



## D5580 FOUR WAY TEST ESSAY CONTEST 2011-2012

### *“Someone to Partake in Your Joy”*

I had placed it on my shelf months ago, and it had not budged since. It sat among my Bible, *Life if Pi*, my Spanish-English dictionary, *Into the Wild*, and my other favorite books. It was left there when the memories in my mind’s eye were still freshly imprinted. I opened it and the vision that had become blurry with the passing days was again crystal clear. My **Camp RYLA** binder was filled with doodles, scribbled notes, and promises to stay in touch. I flipped through the pages until I had reached my destination: page 10, **The Four Way Test**. There was nothing special, nothing unique about this particular page – a simple leaf of stark white paper printed with royal blue ink. The information was not something I could not find somewhere else, but it was the sentimental value of its origin that was special that inspired me to reminisce on my past friendships and also think of all the new friends I had made at camp. Friendship is the most important element in any life. It holds the power to shape one’s character, to give essential personal skills, and most importantly – the power to invoke happiness. After this I reconsidered The Four Way Test, something I had never been exposed to until my last year of high school. I wondered if it is a decision-making tool humans are inherently born with, one you pick up as a child just as you learn your first words, or must it be taught? Regardless, a certain memory lingered and held my attention where a younger self had utilized this tool.

It was in my seventh grade year, I was a mere 13 year-old, and didn’t know as much about human interaction as I thought I did. I came from a small school with only one friend I fully relied on. The most difficult part of middle school for me was becoming accustomed to the amount of new friends I was acquiring. I met one girl in particular that became my best friend, a term I do not use lightly. It seemed silly that it had taken 13 whole years for us to become acquainted! She was the most high of the popular crowd; she made a joke and laughter always followed, regardless of its comical value. Every seventh grade boy swooned around her and every girl wanted to be her right hand man, and I was that lucky girl. Popularity was something I had never experienced before, and I’ll admit that I was feeling ecstatic. But then a day came that turned my entire preteen dream to shambles. My new best friend was suddenly ousted from the clique, through no fault of her own. She was cast out instantly, and people moved on faster than they changed their braces’ rubber bands. I was forced to make a choice. The cafeteria became a battlefield. Where was I to sit? Do I sit with my newfound popularity or my new friend? Luckily, I was blessed with the good sense to choose friendship. We sat alone at our table for a while, but later others joined us, and we were surrounded by true friendship and became happier than ever. I was not given directions on how to make choices even as simple as these, but looking back I noted The Four Way Test was exemplified to a tee in this childhood memory.

I put first things first and considered whether or not it was the **TRUTH** and found it simple to answer “yes” to this first element of the test. I did not lie to others or myself when I chose companionship over seventh grade fame. I next wondered if the path I had chosen was **FAIR TO ALL CONCERNED**. I again affirmed this immediately as well. The “cool” crowd had held the recently banished girl in such esteem before, and I soon realized that I could meet the same fate someday. These people did not care for me one bit. It was also fair to my dear friend, for I remained loyal. Finally, it was fair to me because I chose what matters. I smiled to see the third bullet point, for it read, “**WILL IT BUILD GOOD WILL AND BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?**” And the answer was again obvious. I cannot imagine any other outcome of the decision I made more than five years ago. Those of true heart joined us at our lunch table. We became our own

unique, not nearly as cool, but exponentially more caring crew of misfits that still exists to this day. Finally, we arrive at the last quarter of the test, “**IS IT BENEFICIAL TO ALL CONCERNED?**” I wholly believe so. Numerically, I lost acquaintances, but in trustworthiness, honesty, loyalty and love I had suddenly become rich. My seventh grade best friend learned a volume’s worth on true companionship and remains to this day a person of the highest character. Finally, I think my entire class learned a valuable lesson on the importance of popularity.

Although this is only childhood drama, it has applications and outcomes that affected my life presently. Friendship to many is taken for granted without realizing it is their entire foundation. When a foundation is shaken, the house becomes unstable. At that time years ago, we learned to build our homes on stone instead of sand. Next we learned the dangers and keys to the avoidance of drama, which is open communication. Finally we became comrades for a lifetime. By using the Four Way Test, kinships are strengthened and maintained, and all the while the individual’s character is created. Friendship’s most important task is to make life worth living – to spark happiness. I replaced my RYLA binder on the shelf and picked up one of my favorite books, *Into the Wild*, by John Krakauer. A quote came to mind: “Happiness is not real unless shared.” This summarizes the entire necessity of friendship. The key to the basic human right, the pursuit of happiness, is simply someone to partake in your joy.

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