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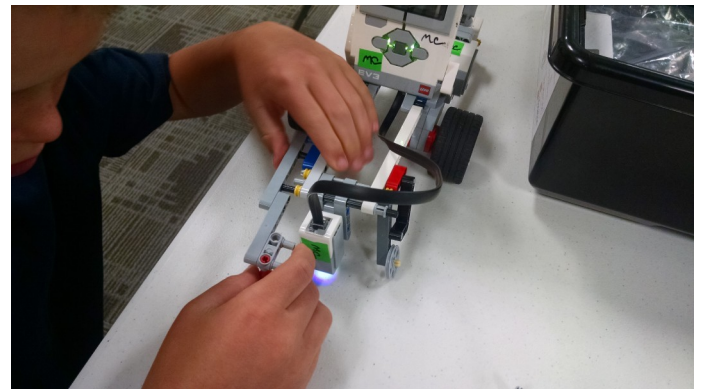
I DID GROW UP ON A CORN / SOYBEAN FARM IN CENTRAL IL! WE'RE JUST SOUTHWEST OF BLOOMINGTON. I MOVED BACK TO THE FARM LAST YEAR ACTUALLY AFTER LIVING AND WORKING IN NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR FOUR YEARS.

I LIKED HIGH SCHOOL. THE SUBJECTS WERE MUCH MORE IN-DEPTH AND TAILORED TO ME. SO I WAS ABLE TO LEARN ABOUT GEOMETRY, FORMAL LOGIC, PROGRAMMING, AND EVEN A LITTLE CALCULUS WHICH I REALLY ADORED. I REALLY LEARNED HOW TO SOCIALIZE DURING THAT TIME IN MY LIFE. I WAS KINDA SHY BEFORE THAT.

I WAS ABLE TO GET A JOB DOING SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT NEAR THE END OF HIGH SCHOOL AND THAT'S WHERE I LEARNED I DIDN'T WANT TO DO THAT FOR A LIVING, OR AT LEAST SO I THOUGHT (MORE ON THAT IN A FUTURE LETTER). SO I WENT TO COLLEGE FOR MECHANICAL ENGINEERING INSTEAD.

THE SUMMER BEFORE COLLEGE, I MOSTLY JUST HELPED WITH PROJECTS ON THE FARM. I ALSO HELPED RUN A ROBOTICS CAMP.

I THEN WENT FOR A SIX-WEEK INTENSIVE "BOOT CAMP" WHERE WE LEARNED CALCULUS AND PHYSICS. IT WAS REALLY TOUGH BUT IT TAUGHT ME A LOT AND HELPED ME BECOME VERY DISCIPLINED. IT'S WHERE MY HANDWRITING WENT FROM BEING AWFUL TO LOOKING NEAT AND PROPER — VERY MUCH AN "ENGINEER'S HAND".



COLLEGE ITSELF WAS GREAT. HONESTLY, I THINK MOST OF SCHOOL SHOULD LOOK MORE LIKE COLLEGE: ONLY A FEW HOURS A DAY OF ACTUAL CLASS TIME AND THE REST IS STUDY ON YOUR OWN. CLASSES CAN BE REALLY IN-DEPTH ON ONE TOPIC. AND YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY TEACHERS AND PEERS THAT ARE USUALLY REALLY PASSIONATE ABOUT WHAT THEY'RE TEACHING. SO IF YOU'RE REALLY CAPTIVATED BY A PARTICULAR SUBJECT, YOU CAN DIVE REALLY DEEP INTO IT. AFTER ALL, WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS LEARNING.



GRADES LET YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE DOING WELL, BUT THEY AREN'T THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.

IF I HAD TO DO ONE THING OVER AGAIN, THOUGH, I WOULD DEFINITELY FOCUS MORE ON BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS. I HAD PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES TO DO SO, BUT I WAS VERY FOCUSED ON MY STUDIES. BUT AS LIFE GOES ON, IT TURNS OUT THAT HAVING LOTS OF SKILLS ISN'T ANY GOOD IF YOU HAVE NOBODY TO SHARE THEM WITH.

I WAS JUST AT A REALLY AMAZING FARMING CONFERENCE (ACRES USA) AND A YOUNG LADY (A LITTLE OLDER THAN YOU) ASKED ALLEN WILLIAMS WHAT SHE SHOULD DO FOR COLLEGE. HIS ANSWER WAS GREAT. IT WENT SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

"I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER THAT I WAS A COLLEGE PROFESSOR. THE BEST EDUCATION YOU'LL GET IS BY APPRENTICING ON A FARM. AND THEN ANOTHER FARM. WORK ON A LOT OF DIFFERENT FARMS, NOT JUST THE ONES NEAR YOU, AND LEARN WHAT THEY'RE DOING. READ ALL OF THE BEST BOOKS. AND THEN, YOU'LL HAVE LIVED IT, SEEN IT, BEEN ENTRENCHED IN IT, AND YOU'LL HAVE GREAT MENTORS FOR THE FUTURE. I JUST DON'T SEE HOW FOUR YEARS IN A CLASSROOM COULD COMPARE."

I THINK HE'S ONTO SOMETHING HERE. MOST OF THE LEARNING I HAD IN COLLEGE WAS WHEN I WAS BUILDING RACECARS, DOING PROJECTS, OR IN AN INTERNSHIP. AT THE VERY LEAST, DOING THESE THINGS MOTIVATED ME TO LEARN WHEN I WAS IN THE CLASSROOM, AND IT GAVE ME A MENTAL FRAMEWORK ON WHICH TO HANG ALL THE KNOWLEDGE I WAS GIVEN. A LOT OF STUDENTS JUST DIDN'T UNDERSTAND OR CARE ABOUT EVEN BASIC CONCEPTS LIKE TORSION, BUT WHEN YOU'RE DESIGNING DRIVESHAFTS, YOU HAVE A REASON AND PURPOSE TO KNOW.

... BUT ... YOU'RE STILL KINDA YOUNG TO BE WORRYING ABOUT ALL OF THAT.

THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK YOU HAVE RIGHT NOW IS TO PREPARE YOUR MIND. BE THE MOST EXCELLENT VERSION OF YOURSELF.

WHEN YOU FIND A SUBJECT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN, READ THE BEST BOOKS YOU CAN GET ABOUT IT. ASK YOUR TEACHER, YOUR PARENTS, YOUR LIBRARIAN TO FIND YOU THE BEST BOOKS ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE INTERESTED IN. SEEK KNOWLEDGE, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WISDOM.

PRAYING FOR YOU,

- THAD