

## The Charlemagne Moment

My grandfather had an 8th grade education. Grandmother was a self-taught nurse. Not the kind of nurse you want if you really need a nurse. My father was a workingman, too. And I began my own career as a laborer on the Chicago road crew the summer of my sophomore year.

I was a good student but, not a great student. As a young man, I was anxious to gain my freedom, prove my worth, and get on with the rituals of being an adult. I thought of my life in terms of the future. School work and history lessons were low on my priority list.

One evening my father told a story about the adventures of Charlemagne and his sword called, Joyeuse – a sword which slew the enemy and knighted brave warriors. When he finished, I begged for another.

"I don't think so, after all, you don't like history," he said. From that moment on, I never read another history lesson. I read stories, lots of stories, stories of adventure, of bravery, and stories of the future. I have come to think of that evening with my father as my Charlemagne moment.

What are your Charlemagne moments - the moments when you realized the value of your education and the joy of knowing what you know? For each of us these moments will differ.

Let me tell you a story of one of our recent graduates. She didn't have a sword but her education has been filled with joyous adventure and discovery. Her name is Kelsey Jenkins and she's a journalist.

Kelsey's earliest encounter with the newspaper business began on a 4th grade field trip to the The Newton Kansan. After visiting the pressroom, she passed out cold.

Turns out, she was allergic to newsprint.

Throughout her education at Emporia State, Kelsey changed her mind many times about a career, of course, never considering journalism. Then one day in Mass Communication class, her professor explained that communication is no longer a one-way endeavor.

"Communication is a loop," he said.

Kelsey immediately understood this loop and how to use the internet, social media and her smart devices to consume news, post comments for other readers, and forward stories among friends.

"This moment in Mass Comm class generated a great deal of personal excitement for me." Kelsey said. "I knew at that moment I had to be part of the conversation, part of the loop."

Today, Kelsey covers the business beat at the Wichita Eagle. In addition to daily reporting, she manages the department Twitter feed and rarely visits the pressroom.

Whether it is an adventure story, a history lesson, or a field trip, we all have our Charlemagne moments. Education is often the spark that ignites a lifetime of passion. At ESU, we find joy in our work. We are builders of vision, of community, and of the future.

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