

December 19, 2014

Professor Freyd,

I happened to do a quick google search on JQ Johnson as my interaction with him oh so many years ago has had such a profound impact on my life. I recently had occasion to tell the story to one of my colleagues. Now having read of his passing I wanted to express my late condolences to you and your family and share with you what probably is one of many similar stories

When I was in junior high school my friend Andrew and I got our parents (both Stanford Faculty members) to sign accounts requests for the LOTS system. The purpose was of course for us to play Adventure and other DEC-20 based games. After all what else do 7th/8th graders use computers for in the early 1980s?

We spent many late afternoons and weekends in CERAS playing, even blissfully ignorant of how many undergraduates were queuing up to use the system for actual academic work.

But before too long a man approached us and nicely commented something along the lines of, I don't think you guys are actually students here, right? The gig was up!

But to our surprise he made a deal with us - he offered to let us keep our accounts and access to the DEC20 for the rest of the summer, but it would be so that he could teach us the Pascal programming language and have us do actual valuable stuff.

And that is what he did - Andrew and I each coded tic-tac-toe games in Pascal on the dec-20. Of course you have probably guessed by now that this man was JQ.

But this act by JQ started me in the field of computer programming which led to my getting a job as a programmer at Lockheed Palo Alto research lab as a senior in high school. I spent many summers and winter holidays working there as I finished college (Swarthmore), and by the time i graduated had enough skill and experience to land a job with Andersen Consulting. Now 25 years later I have spent the last 11 years at Visa doing technical product management, which is to say now I get to tell programmers what to code (though occasionally they let me do some coding)

That act of kindness and generosity amazes me to this day. He didn't have to do that, and it probably inconvenienced him. And all for the benefit of two snotty faculty brats! In any case I am so profoundly grateful to him; I thought I would share this story with you.

Happy Holidays to you and your family,

John Jamison
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