

Appendix 1: A High School Essay

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Below is an essay, originally written in careful longhand, that is one of the two or three least bad pieces of writing I did for Mrs. Spettel in my senior English class at White Plains High. I have indicated her red-pencil corrections in footnotes, since these too should be part of the record.

John Franklin
English IV, c.w., Per. I
December 2, 1953

The Long Way Home

In¹ our present day attitude toward life,² it seems we tend to make too material, too “wholesale”, and I think that this fact is brought out especially in our feeling toward modern sports. Consult a reliable source, and you will probably find that baseball or football are³ the most popular American sports. Yet these sports are hardly the ones that represent the best tests of a man’s physical fitness,⁴ or lack of physical fitness. To me, a sport is the test of a person’s physical development over his opponents’. I would like to relate a personal experience which gave me more self-satisfaction than being a baseball or football hero.

At the close of the cross-country running season, a friend of mine and I decided to put all the labors of two and one half months⁵ practice to a supreme test. The goal which we decided upon was a three hour non-stop run. We roughly outlined our sojourn as a circle from White Plains to Mamaroneck and back, after which we would decide upon a further course to fill out our time limit. So, early one bright afternoon, we set out from White Plains High School, clad in our cross-country uniforms, and blessed with that clear, cool type of weather that is the best running weather we could have asked for.

One learns many little “tricks” while practicing a body-taxing activity such as cross-country which, as experience is gained, are a great aid in extending the limit of endurance. All these aids now presented themselves to my mind as we jogged easily along the road to Mamaroneck. After the initial “breaking-in” of the first quarter mile, we fell into a steady ground-covering pace. By this time I had established a rhythm of breathing, and an arm and leg cadence which was to last, I hoped, for three hours.

After our first hour, it seemed that my body as a whole had “settled down” to its task by speeding up its activity — metabolism, to be correct— in such a manner as to be able to meet the test prescribed. This may seem to be a very incidental matter to take notice of, but when one has been doing the same thing for an hour or more, the little things which are taking place begin to become prominent. The air was cool and refreshing, and running⁶ or not, it was a beautiful day. As the run continued, I began to fully realize the extreme satisfaction of pure physical exercise — pure sport, that feeling that brings out the skiers to the frosty white mountain slopes, and that beckons the mountain climber to the summits.

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1. Double strike-through to indicate the word should be eliminated
 2. Strike-through of comma
 3. “g” for “grammatical error”
 4. Strike-through of comma
 5. Apostrophe indicated
 6. Underlined, with “dang” (for dangling participle) written above

To the reader, a detailed account of the major part of the journey will seem exceedingly boring. However, one humorous aspect was running through the town of Mamaroneck. Picture a brisk, fall afternoon in a busy town. Along come two boys, clothed in nothing but shorts and tee-shirts, jogging down the sidewalk. I am sure that more than one of the onlookers asked themselves that age old question of what the younger generation was coming to, etc.

Due¹ to the early sunset, we were forced to cut our time to two and a half hours. As we moved into that last half hour, the strain of the day's activity finally began to tell. Up to this point the running had been a more or less easy task, a steady, graceful, rhythm. But now, I found it necessary to push myself onward. We had decided on a course to Scarsdale and back to finish up the two and a half hours. Each step seemed to be more and more of a job, as my legs became more and more tired. During practice, my breathing bothered me most after the short sprints. But during a long run such as ours, it was the legs which gave me the most trouble.² That last half mile was really the ultimate. At this point I conceived an overwhelming desire for ... orange juice! I do not know why this particular beverage should have appealed to me at the time, but I began to have visions of the morning orange juice, orange soda, and tasty oranges themselves as we pressed on. Finally, I honestly believed I could not run the last block. Everything suddenly began to start feeling bad, and the small distance remaining seemed like more of an obstacle than the whole trip. When I finally and thankfully reached my friend's home and sank exhausted on the cool lawn, I knew I could not have gone much farther.

The immediate aftermath of our journey was a feeling not unlike a "wake" sweeping over me. Everything seemed to "catch up" and I had the feeling of being all alive. Then slowly, I settled back to normalcy, knowing we had reached our goal.

Of course, almost everyone who heard of our run commented on it with such enthusiastic remarks as, "You're crazy," and "What's the matter with you guys!" But I was able to ward off these remarks by asking myself, "How many of my critics could run a total of eighteen miles nonstop?" Fortunately³, I do not seem to think many could.

Mrs. Spettel gave me an A, with the written comment, "Thoroughly interesting. Be careful of a heavy introduction. Keep diction as tight as possible."

1. "Due" underlined, "g" written above to indicate grammatical error.

2. For some reason, I omitted all mention of a strange phenomenon that occurred as we reached Jimmy's back yard, namely, the feeling of my legs no longer being under my control — a feeling that I couldn't stop them from running: they were now running by themselves. I remember calling out to him, "Hey! I can't stop!" I took several turns around his front yard while I waited for them to stop, which, of course, they eventually did.

3. "sp" to indicate misspelling