

Gerald Cruz

SENIOR - 1st Place

Alumni Senior Writing Contest - 2017

SR - 108

#108 1/2

"Accepting boys, graduating men" is the motto that, in short, embodies the Saints experience. However, the Saints experience is more than just becoming a man. The Saints experience is far greater than what meets the eye; it is a family. Each and every family grows together both through the thick and the thin. Saints is no different. Over the past four years, I've grown alongside a solid group of guys that I can certainly call my brothers. There's something unique about being part of this tight knit community that is solely made up of men. The sense of camaraderie at school and at social events genuinely make St. Augustine High School special. That bond of brotherhood connects every Saintsmen past and present, and that is what the Saints experience is truly all about.

When looking for a person that embodies the Saints culture as a whole, there is one person in particular that comes to mind. From his colorful ties to his hilarious jokes, Mr. Wilson, otherwise known as Sir, is a Saintsmen at heart. His dedication to his school is what makes the Saints experience unrivaled. Sir not only focuses on teaching Biology to Saintsmen, but he makes it a priority to teach every single student what it means to be a part of this Saints community. It's truly special. The Saints experience cannot be explained without mentioning Sir. He can be seen at every single football game in the stands wearing his letterman jacket, but when he comes to the Pit, we all know what's about to happen. The whole Pit surges with energy whenever Sir starts his famous, "Fire Up!" chant. It's his trademark. I was fortunate enough to have Sir as a teacher. Though I don't remember much about Biology, I do cherish the priceless memories in that classroom. I would eat lunch in his classroom every single day, and when we asked him

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SR - 108 why his room is always open for lunch, he said that it all started when a few kids wanted a place to just hang out. That's what Saints is all about. We pride ourselves on having such a rich tradition at this school that it gets passed down from generation to generation.

When I say, "Saintsmen are everywhere," they are everywhere. The STA on a shirt or on a jacket is more than just a logo. Whenever a person thinks of a logo such as Apple or Nike, they think of the products they produce or the people that make that company great. Whenever a Saintsmen, past or present, sees that STA, they instantaneously remember all the relationships built, championships won, and memories made. I'll never forget this, but it was late at night, and I was eating tacos from Jack in the Box. Suddenly, out of the blue, an older looking man comes up to my cousin and I asking if I went to Saints. I proudly said yes. He noticed I was wearing a Saints football shirt and told me a story about his Saints experience. He told me how he was the only person from his parochial school to attend Saints that year and how he played football for Saints. However, what struck me the most was that he told me that the friends you make at Saints are brothers for life. He told he still talks to his brothers from Saints till this day. Saints is more than just another private high school. It isn't just an all-boys high school. It is a family, and to say that all Saintsmen are brothers speaks volumes about the culture here at St. Augustine High School. We are not just a class that will graduate in 2017, but we are part of that same Saints family that has been established since 1922.

Whenever I talk to alumni about what it's like graduating, they all say it's a bittersweet moment. Closing a chapter in my life that has been influential to my growth

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as a person will be difficult to say the least. Having been with my brothers over the past four years, and now having to part ways will be a tough transition. However, as I close this chapter of my life, I'll never forget the earth shaking chants in the Pit, the crushing pain of defeat at certain CIF games, but most importantly, I'll never forget the friendships I've made here at St. Augustine High School. Reflecting on these moments made me realize Saints is truly one of a kind. We have something special here. As I close this chapter and start another, I'll bring these memories with me wherever I go. Saints has a special place in my heart. The experiences I've had here at Saints have taught me more about myself and who I really am as a person. As I move on into the real world, I hope that I stay true to myself.

The Saints experience isn't simply just one single thing. The Saints experience is tradition. It is brotherhood. It is family. The Saints experience is truly unique. As I look back over these past four years, I've can finally say that I've lived the Saints experience. I've been fortunate enough to be surrounded by great classmates and great teachers. I remember Freshman Welcome Week as if it were yesterday. Soon, I'll finally be walking across the stage of the new St. Augustine Commons. St. Augustine High School means so much to me. As I finish my career here at Saints, I hope to bring a piece of Saints wherever I go. Now as I embark on my journey, I understand fully what it truly means to be a Saintsman.