

## **My Personal Narrative Story**

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## **Early Beginnings**

My biggest milestone back in twenty-eighteen was graduating from high school. Receiving that diploma meant a lot to me and I thanked the teachers that guided me and made sure I was on the right track. I was already accepted into my first choice school, Old Dominion University and it felt fantastic. My hard work had paid off and I was on my way to success, but first I had to take care of a few things. First, I had to figure out how to pay for school! This was my first time doing such a feat. Applying for aid, scholarships, and grants can be very intense for a prospective student. Once that was taken care of I had to leave my then part-time employment. They understood that I wanted school to be a full-time commitment. Now, in terms of my major, I knew I wanted to be in the field of information technology. So I pinpointed a few interdisciplinaries and ultimately decided that Cybersecurity was the path I had to pursue. My reasons were based on how I view the future of technology with the increasing scalability of systems and devices and the increased dependency on it in our everyday lives. I concluded that cybersecurity is here to stay.

So I packed my bags and was off to my first day at college. I did pretty well in my first year academically. But the highlight was the culture shock. This was the first time seeing a plethora of cultures in one area and all I wanted to do was make friends. Nguyen (2013) Accurately describes this, “ The university is an environment that brings together people from disparate backgrounds. It is a temporary home for undergraduate and graduate students who pass through in a continuous cycle, changing the college and being changed by it” (p. 140). After a year, I decided I wanted to pick up another part-time job so I signed up for the work-study

program. This led to my first technology job which I still reflect on today. This was a desktop support position at the Perry Library which involved working with faculty (occasionally students) with computer maintenance and troubleshooting. It helped me gain some knowledge about the software side of computers which was invaluable.

### **Challenges and Setbacks**

There were a few challenges that I had to overcome during school and my personal life. After the spring semester ended in twenty-twenty there was an issue preventing me from getting aid for school. This was the worst (and best) thing to happen to me at this point in my life. I unfortunately had to withdraw before the incoming fall term and figure out a new game plan. So what is this game plan that I decided on? I decided to join the United States Army. The road to graduation was halted and a new “side quest” if you will officially started. Shipped out to boot camp a few months later and was off to train for uncle sam. The training I went through made me realize the capabilities I have even when faced with incredible feats. Yes, I've made mistakes, but I learned from them with help from my platoon. It was a surreal accomplishment to be able to complete all my military training. To which I have my family to give the credit for being there whenever I needed support. Roughly six months later I came back home as a United States soldier (national guardsman hence six months of training). I decided to go back into the workforce as I wasn't quite ready to get back into school just yet.

I've had a few jobs since then but I've always had a sense of unfulfillment in each one as I wasn't invested in the position to any extent besides a paycheck. This led me to think about going back to school, but I wouldn't. I'd rationalize my stance with thoughts such as, *“If you were going back you would have already. “It's too late your graduating class will be ahead of you”.* *“C'mon you know college was a waste of time”.* This mindset stayed for another year. That's

until I finally woke up and committed myself to going back and finishing no matter how long it took.

### **Current Day**

So today, I look back and reflect on everything that has happened in my life so far. Both positives and negatives because they are a part of who I am. Smith (2017) “Our stories tend to focus on the most extraordinary events, good and bad because those are the experiences we need to make sense of and that shape us”. Smith’s article is relatable to me and should be for most people. Our personal narrative is a story culminated by life experiences and influenced by values and beliefs. Currently, I’m a senior with just a few credits left to graduate. I’m still serving in the United States military albeit part time which allows me to have the time to do other things. I said earlier that leaving college was the worst thing, but at that moment in time it felt so. I knew the goal was to come back with a game plan and I did just that. Now I am learning new things in both my military and personal careers. An example is a topic I covered in a crime and computer applications course I took last year. The whole course is about investigating cybercrimes and analyzing tools used in investigations, but this one project stood out to me. It was related to a key principle in the military called operational security or OPSEC. To explain briefly, is a code of conduct governing the handling of military documents. That class helped me increase my knowledge further on the subject. I believe that the technical skills and knowledge that I’ve learned so far at Old Dominion have helped me develop personally and professionally.

## Summary

In conclusion, the challenges I went through in my early life are defined by Smith as my narrative identity. They shaped who I am today. Every decision and choice has led me to be the person who decided to finish pursuing school, serve in the United States military, and even write this paper. Since high school, I knew I wanted something better for myself and my family because they are what keeps me going through thick and thin. Whenever setbacks occur I want to have them in my corner every time. I'm glad that I was able to have them support me through my earlier years at college because it was overwhelming until I changed my mindset and focused on other aspects like the disparate culture that Nguyen stated. I also agree with her about how students shape colleges over time so we have more influence than we think. My mindset was a major issue holding me back. Which I did overcome and was able to stick to the game plan to finish school strong.

### Works Cited

Nguyen, C. F. (2013). The ePortfolio as a Living Portal: A Medium for Student Learning, Identity, and Assessment. *International Journal of ePortfolio* , 3(2), 135–148.

Smith, E. E. (2017). The two kinds of stories we tell about ourselves. Retrieved from <https://ideas.ted.com/the-two-kinds-of-stories-we-tell-about-ourselves/>