

I love *The West Wing*. Aaron Sorkin's pure brilliance and exquisite writing skills are revealed in a seven-season-long masterpiece about United States politics. I probably watch the entire series at least three or four times each year.

Why am I bringing that up today? Because fictional President Jed Bartlett's famed line in that show is "What's Next?" When he says "What's Next," it means he's ready to move onto other things. It keeps his momentum moving forward.

Sidenote: the phrase is so famous among West Wing fans that Lin-Manuel Miranda – a West Wing fan himself and also a civically minded inventor of another acclaimed piece of history – even wrote a rap centered around the phrase.

I strive to take a similar view to Bartlett: those who know me well understand that I hate looking back; I always have. It never made any sense to me to focus on the past. Instead, in that Bartlett- and Sorkin-esque spirit, I created a habit of always focusing on the future: to focusing on *what's next*.

Once a year, however, I swerve off that course and break the habit, if only for a minute. I take some time to recap the year we are all about to leave. Spotify wraps your year in music, TIME Magazine gives you a Person of the Year, and Google tells you about what people searched in the last 12 months. I give you this blog post.

I call it the "Year in Review." It's my grotesque yet whimsical attempt to extract some small lesson or theme from the past year. I look through the year's big moments and indirectly answer some questions: how do I want to remember this year? What were this year's best moments?

The 2022 Year in Review starts with a confession. Here it goes: this wasn't a good year for me. On the whole, this year brought far more disappointment and depression than it did excitement. A series of very serious mistakes made in 2021 and 2022 led to a string of painful, dreadful months this year.

I don't make any claim to righteousness; all of that is my fault. I got older, but I forgot to get wiser. I lost my focus, and my moral center escaped me.

Sidenote: I usually start writing this post in late November, and in preparation, I go back through my social media. So here's something I learned this year: if one were to limit their view of my life to my social media accounts or my phone's photo album, they would've had no idea that I wasn't at the peak of happiness. My point? I don't know. *I guess it's just that things aren't always what they seem.*

Regardless, that dim confession manifests my theme for this year.

No matter what's thrown at you, perseverance is the key to accomplishment.

There were so many times this year that I thought about stopping. I thought about stopping my participation in clubs, and I often thought about halting my attendance in classes. I considered resigning from the life of an academically interested student in favor a more lazy, laid-back person.

But none of that would've brought happiness or satisfaction. Rather, satisfaction is gained through accomplishment, excitement, and success. And none of that is possible without perseverance – the ability to keep pushing, to keep going to class, to write that essay, and to keep going to that meeting.

So, instead of focusing on what may have happened yesterday or two weeks ago or a few months ago, I choose to focus on *What's Next*.

But of course, as I said, there is a time to look back. This is that. Part of perseverance is forcing myself to focus not on the bad of the year but on the good. This year wasn't all bad; there were some truly outstanding moments: memories that will last a lifetime. **This is the 2022 I wish to remember.**

I hope you enjoy my Year in Review. Happy New Year and Chag Urim Sameach.

February 26: Back in Washington

As I do each semester, I went back to Washington DC – my hometown – for a politics conference hosted by the American Enterprise Institute. The conference brings together university students of all political orientations to discuss and debate issues.

Outside of the conference, I walked 19 miles in the city around the monuments and government office buildings.

May 18: Lake Monroe (Again?)

About 30 minutes south of Bloomington is Lake Monroe – Indiana's largest lake. I visit different parts of the lake often during the semester at Indiana University.

May 18th marked my 50th recorded visit since I started at Indiana University as a student. That visit was with my friend Nidhi Krishnan, who promptly jumped into the lake when we arrived. Yes, that's against the rules. No, she didn't care when I pointed that out to her.



Me, with my friends Joseph Howard (left) and Arunabh Sinha (right)



Me, with Kaelie Paugh (left) and Anusha Sinha (right) at breakfast

May 20: An Unofficial Alumni Reunion

One of the more memorable elements of Park Tudor School's commencement weekend is the Senior Serenade – where the entire school community sees the outgoing class walk from one side of campus to the other, a symbol of their walk "out" of the school as a student. Though it's been two years since I graduated from Park Tudor, it's common for alumni to head back to campus for the event.

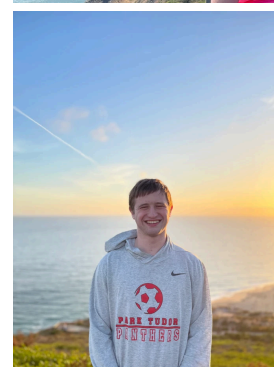
My friends Kaelie Paugh and Anusha Sinha joined me to go back for the school's awards ceremony and the senior serenade.

May 24: The Golden State!

During the week of May 24th, I flew to San Francisco and then Los Angeles with family friends Zach Phelps, Sheldon Phelps, and Suzanne Phelps.

We visited a variety of landmarks. In San Francisco, we visited the Golden Gate Bridge, Muir Woods, and the headquarters of some of the technology companies in the area. We also did a segway tour throughout San Francisco.

In Los Angeles, we completed multiple escape rooms, visited Warner Brothers Studios, and more! During our visit to one of the major studios, we saw the front of the house that is used as Devi Vishwakumar's house in *Never Have I Ever*, one of my favorite TV shows. Oh! And I sat in front of the *Friends* fountain.

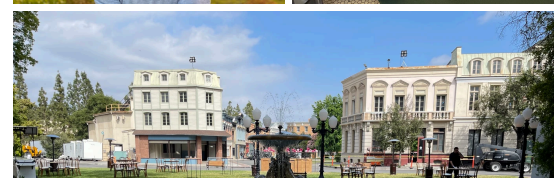


June 7: Started Internship with the Niskanen Center

In June, I started my internship with the Niskanen Center, one of our country's leading think tanks in Washington DC. They focus on mostly domestic issues such as climate, energy, and immigration.

Working with the Niskanen Center was such an outstanding experience. Think tanks play a crucial role in our country's government, and I am so honored Niskanen offered me the chance to work with them in the summer and the fall. I want to offer a special shoutout of appreciation to Kristie Eshelman Dombroski who offered me this position.

I ended my internship with Niskanen on December 9, 2022.



June 21: Nashville with VWB

One of the benefits of working remotely was that I could travel over the course of the summer. One of those highlights was going to Nashville, Tennessee, with my mom.

My mom and I used to go on trips all the time together, but the pandemic put a pause on those trips. It was great to travel together once again.



Me, with my mom on a boat in Camden, Maine

June 26: Acadia and Megunticook

In late June, my entire family joined some family friends to make our way to Maine. We spent the majority of our time at Lake Megunticook, a large lake near Camden, Maine. We spent two weeks tubing, waterskiing, and swimming.



My brother MJ and I participated in our time-honored tradition to see who could kick the other person off the tube first. I am proud to say that I won, though if you were to ask him, I'm sure he'd tell you that he won. *We'll just call it a tie.*

While in Maine, we took a day trip to Acadia National Park. Acadia is one of my favorite places in the world. I first visited with my dad back in 2017. We drove up to the top of Cadillac Mountain and hiked up the Beehive – a famous trail featuring a steep cliff face.

July 8: New York, New York!

Just after the Fourth of July, my family got on the Amtrak from Boston to New York City. It's in our family's tradition to patronize Broadway shows. We attend touring productions as a family in Indianapolis, and we continued to do so even after I left for Indiana University.

How did the idea of a New York trip originate? Great question! It's not uncommon for someone in our family to intently listen to the soundtrack of a new Broadway show. When I was at IU early this year, I started listening to the soundtrack of *Beetlejuice*, a musical based on the 1988 film. I became *obsessed* with this show. When I came back to Indianapolis and shared my love for the show with my family, it turned out my brother had also become obsessed – without either of us knowing the other had even heard of it.

So when we were in the northeast, we decided to go to New York in part to see *Beetlejuice*! We got to see Alex Brightman, who originated the role, live on Broadway! It was such a thrill.

We saw a total of four shows while in New York. On the first night, we saw *Phantom of the Opera*; on day two, we saw *Moulin Rouge!* in addition to *Beetlejuice*. Finally, before departing on Sunday, my mom and I saw *Mr. Saturday Night*, sitting in the second row as Billy Crystal looked right at us!



Me, with my mom in front of the Nederlander Theatre – home to "Mr. Saturday Night"

Before we left on Sunday, my mom and I visited Kossar's Bagels and Bialy's – a famous bagel shop in the city. *Hear me out: best bagels ever.*

August 22: First Day of Fifteenth Grade





Me, walking onto the campus of Indiana University for my first day of Fifteenth Grade

I started my first day of my third year at Indiana University on August 22, 2022. Do you want to read more about what my first semester looked like? You can read my story [here](#).

The Fall semester featured 18 credits, with classes in religious studies, public relations, and more!

September 23: Politics and Alec Benjamin: All in One

Weekend

Unsurprisingly, I attended another politics conference in Washington DC with the American Enterprise Institute. The most interesting panel was a conversation surrounding technology policy with Klon Kitchen. I attended the conference with three of my friends from Indiana University: Arunabh Sinha, Agrayan Gupta, and Garrett Wright.

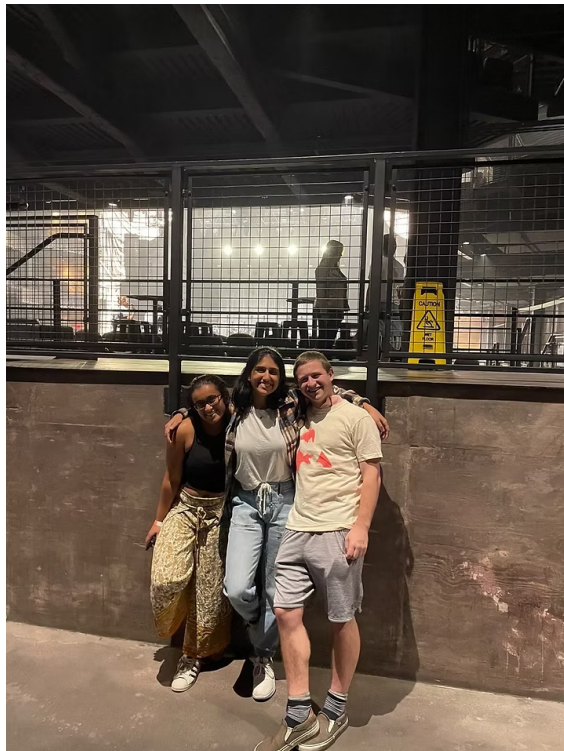


Me, with Agrayan Gupta (left) and Arunabh Sinha (right)

Just an hour after that conversation, my friends Nidhi Krishnan, Selia Jindal, and I went to The Anthem – a concert venue on DC's famous Wharf – to see Alec Benjamin in concert. Alec Benjamin is one of my favorite singers, and it was so cool to sing to his music in person (his voice, by the way, is just as beautiful in person as it is on my iPhone).

September 24: Lewis Black

My parents and I went to see one of our favorite comedians, Lewis Black, when he came to Carmel. We had a great time. He really does remain one of the greatest in comedy.



Me, with Nidhi Krishnan (left) and Selia Jindal (middle) at Alec Benjamin's concert in Washington DC

If you want to indulge in some of his best routines, I recommend starting with "Lewis Black: Taxed Beyond Belief," which you can find [here](#).

Trust me: you can learn a surprising deal about federal taxes by watching that segment.

October 20–21: In a Lavender Haze Over Taylor Swift's New Album

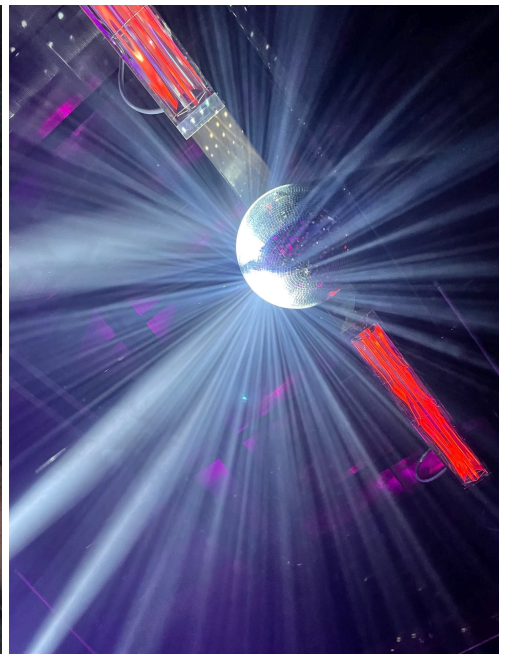
As you probably know, my favorite artist is Taylor Swift. My favorite person is also Taylor Swift. My favorite singer is also Taylor Swift. (I think you get the idea – I'm a big fan).

On October 21, 2022, Taylor Swift brought joy to the hearts of fans everywhere, releasing her tenth studio album, *Midnights*.

The album is about the various sleepless nights in Swift's life, which is ironic considering how little sleep I got during the nights leading up to the album's release.

Sidenote: Even better, I didn't sleep at all the night of the album's release. And that's a good thing, because I had listened to it three times before Taylor Swift surprised her fans by releasing another seven songs; she called it the *3am Edition*. The songs were amazing. The lack of sleep? Not as amazing. (For those wondering, I took a five-hour nap after listening to the album for about eight straight hours).

In the hours leading up to the release, I spent time with my friends Megan Bankowski, Annetta Itnyre, and Ella Woehlke at a "Taylor Swift night" in Bloomington. They played many of her songs from older albums; it was awesome. Plus, we got some great photos.



October 25: Class canceled? Answer: Bagels.

One of my favorite courses from this year was Quantitative Political Statistics. I'm in a group of four people who work on problem sets and study for examinations together. We've become good friends over the course of the semester.

For whatever reason, our class on October 25th was canceled. But we were already awake for our 9:45 AM class, so we all decided to go get bagels together at Gables Bagels – Bloomington's best Jewish-owned, New York-style bagel establishment. We all got a picture together, with the restaurant's owner, Ed Schwartzman, joining in!

November 4: Getting my Head (Back) in the Game

I played fútbol from a very young age. I played all the way through 12th grade and loved (nearly) every minute.

At the same time, Indiana University is known for its fútbol – or soccer, maybe. Our men's team has reached the NCAA College Cup 22 times. I am nowhere close to being good enough to play for our team, but I do love being a fan.

This year, in the first game of the Big Ten Tournament, Indiana University took on Penn State University on our home field. With just minutes left in the second half, a Penn State player kicked the ball out of bounds. I looked up and saw the ball coming toward me. I just had to do it.

If you watch this video, I'm the fan who sent the ball back onto the field (putting it onto the field when a ball was already sent into play was, I swear, unintentional; I'm sorry, IU Athletics).



Me, with Grace Semler, Salomé Cloteaux, Matt Levy, Ed Schwartzman, and Maggie McGuire (left to right)

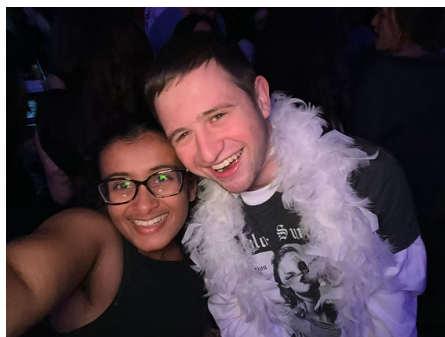


about attaining professional experience while in high school to more than 150 students. I even presented an entirely new session about the keys to success in collegiate journalism.

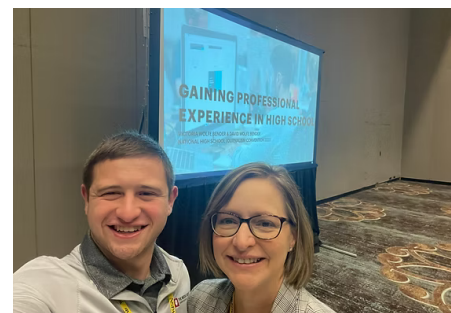
November 11: Wait, Another Taylor Swift Thing?

Yes, another Taylor Swift thing. On November 11th – while in St. Louis – I went to another Taylor Swift sing-a-long night.

We danced to songs all night long. It is my hope that – after reading this – you will see that there is no limit at all to how much Taylor Swift I will listen to.



Me, with Nidhi Krishnan at Taylor Swift night



Me, with my mom before our session started in St.

Louis

November 18: Back Home Again (at the Speedway)

I was so proud this year to serve as the Tournament Director for the 2022 Speedway Signature Event in Indianapolis, Indiana. The event, held for the third time this past November, is a competitive robotics competition for middle and high school students. Competitive robotics was a major part of my life in middle and high school, and it was great to come back to support Indiana robotics.

The event drew teams from all over the United States and Canada. We sent four teams to the 2023 VEX Robotics World Championships in Dallas, Texas.

I want to offer my deepest appreciation to Sheldon Phelps and Suzanne Phelps for once again allowing me to be a part of their extraordinary event. Additionally, the members of our Steering and Host Committee worked so hard to make it the best event ever. Those people are Sheldon Phelps, Suzanne Phelps, Julie Robbins, Doug Ozolins, Nick Kerkhoff, Keith Starost, Matt Walter, Gary Bender, and Vicky Wolfe Bender.

The photos were awesome. Take a look of the photo of me during the opening ceremonies!





Other Ways to Recap My Year:

Want to recap my year in other, more fun ways? What about books and music? Click on each category for a way to recap my 2022.

▼ Recapping my Year in Music

I spent too much time listening to Taylor Swift (as if that could be possible). Oh, you want to know how much? I listened to 241 hours of Taylor Swift music (a significant portion of that is made up of her new album, *Midnights*). That's even more than previous years; it beat out the 184 hours I spent listening to Swift music last year.

This year, I even wrote a blog post about Taylor Swift. Okay, sorta. What is it *really*? It's an economic analysis of how the United States should deal with the private plane use of celebrities like Taylor Swift. Read it [here](#).

Other music statistics from this year: I spent 32 hours listening to Alec Benjamin and 19 hours to AJR. Various Broadway musicals also earned 43 hours of time: much of that included *Tick, Tick... Boom!*, *Come From Away*, *Beetlejuice*, and *Phantom of the Opera*.

> Recapping my Year in Books

> Recapping my Year in University

> Recapping my Year in Travel

> Recapping my Year in Television

> Recapping my Year in Tweets

So, What's Next?

- I'm about ready to have the busiest winter break of my life!

I'm headed to Israel and the United Arab Emirates at the beginning of January! I'm honored to be one of 40 students selected to join this year's cohort of Geller International Fellows. Read more in my announcement [here](#).

In a few days, I'm off to California to visit my friend Zach Phelps, who is a student at Stanford University. We'll be going skiing at a ski park near Lake Tahoe.

When we get back, I'm headed to Knoxville, Tennessee, and my hometown of Washington DC to see family. I'll leave for Israel and the UAE directly from our nation's capital.

- In some of my past blog posts and on social media, I say that I'm on the hunt for summer internships. This year, I'm excited to say that I *was* on the summer internship hunt; I'm not anymore! And that's because **I've already accepted a Summer 2023 internship offer**. I'll make the official announcement soon about where I'll be working and where I'll be during the summer; I'm *thrilled* about the opportunity, so stay tuned for that.
- I am registered for 15 credit hours for this upcoming Spring 2023 semester. This will be the first time since starting university that I haven't taken 18 credits, but I'm nevertheless excited for what's to come. I'll be taking two graduate seminars, one in political statistics and another in public affairs journalism. I'm also excited to take courses in public relations management, labor economics, and urban problems/solutions.
- More to come. *Stay tuned*.