

As I turned 36 yesterday, I started to reminisce a little about what things have helped define my life. I am not talking about family or friends, but actual things.

The first that came to mind was Games, more specifically video games. Now, I am too old to be a millennial - so I of course have not had computers in my life since I was born. However, I have had computers in my life from pretty much the first memories I have - and that is around 4 or 5 years old.

First we I remember us having an Apple II and playing Star Trek with my dad. After that it was a ZX Spectrum+ with a Micro Drive. My dad had only a few games for this, but I strongly remember Ant Attack - one of the first survival horror games!. Somewhere around this time I discovered my dads Acetronic MPU 1000, This was my introduction to multi-player games as we would spend hours playing Space War, Golf, Tank Plane Battle and Space Invaders. That system came out many times over the years!



Space War



Acetronic MPU 1000

Next up was the Amstrad PCW 8512 - a personal word processor with a green and black screen. This was when I really started to get into games. Strike Force Harrier, Tau Ceti II, Starglider II and of course, Head Over Heels! It was also about this time that I got my first GameBoy (maybe a year or two after). Suddenly I was able to play games anywhere - well anywhere I had light!



Head Over Heels



Strike Force Harrier

Now game the big one. This was the defining moment in my life long love of gaming. The Commodore 64. This came about because I had wanted to start coding. I had been doing some with the Amstrad, but I wanted to be able to play games and code in my room. So, I unpacked the old Spectrum to discover it no longer worked. So, my parents agreed to get me a new computer. After a little research we agreed that Commodore 64 would be ideal. It had a massive catalogue of games at this time and was the perfect platform for a wannabe bedroom coder. God I loved that machine. By the end of its life it was only working by virtue of a 9 volt battery blue tacked to the cassette drive to power it!

Somewhere along the line I also had a SNES - I can't remember exactly when I got it, but I remember sitting there on Christmas day forcing my parents to watch me play StarWing (Star Fox for those not in the UK) and telling them all about the FX chip and how this was just the first step into the future of full 3D games!



Star Fox

Once the C64 had finally died, I was bought a PC. My dad and I both got one, an Escom Pentium 75 - a beast of a machine at the time.

This brought me up to about 16 years old. After this computers and computer games continued to be a fixed part of my life. Many consoles came and went, but still video games are a consistently important part of my life and now both my daughters have caught the bug - something I am very happy about!

✘ It is worth giving a massive mention to Star Wars at this stage. My memories of Star Wars go back just as far as my memories of computer games - if not further. I have such happy memories of the Christmas that I got the Millennium Falcon. My dad created a new scene in my room every night when I was asleep for about two weeks! Star Wars also got me reading in my late teens. As a dyslexic, I found it tedious to read - however Star Wars books taught me how to really enjoy reading. Batman comics have a little to do with that as well. They both continue to be a massive influence on my life to this day.

✘ I stop at 16 as something else kicked in at this point, not just hormones, but guitar. When I was around 15 or 16 I was told I had M.E. I had been struggling at school both physically and mentally. I was never all that sporty, but I enjoyed rowing and tennis. Around this age I was unable to do anything physical like that and was finding myself unable to get out of bed some days. I had a little guitar I had got from a car boot sale for about £6, so I started to play it. My Mum agreed that if I could earn a few chords, she would go halves with me on an electric guitar. I got a white Charvette with a reverse "Dinky" head on it. I played this guitar to death over the years! Literally. It has almost no electronics now. It is a "project" for the future these days. Over the years I have owned a few guitars and still play whenever I can. If you are curious what Gamification "guru" sounds like - [click here for a few songs!](#)

✘ After university, the next big thing was Martial Arts. I enrolled at a local Spirit Combat JuJitsu club. Over the years I managed to get my 3rd Dan Black belt and even ran a club for a while. After about 10 years of regular training, other commitments and injury slowed my training down bit. I think it has been about 2 years since I last stepped into the Dojo - something I will fix at some point. If you have ever seen me speak at an event, you have martial arts to thank (or curse). Had it not been for the confidence I learned from that, I would never have been able to stand up in front of an audience!

The current defining “thing” in my life is of course gamification. It will be interesting how long that influences me - it has been three or so years so far!

Now of course, this is not taking into account other massive things in my life. It is hard to ignore my family’s influence on my life! My parents, wife and children of course! This was more a look back at a few things that have helped shaped me.

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