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Edumacation

by Nicholas Treff

(English 1101)

They say a college education is the key to success. Is it? Are the only things you can learn to benefit you taught in school? Didn't someone once say that all you need to know you learned in kindergarten? If you ask me, I would say that there are more ways to be educated than just in a classroom. You see, I already graduated from a four year university and learned many skills during my time there. I learned about professionalism, communication, dedication, expenses, payroll, teamwork, staff management, time management, and a plethora of other traits. At this university, you learn not only what to do, but also what *not* to do. You may be asking yourself what school I went to, and I'll tell you. I attended the University of the Working Class. No, it is not an actual school, but rather the courses you take in life and the knowledge that you gain from them. After I graduated from high school, my life was pulling me in ten different directions all at the same time. I felt like a prisoner on one of those medieval torture devices. You know the one, where you're strapped to a wheel and stretched from limb to limb until your body pulls apart, except without the physical pain. I had plans of grandeur and was hell-bent on achieving all of them, but I was certainly done with the classroom. After all, there are plenty of success stories where business moguls and CEO's never stepped foot in a college lecture hall and have more personal wealth than many of the world's countries, and isn't that the American dream? That hard work and dedication can get you wherever you want to go? Sure it is, but no one said it would be easy.

After high school, like many people, I chose to take some time off, enter the work force, and become independent. I moved out of my parents' house, rented an apartment with an old friend, and started on my life journey. It certainly was an exciting time, and my real education seemed to begin immediately. I first took a job with a marketing firm. I remember the ad in the newspaper well. It read, "Wanted: Enthusiastic, out-going individuals for employment in a high level sports marketing firm to establish contacts with potential clients. Promotions from within, no experience necessary, \$500 per week." I called, scheduled an interview, and could not wait to start building my empire. The day of the interview, I put on my best suit, my best watch, my best cologne, grabbed my resume, checked the directions, and headed out the door. The office was exactly how I imagined it. A large corporate building entailed with two story windows, luxury cars in the parking lot, and even a coy pond in the lobby. I was on my way now. I reached the suite and checked in with the receptionist, which I might add was the first time I ever checked in with a receptionist for an interview, and it made me feel pretty important. I was called in the boardroom and took a seat at a large oak conference table that reminded me of the clip from the original *Batman* movie. Remember the scene where Michael Keaton and Kim Basinger are having dinner and they are sitting at opposite sides of the table, but can hardly hear each other because they are so far away? As questions were thrown at me, I was like a politician running for office. It was as if I had been interviewing for years. I had the perfect answer for every question. I was offered the job, and without hesitation, I took it. I was to start immediately, so I headed home to celebrate. The following day I arrived at the office for my first day of work and was introduced to my trainer, Brian. He told me we had to "go out in the field." Not sure what that meant, I went along. I was expecting to go to corporate offices and negotiate million dollar contracts; I'll chalk that thought up due to my lack of experience, but instead we arrived in a typical suburban neighborhood. There were your typical one and two story homes, garage doors left open, bicycles and minivans overwhelmed the residents' driveways. You were

encompassed with tree-lined streets carrying the name of Old Oak Drive and George Washington Way. No, today we would not be negotiating contracts with CEO's, but rather going door to door selling coupon books that contained buy one get one for golf courses and pizza shops, arcades and hotel stays. I guess that was my first lesson at school, that sometimes things can seem too good to be true. Needless to say, after getting the 114th door shut in my face, I made a professional decision to find employment elsewhere.

After that, I went from job to job, learning different skills and trades and crafts, each of which still benefits me today. I continued on this path for some time, about five years actually. Then I turned 23 years old, and something changed. The day I turned 23, I woke up, got dressed, and enrolled in school. For some reason, every year prior was just another year. But when I turned 23, I didn't feel so young anymore. There is a Garth Brooks song, "I'm much too young to feel this damn old," and you must have been singing to me, Garth, because I could not have said it better myself. I realized that sure, it is possible to be successful without a college education but, boy, is it difficult. The funny thing is, if I could go back and do it all over again, I wouldn't change a thing. They say the brightest rainbows come from the darkest storms. Whether that is true or not I'm unsure, but I do know that who I now am came from who I once was. I learned about back breaking labor, about working your way up through the ranks, about budgeting and about real friendship. I learned how to interact with people of all creeds, of all ages, and about appreciating what you have, especially when it is you that worked for it. These skills are not something that can be taught by a college professor, rather one has to learn them on their own, and I am grateful at my young age to have had that chance. So if you were to ask me about education, I would recommend a double major to every student; major in your coursework, and major in your life course.