I have never had much formal training in programming (except for some Java in high school and one quasi JavaScript class in college) but I would say that I started on the TI-81 where (and as trite as I know this sounds) I would often spend more time trying to program it to do my calculus homework than I would have spent if I actually just did what I was supposed to do.

I would say that I always had an interest in programming so when I started at UC Berkeley and I heard how rigorous and renowned the computer science program at Berkeley was… I immediately backpedaled and went into finance and accounting which, to my mind, had a much nicer effort to pay ratio.

I essentially realized the error of my college decision not long after graduating so I tried to teach myself Rails right before I started work. I had learned enough to create a few simple apps (http://banana.heroku.com/ and <http://glowing-warrior-30.heroku.com/>).

I work for an accounting/consulting firm where there is no immediate need for programming but I started picking up VBA to use in Excel and Access to automate some of the more menial tasks that come with audit and accounting (ex. a spreadsheet to automatically choose and document randomly selected audit samples). From this I spring boarded into doing more complicated (although not exactly critical) applications in VBA for Excel. One of my proudest examples is when I used VBA to make a spreadsheet that could encrypt messages before we sent them over the office IM (we were told that the bank we were working at was spying on our messages). This wasn't a particularly robust encryption algorithm by any means. In fact, it was based on the WWII Enigma machine that I had seen in a Youtube video. Still, it was one of my proudest moments in my Excel “programming” career.

Because of this VBA experience, my company transitioned me into a Hyperion implementation position (which has little correlation to VBA, by the way). If you aren’t familiar, Hyperion is essentially a flimsy front end for a multidimensional database called Essbase. I help people define their dimensions for their financial planning applications. I view it as setting all numbers as objects and assigning the correct attributes to define the object model/class. This job is not actually technical (in a programming sense; it’s more technical in an accounting sense) but I don’t know if making a banana counting website qualified me to tangle with the big boys anyway (in terms of programming).