

Donor 1919

Q & A

What are your career goals?

At the time of writing I continue my self-employed business as a touring musician and freelancer. It is my hope that, during the year, I'll be making a transition to working in coding and machine learning full time.

What are your interests?

My interests and careers luckily align very often! While music is my formal career, art and design are my hobbies (I was forced to choose one over the other early on). I'm lucky enough to do both all the time. Outside of that, I'm a second generation comic book fan and love film and television. I'm a passionate skater (having gotten old and creaky and moved from the hard stuff to slalom inline) and used to run a skate shop at one stage.

What are your skills?

Professional musician and band leader (third generation and the family business, a double bass player principally), Professional artist and designer, Professional mix engineer, Skating and urban sports, Martial artist, Computer coding

What are your favourite books, films, TV shows?

Tough question!

Books - The Name of the Wind (Patrick Rothfuss), Sandman (Neil Gaiman), Something More Than Night (Ian Tregillis), Player of Games (Ian M Banks)

Films - The Rocketeer, Scott Pilgrim vs the World, Spider-Man 2 (the Sam Raimi version)

TV - Firefly (Joss Whedon), Archer, The 4400

Music (because I can't not write this down can I?) - JD McPherson, Amos Lee, Everything Everything, Metric

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What are your favourite foods?

If it's bad for you, I'll be eating it too much! If someone else was buying my last meal, they'd probably pick pizza and cookies.

Do you consider yourself an active person? What sort of sports do you like?

I'm an active person in general, however team sports rarely do much for me. I've been a swimmer since before I remember and skating has always been a passion of mine.

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Goodwill Message

Hey there kid,

Greetings from the dim and distant past. By the time you read this it'll be at least sixteen years in the future, coming on seventeen. Maybe more. It's hard to know what the world is going to be like for you then, let alone all the challenges that you've had getting up to this point already. However let me start by saying I'm glad you've chosen to read this. I hope this message finds you well.

I'm sure that you have a lot of questions and a rainbow of feelings about this whole donor situation and, frankly, you're justified in doing so. You may be finding this all out just now so take your time and do things at your own pace. I'll be as honest as I can with you and hope that it makes enough sense that you'll forgive me for not being able to tell you all this in person.

First things first, I want to explain that this process is not something I entered into on a whim. Despite what you might imagine offhand, being a donor is a long road and I made my choices carefully. With the arduous path your parents chose to take to bring you into the world I can be as certain as possible that they love you very, very much. That is something I care deeply about. Few people can say that their parents were so sure of how much they wanted a child and that is a beautiful gift.

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Goodwill Message *continued*

As I write this, my life has been an incredibly lucky one but never lucky enough to accommodate a family of my own. I am the last of my family line and that is something you now carry for me in a small way. I'm more grateful for this than you can ever know. In the vast tapestry of cause and effect that we live in it's enough to know that there's still a little of us out there, hopefully shaping things for the better.

That's really what I wanted to say to you here. I imagine you might well be starting out as an adult and getting your feet under you right now. I may not be perfect but I figured out one important thing from my time: If you have a talent or a passion for a thing, you have a responsibility to use it for the betterment of all.

If you keep the wellbeing of others in mind and never let a gift go unused you'll never regret a moment spent doing it. It doesn't need to be flashy or grand. It just needs to be done with the right intention and care. Trust me on this one, I wasted enough time working it out. Given that traits tend to skip a generation and some part of you is my own parents you'll certainly have a lot of gifts to draw on. Use them wisely for us. Depending on how old you are and how this message reaches you, you may be able to access information that allows you to find me. If you feel at any point that you want to do so then I would be overjoyed to meet you and learn about the person you have become. Whatever knowledge and help I can provide you, I will gladly and you'll always be welcome wherever I may be.

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Goodwill Message *continued*

I'll also state clearly now that I expect nothing more than what you're comfortable with sharing. You have no obligation to me beyond living out your life to the fullest. It may not feel right to you to find me and that is also a perfectly valid choice. Remember that when it comes down to it, your parents are still your parents no matter where your ancestry may lie. I, like them, want only what's best for you and nobody is better equipped to make that decision than you are.

[REDACTED]

I wish you nothing but the best of fortune and a life full of joy. Know that I've been doing so since the moment I knew you existed and that there's never a day that goes by I don't think about where you are and how you're doing.

Now put this letter aside for a bit and go do something wonderful!

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About Me

Where do you begin with this kind of question? Honestly, I've been turning over this question in my mind for weeks. It's not easy, let me tell you.

It's funny when people ask you 'who are you?' to answer with your job or your passions. To get side-tracked into the 'how' of the thing and not the 'what' or 'why'. I think would be doing you a disservice for our first 'introduction'.

On the outside you probably wouldn't think much to look at me. Average height and build with brown hair and brown eyes. I have a swimmers body by default. I'm greying at the temples and chin and my hair hasn't yet thinned in my late 40's. I was once told by a policeman that I may well be the most difficult person to describe in a witness statement (which I took to be quite a compliment to be honest!). However I've found all this means is I can make myself appear to be whatever I want, whenever I want. Tough, quiet, bookish, rebellious, fabulous and fearsome. They're all just a wardrobe change away for me. Useful for a performer, such as I am.

On the inside... well there are many comparisons or examples I could use to describe myself, but I think the best one I've found so far is the Myers-Briggs designation of INTP. It may not be the most solid piece of science, but if you want to know anything about what makes me tick you'll find it in that description. I spent my whole life needing to figure out how the roots of the plant works before I can enjoy the flowers. My poor parents were always beset with questions and I was damned lucky because they were smart enough to know the answers 90% of the time.

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About Me *continued*

Which leads neatly into a story I suppose...

I was lucky enough to be the only child born to two very talented parents from small but gifted families. My father was a dock worker who became a scientist... who became a musician. My mother was a musician from a family of musicians and academics. They met while working together in a band (complete with sequined disco flare-suits) and soon enough I came along.

Like I said before, I got lucky! I was surrounded by creativity, encouragement and extremely bright people at all times. Because nobody ever told me I couldn't do a thing, I found I could usually do most anything I put my mind to. It's something I'm actively grateful for every day.

I spent most of my young life determined to do anything but join the family business and be a musician. My first performance was at the age of six in front of hundreds and that was every bit as PTSD-inducing as it sounds. I was hoping for a Reed Richards weird-science sort of lifestyle, but I'd have settled for just being Jack Kirby instead and drawing the adventures as comic book artist.

... and then I realised that music was a social activity and I didn't need to sit in a room playing Bach all day and that was that. I joined a band and found a kind of family I didn't know I was missing. I've collected a lot of strays and surrogate siblings from music over the years. I left my small hometown at eighteen and went off to the big city to make career for myself and, as of the time I write this, nearly two decades later, I've managed exactly that.

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About Me *continued*

Since then I've become a lot of things and worn a lot of hats. Such is the freelance life! It's not always been easy and if I'm being honest, it's not always seemed the best choice but it's the one I made (and kept making over and over). It's always let me keep asking people those annoying kind of questions I used to bother my parents with though and that, frankly, makes it all worthwhile.

What else?

- I'm told I talk like Eddie Izzard and I sing with a high, clear tenor like Jay Kay (both of which I hope are true).
- I inherited the DEC2 mutation from my mother that enables me to sleep less but not notice the damage from doing so. Careful with that!
- I've been accused of being a workaholic but frankly, I just can't stand being idle. There's a difference (or so I maintain).
- I struggle with eye contact and I hate using phones. I'm anything but shy, but I could never shake those two things.
- While not religious, I am a practicing Stoic. I try my best to fail gracefully at it every day.
- I've been a serial monogamist and polyamorous and I can't say which I prefer.
- I never married (despite one particularly near miss and many wonderful long term partners) and, as of writing this, I have no children.
- I like the ritual of going to a cinema and I struggle with not doing things when I try to watch TV.
- I have six tattoos and counting. None of them have aged badly. Yet!

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About Me *continued*

- My father is a great martial artist and I was sent to learn from various practitioners from a very early age until I was 18. It's been one of my greatest gifts in life but one I didn't (and still don't) enjoy. I recommend learning one, but don't let it define who you are. Get your black belt and get out.
- I have a love of cookies that sometimes borders on addiction and, left to my own devices, will voluntarily drink bourbon and coke in separate glasses (trust me on this one).
- I've had many chances to risk my hide playing the hero and I've taken more than half of them which, considering I'm still alive to say that, seems reckless but not nearly enough times in retrospect.

Other than that it's all just me, some regular guy, muddling through. I've seen and done so many crazy things and somehow lived to tell the tale. I've tried until I couldn't. I've loved until I didn't. I've laughed until I cried and cried until I laughed. I got a lifetime just like everybody else and I do what good with it I can. What more can you ask for really?