

Published October 10th, 2012

Braving Gravity

By Clare Durant



Once an Olympic hopeful, former captain of her high school debate team, and head of the school newspaper, Clare Durant now dreams of hosting her own television and radio show.

passions in order to find a career that will earn a living. As I embark on the next chapter of my life, my first year of college in Indiana, I am going to constantly fight to not accept that dreams change.

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When I was only five and in kindergarten my teacher asked me, "Clare, what do you want to be when you grow up?" Like so many little kids with the innocence of childhood, I answered her with a wide-eyed grin that made my cheeks wrinkle up to my eyes and said "an Olympic ice skater like Tara Lipinski." It was the 1998 Olympics and I was completely enamored by the beauty of ice-skating. I loved the sparkly dresses, the crunching sound the ice made when silver blades glided across its glassy surface. I loved it all. My dream was to be just like Tara, an Olympian at 14.

I'm 18 now and it wasn't until my senior year at Bentley that it dawned on me that no one had ever asked me since kindergarten: "What do you want to be, Clare, when you grow up?" I thought about what the response would look and feel like. I imagined a raised eyebrow with a slow nodding of the head. I could practically hear the thoughts behind the fake smiles, "Good luck with that sweetie."

For 13 years I got up at 5 a.m. six days a week to glide in my custom-made Harlick lace-up ice skating boots with pink suede hearts on the side in pursuit of the Olympic gold. But when the time came to make a choice between moving to Los Angeles to live and train with an Olympic coach or staying with my family and skating non-competitively for pure enjoyment, I chose the latter.

Sitting on a squeaky metal fold-up chair looking out at the earnest audience from our graduation stage, a pang of guilt overcame me. "Had I failed myself? Had I failed my family? Were those 13 years of training all a waste of time, energy, and money?"

As I made my final promenade out of my gilded gymnasium, blinded by the intense sunlight, the realization hit me like a punch to my solar plexus, "Now what?"

It's almost as if as soon as we graduate from high school we are expected to curb our enthusiasm and bury our

passions in order to find a career that will earn a living. As I embark on the next chapter of my life, my first year of college in Indiana, I am going to constantly fight to not lose sight of my dreams, and give myself permission to accept that dreams change.