**Hometown:** Wood River, IL

**Future Plans:** Ph.D. in Computer Science

**Personal:**

* I was a carpenter for ~10 years.
* I started going to college (as an undergraduate) at the ripe age of 30.
* Hobbies/interests: building things (e.g., programming), math, machine automation

**Here is a longer background story, in case you were expecting something with a narrative:**

While recovering from a high school sports injury, my father bought an old used computer for me to play with (an old IBM 8088). It was love at first sight, but I did not get very far with it, perhaps because I did not know anyone else who shared my fascination with them.

After graduating from high school, I became a carpenter just like my father before me. I was a carpenter for over ten years, but throughout this period of time my latent interest in computers grew. Eventually, I spent much of my free time dabbling in programming and learning what I could. And as I learned more about the exciting things people were working on, I thought about how interesting and rewarding it would be if I could somehow be a part of their community and work. However, I feared I was too old and, besides, I had shown no academic promise in high school.

I did not have the conviction to overcome these fears on my own. But then, one day, while sitting down for lunch with my father at a construction site, he said to me, “I think you should go to college.” For some reason, that is all it took. I was still very afraid and extremely uncertain about my prospects in college, but at least I was not the only person who thought it might be a good idea to go to college at the ripe age of thirty.

SIUE has been an extremely rewarding and fulfilling experience. I have cultivated interests and passions that will last me many lifetimes, and I will do my best to put the skills I learned here to good use.