

In 1983, I graduated from HS and was accepted as a Marine Biology Student at University of Southern California. Because my parents and I did not sit down prior to my senior year and have a frank discussion regarding financing this dream of mine, I was strongly encouraged to pursue other options. So the first year out of HS, I took an Emergency Medical Technician course at Wayne State while working full time. It was exhausting, and I quickly realized that I did not love working in Detroit on an ambulance at 3 in the morning responding to gunshot wounds.

After I graduated from the EMT course, I decided to pursue pre-med with the idea of becoming a pediatrician. It seemed like a noble profession. I took anatomy and physiology and toured the morgue and tangled with dyscalcula. This frustrated me, so I decided to become a Greenpeace volunteer. I plastered Greenpeace paraphernalia all over my room and signed up to fly to Russia and make my way to the Behring Sea to board a raft and park myself in front of a massive whaling ship holding a sign in protest.

Despite my best efforts to assure my mother that we would be provided with a plane ticket, free rain gear, and I am assuming all the fish we could eat, she put her foot down. This was the first time in my life that my mom did not say "sure - go ahead - give it a try". With that dead in the water, I returned to the Marine Biology dream. I schemed with a girlfriend: how would we make our way to California and study? We decided that I would work for the Coast Guard and jump out of helicopters utilizing my EMT and Lifesaving certifications.

I forgot one small item: I was a little bit afraid of heights. Once I realized that jumping from helicopters was out of the question, I returned to my goal of getting into college. I needed to get out of the house and the only way to do this, was to pay for it on my own. I worked all year as a nanny, sold my jeep, biked to the corner gas station and saved every penny to get through the first year. With the help of a pell grant and government loans, I was enrolled at FSU fall of 1985.

I began as an Audio Visual student and moved into Recreational Management. From there, I took a brief stop at Public Relations, and finished off with Advertising. As I have read in other essays, I too, was probably more interested in the extra curricular activities than I was in the curriculum. My first time through Ferris, I had a beer in one hand and a frat boy in the other.

When I left Ferris in 1990, I sort of fell into the non-profit world. I worked for the March of Dimes and felt a sense of pride in doing something for the greater good. I took a brief stint at marketing for a wine company, tried to be a big shot in the corporate world, but decided that I felt more fulfilled working for a non-profit organization. Just before I took my first director's position, I contemplated moving to the north and pursuing a biology degree at Northern Michigan. It was then that I found out that I was pregnant with twin girls. I stayed and took the corporate non-profit job in order to have some stability and medical insurance for the twins.

Several years after the twins were born, I again attempted to leave the non-profit world and go back to school to study biology. It was then that I became pregnant with my son. So I stayed at the stable job.

When my son was three, I filed for divorce, took on a very intense position leading the American Lung Association of Michigan, and felt an overwhelming grief that I had let my biology dreams slip by. Not only that, I was constantly on the road or working awful hours away from the kids.

When I was laid off from ALAM, it was a blessing in disguise. I took a downsized position as a development and marketing director with the Ann Arbor Art Center. This allowed me to work normal hours - even allowed me some work from home time. I was again able to spend quality time in our downsized home by a lake floating in the water. During this period of time, I again fantasized about the biology studies. I swam through algae with goggles just because I wanted to see what was in the fuzzy green masses.

When the Art Center suffered a financial setback, mine was one of the positions to go. I finally took the bull by the horns and entered school in 2010. I took the basic bios, physics, math, geology and some chemistry at the local community college. I have dyscalcula, remember? So the chemistry was a little rocky. In the summer of 2011, I transferred back into FSU and have been driving the 2.5 hours back and forth to Milford each week. Here is where the poem comes in for me:

Environmental Biology in Five Short Acts by
Andrea - with apologies to Portia.

Chapter 1:

I take a chemistry class to fulfill my Env Bio requirements
There is a deep hole in my brain
I fall in. ...I drop
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2:

I take another chemistry class
There is still a deep hole in my brain. I know I have the hole.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again. ...
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter 3:

I take chemistry at a community college
There is still a deep hole in my brain
I see it is there. I use some different tools.
I still fall in; it's a habit. ...
I receive a C-. It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

Chapter 4:

I do not take chemistry. I find the help center.

There is a still a deep hole in my brain

I walk around it.

Chapter 5:

I find BIS. I graduate. After graduation, I slowly take chemistry courses at my pace to fulfill the Env. Bio degree. No more falling into holes.