

Jarid

Up Front

I'm eighteen years old, and I was born at Tucson General Hospital. I'm white with dark brown hair and dark brown eyes. My hair is usually cut short, but right now it's long. I'm trying something different, but it bugs me when it gets into my eyes. I don't have any tattoos. Sometimes I'll wear a necklace. I wear long pants that are usually baggy and regular T-shirts. I'm fun and outgoing. I can be a social butterfly when I need to be. Pretty much I like to kick back, relax, and sometimes have fun. I hang out with friends. We go cruising and get hyped-up on energy drinks. I read gaming and auto racing magazines, but other than that I don't read. I used to be a big-time computer game junkie. Since I started working, I haven't had much free time. I don't do drugs and have never been in a gang.

Growing up, I loved my mom the most. She was always there for me, always helped me. I remember how she would take me shopping for video games, movies, candy, and soda.

Once I tried living with my best friend from school. That didn't work out. He didn't like the fact that I was kind of butting into his personal time and his space. I moved out after four months so we could still be friends.

My Family

I am Scottish, German, French, English, American, and Native American. My grandfather is from Oregon, and he married a woman from California. I think the Native

American part came from my mom's side of the family.

I have a brother and a sister who are both eleven years old. They are twins, and my sister is one minute older than my brother.

My parents met while living in the same apartment complex in Tucson. My dad is from Oregon, and my mom is from Illinois. My dad graduated from high school and is the overnight manager at a big-box store. He works ten- to -fourteen hours a day. The only time I get to see him is when I come home and get ready for bed.

My mom was diagnosed with lupus when she was twenty-eight or twenty-nine. She went to the hospital for thirty-one days when I was in the fourth grade. I remember that whenever she went to the hospital, I was devastated. That's when I started doing really poorly in school. All my focus went toward my mom when she was sick.

She's fine now, but if she gets sick, she has to go immediately to the hospital because the white blood cells will start attacking her bone marrow. She goes to school, and it's paid for by the government. She wants to go into archaeology and is attending the University of Arizona. Since she has lupus and can't work, the government paid for her to go to school.

I have a few responsibilities at home—the front and back porch, and my room, everything else is done by someone else. My mom does the cooking, and sometimes I'll make mac and cheese.

Elementary School

When I started school, I could read a little, I knew most of the alphabet, I knew some colors, could count to ten, and I could write

my name. I went to Thornydale Elementary, and it started off to be fun. I had a blast the whole time. I've always had fun in school. Later there were things I couldn't deal with. The first and second grades were fun. I had the same teacher for both grades. Her name was Ms. Walker. I liked going to school to hang out and make friends. Amazingly, I was really good in reading. It came to me easily. The first book I read was *Green Eggs and Ham*, by Dr. Seuss. His books got me reading, and I was read to at home. When I hit the fourth grade, my English and reading dropped. I was paying too much attention to my mom.

Class Clowns

For middle school I went to Tortolita. I started off good, but I began hanging out with a different type of crowd than what I was used to. They were the druggies, thieves, and whatnots. I liked them because they were always so funny. I tried to be a class clown, sit there and have fun, and try to get my schoolwork done. They seemed like the clowns, so I hung out with them. They never did their homework. They'd sit at home, skateboard, and that was about it.

After a while, I pretty much stopped doing my homework, but I still went to school because I was forced. I didn't mind going to school since there were a couple of teachers I actually liked seeing.

For some reason, in middle school I caught on to math a lot easier. I started doing better and better in math, and that became my best subject. Mr. Adler was my reading and language teacher, and I liked him and Mr. Gabriel the best.

I started doing more sports—skating, biking, roller-blading—just to fit in. I had two best friends. One was Stan, the guy I moved in with, and the other one was Jake. Stan and I were friends from the third grade,

and Jake was a major class clown. He was the comedian of the group and a big-time skater. I don't know if he did any drugs, but we would hang out, and he taught me to skate.

In middle school, I was the good little boy and only got into trouble for not doing my homework. As punishment, my parents took away my television and my video games. Then they took away my computer. They didn't allow me to hang out with my friends. I had to sit in my room and read.

Between my sixth and seventh grades, my grandma died. It was devastating because she was the next person I loved most after my mom. She was one of my inspirations for wanting to graduate. She lived with us, and she didn't have to do much. My parents bought two acres of land and a double-wide trailer. We started living in it with my grandparents. Then we bought an attachment so my parents and the rest of us would have our own room. My grandma was a heavy smoker and died of emphysema.

High School

I started off at Mountain View High School, a school with about 1,700 students. The nicest way I could describe the kids is to say rich snobs. I didn't fit in at all. I wasn't cool enough. I wasn't known enough. I didn't have a cool car. I didn't have a girlfriend until my junior year.

Math was my best subject, and if I had stayed, I'd have been in college prep calculus. I would have been way up there. I almost passed one semester of freshman English, but I tripped over a broom. That trip caused a disruption during the final exam, so Ms. Ryan failed me. She ripped up my test.

Everybody was done with the test, and I walked over to the water- fountain-type

thing to get a drink. Someone stuck a broom out and tripped me. Ms. Ryan said my test was invalid for talking and making a disruption. Half of the room was tile, and half was carpet. Every night she'd sweep stuff into the dustpan and throw the litter into the garbage. That's why she had a broom in the class. Crazy school, crazy, crazy school.

Stan was still my best friend, but he was in special ed because he couldn't concentrate. He had attention deficit.

In my junior year I was called to the counseling office. No matter what I did, there was no way that I could graduate. I got three credits in my freshman year and three credits in my sophomore year. I had six credits altogether. With that and the not-doing-homework thing, I really screwed myself over. It got to be a habit that started with hanging out with kids who didn't do homework. I realized how much free time I would have if I didn't do homework. I'd watch TV, play on the computer, bowl, and do something outside. I have short-term memory losses. I can forget things easily. Someone could tell me something over and over again, and I'll say, "I know it, I'll remember it." Thirty minutes down the line, I'll have forgotten it.

Whenever I could intercept my report card, I would. I didn't want my parents to see it. I didn't want to get into trouble. They ended up calling the school anyway and getting my grades. I got into more trouble because the report card was mailed, and I would take it out of the mailbox. For punishment, the TV was taken out of my room again, the cable was shut off, and the computer was packed up and locked outside in the shed. All I could do was go outside or read a book. I chose to spend time outside playing around. I was BMX biking. I built a fort by digging a six-foot hole. The fort was a place where I could go to relax. I had a light going to it and a sleeping bag down

there. I was planning on a fridge, but the hole got infested with bees and had to be covered. It was cold sleeping outside in comparison to my room. All the electronics made my room hot even though we had air conditioning.

I saw a guidance counselor twice, once about a zero-hour class. That class started really early, and I'd fall asleep. My grandpa took me, and I'd ride the bus home. The counselor tried to help, but I just didn't want to do it. I hated the people in the front office. I didn't like anyone up there. I knew I wasn't going to graduate.

I might have stayed at Mountain View if I had had one-on-one help and more teacher involvement. I'd be sitting there with a question, and the teacher would be running around all over the place because we had thirty students in the class. It was hard to get attention to learn everything. There were some teachers, like the math teachers, who would go up to the board, show us how to do a problem, and then, that's it! We'd be on our own from there. We'd do paperwork, and as I said, that would be it. Some after-school tutoring was free. If I'd stayed, I would not have had a ride home.

My girlfriend was the reason why I went to the career center. I wanted to graduate with a high school diploma. In the second part of my junior year I went to the Marana Career and Technical High School. I was really short on credits and went there to get them back. M-Cat is for the druggies, outcasts, and troublemakers of the other schools. The students know they aren't going to be able to graduate with their class. They get at least another shot at high school. The school is small, with only about one hundred students at most.

We'd get a book and a packet. Whenever we finished the packet, we'd turn it in. Anything from sixty or above, we would get a credit or a half-credit. I took social studies, science, English, and electives. English was

a formal class with actual teachers teaching. The electives were teen court, law-related education, typing, senior survival, and quite a few other subjects. The counselors from the other high schools would go down, check our credits, and talk to us about how we were doing. They all thought it was a good plan for me. I went from having six credits to thirteen credits in a year. I was at M-Cat from the second semester of my junior year to the first semester of my senior year.

I got a full-time job in my senior year and was too tired to get up in the morning. At one point I stayed out of school for six days, and I officially dropped out of school January 2006.

Going to Work

I've had a total of four jobs. My first one was at Jack-in-the-Box when I was seventeen. I was the fryer and made the chicken, fish, french fries, and tacos. I made \$5.75 an hour and worked there for three and one-half months. I left when my manager started to give me a hard time. He said that I wasn't working hard enough, wasn't doing a good job, and didn't deserve to work there.

I would go into the breakroom and sit down to eat. There would be people in there doing lines of coke and smoking joints. The managers wouldn't do anything about it. The store owner would get mad, but she was never there to actually see the drugs being used. Plus, she didn't have a camera back there. I wanted out, and I left.

My next job, and I'm still in school, was at Church's Chicken right off of Oracle and Magee. I was a cashier, and I would prep the food, put it into a box, and give it to the customer. The job was a way for me to start a savings account so I could go to college. I was on my parent's insurance and drove

either my mom's van or my dad's truck. I would drive to school, drive home after school, change into my uniform, and go to work until eleven o'clock at night. I liked getting off late. There'd be nobody on the road, and I could drive as crazy as I wanted. I admit it, I like to race. If I had the chance, I'd go out and race cars big time.

At the restaurant, I caught a guy stealing money from the cash register. I reported it to the manager, but the guy who took the money was the manager's nephew. So for some reason he got promoted to a shift leader, and he did everything possible to fire me. I told my manager that I was sorry, but I couldn't work there anymore. If that incident hadn't happened, I'd still be there. I had a blast doing the job.

Then I worked at Pizza Hut for three months. My girlfriend was working there, and she got me the job. I was paid \$5.15 an hour, the lowest paying job I ever had. It sucked! I'd go there after school, get off at ten, and made a lot less money than what I was used to. What led up to my leaving was a fight. Me and another employee got into a major fight right outside the place. I went back in, took a delivery order, got the credit card number and the address, and the guy I fought with took the pizza out. Thirty-five minutes later he came back and told me the address was wrong and threw the pizza in my face. The customer called back saying he wanted his pizza. The manager started yelling at me, and I just walked out. That was the end of Pizza Hut.

I needed another job since I owed my friend's parents rent money. One midnight on my way back from visiting friends at Picture Rocks, I said, "Why not stop by Wal-Mart and apply?" I filled out the job application on a computer and was called in for an interview.

Now I'm working at Wal-Mart as an unloader making \$6.70 an hour. I've been there six weeks. An unloader takes the boxes

of merchandise off a conveyor belt. The belt moves loose boxes from inside of a truck onto the dock. I put the boxes on pallets, and they're taken out to the floor. The overnight stockers put the merchandise on the shelves. It's a good job for, you know, pretty much working out. I work from four o'clock p.m. to one o'clock a.m. These are ideal hours since I'm a night owl. I love nighttime—no people to deal with, no cars on the road, and the cops are cool as hell. I'm having a blast doing what I do.

Getting a GED

My parents felt it would be better for me to get my GED than to go to the Marana career school. They said that if I was going to work full-time, then I had to study for the GED.

I found out about the GED program at the probation department through a friend's

mother who goes there. It was better than sitting at home doing nothing. The GED is going to be important me. It may stand for the Good Enough Degree or general education degree, but it will show colleges that I at least tried to get some education that would benefit me. I want to go to college and study to be an auto mechanic. I want to work on my own cars, build them from the ground up, and race them a quarter of a mile at a time.

Turning Point

My girlfriend has been an influence on my life. We were at school together and were really good friends before we started dating. She worked hard as a student and got A's and B's. I love her personality, it's very funny. We've been dating for fourteen months. When I switched schools, she was still supporting and helping me. She wants to be a photographer at *Time* or at another huge magazine. Even if we become separated for school, we'll still be together. I can race cars just about anywhere.