

Introduction of Salutatorian: Duncan Luke Heyliger Mr. Tim Smith

Luke Heyliger came to us in 9th grade. Before attending Ridgeview, he was home-schooled, and his parents deserve much of the credit for the honor he enjoys today. He was very obviously well-prepared. Luke's mother remembers him bounding from one side of the sofa to the other as she quizzed him on science, math, and history. I can easily picture Luke leaping back and forth, quickly spitting back answers to her questions, his excitement and impatience growing with each correct answer. Then Luke's parents trusted us at Ridgeview to continue to train their son. In 9th grade, Luke came to my Latin I class. Since then, he has been one of my best students. Although other teachers tell me that he is more of a math-science oriented student, he is also nearly flawless in Latin. As a freshman, he distinguished himself early on with formidable powers of memorization, a strong understanding of the rules of grammar, diligence in completing assignments, and perfection on tests and quizzes. He soon earned the respect and envy of his classmates for his perfect average. During this same year, Luke also became the first recipient of Ridgeview's award for the best ninth grade essay on Homer's *Iliad*, for his articulate and thoughtful writing and his profound understanding of death—"the hateful dark"—in ancient Greece.

In his junior year, Luke opted to skip over Latin III and quickly distinguished himself as the top student in my AP Vergil class. His essays about the *Aeneid* impressed me for their insight and originality combined with reverence and real love for the poem. This year, Luke took my AP Latin Literature course and read the poems of Horace and Catullus with me. His essay on Catullus caused me to remark that despite his analytical mind, so apt to the hard sciences, Luke really has the soul of a poet.

Luke's science teachers have great things to say about him. They regard him as one of our best chemistry and physics students. He enthusiastically helped other students who were struggling with difficult material, willingly taking on the role of physics guru. In mathematics, Luke exhausted Ridgeview's course offerings and even took Calculus III as an independent study.

And there is more to Luke than academics. He is an accomplished percussionist and he performed a chillingly evil Danforth in our production of *The Crucible*. He also does a hilarious impression of Mr. Shubert. His many accolades include winning Student of the Quarter, the Senior Latin Book Prize and four summa cum laude awards on the National Latin exam; he participated in the Science bowl, won the Science scholarship and the Colorado School of Mines Medal of Achievement in Math and Science; he is a tennis instructor and a National Merit Scholar.

Despite his natural intelligence and analytical mind, despite his personal diligence, and intimidating command of Latin poetry, Luke is not an island. He listens intently to his teachers and classmates and engages with them in discussions, often addressing points to the students rather than to the teacher, creating an atmosphere where all opinions are important and need to be refined and challenged. He is open to new ideas and to revising his own opinions. Luke fosters the Great Conversation. In his senior thesis, Luke addressed the complex and shifting relationship between faith and science. Refusing to make a simple argument for religion or for science, Luke astutely saw a way to bridge the gap, concluding that

The man who desires to know and to understand must reconcile conflicting worlds – the greatness of science lies in the balance of the rational and irrational, the intellectual and spiritual, the objective and subjective. It is the [unity] of mortality...and eternity.

Luke embraces science, but without hubris. He also embraces the spiritual, but with eyes open to answers we might still discover. I am proud to send forth a student who has such a mature

understanding of the tension between science and faith, who is such a profound seeker of knowledge. He is ready for any question the world might pose.