

# 1<sup>st</sup> Storyworth: What were your favorite toys as a child?

I am a bit behind because of the holidays, but here goes:

I don't have much recollection of my younger days. For example, I don't recall a specific "soothie" or the like, nor much about my youngest childhood. My earliest perception memory is an anecdote from my Mother that described me as disassembling everything from about 5 years of age, but not getting them back together until about 8. But from then on, my Mom said she never took anything to someone else to repair, because I had an insatiable need to understand how and why things worked. That "repair guru" has been an avocation ever since.

The earliest toys I can recall were mostly plastic models. And that was back when the glue was "Testors", came in a red and white lead tube like toothpaste, and contained toluene, so it would actually dissolve fine parts if I was not careful. I loved to do fine detail work, for example painting the dashboards of car and plane models. I never did sailing ships and the like - I preferred them to be playthings once assembled. But warplanes and cars were the mainstay of my modeling, and almost always injection molded styrene.

The exception, which started about ten years old, was balsa and tissue covered planes, which actually flew. In fact, that was borne out when I repeated ninth grade, because I'd been so bored with school that I didn't do the work, plus the fact I rebelled against the demand that I take a foreign language, whose choices were ONLY latin or french. I had also rebelled against playing piano, despite my parent's doing so, which makes my love for my 12 string guitar that much odder. In retrospect, I was a schmuck, but could not know it at the time. But I will explain that all in future writings.

The specific reference to the balsa issue was that I was allowed to take the "Boces Track" once I had failed 9th grade, so could take shop instead of a language. There, the teacher basically had his hands full keeping us from cutting off fingers, so told us each to pick a project and make it. Most chose simple woodworking like shelves. I decided to make a flying model with a real motor - a glowplug fired type still popular today, which operates like a semi diesel, except the heat of the prior firing keeps the plug hot enough to ignite the next stroke, and they draw the typically castor-oil based fuel in a two-stroke arrangement along the cylinder wall, by use of a reed valve chambered crankcase from the fuel line. See what I mean about how and why? ;-)

Anyway, where things got a bit weird was noticed by a Guidance Counsellor who asked "what's wrong with this picture?" when I made the plane do aerobatics but return to land by me. I was just as lazy then as now, which far more than necessity, has been that mother of invention for most things in life ;-)

Only FAR later did I understand the implication - I had failed algebra, along with a bunch of other normal AP stuff during my first "try" at 9th grade. But NOBODY can build any machine to automatically do much of ANYTHING before (s)he CLEARLY understands MATH. Which implies that there HAD to be some other factors at work, here with ME.

So, to my great good fortune, the Guidance Counselor understood that I was one of those for whom a hybrid path was smartest - let me do the mechanical stuff I liked, but he INSISTED I be returned to AP level work in the main subjects. And he WAS right - once I got away from French I was happy - I took Mechanical Drawing throughout High School, and Literature and World History, with some teachers who MADE me the critical thinker I am to this day. Not that my Mother's Catholic religion was too well served by Al Vinck teaching me what bastards the "Christians" ultimately were, one of the reasons I don't practice a religion today, despite my Mother's insistence that "if you are in my home you will go to my church". You can lead a horse to water, but that's a far cry from getting him to pray about it. One need only look at the "Evangelical" support for Donald Trump to see the hypocrisy.

But, back to the original theme of this treatise; my toys like my books have always tended to be technical. And I took to programming when I entered college as if it could have been a career, based on my aptitude tests at the time. I merely transferred that to machine control logic, but I was one of the earliest to adopt the personal computer as a tool.

My favorite car model was a 1964 Ford Galaxie 500 convertible, which I painted turquoise over white, the latter of which nobody would EVER want ME to actually own in real life, as it would be filthy before it left the showroom ;-). But that was at least prophetic, as my first actually licensed car was a '63 Chevy BelAir wagon, in turquoise, which took me to Clarkson and lasted until I lived in New Britain CT, when the tranny stopped shifting up, which was NOT economically sound in the middle of the 1974 fuel crisis ;-)

One oddity, however, was my poetic bent. I was never a fan of Shakespeare, for example, and still am bored with the language of, say, a "Downton Abbey". But around the 10th grade I started to write poetry, some of which was actually published. And it MUST be clear from reading that I LIKE to write, and have a pretty decent control of the English language. It also has supported my playful spontaneity of spoofing songs, which I LOVE to do, usually in real-time ;-)

In retrospect, I AM sad that I somehow could not foresee the use of a foreign language to me, for which I kicked myself when my career meant it could have been VERY useful. I WILL plan to write more about that subject in later opportunities for this Storyworth plan my daughter has given me.

And I promise to catch up on the "weekly" schedule. Eventually ;-)

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