

Tell us about a person who has influenced you in a significant way.

Ever since I was little, my father and I have always been very close, and he has always been the person to whom I have gone for advice and instruction. My father inherited his love for the sport of fencing from his father, and in turn, he passed that passion on to me. My father fenced in high school and then, while he was in the army, he became the assistant coach at West Point. Following the army, he fenced at William Paterson College for four years, achieving many personal and team goals. However, after getting out of college, he hung up his equipment in the closet and did not touch it until I found it there when I was seven. From that time on, my father has been my fencing coach. He has been to every one of my major fencing tournaments and has been there for me in victory and defeat. Along the way, my dad and I have joined up with several other fencing clubs and coaches, but my father has always been the coach I trust the most. In fact, there was a time when it was just my dad and I working together. Several coaches told my father that I would not accomplish anything simply working with my father. That year, however, I took third place in a national tournament in my age category. In practice, he has purposely put me under all kinds of pressure so that the competition is nothing compared to practice. Because he worked so hard to ensure my success in spite of the fact that he has an incurable heart condition, my father has shown me that anything can be accomplished with determination and the willpower to always push forward. With his encouragement, I have learned to press on through any and all obstacles to achieve my goals.

My relationship with my father, however, goes beyond the sport of fencing. Through the hours upon hours we have spent together in practice, on the road traveling to tournaments, or simply in the course of daily family life, his influence upon me has affected all areas of my thinking. My father is a police officer, who has spent many years of his career working the night hours in some of the most crime-infested areas of Houston. His stories, sometimes humorous, sometimes tragic, have never failed to capture my attention. I have learned what it means to have grace and compassion for those less fortunate, seeing a world beyond my safe middle-class existence. Hearing his experiences forged in me the necessity for law, justice, and honor, and has shown me the

consequences of lawlessness. His deep faith in Jesus Christ, despite seeing first hand the many injustices of this world, has aided me in my own faith journey, and has helped me shape my worldview. I can only hope to honor him and his ideals in the pursuit of my education, on the fencing strip, and throughout the course of my life.