

# **Sophia Allen**

Notre Dame de Sion Highschool

‘Le Flambeau’

*Photojournalist of the Year*



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This year man...let me tell you. When it was first announced back in May of 2020 amidst the nationwide lockdown that I was the sole Editor in Chief of our yearbook, Le Flambeau, I was stressed. Which if you know me is not a surprise. During my time as a junior on staff I loved going to events and taking photos but I felt like my photos were never what I or my editors at the time were looking for. Granted I was going through a lot mentally at the time, but it seemed like the seniors had the skills and photos they needed so I laid low and took some mediocre shots. I loved getting to go to NSPA conventions [pre-COVID] because I always got inspired by all the other photos I saw, plus I learned a lot about how vital composition is and I can still remember a tennis photo with an orange gatorade jug in the background that the judges kept bringing up. "Always remember the rule of thirds" is engraved in my mind.

I've always loved photography and I've found attending events to be therapeutic, but this year something happened that sparked the determination to be the best photographer the halls of my small catholic school had ever seen. We truly missed so much last school year, even if on paper it was only three months, so I knew this year my yearbook book and my camera would not miss a single thing. When I had theme meetings with my school's newly retired advisor Alison Long she told me, "If you are so worried about getting the pictures, bring a camera every day to school and get creative." That's exactly what I did. It's funny actually because freshman year I wanted to be known as THE yearbook editor as a senior. I became the editor, but really by graduation I was known as the girl with the camera. In every class I had one or many of my peers ask me, 'What do you have to take pictures of today?' or 'There's the school's unpaid official photographer.' While I sometimes detested lugging my 35 mm lens and body around (it actually takes up more space than you would think) or clearing my schedule to go to a photoshoot, in the end I felt rewarded. I captured moments when students often think, 'I wish I had a photo of that moment.' I froze that connection for them and they'll get to see it forever in the yearbook.

I've always been a creative person and art has always been something I loved. Whether it was creating or looking at it, I am always drawn to the subject. My grandpa, or PawPaw, was and still is a big influence in developing my art skills. When we were little my sister and I were looked after by him and I can still remember the first time he taught me how to draw a face. From that it was history. Art is full of expression and a good artist lets their emotion flow so their audience can follow, which is what I try to do in all my pieces, but also what makes me love my own photography. This year, with masks and all, sometimes I felt myself wanting to scream at some of the students or people I would be taking photos of to look 'less dead inside.' Harsh I know, but I did not realize how much the lower half of our faces affect so much of our expressed emotions. A solid expression where the subject isn't wearing a mask is always good to see, because it always makes you feel something. But when a photo relies solely on the expression of someone's eyes - the key to looking into someone's soul - it can be breath-taking. While some may say taking photos sucked this year I would have to disagree, solely because everyone has beautiful eyes. They are so minimal in a photo where you can see someone's smile or dimples or raised eyebrows, but when you take those away it's like you can see genuine feeling. If I could go back and tell my past self who was worried about getting photos that would be skimmed over or not having any great photos to show at all, I would tell her she was wrong - mostly because I could've gotten more sleep at night.

I'm writing this during the summer trying to wrap up the 2021 book and I keep reflecting on all my time spent this year. Sure there were mistakes and not every photo was wow-worthy, but I'm proud of myself. I got to go see every sport in action and witness my friends score and succeed in a year when spectators weren't allowed at games. I edited spreads during a freshmen journalism class and they all excitedly asked me if they were in the book or if I captured any cool shots of them. I looked around the room and could confidently tell these 20 students that they were somewhere pictured in the book. I know that's a staff effort, but really it made me proud and I felt my ultimate goal had been achieved with photography for my publication.



**Caption:**

**ORANGE YOU GLAD?**

As junior **Carmen Phillips** rips open the bag of color powder senior **Mickayla Gunther** spins as an attempt to cover her whole body in it May 6. Seniors got to have their tailgate, polo signing, and college sports signing ceremonies all on their last day before joining the rest of the student body for the color throw. “Our last day actually felt really normal which is what made it so special,” Gunther said.

**Description:**

The color throw is an event the whole student body and faculty look forward to each year, however usually it happens to end spirit week with a bang, at the beginning of the year. This year due to COVID-19, however, it was one of those events that were given the phrase: *‘it will happen in the spring’*. As a senior this year, it was a little disappointing we didn’t get to have a normal start to the school year and we had to feel like our whole lives were being pushed around. So when the school decided to give us a day where we could have our usual senior activities on our last day of school it gave us hope for the future which is what I think Mickayla’s face here touches on. The bright colors surrounding her bring that glow of new life which is a nice touch to the moment being captured as well.



**Caption:**

**CHOPPED**

As she's shown what her new do, freshman **Grace Keiwiet** lets gasps at her picture after donating four pigtails of hair April 27. Kewitt was one of 15 students that donated to seniors **Bella Aquino**, **Maggie Caffee**, and **Olivia Pope's** senior service project for Pony-Up and was the first person in the whole school to get the chop. "I wasn't planning on doing it until that day because I just thought of it as something I joked about," Keiwiet said. "During the cut I was really anxious because I could hear the scissors sawing off my hair and I'm still getting used to the length of my hair now, but I know I helped someone at least have an affordable wig."

**Description:**

When taking publication photos it's always fun to witness a pivotal moment in someone's life. I don't know Grace very well, but watching her get her hair cut off 8 inches was very entertaining. When I was writing my statement and I got to the part where I was writing about eyes and etc, a couple photos popped into my mind: but specifically this one is the one that stuck out. I mean just look at them. She just gives off an excited and 'oh my god what did I just do?' expression at the same time even without her whole face being shown. I think this face captured here also just sums up the whole experience of Pony-Up, as well giving the reader a vibe of her confidence, even if they didn't read the caption to know she was the first person to do the drive.

## Images & Descriptions



### **Caption:**

#### **MESSED WITH TEXAS**

As the sun sets on the Fort Worth city skyline senior **Bella Aquino** hoists the national championship trophy above her head March 7. The cheer team placed first in their national competition, the only competition they got to compete in due to the cancellation of the Regionals to qualify for State. “It made me feel like I was on top of the world,” Aquino said. “All of Coach Tabby’s and the senior’s hard work these past years finally paid off.”

### **Description:**

This photo has more of a personal connection to me as I was a part of the national winning team, but also because Bella is one of my best friends. I love how you can see how fierce Bella’s personality is in this photo, but it just makes a statement for the whole team even if it’s just one person in the photo. In the book, this photo is featured on the title page, which I think is the perfect opening for a book that was made during a global pandemic. This picture states what I want everyone who picks up the book when they get it to think, which is: no matter what we will rise and we will make it out on top.

## Images & Descriptions

### **Caption:**

#### **WATCH AND LEARN**

As the sweet aroma of a campfire fills the room sophomore **Claire Coates** prepares to take the thermometer out of the Sprite can March 2. Women's health class students used a bunsen burner to light marshmallows, cheese puffs, and a soda can to measure how many calories they contain based on how hot the can got. "My favorite thing about women's health is that it covers a lot of topics that actually interest and apply to me," Coates said. "But I really wanted to eat the marshmallow."

### **Description:**

I love how this photo turned out because it was definitely one while I was taking it that I was like 'Please don't let the mask screw this up,' and it didn't. This photoshoot was also one of those where I was scrambling at the last minute to go, because someone had just found out about the experiment, but we live and die by the photos we take and hey, the composition is really nice here. I'm also proud of it because it was placed in the Walsworth National Photo Contest with an honorable mention. That was a pretty big deal to me and makes this photo represent a lot of my hard work and determination, even if Claire sets the tone of the photo that way on her own.





**Caption:**

**READY FOR BATTLE**

After a pep-talk from Lacrosse coach **Molly Munninghoff** the team starts their gamely chant to begin the match at St. Teresa's Academy and senior **Zoe Zorn** chimes in April 20. The Storm fought a tied match for the majority of the time, but fell to the Stars 10-13. "We can always rely on each other to keep us pumped up," Zorn said. "I always try to be encouraging after a turnover or something happens because I know we can get the ball back."

**Description:**

I have never been to a lacrosse game till this year, which I guess is one of the cool things about doing student journalism is you never know what you're getting yourself into. These girls are intense when they do their chant, but they make you want to chant with them, pick up a lacrosse stick, and storm the field with them. What's interesting is Zoe is a very reserved and quiet person at school, and when I realized these girls do a team chant before games I was trying to process where to stand but also who to capture in the moment and she just stuck out. Her whole facial expression here just makes you happy, but it captures the drive and spirit the team has. Why I love this photo so much is it showcases a student whom you don't see in the front row of every game or anything like that, but it showcases the student's inner personality and you can tell it's a candid photo. I think solo person shots were in abundance this year, which with COVID-19 and social distancing makes sense, but I like how with photos like this you see the individual for themselves and not a group of people.