

I sat in my room thinking, reflecting in on myself. I was asking myself a simple question: “What do I want to do when I grow up?” It is a question just about everyone asks themselves at some point, but I was forced to seriously ponder it when I was in seventh grade. A new high school was opening nearby, and it specialized in computer programming. My programming teacher offered to help me skip a grade in order to get in, as he thought my talents would help the school to get off the ground. If I took the offer, I would end up graduating high school a year early, and I would graduate with an associate’s degree in computer programming. It may have been a fantastic opportunity, but it was an opportunity for a career path I was not sure I really wanted to pursue.

My interest in computer programming began back in fourth grade. I enjoyed the classes, I was very enthusiastic, and I had a lot of fun with them. I took to it very quickly and was considered to be a natural at it. After years of classes, my programming teacher presented my parents and I with the life-changing offer. As much as programming interested me at the time, I had to question if I had any real passion for the craft. It was fun, but I had no vision for it; there was nowhere I wanted to take my skills. I had to wonder, should I walk away from this opportunity after all?

My decision shocked everyone. It came out of nowhere for a lot of people, but not for me. Deciding against computer programming, I told everyone I wanted to pursue a vastly different path in life: creative writing. I have been developing stories inside my head for as long as I can remember, though I did not give them much thought for the longest time. It took me being faced with such a monumental decision to get me to seriously consider them. Though, there was someone else who was not so surprised by my decision: my mom. Once I told everyone of my decision, she showed me something truly special. She presented me with a book titled, *Barn Cats – A Nonfiction Novel*. It was a short book I wrote when I was only in second grade, and I had completely forgotten about it. After seeing this long-lost piece of my history, I truly felt like I had made the right decision.

All of my attention was then turned towards furthering my skills in writing, in order to make up for the lost time. I wrote many short stories and prompts on my own and took many writing classes. I was even accepted into the Iowa Young Writers’ Studio, where I was given the opportunity to write within a group of highly skilled and like-minded individuals. While

computer programming may have been enjoyable to me, I had no deeper interest in it. Now, however, I believe I have found my true passion in creative writing. I learned that sometimes the path most expected of you is not the path that is really for you. It can sometimes take a deeper look at yourself to discover what it actually is you want to do with your life. By going with what I felt was right, I have accomplished much I am proud of already. Through the pursuit of higher education, I hope to one day become a writer when I grow up.