

What Road Have I Not Taken?

I usually rate my life experiences on how many beers you and I would have to drink in order to tell you one of my stories. The average time usually being a six-pack enabling us to leisurely stroll down one of my paths while having a number of laughs and questioning life's judgments. I have come to a lot of split roads in my life and if you were to ask anyone who may know what kind of life I am living, it would be answered in one short term, "Shit House Luck." What this entails is that this particular luck is neither bad nor good, it just means how in the world could this happen to one particular individual, and the way that it happens is so far beyond comprehension that it can only be confronted by laughter, hence the title of this paper.

So when I am asked to explain how I ended up on this particular path I would reply by asking you to pull up a bar stool and be prepared to drink at least a keg of your favorite bubbly and listen to this memoir of the craziest chain of events, many of which may not be appropriate for this particular writing so I will just stick with the facts and give you the hyper version Cliff note without all of the short stories and side note jokes.

So lets start from the first few paths, these were a little bumpy but were in no way bad. My father broke his neck when I was three, parents divorced by the time I was 10, and then a full work load of taking care of a quadriplegic was placed on my brother and I while we were teenagers. This brought on many challenges but never concerned me for I knew any different. I graduated high school as an average student, moved on to the local

community college where I excelled and attempted to become a DNR officer only to end up getting an Associate Degree in an Engineering field. Don't ask, cause those two fields are so closely related, not? I got a job with Knoll incorporated as ProEngineer designer, the newest CAD software still dominating many engineering fields today while also working at UPS as a night Super Visor of the International wing. During one summer break I got a good taste of a double income and was making great money. School got put on hold, UPS was dropped, and Knoll became my full time employment. After a couple of years, my boss put a phone call in to a friend at Steelcase, told him my about my talents and wanted me to grow in a bigger company. He was a great individual close to retirement and really wanted me to be successful.

So now I am at Steelcase working side by side with a very vocal and high-strung engineer who consistently swam against the flow while teaching me everything he knew. He was really into efficiencies and his life was something I could really relate to. I enjoyed his philosophies and told me that some people are born with a natural talent, and that talent is something I would need to hone. He encouraged me to get back to school in order to fit the bill of certain requirements needed to get a promotion. At this it time my parents remarried, which allowed me to move out and attend school at night, all while having run-ins with the law learning a few of life's lessons I dropped back out of school in order to fulfill my enjoyment of the nightlife and so far I had no regrets I was twenty-one, living on my own and enjoying new friendships.

As a couple years passed and the economic hammer was coming down on the furniture industry, they began laying people off by the thousands. My current boss again kept me ahead of the curve by giving me a day off to look for a new job, called in a favor to a Head Hunter at Herman Miller and explained that I had most of the tools needed to be a successful Engineer and would be a great asset to that company. Within two weeks of that interview, all my co-workers at the Case were cut while three of us jumped shipped and landed at Mother Miller's doorstep and began the career of where I am today. There was one stipulation though; the initial contract was signed stating as long as I kept attending school, and made a commitment to graduate, that I would stay employed. This was a difficult thing to hide for a long period of time, not only was everyone with bigger degrees being let go; they also had years of experience and ridiculed me while they felt they were being treated unfairly. I really excelled in my position, as a New Product Development Engineer and some of the things that I can attribute to me staying employed were that I was fast, intelligent, creative, and under paid. More bang for your buck as I was told with a great personality, and personality goes a long way. I am to this day the last new engineering hire since the year 2000.

As I was taking on more engineering classes, the product development director noticed that I had more of a creative side as I would steer and encourage our contracted designers, he highly recommend me going after an Industrial Design degree as this would open more opportunities for me in the New Product Development field and also stated that I had a real knack for design, a talent that Herman Miller really embraced. There are not too many individuals able to play both sides of the fence. Both Engineering and

Design Leaders have complimented me on my knowledge and creativity and going after an Industrial Design Degree sounded like a good solid path and it excited me to think I may actually make it to the end of one road. Of course we all know that cannot happen and I almost got to the end until I hit a few more forks once again.

I had lots of laughs, got in some more trouble, met my wife, bought a home, and had a kid. Time was tight but things were good and even though work stress was high, I avoided a ton of cuts and stayed on the path of completing my BFA.

However, this is where I take the path of fear and frustration and it leads me to the BIS program. My wife announces twins are on the way, I am working like mad to prove my worth, embracing individuals from India while they take over the company all while contemplating why I am still in school. I have been working with a counselor who is hesitant about helping me achieve my goals and has ultimately made me frustrated. The classes needed for my BFA degree are redundant to my career, and I have plenty of credits for graduation and hope is fading fast.

Within a few weeks of searching for an alternative, I meet a wonderful individual on the phone and she explains to me there are options for this. All of the sudden I see a road, a road that appears to be a little smoother, a little shorter and more efficient. Yes there may be a few small snags after this path, but we all know getting a degree is key, it does not matter what it is as long as it is a degree. The positives are that I can tailor it to suit my needs and apply it as my employer or I see fit.

I found it to be unfair to leave my wife at home with three screaming children while working all day and attending night classes, so I really embraced the idea of online classes and this degree program. I have been grinding away at the education path for years now my wife and I decided it is time for this one to come to an end.

So here I stand on my path today, not exactly sure where it will lead me, but knowing that it will get me somewhere?