

ALUMNI OF THE MONTH

quinton KLABON



GET TO KNOW QUINTON

WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?

I work at St. Marcus Lutheran School in Milwaukee, WI.
I am the Development and Communications Associate.

WHAT IS THE FIRST THING PEOPLE NOTICE ABOUT YOU WHEN YOU MEET THEM?

There was a time when the answer would be "my height," "my dazzling charm," or "my smile," but nowadays it's how I look really young for my age. *sigh* It's always awkward to get asked if I'm the high school intern when I'm wearing a really nice suit at an event!

IF YOU WERE STRANDED ON A DESERT ISLAND AND COULD ONLY HAVE THREE THINGS ALONG WITH YOU, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?

I won't cheat and say "a laptop with internet access," which might be all I would need! Give me a Nintendo 3DS with a few games for my brain, the Hong translations of Soren Kierkegaard's work for my soul, and a tanker filled with fresh water for my body, and I'd be set.

Class of 2001

ATTENDED ILS K-8

What is one of your best memories of being at Immanuel?

It's rare that a person gets to feel like he is on top of the world, but it's even rarer to do that with his best friend. Before I found my rightful place at center defense, my best friend, Ben, and I were picked to play forwards for Immanuel's soccer team. (Go Cougars! Wool!) Ben was a masterful soccer player and I was good enough support, so game after game consisted of us waltzing down the field, passing back and forth, and blasting shots into the back of the net with no one stopping us.

Sports are often praised for teaching people to overcome adversity, but there's something to say for the pure celebration of easy joy. I got to spend a whole autumn every year feeling like the coolest, greatest soccer player ever with the person who's still my best buddy. I'm ever grateful for that.

That said, adversity matters, too. Our basketball team, led by Mark and Andy, was amazing, but once those boys had commitments to their traveling team, we were in big trouble. In 8th grade, we were losing another game we shouldn't have been and were dejected and debilitated. We substituted out our "best" players and gave those in reserve a chance to step up.

Somehow, this solved the problems and we mounted a comeback. Only down 1, Mr. Voelker STILL didn't put our top players in, but I'll never forget what happened next. A free throw was shot. Clank. It dropped right into our hands, but the other team was vicious and the ball was torn out and started skipping around Immanuel's home court. Players deflected it with shins, bounced it with hands, but no one could grab a hold. As if by magic, it ended up in Tyler's hands right by the basket. He jumped up to win...and shot it into the under side of the rim with 2 seconds to spare. I watched at the 3-point line, dejected. But the ball rolled into the hands of 1 of our players, Matt.

He wasn't confident in anything in life, but Immanuel had helped him develop a sense of humor that had helped him find his place. No athlete, he was good for team morale, but not the person you'd trust to win a game in the final seconds.

God taught us all a lesson that night. After 9 players had awkwardly, fearfully tried to salvage a victory, Matt saw the ball roll to him, nonchalantly picked it up off of the ground, eased back with the most natural shot you'd ever seen outside the NBA, and strolled away from the basket without looking to see if it went in.

I remember all of this because it was so surprising that I watched him, not the ball, and I only saw him drain the shot out of the corner of my eye. You had never heard a louder noise in the Immanuel gym, and every player on our team involuntarily shouted, jumped, and rushed the boy to hug him.

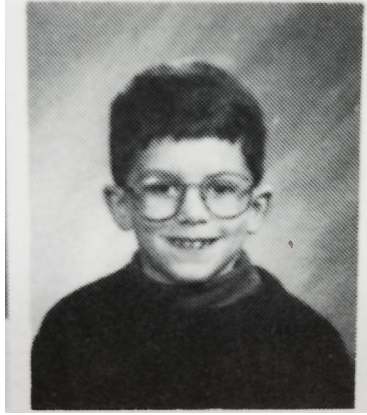
We aren't even Facebook friends, sadly, but I'll see his name pop up there every so often, and I'll always remember the look of total contentment on his face, having finally been given that moment of grace we all hope for in life. Every Immanuel alumni in that grade still remembers it whenever we get together.

How has attending Immanuel influenced your life?

I can be honest with those reading this. We're all born sinners, but I was not a very good kid. Whereas some kids act out or sabotage themselves, I did the opposite. I could read and do mathematics at 3, I nerded out on the Bible, and so I let people know that I was the greatest human yet to walk Earth (or at least central Wisconsin). Missus Rucks had a Bible game where we'd learn the books of the Bible by being given a random verse, and whoever found it 1st got a treat. I would cheat by sticking my fingers at various points in the Good Book, inevitably beat everybody from my superior Bible knowledge, and then laugh obnoxiously when I won. "Philippians 2:3," I'd say. "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." *turns to classmates* "THAT'S RIGHT, I WON! I am the best! Me!" I knew the Bible, but I didn't understand it. I got all As through 3rd grade, but my teachers and classmates let me know how mean I was to those who couldn't measure up to my standards.

Then, I got Mister Parris for 4th grade. He remains the most influential teacher in my life because he made me cry. I was riding high on my superiority 1 day in the 1st quarter when he called me out in class. It went on for awhile, but I remember this part: "Quinton, I heard a lot about how smart you are, but I don't see it. You coast. You don't act like a leader. I think you're overrated." No teacher had ever shown that severity of tough love before. I could be smart...but still bad? I'm bad? It hadn't occurred to me. I raised up my little desk top to cover my face and cried hot tears while pretending to search for my notebooks for 5 minutes.

It was like Saul on the road to Damascus. It was instantaneous. I never doubted my abilities, and still don't, but I now recognized that even the most talented people are at the mercy of the world, that even the best sin and



sin often, and that ESPECIALLY the talented must put their abilities to work for others to matter a iota in the quantum speck of time we have on Earth. It's how I live my life now.

Thanks, Frank Parris, for making me cry 1 day. It was the best thing anyone could have done.

There's no facet of Immanuel that didn't lead directly into who I am today, and I treasure it for that. It's not even that most of my best friends are those kids I met in kindergarten or as new kids at Immanuel. Singing in musicals, playing line soccer, teaching Sunday and Vacation Bible School, speed-Bible-verse-finding, the "around-the-world" math game, and reading speeches all factor in what I do in my professional and personal life.

The most obvious thing is that I graduated from 1 of the world's best universities, Dartmouth College, devoted my life to education and currently work at the biggest and best Lutheran voucher school in Milwaukee. Each day, I get to raise money for a school that transforms the lives of Milwaukee kids and wins minds and souls for Jesus and high-quality education.

St. Marcus Discover America 2015

The children at Saint Marcus are superficially different from those at Immanuel, but we're all looking for the same things in life, and Lutheran education provides those. We leave with the skills to succeed in high school, sure, but we find our place in a universe that sometimes seems not to care, where we can be as disposable as the next person drifting

FUNFACTS

IF YOU COULD GO BACK IN TIME, WHAT YEAR/ERA WOULD YOU TRAVEL TO AND WHY?

Assuming that I can come back to my air conditioning, internet, and car, I'd go back to the rule of Justinianus I in Constantinopolis to see 1 of the great rulers in world history take an empire of Christians trying to survive and help them thrive instead. We've finally reached an era in America where nominal Christianity's fallen away and people don't feel obligated to say they're believers if they aren't (which is a good thing). It means we Christians don't shape the culture anymore and have to make big decisions to have a bright future. The issues he dealt with were different, but the courage, intelligence, and justice with which he approached them would inspire me after I returned home in my Delorean.



anonymously through life. Immanuel and Saint Marcus tell us, "No!" There is a God who loves you, who wants you to take the 1 gift or many gifts He's given you and make it matter, and who loves you even when you fail. Saint Marcus and Immanuel both have experienced a lot of hardship.

We're still a family in this thing together. I work at Saint Marcus because I learned at Immanuel.

Immanuel people remain the best I have known in my 28 years. 4 of my 6 best friends are Cougars for life. Plus, hey, my current girlfriend is someone who attended Immanuel for a few years before moving again and whom I reconnected with last spring. Our 1st date was 20-percent Immanuel memories!