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EDUCATIONAL NARRATIVE

I had always planned to go to university. I knew from a fairly early age that I wanted to pursue a career in a scientific field, and considered varying hard sciences like math (which I loved), chemistry, and physics among others. My grades did not reflect my abilities, and after scoring as genius level on a school IQ test, I was put into an advanced learning program for the remainder of grade school. Despite this, I had a steady stream of C's and B's. I could attribute this to many things, but after evaluating it over time, I think that it primarily stemmed from two things: boredom, and a lack of organizational skills. I didn't realize until I was in my late 20's that I had a moderate attention deficit disorder that went undiagnosed (My two younger brothers would later be diagnosed with severe ADHD), and that hampered my abilities to succeed in school. Regardless, I doubt I would have been successful in a standard, structured school environment at the time, as I was quite ambivalent about most of the material being taught. When it came to any topic that I was interested in, I took a self-learning approach and would spend hours or days devouring any books, articles, or other media I could get, to the point where I would be far beyond my grade level when it came to that topic. This pattern continued until high school, where I flunked out of my first high school, then spent a semester at an alternative method high school (where I earned the highest grade the school had ever given out in math) and finally graduated from General Amherst High School in January of 1994.

In Ontario, until 2004, students wanting to pursue a 4 year baccalaureate degree were expected to graduate with 30 credits, including 6 Ontario Academic

Credits(OAC's) , which are generally taken during a fifth year of high school. This was previously just referred to as Grade 13 until 1984. When I graduated, I had only 2 OAC credits, thus deterring my plans for a 4 year post-secondary education. While looking at my options, I considered several 2 and 3 year Art & Technical colleges (equivalent to a junior college or community college in the US) and applied to several. I was accepted to Mohawk College of Applied Arts & Technology in Hamilton, Ontario, about 3 hours from where I was living with my parents. In the fall of 1994, I moved into a small apartment 2 blocks from campus, and began my college education.

The transition from living at home to living on my own and being entirely responsible for myself made for a tough transition for me. I had never had good study habits, and had instead mostly 'skated by' in high school. I was entirely unprepared for success in college, and it showed. I spent a lot of time watching TV, skipping class and playing varying Role Playing Games. I still managed to show up for classes and exams, but I wasn't engaged in my education. When my second semester rolled around, I wasn't even able to keep up the facade of being interested in my classes. This resulted in academic probation, and eventually I was dropped from the program when I failed 4 of 6 courses.

I moved back home and worked part time for the next few months, trying to get a job in the field where I was most interested (computers), but was unsuccessful. The area where I was living (southern Ontario, near Windsor) was a primarily industrial area, and any technology jobs were fought for by multiple, often overqualified applicants. Despite my self-taught computer abilities, I always lost out to older applicants with a degree. By the fall of 1995, I was determined to reapply and finish my degree. I was re-accepted into my degree program at Mohawk and moved back in January of 1996. I successfully completed the

following 2 semesters, and had a co-op placement at the Royal Bank of Canada in Toronto as a paid intern in their internet banking division. This was the first time where my ability to self-learn came into play in a job. I was thrown into several technical tasks which I had no background in, and was forced to learn very quickly to succeed there.

in 1997 I returned to Mohawk for the last semester of my 2nd year, and fell back into old habits, and became uninterested in school. I flunked all my courses and left school. I spent 1998 applying for the very few technical jobs I could find, and being rejected, while working part time as a music teacher (guitar, beginning piano and introduction to music theory), and also as a security guard, and being generally unhappy. In late 1998, I was speaking to a friend of mine who lived in California, and was generally complaining about my life and how there was a lack of jobs that I was interested in, when she made a statement that would ultimately change my life: "Why don't you move here, to California? There are 5 jobs for every person, and most companies can't hire fast enough." Of course, the first thing that I thought was "That's stupid. I'm not going to pack my meager belongings into my car and drive 2600 miles to a strange place and try to find a job." The more I considered my other options, the more appealing it seemed. In January of 1999 I packed a few things and a box of food into my car and drove to California.

I spent 3 months living in my car before finding an apartment with two other people from church. I spent 5 months doing odd jobs wherever I could find them and working as a temp at a local day program for disabled adults to pay the bills, and attended job fairs, hiring fairs and going on interviews. Finally in June of 1999, an acquaintance from church hired me as a junior engineer at his company Petrasoft Research, which was soon acquired by a larger startup company

Lightsocket, Inc. While employed there, I attended an Introduction To Java Swing course at Evergreen Community College to introduce me to Java and its GUI tools. I also attended several JavaOne conferences and was able to learn about many technical tools and techniques, including instrumentation and industry best practices. I still was more of a 'hacker' in my knowledge - using the quickest way to solve problems, instead of thinking through them.

In August of 2000, I married my wife Kelly, and upon returning from our honeymoon, found that Lightsocket, Inc had run out of money and was laying off half its employees. I was lucky to remain, but the company ended up going out of business in October of 2000. I was now stuck with a new, expensive apartment lease and looking for a job. I was very fortunate to find a great position at a very small, new company called ePatterns, from the second job that I applied for. This position was another where I was thrown in with insufficient knowledge and was forced to learn myself very quickly just to stay afloat. The company was founded and staffed largely by graduate students (and two professors) from Stanford's computer science division, and nearly every discussion that I was involved in ended up with me reading up on software and computer design concepts and implementations. During my time at ePatterns I learned more about the academic side of computer science and computational theory than in the entire time I attended college. The company didn't succeed, and in fact went under a mere 7 months after I joined due to a lack of venture funding. My wife and I had just found out that she was pregnant, and I was again looking for work.

This time, the hunt for work was different. I had learned and accomplished so much in the previous 7 months that I was now well prepared for a job in the industry. Instead of searching online job ads and the newspaper, I called two people I had previously worked with and asked if there were open positions at their

companies. This resulted in two immediate interviews and two job offers within 10 days. For a variety of reasons I chose the offer from Netscreen Technologies. I worked at Netscreen for 4 years, from May 2001 until May of 2005. While there I attended another JavaOne conference, concentrating on learning about new trends in User Interface programming, and the latest version of the Java programming language. I then was able to transition our entire team to this new version with virtually no interruption or difficulties.

Netscreen was acquired by Juniper Networks in 2004, the month before my son Christian was born. I made the transition after the acquisition, but found that I wasn't enjoying my work as much as I had previously. We went through several mid and senior management changes and I began to consider leaving. In the spring of 2005 I was approached by a company who had found my resume on my website. I kept my resume up to date and available for anyone to view as an ongoing exercise, and it certainly paid off in this case. Packeteer was forming a new group to build a brand new project from the ground up, and was planning on utilizing several new processes that I had recently been reading about, including Agile/Scrum and User Experience(UX) & Interaction Design. I interviewed there, and met with members of the team, and found myself very excited to join their team, which I did in May of 2005.

This position again required me to learn a great deal about the new UX processes that my immediate team were using, and find ways to translate those into the technical processes that the larger technical team were using. Our team was put through a week long course on Interaction Design training by Cooper Interaction Design. Interacting with the server engineers also taught me a great deal, as they were very heavily invested in using computerized tools for automating their development processes. I attended an industry convention in March 2006, The

Server Side Java Symposium, where I focused on learning about using tools to streamline a software development process, as well as communications protocols for Java. In the spring of 2006 our company went through some senior management changes which trickled down to our group and we were told that our project was being cancelled. In another twist of fate, I was approached that same week by a former colleague at Apple, Inc, who had an opening in his group: .Mac.

Apple was, and had always been a place where I wanted to work. They had long been groundbreaking in the industry, and were often considered to be the ‘shining star’ of one’s career. I had previously applied twice, once in 2000 and once in 2001, and had not even managed to get an interview, so needless to say, I was thrilled with the opportunity. The position, however, was one that I was only mildly qualified for, it was entirely server work, whilst I had spent the last 6 years doing primarily graphical interface work. I was familiar with the base technologies, but once again, this job would require a lot of learning. I joined Apple in May of 2006 and have been there ever since, moving from Software Engineer to Senior Software Engineer, and finally to Software Architect, where I was one of the first people to work on iCloud and followed it through it’s entire life cycle. At Apple I’ve had to learn everything from operating systems to databases to project management.

I have regretted not getting my degree for several years, but have not had the time or opportunity to go back to school until I moved to Ohio in October of 2011, and enrolled at WVUP Board Of Governors program, with the intent of continuing on to the Regents Bachelor Of Arts program and getting my degree. I want to finish my degree for two main reasons: first, to finish something that I started and prove to myself that I’m capable of it. Secondly, I have spent a great deal of spare time working on a project that I enjoy that involves using computer science to solve difficult math problems, and I would love to take higher level advanced math classes to help me with that project. I hope to finish my Associate degree in a few years, and my RBA after that. I’m currently enrolled in one CS class (the pre-req

for all the higher level courses) and the Portfolio Development course. So far, I am enjoying my schooling, and am confident that this time, I'll graduate.