

Finding My Path: A Personal Narrative Essay

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IDS-493: Electronic Portfolio Project

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September 14, 2024

Personal Narrative Essay

Have you ever sat down and really thought about life, about your life or even life in general. How it works, how it was created, will this world we live in ever be destroyed? All we really know is what we hear, read or see. I have always looked at life as one giant story, each person that lives this life or had the chance to live this life has their own book telling their personal story. We only get one chance at life, it's up to you to live that life to the ultimate most so when that story reaches its last page there will be no regret. Stories never die, I want mine to be told and lived on as I am gone. That mindset didn't come easy or right away. The way I live my life and look at as a whole was a process. That process was life and its trials and tribulations. That is the most beautiful thing about a story. A story always contains a plot, a beginning, middle, and end. My story is nowhere near its end, but it doesn't have to be finished to be told. My name is Dante Alan Scaramazzo and this is my story.

The Beginning

I was born in Page, Arizona on September 4th, 2002. My mom found out she was pregnant with me when my dad was in bootcamp for the Navy. My parents definitely did not expect this and to had me at such a young age at a point where my mom and dad were both figuring out their futures. My dad was first deployed to Jacksonville, Florida where my parents had my brother Kaden in 2006. My dad was then stationed in Honolulu, Hawaii in 2009, where I grew up and went to school there from kindergarten to 8th grade. I was blessed to not only live in Hawaii for nine years but my dad's 3 brothers were stationed there too.. I had two older cousins that I looked up to as well as my uncles. I grew up pretty fast and was mature for my age as I only hung around with older people other than kids at my school but I preferred it that way. I

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could go on for hours about how much I genuinely loved the life I lived growing up, outside all the time playing sports, going to the beach, skateboarding, playing video games, you name it. I did everything, and loved doing them alongside my family and friends. The nine years I lived in Hawaii were really the best times of my life and wish I could go back more than anything.

There is no story without trials and tribulations and a lot of those that still hurt to this day took place during these times. From kindergarten to eighth grade you really start to learn about this world and how it works and start to really realize that it comes with ups and down. Sometimes those downs really weigh on you no matter the ups. I never struggled making friends or had a hard time at school. I have always done fairly well in school and maintaining As and Bs came pretty easy to me.

My uncle Justin, my dad's oldest brother and Dre who was 4 years older than me but lived on the same block as me a couple houses down were my ultimate best friends. Of course I still had my mom, my dad, my two cousins Cody and Tyler but some people you just connect with people differently at different times. If I wasn't outside playing football with Dre or skateboarding or at his house playing video games I was with my uncle Justin. My uncle Justin taught me so much and I really looked up to him, he would take me with him everywhere. My life entirely changed and didn't feel livable this one day in 2016. The news that my mom and dad heard that day was my uncle, my best friend in this entire world passed away. One of the events that truly changed my life forever.

The Middle

Towards the end of eighth grade my dad got news he was being station back in Jacksonville, Florida where I would live my high school days and really figure out who Dante Scaramazzo is. Freshman year started off a little rough as I knew no body and everyone has been

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going to school with each other for years but I slowly found my way and my friends. I really started to blossom in Junior year where I met most of my best friends in my Florida friend group because I still had my friends from Hawaii I talked to and played video games with, especially during quarantine. In the year 2020, I experience another big loss that still doesn't sit right with me which was the death of my best friend Dre. Again, I sat in that feeling of distraught losing my mind thinking that life wouldn't move on. No matter my pain, that sun is going to rise in the morning and set at night. Time wasn't going to stop for me, I had to realize the hard way but a lesson is still a lesson that I feel like everyone learns.

I feel like all the tragedy I faced and pain I was put through needed to be done. I really never thought about my future in high school and didn't know what I wanted to do after I graduated high school. I ended up getting a job when I was 15 at McDonalds. I wanted to start making money, I never liked asking my parents for money and it just felt good to have my own. I worked there for two years, then Wendy's during my senior year. I always knew I could do better and college was the answer for me. I ended up applying to Old Dominion University. I knew about this school because my friend Davis that I met in Hawaii lived in Virginia Beach. My friends and I took a couple trips to his house in Virginia, only an hour from the school. My friend Sebastian and I got accepted with scholarships and decided to come here together. Freshman year all the way to now being a senior still was a tough journey and I found out even more about myself. I finally applied myself and found an area of study that I really enjoyed. I didn't want to come to college and just skate by and end up at a job I hated and a life I wasn't happy with. Cybersecurity was that for me, something I could see myself really digging into and finding happiness within. I made that decision sophomore year and after diving in and taking courses I cannot be happier with my decision. I enjoy the challenge and critical thinking that comes with

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cybersecurity. I have always been fascinated with computer technology. Cybersecurity just seemed like the perfect fit for me.

Now I am here, currently as a senior studying Cybersecurity and working towards a degree in Bachelor of Science. At this point, I have completed 90 percent of my courses for my major. I have learned so much such as basics of hacking, coding with python, the framework of networking and so much more. For the first time in a long time, I am excited for the future and where I could be in a couple of years. There is so much more that I have to learn and so much more life to live. Thankfully, this story is far from finished with a lot more to be done. I guess you are just going to have to wait to read the rest of the story of Dante Scaramazzo.

Reflections

I feel like a beautiful aspect of a story is character development. To see the beginning, the middle, the end. The pain, the happiness, the memories, the accomplishments and sacrifices made. For me, I wasn't able to find my worth until I faced certain obstacles in life, till I understood that I will always have these feelings and emotions. Montañez (2023) describes how powerful emotions are and how "they can tell you a lot about yourself and your interests" and she was not lying. My mom and dad taught me to use my emotions as my strength, not a weakness. My dad used to tell me this quote from Bruce Lee all the time when I was a kid. The full quote itself is lengthy but my dad would tell me "Be Water, my friend" (Bruce Lee, 1971). Which means to empty your mind, be formless, shapeless, just like water. This quote has always stayed with me and helped form the mindset I have today. To always be me in everything that I do, if that's at work, in my school work, so be it. I found cybersecurity to be a field I can see myself really blooming and something I can be passionate about. A field I am excited to learn more about and continue on pursuing as my career.

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Emily Smith and her Ted Talk “There’s more to life than being happy” made we realize so much and motivated me to write my story the way I did. She mentions the 4 pillars of meaning which include belonging, purpose, transcendence, storytelling. These 4 pillars represent the feeling of meaning, to not strive for this feeling of happiness but a feeling of that you mean something as a human being. Emily made me realize what my 4 pillars were and what were meaningful to me. My sense of belonging is being here with my family, with myself, with the people that make me happy and fill me with love. They push me to want to work hard and put my everything into what I am doing. My purpose is being able to go to sleep at night and be able to wake up in the morning and live life to the fullest and strive to be the best me possible every single day. I want to be able to call my family and tell them I love them and to be able to hang out with my friends. My belief in God and that my loved ones are in heaven watching down on my every single day is my transcendence. My belief that the love and soul of those I lost still live within me and push me when I want to give up or think I am not good enough. Now I look back and smile, knowing those days and lessons just made me into who I am today. Someone that I am proud of, that works and loves hard. Those bad times didn’t define me, they just pushed me to strive for bigger and better. I owe it to myself, to my family, and to all those I loved that lost their lives too soon. That is my story.

The End

To be continued...

Conclusion

Life is truly weird but beautiful when you start to see all the pieces come together, to get the full picture. Life is filled with nothing but stories, but what about yours. You just heard about mine. How Dante Scaramazzo came to the point he is at now at the age of twenty two years old studying Cybersecurity in his Senior Year of College at Old Dominion University located in Norfolk, Virginia. I couldn't be more grateful to be in the position I am now, to be able to look forward to what my future holds with this degree. I plan to use my life experiences, the love I formed from pain and everything that makes me who I am into my cybersecurity career. Forming relationships with new people and just striving to be a bright light in the environment I am in and motivate others by working hard and not giving up. To always help others, to always be kind and to always be in tune with myself. I still am that same kid living in Hawaii with my family spreading nothing but love and laughter wherever I go. I could never change, that is just who I am.

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