My CSC 116 Honors Contract Experience – Stanton Parham

First of all, I am very glad that I chose to take on this extra project.  I don't regret any of the extra work or learning that I had to do in order to complete this project.  In actuality, I probably learned way too much from this project (I don't have anything else left to learn!  Yeah right, just kidding!), and I had a lot of fun doing it.  Either way, the amount of programming "know-how" that I acquired from this single project is probably more than I'll ever get from an individual computer science class.  The reason that I was able to learn so much was because I was able to choose what I wanted to make, and I actually did it!  I was able to learn and develop my skills while doing something that interested me.  And that interest drove me to go above-and-beyond with my game in order to learn more about programming than I ever had before.

Some topics that I developed an understanding of were: classes and how they interact, GUIs in general, the JavaFX GUI library, threads, and serializable objects.  Throughout this project I also developed a deep understanding of the Eclipse IDE and how to use it effectively.  (I can easily say that without the many plug-ins and tools of Eclipse I would have succeeded in creating the most atrocious Java program of all time.)  With the awesome power of Eclipse, Google, and Stack Overflow, I was able to understand some of the toughest concepts that I've ever faced in programming.

Aside from technical skills, I also developed a great understanding of what it's like to be a "real world" programmer.  I encountered a LOT of problems as I developed my game, and I had to find the solutions to these problems on my own.  Granted, I didn't need to develop my game according to anyone else's specifications or deadlines, but I gave myself enough goals that it still felt like I was developing for a very, very ambitious client.  I even felt the dreaded "crunch time" towards the end of the project.  But most of all, I was able to experience the fun and joy that comes with being able to work on a project that I was wholly interested and invested in.

Believe it or not, I had a great time completing this project, and I am extremely grateful for all of the knowledge that I gained as a result.  I will, without a doubt, always remember this as one of the most important moments in my computer science career.