



Life is Like Photography, We Develop From the Negatives

By Lauren Fredericks

LIFE from day one has been a roller coaster from the moment that I was born. It all started when my Mother and Grandmother were arguing about what my name would be. Not only that—there were the everyday struggles of a non-reliable sixteen year old mother taking care of me without a Father. On the flip side my name was decided, I'm Lauren. The word family to me is the meaning of love, security, and how one was raised. I feel safe when I'm around my family but no matter who I'm with I still feel a sense of independence. I grew up knowing all of the issues with where I ended up and why I was there. When I was adopted as a four year old child, I wasn't scared or upset. I was just content. I remember the exact moment of my mom's face when I was taken from her. The papers were already docu-

mented upon my Aunt and Uncle's custody with my Grandma's signature. Although life with my mother would have been bad, life with my aunt and uncle wasn't too glamorous either. While my mother was busy living her life with alcohol and drugs, my adoptive parents (Auntie and Uncle) had alcohol in their lives. I knew from when I was little, that everyone around me had some type of bad influence, so to this day I live by learning from what not to do.

As I grew older I knew all that was going on. After I was adopted my mother didn't contact me until eight years old. But even then it was a quick phone call. I still have every memory of the moments I've spent with her from my earliest memory of just two years old. When I was eleven I got to experience what she was like even

more. As I approached my teenage years I could tell by the way she would act, exactly what was up. She had alcohol and drugs in her life. She thought that she was hiding it from me and she always tried to protect me from knowing. But I did know. I let her keep that little piece of joy of me not knowing, but still I tried to help her stop by getting her to do things with me. I did get her to do fun things with me, but her phone was her liability most of the time. Although I lived with my Aunt and Uncle, they weren't happy people. Every day after coming home from work they turned to alcohol to 'save' them. I always distanced myself from them. At the same time I knew that my mom couldn't be there for me because she was always busy. Every moment I've experienced in my life I know has made me a stronger person.

When I was about to turn seventeen my mother finally confronted me. She spilled her heart out to me by telling me every little detail of where she was when she couldn't be there for me. I took in so much knowledge that it was overwhelming and a little scary. I felt like I was on one of those TV shows that explains all about drugs, the type of people that they were stuck around, and the life they chose to live. I keep an optimistic side of me strong because I don't want to think of the worst outcome and because it helps me be a little supportive towards her. To this day I have this little feeling that I'm my mom's hope and the reason that she tries to stay away from her past.

Life has always had its ups and downs but it's what keeps me going. I learn from the good and the bad. Even though I've experienced a crappy life, I'm still standing, and I'm waiting for the day that I'll make a difference towards others. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Lauren Fredericks is a high school senior from Alaska. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.