Introductory Speech

# Personal Introduction

Hi my name is Johan Bester. When I was 5, I saw my first computer. I remember my dad taking my hand and leading me into this massive machine that WAS the computer. Ever since I’ve been fascinated by tech and computers.

In 1982, while in high school, I caused a minor stir when I attended the local university to start learning computer programing along with the post-grad students.

After school I worked for the South African government in their main data processing center, till I joined an NGO and left to work in West Africa as a regional coordinator.

Even in the desert of West Africa my love for tech and technology helped immensely as we started using satellite-phones and computers to better facilitate our work. I became a sort-of “tech consultant” and we managed to do fantastical things on a shoe-string budget, to make our work easier and better. It is during this time that I build my first website in HTML, I published a lot of our work on this website to help co-ordinate the project. After 7 years my involvement ended, and I left the field.

I came to the USA in 2003, completed a GED in 2011, and graduated with an Associate’s degree in CMIS in 2014.

Right out of college I got a job at small company where I worked as a generalist IT support contractor, and web developer. In December 2019 I lost my job, and quickly realized that I need to learn more JavaScript and other basic industry skills if I am to find a new job.

While self-studying to improve myself and learn all I could learn on my own, I met the folks from Savvy Coders in an online meetup. Subsequently I attended the Savvy Coders web developers bootcamp, from which I just recently graduated.

I’ve been working as a web developer because I love it! I want to continue enjoying what I do for the rest of my career. I would love to move back into a team coding environment where I can grow, be creative, and help others develop in their coding life. My ambition in life has always been to help people, and to help make things better in any way possible. I would love to become a capable full-stack software engineer so that I can help build a better, brighter, and more sustainable tech future for all.

Describe a project that you completed. What was the most challenging part of the project? How did you manage that challenge? \*

During the bootcamp I completed we were tasked with developing a Single Page Application(SPA) in vanilla JavaScript.

Apart from working to be a better web developer, I’m also a Martial Arts enthusiast. My sport of choice is the Filipino Martial Arts (FMA), particularly stick fighting. Finding FMA schools and events is still hard, and we love to work out together. So, I’ve developed the “STIX FMA Fun Finder” to help FMA practitioners do just that -- find each other.

In my previous job I had learnt to develop more traditional ASP.net websites in Visual studio, using VB to do the code-behind.

One of the challenges I had in developing my SPA was making a methodology shift from a more traditional web development paradigm, to developing a web application as a single page application using vanilla JavaScript.

I’ve been building websites for several years, and understand the development life cycle, from conception to deployment, for normal multi-page websites. Working purely in vanilla JavaScript, serving different page views to the same page, took some getting used to.

Now that I have gone through the process of converting my original multi-page application into a Single Page Application I have a greater appreciation for functional programming, and JavaScript frameworks.

The greatest challenges in developing this application was finding data with which to populate the app. I could not find any public data bases or APIs that served up info on FMA venues or events in North America. In desperation I resorted to scraping the web for data, downloading any text from websites pertaining to FMA. Then I spent 2- 3 weeks, using all sorts of web tools, cleaning and parsing that data into a usable JSON format. Among other, to "clean" and format the data I scrapped, I had to tools like VS Code to transform the data into pure ASCII text, so that it could then be complied into JSON datasets.

It was an interesting experience, but I'm sure that somewhere out there in cyber space, there has to be a better way to do something like this. I want to find out how, or eventually build a better way to do this.