Personal Narrative Essay

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Introduction

This paper entails my academic and professional journey, as well as my blossoming of interest in the world of computers and cybersecurity. My career has followed an unending chase of seeking to understand how computers and technology work on a deeper level of understanding. I have always been fascinated by the invisible magic that occurs in networking and building network infrastructure, as well as the world's growing dependence on technology. All these questions and more have led me here.

Early Interests

For as long as I can remember, I have always been able to use a computer. According to my mother, she was able to teach me to operate one at 3 years old. From then on, I have always been interested in how they work. When my parents were teaching me how to use the family computer, I would constantly ask questions such as, "How does the mouse know what it is clicking on? How do wired headphones transmit sound?" Along with a plethora of other youthfully curious questions. That fascination grew for several years, from volunteering to fix computer problems in junior high, to taking apart and building computers. Until a particular incident occurred that pivoted me towards an interest in cybersecurity.

A family member of mine had their identity stolen. They transferred away all the contents of my family member's savings account, which was devastating for my family member. The circumstances surrounding the theft were a big question; one I became fascinated in solving. In short, it involved

visiting a malicious website, and entering critical information that was compromised. However, this event led to a fascination with the investigative process. Hundreds of computer crimes such as fraud, identity theft, impersonation, harassment, and more occur every single day. I decided to pursue an education in technology, with the idea that I would eventually like to specialize in digital investigative work. These past experiences are like Nguyen's concept of *mimesis,* since I was able to translate my past experiences to shape my future aspirations (Nguyen, 2013).

Academic Journey

During high school, I grappled with two career interests: music and IT. I enjoyed playing clarinet, and I was even able to make all-Virginia honor band twice during my last two years of high school. Eventually, after covid hit and much deliberation occurred, I decided to pursue the path of IT while still enjoying playing and making music in my free time. I knew early on that I would want to pursue community college first, as student loans are not a good option for me. I spoke with my local community college's advisor, who convinced me to pursue an Associate of Applied Science in Information Technology with a Specialization in Networking. I enjoyed my coursework very much in community college, and I was also able to take and pass the CompTIA A+ while pursuing it. I was also able to graduate with a certificate in Networking Fundamentals. I graduated with an associate's degree in May 2023.

Initially, this was the pathway I was going to choose, associate's degree only. After some thought, I decided to investigate transfer options nearby. This serves as a *fusion of horizons*, since I was able to integrate my past community college experiences with future goals with Old Dominion University's online cybersecurity program (Nguyen, 2017). This degree accepted the most amount of my community college credits, so I choose to pursue my bachelor's degree here. The flexibility of online coursework here has been a blessing, as I have also been working full time while pursuing my bachelor's degree. During my time here at ODU, I have taken an interdisciplinary studies class, where I wrote a paper entitled "What Can the U.S (United States) Learn from the Work of the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) Based on Major Ransomware Attacks in European Hospitals During the Covid-19 Pandemic?" I will graduate in May 2025 with a bachelor's in cybersecurity, and a digital forensics certificate.

Professional Journey/Internships

In October of 2022, I went to my academic advisor at my community college, as my final semester of my associate's degree involved a "coordinated internship" option instead of taking an additional elective class. I was interested in this, so I asked her for assistance in finding one. Together, we worked on building a good resume, which included my intent to pursue a bachelor's degree at Old Dominion University. She sent out my resume to several employers nearby. A couple of weeks later, I received an email from a supervisor at K-VA-T Food Stores Inc., asking me to see him to

talk about internship opportunities. I went and discussed the idea of an internship, which turned into a part time job offer during the interview! After a brief period, I began work as a part time Technical Services Technician. After working there for about 3 months, I was offered a full-time position, and the rest is history. Since I was fortunate enough to have an internship turn into a full-time job, this can serve a *redemptive story* (Smith, 2017).

During my time with food city, I have resolved over 1,600 networking, security, and IT-related issues across corporate offices, stores, and the distribution center. I have had the opportunity to travel across several states in the Appalachian Mountain areas for store installs and remodels. This includes setting up and installing hardware and networking equipment, store software, and occasionally POS systems. It has been a great privilege to be able to practically apply concepts I have learned in the classroom throughout my career at Food City. I have made lots of friends, connections, learned so much through my experiences that I hope to take with me throughout my entire career. I have also earned three scholarships through the company that have helped me pay for my degree. I can utilize all these achievements at my job to define and elevate my personal brand (Montañez, 2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, my journey in technology and cybersecurity has been shaped by a persistent curiosity and drive to understand the unseen

mechanics of computers and networks. From early experiences at home, to formal education and practical work, I have grown my skills and solidified my passion for this field. Each step, from my community college days to my current role, has helped me apply what I have learned, navigate challenges, and uncover new opportunities. As I continue this path, I look forward to advancing my knowledge and contributing to the ever-evolving world of technology.

Works Cited

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