

Tony's Many "Desk Jobs"

I have been very fortunate to have had many desk jobs during my working career which began when I was around 10 years old. I use the term desk job somewhat loosely as you will see that most of these allowed me to have experiences far from the physical office locations (and I didn't even have a desk in some cases).

Here we go:



Yes, I'm a paid entertainer. Having taken accordion lessons since I was about seven years old, my golden opportunity came when my Dad offered my services at age 10 to play at a grammar school graduation party in a neighbor's basement. I was scared to death because I wasn't really very good and had to read sheet music for all except the Julida Polka (which I had memorized - and still remember parts to this date). I started playing songs but made many mistakes so after each attempt at sheet music, I replayed the Julida Polka. After probably the fifth polka, the host offered to pay me if I would stop playing and go home. I called my Dad and it was probably the shortest paid entertainment gig that ever happened in my neighborhood. The quickest \$5 I ever made.



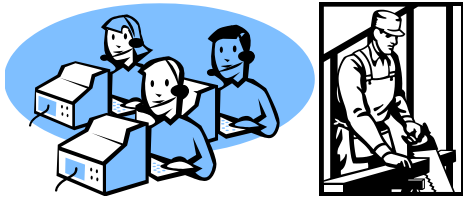
Mop boy twice a week when I was 12 at a photo finishing lab was my next real job. (I didn't have a desk there, but I did have the use of a mop, bucket and broom.) Though not really legally old enough to get a job, my Mom arranged the job at the place she worked part-time. It was my first real feeling of financial independence – I now had spending money.



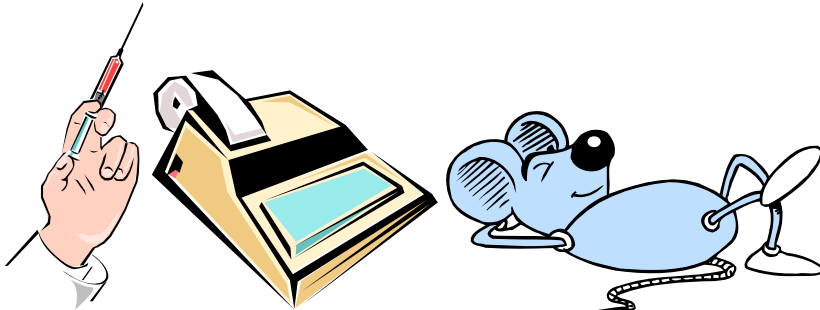
At age 16, I began my illustrious career at the Chicago's Last Department Store Hot Dog Stand on the far southeast side of Chicago just blocks away from the Indiana state border. I began by sitting down (no desk, but a stool) in front of 50-pound bags of Idaho potatoes and becoming proficient in peeling the entire bag in record time – in fact I was faster than the automatic potato peeling machine. What pride I took in this accomplishment. I eventually moved up to managing the stand and kept this job until my second year in college at IIT. I loved the kosher red hots, hand-

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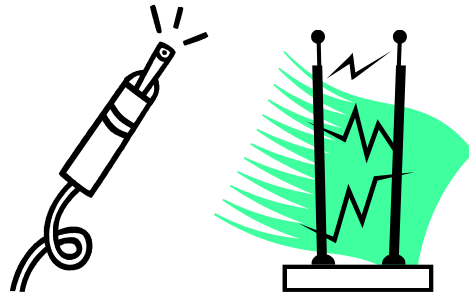
made French fries, milk shakes, fried chicken and shrimp, and corned beef sandwiches on rye. I had the good fortune of working with many African American guys who taught me a thing or two (.....)! The owners (Mr. Jacobs and his sons Jack and Les) were very appreciative of my hard work and they helped me in many ways, including helping me apply for National Defense student loans for college, wiring me and my Triangle fraternity brothers money to get back from Madison, Wisconsin after we were dropped off there as a part of Hell Week initiation, and even years later selling us our wedding bands. What a full service operation!



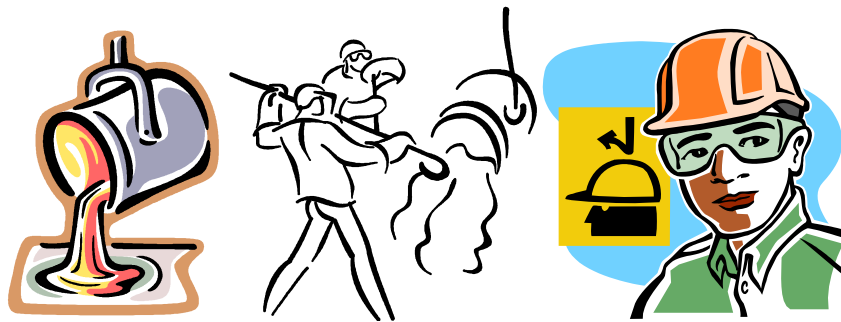
In that same timeframe, I also had a short stint at telemarketing for a remodeling contractor. I detested that desk job because you had to sit at the desk and make random calls from long lists of potential prospects. The hit rate was infinitesimal and thus you didn't make any money unless you were fast, good at talking fast, and lucky.



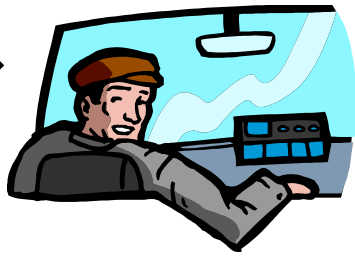
On to the rat lab at the IIT Research Institute during my days from sophomore on – a job passed down to Triangle Fraternity members (a fraternity of architects and engineers) as seniors graduated and went on to full time jobs. Here we injected mice and rats with experimental drugs in a cancer drug screening program. We also removed the tumors and weighed them to gather statistical data. Then we calculated results for the various drugs which were then selected for further trials if they showed any promise of being helpful. That was the “glamorous” part – the rest was clean-up work (of the grossest kind). This was a great weekend job which helped with spending money throughout my six years at the fraternity house – it took me a little longer to graduate since I was a co-op student paying my own way through college.



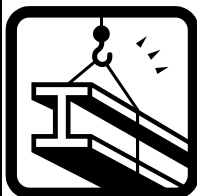
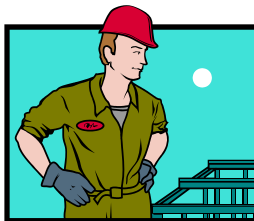
The co-op assignments I had during undergraduate years included three assignments at Western Electric Hawthorne Works in Cicero, Illinois (the famous social studies made here showed that even negative attention to workers improved their productivity) – this was a part of AT&T. These were in the electrical drafting group, the test design group (I worked with the guy who developed the first ferrite memory cores which would be used in the electronic pushbutton switching systems for telephones – the beginning of a new age in telephonic signal transfer), and the destructive electrical component test lab where we ran tests on capacitors, resistors and whatever else the engineers wanted tested. I worked in the test design group the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated – since we had responsibility for the frequency standard at Hawthorne Works, we listened to the events unfolding that terrible day. I'll never forget the gloom we all felt at the local bar that evening.



My other co-op assignments were at U.S. Steel Corporation, South Works. I became a steel driving man – what fun! As part of the management training program, I spent time in all of the major departments: Maintenance Division (machine shop for large equipment), Alloy Bar Mill, Power Division, Open Hearth Furnaces, Blast Furnaces, Structural Rolling Mill, and Foundry. As one assignment while a trainee, I did a safety project and found out that South Works was known as The Butcher Shop back in the days of the Industrial Revolution (around 1907) when 1200 injuries or deaths occurred each year at the plant (out of a work force of 10,000). Hearses (and ambulances for the lucky ones) used to wait in line outside the plant waiting for business. One of my fondest memories as a trainee was the summer my friend Jim and I spent roaming the steel mill (many of the 284 acres) making an inventory of crane wheels – many located outdoors under layers of pigeon doo doo – using monster calipers to determine their diameters. When we split up going each to a different location, the laughter didn't end.



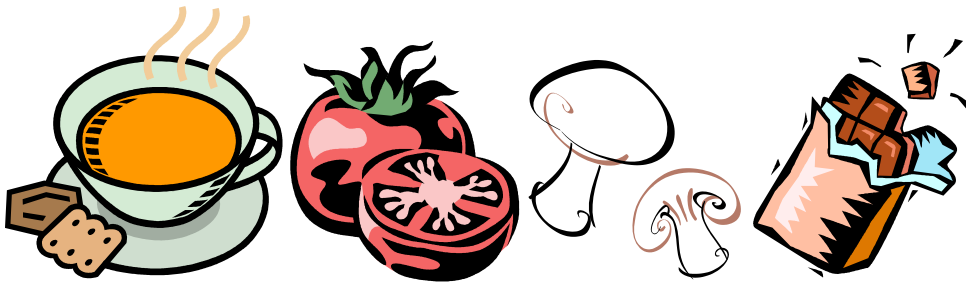
The last year or so during undergraduate days at IIT was spent driving a Commercial Taxi Cab. The firm had mostly a south side of Chicago clientele, with many fares going downtown. I worked 12-hour night shifts beginning at around 6 PM. The cabs all had manual shift transmissions. Once, the shift linkage on my cab was slipping so I had to get out of the cab each time I stopped to reset the linkage. This did not make my passenger very happy! Needless to say another cab had to take my passenger and I exchanged for a slightly better one. This is how I learned to tip the dispatcher before being assigned a cab. My fondest memories include finding fares to the far north side so I could spend time with my fiancée and share leisurely dinners. Cab 54 where are you would have been appropriate since I was out of communication with the dispatcher for several hours each night. I also recall looking for a fare back to the south side or downtown from the Edgewater Beach Hotel (which has since been demolished).



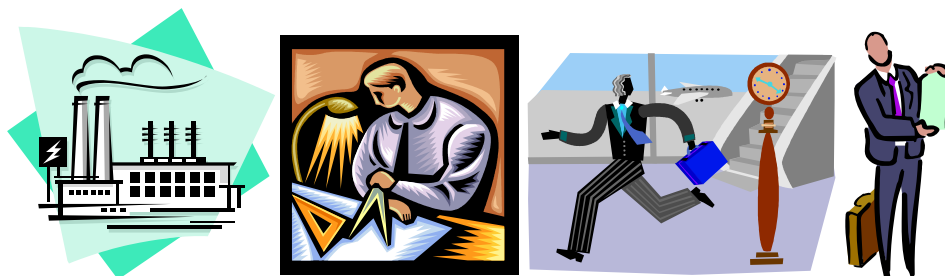
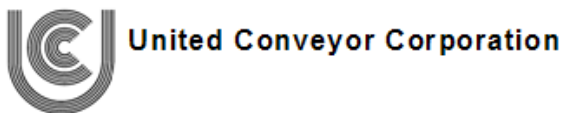
My grandfather

(beer keg on Open Hearth floor)

Upon graduation with my Bachelor Of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering (B.S.E.E.), I took a work assignment at US Steel as Maintenance Shift Foreman in the 34' structural rolling mill. I rotated 8-hour shifts every week (7am to 3pm, 3pm to 11pm, and 11pm to 7am). It was strange getting Monday and Friday off sometimes as my 2 days off for the week. I commuted to the far South Side a distance over 25 miles each way but aside from the shift work I loved the mill. My grandfather was a second helper in the open hearths at US Steel and when they had a "good heat" (meaning large batch of purified iron) they would bring a keg of beer to the furnace floor for the workers to share and celebrate (I would have preferred a bonus). My uncle also worked there as a "blower" on the blast furnaces (which means the foreman who is responsible for tapping the blast furnace outlet with dynamite so the liquid molten iron could run out in sand lined troughs into ladle cars to be transported to the open hearths for further processing). My brother also worked there for awhile as an electrician. I still remember asking for 30¢ worth of gas for the green Plymouth with full service from the attendant and having enough gas for the return home.



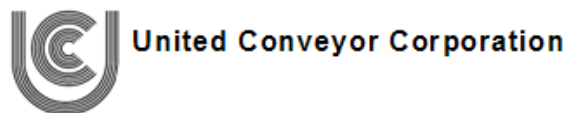
The steel mill was a good place but it was time to move on to yet another desk job – Campbell Soup Company on 35th Street on the south side. I learned how to be a really environmental friendly commuter – I commuted from the far north side to the south side taking a bus, an elevated train/subway, and two more buses. I learned every bump on the bus ride after the subway as I had to balance my morning coffee and donut on Archer Avenue. I started designing electrical control systems for soup manufacturing lines and then got to be a project manager and had the pleasure of installing the first automatic tortilla machine at the mushroom farm for the migrant Mexican workers, and my pride was installing the second Chunky Soup Line in record time. I also worked on the automated spaghetti-o's production line where we made the pasta shapes for the soup. It was great when Campbell Soup bought Pepperidge Farm and Godiva Chocolate – we could buy seconds of their products (and soup as well) at the company store. I once paid off a traffic cop with 2 cases of soup for giving me a bye on a minor speeding ticket on the way home. He wanted chicken noodle and tomato; the cans had no labels and were dented so you had to identify the contents by code numbers stamped on the bottom. A fond memory was tomato season when trucks were lined up on 35th Street waiting to be unloaded – in those days the tomatoes were monsters (later, smaller hybrids were developed which were more suitable for automated harvesting machinery – too bad).



Then on to UCC where I held many positions including electrical designer, mechanical project engineer, sales engineer, and finally Utility Sales Manager. I got to visit many coal fired power plants, and ended up negotiating license agreements in Italy, Spain and India. This gave me the opportunity to travel worldwide to Italy, Spain, France, The Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong and India. I later came back to UCC at the end of my work career.



Some consulting work and being an electronics components manufacturers' representative with my other brother filled in another 2+ years, but I was again ready for yet another desk job – this time with Reimelt Corporation headquartered in Germany with US headquarters in Tampa, Florida. This was an opportunity that came up just in time as I had to start making real money again. Reimelt is a prestigious company with a good reputation so we got projects with the big food companies (Nabisco cookie projects, General Mills/Pillsbury dough plants, Kellogg's cereal plants and Pepperidge Farm cookie plants). This allowed family visits to Germany since Christina ended up being the au pair for our German owner for several years. It allowed Myra and me to visit parts of Germany as well as a trip to Vienna and eventually to Budapest on a Danube River boat. It was just after communism fell in Hungary (Janos Kadar et. al. bye-bye). We appreciated having a beer at the local Burger King in Budapest – those Europeans know how to live. It also gave me the opportunity to travel to Germany (and Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Canada, and Mexico) on business trips – mostly when we had trade shows to attend. One of the trips was to Berlin just after the wall came down – I walked through Checkpoint Charlie without being shot or searched. I was fortunate to be a part of senior management so I attended meetings once or twice a year in Germany after the company was bought by an investment group. This also brought me into plastics plants since they owned Henschel mixers (used in mixing plastic raw materials).



Anyway, back to UCC until the end of January 2011 at which time I will officially retire from a formal desk job. I have to thank UCC for the opportunity to head-up a new small company they bought (Chicago Conveyor Corporation) for just over 2½ years. It was challenging. Since its integration into UCC, it is finally time to move on.

Not bad for a steel drivin' guy from the South Side of Chicago.

I'm lucky and thankful that so many jobs (and desks) came my way.

Work has been important to me and has given meaning to my life and allowed me to support my family and share my good fortune.

Tony – Revised 8Oct10