

How I Got Here – The Importance of Not Overlooking Your Own Backyard

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During the past year, you may have noticed a new name on the *Sound and Vibration* masthead and website. This marks my 12th issue with *S&V*, and I would like our readers to know just how I got here.

I have learned that people asking questions are often expecting certain answers. During my final semester at the Case School of Engineering of Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in Cleveland, OH, many people asked me what I was going to do after graduation. Because I was receiving a B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering, most expected to hear that I was joining the ranks of a large manufacturing firm or heading off to graduate school. With the current economic conditions, some were probably expecting to hear that I was still looking for work. No one expected to hear that I had accepted an editorial position with a magazine in Bay Village, a western suburb of Cleveland.

As a senior in high school, I certainly had no idea that I would go to work for a small engineering magazine after college. I was much too busy trying to decide what college to attend to worry about what I would do afterwards. I had some ideas, but assistant editor was not one of them. I should have known better than to limit myself. Perhaps I was too caught up in my calculus and physics classes to fully appreciate the work I did as the editor of the school newspaper.

Fortunately, my time agonizing over which college to attend was well spent. I chose CWRU over seven other excellent schools to which I applied and was accepted. This was Lesson One in remembering to look in my own backyard. CWRU was a late entry into my college queue even though it was less than 150 miles from my home in Dresden, OH. I had not even considered it until one of my uncles suggested it midway through my senior year of high school. A visit to Cleveland proved that an urban campus can still have a 'homey' feel to it and the faculty, staff and students were very helpful and welcoming. CWRU's well-endowed undergraduate scholarship fund made attendance very attractive

from a financial perspective and I mailed my letter of acceptance on my 18th birthday.


Nearly five years later, I was again agonizing over how to begin the next chapter in my life. I had participated in CWRU's cooperative education program, spending one summer and two 7-month periods working with engineers at manufacturing companies. I had an excellent experience at all three assignments, but somewhere along the way I realized that I did not want a career in manufacturing engineering. I also knew that I wanted a break from academia, ruling out the possibility of graduate school.

Now that my options were somewhat limited in an already dismal economy, I set out to find a job, hoping for something in an exotic location. The search was not going well until one day in my thermal elements design class, taught by the department chair, Dr. Joe Prah. Dr. Prah started class that day by reading an announcement of a job opening that he had received from a Case alumnus (Jack Mowry). The position was for an assistant editor at *Sound and Vibration* magazine in nearby Bay Village, OH – right in my own backyard. I listened with half-interest like the rest of the class, but fortunately my previous lesson in not overlooking my own backyard prevented me from missing Lesson Two. Something in my brain noted that this opportunity was worth further consideration. A few days later I then approached Dr. Prah and asked for the contact information.

After reading over the job description several times, I prepared application materials. I gathered writing samples, photographs and my resumé, and prepared a cover letter. I stuffed it all into a big manila envelope and mailed it across town. Exactly two days later I received an e-mail from Jack Mowry, stating that we needed to get together. The rest as they say, is history. The interview process went splendidly; *S&V* offered me the job and I accepted. I finished the semester in grand fashion and graduated in May of '02. After a two-month tour of the western United

States, I returned to Cleveland and began work in August '02, right in my own backyard.

Many people were surprised with my job choice, but it was just what I was looking for. My mechanical engineering classes and extracurricular interests prepared me well for my work at *S&V*. My technical writing skills were refined during the years at CWRU through numerous laboratory and project reports. I often found more satisfaction in writing a good report than in the actual work I had done on the project. The Engineering Core included many courses featuring group work, helping me develop the people skills that are so essential in working at a small company. The deep integration of computers at CWRU also helped prepare me for life at *S&V*. In addition to digitally preparing the magazine, I also maintain the SandV.com website and the small network of computers at the office. My personal interest in photography has kept the right half of my brain ticking and those creative thoughts have often been valuable while preparing the latest issue or web update. The mechanical engineering curriculum at CWRU covered a broad range of subject matter, giving me excellent background knowledge in the topics covered by *S&V*.

After a year on the job, I am still enjoying it every day. A lot of work goes into producing a business magazine every month, but there is great variety in that work – each day is interesting and full of new challenges. The staff at *S&V* is wonderful to work with, helping me feel at home from the first day. Through *S&V*, I have met and been in contact with many intelligent, helpful and even famous people. I get to use a wide range of my skills and training, and there is great satisfaction in seeing the fruits of our labors come out in print every month. I am glad to be "on board" with *S&V* and I look forward to the ride. One and a half years ago I would never have believed it – everything I wanted in a job, right in my own backyard. 

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