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Midterm Essay

June 23, 2016

I've wanted to be a programmer since I was about 11 years old. I always messed around with computers as a kid and knew that it was something that I was pretty good at and would love to do for a living.

Fast forward a few years and after a series of bad personal and education choices, I decided to join the military. I took the coolest sounding job that had a signing bonus and spent the next decade working on that career and supporting my family.

Like many people, as I got older, I lost focus of what I really wanted to do in life and made sacrifices to ensure that my family was taken care of. There's nothing wrong with that, but I was never completely happy with the path that I had chosen.

After separating from the Air Force and being slapped in the face with the harsh reality of being almost 30 with no education and no transferrable skills, I decided to go back to college and study software and database development. I eventually found a job that paid well, but still wasn't doing anything that resembled what I really wanted to do. It was ok, though, because I was finally back on track. I WOULD be a programmer. It was just a matter of time.

I worked hard at school and made sure that all of my professors knew who I was and that I was seriously looking for someone--anyone-- in the industry to give me a chance. A few weeks into the spring semester, I got an email from my professor about a possible internship position as a PHP programmer and web developer. I jumped on it.

I ended up quitting my secure, well-paying job for a chance, just a chance, to be able to do something I love.

It's a scary time right now. I have that free-falling feeling you get right after taking a leap of faith. Money is going to be tight for a while and there's no guarantee that this will turn into a full-time job. But I went to work at my new job on April 14th and sat in on my first conference call. The introductions were given and the CEO of the company introduced me as "Daron, our new programmer". I smiled like an idiot. I don't think anyone in that room knew how much those 4 words meant to me. In those four words were 20 years worth of struggle, heartache, and sacrifices. Twenty years of frustrations and failures. Twenty years of doubt and self-loathing. 20 years of wrong turns, false starts, and backtracking.

But those 4 words were also a victory 20 years in the making.

I don't know what's going to happen from here, but I know this: I feel like I'm 11 years old again -- and I can't wait for the next 20 years.