

I grew up in a home where the only available reading materials were the daily newspaper, a set of old encyclopedias, and a few old junior high and high school texts. Although I have five older brothers and sisters, only two of them were and still are avid readers. One of them, my sister Becky, took great interest in me as a child. She and her husband would always encourage me to read. For Christmas one year, they bought me my first real books. These included Little Men, The Call of the Wild, and one or two others. Although I was too young to read these when I first received them, I treasured them for a long time.

In elementary school, I remember loving the stories the teacher read to us, and I loved going to the library. The first books I remember taking an interest in were music and poetry books. There was this one rather large volume of poetry that I checked out at least a dozen times while there. I really enjoyed it, even though I didn't really understand most of the poems. My last few years of elementary school were rather fun because I excelled in the classroom. I liked learning. It was a pleasure to learn so many different facts about things. I remember at one point, I checked out this series of children's books on each of the fifty states. By the time I was done with it, I knew the name of each state, each capital, and the rankings in population and area of each state and city in the country.

My reading interests continued through junior high. Although I enjoyed reading at this time, it alienated me from most of my peers and childhood friends. This period of my life was one of the most difficult. My parents weren't getting along, and I was losing my old friends to new ones and to different interests. I became involved in the school orchestra and

was known as a "bookworm." While all the guys were playing football and baseball, I was hanging out with all the "weirdos" in the library. During this period, I was able to buy books in English class through the Scholastic Book Services newsletters. I remember purchasing stuff by Jeannette Eyerly and other authors who dealt with issues affecting teenagers. I also bought one of the first paperback editions of Dune, simply because I had bonus credits and it was one of the most expensive "free" books available.

After junior high, I decided to persuade my parents to let me attend Salpointe, a Catholic private school, instead of Tucson High, the school where all my other brothers and sisters went. This was because my best friend was going to go there. They reluctantly agreed to let me attend, and I was on my way to a totally different world, one which would change my life. My feelings of alienation increased there for a while. I thought my best friend from junior high would still be my best friend in high school, but once we got there he went his way and I went mine. I proceeded to join the band and I also became a regular user of the library. In this period, I started reading books by Frank Bonham and S.E. Hinton. These works contributed to an awakening sense of consciousness that I was experiencing at the time. I began to realize that I was different from all the Anglo kids, and different from most of the Mexican kids too. I loved to read, I was intelligent, unathletic, and very quiet. In my sophomore year, I joined the newspaper staff. The moderator, Jane Cruz, and her husband Ron, took a very strong interest in me and a friend named Richard. They were both actively involved in social and political issues outside the confines of school, and they turned us on to what was happening. They helped<sup>45</sup> gain an understanding of who we were, instilling in us a sense of pride in our culture that hadn't existed before. I thus began to read more serious works on Mexican history. I began to learn about my own people and where I came from. Richard and I participated in boycotts and pickets when

other kids our age were attending sports events and dating. At the same time that this was all taking place, I started doing volunteer work in the school library, hanging out chatting with Karen and Jeannette, the librarians, until late in the afternoon. I'd stick around and help them re-shelve books and file various things. I loved it. To me it seemed like the things I was learning in the classroom were far less important than the reading I was doing on my own. At this point my reading included stuff on politics and music, especially folk music. I devoured Daybreak, Joan Baez's autobiography, and Dylan: An Intimate Biography, by Anthony Scaduto. By the time I became a senior, Richard, Ron and Jane had all moved on. I felt very isolated, as the atmosphere at school was becoming more conservative every day. One day I decided to quit school and enter the University of Arizona. I left Salpointe in October of 1976, passed my GED test in December and was enrolled at the University in January.

I continued to read all kinds of books in college, some required, some not. I also started my own collection of books and records, all the while hanging out in used book and record stores and libraries. For a very short while I worked at the UofA Media Center, but I already had a job at a grocery store, so I left it. I worked my way through college and received my B.A. in psychology in 1982. By the time I graduated from the UofA, I considered myself a full-fledged radical, with extensive reading in Marxism, history, popular culture, psychology and music. Reading has been such an important part of my growth and development that I don't know where I'd be without it.

In closing, both my parents never made past the eighth grade because they had to help support their families. They've worked all their lives and are now virtually broke. My dream is to be able to help and encourage others to read, because I feel that it is the key to knowledge and

change. With my degree in library science I hope to contribute to the advancement of my people and of the human race. I am still actively involved in the community, and I hope to continue to be as a librarian. Right now I have my own three hour radio show on KXCI. Reading about music has really made a difference and has helped me immensely. Someday I'd like to open an alternative book and record store, and I feel that a degree in library science will be an invaluable aid in pursuing all these goals.

Very interesting - with  
your enthusiasm, I'm sure  
you will have an  
impact on the  
Profession

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