Meeting Robert Even

Robert and I meet for the first time in our English Composition class. He stands before me with a relaxed posture and we exchange our greetings. “Hello,” he says in his calm, cool voice, “Shall we begin?”

I gesture to the chair across the table from me and we both take our seats. He sits, laid back in the chair, with his arms upon the table. His finely combed blonde hair reflects the lights of the room, almost at me, as we start.

We began by talking about his home life before he decided to come back to college and pursue his education. Robert grew up as a native to the northern side of Fort Wayne. He was the upper middle child of a larger family with six children, all of whom attended Snider High School. Asking him what he enjoyed during high school he responded, “Math, I really like history too.” Going more in depth to this answer we find out that he was a big fan of studying what happened during both World Wars and ancient Egyptian history. After high school Robert did not feel the need to go to school right away, opting instead to work for a few years while he figured out his life.

Looking at him you would never guess that Robert was hard at work for construction companies for the past five years of his life. He appears to have a slender build, but underneath what you can see there is naturally built muscle. Right after high school Robert went to work at Indiana Refractiories where he melted metals in furnaces at high temperatures. This only lasted one year though, and afterward he moved onto his construction jobs. For two years after the foundry he worked at Leisure Design, where he drove to people’s houses and built pools and patio equipment. This is where he found his, now, ex girlfriend. Shortly after meeting her she became pregnant with his child, and Robert realized he needed something with a higher pay to support all three of them. Thus this leads to Robert’s current job at A&B Construction.

Fast forwarding three years and Robert’s life has changed in many ways. He still works at A&B Construction and takes care of his two year old son, also named Robert, during the night. Seeming like he had a good life ahead of him for his family I wondered why he decided to come back to school. He said to me that his girlfriend broke up with him six months ago and construction had “Taken a toll on my body at this point...”

At this point I had to know more about how he was going to make it through school. After all balancing school, work, and a small child can be a very stressful situation. What he told me is that he has cut back on work, only now working two days a week. He is also not going to school full time, opting instead to go just below full time. Combining these gives him a lot more free time to be able to watch and spend time with his son.

“That can’t be all you do though, what about hobbies at home?” I asked him, sensing that there was more to him that just constant work.

He answered my question with, “I play guitar…” This was an unexpected turn of events as, just looking at him and hearing his backstory one would not figure him to also be a musician. Robert says that he has played guitar for “...almost two years…” but does not have any favorite songs he likes to play. Having played for two years, an obvious question was on my mind, “Do you play in a band?” He replied that he did not and that he likes to “freestyle” music when he plays, preferring to come up with his own music as he plays.

There is another thing that Robert likes to do in his free time other than playing music, and that is watching Netflix. This is a typical answer of young college students at this time and was much less surprising than his previous answers. He told me that his favorite genre of movies and tv shows is comedy, and that he is currently watching shows such as Bojack Horseman and Shameless. His answers for his favorites also are screaming his age with Tosh.0 and Rick and Morty.

After getting to know Robert’s home life I decided it was time to switch the conversation to what his future looks like. We began with school and what he hopes to accomplish here at Ivy Tech. As a 24 year old he was afraid to come back, thinking he may be one of the older students in his classes and maybe not adjusting well to being back in class with younger people. These fears were dashed though when he walked in his first day and noticed there are people in his classes that were as old as, if not older, than he was. His other biggest fear was”...just reacclimating to, you know, designating time to study again.”

Looking at what Robert hopes to accomplish here at school is no small feet. He is having a hard time choosing between two majors, but he realizes he has time to decide as this is his first semester here at the school. He currently is pursuing Computer Science because the field itself sounds interesting to him. He has no programming experience as it is, but he is”...willing to learn.” The biggest problem he sees with this field is that, according to future predictions, it is showing a negative job growth over the next ten years.

With that information Robert is also debating on pursuing a psychology degree. He believes that, with having to deal with such a large family, that he has grown to be very good at showing compassion and empathy. Combining that with his problem solving skills from liking math he thinks this would be a good fit for a degree for him if Computer Science doesn’t work out.

Whichever degree Robert chooses he plans on transferring out of Ivy Tech to get his Bachelor’s degree. His ideal universities at the moment would be IPFW or IU here in Indiana. He would like to choose one of these so that he doesn’t have to move far, or at all, to be able to finish his degree while still working to support his child.

I stand up and let him know that this is all the time we have for the interview. “It was great to meet you,” I say as I reach out to shake his hand.

“You too,” He says as he firmly grips my hand.

From there we both part ways, both of us on our way to our next classes. I think over who I met and what he told me. He has to have a tough life trying to balance everything, a child, work, and school. Luckily he knows enough not to overexert himself and have some fun every once and awhile, playing his guitar and watching shows.

I look back over my shoulder one last time to see him getting his things packed to walk out the door and think to myself, “Good luck.”