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ENGH 302 – Advanced Composition

**Space and Technology**

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From a young age I knew that I wanted to be like my dad. Both of my parents migrated from Portugal two years before I was born with very little education or money. Only through their strong work ethic and determination were they able to provide my younger brother and me a normal life without any hardships outside of school. However, school was a challenge for me in the beginning. Due to my parents’ lack of a formal education and English skills, English courses and understanding what needed to be done in class was a challenge in the beginning of elementary school. Luckily, I managed to get good grades throughout the years and my only challenge once I got into high school was figuring out what I wanted to do after I graduated. It seemed that everyone around me knew what they wanted to do, and I definitely didn’t want to disappoint my parents who worked so hard for me to have a better life. What helped me figure out what I wanted to do was my dad.

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My father, despite his lack of a formal education, was a handyman who seemed to know everything. When we moved into our current home back in 2002, my parents immediately began renovating. From the moment we moved, up until my high school graduation, I was consistently surrounded by construction. My dad would somehow know how to renovate a kitchen and rework the gas pipes, understand how to do plumbing and install toilets, and would also understand how to do electrical work, car work, or any other kind of labor-intensive work. He could do it all, but he didn’t do it alone. My brother and I would help him with painting, carrying things from place to place, holding things up for him to make the job easier, and any other tasks he would give us. We were his little workers, but we had fun because doing things with our hands was what we enjoyed and because we felt like men. I knew that when I grew up, I wanted to be self-reliant like my father but because of his lack of a formal education, he couldn’t get a great job. His main job is working as a construction foreman who works very long hours in harsh environments. That was the only aspect of my father that I didn’t envy and wanted to make sure I would avoid. The field that best suited my interests and my admiration for my father was engineering.

2

Engineering spans multiple fields though and choosing the right one is challenge in of itself. I wanted to find the best field that perfectly matched my interests. The thing that always interested me from a young age and even today is space. My main interest about space is the mystery of its beginning. There are so many facts we know about space and what resides in it. Stars, planets, black holes, and the possibility of life beyond earth, are just a few but there are also facts we don’t know because our level of technology. While our technology continues to advance, it isn’t capable of doing everything just yet. I want to be able to help to advance our technology in order to bridge the gap and understand our universe more. People who heavily influenced me in this regard are Albert Einstein, Elon Musk, and Tony Stark the Marvel comic book character.

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Albert Einstein is a household name where everyone understands that he is arguably the brightest mind in recent history. Even today we are reminded of his work and just how smart he is, specifically with the recent findings of recorded gravitational waves from two black holes colliding. The second person to heavily influence me is Elon Musk, not so much on what he says, but more on what he does in advancing technology. The reason why he influences me so much is because he is the closest thing to Tony Stark, the marvel comic book hero also known as Iron Man, that we have today.

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When the marvel film Iron Man came out in 2008, I knew that I wanted to be just like him. I wanted to be a genius that was able to create anything, especially a cool robotic suit that would be able to fly and fight crime. I knew that it would be incredibly difficult for anyone to be able to advance technology and use their money for the good of mankind without any real incentive to do so. Then Elon Musk shows up with his want to improve technology for us to reach new heights. After seeing the SpaceX rockets land time and time again, and seeing self-driving Tesla cars firsthand, his innovations have made me realize that maybe creating an Iron Man suit isn’t some far off dream about but a reality that might come to fruition sooner than expected. With all these people, characters, and events that have taken place, I knew that mechanical engineering was the right choice for me.

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While my parents wanted me to go into civil engineering and focus on building houses, my main passion was to work on smaller projects which would affect the lives of others such making satellites, cars, or planes. I suppose I was sick of being surrounded by construction and wanted a change, but the influence from my childhood of working with my father heavily influenced me to go into engineering. I wanted to impact the lives of many for the better with my creation and getting a proper education is essential.

6

During my academic career wondered how I would be able to change the lives of people and change how we see technology. Other people have struggled with this, and others excelled. Where would I fit in the engineering world and how would I be able to change it? The question I should’ve been asking is how people are improving technology today. This question only grew stronger with the introduction of my senior project.

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For my senior project, myself and 13 other students of different engineering backgrounds worked on a ThinSat; a small satellite capable of conducting different experiments in orbit for a more affordable price than traditional satellites. The question I kept asking myself throughout this entire project was what was necessary to make technology advance. Are small satellites the right approach to experimenting or do we need larger satellites to see better advances? Does technology need to be tested in space in order to improve? How does experimenting with things in space help us down here on earth? What role does space have on our technology and how will it improve it? I plan to research and explore this topic more in order to find out what is necessary to improve our technology and what I can do to be apart of this movement.

**Outline**

Parents

* Dad = handy man
* Handy man = hard work
* Handy man = money

Engineering

* Space
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