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Prompt 5

### Why Astrophysics?

Ever since I was in elementary school, I always found myself enjoying math and science more than reading, writing, social studies, etc. I enjoyed memorizing the multiplication tables and learning how to divide, liked doing experiments, and reading small books about every single planet and dinosaur. This pattern continued throughout middle and high school, where I started to learn more about algebra, very basic physics and chemistry.

I was and still am a very curious person. I think that this is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because it fuels my interest in what I am already interested in, which in my case, is math and science. I am eager to learn more about them and would do anything to find answers and learn. This can also be a curse because if I cannot find an answer to my question, I feel like I will never get closure because I want to have the question answered no matter what.

Because of this curiosity, I felt that I wanted to learn more than what was taught in middle and high school, and became an exceptional student. I still remember when I asked my math teacher in middle school that I wanted to learn trigonometry and if possible, calculus. As time passed, I would eventually learn more advanced math and science. My curiosity would also grow because after learning something, I would think how something would connect to another thing and why do we use the mathematical tools we use. I like to think that one of the words I would think of the most is “why”.

This curiosity is what convinced me to study astronomy, and eventually, astrophysics. The major has everything I like: math, physics, and planets, with added bonuses of stars, interstellar and intergalactic matter, and theoretical physics. As I progress in my major, my curiosity will continue to grow, and I want it to grow because it is what will lead me into success in my future career.

The horse racing industry also impacted my decision. There are two parts to this impact. A big part of that influence is that I have seen how hard my parents have worked in the industry for more than 20 years and experienced it myself when I would go help my dad out to feed the horses. They must go every day and have to do the same thing every day, no matter how sick one is, no matter how bad the weather is. I want to study what I like and live a good life, even if it is a very difficult subject, so that my parents acknowledge that every sacrifice, including those 20+ years of monotonous and possibly dangerous work were worth it in the long run.

A smaller part of the influence is when I used to walk around with my friends at Arlington Park, I would look at the dots in the sky, space out, and think about what things can be happening out there that we are not aware of yet and that there is a possibility that we are unknowingly looking at something that is key to solving the mysteries of the universe. This would happen almost every night as a result of this colossal curiosity that I have.

I would love to go back to the backstretch to give back to the place that raised me. I would like to talk to the residents and their children about my story, offer families free trips to the Field Museum, the Museum of Science and Industry, or even Adler Planetarium. If possible, I would like to offer scholarships to those who want to attend a two-year school, a four-year school, or even trade school. I feel like giving back in any way is the least that I can do as

appreciation for watching me grow as a person and launching me into the unknown to pursue my dreams.