

Pen Sketch

I was born at a very early age, and I come from a family of Adventurers.

We have been adventurers for generations, but adventurers don't always have it easy. I wouldn't say the family at large has been successful at creating fortunes or grand legacies, but they generally try their best and are simply good people with big hearts and lots of individuality and courage. One thing that most of us do have in common is a thirst for adventure, and it is evident in many stories handed down over the years. I've been very fortunate to live an adventurous life, and have travelled all around the world - from Asia to Africa to Antarctica, in pursuit of the next adventure myself.

I was born in [REDACTED] a small town in [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. My parents were both from [REDACTED] and met in college. He had just returned from the [REDACTED] War, which was a very troubling and harrowing experience, and they were very young when they fell in love and got married in a simple ceremony. They left college without graduating and moved to [REDACTED] to help his father in his mining business, which he had left my grandmother to pursue. Mining and prospecting runs in my father's side of the family back generations, and even today he spends half his time in Latin jungles on - you guessed it - adventures.

My mother was only 22 when I was born, and my brother came just 12 months later. The relationship didn't last and they soon separated, and haven't talked much in a long time. My mother remarried my stepfather, who was by no means a good guy, and not a provider. She worked very hard to provide for the family, but both my brother and I started working very young - at 11 and 12, to help out. We were very poor growing up - ridiculously poor, and isolated due to my stepfather's penchant for religion and manic control. I wouldn't say it was a good experience, but I learned the benefit of hard work early, and was lucky to have many good and positive influences outside the family to inspire and encourage me.

I worked very hard in school and suffered the trials of a nerd - a combination of intellectual desire to learn and poverty don't make you very popular in school - but the work paid off and I won scholarships to a prestigious private university - [REDACTED]. With my best friend, we took off at 18 on a cross-country road trip to begin our lives, an adventure that did more to shape me than almost anything else.

Along the way, driving from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] we had a great adventure, dominated by fears of money running out, the car breaking down, and the boredom of tedious driving. Suffice it to say I made it to [REDACTED], with the car giving out a block away from campus, suggesting a divine providence or guardian angel that got me there safe and sound.

In university, life was instantly different - I was suddenly confident, handsome and popular, and very much enjoyed my time there, studying economics and international development. I had to work very hard to keep the scholarships, and with no money I soon learned an important lesson about survival: you can do it if you have to! I worked and played and even went abroad to study, in Brussels, my sophomore year. An important lesson from that time was that my situation growing up, while difficult, afforded me freedom, as I was not constricted by the wishes of my parents. Instead, it forced me to be creative to figure out how to keep up with my rich friends on limited circumstances. So while my friends took trains to the south of France that Brussels spring, I hitchhiked, and later I found ways to explore Europe all the way to the Arctic and finally settled for the summer to bartend in Greece. It seems quaint and easy now, but at the time it felt very risky and hard. You'll see. Learning to live with presence and to explore is something many people fail to do in life.

The moment I finished university, another friend and I decided that instead of graduate school the thing to do was to go to Fiji to think about our futures. This plan, concocted at a neighbourhood tiki bar the summer before graduation, lacked one important component: funds. So instead I scraped the money to get a one way ticket to Bangkok, and off we went for a new adventure. After 6 weeks of walking around Southeast Asia, camping in the golden triangle, nearly drowning in Bali and the like, we found ourselves in Hong Kong with friends parents, looking for work.



[REDACTED]

I had intended to go back home, but as we just had a one-way ticket odd jobs, modelling and bartending led to a job-job, and I found myself in publishing, [REDACTED] At 23, I was traveling to Thailand and the Philippines, Korea and Taiwan to learn the ropes, and in another year I landed a job at [REDACTED] managing their marketing in Asia. Suddenly the world included India and Pakistan, Japan and Australia, and I was fortunate to have a charmed life in Hong Kong for many years filled with ridiculous stories.

In [REDACTED] I wrote a book [REDACTED] At the same time my company moved me to London and my focus became truly global – with adventures in Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town, Tuscany and Antarctica – where I lived in a trailer for a month filming video art. All crazy by the standards of my friends, but part of that same adventurous narrative for me. Eventually I left the magazine world and built my own company, where the adventures continued – balls in Venice, fundraisers in Hong Kong, projects in Vietnam and Beijing and Miami and St. Moritz and on and on, next launching the first digital currency and other cool things. I made friends in London, fell in love, and built a home and a life. I've been very fortunate for the first half of my life and feel blessed in many ways.

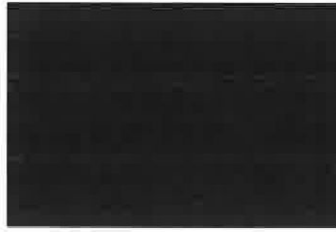
When I was 25 or so I started doing yoga, and this is a practice I highly recommend to enhance a person's self discovery and sense of self. There are other ways to find yourself, but I believe the surest way is through the breath, and contemplation via meditation. With this in mind I've visited meditation centers in Sri Lanka and the north of England, experienced reiki and the healing power of conscious energetics, and learned to believe that we create what we want in life through our thoughts and actions. We give out what we put in, and everything is connected. In this way, I came to think about becoming a donor, because every action, if done with the right intention, is destined to be good in some way. It's a kind of spirituality and philosophy which I believe approximates religion, but perhaps a bit more reconciled with science than some others would like to believe. If we are all part of One, its just our perspectives that limit us.

The women in our family have always been strong, and identifiable. On my mother's side, who are best described as solid and conservative, some of the adventures in the family are truly epic, from my great-great grandmother, who crossed from Illinois to Oregon in a covered wagon, keeping notes as one of the few literate women of her day – fighting Indians and starvation before finally settling in Oregon to become prosperous dairy farmers. My grandmother was one of the first private female pilots in California, and would fly her daughters to lunch in the northern California forests to see their dad, a lumberjack working deep in the woods in harrowing conditions. He eventually built their house with his bare hands, and still cuts a bellowing voice in his jeans and overalls. They divorced too, and Grandma has since had her pick of men, [REDACTED] Her name is [REDACTED] and the family name, [REDACTED] would make a great middle name for generations to come. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My mother's family has been in America since the 1700s, and they are classic Pennsylvania Dutch, English and Irish, with roots stretching from Chicago and Pennsylvania on one side to South Carolina on the other.

On my father's side there are hints of tragedy and a more exotic flair. They were English/German and what we call dark dutch – which might have meant Spanish in Amsterdam dating from the 1500s. They came to America early, but it is all a bit fuzzy. Somewhere back there, a Sephardic Jew allegedly met an American Indian in Oklahoma and they ran off to LA (such pairing being generally unapproved back then) and somehow they must have ended up in the mix, since my genetics show 94% Northern European, 5.7% Southern European and .3% American Indian/Asian ancestry. At any rate, my grandfather was given his name after the early death of his father, and his mother remarried a man who laid many of LA's sidewalks [REDACTED] For whatever reason (it runs in the blood) they ended up gold mining [REDACTED] near Yosemite, where my father spent his younger years. A tragic car accident [REDACTED] eventually led to my grandmother, [REDACTED] passing away and I never got to meet her. It was a story too sad to tell, but I often felt a connection to her, such that in elementary school I started a novel about a woman driving and having an accident – only it wasn't until 20 years later I knew I was telling a story of her when I finally heard an eerie rendition told over a Christmas drinking session with my half-sister. I sometimes wonder if reincarnation happens, or if I have a small piece of her inside me, and I really felt she may have always been my guardian angel, helping me to experience such a charmed life.

[REDACTED]



For my father at 18 the result of his mother's tragic death was a subsequent enlistment to [REDACTED] where he was caught in that terrible war in his youngest, most formative years. Highly intelligent, he never quite aced the execution part of life, and was never one that you could call "reliable". It's okay, nobody's perfect, but he kept his promises to his fellow soldiers, wearing a beard to this day in honour of a fallen friend. He also named me after his machine gun, (which I always found distasteful), but he said it saved his life on many occasions, poking out from a helicopter sweeping the jungles. [REDACTED] was what they called me as I grew up. A generation later, in [REDACTED], I stole a tile from a POW camp similar to one he had been held in. He didn't want it. On my father's side these names ring true – [REDACTED], and in my generation [REDACTED]

Of course there are many stories and adventures in any person's life, but I think it runs in the blood for us to be courageous, independent thinkers, to overcome adversity, to love nature and the outdoors, to be principled but spiritual, and to have a thirst for life in all its fullness. Honesty and forthrightness haven't brought us wealth and fame and fortune, but enjoyment of life and drive to achieve and experience which is another wealth. Importantly, I would say everyone in my family is intelligent – from a creative mother who could have been a fashion designer to a geologist father who always innovates, it's a legacy that goes back generations, and one which you, child, will take forward in your genes. But you will have to work hard and earn your integrity – nothing worth having gets handed to us on a silver platter.

