Moving On

June 16, 2008

In November 2006, I moved to San Francisco because I had to: my company got acquired and us moving out was a condition of the agreement. It was the first time I'd ever actually lived in San Francisco, as opposed to just visiting, and I quickly realized that although it was a fun place to visit, I couldn't stand living here.

Even after all this time, I can't really put my finger on what it is I don't like — in fact, I suspect it's probably harder for me now to explain it than it was when I first came here. The first thing that comes to mind is how *loud* the city is. I want a place where I can live quietly and focus on my work; but San Francisco is filled with distractions. There are always crews tearing up the street, trains that are delayed, buses that have broken down, homeless people begging, friends having parties, and so on. It's impossible to concentrate and without my concentration, I feel less like me.

The other big problem is that San Francisco is fairly shallow. When I go to coffee shops or restaurants I can't avoid people talking about load balancers or databases. The conversations are boring and obsessed with technical trivia, or worse, business antics. I don't see people reading books — even at the library, all the people are in line for the computer terminals or the DVD rack — and people at parties seem uninterested in intellectual conversation.

And so I'm moving back to Cambridge, Massachusetts — Harvard Square in particular, the one place I've ever been to that brings a special delight to my eyes, that warms my heart just to see. Surrounded by Harvard and MIT and Tufts and BC and BU and on and on it's a city of thinking and of books, of quiet contemplation and peaceful concentration. And it has actual weather, with real snow and seasons and everything, not this time-stands-still sun that San Francisco insists upon.

I miss Boston; I'm excited to go back.

But I'm also sad to leave my responsibilities in San Francisco. One of which I'd particularly like your help with. I've been honored and overjoyed to help Lawrence Lessig get his Change Congress project off the ground. If you haven't heard, he's trying to build a national movement to get the corruption out of Congress; to pass public financing of public elections, earmark reform, and other pressing concerns.

But they need a full-time day-to-day tech organizer. Someone who knows how to blog and who the bloggers are and can keep them in touch with the community.

Someone who knows enough about technology to know the tools that can be built and should be. And someone with enough drive and talent to make sure those things get built. It's a dreamy job and I hope there's someone out there who will take it from me. A more formal write-up is on the Change Congress blog.

Thanks for everything.