

Kyle Skrinak Collected Writing

2016–2026

kyle.skrinak.com

About this book

This is a complete archive of the writing published at kyle.skrinak.com, current as of June 18, 2026. It contains 43 pieces written between 2016 and 2026, arranged in the order they were written, oldest first.

Nothing else is needed to read it. This single file is self-contained: the words and images are all here. You do not need the website, any account, or any special software beyond whatever you are already using to view this page.

It was made so that the writing would remain readable on its own, apart from any website that may or may not still exist when you find this.

Written by Kyle Skrinak. Where a piece links to a video or other online material that cannot be printed, the web address is shown in its place so the reference is preserved.

Contents

1. Static Sites: Everything Old Is New Again	October 30, 2016
2. Vim for writers	February 8, 2017
3. Drupal @ Duke meetup notes	February 12, 2017
4. DrupalCon Baltimore 2017 — Backend Security notes	April 22, 2017
5. Drupal 8 Multisite documentation	May 25, 2017
6. DrupalCon Nashville 2018 -- Higher Education Summit Notes	April 6, 2018
7. DrupalCon Nashville 2018 -- 04-09-2018 Higher Ed Summit Day	April 8, 2018
8. DrupalCon Nashville 2018 -- 04-10-2018 Tuesday	April 9, 2018
9. DrupalCon Nashville 2018 -- 04-11-2018 Wednesday	April 10, 2018
10. DrupalCon Nashville 2018 Video Playlist	May 12, 2018
11. 5 DrupalCon Nashville Take Aways	May 20, 2018
12. From My Wife's Kitchen	September 29, 2018
13. What is n=1?	October 12, 2018
14. My Morning Routine	October 19, 2018
15. How to Pick a Restaurant	October 27, 2018
16. A Pound of Flesh and a Hot Tub	October 30, 2018
17. Old Again, New Again	January 14, 2019
18. 2019 DrupalCon Higher Ed Summit	May 21, 2019
19. Diminished Zeal with Steady Commitment	September 1, 2019
20. My Windows 10 Setup	September 13, 2019
21. Don't You Miss Carbs?	September 16, 2019
22. Lorraine Barbara Kubik Skrinak	October 30, 2019
23. Happy Third Lowcarbiversary	June 7, 2020
24. Drupal Multisite on a Dime	December 2, 2020
25. Jekyll, Hugo, and Me	January 15, 2021
26. Two Guys Watch a Burning House, Part I	January 17, 2021
27. My Hero, Karen — Part II	January 18, 2021
28. Shinleaf Campsite	January 18, 2021
29. Gratitude, and That's Right	January 29, 2021
30. Meet Holly	January 30, 2021
31. Loose Shorts and the TSA	February 19, 2021
32. In the Jekyll garden	April 1, 2021
33. DrupalCon 2022 Code+ Presentation	April 6, 2022

34. What I did at DrupalCon 2022	May 3, 2022
35. Modernizing an Old Jekyll Blog with GitHub Actions and AI	September 18, 2025
36. AI-Assisted Modernization: Two Days, Ten Years Strong	December 31, 2025
37. Fun at Scale	February 1, 2026
38. From Squarespace to Astro: A Migration Story	March 1, 2026
39. The Middle Tract	March 8, 2026
40. On Being Sculpted Down	April 18, 2026
41. What Forty Years of Displacement Looked Like Before It Was for Everyone	April 28, 2026
42. Last summer, we snowballed Jackson	June 13, 2026
43. Take the Long Way Home	June 16, 2026

Static Sites: Everything Old Is New Again

October 30, 2016

Despite being an ardent Drupal fan, I also love statically-served sites for many reasons, especially for the freely available static-site services that Duke and GitHub makes available. For now I'm getting up and running on Jekyll using the Minimal Mistakes (<https://mmistakes.github.io/minimal-mistakes/>) theme. This theme has a lot of features baked in, so I can focus on getting up and running. Plus I don't have to provision a web server, PHP, MySQL or Maria, and so on.

Vim for writers

February 8, 2017

Here's an excellent article (<https://opensource.com/article/17/2/vim-plugins-writers>) on using Vim for narrative writing, as opposed to technical documentation. I love the idea of an immediate editor for the kind of lazy checking I like to do before I share something I've written.

While reading this article, I see attention drawn to NeoVim. Never heard of it before. "Vim, but better" is what they claim, as new forks always do. Worth checking out, anyhow.

Drupal @ Duke meetup notes

February 12, 2017

Here are my hastily-assembled thoughts on Drupal 8 for 2017 at Trinity Technology Services.

To view this document on Sway (<https://sway.com/thDd10XgSCzLMAIrl>)

Embedded media (view online):

<https://sway.com/s/thDd10XgSCzLMAIrl/embed>

DrupalCon Baltimore 2017 — Backend Security notes

April 22, 2017



See the Duke University IT Security Office (<https://security.duke.edu/>) for comprehensive security standards documentation.

1. Physical aspects:

- Access-controlled server rooms
- Authorized physical access only
- Log all access as required by data

1. Network aspects:

- Appropriate Host-based access controls, i.e., firewall, port control, access lists)
- Require secure remote access, using VPN or SSH
- Encrypt all authentication traffic
- Log all network-based server access
- Third-party Vendor requirements
- Avoid authentication trust relationships

1. Operating system

- Login prompts to remind users regarding prohibition of unauthorized access, lack of privacy for its users, last access time stamp
- Disconnect inactive logins
- Strip banner and error messages regarding system information
- Mitigate announced vulnerabilities within a reasonable time-frame (same for applications)
- Install anti-virus for periodical full storage scan
- Approved OS's only
- Disable host web browsers that do not receive automatic browser updates
- Routine scheduled downtime to mitigate vulnerabilities
- Device reporting on the above configuration for department review

1. Data

- Protected data heightens access requirements

1. Application

- Ensure development tools, code samples, and the like, are removed in production
- Vendors must incorporate security in the initial design phase
- Develop on non-production servers only
- Use de-identified data for development and testing
- The principal of least privilege: apps only access what they must.
- Username password credentials must not be stored in the program source code
- Hash passwords, 3DES minimum
- Publicly-accessible apps must not execute OS shell commands or pass non-admin user input to the shell
- Remove commented code from production apps
- Disable path traversal and directory browsing
- Leverage Drupal's input validation mechanism for all input data. Sanitizing input alone is insufficient.
- Authenticate all credential data
- Robots.txt can unwittingly provide path data, do not rely on it
- Periodically review Drupal and OWASP requirements

1. User and accounts

- Use Shib for Drupal user management.
- Do not share user accounts. One person per account.
- Regularly review user membership per site
- Revoke user access within one business day for exited employees
- Remove accounts inactive for 3 months
- Admin users must change passwords every 180 days
- Use the principal of least-privilege regarding account access. Do not require an admin account for site backup
- Encourage MFA
- Vendors must have guest NetID accounts, managed by their departments

1. Tools we use:

- Fail2Ban
- Splunk
- Ansible
- Tivoli
- Autofs
- Shibboleth
- Composer (D8)

Drupal 8 Multisite documentation

May 25, 2017



Summary

In order to better understand what adopting Drupal 8 multisite means, I have reviewed the code base for Drupal 8.3.2 for all references related to 'multisite' or multi-site' in the comments of the Drupal code.

- Conceptually, Drupal 8 multisite seems identical to Drupal 7's model, though there are noteworthy differences in how the docroot structure is different.
 - We could continue with our git repo-based module and sites workflow?
- I'm unclear what a composer workflow for multisite will look like.
- JS/PHP library management in Drupal 8?

from the README.txt in docroot

Note: I have based this documentation on Drupal 8.3.x INSTALL.txt. I essentially changed the passive voice verbs to active.

A single Drupal installation can host several Drupal-powered sites, each with its own individual configuration.

For this to work you need the file sites/sites.php to exist. Make a copy of the example.sites.php file:

```
$ cp sites/example.sites.php sites/sites.php
```

You create additional site configurations in subdirectories within the 'sites' directory. You must include a 'settings.php' file, in each subdirectory which specifies the configuration settings. The easiest way to create additional sites is to copy file 'default.settings.php' from the 'sites/default' directory into the new site directory with file name 'settings.php' and modify as appropriate. You copy the new directory name from the site's URL. The configuration for `www.example.com` will be in 'sites/example.com/settings.php' (note that you'll omit 'www.' if users can access your site at `http://example.com/`).

```
$ cp sites/default/default.settings.php sites/example.com/settings.php
```

Sites do not have to have a different domain. You can also use subdomains and subdirectories for Drupal sites. For example, you may define `example.com`, `sub.example.com`, and `sub.example.com/site3` as independent Drupal sites. The setup for a configuration such as this would look like the following:

- sites/default/settings.php
- sites/example.com/settings.php
- sites/sub.example.com/settings.php
- sites/sub.example.com.site3/settings.php

When searching for a site configuration (for example `www.sub.example.com/site3`), Drupal will search for configuration files in the following order, using the first configuration it finds:

- sites/www.sub.example.com.site3/settings.php
- sites/sub.example.com.site3/settings.php
- sites/example.com.site3/settings.php
- sites/www.sub.example.com/settings.php
- sites/sub.example.com/settings.php
- sites/example.com/settings.php
- sites/default/settings.php

If you are installing on a non-standard port, the port number is treated as the deepest subdomain. For example: `http://www.example.com:8080/` could be loaded from `sites/8080.www.example.com/`. The port number will be removed according to the pattern above if no port-specific configuration is found, just like a real subdomain.

Each site configuration can have its own site-specific modules and themes in addition to those installed in the standard ‘modules’ and ‘themes’ directories. To use site-specific modules or themes, simply create a ‘modules’ or ‘themes’ directory within the site configuration directory. For example, if `sub.example.com` has a custom theme and a custom module that should not be accessible to other sites, the setup would look like this:

- sites/sub.example.com/
- settings.php
- themes/custom_theme
- modules/custom_module

For more information about multiple virtual hosts or the configuration settings, consult <https://www.drupal.org/documentation/install/multi-site>

Sites, Theme, Module, and Profile locations

Do not mix downloaded or custom modules and themes with Drupal’s core modules and themes. Drupal’s modules and themes are located in the `/core/modules` and `/core/themes` directories, while the modules and themes you add to Drupal are normally placed in the `/modules` and `/themes` directories. If you run a multisite installation, you can also place modules and themes in the site-specific directories — see the Multisite Configuration section, below.

from the modules/README.txt file

In multisite configurations, modules found in this directory are available to all sites. You may also put modules in the `sites/all/modules` directory, and the versions in `sites/all/modules` will take precedence over versions of the same module that are here. Alternatively, the `sites/your_site_name/modules` directory pattern may be used to restrict modules to a specific site instance.

from the themes/README.txt file

In multisite configurations, themes found in this directory are available to all sites. You may also put themes in the sites/all/themes directory, and the versions in sites/all/themes will take precedence over versions of the same themes that are here. Alternatively, the sites/your_site_name/themes directory pattern may be used to restrict themes to a specific site instance.

from the profiles/README.txt file

In multisite configurations, installation profiles found in this directory (*docroot/profiles*) are available to all sites during their initial site installation.

from the sites/example.sites.php file

Configuration file for multi-site support and directory aliasing feature.

This file is required for multi-site support and also allows you to define a set of aliases that map hostnames, ports, and pathnames to configuration directories in the sites directory. These aliases are loaded prior to scanning for directories, and they are exempt from the normal discovery rules. See default.settings.php to view how Drupal discovers the configuration directory when no alias is found.

Aliases are useful on development servers, where the domain name may not be the same as the domain of the live server. Since Drupal stores file paths in the database (files, system table, etc.) this will ensure the paths are correct when the site is deployed to a live server.

To activate this feature, copy and rename it such that its path plus filename is 'sites/sites.php'.

Code references to multisite

- core/lib/Drupal/Core/DrupalKernel.php, line 363, findSitePath to determine site's base directory
- core/lib/Drupal/Core/Extension/ExtensionDiscovery.php, line 176, determine site's "parent" for finding global extensions
- core/lib/Drupal/Core/Updater/Module.php, line 20, for determining installation directory for modules in multisite contexts
- core/lib/Drupal/Core/Updater/Theme.php, line 12, same as above
- core/modules/editor/src/Form/EditorImageDialog.php, line 210, for creating valid file paths in multisite contexts
- core/modules/file/file.module,
 - line 995, same as above
 - line 1253, same as above for file link creation
- core/modules/filter/filter.module, line 778, for creating valid file paths in multisite contexts
- core/modules/image/src/Plugin/Field/FieldFormatter/ImageFormatter.php, line 209, for creating valid file paths in multisite contexts
- example.gitignore, line 25, "ignore multisite environment"
- modules/README.txt, line 29, multisite information, added above
- profiles/README.txt, line 21, same as above
- sites/default/default.services.yml, line 29, setting the cookie_domain variable.
- sites/default/default.settings.php,
 - line 13, commented instructions on selection rules for site discovery
 - line 709, commented instructions on setting the 'trusted_host_patterns' variable

- `sites/example.sites.php`, This file is now essential for multisite. Worth reading entire file.

DrupalCon Nashville 2018 -- Higher Education Summit Notes

April 6, 2018



I will be leading two sessions at the DrupalCon Higher Education Summit (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/higher-ed-summit>) on Monday, April 8th, 2018, and I'm using this post for my preparation notes.

You can find all the virtual directory for all the Higher Education Summit Session notes here (https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1uaFfgSob8VHllpVb1WNMi_UdYdrYXwTA).

Note: these agenda items are not hard-and-fast discussion items. Depending on session attendees and details I cannot anticipate, these discussions tend to grow a life of their own. I find that nearly always, the actual discussion turns out far better than I anticipate. *Caveat lector.*

Session 1; 11:20 AM – 12:20 PM

Continuous Integration / Continuous Development Strategies

Agenda

- **Spread out and speak up**
- **Volunteers for note-keeping**

(Google docs allows for multiple authors. The more the merrier)

Link to the session notes (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/13P7qKfVlm9QsjFzSsqyOobgSbnktAPNZLXAkxgbmk8/edit?usp=sharing>)

- **Introductions**

Tell us your name, title, what you do, and your efforts at CI/CD so far?

- What is Continuous Integration / Continuous Development (CI/CD)? What is it NOT?
 - Continuous integration is the integration of code commits with building, testing and deploying these commits. (1)
- **What are the tools and components of CI/CD?** What are you using? (1)
 - Gitlab-ci, Jenkins, Circle-CI, Travis, git-commit hooks
 - Ansible, Git workflow, dev vm or docker, task runners, package managers, repositories
 - Functional testing, Behat testing, coding standards, linting, static analysis
 - Deploy, pipelines, stages and tasks At Duke's Trinity School of Arts & Sciences, we're using gitlab-ci (<https://about.gitlab.com/features/gitlab-ci-cd/>). We have used Jenkins, we still have a 2-year old Jenkins server, but we prefer gitlab-ci.

- How long have you been using CI/CD?
- What benefits have you seen because of your adoption?
 - Improving quality, consistency and process speed How would you like to extend your CI/CD adoption?
- What are some blockers or obstacles to implementation?
- Examples or potential CI/CD workflows
- Examples of shared CI/CD resources
 - (1) CI/CD session (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DysbTwsI5SA>) from last year's Dublin conference.
 - (2) DrupalCon Vienna 2017: Automatic Drupal Updates using Visual Regression & Continuous Integration (<https://youtu.be/vSkOeYO7Ycw>)

Session 2; 1:30 AM – 2:30 PM

Web Accessibility, led by Joel Crawford-Smith

Led by my fellow Dukie, Joel, (<https://joelcrawfordsmith.com/>) with whom we collaborate frequently. Looking forward to his session.

You can find his session notes here (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xOq9NTtG8qaSjdmymFplZR0RCtQ4usgELM5MvHUYgQ/edit?usp=sharing>)

Session 3; 2:30 AM – 3:30 PM

Holistic DevOps & Drupal Security

- **Spread out and speak up**
- **Volunteers for note-keeping**
(*Google docs allows for multiple authors. The more the merrier*)
Link to the session notes (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GWCl21mqbPx7eHkRdz7uPzQR6kGyRJD8ADjpd7DUMSc/e/dit?usp=sharing>)
- **Introductions**
Tell us your name, title, what you do, and your efforts at security so far?
- Why “Holistic?”
- **What are the tools and means of Security?** What are you using?
This is a multi-pronged front:
 - Policy and Governance
 - Identity, membership and SSO
 - CI/CD
 - Firewall
 - OS
 - Stack
 - Third-party integrations, events, faculty profiles, courses
 - Third-party vendor-built websites
 - Drupal
 - Scanning, such as NetSparker
- How have your efforts evolved over the years?
 - Compare and contrast your response between Drupalgeddon and Drupalgeddon II
- What benefits have you seen because of your efforts?
How would you like to extend or enhance your security?

- What are some blockers or obstacles to enhancing or extending?
- Examples or potential security workflows
- Examples of shared security resources
 - DrupalCon Dublin 2016: Drupal Security: There is a Mini-DrupalGeddon - YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ej8yiPHota4>)

DrupalCon Nashville 2018 -- 04-09-2018 Higher Ed Summit Day

April 8, 2018



Keynote

- Converting vb-script site to a modern, responsive heterogeneous site with Drupal 8
- Good mix of heterogeneous systems to produce a modern and robust content website, including static pages
- This blog post (<https://evolvingweb.ca/blog/profiling-and-optimizing-drupal-migrations-blackfire>) echos much of this keynote discussion

Accessibility Panel

- Training content editors
 - Incentivize training?
 - Clarifying roles for responsibility
- How the OCR (<https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/index.html>) is impacting our response, and assigning priorities
- Everyone wants accessibility, but funding implementation efforts remains problematic

See my preparation links for more details on my notes for the day here

Event page for Higher Ed Summit (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/higher-ed-summit>)

DrupalCon Nashville 2018 -- 04-10-2018 Tuesday

April 9, 2018



Dries Keynote

TL;DR: Back to roots

- New in 8.5
 - Media and content moderation
 - Stable upgrade path to D8
 - Simplified site building
 - API-first focus
- User facing changes to better address poor installation experience for new users who wish to try Drupal
- CMI changes, composer changes, removing it as a requirement, but make it a best practice, longer period between updates
- Improving non-technical perception of Drupal

Vendor visits

- **Pantheon**
 - After several failed starts, I met with a chief-something or other, which led to a discussion with Josh Koenig, Co-founder, and John Sepassi, Platform Sales Rep. We discussed our multi-site workflow and some advantages with the Pantheon workflow. This includes full use of a CDN and performance analysis tools.
 - Of course there's much to like in Pantheon's offerings. With Drupal 7, their value proposition was less attractive, since we've done so well with standing up multisite on our own servers. Drupal 8's adoption of modern CI/CD changes this dynamic, as we're learning. However, the cost for Pantheon is significant, so much so that I remain "only looking."
- **Kanopi Studios** — They popped up on my radar via a LinkedIn message. They are an agency that helps with website builds.
- **Kwall** — an agency that helps with website builds. They were located off-site at a coffee shop about a half-mile from the convention. Met with Alex Reed and Kevin Wall, discussed the nature of higher ed website projects and requirements.

Horizontal DevOps ~ Scale your team and tools across projects. (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/sessions/horizontal-devops>)

- We often think of DevOps in a super siloed context (eg one project at a time), but having an organizational DevOps plan/strategy and some cross project standardization is really how you benefit. This talk is about the business value of horizontal DevOps across people and projects.
 - This makes sense for groups with varying hosting and stack configuration requirements
 - Circle CI dependency

Some guidances

- Use Semantic versioning
- Package managers for distros
- Keep documentation current
- Define or share your release workflow for every tool

Getting closer to your customer: Using Drupal in the last mile (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018.html>)

<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018.html>)

- How to better align the back and front end of development
- Using the tour module to provide user tips to sites
- Low value for us, given our distribution and support model, but smart for bespoke site design

Integration of Drupal Coding standards with Git hooks (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/sessions/integration-drupal-coding-standards-github-hooks>)

<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/sessions/integration-drupal-coding-standards-github-hooks>)

- Using for running standard checks when committing code
- Client and Server side hooks
 - Client
 - pre-commit
 - Prepare-commit-msg
 - commit-msg
 - post-commit
 - post-checkout
 - Pre-rebase
 - post-merge
 - Server
 - Pre-receive
 - Update
 - Post-receive
 - Demo shows a simple PHP code linting before committing

Power up Drupal 8 with integrations: Cornell University showcase (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/sessions/power-drupal-8-integrations-cornell-university-showcase>)

<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/sessions/power-drupal-8-integrations-cornell-university-showcase>)

- With ambitious goals and an aggressive timeline, IT@Cornell architected and built a centralized repository for discovering and applying to educational and extra-curricular opportunities. By leveraging the strongest traits of each platform, we delivered a multifaceted solution that uses Drupal 8 as the front end, Salesforce as a backend, and other technologies as data feeds for the information displayed to the end users.

DrupalCon Nashville 2018 -- 04-11-2018 Wednesday

April 10, 2018



Keynote: Drupal and the secret of my success — Steve Francia

(<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/keynote-drupal-and-secret-my-success>)

highlights

- Biography (<https://stevefrancia.com/>), startup failures
- Introducing Drupal for MongoDB site
- Emulating Drupal's community techniques
- Hugo (<https://gohugo.io/>), Docker involvement
- Illness, life lessons
- Key for success
 - Open Source
 - Collaborative Development
 - Community Engagement
- Steve's message: Don't stop

Summary

Easily the best non-Dries keynote I've attended yet.

Vendors

- *OPIN*, a Canadian firm. Works with SUNY.
- *OneOrigin* has an interesting A.I. technology that assists with creating faceted searching without SOLR.
- *BlueSpark* as I was favorably impressed by their COO's presentation. Marketing guy is a Duke Fuqua grad. Perhaps I can pick the COO's brain about other performance measurements and capability assessment?

Don't trust your gut: agency operations metrics (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/sessions/dont-trust-your-gut>)

Session summary by presenter:

I'll admit it, I love spreadsheets. So when I attended a session by Sean Larkin* called, "Scaling your business starts with the right spreadsheets: performance metrics" (<https://events.drupal.org/losangeles2015/sessions/scaling-your-business-starts-ri>)

[ght-spreadsheets-performance-metrics](#)) at Drupalcon LA, I was excited to take what I had learned and apply it to my own agency. I was inspired. I immediately adopted these same spreadsheets and started adapting them to fit my needs as Chief Operating Officer.

- Billable hours matrix (<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1FORnelNjLv-g8uLoHThcn-036l5-kOboC5e3Y4qUngg/edit>)
- Megasheet (<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1FORnelNjLv-g8uLoHThcn-036l5-kOboC5e3Y4qUngg/edit>)
- Stepping through measurements and their impact on constraints
- Cost recovery and profit focused, but still valid capacity, capability and status measures

A smarter Way to Test Accessibility - a comparison of top tools (Lighthouse, Tenon.io and WAVE API) (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/sessions/marter-way-test-accessibility-comparison-top-tools-lighthouse-tenonio-and>)

[marter-way-test-accessibility-comparison-top-tools-lighthouse-tenonio-and](#))

- What should automated web accessibility tell us?
- Tools
 - Lighthouse (Google)
 - Tenon (commercial)
 - WAVE (commercial)
 - Types of tools
 - Dev-facing
 - Compliance-facing
 - Comparison of the above
 - Lighthouse has an API and a Node package
 - Runs script as a pre-commit git hook
 - AI can better help with accessibility analysis

How to build a Drupal site with Composer AND keep all of your hair (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/sessions/how-build-drupal-site-composer-and-keep-all-your-hair>)

This session will cover everything you need to know to build and maintain a Drupal application using Composer. We'll start Merriam Webster's definition of Composer (not really) and walk you through step-by-step until you have a fully built Drupal codebase. There's no prior knowledge or experience required. But if you're already a seasoned Composer user, we've got a few tips for you too!

- Covered basics
- Drupal template project
- Drupal module updates
- what required-dev is for
- Reduced production deployments
- You can find this code here: <https://grasmash.github.io/drupal-composer-training/#create-a-new-project>

Good-bye DrupalCon

DrupalCon Nashville 2018 Video Playlist

May 12, 2018



Below is my list of videos to catch up on DrupalCon Nashville 2018. The first is the youtube embed of my public playlist, followed by the exported links for non-js browsers.

Embedded media (view online):

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/videoseries?list=PLHdTfMnflBBIRQBp5IzyS3dsC8rC44iEC>

- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Driesnote (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HkOdpNT8Ec>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Keynote: Drupal and the secret of my success | Steve Francia (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJo9tPXGPo8>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: What's possible with WordPress 5.0 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9ilO4e5IEg>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Build banging sites with BPM: Bricks, Paragraphs and Modifiers (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACISyOC2Kkk>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Top Drupal 8 Modules: A tour through the best of Drupal in 2018 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrrPN1pfmA4>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Think Your Website is GDPR Compliant? Think Again! (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y48A7oQx4zQ>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Composer 101 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlkvEn3MjTI>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: A farewell to Twig (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYKA1t_PB0s)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Media module in core: Setting up a Drupal 8 media library (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grYtgcZyQBA>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Top 8 considerations for choosing a local development environment (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9kz0MPpq4o>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Modern CSS: You can do it! (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ICxtqpdo_g)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: WordPress vs Drupal: How the website industry is evolving (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvaVbPyX5eE>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Site Building 2.0: How Layout Builder will change everything (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTuOeyx9JLQ>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Crazy Tricks with Views (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6_FyInRQ-I)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Closing Session (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFxLfmL0U28>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Advanced Configuration Management in Drupal 8 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2kYZhgUSU0>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Horizontal DevOps ~ Scale your team and tools across projects. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpb84OuOzzY>)

- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: JavaScript and Accessibility: Don't Blame the Language (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLRWQnzlfcw>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: You wouldn't choose the cheapest brain surgeon (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLYWbHTerHg>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Making Serverless Headless - Drupal with AWS (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oW-hwUvy8A>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Weather.com's Project Moonracer - Decoupled User Interfaces (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zn04u3mAQ8o>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Get a perfect 100 in Google PageSpeed & what will happen if you don't (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeqItR9U9E>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: A comprehensive digital style guide with PatternLab (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXSksmlenio>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Configuration Management for Humans (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLUHG5WTO60>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Symfony 4: From zero to hero (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6wrBxWIZUI>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Introduction to React Design Patterns (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM1oqED26S4>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Next Level Twig: Extensions (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwN17CD9z3o>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Level up! A Drupaler's Fast Track to Creating a Symfony App! (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htWU90pTd1A>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: All Performance is Mobile Performance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmUVyBYHIVA>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Deliver a more robust search with Search API and Solr (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzWM9jpr354>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Why Drupal Is Not a Word Processor (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6IM-9SbGrc>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Continuous Integration has never been so easy (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOpmmo_P1JU)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Decoupled Drupal Hard Problems (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wH10_jHpzU)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: The Rise of the Distributed Database (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDHgJSV-s3c>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Principles of Unit Testing (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcPuQe3lVDM>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Modernize D8 Admin UX and Accessibility with Material Admin Theme (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0c8pfsJSZ-c>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Infrastructure Troubleshooting Secrets, Revealed! (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HH4xBx2tWE>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Welcome to NoOps, the new DevOps! (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogn7XT8AV2U>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: The Benefits of Continuous Integration (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpwxYsFP7Y>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Automate Your Automation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qu0HOCaeLUk>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Defense in Depth: Lessons Learned from Securing 200,000 Sites (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcAsaY4XaG0>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: When Being Nice Fails: The Dark Arts + Project Management (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgSsTH0eaEg>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Creating a PM Career Path Within the Drupal Community (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBsLWwels-0>)
- DrupalCon Nashville 2018: Everybody Loves Performance: Easy Audits and Low-Hanging Fruit (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwUKWbY9V8>)

5 DrupalCon Nashville Take Aways

May 20, 2018



For our Drupal @ Duke meetup, here are my top five take-aways from this year's DrupalCon Nashville.

1) Web accessibility

Web accessibility has become front-and-center, both in academic shops, hence this opening panel, and commercial as we saw with later sessions. The Higher Ed Summit, which is easily my favorite aspect to DrupalCon, had a panel discussion, which included no less than Duke's own Joel Crawford-Smith (*search for him on LinkedIn — LinkedIn links are problematic*) as they discussed the current web accessibility landscape, pitfalls, perils and promises. I have two DCN videos that I hope to watch soon related to accessibility.

Revised 2026-05-09: original LinkedIn profile link removed.

2) The Dries Keynote (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HkOdpNT8Ec>)

I'm always curious to see where Dries goes with this, for hopeful obvious reasons. This year was a "Back to Roots" theme. We saw Dries acknowledge the growing complexity of Drupal. Drupal 8.5 is finally offering a compelling reason for upgrading our sites, from better media management to stable upgrade paths and maturing of modern workflows.

3) Steve Francia's most inspiring if unusual keynote (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJo9tPXGPo8>)

Frankly, I come pre-loaded to most non-Dries keynotes with scepticism and cynicism, given past keynotes. Steve's keynote, however, was most inspiring and impressive. OK, a little heavy on the animated gifs, but solid and humbling advice that I found directly applicable as an IT professional. Well worth the watch.

4) Don't trust your gut: agency operations metrics (<https://events.drupal.org/nashville2018/sessions/dont-trust-your-gut>)

Though focused on commercial agency application, this session helps me to better understand how to manage a web development team through metrics, quantifying constraints, outputs, capacity, delivery dates, and so forth. A more mature way to manage a team than by instinct alone.

5) How to build a Drupal site with Composer AND keep all of your hair <https://grasmash.github.io/drupal-composer-training/#create-a-new-project>

Jeff Geerling (<https://www.drupal.org/u/geerlingguy>) is well-known and established in the Drupal DevOps community for his advanced work on configuring and maintaining the hosting stack for Drupal websites. Matthew Grasmick (<https://www.drupal.org/u/grasmash>) was no slacker, either. This was a “hands on” session, and it did not disappoint. They focused on creating a stack environment on Mac, Linux and Windows, and then we stepped through the exercises together. As it would happen, I had to leave early to catch my flight back. However, everything you need to get your fingers with a practical knowledge of composer, specifically for Drupal, is here, at the above link.

From My Wife's Kitchen

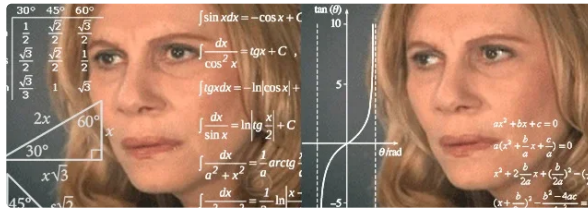
September 29, 2018



My wife completely supports my LCHF way of eating, even if she's not doing it herself. She loves to cook. It's her passion and the kitchen is her artist's studio. With her guidance, and in my attempt to free her from additional work for my WoE, I've started to cook much more frequently than I have in the past. What nice about LCHF is you begin to actually cook again, like we did decades ago, before pre-fabricated food became so common, cheap and easy to buy. You know, and care about, the ingredients you use. You check the labels. See how eight-syllable chemical compounds that frighten you.

What is n=1?

October 12, 2018



I hadn't heard of "n=1" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N_of_1_trial) before LCHF. I heard it over at the Ketogenic Forums (<https://www.ketogenicforums.com>), where it is a category for posts. Wikipedia describes it as; "An N of 1 trial is a clinical trial in which a single patient is the entire trial, a single case study."

Most informally, "n=1" is another way of saying; "I've tried this, and it works for me." In the LCHF world, helping one to understand what's going on, and why is critical. LCHF has common, well-funded and ubiquitous critics, warning us of the certain debilitation and death we face for not following their high-carb guidance. I've fallen to this guidance, heck, it's why losing weight was so vexing for me. Despite carefully and rigorously following their food pyramid, avoiding saturated fats, and eating lots of carbs, and engaging in lots of exercise, at least 5 hours per week, and not eating more per day than my estimated caloric intake of food, I should have been fit. I found myself simply gaining weight. My turning to LCHF was more an act of "I've got nothing to lose" desperation, than a measured, risk-mitigated change. Again, having a doctor oversee my course of action also greatly ease my fears.

Alone, n=1 is problematic. Relying on anecdotal evidence is woefully insufficient. Ignoring the subjective influences of personal confirmation and selection bias, including the placebo effect, from legitimate observation, analysis and action has been the path of folly. That said, coming to the party with sufficient and reflexive self-doubt and skepticism, as well as being open to all evidence, should go a long way to counter balance those forces.

On the process level, many leading figures in LCHF have been publicly begging for more clinical trials, more evidence that either support or refute their claims. In a December 22, 2017 op-ed in the Globe and Mail (<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/minimal-carbs-lots-of-fat-incredible-results-but-no-science/article37402123/>), Taubes laments about the lack of clinical trials, despite the growing number of n=1'ers experience with improved health on LCHF.

N=1 isn't anti-medical, anti-pharmacological or against the scientific method. I owe my life, health and well-being to doctors and the scientific process. This is to say that there's a lot we don't know, evidentially, about nutrition. This evidence deficit doesn't stop powerful groups from making breathless proclamations about what we should or shouldn't eat.

The lack of relevant research brings us back to policy, and the rent-seeking actions of powerful interests whom game the process for their advantage. That's a whole different topic. Suffice it to say, without evidence, we do whatever it takes to stem the obesity crisis, such as n=1.

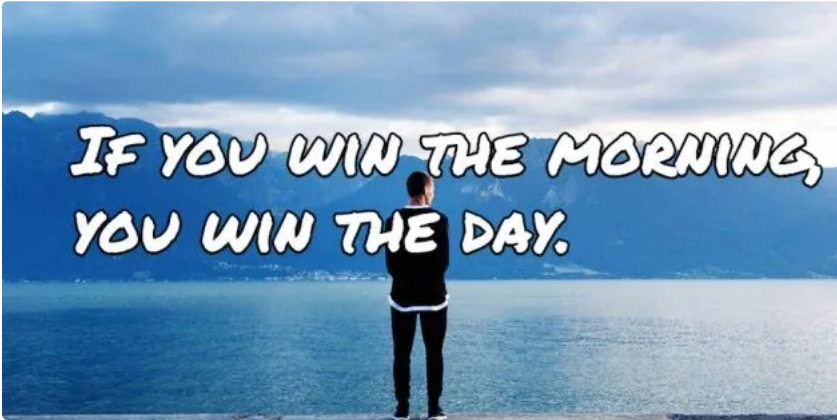
My n=1 is simple. I should be dead based on the fear, uncertainty and doubt of nutritional guidance. Rather, I've never been better. My weight has remained below 225 for approaching a year, and my other markers are stable, in a positive measurement. If there's a problem with LCHF, I cannot find it, and my frequent testing of my markers make self-denial impossible.

n=1 could also be summed up this way. In the 1933 Marx Brother's movie "Duck Soup," Chico Marx, playing Chicolini, was caught impersonating. Caught in the act, he defended himself by saying

“Well, who ya gonna believe, me or your own eyes?”

My Morning Routine

October 19, 2018



Quote by Tim Ferriss, image from [inc.com](https://web.archive.org/web/20251210184747/https://www.inc.com/chris-winfield/5-morning-rituals-that-help-you-win-the-day-.html) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20251210184747/https://www.inc.com/chris-winfield/5-morning-rituals-that-help-you-win-the-day-.html>)

My morning routine precedes my LCHF way of eating by about a year. My routine, itself, reflects the gradual development of decades of experience, self-reflection and formation. It helped me to be open to, and steel myself, for the change I needed to make. My being sufficiently motivated to try something as “radical” as a high-fat diet was necessary for my subsequent success.

What are your motivations? Here’s how I found mine.

An essential prerequisite to fundamentally changing one’s self is to be sufficiently motivated. Merely “wanting” or “desiring” alone, is not enough. It fails to engage you to reexamine your beliefs, and to change your comfort zone. To affect change, it’s important to understand the nature of motivation, as rightly-ordered and formed motivation helps to drive a successful result.

In other words, my morning routine provided me with the necessary motivation to step out of my comfort zone, and try something I otherwise would not try.

Here’s how I got to where I am today.

The experiential

I’ve struggled with weight management my whole life. At 6’ 2”, and generally hovering around 275 pounds, my “big guy” persona was deeply woven into how I saw and presented myself, and how others saw me. Others were always charitable to point out I wasn’t “obese” but “big” with the implicit connotation that, like Texas, big is good.

As I got older, however, my “bigness” became an increasing liability. From the social stigma of being fat in my youth, concerns about my professional appearance in my middle years, motivated me to try all kinds of diets, some successfully in the short-term, but, ultimately, all were failures after a year.

The common “standard American diet” remedy for weight gain is the “Calorie In – Calorie Out” or CICO model. They recommend that we should eat less and exercise more. Nutritionists and dieticians wag their finger at us,

telling us that we're fat because we're lazy and out-of-control children who cannot follow their clearly laid out advice. You've seen their nags. *"Hey fatties, you should park further away from the store entrance. You should take the stairs. Walk! Don't finish dinner. Count your calories."* Ad nausea. It surely isn't the "science" behind their Food Pyramid guidelines that are failed, right?

As I've been admonished for my sloth and gluttony since childhood, I started exercising in 1982, when I took up jogging in downtown Philly, which was all kinds of fun for this art school student. I have maintained an active, if inconsistent, jogging routine ever since. However, as I crossed the 4th and 5th decades of existence, my exercise no longer had the impact on my weight maintenance that I expected it would. Looking back, I'm not clear it ever did, but my thinking it did was satisfying enough not to question the assumptions I based it on.

My frustration with my weigh management reached its peak when my doctor, in 2016, diagnosed me as medically obese and that I might be facing hypertension, a condition my mom has. Maybe I was lazy and out-of-control, but that's not me.

I had to do *something*.

The formative

Meanwhile, and unrelated to my weight, I was ruing the bad habits of other people. I allowed my obsession on their faults to bring me chaos and pain. It was in Al-Anon (<https://al-anon.org/for-members/the-legacies/the-twelve-steps/>) and by working the twelve steps that I learned to flip this dynamic. Rather than focus on other's bad habits, I should focus on my own. I'm powerless over the faults of others, but I'm empowered to change myself. Though it took me many years for this concept to gain momentum and find motivation, I decided to better cultivate my own habits, through faith, introspection and inspiration drawn from other's experiences.

I am an avid listener of podcasts, especially those focused on self-learning and self-growth. It was through this habit that I became acquainted with Ryan Holiday's book, "Ego Is the Enemy (<https://egoistheenemy.com/>)." The focus of Holiday's book is that when we are steeped in our own narcissism and hubris, bolstered by our own prior successes, we can be our own worst enemies. I heard the author speak (<https://www.econtalk.org/ryan-holiday-on-ego-is-the-enemy/>) on the EconTalk podcast. During the interview, Holiday spoke glowingly of the Tim Ferris podcast (<https://tim.blog/>).

Tim Ferriss is notable for his focus on self-improvement, which started with a financial angle, but as he's aged, his focus has expanded as well (<https://www.cmc.com/2018/01/08/tools-of-titans-author-tim-ferriss-on-his-morning-routine.html>), to one similar to Stephen Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (<https://www.franklincovey.com/courses/the-7-habits/>)." I read that book in the late 90's and remain influenced by many of its principles as well. It is in this vein that Tim Ferriss studies successful people and he, and we, learn from them. This subject matter has the greatest natural interest for me.

What's relevant here is that Tim Ferriss is very much an N=1 kind of guy, willing to try many seemingly foolish things to experience it, first hand. Some nutty things, like how long one can hold his breath, and some less so nutty, though solidly controversial, like alternative concepts to contemporary "common sense" principles, such as on diet, fasting or "smart drugs." (I only do two of those three. Smart drugs remain a bridge too far for now.)

On Ferriss' podcast, one topic that pops up frequently are the advantages of a morning workout routine. One of his guests, Jocko Willink, made a striking and animated argument (<https://tim.blog/2017/10/20/discipline-equals-freedom/>) for developing a morning routine. Jocko is not alone. Google "morning routine" and you'll see plenty of results from a deep and diverse array of sources.

As someone naturally inclined to be an early riser, this had natural appeal for me. Thus, motivated by my failure with weight management and inspired by the success of others, a routine was born. The pieces were in place. I just had to turn that into a morning habit.

Another aspect that connects Holiday, Ferriss, and Willink is the principle of delayed gratification, a.k.a., stoicism. I'll save that for another post.

What is my morning routine?

1. The night before, I pack my gym bag, work clothes and lunch.
2. I awake early, 4:15 AM. Though I have an alarm, I rarely rely on it now.
3. I finish packing, make my morning coffee, (see below) and I walk my dog. For my LCHF way of eating, packing my lunch helps me keep my food on track. I rarely buy snacks during the day. This helps me save money and eat less processed junk food, even if the snack is LCHF-friendly.
4. I pray the Rosary (<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/rosaries/how-to-pray-the-rosary.cfm>) on my 30 minute commute to the YMCA. This helps me to offer my day up to God's glory, and open my consciousness to His word, and not my own petty and foolish thoughts.
5. I exercise for roughly 60 minutes, starting at 5:30 AM, when the YMCA opens their doors. I alternate between running — I am a slow runner, averaging at 12 minutes a mile — and weight-training. I run three times a week, and lift weights twice a week. I enjoy an 8 mile run on Saturdays, and a long and leisurely walk on Sunday mornings. Frankly I enjoy the experience and “high” of running the most, but it's nice to break the routine.
6. I enjoy a butter or coconut-oil coffee with my workouts. This is not required, but it sure is pleasurable.
7. I am at work by 7:30 AM.
8. I skip breakfast. I “break my fast” with lunch, usually around noon.

Even when any of the above is off, I have accomplished much before my workday begins.



Taken on my morning run in New Orleans, May, 2016, © Kyle Skrinak

Another benefit of my morning routine is I get a unique perspective on the places I travel to. For example, in New Orleans, May 2016, I ran the streets of the French Quarter every morning, which was an excellent way to see that area. Mornings have this great relaxed feel to them and I'm running through country and city, seeing things I might otherwise miss. When I'm traveling, the details of my routine change. I might say the Rosary at the start of my run, not before. Instead of packing for the gym the night before, I might spend time on route-planning, which can be fun and challenging as well.

What I don't do

- I would follow the advice to "make the bed first thing you do," but that would wake my wife. I think this is great advice, where possible. Navy Seal Admiral McRaven puts a fine point on this in this quick video: <https://youtu.be/KgzLzbd-zT4>
- I don't keep a journal, but, I do see great value in it. Forming a thought in your head, and writing it down, are quite different. Elucidation crystallizes nascent thoughts and helps you keep yourself on task.

How has this helped me?

LCHF is like a cool pool on a hot day. Jumping in can be jarring, but utterly refreshing once you've, well, adapted. To do well, you have to give up what might have been "staples" in your diet: bread, beer, rice, potatoes and sugar. For many people I speak to, this is a deal-breaker. I was so desperate, I had nothing to lose. At 53, I had consumed vast quantities of all of those items, so giving them up as an N=1 trial was doable. I had an expert guiding me. I had a morning routine, which is also my time, to keep me heading in the right direction. The pieces were in place. With 16 months experience behind me, my motivating reward has been the success of my LCHF way of eating.

My morning routine has helped me to be open to other ways of self-improvement. Being open to this has expanded my self-improvement options. This has led me to ignore the traditional, misleading or unhelpful advice on most things. The time in prayer and reflection help me to ground myself in repeatable results. The success inspires me to continue on.

So, yea. "Winning the day" before 9 AM is an addictive and self-rewarding spiral.

How to Pick a Restaurant

October 27, 2018



Better Dining through Butter

Who doesn't love the convenience of eating out? You can sit down, relax, and enjoy company — or alone time — while having others serve you drinks, snacks and then dinner. You're free to try new foods or drinks without renovating your kitchen. You can enjoy a wide range of ethnic cuisines, limited only by what's available nearby. As for variety, similar to most Americans (<https://web.archive.org/web/20221128083217/https://parade.com/397203/parade/top-10-ethnic-cuisines-americans-crave-most/>), I like Mexican cuisine, followed by Asian, whether Chinese, Japanese or Thai and then Indian. On my LCHF way of eating, my new favorite is southern, but we'll get to that in a minute.

When I changed how I eat, I followed Dr. Westman's page four (<https://adaptyourlifeacademy.com/start-keto-right/>), which makes eating out practical enough. This all started on a week-long trip away from home. This wasn't by design, but, in retrospect, it was quite serendipitous. Being on the road forced me to eat out all the time. Despite my neophyte status and lack of a personal kitchen, this week also reflects the most dramatic weight loss (yes, yes, mostly water) so eating out on LCHF is possible. Since weight-loss was my key motivator back then, my success provided me with greater motivation to remain LCHF.

Revised 2026-05-12: Dr. Westman now avails his famous Page 4 list with additional training, available at <https://adaptyourlifeacademy.com/start-keto-right/>.

I much prefer eating at home. I like to know precisely what I'm eating, the ingredients and sources. So much so now that I generally dread eating out, unless it is at precious few select restaurants. Since then I've learned some tricks to help guide me. That said, if you're new to LCHF, I cannot strongly recommend enough that you consult with Dr. Westman or a qualified low-carb practitioner. [I removed this link. Dr. Westman did not continue his Heal Clinic project.] Winging LCHF, solo, or with only the Internet as your guide, is a near certain recipe for disappointment.

Another disappointment on LCHF is how inflexible restaurants are with what they serve. It is nearly certain you will need to make modifications to your menu selections. The good restaurant perk up at the opportunity to serve you. The bad ones?

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Keep movin', movin', movin'  
Though they're disapprovin'  
Keep them dogies movin', rawhide
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If only there was a quick way to tell? Well...

It boils down to one simple question:

“Do you keep real butter or evoo (<https://www.rachaelray.com/2009/05/17/what-makes-evoo-evoo/>) in the kitchen?”

The response might be a disinterested; “no,” as the worker pauses without knowing what to say next, a confident “no, but what we serve **tastes just like butter**,” a matter-of-fact “*Sure do*” or, ideally, an incredulous “*Are you kidding? What kind of restaurant doesn’t serve real butter?*”

Yes, I want butter, not a *frankenbutter*. I’m not a child. The last response sings to me.

What to do?

Life is too short for fake butter, cheese or people. — Bill Murray

Revised 2026-05-09: removed broken Twitter embed; quote retained as a blockquote.

Try to call in advance, and ask this question before you go. Be prepared to wait. Most staff that answer the phones won’t know. If they don’t have butter, you may be able to steer clear of the restaurant. If you cannot change venue, it may be an opportunity to fast or limit what you eat. If you ask at the time you’re there, you might make others uncomfortable with your seemingly orthorexic-like questions on ingredients.

Of course, I wouldn’t bother asking an Asian restaurant. I’d focus on the meat dishes and ask for no rice and watch the stir-fry! The standard frying fat is vegetable oil, something I do my best to avoid. Nina Teicholz provides a jaw-dropping presentation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2UnOryQiFY>) on the historical reasons behind vegetable-based (seed-based, really) fats, and why they are so unhealthy, and unnecessary, for you. She also wrote a book about it, “The Big Fat Surprise (<https://ninateicholz.com/about/the-big-fat-surprise/>),” well worth reading.

Southern cooking, especially when the kitchen has lard or butter, can be the most accommodating on LCHF. It can also be terrible. The early 90’s movie, “My Cousin Vinny,” mocks southern cooking, but, as we’ve learned, Vinny’s critique was way off, and now the joke’s on us:

Embedded media (view online):
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/RuY-JRvIcKk>

One of my most memorable LCHF meals was at a southern-style restaurant in Albany, GA (<https://www.facebook.com/Pearyls-Famous-Country-Cooking-111689535534146/>). They relished serving me with a side of butter. Bon Appetite!

This question eliminates every, or nearly every, chain restaurant. That realization was difficult for me. I used to love On the Border. That was my “go to” for Father’s Day, my birthday, and other artificial reasons in between. The Bordurrito was a go-to fav, the massive carb fest that thing was. It is thanks to OtB that I now know what “*Phase Butter*,” (<https://www.amazon.com/Phase-Liquid-Butter-Alternative-Pack/dp/B01C3JVC2K>) is, and that it “*tastes just like butter*.”

Uh-huh, to which I say;

It’s not nice to fool an LCHF’er

Embedded media (view online):
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/ijVijP-CDVI>

I’m not sure how I can taste the difference, and Mother Nature can’t, but, hey, whatever.

Chain restaurants are there to make maximum profit with as little culinary artistry as possible, despite the ambiance that is merely part of the ploy. Compared with canola oil, Butter and evoo is expensive, sours quickly and has expensive storage requirements. Since that average tongue cannot taste the difference, guess what happens? As for we LCHF'ers, we'd rather support local establishments that care about what they cook, right?

“Butter? We ain't got no butter. We don't need no butter. I don't have to show you any stinkin' butter!

I've found Mexican restaurants to be generally the most accommodating of LCHF. Best, not a one has complained when I've brought my own chicharones to dip into the guacamole, while others are snacking on tortilla chips and salsa.

What about surprises?

When life happens, what to do? Remember the axiom, less is more? That's right, don't eat. For example, if you're at a faux-Italian chain, and it's all bread, pasta, sugar and rapeseed oil? You can order an unsweetened tea or a diet soda, and enjoy the company. Order a house salad and take your time eating it. Skip the croutons, of course. If you've been on LCHF for a long enough period of time, this will not be a problem. My personal experience was this was difficult at first. “*Kyle, aren't you hungry?*” It was a fair enough question, since, previously, I ate and ate and ate. Now, on LCHF, my satiety is such that I can, and do, skip meals. It's not willpower, per se, I've adapted my body. I don't *have to* eat now, and not merely because everyone else is.

Remember, we're not dogs. We don't have to reward ourselves with food, nor eat it because we see it.

It's that simple. If they have real butter, they are the real deal. I would like to think that LCHF'er and foodie, alike, would agree on this?

What are your challenges when dining out? Has butter been your culinary touchstone?

A Pound of Flesh and a Hot Tub

October 30, 2018



At my age, losing 60 pounds will leave you with extra skin. Things don't snap back like they used to. That's fine by me, but it sets the stage for this story. We have a hot tub. Winters and hot tubs are simply awesome. My teenaged son never misses the chance for an evening dip and loves company. I'm happy to accept his invite. Despite this almost nightly ritual, throughout my weight loss period, it seems that I now have visibly "extra" skin.

A few weeks ago, enjoying the bubbly warm water, I notice my son sizing me up as we bask in the tub.

My son asks; "Dad, can you pull your skin out, like a balloon?"

"Um, I never tried, I don't plan to, why?"

"Just wondering."

The next night; "Dad, that's a lot of extra skin you have. *What are you going to do about it?*"

"Huh? I'm not even thinking about doing anything about it. Why?"

"Oh, just wondering."

Again, the following night; "Dad? Are you going to get your extra skin surgically removed?"

"NO! Why do you keep asking me about my skin?!?"

"Just wondering."

I don't doubt he's just thinking out loud, which is how we live. I don't mind the questions but the continual and seemingly off-the-cuff questions from him finally make me self-conscious. I'm checking the bathroom mirror (never a pleasant exercise), and, OK, sure, there's some extra skin, but nothing to go on about.

Yet...

At our next hot tub bask; curious about his constant and unprompted asking. I ask my son; "You know how you keep asking me about my skin?"

"What are you talking about?"

"You know, how I have extra skin, and should have it removed?"

"I have? I don't remember."

<*sigh*>

Minutes pass...

“Oh yeah! *What’s that like?* Are you going to do something about it?!?”

“Never mind.”

Postscript: I wrote this in February, 2018. My skin has tightened up since then, I’m pleased to report. Perhaps related to autophagy? That’s for another post.

Old Again, New Again

January 14, 2019



I was a computer systems magazine production manager in the early '90s, in NYC, at Hachette-Filipacchi Magazines. Their portfolio included Elle, Woman's Day and Stereo Review, among other popular national magazines. There were a lot of celebrities about. It was a fantastic and exciting job for this young buck. My business attire was a dress shirt and tie, which was common then and there. Being young and eager to impress, I found how I dressed helped me in my career. It adds an informal statement of seriousness and professionalism, as opposed to my inclination towards stumbling humor. While I didn't "have to" dress well, doing so was a self-reinforcing positive loop. I grew fond of my shirt and tie attire.

Then, life happened. My wife and I moved to North Carolina. We had a baby. Another baby. A third baby. I got older. My vocation adapted to changing markets. I got a job at Duke University. My body became insulin resistant. While I was always overweight to varying degrees, I had become, well, fat. Clinically obese.

Like Rome, my belly wasn't built in a day. My 38" waist became a 40, 42 cresting at 44, though really should have been a 46". My XL shirts were tight around the belly. After years of gradual gain, putting on my old 90's clothes was well out of the question. Defeated, I had put my old clothes away in the hope that I would, one day, win the battle of the bulge. I was also uncomfortable in my appearance and my dress standard reflected this. I was deeply ensconced in "business casual," i.e., polo shirts and khakis.

The long-term success of my low-carb regimen changed my comportment. In the past, even with my most successful weight-loss efforts, I would have been back on the seemingly inevitable upward weight trajectory. However, this is no longer the case. I am solidly in the low 220's. I have been since January 2018. In the picture, above, I was mid-230's



Mr. Hot Shot IT Manager, May 1992

weight-wise. That was back on my steady regain from my Jenny Craig weight-loss the prior year. Unlike my unsure post-Jenny Craig diet, I am enjoying my low-carb regimen. I see no reason to change how I eat.

This past weekend, I decided it was time I declared victory. I donated my baggy clothes to Goodwill.



Out with the old

My closet had been the battery for my old and new clothing. I had grown tired of my too-loose fitting pants and shirts. So, I yanked all my clothing out of the closet and separated the wheat from the chaff. Getting rid of old stuff is satisfying, even more so when you're getting rid of your "big you" clothes.

The next step is to upgrade my attire for my new normal size. My 2019 new year's resolution is to slowly and steadily upgrade my professional wardrobe. I'm not someone who enjoys shopping, but

this exercise serves a pragmatic purpose. We'll be dumpster diving at Goodwill more so than the posh showroom of an upscale market.

I like being back in a shirt and a tie. Just to make this more interesting, I've enlisted my *most fashionable* oldest daughter to help me with tips on how well I'm doing in my clothing selection. I'll be using the friction of my limited wardrobe, and my own bad clothing decisions, to drive a slow but deliberate build up of my wardrobe.

Two years ago, I never would have thought I'd be here, now. Yea, it's a great feeling for an old again, new again, guy.

2019 DrupalCon Higher Ed Summit

May 21, 2019



The Higher Ed Summit organizers had considerably redesigned the schedule and makeup of the summit. I say to a significantly improved format.

This year, we:

- Introductions and the usual keynote start
- Held three sessions of three concurrent presentations, broken out by interest, i.e., marketing or back-end
- Lunch
- A “Solutions” meeting with randomized attendees, seven per table
- Three 15-minute presentations to all members
- Concluding thoughts
- A closing mixer with a networking game that was surprisingly effective. Even considering the introverted nature of Higher Ed IT professionals.

Note: The summit website (live-seattle-hes.pantheonsite.io) has been decommissioned and the content was never archived.

EduDU

- We strongly encourage using the EduDU Slack group (<https://edudu.org/>) and the #drupalcon channel to connect with other higher-ed professionals at DrupalCon, plan BoFs and braindates, and keep in touch with attendees after the conference.
- Please fill out the form at the EduDU website (<https://edudu.org/>) to receive an invite link. Non-edu email addresses will be removed from the Slack team, so make sure to use your work email addresses when signing up.

Opening session

- Paul Grotevant (<https://sites.utexas.edu/drupal/author/pfg/>) presents on new summit format
- “Braindates” continue the conversation afterwards
 - Connection opportunities.
- The Solution problem

Keynote: Web Accessibility

Gian Wild

Her presentation (<https://web.archive.org/web/20240416045446/https://app.prezenti.com/presentations/1674/public/slides/1>)

Accessibility Oz

Some random thoughts I typed as Gian spoke

- Not just visual
- Better access to people are otherwise unable to do so
- Who is disabled? 20% in US and AU
- Screen and braille readers
- Screen reader introduction video
- Another screen reader demo, amazon website from a long time ago
- Cognitive Disabilities
- Add the word search to a search field
- Reading disabilities
- Cognitive disability
 - Phonemes dyslexia
- Assistive technologies
- User Techniques
 - Decreasing saturation common filter
- Physical Disabilities
 - “One Thumb to Rule Them All”
- Hearing Impairments
 - Signing cat
- Mental health disabilities
 - Depression, PTSD, Anxiety, OCD
- Assitive tech
 - Spotify, Reader view
- Legal precedents
 - Sydney Olypmics
 - June 1999 - August 2000
 - Home.depot, Target, Canada, NetFlix
- WCAG2
 - Four principals
 - Principals layout
 - Three levels

Phase A: Accessibility Roadmap

1. Build an accessibility committee
2. Develop disability reference group
3. appoint an accessibility champion
4. Hire additional disability services staff
5. Conduct an accessibility stocktake
6. Address accessibility issues identified in the stocktake

7. Develop accessibility resources
8. Provide a communication method for staff and students to comment on accessibility

Phase B: Develop an accessibility Plan

1. Statement
2. Write Plan
3. ID policies and procedures
4. Communicate

Phase C: Make accessibility fixes

1. All new websites to be compliant
2. Inventory
3. Test
4. Contact vendors
5. Fix

Phase D: Develop knowledge

1. Training
2. Sessions
3. Case Studies
4. Attend conferences

10:45 AM — My Presentation

You can find my slide-deck [here](#).

My presentation on DevOps, Drupal 8 and Multi-site represents the culmination of three year's work from our team's investigation and implementation of the very topic. Of course we're all very busy, and we've been putting such narratives to low priority for our support and standard daily tasks. Despite all this hard work, we're still very much at draft status.

My own increasing managerial duties, and decreasing tech duties, have rusted my familiarity with the technical aspects. As the date approached, my unpreparedness mocked my empty slide-deck. I cursed myself many times for agreeing to do this. In retrospect, I'm glad I did. I also discovered the myriad documentation our team has created in support of this effort.

The meeting generated interest, and a group of attendees and I discussed various related matters after my presentation. The discussion we held helped to raise new questions and answer others we've been kicking around. This is the fruit of contributing back to the community. You always get more back than you put in. The nature of our discussion led me to miss the next scheduled presentations, but my other team members were able to attend these and brief me on what they learned.

Finally, my extensive preparation for this session paid off later in the week, at the Duke annual TechExpo presentation. We had a cancellation due to illness and needed to fill an open slot on the schedule. That's for a later post.

Lunch

Lunch was delicious and fully-compatible with my low-carb way of eating. Better was the company and information we gathered while we ate. While we talked a variety of topics, configuration management (CM) was front and center. We enjoyed the illuminating company of Shawn DeArmond, University of California, Davis, and his insights on CM. He offered his qualified opinions on what makes sense, and I have a new YouTube video to watch.

2018 BADCamp Configuration Management Drupal Multi-Site and Distributions (<https://2018.badcamp.org/session/configuration-management-drupal-multi-site-and-distributions>)

1:00 PM — Solutions session

As we filtered into the room, Paul handed each attendee a table number. This assured randomized seating so that we couldn't sit with our "normal" crowd. The rules for engagement were simple. Write down your greatest pain points. In round-robin fashion, share them with the table. Next, each person leads with their problem and we collaborate towards a possible solution.

My problem was around how to cultivate new talent, especially from underrepresented communities. This led to a fascinating discussion and back and forth on how to do so. One of the possible suggestions was to seek out the growing use of bootcamp-style training that has been growing nationally. Seek connections with these groups, and possibly offer mentoring.

2:00 Lightning Rounds

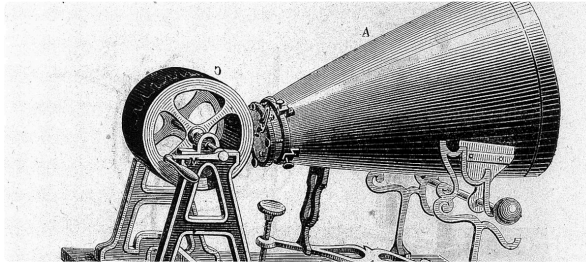
I'll have to dig into my notes for this

DevOps for a small team

4:00 PM — closer and mixer

Diminished Zeal with Steady Commitment

September 1, 2019



After 2+ years, the loss continues

Though my LCHF journaling has been quiet, don't let my silence fool you. I have been thoroughly enjoying low-carb living and its consequences. My initial excitement was my finding actual validation in what I had read in Atkins diet books fifteen or more years ago. Even better, Dr. Westman's guidance helped me exceed where my read of Atkins had failed. As I type this post, 2 years and 2 months in, I am maintaining my weight loss, increasing my health, and enjoying life as I had not expected at my age.

If all is so great, you might think my zeal would stoke my muse, that I'd write more. While I love to write, there's a flipside to public professions. Someone I love dearly, changed her eating to a low-carb diet. She dropped 50 pounds and said she never felt better. "Why don't you blog about it? You can inspire others to give it a go." I asked.

She responded;

"I've spent my whole life with my weight problem hovering over every aspect of who I am. I don't want my weight, to be a 'thing' with me. I want it all behind me."

It didn't hit me until a couple of days later what she was saying, and I love that reaction. Isn't this how it should be? Our culture is drenched in a quasi-nutritional patter about fiber, cholesterol, exercise, how "bad" one is to want "one more pie," and so on. We should eat, enjoy what we eat, and live.

We should eat to live, not live to eat.

My Windows 10 Setup

September 13, 2019



The Platform Nomad

Every four years, Duke University personnel receive a “device refresh,” i.e., a new desktop or laptop device. To celebrate my fourth year at Duke, I switched from a MacBook to a Lenovo Yoga laptop. Though I remain an admirer of the life and achievements of Steve Jobs, my opinion on Apple products have greatly and progressively diminished since his passing.

As predicted by Jim Collins - Good to Great (https://www.jimcollins.com/article_topics/articles/good-to-great.html) book, Job’s market-savvy, charismatic, technical and culturally prescient leadership is a difficult – if not impossible – act to follow. I have long admired Apple’s manufacturing and parts specifications. However, I have a diametric opinion of their technical, marketing, and pricing strategy. At the time of my refresh, Apple had just rolled out an “innovation,” a thin touch bar between the laptop’s monitor and keyboard. This input interface was more gimmick than innovation. Ironically, Apple placed this on their higher-end laptops. I wasn’t alone in my disappointment at this inclusion. Put another way; the bloom was off the Job’s rose. Compounding my decision is Apple’s increasing focus on iOS over MacOS. Apple has positioned iOS as a consuming OS, not a creative one. What’s the point in investing in an OS that is losing research and development focus? Apple’s great at novice interfaces, which is moot for my purposes.

Meanwhile, I liked what recent and unprecedented changes Microsoft was offering. Windows Subsystem for Linux, while not as well integrated as the Terminal console is on Mac, has far superior from previous options. I liked Windows 10 well enough, though, my experience is with the enterprise edition, free of the garbage applications many tell me that Microsoft includes in the consumer editions. I do despise gratuitously added software, regardless of the platform. I value being proficient on Windows, Mac, or Linux. However, as a manager, and being that I spend most of my time in the Microsoft Office Suite of applications, the best platform for me is Windows.

After all that, I acknowledge that a remaining problem with Windows is its progressively sluggish performance over time. This degradation is a shared problem across platforms, but decidedly so on Windows. To address this, here are my steps to re-image a Windows device.

All of which reminds me: time to update my vimrc configuration file. Or should I switch to Neovim (<https://neovim.io/>) Visual Studio Code (<https://code.visualstudio.com/>) or GNU Emacs. (<https://www.gnu.org/software/emacs/>)

My Windows Configuration

1. Image machine with the Duke enterprise license standard image

2. Enable my user account with correct privileges
3. Uninstall any MS Office via add/remove programs UI. (Part of the TTS image.)
4. Run Windows Update (<https://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>)
 - This can take several restarts
5. Install 1Password (<https://1password.com/>)
6. Install Chocolatey (<https://chocolatey.org/install>) using cmd.exe, installation page found here (<https://chocolatey.org/install>).
 - Set-ExecutionPolicy Bypass -Scope Process -Force; [System.Net.ServicePointManager]::SecurityProtocol = [System.Net.ServicePointManager]::SecurityProtocol -bor 3072; iex ((New-Object System.Net.WebClient).DownloadString('https://community.chocolatey.org/inst
7. Restart after chocolatey package install.
8. Install chocolatey script for my applications
9. Enable Hyper-V
 - Enable-WindowsOptionalFeature -Online -FeatureName Microsoft-Hyper-V -All
10. Enable Windows Subsystem for Linux (WSL) (<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/wsl/install-win10>)
 - Enable-WindowsOptionalFeature -Online -FeatureName Microsoft-Windows-Subsystem-Linux
11. Establish Microsoft OneDrive (<https://onedrive.live.com>) user configuration
12. Install Microsoft/Terminal: The new Windows Terminal (<https://github.com/Microsoft/Terminal>) and Ubuntu (<https://www.ubuntu.com/>) from the Online Microsoft Store (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/store>)
 - Use either cmd.exe or powershell to run the ubuntu command to create your user account for the ubuntu instance. Afterwards, you'll be able to access the ubuntu shell profile within Windows Terminal, now my favorite Windows shell.
13. Install Homebrew on Linux (<https://docs.brew.sh/Homebrew-on-Linux>) into WSL
 - Install ssh keys
 - fix the perms on the new keys:
 - cd ~/.ssh
 - chmod 700 .
 - chmod 600 *
 - chmod 644 *.pub
 - sudo apt-get update && sudo apt-get install build-essential binutils file openssl libssl-dev
(brew won't install without this, see this link (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190629064424/https://github.com/Homebrew/linuxbrew-core/issues/13596>))
 - sh -c "\$(curl -fsSL https://raw.githubusercontent.com/Linuxbrew/install/master/install.sh)"
 - It is import to add the linuxbrew path to profile for this to work
 - Helpful cleanup commands:
 - sudo apt autoremove * echo 'eval \$(/home/linuxbrew/.linuxbrew/bin/brew shellenv)' >> ~/.profile
 - eval \$(/home/linuxbrew/.linuxbrew/bin/brew shellenv)
 - brew install gcc
14. Install zsh
 - Install Oh My Zsh - a delightful & open source framework for Zsh (<https://ohmyz.sh/>)
 - use brew install zsh before running the oh-my-zsh script.
 - Add the path for \$(which zsh) to /etc/shells.

- Let the OMZ script configure your zsh as default shell.
- `sh -c "$(curl -fsSL https://raw.githubusercontent.com/robbyrussell/oh-my-zsh/master/tools/install.sh)"`
- Further zsh customizations
 - `plugins = git, ssh-agent` and `vi-mode`
 - add `zstyle` configurations for `ssh-agent`:
 - `zstyle :omz:plugins:ssh-agent agent-forwarding on`
 - `zstyle :omz:plugins:ssh-agent identities key1 key2`
 - You must add `export PATH=/home/linuxbrew/.linuxbrew/bin:$PATH` to the beginning of your `.zshrc` file.
- 15. Install vimfiles
 - GitHub - kyleskrinak/vim-files-2.0: My vim configuration files
 - *Note - I have archived this repo.*
 - *Revised 2026-05-09: original link to vim-files-2.0 removed.*
 - I might be migrating to NeoVim. I like the configuration setup better. Stay tuned.
 - New repo: GitHub - kyleskrinak/neovim: My neovim configuration files (<https://github.com/kyleskrinak/neovim>) * Neovim conf files go here: `%USERPROFILE%\AppData\Local\nvim`
- 16. Load AutoHotkey (<https://www.autohotkey.com/>) autoscripts
 - At shell:startup
- 17. Use Windows Hello for device authentication
 1. Enable fingerprint scanner
 - Enable fingerprint and PIN for Windows 10 (<https://www.addictivetips.com/windows-tips/enable-fingerprint-and-pin-login-windows-10-1803/>)

Don't You Miss Carbs?

September 16, 2019



It's a common question for me these days. After talking about my weight-loss, severely reducing my carb intake, and how I must remain low-carb to do so, my interlocutor nearly always will press me;

Don't you miss the carbs?

Honest Answer:

- **Emotionally?** OMG Yes!
- **Rationally?** Not in the least.

Here's a story of a typical day in my life before I started low-carb.

On my morning commute to work, I'd think about the day ahead and how I should prepare. Then, I'd consistently wonder; "*Is anyone bringing pastries?*" Heck, why leave this to chance? Many times, I'd be the "nice" person and bring in the pastries or donuts myself. Then I couldn't wait to place the goods in the shared office space, flip open the boxed delights and grab my favorite cupcakes. Just thinking about it, on my drive in, was exciting. Of course, it's exciting! I mean, donuts!

Stop and think about that for a minute. Why are donuts exciting? There's no evolutionary need for donuts. Instead, it's quite the opposite. While every mainstream diet warns off donuts, the high carb diets suggest that it's unreasonable to give up donuts forever. It's like telling an alcoholic not to give up alcohol, as it's an absurd and impractical thing to do.

I don't buy that.

I've come to learn that "healthy" carbohydrates do not sufficiently suppress appetite. Processed carbohydrates, and sugars trigger hunger. Consider how easy it is to eat too many donuts, however, you want to define "too many." Now, consider the last time you overate meat? I don't mean "Meat and three (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meat_and_three)" but, just meat? Even as a meat lover now, I experience a mild revulsive reaction thinking of the difference. There's a scientific reason for this, something with grehlins, and other appetite-regulating hormones doing what evolution has focused them on doing. I don't pretend to understand the science and there's plenty more information for the curious.

I did an experiment. I ate two pounds of beef. The last few bites were difficult to finish as I felt full. I remember eating 6 – 8 donuts in one setting and only stopping because I rationally knew that was too many, but my body wasn't stopping me. It's nice when the brain, stomach, and heart work in tandem. It's in this way that low carb has been the most natural diet to follow.

If you don't trust your own experience, there's been further research on the addictive nature of sugar. While not as addictive as cocaine or meth, it is consistent with the DSM 5 criteria (*Food Addiction in the Light of DSM-5* (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4179181/>)) for determining addiction. Then there's the matter of the sugar industry gaming public policy to vilify fat to encourage sugar consumption.

Now my brain and heart understand. Sugar, starches, carbs, all want to trick me. The less I eat of these tricky buggers, the better off I am. Got it. As 2 Keto Dude alumni, Richard Morris once mused, "carbohydrates are the packing peanuts of nutrition."

Think about what this means for you nutritionally. We don't need carbohydrates. At its least bad, it's filler. It absorbs the delicious flavors of the foods you've prepped. I use a spatula now to capture that deliciousness, without the padding.

It's better to simply do without carbs.

Then I'm asked;

"What do you eat? What is there to eat?"

Lorraine Barbara Kubik Skrinak

October 30, 2019



“Did you know you brighten my day? You are like sunshine to me.”

This is how Mom greeted my daily visits at rehab. This was the essence of Lorraine Barbara Kubik Skrinak.

She radiated an authentic, and charismatic love to you, whether you were her son, or the maintenance guy changing the light bulb. Even with a failing body and brain, her love, unmistakable, came through. More than her love, Mom was also a fighter, an innovator and self-reinventor. She taught without teaching and loved without treacle.

I won't let her life pass, however, without a quick recap of a remarkable life.

Mom was born on March 18, 1928, to first-gen Americans in the hardscrabble of coal-cracking NE PA. She told me stories of blackouts during WWII, her gifted academics, artistry, and a love for fashion and becoming a seamstress.

After high school, Mom worked at Pomeroy's where she met my Dad. He was a charismatic contrarian with big plans. Go figure that Jackie Gleason was his favorite actor. They married in 1954 and soon Kim, Karen, Kris, and finally I came along. Dad and Mom had also started an advertising agency, complimenting each other's talents. Our family, and their business, Wes Advertising soon thrived. Everything for the perfect life was in place.

God had other plans.

Doctors diagnosed Dad with cancer in 1966, and after a painful year-long battle, Dad passed. He was only 41. Mom took over the advertising agency, despite the sharp rebuke of that time and place. Wes Advertising stayed open and provided an income for Mom to raise her children. Death came again in 1970, when her Mom, Nellie, died of



Lorraine Barbara Kubik Skrinak
March 18, 1928 – October 29, 2019

cancer. A flooding hurricane left us homeless for several months in 1972. A year after that, our house burned down, myself trapped on the second floor, leaping into my sister's arms to break my fall. Then, in 1976, my beautiful sister Karen died in a car accident.

/< Pause >/

You would forgive anyone for losing sanity at this point. Mom kept it together. Mom fought on. Not with swinging fists, but a steady and unyielding heart. Rather than collapse, while continuing her agency, Mom joined the American Cancer Society. She didn't like what she saw, she started "Spark of Life" dedicated to fighting cancer. Mom later joined the March of Dimes, always seeking ways to give, despite her modest means. She continued to work in a variety of sales-related jobs after that.

Elena and I moved to NC in 1994. We thought it would be a good idea to move Mom while she was in good health, and we had our newborn daughter Katlyn as bait. The plan worked.

We three sons worked together to help Mom whenever and however we could. When Kris's career took off, he bought a house that Mom lived in for many years, and then, later, an apartment where Kris and I shared costs. Finally, since Elena and I had room, we moved Mom into our house, where she lived until her stroke in 2016.

I visited Mom her first post-stroke day at Pettigrew rehab. With shaking hand and stuttering words, Mom pointed to the beauty of a bluebird perched on a bush outside her window. It took everything she had to point to the simple beauty of this bird. I had never seen such a marvelous bird before. Even in the darkness of her condition, her irrepressible spirit abounded.

It was our honor, our desire, and not our duty, to be there for Mom in her winter years.

People have kindly remarked that "I'm such a good boy." for taking care of Mom. Speaking for my brothers, whom we all have, always, taken care of Mom, I'm just showier about it. For me, the man behind the green curtain was Elena. Mom loved her pea soup. I say this, because my visits wouldn't pass without Mom asking for Elena's pea soup. Sandy's support for Kimmer, and Allison's for Kris, helped us help mom. We brothers cannot imagine any other choice — to want to help Mom. Our choice was in love, through love, a desire to support Mom. It was a desire as natural and strong as one's own desires, like laughing or eating. You should hopefully see this fact clearly now. It's what she taught us, by living it.

Back in the early '90s when Macs were new, you could make the error beep sound anything you wanted. I was working when my Mac robotically burped the error ding. "I don't like that." Mom said. "Your computer should say, 'You're such a good boy.' when you make a mistake." "Mom, I love the idea." So, I recorded Mom saying that. People loved hearing it.

Mom had a knack for repeating key phrases, such as the cute things her children or grandchildren would say. When I was a kid, my attempt at Handel's Messiah became "Ha-Ray-Roo-RA CHISH CHISH" my trying to imitate the sound of cymbals. Or "I'm gonna pee... in the blue..." after my son learned the joys of toilet bowl cleaner tablets and their blue dye. "I'm gonna get thome nutsth." As my then four-year-old daughter determinedly waddled to the cupboard. "I'm sending you lots of pink bubbles," she would tell Kris and Allison as a way of sending her love.

Twenty-five years ago, my wedding tasked me with writing a toast to my Mom. As I thought through great figures of history, Socrates, Augustine, Michelangelo, Aquinas, Einstein, only one person kept bubbling up in my thoughts. Not with fanfare, but quiet, steady determination, like there was no other choice. It was Mom.

Mom is my inspiration, motivation, and example of how to live, how I should be and how I should love. Speaking for my brothers and myself, we weren't being good to be good. We were loving Mom as she taught us how to love.

Mom and I continually shared our hope at seeing Dad and Karen once again. There is a glorious family reunion that started on Tuesday at 12:50 PM. My heart aches at losing Mom but the thought of their reunion gives me great joy and hope.

Mom, I love you. I know you love me. My brothers, your children, grandchildren, Kim and Sandy, Kris, Allison, Savannah and Trinity, Elena Katlyn, Alexa, Will and me, and all your family and friends, we all love you. We never doubted your love. Not ever.

Happy Third Lowcarbiversary

June 7, 2020



Left, working the camera at my son's football game, 2014-August. Right, 2020-June.

Yo-yo dieting, no mas

I've lost more weight in the past. I became frail, cold and hungry on those diets. I've never kept it off for more than three months. I never felt as good as I do on low-carb, either.

After meeting with Dr. Westman, and some pre-diet planning, June 8th, 2017, marked my first "official" day of switching my diet to low-carb. Since then, I've made some mistakes, I've never "cheated," and have come to love this way of eating. Thanks to Dr. Westman's steady guidance, I've come all the way around to his simple "dirty lazy" approach, as some call it. See the end of this article for more information on Dr. Westman.

I entered low-carb eating a skeptic and now I'm convinced after having lived the change and the growing body of evidence that low-carb is not only safe, but might be the best way for optimal health for most of us.

How big a change has it been? Well,

In June of 2014, I

- Weighed +290 pounds. I was clinically obese.
- The old and failed method of Calories-In-Calories-Out (CICO) dieting, i.e., tracked 85% of what I ate and made sure I was under my suggested total caloric requirements
- Exercised more than 60 minutes a day, five times a week.
- Limited my variety of exercise, since my joints prevented me from jumping or other similar movements

- Snored like a chainsaw
- I had a 46" waist, and wore an XXL shirt
- My blood pressure was high, and my GP was ready to prescribe medication
- My triglycerides were high and my cholesterol levels were unhealthy

Today:

- Weigh 230 pounds
- Following Page Four for health management
- No tracking of calories or exercise.
- Eat delicious food until I'm full
- I don't eat sugar or starches
- Exercise 30 - 45 minutes a day
- No more snoring
- 38" waist, L shirt
- blood pressure and vitals are excellent
- On no medications

Many people warned me against a high-fat, low-carb eating plan. I don't doubt they all meant well, but this old school thinking is keeping so many people from better health.

Their intent doesn't matter — they're wrong. This is why I go on and on about low-carb.

Oh, by the way, if you're so inclined, check out Dr. Westman's Page Four, available at <https://adaptyourlifeacademy.com/start-keto-right/>. It is a very specific and easy-to-follow low-carb guidance for sane people.

It's the best \$15 you'll ever spend. *(As of May 12, 2026.)*

Revised 2026-05-12: Dr. Westman now avails his famous Page 4 list with additional training, available at <https://adaptyourlifeacademy.com/start-keto-right/>.

Drupal Multisite on a Dime

December 2, 2020

Presentation

This talk covers how Trinity Technology Services adopted CI/CD practices for managing our Drupal Multisite hosting infrastructure, which serves over 100 Drupal websites across Trinity College.

Key Topics

- Drupal multisite architecture and management
- CI/CD pipeline implementation
- Deployment automation and workflow
- Scalability for 100+ sites
- DevOps integration with Composer and version control
- Configuration management in Drupal 8+

View the full presentation: [Drupal Multisite on a Dime](#)

Jekyll, Hugo, and Me

January 15, 2021

I've been using Jekyll (<https://jekyllrb.com/>) for the blog that you're currently reading for several years now. There is much to love in static websites for my professional and personal musings. My employer offers free static website hosting, and as a manager, I can use my blog pages for commonly-asked-for content or information. The theme I use, "Minimal Mistakes" (<https://github.com/mmistakes/minimal-mistakes>) is a well-developed and maintained Jekyll theme that incorporates much of what a modern website should — if not must — have, such as device responsiveness, web accessibility, and other modern web goodness. I can also use Markdown (<https://www.markdownguide.org/>) for my writing, with the Neovim (<https://neovim.io/>) editor. Also, using the `--livereload` option in `jekyll serve`, I can see my content updates in my browser, in full display context, when I save my markdown.

If all is well, what's the rub?

Maintenance

Jekyll runs on Ruby (<https://www.ruby-lang.org/>). Unless you're a Ruby developer, the occasional visit to a ruby compilation brings a lot of left feet to the dance. Ruby has two environment managers, `rbenv` (<https://github.com/rbenv/rbenv>) (which I use), and `rbvm` (<https://rbvm.io/>). Ruby uses gems (<https://rubygems.org/>) for libraries, logic, and object encapsulation, and the environments work to manage dependencies. That's all nice, but when you simply want to blog, ensuring you're up to date with your environment becomes a big, hairy, fugly ball of "what just happened?" At work, we use Ruby version 1.9.3 to compile SASS to CSS. Yes, we're working on that update. It won't come soon enough. Supporting such an old version, however, comes at a high cost.

I like to keep my code reasonably current. I check for updates from the theme's author, as well as ruby and gem updates. If I spent even half my day in Ruby, I'm sure I'd be fine with this standard maintenance. But I don't. I'm usually in mainstream office-type applications. I'm a manager, after all.

Slow server content updating

Livereload (<https://jekyllrb.com/news/2018/01/02/jekyll-3-7-0-released/>) is great, but, *until recently*, the round-trip from file-save to Jekyll-reloaded web page was in the 10 - 20 second range. I was in the 4 - 6 second range on my Mac-brew managed ruby system years ago. (FYI — I tried natively compiling Ruby and gems in Windows and it is a royal PITA. It's possible but not worth my time.) I saw the drop in performance when I switched to Windows 10 some years ago, using the new WSL service. Seeing my content in context is important to me. A few months ago, I upgraded my WSL to WSL2 and saw improved performance, now in the 5 - 10 second range. Better, but still annoying for my temperament and preferences.

There's gotta be something better

We're seeing increasing interest in static websites. This also means more options in everyone's favorite frameworks or languages. Python has Pelican (<https://blog.getpelican.com/>) and others, Node has Hexo (<https://hexo.io/>), and, not wanting to be left uninvited to the dance, even PHP has Sculpin (<https://sculpin.io/>). At the DrupalCon Nashville 2018 conference, I had the pleasure of attending Steve Francia's (<https://stevefrancia.com/>) keynote (<https://youtu.be/EJo9tPXXGPo8>). While there was a lot of good stuff in that keynote, he mentioned his work on the Go programming language at Google, and unsurprisingly, on the Go-based static website generator Hugo (<https://gohugo.io/>). Given my favorable impression of Francia and his work, I was curious to check out Hugo.

My initial impression was, well, wow. Hugo has markdown, was painless to install (I used linuxbrew on WSL2) and most importantly, Hugo is fast. Shockingly fast. My simple “hello world” website renders in under a second, heck in under 100 milliseconds. It’s nuts. So what happens with more content? I’m assured Hugo scales quite well and retains its blazing speed. I also took full advantage of a new CI/CD system in GitLab where a push to the specified git repository branch publishes pages on their service but that’s another topic.

Smitten with this performance, I started to dig into Hugo as a new publishing platform for this blog. I soon discovered that the Hugo theme world is still lagging behind Jekyll’s. Using GitHub’s star rating method, the most popular Hugo theme, which includes Disqus support, is 1/7th that the rating of my current Jekyll theme. Additionally, the features and display of the better supported Hugo themes are missing aspects of my Jekyll configuration that aren’t trivial to give up.

Here we are, again

Dejectedly, I spun up the old (current) environment blog environment. I see Ruby has a 3.x major release out. I update and things break. *Here we are again*. I completely uninstall and reinstall ruby, rbenv, and gems. Then I see Jekyll and my theme doesn’t play well with Ruby 3.0.0 so I set my environment to use Ruby 2.7.2, which fixes the problem. *More of the same ol’, same ol’*. Then I get `jekyll serve` to launch and, wait, *what?* Jekyll is now generating my page and site updates in under a second? At some point in the past few months, someone, somewhere, made some adjustments, and now my Jekyll system is, while not as fast as Hugo, it is fast enough, and I can keep all of my customizations for this blog.

Here are the stats as I update this page:

```
Regenerating: 1 file(s) changed at 2021-01-16 11:59:14
  _posts/2021-01-16-jekyll-hugo-and-me.md
Jekyll Feed: Generating feed for posts
...done in 0.7113945 seconds.
```

I noticed that I have updated the Jekyll Gemfile requirement from 3.4 to 3.7 as a version minimum. Perhaps this accounts for the dramatic speed increase? Or Microsoft has implemented some architecture changes to WSL2 that is helping? Or both? Or something else? Whatever the reason, I’ll take it.

It looks like this blog will be on Jekyll for a little while longer.

Two Guys Watch a Burning House, Part I

January 17, 2021

Note: I originally posted this on my Facebook account on March 19th, 2017. Facebook has since retired Notes; the original can still be found with some effort. I've moved this content here, with some edits for clarity.

I forget when in 1973 the Skrinak family house caught on fire. I'm guessing it was in late Spring, but that was so long ago. I do remember this — it was warm enough for my 11-year-old self to be on the roof of my house in my pajamas.

I went to bed after an ordinary day, around 9 PM. We had largely restored our house after the devastating 1972 flood from Hurricane Agnes that ravaged the Wyoming valley. The neighborhood had largely returned to its old Kingston self. We had also recently reshuffled the second floor so all of us siblings were able to get our separate rooms. Not that I minded sharing with my brothers, as many of us youngest siblings love our sibling's company. Unlike now, a kid per room was a luxury.

As for my bedroom, I had three smallish windows. With the room darkened for sleep, I could see the streetlight-diffused night sky illuminate my room in a row of three rectangles. As I drifted off to sleep, I'd peek my eyes open and closed as I settled in.

My Mom had gone out with her friends, a long-deserved night of fun. She rarely went out, and it was good to see her have some down-time. In the kitchen directly below my room was a cooking pot of vegetable oil. The details as to why are unimportant. The cooking oil was soon forgotten by some other distraction, and a grease fire started. Grease fires move quickly — too quickly. The fire consumed the kitchen in minutes and spread to the dining room. The steps to the upstairs were off the dining room, and the nascent fire blocked access to the steps. My siblings — Kim, Kris, and Karen — scrambled out of the house, unable to get to me.

From my bed, I peeked my eyes open. The row of windows had slightly dimmed. I wasn't sure why. I couldn't smell the smoke as it was just starting to fill the room. I closed my eyes to go back to bed. The second time, I peek again. The windows were even dimmer but still clearly set. My eyes faintly burned when I opened them. The Sandman? Really? Odd, but I was so relaxed and comfortable. The smoke was like liquid Nyquil (the old formula), and I felt great. A third time I stirred. I didn't hear anything (the white-noise wash of crackling house was steadily getting louder), but I "sensed" Karen calling for me.

Kimmer and Kris were scrambling to put the fire out. Someone called Mom, and she rushed home. Neighbors were helping as well with their garden hoses. Karen was focused on yelling for me to get out. The fire department had not yet come. Though a mere half-a-mile away, they took over 30 minutes to respond. I suspect more time than that. They play an imperceptible role in this story. Though I now daily pray for firefighters and first responders and honor the work they do, the hero in this story is Karen.

The last time I was this relaxed was when I was under anesthesia to get my tonsils out. "Kyle! Kyle!" Again, I sensed Karen. I didn't hear her. I felt her, dreamt her, calling me, demanding my attention. "Kyle! Kyle!" I forced my eyes open. A million pinpricks greet my eyes. I wanted to shut them hard to keep the burning pain out. My breathing was difficult, but the difficulty had come gradually, in my sleep. The windows now were nearly imperceptible. "Kyle! Kyle!" I rose out of bed and walked to the stairwell. Looking down the steps, I see a dim eerie light show of a shifting red-orange-yellow, from behind a thin black smoke veil, raging from the kitchen. I couldn't

see the flames. The light above the steps, which was my night-light, was darkened by smoke. Unmistakably, something was wrong. Now I'm fully awake.

I pass through Kris's room to his two smallish windows. I snap out of my dream-like state, and now I can hear Karen frantically and unmistakably calling my name. I poke my head out the window. My eyes and lungs get immediate relief. I see Karen, hands cuffed to her mouth to focus her shouts, and she is relieved to now see me. I can see our neighbors gathering to watch the unfolding drama.

Amidst the chaos, I notice two adult men, across Walnut Street, casually watching, having found their evening's diversion. Karen and I now scramble to figure out how to get me out of there.

Continued...

My Hero, Karen — Part II

January 18, 2021

Note: I originally posted this on my Facebook account on March 26th, 2017. Facebook has since retired Notes; the original can still be found with some effort. I've moved this content here, with some edits for clarity.

This is the conclusion to “Two Guys Watch a Burning Building.” I like this title better. The burning house, and attendant ne'er-do-wells, are incidental. That's Karen, on the left, above.



My perch, 40-some years ago, after some significant renovation, and shrubs.

The windows of Kris's bedroom were the smallish size of the windows in my room. Their bottoms began a couple of inches above my belly button, making passing through it difficult, even for this expert climber-into-and-out-of-er. Is this really the only way out? I go back into the room and look down the stairwell. The flames are much brighter now. I can feel the heat rising from the steps. The flame's luminosity pierces the veil of smoke, the fire now visible. The smoke hurts my lungs, my eyes — I must get to fresh air. My young mind assessed that leaving Kris's door open would be better for the house and my options. Of course, this only made my situation worse.

Karen and I decide there's no choice but to get on the roof. I wiggle through the window. From my earliest memories, I've had a dreadful and stultifying fear of heights. I don't this evening. There was a thin ledge of the roof in front of Kris's window, which I follow to the larger roof over the living room. My new waiting area seems safe for now while Karen and I consider our options. Looking right, I see a light rise of smoke from Kris's window — not too heavy. The roof wasn't hot, and Karen didn't see flames in the living room below me. This seemed to buy us time.

Our house on Walnut street had a unique aspect. Our first floor's foundation was 6 feet higher than the other houses on the street. When last year's flood had hit us, this was a blessing. Whereas our neighbors had the water level fill their first floor, we only had 2 feet of water on the first floor. As different as fire is to water, our blessing was now

my curse. My one-story perch was roughly a story-and-a-half drop. Karen and I didn't want me to jump. In our desperate hope, we continued to look for alternatives.

Wisps of smoke crawl from the eaves of the roof in front of me. Looking to my right, the smoke had become dense. Karen tells me that my brothers and the neighbors are frantically looking for a ladder tall enough to reach me. In the floor beneath Kris's bedroom was our laundry room. Our dog, Louisa, and our cat, Handsome, were trapped there, barking and mewling.

Louisa was a beautiful silky-grey Weimaraner. We bought her as a gift for my Mom's dad, "Pop-pop" as a consolation companion after he lost his wife, my Grandma, his everything, to cancer a couple of years after my father died. "Louisa," the Skrinak-forced feminine form for "Louis," my Pop-pop's name, seemed fitting. Dogs make lousy gifts, however, and Louisa was soon an adopted Skrinak. Handsome was a stray Siamese tomcat badass that was always roaming the neighborhood, calling for in-heat partners, and getting in fights. Yea, you should get your male cats fixed. You don't want to hear that every night. Handsome got his name when Karen, seeing him for the first time, said, "Hey, handsome!" Handsome and I had a unique relationship as well. Kimmer is a fantastic storyteller and loved to play up the voodoo-superstition of our youth. "The Devil can control cats, Kyle." Kimmer somberly informed my wide-eyed self. Afterward, I was terrified of that cat. Handsome would chase me around the house. One night I worked up a rouse to have Handsome chase me, wherein I lead him to the basement, and closing it tightly. Score one for me. Looking back, I don't understand what I was afraid of. Still, Handsome was our pet, and I thought he was the best cat ever.

Fires are loud, and the cacophony of all the discernible sounds only becomes horrific in retrospect. I'm sad to say we lost our pets in the fire, trapped in the laundry room. It still hurts as I type this.

My squatting calves, trembling and tiptoe, are eager to get me out of there. Karen and I agreed — my only option is for me to jump and for Karen to "catch" me. The two adult men, across the street, continue to savor their evening's spectacle. "Kyle! I'll break your fall!" as Karen positions beneath me. "How? What does that mean?" "I don't know; we have no other choice. Just jump." We sure seemed like we didn't have any other options, as the fire was spreading and there were no firefighters in sight and my jostling brothers and neighbors could not find a ladder.

I jump.

Karen, God bless her, broke my fall. I didn't aim, nor think of how to fall. I trusted Karen to resolve the details. It is amazing what we can do in love. Tears well up as I think of my beautiful sister, but this wasn't her time, yet. We collapse together on the ground. Miraculously, neither she nor I were hurt. The whole drama resolving in a single fall. My neighbors take us in as Karen as we decompress. Karen was hoarse. My knees and ankles sorely burned but I broke nothing. Yes, I was as big for an 11-year-old as I am for a 54-year-old now.

I suspect those two adult men would have come in handy at that precise moment. We, nor they, will ever know. I was later told they were volunteer firemen, waiting for the firetruck to arrive. Sometimes we embellish our memories in vindication or vituperation. Whatever. They will remain shiftless and useless cowards in this story. I pray they found redemption elsewhere.

The fire didn't consume the house, leaving the frame in-tact. Though I don't recall their arrival, the fire crew did show up in time to put out the fire and slap us with a costly water charge. Thanks, guys. My perch would have been fine for the keystone cops of firefighters to arrive at their leisure. Though the flames never spread to the living room, the heat was so intense that it melted our television and stereo. Who knows?

Our house was a charred blemish on E. Walnut Street for several months afterward. Our dear friends gave us a place to stay while Mom figured out the details, with us finally moving to Wyoming, PA. I remember my first bedtime after the fire. The eerie orange-glow illumination of the old-style flip-clock before my closing eyes told more than

time. I dreamt of fire raging behind a wall, struggling to break through and get me. In my waking moments, however, I never doubted I was safe.

My Mom has been through quite a struggle. I'm unclear on how Mom figured all this out while single-handedly raising her family. She has told me, many times, "I never signed up for this." The only way I can make sense of all this is this; "It is amazing what we can do in love."

Postscript, January 23rd, 2021. My Mom passed away on October 29th, 2019, two-some years after I wrote this. I wrote a eulogy honoring her extraordinary life that you can read [here](#).

Shinleaf Campsite

January 18, 2021

***Note:** I originally posted this on my Facebook account on November 8th, 2008. Facebook has since retired Notes; the original can still be found with some effort. I've moved this content here, with some edits for clarity.*

A tall and thick web of branch silhouettes cut the night sky. A few stars and a bright moon cut through, enough to dimly illuminate the forest around us. There was nothing extraordinary about it, other than the infinite richness around us. We were with other dads and daughters, and we all went for an ordinary walk at the campsite. My eight-year-old daughter and I walked hand-in-hand. Being with her friends excited her, being with me excited her; yet we were walking as if to get the mail.

When I was 8, I played alongside a lake against a star-splattered night with my brother and sister. Kris showed me the Milky Way; Karen showed me the isthmus to a usually unreachable island. That was also an ordinary night, a night that now sneaks up and extraordinarily fills me.

For my daughter, that walk was just a brief moment between the scary campfire stories, marshmallow smores, and watching and playing with the campfire.

For her dad, it was something else.

Gratitude, and That's Right

January 29, 2021

Note: I originally posted this on my Facebook account on April 2nd, 2017. Facebook has since retired Notes; the original can still be found with some effort. I've moved this content here, with some edits for clarity.

You all have been so kind about the two recent notes I've published. I've been thrashing that story around for years in my head. As my friend Jim tells me, you don't have to be writing to be writing. I'd love to write some more, as I've found it quite enjoyable and satisfying, but, well, not yet. So, I hope you enjoy this journal entry of sorts.

This is a big week for me. Duke University is holding their TechExpo this Friday, and I'm one of the co-chairs. I'm soberly honored to be working in this capacity along with so many bright lights. We have the highest registration recorded yet. The venue will be at capacity if everyone shows up. Event planners, reading this, are nodding sagaciously. I'm looking forward to attending as many sessions as I can, but I suspect I'll be Nervous Nelly, running the floor, looking for raging fires to extinguish.

On other fronts, I'm the president of my neighborhood's HOA, and that is been challenging, put mildly. We've got a Gordian knot of informality to fix, and we're doing our best. Yet, let this cup pass, Lord, I beg you.

Finally, we're helping Alexa find the right college for her. My children fill me with ineffable pride to see who they are and who they continue to become.

My mom Lorraine is stable now. Her health is strong — all of us should be so healthy, at 89. The staff at Chatham Commons have been wonderful. This was my biggest worry. Not that assisting living is a Shangri-La, of course. Mom is still Jack Nicholson's Randle McMurphy at the Oregon State Mental Hospital, and this continues to be a challenge for her. Kris is visiting with us, and her, of course, as I write this. For mom, seeing her sons is like water for parched lips.

In short, we're juggling 5, 6, 7 pins in the air. Keep us in your prayers, I promise we'll do likewise.

As for the title for this post, I've always thought this is a fetching tune. Then I read the lyrics. Good stuff. Not bad for a bunch of punks from Brooklyn.

What you think,
that the world owes you?
What's gonna set you free?

Meet Holly

January 30, 2021



HOLLY - ID#A054700

This was my post the day after we adopted Holly from the Wake County SPCA (<https://spcawake.org>). It is essentially copied from the SPCA pet catalog. Originally posted to Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/notes/kyle-skrinak/new-skrinak-addition/131859026624>) on August 1st, 2009.

Original catalog text

My name is Holly, and I am a spayed female, white and brown brindle Pointer and American Staffordshire Terrier. I am 10 months old.

Hi there! My name's Holly. One, two, three, go! Come on, let's race! No, really! Come on! Just so you know, I'm a go-go-go kind of girl! I'm a little shy when we first meet but give me a couple of treats and a few minutes, and you'll find me by your side in no time. I am also sweet, not to mention a cute little girl who's looking for a family to keep up with me. Of course, I know

whoever I end up with will love me and take care of me for the rest of my life. I occasionally indulge in coprophagia, but I'm sure a steady discipline will help me break this disgusting habit. I like finding new things to chew on, and my new parents will need to make sure I don't get into anything I'm not supposed to. I will reward your patience with lots of kisses. Are you the perfect person for me? I currently weigh ~40 lbs. and should reach ~45-50lbs.



Meet Holly Skrinak

Loose Shorts and the TSA

February 19, 2021

I wrote this story, years ago, back when my low-carb weight loss was still new to me. Like many life-long yo-yo dieters, I had yet to develop the conviction that this time is different, and that I might once again re-inflate. The shorts in question were 4 sizes too big for me then, more so, now, though I've long donated them to Goodwill.

You know the drill. Before you get to the gate to board your flight, you must remove all electronics and metal, shoes, wristwatch off, double-check your pockets, bags, and *finally*, pass through inspection — like a mini-colonoscopy. Anyhow, flashback a couple of hours earlier, where I'm dressing for the day. My only pair of shorts is my now way-too-loose shorts. Slap on a belt, and I'm fine-ish, right.

Well...

There I am, converting into Mahatma Gandhi to get through inspection when a TSA agent *helpfully* reminds me; "*and your belt, too.*" Unthinkingly, I unthread the belt and queue "Moon River." Um... My hands grab hold of my gravity-obeying shorts.

Houston, we have a problem.

Now, don't forget, you must hold your hands overhead for the full-body scanner. By now, it's clear that I decided to wear my dad's shorts. I see beads of sweat form on the forehead of every TSA agent watching my exam. (Yea, they're human, too.) I spread out my legs, and shove my belly out as far as I can, and assume the pose. I hear a faint "ding" as they steer me out of the scanner. *Of course*, we're not done, yet. I think there's one Don Rickles (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Rickles) reincarnated as a TSA agent, who insists on a pat-down. Really. "Sir, you better grab those shorts tightly, *no one wants them to drop.*" Thank you, captain O.

The good news is my shorts didn't drop. The public and I are relieved at this. I scramble to rethread my belt before I re-acquire every other earthly possession to end this abomination.

Now onto my flight.

Oh, by the way? I never fit so comfortably into airplane seats as I do now.

In the Jekyll garden

April 1, 2021



Continuing my research on a static website workflow, I'm spinning up a new personal website as an excuse to try building a new Jekyll-based static website. Doing so reveals the rough edges.

How so?

I'm trying a new Jekyll theme, Basically Basic (<https://mmistakes.github.io/jekyll-theme-basically-basic/>), made by the same developer, Michael Rose (<https://github.com/mmistakes>), for the Minimal Mistakes (<https://mmistakes.github.io/minimal-mistakes/>) theme that I use for my professional website. He's done excellent work supporting and maintaining with his Minimal Mistakes theme, so I'm comfortable with his new theme as a starting point.

I'm on a Windows 10 21H1, using WSL2 and Ubuntu 18.04 LTS. In that virtualized OS I am using rbenv to manage my Ruby versions. Already, expecting a non-information technologist to build or configure such an environment is a concern. I suppose a docker image may help? Digression: writing this motivated me to upgrade Ubuntu to 20.04. Thanks to this careful description (<https://alessio.franceschelli.me/posts/windows/wsl2-upgrade/>) of the process, I did so without interrupting my post-upgrade environment, which is no small engineering feat.

Noted I used this method (<https://stackoverflow.com/a/25735388/479709>) to copy the 18.04 image export to my OneDrive as a remote backup. It enabled a PowerShell progress bar on the copy transfer process.

With those details out of the way, my first step was to cd to my desired disk location and create a new Jekyll website

```
jekyll new recipes
```

If you've been through my website, that premise shouldn't surprise you. I then cd recipes to snap in the Basically Basic theme, using the Ruby Gem Method (<https://github.com/mmistakes/jekyll-theme-basically-basic#ruby-gem-method>) to install the theme and gem requirements.

Great! Ready to go, right? Not so fast. Welcome to Ruby. My first attempt at a server run is met with failure. The ffi gem is incompatible with... something. I don't know whether Ruby 3.0.0 or Jekyll 4.2. To fix this failure I must backport ffi to version 1.14.2.

I run `bundle exec jekyll serve --livereload` and I'm met with this error.

```
/home/figgles/gems/gems/jekyll-  
4.2.0/lib/jekyll/commands/serve/servlet.rb:3:in 'require': cannot load such  
file -- webrick (LoadError)
```

This is a known Ruby 3.0.0 bug (<https://github.com/jekyll/jekyll/issues/8523>). I fixed it with this:

```
bundle add webrick
```

Whoops! I run `bundle exec jekyll serve --livereload` and I'm met with a ffi library error. However, I cannot replicate the error after updating my OS. If you do experience this, you can run the following:

```
Update the Gemlock.file to ffi (1.14.2)
```

```
bundle remove ffi
```

```
bundle add ffi --version=1.14.2
```

Finally, I can successfully launch my local compiled website and begin making edits. Since I am an information technologist, that's fine. These convolutions, however, make recommending this approach more problematic, especially for non-IT users, such as researchers or faculty.

DrupalCon 2022 Code+ Presentation

April 6, 2022

Presentation

This presentation highlights Duke University's **Code+** cocurricular program, a unique initiative promoting undergraduate diversity, equity, and inclusion in computer science and technology.

Key Topics

- Code+ program mission and goals
- Supporting diverse student populations in STEM
- Building inclusive technology communities
- Duke's commitment to DEI initiatives

View the full presentation: [Code+ at DrupalCon 2022](#)

What I did at DrupalCon 2022

May 3, 2022

Presentation

This presentation summarizes my experience at **DrupalCon 2022** in Portland, OR, covering key sessions, learnings, and takeaways from the conference.

Topics Covered

- Conference highlights and notable sessions
- Drupal ecosystem trends
- Community connections and networking
- Actionable takeaways for our organization

View the full presentation: [What I did at DrupalCon 2022](#)

Modernizing an Old Jekyll Blog with GitHub Actions and AI

September 18, 2025



Why Now?

Well, hello there, September 2025. It's been a while, hasn't it? I've been meaning to update my online presence for a while, and the old blog sitting untouched for years kept reminding me it was overdue. A recent home-grounding cold gave me the time and space to revisit a long-neglected pet project: this blog. Around the same time, I had also scaled back my time on social media — Facebook, X, Instagram, and the like. The constant distraction had become a death-by-a-thousand-cuts, and Facebook's push to make "Reels" as prominent as TikTok (which I've avoided for that exact reason) only sealed the deal. With that space reclaimed, I found I had more energy to create instead of mindlessly scrolling through mediocre content. Before diving back in, I weighed whether to keep it in Jekyll or switch to one of the many newer static site generators. I examined various metrics, such as community size, commit activity, and available tools. In the end, Jekyll still met my simple purposes, even though the theme I use is essentially deprecated. The frustrating part is that the theme's author no longer supports its development. Though it may not be cutting edge anymore, it works — and that's enough to get the blog moving again.

Setting the Stage

Since I last blogged, a revolutionary new tool has emerged: LLMs. In the past, my research for blog maintenance was a step-by-step cycle of searching for instructions, making trial attempts, and then searching again to figure out why things broke—more time on workflow, less time on content. With LLMs, I wondered if I could flip that balance and make the technical side easier.

One of the biggest attractions of coming back to this project was the promise of managing deployments entirely through code commits. No more manual directory uploads or ad-hoc scripts to remember — just write, commit, push, and let the pipeline do its job. First, though, I had to establish the fundamental environment. This blog has two targets: GitHub Pages, which I use for staging and preview, and an AWS S3 bucket served through CloudFront for production. To keep things clean, I maintain a clear separation between the two. Staging on GitHub Pages makes it easy to preview changes before they go live, while production on S3 + CloudFront gives me the durability and performance I need for a public-facing site. That balance — fast iteration on staging, solid delivery on production — sets the foundation for everything else in this rebuild.

Automating with GitHub Actions

Once the environments were in place, the next step was getting deployments to happen automatically. In the past, publishing meant carefully following a checklist or running brittle scripts that never felt quite trustworthy. I had to log in to GitHub, check the GitHub pages, then log in to AWS and push directories up via SSH or the UI. Then I

would have to reset the CloudFront cache each time. This time around, I wanted the workflow to live entirely inside the repo, so that committing code wasn't just version control — it was deployment. GitHub Actions turned out to be the right fit.

With Actions, I could wire up a pipeline that builds the Jekyll site, runs tests, and pushes the results where they need to go. The key to making this work for production was establishing trust between GitHub and AWS, and that's where OIDC comes in. Instead of hard-coding credentials or passing around access keys, GitHub can request temporary credentials directly from AWS. It feels both cleaner and more secure than what I used to cobble together. I wish to ensure that I am not only automating but also using secure practices.

That shift — from ad-hoc scripts and stored secrets to declarative workflows and ephemeral credentials — is one of the most evident signs that this blog's infrastructure has grown up.

Smarter Checks: html-proofer v5

Another unexpected, big, and pleasantly surprising change since I last touched this blog is how much the Jekyll ecosystem has matured. Back then, catching broken links or malformed markup meant either waiting until a page failed in production or trying to spot problems by hand. It wasn't efficient, and it definitely wasn't reliable. I use an old trusty web spider tool, Xenu, which is great for link discovery, but it progressively shows its age as HTML continues to evolve.

Enter the Ruby library html-proofer v5. The tool has been around for years, but the latest version is far more flexible and better integrated with modern workflows. It runs right inside the pipeline, checking links, images, and HTML validity before anything goes live. The days of scrolling through a published site hoping not to stumble across a 404 are, thankfully, over.

I might have discovered this upgrade eventually on my own, but LLMs accelerated the process. Instead of combing through outdated blog posts and scattered documentation, I was pointed directly to the library for inclusion in my workflow as an automated QA review. There was a glitch, however, as ChatGPT hallucinated that there was a configuration file for the library. More on that later. For once, the time spent was on writing content — not chasing down arcane build errors.

Delivery with CloudFront

This site has always sat behind CloudFront, but coming back to it after a long pause meant a few updates to match today's best practices. The first was tightening the origin path: serving from S3 with an Origin Access Control (OAC) instead of the old wide-open patterns. Locking CloudFront to the bucket and letting it request objects with signed, temporary credentials closes a door I should have closed years ago.

While I was in there, I revisited the S3 endpoint choice. The "website" endpoint is convenient for static hosting, but the REST endpoint, paired with CloudFront, gives me more predictable behavior for headers and error responses. Either path works, but the important part was being explicit and consistent, so caching doesn't surprise me later.

Caching itself needed a refresh. I simplified behaviors to make HTML short-lived and assets long-lived, using versioned filenames to prevent users from accessing stale content. Automatic invalidations for HTML on deploy replaced my old habit of manually mashing the "Create Invalidation" button: small thing, big quality-of-life improvement.

The end result: same idea as before—CloudFront in front of S3—but with stricter access, clearer origins, and saner cache rules. It feels less like a hobby setup and more like a site I can trust to behave.

Developer Helpers

Along the way, I also built a couple of small conveniences that made this process smoother. I am a long-time fan of zsh. It is my preferred shell. As I was issuing console commands, the repeating patterns led me to wonder, “Can I put this into a script or function?” Again, LLMs to the rescue. One of the resulting changes is a small zsh helper I call `gitshas`, which provides a quick lookup of recent commit hashes along with their messages. It’s the kind of shortcut that saves seconds each time, but over dozens of commits, it makes referencing or rolling back changes far less tedious.

The other is a lightweight GitHub Issues workflow I’ve started using as a personal to-do list. Instead of juggling sticky notes or a separate task manager, I can capture ideas and track progress right where the work lives. For a solo project like this, that’s enough — no heavy project board or elaborate labels required, just a running log of what’s next and what I have done.

These helpers don’t change the architecture, but they make the day-to-day feel more polished. It’s the difference between fighting the tools and having them stay out of the way.

Troubleshooting Notes

No rebuild goes smoothly, and this one was no exception. Some problems were old friends, and others were brand new. LinkedIn, for instance, still throws its infamous 999 and 403 errors when automated requests try to touch its pages. S3 handed me the occasional `AccessDenied` error until I tightened up the bucket policies to match the new CloudFront setup. And OIDC, while far more secure than static credentials, punished me with cryptic errors until I got the trust relationship between GitHub and AWS nailed down. Even SSH decided to join the party, with network blocks cropping up where I least expected them.

And then there were the lessons unique to building with an LLM. ChatGPT hallucinated a configuration file for HTML-Proofreader that doesn’t actually exist, and for a while, I chased my tail trying to make it work. Eventually, I learned how to spot when the tool was confidently wrong — it’s a simple rule. If by the third attempt, the LLM code fails, presume a serious logic error in the generation. In the case of the HTML-Proofreader, the LLM advised me to create a config file for library operations. This library does not have such a config file. However, a user suggested this in a support forum. The LLM ran with that as if the library had implemented this. That experience turned into one of the more valuable takeaways of the whole project: AI can accelerate the work, but it still needs a human in the loop to keep it honest.

Wrapping Up

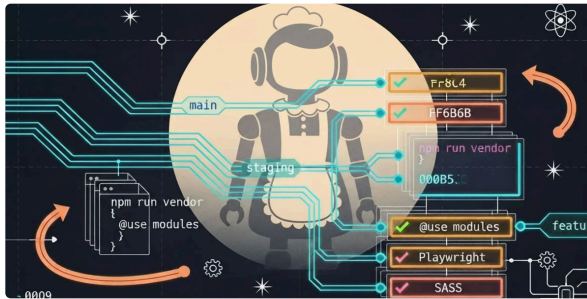
This project started as a way to dust off an old blog, but it turned into much more than that. I modernized the pipeline, tightened the infrastructure, and discovered tools in the Jekyll ecosystem that make publishing less fragile and more reliable. Just as importantly, I learned how to work alongside an LLM: when to lean on it for speed, and when to step back and question its output.

The result is a blog that’s easier to maintain, more secure, and a little more polished than it was the first time around. I can spend my energy on writing instead of wrestling with builds, deployments, and broken links. That’s the real win here — moving from a neglected project to something that feels alive again.

I’m indifferent whether this blog will draw a lot of readers, and that’s fine. For me, it’s enough that the process of writing and publishing feels like progress rather than friction. It reconnects me with what I love about technology, creativity, publishing, and access. And with the right balance of automation, infrastructure, and a skeptical eye on AI, I’m set up to keep it that way.

AI-Assisted Modernization: Two Days, Ten Years Strong

December 31, 2025



I have had my personal blog for many years now. It will be 10 years old next October. They grow up so fast, don't they? What started as a way to share my thoughts, wins, and work notes has now become a "skin in the game" playground for me. Since my blog started its life, I have hosted it entirely in the cloud (minus local dev), which lets me practice for my own professional edification.

A playful "what if" session with VS Code's integrated Copilot turned into mowing down long-standing issues in minutes. At my prompt, Copilot analyzed my repo and, in short order, generated a proposal for changes I have long put on hold. Examples include security hardening, modernized asset management, and gaps in workflow documentation. What followed was a 48-hour back-and-forth, condensing what would have been two weeks of evenings into two winter-break days. So, as per my learning preferences, I am sharing this experience as part of my learning process. I hope sharing my experience will help anyone evaluating whether these tools are worth the investment, even if just to play and see.

My changes, by the numbers (right from Copilot)

- Major PRs merged: 2 (#53 MM4 upgrade, #55 CI cleanup)
- Total files changed: 92
- Lines added: 11,707; Lines deleted: 1,160
- Includes reduced: 46 → 18 (28 removed)
- SASS overrides added: 2 new files (16 lines total)
- Playwright tests: 8 snapshot tests + 111 lines (Wraith replacement)
- Maintainers documentation: 229 lines filling an empty MAINTAINERS_NOTE.txt
- CSS customizations: 4 → 20 lines using @use modules
- Font Awesome: CDN → self-hosted 5.15.4 (18 files)
- Reveal.js: 5.2.1 with a formalized npm vendor script
- Reveal.js menu: Restored/pinned at v2.1.0 with complete documentation
- New npm scripts: vendor:fontawesome, vendor:reveal

What I learned from all this

1. **Documentation is a necessary guardrail.** The novelty and ease of natural-language interaction lead to a false sense of "memory and intuition." Without a persistent context, the AI will re-analyze the same situation differently. **My learning:** Lead with your documentation. Keep workflow docs up to date and ensure I always reference them in prompts. Here is where I keep my work instructions for this blog.

- README: <https://github.com/kyleskrinak/kyleskrinak.github.io/blob/main/README.md>
- CHANGELOG: <https://github.com/kyleskrinak/kyleskrinak.github.io/blob/main/CHANGELOG.md>
- Documentation: <https://github.com/kyleskrinak/kyleskrinak.github.io/tree/main/docs>
- GitFlow Guide: <https://github.com/kyleskrinak/kyleskrinak.github.io/blob/main/docs/operations/gitflow.md>

- Hallucinations remain a critical issue.** Roughly 1 in 3 prompts were problematic: confusing staging vs. main, implying I had completed the MM4 upgrade, trying to create blog files outside the documented workflow, ignoring that Reveal.js was already self-hosted, and even honoring an errant note I'd included about ".htmlproofer.yml." Newsflash - you can become the parent of your own project's hallucinations. **Mitigation:** always human-in-the-loop—review → approve/reject → execute.
- Effective prompting requires specificity.** Specific prompts (exact colors, exact branches/SHAs, exact files/paths) reduce errors. When the AI gets it wrong, it often exposes vagueness in my own thinking. Now I use AI as a call-and-response stress test for clarity: if I can't explain it precisely enough for an AI to understand, my phrasing probably isn't clear enough for humans either.
- Verify all suggested actions.** Never blind-trust AI output. Read commands, understand consequences, check diffs, run local builds, run tests, and confirm alignment with the workflow. Remember that you're gaining a large amount of time. Skipping this (because you're lulled into complacency) invites unresolvable complexity later on.
- The productivity multiplier is real.** Two weeks compressed into two days. AI handled diffs, log analysis, boilerplate docs/scripts, and pattern recognition; I focused on real-time prompt decisions and verifying the results.
- AI helps best at scale—cohesion is human.** AI can juggle best practices, assets, tests, docs, branch rules, and CSS precedence. Deciding what fits and what to reject is human work. Without that, the train goes off the rails.

Conclusion: New life in my Jekyll + Minimal Mistakes stack

I no longer wonder whether to migrate to faster/newer stacks (Hugo, Eleventy, etc.). The refactor gave my stack a new lease on life: reliable asset vendoring, far more complete documentation, visual regression testing for Reveal pages, and tighter theme integration. I'm sticking with this stack. It's funny how radical and unexpected this all is—but I like it.

Hrm. I wonder if there's a better way to manage Jekyll assets and serve device-dependent images? Stay tuned.

Epilogue: Post-Publication QA & Polish (2026-01-02)

After publishing to my local environment, I smelled a rat and found more snakes under the rocks. Did I inadvertently change my visuals with the CSS update? Is my front matter correct across all my posts? Do I have a documentation on what front matter should be, and is it layout sensitive?

So, curious, I continued on with iterating visual fidelity and testing infrastructure:

Note: I asked Copilot to summarize the subsequent QA changes. Everything below is from Copilot's chat thread.

Visual Regression Enhancements

Pixel-Perfect Local/Production Parity:

- Extended visual regression suite to all 54+ pages, not just Reveal presentations
- Created `tests/full-visual-regression.spec.js` with 2% pixel tolerance, revealing five color mismatches:
 - Archive item H2 links: `#575b62` (was inheriting `$link-color`)
 - ToC header: `#0099cc` (production shade vs local `$primary-color`)
 - ToC box: `#f5f5f5` background + `#d3d3d3` borders (was lighter)
 - Page H2 underlines: `#babdbd` (production `rgb(186, 187, 189)`)
 - HR elements: `#cccccc` (was darker default)
- Fixed all five colors in `assets/css/_custom.scss` with `!important` overrides
- Confirmed 54/54 pages pass pixel-perfect comparison

Interactive QA Tool:

- Built `/compare/` page for side-by-side local/production inspection
- Left/right iframes, Previous/Next navigation, keyboard shortcuts
- Developed-only (excluded from staging/production builds via config)
- Invaluable for spot-checking color accuracy during CSS tweaks

Sitemap & Artifact Cleanup

Removed Non-Public Assets from Sitemap:

- Updated `_config.yml` to exclude `assets/files/` (PDFs) and `assets/reveal/plugin/notes/speaker-view.html`
- Ensured legitimate pages remain indexed (55 URLs now vs bloated prior list)
- Added jekyll-sitemap plugin configuration with explicit exclusions

Playwright Artifact Consolidation:

- Unified test outputs under single `tmp/playwright/` root
- Added `.gitignore` entries to exclude test artifacts
- Cleaner workspace, easier cleanup

Documentation & Workflow

README.md enhancements:

- Added “Full-Page Visual Regression Testing” section with workflow details
- Documented `/compare/` tool and its purpose as dev-only QA
- Updated snapshot location references to `tmp/playwright/`

CHANGELOG.md expansion:

- Comprehensive “Unreleased” section logging all QA refinements
- Color fix inventory + rationale
- Explain the changed Playwright directory structure

.github/CONTRIBUTING.md updates:

- New “Full-Page Visual Regression Testing” guide with typical output
- Interactive “Side-by-Side Comparison” tool documentation
- Expanded PR checklist: CSS changes now require a full visual regression run

- Clear dev-only status and exclusion config for compare tool

Changes Unpublished

- Marked `_pages/location.md` and `_pages/calendar.md` as `published: false` (outdated content, not removed entirely)

Final Validation

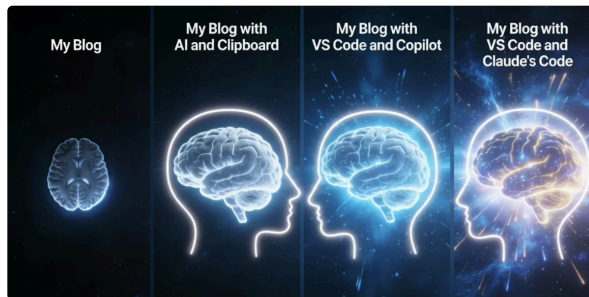
All test suites pass with zero warnings:

- `npx playwright test tests/full-visual-regression.spec.js` → 54 passed, one skipped (PDF timeout)
- `npx playwright test tests/reveal.spec.js` → eight passed
- `bundle exec jekyll build` → clean output, no deprecation warnings (SASS@use modules)
- Local serve at `http://localhost:4000` shows full visual parity with production

Addendum: I used GitHub Copilot to help me draft portions of this post—for structure, phrasing, and technical articulation.

Fun at Scale

February 1, 2026



When I started my blog, it was a novel and fun way to “get the word out,” whatever that meant at my whim, both personally and professionally. As time went on, technologies changed, and so did my priorities. Complexity increased. Over the years, what was novel and practical became an unmanageable burden. Eventually, I just let it languish. I knew I had to do something, but it wasn’t clear what that meant in practice.

Then the current buzz about “AI all the things” started. We couldn’t use it at work, but I could play with it, and I had a specific use for it, this blog, that reflects my vocation as well as my personal life. I’ve already posted about my initial Jekyll modernization using GitHub Actions and LLMs and my two-day AI-assisted sprint that condensed weeks of work on my findings. Now, however, its application has become clear. Not only has my personal use case been relevant, but I’ve also dramatically improved my personal site, gained professional takeaways, and...

I am having fun again.

We know AI isn’t a slam dunk. It hallucinates. It proposes overly complicated implementations. Yet I can manage the once diverse and disorderly mix of elements and guide them, using natural language, to an integrated end product. It’s like a small team that dutifully processes my prompts and, if I phrase them right, outputs a deliverable or a milestone toward one. When I wrote a “recipe” program in BASIC, it was novel but only questionably functional. Even so, it was fun to show off. Now, at scale, this isn’t a prototype. It’s my website. And soon, important deliverables at my work.

Ready to have more fun, I pointed GitHub Copilot (<https://github.com/features/copilot>) at whether I could refactor my Jekyll (<https://jekyllrb.com/>) to a modern component-based replacement. Then I came across a recommendation to check out Claude Code (<https://claude.ai/download>).

The Migration: Claude Code and Astro

In my continuing AI journey, I can confirm that using Anthropic’s Claude Code CLI in my terminal is, in a word, amazing. I heard about this from a tech podcast. I already had a task in mind: I had taken my Jekyll (<https://jekyllrb.com/>) and Minimal Mistakes (<https://mmistakes.github.io/minimal-mistakes/>) theme well past its end-of-life. I considered contributing back, but nearly every component the theme uses is deprecated or obsolete. So I installed Claude Code and was greeted with the terminal user interface (TUI). Oh, now you’re singing to me. It is an impressive terminal interface. “Can you glean my intent from my repo?” In minutes, I had a shockingly accurate mirror of my blog and where we were. “Based on your review, suggest a contemporary Static Site Generator target I can migrate to.” It had several suggestions that required my review. I finally arrived at Astro (<https://astro.build/>), an NPM-based generator. Hugo (<https://gohugo.io/>) was my fallback. “Create a plan to move my site from Jekyll to Astro.” It developed a plan

with a timeline. Claude Code estimated, “It should take about two weeks.” That’s quick; let’s go. In hours, I was 80% finished. The markdown conversion was relatively smooth. I had to use a different markdown parser as I use an extended formatting set. Claude also converted my reveal.js (<https://revealjs.com/>) presentation to slidev (<https://sli.dev>), a newer markdown-based presentation library. This took a few iterations, as I had custom markdown within reveal.js and had to identify the patterns that mapped to Astro components. With several more hours of effort, reviewing prompt suggestions across multiple options, Claude prompted me, and we had a nearly complete migration. Late in the migration, I learned I missed my second-most important page about my low-carb journey. I will be re-adding that page when I commit the branch in support of this blog post.

By the numbers, the migration was surprisingly successful. It seemed more performant, but I wanted numbers. I prompted Claude Code to identify and capture the difference using Chrome’s Lighthouse (<https://developer.chrome.com/docs/lighthouse/overview/>). Claude generated Lighthouse testing scripts that ran against both the Jekyll production site and the new Astro build, testing a sample of pages across desktop and mobile. It executed the tests, collected the Lighthouse JSON reports, and produced a comparison document.

The results were consistent: desktop scores improved by an average of 29 points (58.5 → 87.5), and mobile scores increased by 32 points (56.5 → 88.5). The best performer was my Vim for Writers post, which went from a 60 on desktop to 98, and from 58 to a perfect 100 on mobile. I found that ironic, as it’s a simple light-touch text post.

For context, Lighthouse measures performance, accessibility, best practices, and SEO on a 0-100 scale. These weren’t just theoretical gains; they represent real improvements in page load times, responsiveness, and user experience. The 30-point average improvement came from Astro’s static site generation, which eliminates run-time overhead, handles responsive image variants and lazy loading, and ships zero unnecessary JavaScript by default.

What’s interesting is that these gains applied across the entire blog, over 35 posts, without any per-post optimization. The architectural shift from Jekyll to Astro made better performance the default. I didn’t have to fight for it on each page; it came with the migration. I also didn’t have to manually run the tests and compile the results. I just asked for the comparison, and Claude handled the instrumentation.

The Safety Net: Copilot’s Second Opinion

OK, new theme, content migrated, working great locally, now it’s time to push to my staging (github.io) and main blog website. I have been disciplined in using a PR for commits to both staging and main to become familiar with Gitflow. While stepping through the PR process and looking at GitHub’s PR page, I discovered I can invite GitHub Copilot (GHC) to review my commit and trigger a review. This looked interesting, so I gave it a try. GHC started finding inconsistencies: testing, coding, documentation, and legitimate misses by Claude. I ran the comments through Claude, which confirmed the misses. I instructed Claude to address the comments and update the PR. Two or three passes later, (depending on the issues) the GHC review was clean, and I merged my PR. Claude has plugins that can do the same, but I prefer passing the review off this way. For now. That could change. This is all still highly dynamic and evolving.

Why Bother Owning It?

So, here I am, 12 years after stumbling onto a fun way to share information, then blogging and playing with static sites, to, as of a year ago, an anchor and chain to the past.

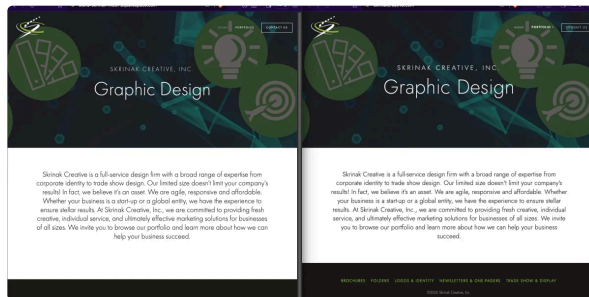
Ironically, what motivated all of this is my growing dissatisfaction with social media. My blog was the forgotten option. I need to spend more time with long-form reading, writing, thinking, and less time with the quick distractions of cat memes and one-dimensional hot takes. As I considered options like Substack (<https://substack.com/>) and Medium (<https://medium.com/>), I was underwhelmed. They’re not bad, but they all offer a model that isn’t mine. I was ready to retire my blog when I realized I already had a platform I owned and could shape however I wanted. As

a committed contrarian, I don't care about engagement, likes, or shares. With my platform, I own my content. My "platform" was this rusty old bucket. That's where AI comes in. Thanks to what I've described above, my 12-year-old blog now runs on a thoroughly refactored and contemporary stack with well-supported features.

So, my blog's back, baby! I'll be spending as much time on the content as the infrastructure with my AI amanuensis and the infra minions. I'll be writing and continuing to cut my teeth on the latest continuous integration routines and practices.

From Squarespace to Astro: A Migration Story

March 1, 2026



The original Squarespace site, left; and the migrated rebuilt site on the right.

The Itch

I keep running into a problem with my vocational assets: I know they could be better managed, but time and cost get in the way. My personal blog is a good example. For years, it sat on an aging Jekyll stack, accumulating technical debt while I told myself I'd get to it eventually. When I finally did — with AI tools doing the heavy lifting — weeks of backlogged work were reduced to hours. I wrote about that experience in three posts: [Modernizing an Old Jekyll Blog with GitHub Actions and AI](https://kyle.skrinak.com/posts/2025-09-19-modernizing-an-old-jekyll-blog-with-github-actions-and-ai/) (<https://kyle.skrinak.com/posts/2025-09-19-modernizing-an-old-jekyll-blog-with-github-actions-and-ai/>), [AI-Assisted Modernization: Two Days, Ten Years Strong](https://kyle.skrinak.com/posts/2026-01-01-ai-assisted-modernization/) (<https://kyle.skrinak.com/posts/2026-01-01-ai-assisted-modernization/>), and [Fun at Scale](https://kyle.skrinak.com/posts/2026-02-02-fun-at-scale/) (<https://kyle.skrinak.com/posts/2026-02-02-fun-at-scale/>). Each one started with a friction point and ended with something new and fresh.

That itch didn't stop at my own blog. My wife Elena runs a graphic design business at skrinakcreative.com, and I've managed the technical side of her web presence since I've been building Drupal websites. We'd been on Squarespace for years — it worked, but we no longer needed the full service. I wanted to keep her web presence without a subscription. The problem was clear enough. What wasn't clear was whether AI tools could handle a migration of this kind, given the countless ways such projects can get off track.

My prior projects led me to try. Skepticism noted, then set aside. I spun up a new project anyway.

The Situation

Elena's practice is referral-driven. She's never aggressively pursued new work — clients find her, and she enjoys the work that comes to her. That model served her well for decades, and her website reflected it: a portfolio site, essentially a brochure, designed to make a strong impression on anyone who looked her up. It didn't need to do much else.

I built her first site on Drupal, which made sense given my day job. When my time to support it thinned out, we moved her to Squarespace. That was the right call at the time. Squarespace gave her a polished, self-sufficient platform she could rely on without having to lean on me for every update. We were happy with it.

Over time, as her referral work lessened, so, too, did our need for Squarespace. We no longer need the same level of dynamic updates as before. All she needs now is a fast, reliable online presence that maintains its professional look and is low-effort for me to maintain. A static site is the right tool for that.

The First Instinct

My first move was HTTrack. I know the tool well — it's a capable web crawler that replicates a site to local storage, rebuilding link structures so you can browse offline. For a straightforward static site, it's a reasonable starting point for a migration. I'd used it before. I knew what it could do.

What followed was less straightforward. I ran multiple attempts with AI assistance, tweaking HTTrack's extensive runtime parameters each time — options related to JavaScript capture, CSS handling, and self-hosting of external references. It was whack-a-mole. Accommodating one use case would break another. Fix the stylesheets, lose the fonts. Capture the scripts, break the gallery. No matter what I tried, I could never generate a site capture that didn't still point back to Squarespace in some form.

That result pointed to something I hadn't thought about going into the project. Squarespace is a feature-rich platform and not just a hosting solution. It's obvious in hindsight, so bear with me here. Squarespace tightly manages its themes, fonts, and interactivity. HTTrack doesn't render URLs via JavaScript, so it can miss client-side artifacts, such as galleries, navigational elements, lightbox-like behaviors, and so forth. These are missing or broken in the static capture. While I was able to retrieve a copy of her site, the trailing dependencies would break once we canceled her subscription.

That's when the IP question surfaced. Even if I could have captured a truly decoupled copy, was I infringing on Squarespace's IP (Intellectual Property)? Which of their themes or other bundled components would I be using illicitly? I knew using Adobe Fonts would be improper. Rather than go down that rabbit hole, I chose to "roll my own" and start from scratch. That decision shaped what comes next.

The Discipline

Documentation has always been the foundation of complex project management. I've long known this. My personal temperament, however, runs toward play and discovery, which has always sat at odds with strict documentation discipline. AI bridges that gap in a way I didn't expect. It lets me be playful while leaving a breadcrumb trail of how I got there, which was just outside my natural discipline to maintain on my own.

My previous work with AI-mediated blog migrations taught me this directly. AI has no persistent memory between sessions. This is something we humans take for granted, and we know how that can lead to undesirable results. With documentation as a project's guardrails, AI's probabilistic method will lead you to more frenetic results. The fix is simple but specific: lead with documentation, starting with broad strokes and working down to the details. Remind AI to update documentation and AI instructions, especially when it produces a wrong answer. Think of it as the modern equivalent of hitting Ctrl+S obsessively — always refer back to the project documents.

Now baptized into this mindset, I started from the macro. I prompted Claude Code to define scope and deliverables: 7 pages, 1 grid-based theme, a known asset inventory, and 1 integration to import. After this definition, we proceeded to extract the design specifications from the Squarespace website: color tokens, typography, spacing values, and banner dimensions. I had prompted Claude to set visual tests as well. We captured a visual baseline of the current site and used it for our iterations. We tested across desktop and mobile, and defined what was acceptable, using Playwright for the capture and comparison. We did so before the migration began.

That groundwork is what made AI reliable rather than chaotic. Insufficient context isn't humility — it's a failure to do your job. When I've been lazy in AI interactions, I've actually been providing too little to work with. My playful instinct is fine. The breadcrumb trail is what makes it recoverable.

The Stack

Claude Code's first suggestion for a target framework was Hugo. I've used Hugo before and respect it, but it wasn't my druthers after using Astro. Having worked with Astro on my blog migration, I've developed a bias toward it — its build speed alone is enough to make me happy, and for an image-heavy design portfolio, its native image optimization is the right tool for the job. Astro handles WebP conversion, lazy loading, and responsive srcsets without extra configuration. For Elena's site, images are the product. That settled it.

For hosting, I wanted to evaluate Cloudflare Pages. I hadn't used it before, and this was a low-risk opportunity to do so. I'm well pleased with it. The free tier offers solid infrastructure, global CDN, automatic HTTPS, and git-based deploys. I'm not entirely clear on Cloudflare's business case for offering this freely — my guess is it draws developers into their ecosystem, with some percentage eventually using paid services. Whatever the reason, I'm not complaining. The caveat worth naming: Cloudflare can change that calculation at any time, which would force a hosting decision. It's a different flavor of vendor dependency than Squarespace, but a dependency nonetheless. The cost of being wrong is low — migrating away from a free service is a different problem than canceling a paid one.

For the theme, the right call was no theme at all. Existing Astro portfolio themes all required more adaptation than building clean from scratch — the difference between their layouts and Elena's design was too large. A blank Astro starter, shapen to spec, was the familiar instinct. Anyone who has worked with any blank CMS theme will recognize the logic.

The remaining decisions followed from the project's needs. GLightbox matched the gallery behavior Elena's site already had. Jost, a geometric sans from Google Fonts, replaced Futura PT — Adobe Fonts licenses don't survive a Squarespace cancellation, and Jost is close enough that most people won't notice the difference. Elena caught the difference. We'll get to that.

What Happened

Claude Code wrote everything. Every page, every layout, every style. My role was to manage the project and, in the visual alignment work, to be the eyes that Claude Code doesn't have.

The build moved from broad structural decisions to progressively finer detail. Early in the process, automated visual regression tests ran against the live Squarespace site, flagging layout differences at a gross level. As those resolved, the work shifted to subtler corrections — spacing, alignment, proportions that the tests could confirm but that I had to identify first. Claude Code can apply a pixel value precisely. It can't see that the banner is two pixels too tall. That part was mine. I'd identify the discrepancy, measure it, and feed it as definite input. Claude Code applied it. The test suite confirmed the fix. We moved on.

This iterative loop — observe, direct, execute, verify — is what the documentation discipline made possible. Without the test suite, corrections would have been subjective and hard to confirm. Without the documentation, each session would have required re-establishing context. Without the scope definition, the work would have had no natural stopping point.

When I thought the site was ready, I called Elena over. Her reaction was immediate and, for her, uncharacteristically carefree. She approved it. I flagged the font substitution myself — Jost standing in for Futura PT — and she accepted the tradeoff without objection. Her standards are exacting. She held me to the same standard she'd hold anyone she worked with. That she was satisfied mattered.

The Numbers

The project took about eight hours. Roughly one of those was due to a DNS configuration issue that Claude Code didn't catch.

At this point, I expected that reconfiguring DNS would be simple enough. Cloudflare already “knew” my current zone record configuration and had captured it. My plan was to migrate the nameservers to Cloudflare, add a custom domain configuration in CF Pages, and wait for propagation. As a side note, I hate the whole “Wait 48 hours for changes to reflect” thing, but you can query for confirmation right away rather than let a bad zone record munge things up. Back on point, I made the mistake of only adding skrinakcreative.com and not including the `www` . prepended version as well. Claude was completely blind to this miss and suggested every possible fix, except this one. Interestingly, I left the project, and it was in my idle time that my experience kicked in. I caught my error and added the missing custom domain, fixing the issue. A junior technologist might have spent considerably longer on that, or not found it at all. Some things only come from having broken them before.

Lighthouse performance improved from 57 to 86. The remaining scores held or improved across all seven pages. The site is faster, leaner, and free of a subscription. Those were the goals.

Project Scope

This was a tightly scoped project. Seven pages, one theme, a known asset inventory, one integration swap. The scope was defined precisely because I knew what I was taking on.

But what counts as tightly scoped keeps expanding. Without AI assistance, a project like this simply wouldn't have happened. I've been aware of AI-assisted migration tools for several years, and for most of that time, I was skeptical. The claims evidently outpaced the results. My blog migration projects moved me from skeptical to convinced. This project applied that conviction to something with real stakes.

The effort for this type of work is practical again at a small scale. I am free to truly manage a project while AI does all the small but vital information management to keep the project on scope and on task. AI does the execution while I keep judgment where it belongs. This is a whole new species of leverage, isn't it? There's no precedent in my line of work for this kind of acceleration. And this phenomenon is still new and rapidly changing.

Close

Elena approved the site. She wasn't evaluating the process — she never needed to. She looked at it, and it met her standard.

I've been writing about this workflow for a year now, and the projects keep finding me. Not because I go looking for migrations to run, but because the itch surfaces when something I care about isn't as good as it could be, and the cost of fixing it has finally dropped within reach. That's what AI-assisted development has changed for me — not the desire to improve things, but the calculus on acting on it.

I still haven't worked out the right balance between planning and surprise. Push too hard on structure and you're just executing a spec. Let it go too loose and you're debugging indefinitely. The productive zone is somewhere in between — structured enough to give AI what it needs, loose enough to let the work surprise you.

As far as what I will post next, I don't know. Here's a tease: I used a similar process in writing this very post. I've asked Claude to juggle the details while I rope it into a hopefully interesting narrative. Relatedly, an interesting video by Stephen Welch (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iv-5mZ_9CPY) on how diffusion models generate imagery, from coarse structure to fine detail as we whittle away the “detail noise,” reinforces my discovery through practice.

For a more technical walkthrough of this migration, see my presentation on AI-Accelerated CMS Migration (<https://kyle.skrinak.com/presentations/2026-02-22-squarespace-to-astro.html>).

This post was developed collaboratively with Claude Sonnet 4.6 (claude.ai) in a single session, using the same iterative, AI-assisted approach described above.

The Middle Tract

March 8, 2026



Herbert James Draper, *The Lament for Icarus* (1898)

“Icarus, I recommend thee to keep the middle tract; lest, if thou shouldst go too low, the water should clog thy wings; if too high, the fire of the sun should scorch them. Fly between both.” — Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book VIII (trans. Riley, 1851)

Strangers with Mustard Packs

The Tobacco Road Marathon starts and finishes at the USA Baseball National Training Complex in Cary, North Carolina. The course follows the American Tobacco Trail, a rails-to-trails path built on the former Norfolk Southern Railroad that once served tobacco farming communities. It’s a Boston qualifier, with up to fifteen percent of finishers qualifying, and is known for its flat, fast route and March temperatures in the forties and fifties. With tall pines lining the trail, most of the race feels like a run through the woods. The event is well organized, genuinely enjoyable, and on March 20, 2024, the conditions seemed ideal for a great day.

But the day didn’t unfold as planned.

At mile 6, a speed walker passed me, steady at around a 12:15 pace, while I was at 12:30. She shared she had started speed walking to avoid leg cramps, which struck me at the time as extreme.

At mile 17, I hit “the wall.” I begged a fellow runner for mustard, and he handed me packets for my cramps. They helped almost immediately. He vanished back into the race.

The American Tobacco Trail is flat-ish. Runners appreciate its rolling inclines and declines. The inclines on the return leg compounded what was already there. I was slowing. The cramping was there, but the mustard packets weren’t.

My wife and two dear friends were at a water stop not long after. They were loud, warm, and enthusiastically cheering me on. Exactly what you need on the back half of a marathon.

The morning of the run, I filled my CamelBak with Ninja-blended berries, my carb concession. The pits clogged it. By mile 14, it stopped working. Just as I needed fuel most, it failed.

Shortly after the turnaround on US 64 heading north, my daughter FaceTimed me, radically changing my failing disposition. She stayed with me through that stretch, past Wimberly Road, hearing everything — including my encounter at an aid station where a volunteer happened to have pickle juice on hand. I knew pickle juice worked on cramps and figured someone at a marathon would have already thought of that; it was great to see they were right.

The volunteer also handed me a banana. Cramping and ready to try anything, I accepted — at this point, all bets were off. If a banana was on the table, so was the banana. It did nothing for the cramps. My first banana in five years, consumed on camera, pickle juice in the other hand. My daughter laughed; I'm fairly certain she has screenshots.

At mile 18, my daughter reminded me that I'd once said I didn't need to run a marathon. Only looking back did I realize how right she was — I had meant it, then and now.

The gel packs worked better. I figured this out around mile 20.

Around mile 22, the cramping intensified.

Around mile 23, I found my friends again. I told them I intended to hug them regardless, and they should plan accordingly. They laughed, and I followed with a run-by hug.

The final three miles brought worsening ankle cramps. The last aid station offered only pretzels — no pickle juice, no mustard, no gel packs. I politely declined and kept moving.

Exhausted but triumphant, I finished just before the six-hour cutoff.



Tobacco Road Marathon, March 20, 2024. Bib 832. The course closes in six hours.

Just behind me, a blind runner finished with his guide. I congratulated him. He was polite, measured — a man who had heard it before and simply wanted to be done running a marathon. What he'd accomplished stayed with me regardless.

Kazem Yahyapour, the race's founder and driving force, was there at the finish line to greet me. That he was personally present says everything about what makes this event worth running.



Kazem Yahyapour, race founder, at the finish line.

Later, I realized how fitting my finish line thought was: “Another bucket item achieved, pretending to be an airplane as I cross the finish line.”

But who is Icarus, and what does a Greek myth about flying too close to the sun have to do with running 26 miles through North Carolina?

Icarus was Daedalus’s son. Daedalus crafted wings from feathers and wax and warned: *Fly the middle path between ocean and sun. Too low — the water clogs your wings. Too high — the sun melts the wax. Stay centered.* Icarus nodded, then soared toward the sun. The wax melted. He fell.

It’s an ancient Greek myth about the dangers of ignoring good advice. It’s also a story about what happens when you mistake capability for wisdom, when you confuse what you can do with what you should do. I had been warned, in a sense. Not by Daedalus. By my own body, my own history, my own equilibrium. I went anyway.

How do you like these wings, Icarus?



My first banana in five years. Mile 18. She has screenshots.

Only later would I see what June 8, 2017, set in motion. By 2016, knee pain made me think of my mother's experience. She needed knee replacements. I was heavy and in pain, and my doctor's advice — move more, eat less — had failed before. I was 295 pounds and had been obese my entire adult life.

Then, somewhat serendipitously, I found a presentation by Dr. Eric Westman of Duke University on low-carbohydrate eating. I had done Atkins years before, backsliding after not following maintenance. Dr. Westman's simple and ungimmicky approach centers on a single handout — what to eat, what to limit, what to avoid. I began his care on June 8, 2017. Within 6 to 9 months, knee pain was practically gone, and over the course of a year, I'd lost 65 pounds, a weight I've maintained since.

By 2024, seven years in, I enjoyed a steady routine — 90 minutes of daily exercise, including jogging, bodyweight exercises, prayer, and walking. It was more than necessary, but habit has a way of becoming its own justification.

Friends — online and in person — urged me to run a marathon. By now, I'd completed four half-marathons. I enjoyed them, even if my time was uncompetitive. I felt capable. Encouragement landed on fertile ground. About a

year before March 2024, I committed. Like pride before the fall, this is when I thought my wings were durable, as Icarus did.

The Wax Starts Melting

Six months before the marathon, I made a choice that destabilized everything that had taken seven years to build. I didn't know it then. I know it now.

My foot injury during training was the first sign. My coach worried it might sideline me. It didn't, but it never fully healed. Two years later, it still hasn't.

Training for a marathon differs from training for a half-marathon. Greater effort means greater fuel needs. I raised my carb intake — not much by normal standards, but significant for me. Twenty grams a day had been my ceiling for 7 years; that limit softened. With extra activity, nothing alarming showed. So I continued.

What I didn't anticipate was the persistent appetite from marathon training. Feeding it seemed reasonable at the time, but the hunger persisted beyond the event. The leniency outlasted any justification for it.

Friends encouraged the marathon with good intentions. I don't fault them. Excitement over renewed health is contagious, and both online and in person achievement culture magnifies it. Peak moments seem like the new baseline — but aren't. Years of newfound capability make raising the bar feel natural, but it isn't always the right move.

I've run less since. My routine changed. I can no longer reliably run a half-marathon the way I used to. That may change. It may not. Either way, it's not the point. I walked around Manhattan in 2023 and 2025 — 33 miles each time, less taxing than the marathon. Distance wasn't my issue. Running long distances specifically was. The marathon demanded more than I had stored, and I've been paying for it since.

The Middle Tract

The Tobacco Road Half Marathon is next Sunday (March 16, 2026). I won't be there this year, but it's very much on my mind. I ran the half last year and had great fun. I may run it again next year, or I may not. It's not a hard decision either way.

The half is genuinely fun. That's the whole reason I plan on it again. My first half was about whether I could. I run them not to prove anything, not to chase a qualifier, not because restored health demands an achievement destination. It's just because I enjoy it. Fancy that. Exercise is fun and does not need to be a meat grinder.

This achievement culture — online and in person, though I spend less time in the latter — has a way of making peak moments feel like the new baseline. They aren't. The exhilaration of restored health is real. I felt it. I still feel it. Exhilaration is not an instruction. It doesn't tell you what to do next. It just tells you that something good happened. What you do with that is your call.

A steady, boring Tuesday is the win. Keeping my carb intake to below 20 grams, an ordinary walk, feeling good, and then going to bed. Nobody posts that. There are no likes for this steady state in achievement culture. But steady state is the point. It always was.

I wanted the marathon. I just didn't give serious thought to what it would do to my equilibrium. Seven years of work, and I'd taken it for granted.

Daedalus knew. You knew. You went anyway. You came back.

Fly the middle tract.



Jacob Peter Gowy, The Fall of Icarus (1635–1637). Be like Daedalus, left, and not Icarus.

PS

A note for readers curious about low-carb eating: I'm a support admin for Adapt Your Life Academy (<https://adaptyourlifecademy.com>), Dr. Eric Westman's education platform. Dr. Westman was my physician when I started this way of eating in 2017. I'm also one of the testimonials on their site — 65 pounds down, still there. If you want structured, clinically grounded support without the noise, Adapt Your Life Academy is where I'd send you.

On Being Sculpted Down

April 18, 2026



Vilhelm Hammershøi, Interior, Strandgade 30 (1901)

The Fall

I fell yesterday. Six miles into a jog on the American Tobacco Trail, down hard, arm bruised. It hurt. My first thought was to stop. My second thought: stopping would make tomorrow worse, so I kept going.

The path was unpaved, riddled with loose rocks. My foot caught on something, and I was down before I knew I was falling.

I fall once a year, maybe less. This might have been my longest stretch without one.

Part of the reason I kept running was practical. There is a public facility along the trail, and I knew I wanted to clean the wound right away, with soap, while the skin was still warm from the run. The cleaning was going to hurt, and I wanted to get it over with.

A half mile later, a different thought arrived. If I walked into a clinic in the next ninety days and they asked whether I had fallen recently, I would get a bracelet. Fall risk. Printed, wrapped, and attached to my wrist.

I knew this because it had already happened to me two years ago. I went to a cardiologist for a pre-marathon checkup, a visit I had scheduled myself because I wanted to be responsible about training. At intake, the receptionist asked if I had fallen recently, and I answered honestly that I had, because I am active and I fall sometimes. She reached for the printer and began generating the bracelet before I had seen the doctor and before anyone had measured anything about me. Later in that same visit, I scored in the top ten percent on a fitness test for my age bracket.

The moment I realized what the receptionist was doing, I changed my story. I told her I had not really fallen and that I did not need the bracelet. I lied. I lied to a medical professional, to my own chart, because the bracelet was not just an embarrassment. It was a symbol of something much larger than its original purpose, and I was not willing to wear it.

Pygmalion and Procrustes

There are two old ideas that have been rattling around in my head since that visit, and they explain why a paper bracelet felt so much heavier than it should have.

The first is the Pygmalion effect. The story comes from Greek mythology, where a sculptor named Pygmalion carved a statue so beautiful that he fell in love with it, and the gods eventually brought it to life. Psychologists borrowed the name in the twentieth century to describe something more ordinary and more unsettling: the way other people's expectations of us shape who we actually become. When a teacher believes a student is gifted, the student tends to perform as though the belief were true. When a clinician believes a patient is frail, the patient tends to behave as though the assumption were correct. When a clinician sees a patient as the abstract average of a demographic, the patient tends to drift toward the mean. Expectations are not neutral. They reach into us and begin to shape us.

The second idea is the Procrustean bed, which comes from a darker corner of the same mythological tradition. Procrustes was an innkeeper who offered travelers a place to sleep and then made sure they fit the bed exactly. If they were too short, he stretched them. If they were too long, he cut off whatever hung over the edge. The fit was guaranteed because the bed was fixed, and the travelers were not.

When I sit in a clinic at sixty-three, I can feel both of these forces working on me at once. The staff carries a set of expectations about what a man my age is, and those expectations begin to sculpt me the moment I walk in the door. At the same time, the clinic itself is a Procrustean bed made of protocols, intake forms, and standardized questions, and it is not interested in whether I fit. It is interested in fitting me. The bracelet was one small example of both forces meeting at the same wrist.

Lived Experience

In my fifties, I used to watch people a decade or two older than me defer to their doctors, and I was puzzled by it. These were intelligent people, accomplished people, people who had run companies or raised families or built careers on the strength of their own judgment. And yet, when a man in a white coat told them what to do, they set their own judgment aside and did it. I thought, quietly, that I would never be like that. I told myself I would keep my own counsel as I got older. I believed that was a matter of character.

I was wrong. What I had taken for strength of character was the good fortune of never having been tested as a man in his sixties. The pressure does not announce itself. It leans on you slowly, and from every angle.

Now that I am sixty-three, I can feel it directly, and I understand why the people I watched in my fifties did what they did. The forms assume a version of you that is not quite you. The guidelines assume a trajectory that is not quite yours. The clinician assumes a baseline risk that does not account for how you actually live. If I defend my judgment, I do it alone.

The pressure shows up in specific ways. My cardiologist looked at my lipid panel, which was excellent by almost any measure, and recommended a statin. My LDL was higher than the guideline preferred, so the guideline said statin, and the conversation was effectively over before it began. I asked him to walk me through why a statin made sense given the rest of the picture, and he would not. When I raised the known side effects — the destabilization of blood sugar, the muscle soreness that has cost some men their ability to exercise — he was unmoved. *We can adjust your prescription*, he said, as if side effects were a dosing puzzle to be solved downstream rather than a reason to reconsider upstream. The protocol said what it said.

During the same stretch of visits, he also told me to stop eating eggs. The advice was built on an older chain of reasoning — that dietary cholesterol raises blood cholesterol, and that raised blood cholesterol is the same as cardiovascular disease. The first link in that chain has been quietly abandoned. The 2015-2020 dietary guidelines (<https://odphp.health.gov/our-work/food-and-nutrition/2015-2020-dietary-guidelines/>) removed their long-standing restriction on dietary cholesterol because the evidence did not support it, and the American Heart Association's own 2020 advisory (<https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/full/10.1161/CIR.0000000000000743>) acknowledged that observational studies do not show the association they had assumed for decades. None of this came up. The advice arrived as a pronouncement.

Had I not already done the work to understand my own metabolism, I would have taken that advice. I would have walked out of his office and back toward the foods that kept me obese for most of my adult life.

Revised 2026-06-15: updated broken link to 2015-2020 dietary guidelines (moved to odphp.health.gov).

And then there is the smallest and strangest of the pressures, which I have only recently begun to recognize. When I was younger, a doctor who learned I was on no medications would say something like, well done. Somewhere around sixty, the response began to shift. It is not usually spoken aloud, but the raised eyebrow is there. The nudge is there. The sense that a man my age ought to be on at least one thing, and that being on nothing is a kind of oversight rather than a kind of achievement. Wait a minute. Am I at the doctor's office, or at a garage, after asking for a simple oil change? Would I like to add a cabin air filter? Would I like a statin while I am here? That was not a question I expected to be answering at my annual physical, but it has started to come up.

Fair Acknowledgment

All of that is the view from my side of the exam table. I owe the other side a fair accounting. I do not think the people in the lab coats are villains, and I do not think the system is designed to hurt me. The truth is more complicated than that.

First, the demographic shift is real. On average, a population of sixty-year-olds is less healthy than a population of fifty-year-olds, and a population of seventy-year-olds is less healthy still. The aggregate numbers tell a real story, and the clinicians who work with those numbers are not making anything up. The frailty curve bends. The chronic conditions accumulate. The medications multiply. All of this is observable, and a cardiologist who has been practicing for thirty years has seen it many thousands of times. I understand why the protocols exist.

What the guidelines struggle to see is the individual. An average describes a population. It does not describe a person. One sixty-three-year-old runs six miles a day. Another does not. The fall-risk screening question treats us as interchangeable. The statin guideline is calibrated for the population, and the man in front of the doctor may not fit it. The advice against eggs was written, at some point, for someone who was not me.

Second, the constraints on the clinicians themselves are real. A clinic runs on protocols because protocols are defensible. If a patient falls and the chart does not show a fall-risk screening, the clinic is exposed. If a patient has a heart attack and the chart does not show that a statin was offered, the clinic is exposed. Legal liability is part of this, but it is not the whole of it. Standardization is easier to teach, easier to audit, and easier to scale. A clinician who tries to treat every patient as an individual, in every encounter, will eventually be worn down by the volume. The protocol is, in some sense, a survival strategy for the clinician as much as it is a risk strategy for the clinic.

Third, there is the matter of lifestyle interventions, and here I have to be careful to be fair in both directions. Clinicians are skeptical of lifestyle interventions because they have watched patient after patient fail to follow through. That skepticism is not imagined, and it is not malicious. It is based on experience. If you have recommended dietary change to a thousand patients and seen a handful succeed, it is reasonable, in a bleak way, to reach for the prescription pad instead.

But the skepticism carries a blind spot. A great deal of what has failed has been the calorie-in, calorie-out model of dietary intervention, which leaves people hungry and therefore miserable and therefore non-compliant. When the interventions are designed around satiety instead — the low-carb approach I follow is one example — the adherence numbers improve. The research on this has been accumulating for years, though it has not yet fully reached the exam room. Which means the clinician's honest experience of patient failure is partly an experience of failed methods. The patients may not have been the problem.

This is where the Pygmalion effect returns. If the clinician does not expect the patient to succeed, the clinician does not invest in exploring what might work. The conversation that might have opened a door never takes place. The prescription pad comes out, and the patient leaves with the slip in hand and a sense that the other roads were never real.

Arming the Reader

What follows is how I maintain my footing. I will not pretend it is a program, because it is not. It is a set of habits and instincts I have gathered over the last several years, and I offer them in the spirit of one man writing down what has helped him.

The first habit is a question I have trained myself to ask: What is the relative risk, in numbers, of doing or not doing the thing you are recommending? Categorical advice is easy to give and hard to argue with. *You should take a statin.* Numbers are harder to give, because they force the clinician to specify what the statin is actually buying me, and over how many years, and at what cost in side effects. Most recommendations sound inevitable when they are spoken as protocols. They sound much less inevitable when they are spoken as trade-offs.

The second habit is closely related. I ask the clinician to walk me through the reasoning. If the answer is some version of *the guidelines say so*, that is a reason, but it is a thin one. It tells me what the rule is. It does not tell me why the rule applies to me. A clinician who can explain the thinking behind the recommendation is a clinician I want to work with. A clinician who cannot, or will not, is a clinician I begin to look past.

The third habit lives outside the exam room. I have been building my own health literacy, slowly and through reading, because I have decided that I am not willing to be a passenger in decisions this important. The specific domain I have invested in is metabolic health, which means understanding what insulin does, how satiety works, and what the lipid panel measures and does not. The literature has moved a great deal in the last decade, and a good amount of what I learned growing up about diet and heart disease has been quietly revised. I have found that reading the research, even at a layman's depth, changes the conversation I am able to have with a clinician. It also changes the conversation I am able to have with myself.

The fourth habit is a community. I belong to a low-carb group where the members think seriously about food as medicine, and the presence of people walking the same road has been more useful to me than I expected. I want to be plain about this: the low-carb approach I follow is controversial, and I know it. I am not here to argue anyone into it. I can only speak for what the last nine years have done for me, which is a great deal. I offer the approach the way I offer the other habits, as one man's experience. If food as medicine is a paradigm you have not considered, it is worth considering.

The last habit, and the most important, is to find the right clinician. I am not advocating that anyone walk away from medicine. Medicine has saved my life more than once, and it will probably save it again. What I am advocating is the recognition that a clinician is a person, and people vary. Some will meet you as an individual. Some will treat you as a row in a table. You are allowed to choose, and it is worth the effort.

Close

After all of that, I still think about the bracelet. Not the one I refused at the cardiologist, and not the one I will refuse again the next time I am asked. I think about the bracelet as an idea, and what it would have meant to wear it.

If I had accepted it, I would have carried a small printed declaration that I was a man at risk of falling. Some part of me would have begun to believe it. The next time I set out on the American Tobacco Trail, I might have gone a little slower. I might have skipped the unpaved stretch. I might have told myself that a six-mile run was too much to ask

of a man my age. None of this would have happened all at once. It would have happened the way the Pygmalion effect always happens, quietly, by degrees, without my noticing. Procrustes does his work while the traveler is asleep.

I am not willing to shrink. That is the whole of it. I am not rejecting medicine. I am not rejecting doctors. I am not rejecting the real wisdom that a careful clinician can bring to a long life. I am rejecting the Procrustean bed, the fall-risk bracelet, and the assumption that a man at sixty-three is the average of men at sixty-three. I am not the average. You are not the average. There is no such person. The average is a description of a group, and a group is not a body that walks into a clinic on a Tuesday morning with a bruised arm and a story to tell.

I fell yesterday, and I kept going, and I will keep going. The trail is still there. The pebbles are still there. And so am I.

PS

A note for readers curious about low-carb eating: I am a support admin for Adapt Your Life Academy (<https://adaptyourlifeacademy.com>), Dr. Eric Westman's education platform. Dr. Westman was my physician when I started this way of eating in 2017. I am also one of the testimonials on their site — 65 pounds down, still there. If you want structured, clinically grounded support without the noise, Adapt Your Life Academy is where I would send you.

What Forty Years of Displacement Looked Like Before It Was for Everyone

April 28, 2026



Thomas Cole, The Voyage of Life: Old Age (1842). The closing panel of a four-part allegory. Cole's figure is older than I am but looks about as confident as I feel about what's ahead.

Every company in America is wrestling with the same directive right now. Adopt AI, roll it out safely, train the staff, and don't expose intellectual property. Corporate legal sits in the middle of it, watching for the moment a careless prompt sends a trade secret into someone else's training data. The pressure is real and the guardrails are necessary.

I watched that mandate land in my own work. Sanctioned tools and approved training were coming, but slowly. Forty years in this marketplace has shaped how I respond to a moment like this. I don't wait well.

This wasn't my first encounter with a tool I needed to understand.

1985: PostScript

In 1985 I was the camera operator at the Stat Store in downtown Manhattan, eventually the floor manager. I served the graphic artists, designers, photographers, and models who passed through with materials needing reproduction. The work was analog — film, chemistry, paste-up, halftones.

Then a new paradigm arrived alongside the existing business. The Stat Store added a service called PostScript Design Services, anchored by a high-resolution Linotype PostScript printer. Agencies could now send their desktop-publishing files to us and walk out with high-end printed output. PostScript itself was the radical part. It described type and graphics mathematically rather than as fixed images, which meant a single file could print at any resolution on any compatible device. For an industry built on physical paste-up and photographic reproduction, this was a category change. Steve Jobs thought so too. He went to Adobe and commissioned a screen-rendering version of PostScript called Display PostScript, then made it the imaging engine of his next operating system, NeXTSTEP. PostScript was supposed to be a printer language. He repositioned it as the foundation of a graphical desktop.

One of the partners would not let me near the imaging side. I learned anyway — found the time, found the access, worked it out.

A former Stat Store associate had moved on to design work at Elle Decor. When the magazine needed a desktop publishing analyst, she remembered what I'd been doing on the side, and Hachette Filipacchi hired me. The job confirmed what I'd already taught myself. That was the pattern in its first form: the thing I wanted to learn was kept from me, and I learned it sideways. The learning didn't just give me a skill — it gave me the next door. Looking back, I had more moxie than I realized at the time.

Forty years on, what started as a necessity-is-the-mother-of-invention drive had matured into a discipline.

The AI mandate was real, but the path through it wasn't laid out by my company. So I found one. A decade-old Jekyll blog I'd been meaning to modernize sat there waiting. I pointed AI at it and worked through the problems with my own material, on my own time, where the only thing exposed was my own learning curve — two weeks of evenings compressed into two winter-break days (<https://kyle.skrinak.com/posts/2026-01-01-ai-assisted-modernization/>). Then I migrated my wife's design portfolio from Squarespace to Astro (<https://kyle.skrinak.com/posts/2026-03-02-from-squarespace-to-astro/>) the same way. Real projects with real outputs, and no risk of IP exposure for my employer.

Same pattern as 1985. The path I needed wasn't being offered, so I made one out of what I had access to. The difference this time isn't the impulse. It's what's on the other side of the learning.

The Second Time: Elle Decor

By the second time, I wasn't sneaking up on a tool. I was running production on it.

Elle Decor was a proof of concept. Hachette Filipacchi wanted to know whether a high-end magazine could be produced on desktop computers, and they were willing to find out by publishing one. I joined as the desktop publishing analyst — the bridge between the editorial and art teams.

We used QuarkXPress on the Mac, and the launch consumed everyone. Nobody was thinking about who this would replace. We were thinking about whether it would work at all.

It worked. Elle Decor overperformed on expectations, and Hachette Filipacchi promoted me to oversee desktop production across the magazine portfolio. That's when the displacement became visible. The typeset galleys I'd worked alongside — long strips of phototype, hand-corrected, pasted into mechanicals — were being replaced by output from QuarkXPress on a Mac. The trade that had defined commercial publishing for a generation was being absorbed into a workstation.

Some people learned the new tools and kept working. Others didn't, and they faded.

I hired a former typesetter named Laurie. She was brilliant. She knew what good typesetting looked like, and QuarkXPress was nowhere near as sophisticated as the Atex system she'd come from. She made it work anyway. She used her typesetting craft to push QuarkXPress closer to what it was replacing, and her work showed the difference.

The agent who placed her revealed the darker side. The agent only knew the old paradigm, and she was distraught — emotional about a market she was clearly unprepared for. Two women, same trade, different outcomes.

The mandate I'm living with isn't bounded the way the desktop publishing wave was. I've been thinking about that against a memory from those years. I was old enough at Elle Decor to understand I had a skill set, and the question was how preciously to treat it. Watching Laurie and watching her agent, the answer was clear enough. Not too preciously.

That lesson is what's serving me now. Desktop publishing displaced typesetting, but it didn't displace clinical researchers or auto designers. AI isn't a trade-shaped wave. The boundary lines that used to define which trades were at risk and which weren't are softening. The path forward looks similar — find the work, learn by doing, don't get sentimental about what made you valuable yesterday. But the scope is wider now.

The Third Time: The Web

The scope had been widening for a while. The third time I noticed it was the web.

We moved to North Carolina in 1994. Hachette Filipacchi held a director-level promotion in front of me as a reason to stay, but I left anyway. Family came first. Print was still strong that year, and most people would have called it a peak. But Hachette had a proof of concept running on AOL's NaviSoft web publishing tools — internally, I remember it as Rainmaker — an attempt to publish to both print and web from the same source. The promise was that desktop publishing would evolve into multi-media repurposing, with the same files driving every output. HTML in 1994 wasn't ready for sophisticated media. Neither were DTP files, which had been engineered for one destination — the printed page. The PoC was premature in one direction and structurally constrained in another. The signal that the web was coming was real. The path everyone predicted to get there wasn't.

I took a prepress job at a North Carolina print shop. Prepress prepares agency art for printing. Graphic arts, all over again. I held that role for several years and the work was familiar and steady.

Print's decline came faster than I expected. Small jobs went first — the kind that didn't justify the overhead of a print shop when a web page could carry the same message. Then larger ones followed. Every print shop was losing customers to the web, not just ours, and the trade I'd just rejoined was contracting around me.

The click moment was quiet. A few of us in prepress built the shop's online presence together as a side project, and that's when I perked up at something other. The side project was more fun than our prepress day jobs. That's the whole insight — not a strategy, not a forecast, just attention going where attention wanted to go.

I got a Master of Science in Information Technology from RIT in 2001, and my print employer paid for part of it. The pattern was the same as Hachette Filipacchi: they had offered a director-level title to hold me in magazine print, while the print shop was funding the credential that pointed past print. The technical horizon had shifted. My goals had shifted with it. Neither employer could reposition fast enough to meet either change. That's how it goes when external forces move faster than an organization can adapt.

What Made Each Wave Local — and What Changed

What I had seen was niche to my industry. Typesetters fading at Hachette Filipacchi. Print shops contracting around me in North Carolina. Each wave was real but local — bounded by the trade it was reshaping. You could read about it in the trade press if you cared, and most people didn't have to.

The future is never a straight-line projection. PostScript was a printer language until Steve Jobs commissioned Display PostScript and made it the screen-rendering engine of NeXTSTEP. Desktop publishing was supposed to evolve into multi-media repurposing, and the predicted path stalled — repurposing arrived later through a different stack entirely. The web didn't follow any line at all. It expanded by answering questions nobody had thought to ask, and human and market creativity bent the technology to fit problems its inventors never anticipated. That's why it became universal. AI is on that trajectory. It's becoming all things for all people, but the path it takes there will keep surprising us.

Most current AI guidance — both the practical kind that tells you which tools to learn, and the philosophical kind that tells you what AI means for human work — leans on straight-line projections. It's not just unhelpful. It teaches you to plan for a future that won't arrive.

Now it's in every sector at once. Anthropic's most powerful model, Mythos, isn't being released to the public. It's going to a select group of companies under a security program called Project Glasswing, with meetings between the administration, tech CEOs, and bank executives about what models like this can do. That's the inflection point. The frontier has gotten capable enough that even releasing it requires a controlled rollout and government-level conversations.

In 2022 the worry was that AI would take our jobs. By 2026 the worry has flipped. We're worried we can't scale up the workforce fast enough to meet what AI is asking of us. Companies are mandating adoption while trying to find

the people who can actually do the work. The technical horizon is moving faster than any organization can reposition. I watched two of my employers run into that wall years apart, in two different decades. Now every company in the country is running into it at the same time.

AI doesn't care what you think of AI. Your criticisms might be time-stamped and no longer relevant. AI is scaling. What will you choose to do?

The Same Pattern, Wider Scale

I've used the methodology I refined over forty years to bring myself forward. Find the work that engages you. Use your own material. Learn by doing. Don't get sentimental about what made you valuable yesterday. The Jekyll modernization and Elena's site migration are the latest applications of an instinct I first acted on in 1985.

The displacement I watched at Elle Decor and at the print shop is happening everywhere now, not as a trade-shaped wave but as something that crosses every trade. Laurie's adaptation and the agent's paralysis are the same two outcomes available to anyone with a skill set right now. The choice is the same. The scale isn't.

As for me, I'll keep using what I've learned to adapt to another technology shift, knowing my cohort is far broader and more diverse than before. At sixty-three, I presume this is the last major adaptation I'll work through. I also know that's the kind of straight-line thinking I just spent this post pushing back on. So I'll hold the presumption loosely, but don't hold me to it.

Last summer, we snowballed Jackson

June 13, 2026



Carter's Vintage Guitars, Nashville, TN — June 8, 2017

Note: I originally posted this on my Facebook account on January 6th, 2018. Facebook has since retired Notes; the original can still be found with some effort. I've moved this content here, with some edits for clarity.

I'm exhuming this piece in celebration of nine years of low-carb eating. The trip in the story below is the very trip when I started eating low-carb, June 8th, 2017. Since it was still so new, I hadn't thought to write about it at the time. But this trip was notable in another way: I was completely responsible for my own food choices. No negotiating what to eat; Katlyn didn't care what I had. It was also when I experienced my first NSV (Non-Scale Victory) — driving for hours on end without that horrible sleepy fatigue.

It's been several months past now and the sting of all the chaos has settled down. Maybe I can do better justice to writing my travels. It all started with the idea of a road trip. Katlyn had an internship at Neiman-Marcus and we needed to get her down to Dallas, TX. (Not Dallas, PA, mind you.) I thought this would be a great time to get re-acquainted with Katlyn, now that she had established her autonomy as a young lady. *Side note: When your child asserts her autonomy, it is necessarily in a way that the parent finds profoundly disturbing, or she's not asserting her autonomy. Though I understand this now, it doesn't mean I have to like it.*



Crowdsourcing Nashville lunch recommendations, June 8, 2017

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft a-gley. — Robert Burns

We leave Apex early morning. We're driving Katlyn's car, since she'll need transportation. Katlyn warned us the car was "driving funny," but it wasn't when I would drive it. I play the "Dad" card, and insist that Katlyn drive, thus allowing me to do what I've done since the late 1980s — stare at a glowing rectangle. Katlyn's youth is better suited for long drives anyhow, right? Katlyn plays her Dad-targeted Spotify playlist, which we both enjoy, talking about her picks, and which musicians and songs we do and don't like.



Very savvy and sweet; Katlyn made a road trip mix, with stuff I like, she likes, we both may serendipitously like, and not a dude in the bunch yet. It's an inter-generational mix!

"Dude" when I meant "dud?" As Freud said, there are no accidents.

We're in East Tennessee, on I-40, when Katlyn notices the transmission is revving, though that's not how she described it. "The car is driving funny again." Oh, and the rear seat window kept dropping because, hey, it was a 2002 Honda Accord. We stop in Knoxville to buy packing tape to keep the window up. This is also when we switch driving.

We're back on I-40. I'm accelerating and I can hear, *feel*, the transmission revving up without our speeding up. This isn't good. Maybe it's a passing mechanical fluke? Hondas are self-healing, aren't they? Concerned, but not greatly so, we call Elena, my wife, to help us pick a lunch spot in Nashville, TN. She settles on "Arnold's Country Kitchen (<https://www.arnoldscountrykitchen.com/>)," which, we soon discover, is providentially located near "Carter's Vintage Guitars (<https://cartervintage.com/>)," a used guitar store.

We exit the interstate and head into Nashville. I'm at a stop sign, with city traffic. An 18-wheeler pauses to let me into his lane, a left turn. I accelerate. Engine revs. No movement, well, we start to roll backwards. Nice. "Houston, we have a problem." Somehow I manage to engage the transmission and we roll into Arnold's for lunch.

Yeah, Katlyn and I are sobered by what just happened. The emotional dark storm clouds appear over our heads as we try to figure out what to do. We call Elena, who is transforming into Houston Command Central. I call our mechanic, and he gives us some things to try. Meanwhile, lunch was marginal, but Carter's Vintage Guitars was unexpectedly exciting.

Uncharacteristically camping it up



Uncharacteristically camping it up. (Katlyn reminded me of a song we wrote entering Nashville: Pancakes and Beer, pancakes and beer.)



I'll take one of each, ship to Apex.

The store threw me back three decades. I haven't been to a guitar store this impressive since Manny's in NYC (<http://www.premierguitar.com/legendary-mannys-music-to-close>) back in the 70s. The place is bursting with all kinds of stringed

instruments, not just guitars. Also, being Nashville, the place oozes with talent. There's a thirteen-year-old girl, across the store, eye-rollingly bored, playing a mandolin like it's no one's business. It's like she's on auto-pilot, waiting on someone. Me? I'm a kid in the candy shop, running around, playing everything from double basses to tiny basses.

Me and my homies

Meanwhile, Katlyn spots her own candy. Luke Bryan (<https://www.lukebryan.com/>), barely disguised, is enjoying the axes there as well. I roughly know who he is, since Elena's a big fan. He is talking to an impossibly pretty woman, who, I presume, is a music starlet wanna-be. I don't want to pile on, and Katlyn is bashful, so we leave without a photo. Later, outside, we spot said woman in the parking lot. "Was that Luke Bryan?" Her eyes dreamily sparkle; "Oh, that was Luke."

High off this excitement, we haltingly stumble back to I-40, sobering us right back up. Clearly, something's wrong with Katlyn's car. Crap. Now what? We decide to gamble on a drive to Jackson, TN — roughly our original plan — for the night, to regroup.

Nothing finer than... staying in Jackson, TN?

Kyle Skrinak is at Super 8. June 8, 2017 · Jackson, TN · 2 people

So... here we are, in Jackson, TN, with a misbehaving transmission.

Super 8 Motel · Jackson, TN
350 people checked in here

Like Comment Share

Review

So... here we are, in Jackson, TN, with a misbehaving transmission.

We limp into the Super 8 parking lot. Elena, making NASA's moon missions look like child's play, had arranged our stay, had been working the interwebs for the best deal. More digging reveals a highly rated mechanic in town. We settle in for the night, a shade optimistic for a quick fix and return to the road.

The next morning would be where God's laughter begins. Here's my Facebook post:

Our trip to Dallas, TX, so far:

Previous night: review AAA mechanics to find a reputable one in Jackson, TN 7:30 AM: transmission still is a mess, drive to mechanic. 8:30 AM: after free inspection, sends us to a transmission specialist 9:30 AM: review options to bring Honda home by myself 10:30 AM: agree that having this mechanic fix the car is the best option over self-towing the car home 11:30 AM: we scramble to get Katlyn to Dallas by Saturday. Lose \$100 to Enterprise 12:30 PM: Learn that you cannot rent a car with a debit card away from home 1:00 PM: Elena scrambles to overnight a credit card to us after we determine where we're staying tonight. 1:30 PM: Transmission specialist drives Katlyn and me, and all her transferred belongings, to another hotel, for another night in Jackson

After I drop Katlyn off in Dallas, (God willing) I'm returning to Jackson to wait for Katlyn's car to be repaired. Then I'm driving home. Oh, and I must provide documentation proving valid reason for canceling my return flight, for a refund, which, we'll have to wait for, of course.

Enterprise has only thrown shade on my challenge of their \$100 "cancellation" fee. Katlyn has discovered a myriad of unhappy Enterprise customers on FB. My skepticism grows.

I pray for a solid good day tomorrow.

It was quite the pickle we were in. Before the trip, I was thinking how nice it would be to have this one-on-one time with Katlyn. Instead, we found ourselves before a cosmic-scale life-learning lesson. I hadn't been faced with such seemingly insurmountable problems since my Mom had her stroke and Elena and I stared at each other, *clueless*, about what to do, without the luxury of time. This felt very much like Hebrews 12:6-7 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+12%3A6-7&version=NIV>) was coming down, and we'd better be listening.



Jackson, TN had its charms.

Continued here — “Take the Long Way Home.”

Revised 2026-06-19: added a link to the sequel, “Take the Long Way Home.”

Take the Long Way Home

June 16, 2026



The long way home begins — somewhere east of Dallas, TX, June 11, 2017. Bug-splatters courtesy of the insects who were in the wrong place at the right time.

This is the second half of a story I left hanging for nine years. I cobbled this sequel together with much thanks to Claude and Facebook's Post export. Otherwise, I never would have completed this, given the growing count of stuff I want to do when I retire. I'm finishing the saga now as I look back on nine years of low-carb eating — and on the trip that was my ketogenic baptism. When we last left off, Katlyn's 2002 Honda Accord had surrendered its transmission in Jackson, Tennessee, and I'd posted a timeline to Facebook from a motel.

Friends, I am begging for your help

There is a particular flavor of helplessness reserved for the man arguing with a rental-car company from a parking lot off the bustling US 45 Bypass. The original plan had been simple: drop Katlyn and her Accord in Dallas, fly home, done. The Accord had other ideas. Now I needed a rental to finish the drive, which meant moving a reservation date. Enterprise indifferently informed me I would have to pay a \$100 fee for moving the date. So I did what any aggrieved citizen of 2017 does — I took it to the people.

Friends, I am begging for your help. Enterprise Rent-A-Car is giving me a raw deal, a \$100 charge to change a start date. Please comment here on my post on the Enterprise FB community. Heightening the matter may help me out. Thanks!

— Facebook post, dated June 9, 2017

The mob was sympathetic. Katlyn, doing the forensic work of the young, found an entire cohort of disgruntled Enterprise customers. My skepticism, already robust, matured into something closer to conviction.

By the end of that first full day in Jackson I had learned a small, durable truth, and posted it before bed:

What a day. Journaling is like a bike helmet. You don't need [to keep or wear] one until you're falling.

— Facebook post, dated June 9, 2017

A chatty man and a missing license

There was a catch, and it was mine. You could not rent a car on a debit card away from home — not in 2017, anyway — and we did not travel with a credit card. We owned a few; we just kept them on ice, out of reach of unnecessary spending. So Elena overnighted me one of ours.

The card arrived overnight; some of the trappings of the 21st century were present. We went to collect the rental. The deadline was real: Katlyn had to be in Dallas by Saturday. The gentleman behind the counter did not share my sense of urgency.

A funny thing happened at the car rental. Nice elder fellow worked the desk. Not the quickest, however. Loved to talk. And talk. And talk. I'm not one to rush where I'm the guest in a small town. By the time I was out of there, I was eager to leave, and Katlyn and I were racing to Dallas. 4 hours later, we stopped in Little Rock for lunch, when I discovered my driver's license and credit card were missing.

Guess who had them?

Atypically for this trip, we weren't pulled over. Not once. But I couldn't lodge without a Driver's license. So I camped at my daughter's brand-new apartment. Helping to make a splash for her first night with her new co-interns, as only I know how.

He was aghast when he realized his mistake, though that and a quarter won't buy a coffee.

— Facebook post, dated June 11, 2017

But there is something that post left out, because I didn't yet have words for it. The rental was a new Toyota Corolla, with a bevy of cool features we hadn't driven before. Our cars are usually at least a dozen years old — long paid off — so a new one was novelty enough on its own; and being in IT, I revel in features and gadgets, so I was happily marveling at all of it. What kept me driving, though, was something else: the bone-deep, near-narcoleptic fatigue that had shadowed every long drive of my adult life never arrived. Katlyn, who knew the old routine, kept offering to take the wheel. "If you don't mind," I told her, "this feels so good I just want to keep going." And so we did — Jackson to Little Rock non-stop, all the way to a Chipotle, where I reached for a credit card and a license that were both sitting back in Jackson, with a very chatty man.

You cannot check into a hotel without them, which is how I came to spend the night on the floor of Katlyn's new-to-her internship apartment, making a memorable first impression on her new co-interns. I had set out wanting unhurried, one-on-one time with my daughter; God, in His unsearchable wisdom, gave it to me — just not in any shape I would have chosen. *Be careful what you pray for; it may arrive itemized.*

And yet:

And Katlyn is in Dallas!

— Facebook post, dated June 10, 2017

She made it. Whatever else had gone sideways, the one non-negotiable thing had happened.

The long way back

Then came the part nobody writes postcards about: the solo drive back to Jackson, alone, to wait on a transmission. I left early, partly so as not to disturb the new friendships already forming among Katlyn's intern cohort. My license, of course, was waiting back in Jackson — the one direction I was already headed.

The drive had its moments of serendipity. It was Sunday and I wanted to meet my obligation, so I stopped for Mass at Our Lady of Fatima (<https://olfbenton.org/>) in Benton, Arkansas. I have always loved stepping into a church in a town I'm only passing through — a chance to see another community where the faith is plainly lived, where you can tell what matters to people and where their hearts are. This was exactly such a place.



One thing I love about traveling is visiting different churches. — Facebook post, dated June 11, 2017



Let the meal photos begin. My first post-Mass low-carb meal, courtesy of the Our Lady of Fatima Hispanic Ministry. Delicious! — Facebook post, dated June 11, 2017

A few days into low-carb eating, and I was pleased to find no problem accommodating me. In fact, this generous meal required my “stop” hand, as I figured there were migrants much hungrier than me.

Proud papa, marooned

Monday morning, the thing this whole circus had been *for* finally arrived. It was no small thing: of the twenty students Neiman Marcus selected that year, Katlyn was one of the few not from an Ivy League school. So I posted what any father would:

Forget everything else. Katlyn’s Dallas internship starts today. I am a proud papa.

— Facebook post, dated June 12, 2017

I, meanwhile, was a proud papa in a La Quinta in Jackson, Tennessee. I worked for Duke University at the time, and being in IT, we had mastered remote work — so I worked from Jackson while I waited for the car. It was like a preview of the COVID days to come.

My universe is slowly imploding back into place. Can't wait to get home.

— Facebook post, dated June 12, 2017

“Imploding back into place” is the most earnest sentence I produced all week. And then the transmission part schooled me in a whole new definition of “overnight.”

Jackson update: here, overnight means 2 nights, which, through experience, I can understand. The, ahem, “overnighted” transmission part will arrive TUES morning. Car repair completion delayed to tomorrow, 2 PM-ish. A set-back of sorts. I remain optimistic I'll be home soon.

For the record, this is a lousy town for walking. I suspect it's also lousy for “fooling around,” but I'm no Johnny Cash.

— Facebook post, dated June 12, 2017

For the uninitiated: Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash sang about Jackson (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGhCszn00S8>), though the Jackson I saw wasn't as wild as the song suggests.

Carless in a car town

Carless in Jackson, I cobbled a new routine in my host city, with lots of walking. It is not a town built for walking — plenty of places are; Jackson is not one of them. Still, the town was good to a stranded out-of-towner: warm, unhurried, and patient with a man plainly not from around there.



They've arranged a loaner for me. 500 gallons to the mile. — Facebook post, dated June 13, 2017

Still not fixed. Stay tuned.

— Facebook post, dated June 13, 2017

Habemus auto

And then, on Tuesday, the white smoke:

Habemus auto.

— Facebook post, dated June 13, 2017

We have a car. Bill's Transmissions (<https://billstransmissionsjackson.com/>) had done the work, the long-promised part had finally arrived, and the 2002 Honda Accord that had started the whole mess was whole again — ready by the end of the day. Bill was fair with us and did right by the car.

Which left me a last decision: take one more night in Jackson, or drive due east and run the sixteen-odd hours home in a single shot, straight through the night. Before this trip the question would have been laughable — I could barely keep my eyes open for a single hour, let alone a state. But I was not that man anymore. I chose the road. I drove into the dark with the rear right window taped up, a stash of processed sugar-free meats from a random roadside gas station riding along, and, for once, nothing revving that shouldn't, and somewhere in the small hours I watched dawn arrive as I ran east toward home — the same way this long way home had begun. It was not easy. But I was astonished then, and I am astonished still, at how completely that old, debilitating, near-narcoleptic fatigue had simply and utterly vanished.

So that was it. Not the trip I had planned — *the best laid schemes o' mice an' men*, and all that — but perhaps the trip I needed. I had wanted time with Katlyn, and I got it, in a form I would never have chosen and would not now trade. I had started a way of eating that, nine years on, is still with me — and I've come to suspect the chaos itself helped the change take hold. Stranded and on my own, I answered to no one about what I ate, and those long, clear-headed drives were an early harbinger of more unexpected health benefits to come from my dietary change. A smoother week might not have convinced me half so well. Tolkien had a word for a story that turns like this one: *eucaastrophe* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucaastrophe>) — the good catastrophe, the sudden turn where what looked like ruin opens onto grace instead. From that motel in Jackson it felt like ruin. It wasn't. And somewhere around the third night I was reminded that Hebrews 12 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+12%3A6-7&version=NIV>) never promises the discipline will be *fun* — only that it is the sort of thing a father does for a child he loves.

Here, dear reader, is how I got home — a journal entry nine years overdue.

Some overnights take longer than others.