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Yesterday, [the autobiographical post I wrote for The Setup](http://tom.preston-werner.usesthis.com/) went live. I wrote that post over a year ago and then entered into an epic battle with [@waferbaby](http://twitter.com/#!/waferbaby) about the length of my "Who are you, and what do you do?" section. He said it was too long. I said it could not be shortened. And so the post sat for a year, collecting dust, neither of us prepared to back down.

About a month ago I decided that it was foolish to let the words I had written rot on my hard drive and so I did the only thing I knew how to do: overreact. So I cut the original nine-hundred words of my bio down to fourteen words and resubmitted it to Daniel. Those are the words you see in the post now.

For your pleasure, here is the original bio in its full, unabridged glory.

My name is Tom Preston-Werner. I find that the hyphenated last name makes me sound distinguished and worth listening to. I grew up three decades ago in a small city in Iowa along the Mississippi, which means I shucked a lot of corn and know exactly how many mosquitos will land on your arm should you hold it still for ten minutes at dusk on the muggiest day of the summer. As an aspiring theoretical particle physicist, I worked my way through entire shelves of scientific literature from the public library, desperately wanting to understand the bewildering mathematics that littered the pages like so many leaves on the bottom of that morning's cup of green tea. I searched in vain for instructors or classmates that could provide me with the insight necessary to comprehend the true meaning of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, but all I found were underpaid math teachers and disillusioned "students" in search of their next smoke break. After obsessing over US News' Best Colleges reports for months I finally chose and was accepted to Harvey Mudd, a tiny engineering school in California famous for assigning the greatest number of hours of homework per night. This sounded just perfect to me. Finally a place I could bring up the EPR Paradox and not be immediately stigmatized as "that science weirdo with the hilariously thick glasses and unfortunate hairdo."

Mudd did not disappoint. But now I had the opposite problem. In order to properly understand particle physics, you must have a deep and profound love of math. You have to be so comfortable with abstract concepts that even Picasso would be jealous. Ironically, in order to grasp the fundamental reality of our universe, you must forget about the "reality" of everyday life and start living in a world comprised of eigenvectors, Hilbert spaces, and Planck's constant. This was a leap I could not make. I like math, but I'm too easily distracted by macroscopic reality to make it my profession.

Once I accepted that I would never spend late nights poring over bubble chamber printouts at Fermilab, it became obvious that I was destined to enter computer science. I started programming in BASIC on a TRS-80 that my dad bought from Radio Shack when I was 8 years old. Since then, I'd learned to love the discipline and creativity involved in making a machine do my bidding. It was like having a super-obedient but annoyingly logical little brother. He'll do anything you want as long as you tell him in precise and unambiguous language. The best thing is, the feedback is immediate. In physics, it can take twenty years to prove that a single esoteric particle even exists. When you're writing a program that displays the number of electrons in each of the shells around the nucleus of every element, the feedback is immediate and intoxicating. With just a few keystrokes, the world is changed forever. Try to get that kind of rush even once in a lifetime as a theoretical particle physicist. I dare you.

In 1999, after two years of college, I dropped out of Harvey Mudd to join a startup with some friends that were graduating. It was the end of the first dot-com bubble and I thought I could strike it rich, right then and there. Sadly, like so many startups of the day, we never accomplished what we envisioned and I ended up bouncing between jobs and consulting gigs for six years until I found myself in San Francisco. If Harvey Mudd was my mecca for physicists, then San Francisco was my mecca for programmers. Where else can you be grabbing lunch at a taqueria and overhear a group at the next table discussing the finer points of optimizing C code to run on an embedded processor?

I moved to San Francisco to take a job as a Ruby developer with a Wikipedia search engine called Powerset. I also began attending Ruby meetups and drinking with local software developers. There are a lot of talented people in the Bay Area and I wanted to meet them all. Within the Ruby community, a distributed version control system called Git was starting to get some attention. It was a really cool way of working with other people on code, but there wasn't an easy way to get up and running with a group of developers. Along with cofounders Chris Wanstrath and PJ Hyett (who I met at the Ruby meetups) I started a company called GitHub that would address this problem and make it dead simple to share Git repositories and collaborate on code with other developers.

At first, we worked on GitHub on the side, putting in time on evenings and weekends. After six months we launched the site to the public and started charging. Not long after that, Powerset was acquired by Microsoft and I was faced with a choice: stay on as a Microsoft employee with a big retention bonus and give up GitHub or turn down the Microsoft money and quit Powerset to work on GitHub full-time. You can read more about this saga in my blog post entitled [How I Turned Down $300,000 from Microsoft to go Full-Time on GitHub](http://tom.preston-werner.com/2008/10/18/how-i-turned-down-300k.html). I think I made the right decision.

Today GitHub has twenty-nine employees and more than 730,000 users with over 2,000,000 repositories. We're growing fast, and I'm having the time of my life!