

One Improved Unit



Send him mail.

“One Improved Unit” is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OIU-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Albert Jay Nock wrote that the only thing each of us really has the power to do is “to present society with *one improved unit*.” The only person that we may forcefully control is ourselves. This is the basis for voluntaryist philosophy. As such, our *primary efforts* should be toward becoming better members of society. Once we have improved, we will, as Stephan Kinsella put it, “become a bright light that attracts people; they see you are good, and successful, and worth emulating or listening to – so you win people over by the *power of attraction*.” Only then will you be successful in changing hearts and minds, in having an audience interested and eager to listen to what you have to say.

Since high school, I have been growing and improving in various different ways spiritually and philosophically. Contrary to my junior high and high school years, I’ve come to really love myself and to see myself as having great worth. However, I still have a long way to go; I have much that I can improve about myself. Life is a journey that we are all travelling. We have good days and not-so-good days. But every one of us is imperfect and can find something that they would like to improve. For some it’s knowledge, for other’s it’s spirituality, and for still others it’s behavior and improving how we approach our fellow members of society. And for some, like me, it’s all of the above, as well as our approach to the one’s we love the most, our spouses and children.

With all of this in mind, I’ve decided to split my weekly column into two series. The first series, “One Voluntaryist’s Perspective” will continue as it has, looking outward, analyzing current events or exploring voluntaryist ideas. This new second series, “One Improved Unit” will look inward. I will use this column to explore ways in which I have improved as a human being, as a friend, as a husband, and as a father, either recently or in the past. This series will be much more personal than the other one, and will offer a glimpse into how I’m becoming “one improved unit.”

Life Overview

For the first edition of this series, I would like to give a short overview of where I've been and how far I've come. I will complete my twenty-ninth year of mortality in January of next year. I'm an 80's and 90's child. I remember when we got our first computer. It was an AT&T, 486 66mhz processor with 4MB of RAM. I think my current toaster has more power than that. It had Windows 3.1 and our favorite program was a digital encyclopedia. I did all I could to figure out how to use it. Today, that's my career. I test software for a living and thoroughly enjoy it. It comes so easy to me. All I wanted to do was play with the computer, to learn all I could about how it worked and what it could do. Unfortunately, I had 4 other siblings that wanted their time with it. And further, I had to go to school most of the week, most of the year. But that didn't stop me completely from computers becoming a passion of mine.

I was Mr. Tech Support from very early. I developed a reputation among my family and friends for having computer savvy. As I grew into a teenager, however, the stresses of school pushed me into a sort of clinical depression. Computers were my one escape in life. As I got older and learned to drive, cars became a passion. And preceding my interest in cars came the need for employment. I was eager to work ever since I got my first job at 15. I was a cashier in a mall food court. It was a lot of fun and I made more money (at \$5.25 an hour, minimum wage) than I ever had. At one point, my boss became a mentor to me on what is called Human Dynamics, developed by psychologists Sandra Segal and David Horne. What Human Dynamics taught me was very valuable. It helped me understand human personalities and behaviors better, including my own personality and behavior. Not a day goes by where I don't think about what I learned. Everyone I meet gives me an opportunity to improve my understanding of human personalities.

My dad helped me buy my first car, a 1993 Mercury Tracer. I loved it, but when I was 17 I got a new job as a lot technician at a Jeep dealership which allowed me to upgrade to a 1995 Honda Civic. With rims! I loved that car. It had a loud muffler and smokin' sound system. Things like this, working and flash, helped my depression greatly. I made friends in online Honda forums and met other Honda enthusiasts at organized meet ups and in high school. Having the time and the means to explore your passions is, I believe, an effective antidote to the depression experienced by some due to the minor control they have had over their own lives.

At 18 I decided to try my hand at selling cars. My father was a sales manager and everyone knew me as a lot technician. They gave me a shot, but I failed miserably. I found it very difficult to get people to agree to a price that I knew was higher than our lowest offer. I'm not sure I would have those difficulties today, but 10 years ago it was de-motivating. I no longer wanted to sell cars. Instead, I wanted to be a police officer. I had a high regard for police work and considered it a noble calling (keyword: *had*). So in preparation, I got a job as a security guard. I worked the night shift, but my hours were few. I decided to approach

my first boss (at 15) and get a second job in the mall food court. She was eager to have me back. It was while working here one Sunday morning that I met my wife.

The story of my first encounter with my wife has been told elsewhere, but here I will say that it had a very profound effect on me. It was a great leap forward in my personal development. It was the catalyst that helped me develop spiritually. A big part of that was my intellectual development. I consider the intellect to be a major part of the soul, and I soon found myself intensely interested in all sorts of things, primarily economics. I moved through the likes of Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams, to Henry Hazlitt, Murray Rothbard, and Walter Block. After I had become a full-fledged Austrian School adherent, I discovered libertarian ethics and finally, voluntarism.

Continuing my intellectual development, I eventually discovered Alfie Kohn and the nonviolent parenting philosophy. Along these lines I discovered unschooling. Both of these contributed to another great leap forward. As before, such a leap forced me to completely change my approach in life. I committed to raising my kids without violence and without educational compulsion. I have had and am still having struggles with myself over various things along these lines, but such is the nature of progress.

Final Thoughts

The preceding is a brief overview of my life and my personal development in the areas of knowledge, spirituality, and behavior. I still have much to improve and will use this column to explore what that entails. Life has a way of carrying us along and if we don't stop to "smell the roses," assess our life, consider our weaknesses, plan for improvement, and develop into "one improved unit," then we miss out, I think, on becoming the best person we can become. And if we are to ever have a free society, we must all do likewise.