

1. What would you describe to be your most unique or special skill that differentiates you from everyone else? What do you experience there and why is it meaningful to you?

Skill can be described as the ability, coming from one's knowledge, practice, aptitude, etc., to do something well, and it is apparent that skills are all around us. From singing at an intimate open mic night in front of strangers, to being able to wiggle your ears for your friends at a social gathering. To me, a skill can be described as aspects that showcase one's individuality, or bring people together to embody something astounding. My father is a high school math teacher, who raised me how any typical math teacher would, with a strong passion for all things regarding mathematics. He had taught me all the tricks of the trade when it came down to times tables in elementary school, how to solve multi-step equations in middle school, and confidently derive equations within high school. Uncoincidentally, he also happened to be the head coach of the mathletes team; because I was too young to stay home alone and watch my younger brother by myself I had tagged along to various mathlete competitions alongside him far before I could even compete. It had made me feel so complete to be surrounded by so many other like minded people, even though we all had different social groups, we were all of different ages, and we were all apart of different cultural backgrounds, when it came to math, we all spoke the same language. Other than my family at home, my nerdy number friends from mathletes were a family to me, and when I began high school, I had my family to guide me through the journey that high school is, and help me with the many problems I would encounter. Seeing my reflection on the pristine polished school laminate floor walking to mathletes practice in the classroom with tangram ceiling tiles tucked in the back corner of the hallway, I found my unique skill. My skill is more than mathematics, it is the ability to solve complex problems. When faced with an issue, one might completely shut down. Upon looking down and seeing a score of zero during a mathletes competition I was sure I had in the bag, some would have gave up. The thought of failure scaring an individual like myself into never opening up a new door to a different possibility, siking themselves out from unveiling what could possibly be their truest form of happiness and success. I have taken my failure as motivation to continue solving complex problems. With this skill I have been able to discover my happiness; love for number crunching, statistics, and accounting. While attending Illinois State University I have chosen to be an accounting major, on a five year plan to achieve my masters degree and become a CPA (Certified Public Accountant.) We are unable to pick and choose the complexity of problems that life will face us with, and the pop up of problems is unpredictable, but the plan you take to solve the problem will introduce you to your best skills.

2. If you were given the capability to travel back in time to any period in history, where would you head to and why?

Scandalous flapper girls with hair kept in a sleek bob, the emergence of the modern day automobile, and music flowing out of the radio are all things that the 1920's can be categorized with. Because the "Roaring Twenties" ushered in the birth of a modern national lifestyle, as post-war Americans came to value convenience and leisure over hard work and self-denial, I would travel back in time to this iconic time period. The 1920's brought a sense of peace and unity to people when Germany and the Allies signed an armistice to end the fighting in World War I. Because of this, families were reunited, and thought of fear was lifted, bringing people social, political, and economic contentment. The economy was also 'roaring' as well, this decade was a time of tremendous prosperity. Following the end of World War I, the industrial might of the United States was unleashed for domestic, peaceful purposes. Within a few short years, an economic shift took place as the economy transitioned from wartime production to peacetime production. New technologies such as the automobile, household appliances, and other mass-produced products led to immense consumer culture, which stimulated economic growth. Furthermore, under the administration of three consecutive Republican presidents, the government adopted fiscally conservative policies that fueled private business. Socially, relationships and interactions between people living in the 1920's became more active due to the ratification of the 18th amendment. With prohibition a concept of the past, most people of legal drinking age spent their time at their local speakeasy passing back and forth both personal stories, and alcoholic beverages. The booming business of the speakeasy could be considered a starting block for the emergence of popularity concerning jazz music. Jazz music introduced a unique blend of music, with roots in western and African music, that included work songs, field holler, and blues. Much of jazz is improvised, because many jazz musicians could not read music; meaning that musicians composed as they played. Until the '20s, jazz music was played in the back alleys and basements of African-American communities in the South, especially New Orleans. Then bands like King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, with trumpet player Louis Armstrong, spread jazz to the rest of the nation, becoming popular in the late 1920's. Armstrong's Jazz began taking a different side into Blues music. Eventually jazz would influence music throughout the entire new western world. To be a woman in a pre 1920's world meant to be powerless, until the ratification of the 19th amendment on August 18th, 1920, giving women the power to vote and making the first step towards equal rights within the genders. This is a vital movement in the 1920's, and it can be seen as a catalyst to the gender rights movement of the 1960's. It is for these reasons and many more that the 1920's is an era that I hold special connection with, and given the chance I would chose to travel back in time to this decade with no hesitation.

3. Describe an experience that forever changed your life and your outlook on life.

“Thank you for calling Nick’s Pizza and Pub in Elgin, this is Jordan, how can I help you?” Is the way I have answered thousands of phone calls in the duration of the past two years. The experience that has changed my life and my outlook on life is getting a job at Nick’s Pizza and Pub. I had freshly turned sixteen when my father bought me a car on a loan, he payed for the car in full, I pay him back, no interest. The best loan I will ever receive in my life. Another condition with that purchase was for me to get a job in order to start paying him back, so I drove around and saw that Nick's Pizza and Pub had a sign placed in front of the restaurant that stated “We’re always hiring great team members!”, before I knew it, I was sitting in orientation. Nick’s Pizza and Pub is a small family owned chain that has locations in Elgin, Crystal Lake, and one being built in Chicago. Working for such a small company has effected my outlook on life because when I was working part time during school, and full time during summer, I saw Nick Sarillo at least once every weekend. He knows every single one of his employees on a first name basis. This is impactful to my outlook on life because it has taught me that there are companies, big or small, out there that genuinely care about their employees, and I am going to work my hardest to find one of those companies to work for in the future. Working at Nick’s Pizza and Pub has also changed my life in the way I communicate with others. I am a trainer at my work, and in order to obtain that title, I attended a workshop class through Nick's University called 301 that many other business leaders around the country also attend to learn effective communication skills. The class takes inspiration from Rudy Miick, a guide and coach in dynamic performance within leadership, management, business and life. In this class we simulated many situations in the workplace that would arise conflict, and how to solve them. I value the skills I was taught through 301, because they have changed my life. These communication skills are enforced at Nick’s Pizza and Pub, creating an operative space that makes work much more enjoyable, and really makes clear how important communication at work is. At Nick’s Pizza and Pub your hourly wage is dependent on how many positions you are certified on, and training on positions is highly encouraged there. Because of this value my work ethic has been highly increased due to the incentive of higher pay, I am aware that this is not how every company operates, but my outlook on life has shifted from hard work not paying of, to being shown and proven that hard work does in fact pay off, which has forever shaped my outlook on life.