

Unschooling Ourselves



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“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.

Over the last 12 months, I’ve read a total of 57 fiction books, and I’m on the premier of another 7-book series. I’ve also read approximately 15 non-fiction books within that same time span, and a countless number of columns, essays, and journal articles. Why am I reading so much? For starters, because I have a thirst for knowledge, which from both types of books I get more than I can retain. But more importantly, I believe that the moment we stop seeking the unknown, our lives become routine and boring. And that’s neither what I want for myself, nor what I want to model for my wife and children.

Life Learning

Many prefer to refer to the unschooling lifestyle as “life learning.” I personally don’t care either way, but I really like the idea of life-long and life-centered learning. I taught myself to use computers at 12, when my parents bought our family’s first computer. Using a computer is now my career, literally. I test software and predict the user’s experience. I’m paid well enough for a simple and stressless job. Many aren’t so lucky. In fact, had I not met a certain friend when I did, who knows where I’d be today. I might still be testing software, but in any event, I found a passion and stuck with it, and now I’m reaping the benefits.

I remember when the movie *Jurassic Park* came out. I was so excited that I got a hold of several books on dinosaurs and studied like crazy. Paleontology was one of my earliest passions, years before computers. My children really like dinosaurs now, and I can still remember quite a few names and other “fun facts.”

After I got my driver’s license, I, like all young men, became passionate about cars. My first car was a ’93 Tracer, which I had a blast driving off-road rally-style. After that came a ’95 Civic Coupe. It was already lowered, with rims, a tint, and a stereo system, so that I immediately jumped into the Honda scene. I became an expert on Hondas. Every model, trim, engine, technology, and the thousands of aftermarket parts. I ended up crashing the

'95 Civic, and then bought a '00 Civic Sedan. I've put 110k miles on it (175k total) driving it as far as Chicago (from Salt Lake). I just can't see myself buying any other make of car, and I fully expect to pass this one on to my children.

I've written before on economics, another passion of mine. I've studied several economics books, blogs, and journals. This passion created another passion, the libertarian political philosophy, which in turn led to another passion, voluntaryism. But it hasn't stopped there. Voluntaryism forced me to confront my personal life, meaning, my family, and how I was raising my children. Thus was I led to the philosophies of peaceful parenting and radical unschooling.

Religion, too, has been a passion. I should say that this front has cooled a bit in recent years though by no means quenched. In fact, I think it's blaring up again. I've got more questions that need answering, and damned if that isn't the kind of thing to get me into trouble. My time is more valuable than it used to be, as an unschooling father of two (at the moment). I just wish I had more of it right now. So much to learn!

Final Thoughts

I hope your life has been as passion- and learning-filled as mine has been. I hope you've taken the time to study the things that *you* have wanted to study. My time was wasted with a lot of meaningless forgotten drivel, as I was raised by public schools, but looking back I see that I was still able find time for myself. That's when my learning was the most meaningful and unforgettable. I have no idea what I'll be studying in the coming years, but I know that quite a bit of it will be alongside my children.