

Will was born. But we will talk about that later. The important thing to note is that we had this new bouncing baby boy of remarkably large size with a tendency to want to eat every thirty seconds or so. The effect on our natural resting cycle, which tends towards ten hours of uninterrupted sleep, left us a little on edge.

"It was hard enough when Brie was born," Kate was saying as we crawled toward bed after the 2:30 a.m. feeding, "but at least we didn't have *another* child who, feeling insecure, decided to wake up a few times a night to explain how unhappy she is over the amount of attention the new addition to the family is getting."

"What makes you think Brie is feeling insecure about Will?" I replied.

"I don't know... perhaps it was during that family photo shoot we were trying to do with the four of us. You know, the one where Brie, realizing that Will was the center of attention for the photo, threw herself to the ground and beat her face into the floor until she split her lip and bled all over herself and you?"

"Oh yes. Well, we did get the blood stains out." I said half heartedly.

"That's not the point. The point is that Brie, still slightly ignorant of human physiology, wants to put Will back where he came from."

She'll get over it" I said wearily, "and if she doesn't, there's always sending her to college to look forward too. Besides, things could be worse."

"Really? I can't imagine how" replied Kate.

Which is a fine lead in to

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or "how things could be much worse. Much, much worse."

An alternate lead in:

Dave: "Bud, I really can't do that for you. I'm sorry, but it's my last week at work and I've got a billion things to do in order to check out."

Bud: "Dave, JPL is still paying you to do a job. I need this sixty page document rewritten by tomorrow."

Dave: "Look, Bud, there are four things that top the list of extremely stressful things to do. One is selling a home. One is moving cross-country. One is having a new child. And one is starting a new job. Kate and I are doing ALL FOUR AT ONCE. So cut me a little slack, all right?"

Bud: [after a thoughtful pause] "Well, really, getting divorced is probably more stressful than any of those."

Dave: "BUD! YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT! THE POINT IS I DON'T GIVE A [hoot] ABOUT YOUR [darn] REPORT!"

Another conversation shortly thereafter:

Scott: "Dave, I really need you to help me with this memo."

Dave: "Look, Scott, there are five things that top the list of extremely stressful things to do. One is getting divorced. One is selling a home. One is moving cross-country. One is having a new child. And one is starting a new job. Kate and I are doing FOUR OF THEM AT ONCE. So cut me a little slack, all right?"

Scott: [after a thoughtful pause] "You know Dave, death of a spouse is probably more stressful than any of those."

The point is not that the people I work with have brains the size of a throat lozenge, only softer and more wrinkled. The point is that we were indeed selling a house, moving cross-country, starting new jobs, and trying to get adjusted to having a newborn and a toddler, which is roughly a gigamegazillion times harder than having a single child. So why were we doing it you ask? Is it because the birth of our second child in the flickering light of the still-smoldering ruins of L.A. made us realize that we needed a better environment to raise our children? Was it the money we were going to make at our new jobs along with the lower cost of living in Massachusetts? Was it an attempt to make it into the Guinness Book of World Records as "most stressed couple in history?" Or was it because we were just plain idiots?

Probably all of the above.

We actually did decide to get serious about moving out of L.A. after the riots, but "serious" was still a relatively low-level effort, mostly writing to chambers of commerce in various cities to find out about cost of living, housing, etc. I was sending a few resumes out in a haphazard fashion, mostly to the Seattle / Portland area. New England was another area of interest, with the advantage of family close by (my Mother, Brother and family, and many of Kate's Aunts, Uncles, and Cousins). But the real kicker was when Kate came across an add for the MITRE Corporation in Bedford Mass., and decided to apply. They flew her out for an interview (over Halloween... my Mother was rather surprised to have Brianna show up at her door as a tricker-treater when she thought we were on the West Coast).

MITRE was an odd combination of strangely elaborate perks (normal for a high-level engineering research and development firm) and dismal, ignorant military bureaucracy (normal for people use to eating K-rations). Kate was driven from the beautiful new structure that houses MITRE's secretarial staff to the dank, bunker like buildings they stick the engineers in at Hanscom Air Force Base. She was meeting her potential future boss at bunker... make that building 1302. As they approached rank after rank of featureless cinder block buildings, Kate and the driver cried out "there it is" at the same time... while pointing at different buildings. The first had a large, grim "1302 A" painted on it. The second had an equally grim "1302 B". As they continued on in shock, they passed 1302 C, D, E, F and G.

"I don't suppose..." started Kate. The driver just shook his head. They finally pulled over at 1302 F. Kate called her interviewers and asked in an embarrassed tone "I am sorry, but which 1302 are you in?" "1302 F". "Oh. I knew that" she said quickly. The interviews went well, until they "treated" her to the local cafeteria. K-rations would have been better.

A few days later, she had a job offer, with one minor additional hurdle. Kate made too much money, and had to "interview" with a Vice President. Fortunately, they did the interview by phone. It was getting a bit too close to Will's birth, however, and MITRE agreed to wait for a few months for Kate to start.

This caused me to jump into high gear. Well, to be more precise, it caused Kate to cause me to jump into high gear ("Sweetie, time to write some cover letters for your resume." "Oh, I'm kind of beat; maybe I'll just take a break this evening." "Hmmm... sounds like it's time for a little visit by mister cattle prod!!! ZZOOORCHAARRRGGGGG!!!!"). I sent out over a hundred and

twenty resumes to various firms in the Greater Boston area, mostly advertised in the Boston Sunday Globe. Kate also spotted an add in the Wall Street Journal for State Street Bank and Trust.

Of course, I received no replies until the week Will was due, when three companies (including State Street) told me they wanted me to fly out for interviews immediately. I told them I had to hold off for a few weeks.

Will was born on February 10th, (like Brie) one day after the due date. The birth went faster than Brie's, and we didn't have the baby-in-distress scare that Brie gave us, but we did have a parents-in-distress scare. Kate's OB/GYN, Dr. Woodard, was on vacation that day and we had the on-call doctor, who we will refer to as "Dr. Bonehead" not because we wish to protect his reputation, but out of an innate desire to call him names now that he is not physically present with a scalpel in his hands.

So we were far into the birthing process when Dr. Bonehead did an inspection. "Hmmmmm" he said in a concerned tone of voice.

"Hmmmmm?" I asked. "What does that mean?"

"Well," he began in a hem-hawing tone of voice, then spewed forth a ten or fifteen minute spiel about how these birthing things didn't always work out as hoped. This sounded vaguely ominous.

"What exactly isn't going as hoped?" I asked.

This lead to another long and chaotic string of statements that gradually deteriorated into incoherent muttering. The point appeared to be that Kate had a fibroid cyst that was too large for the babies' head to pass, and since the babies' head couldn't pass, that meant that the baby was kind of stuck, you see, and so since the baby was stuck, you see, it seemed like, well, you see, the baby was going to have a difficult time to, you know, to come out, since it was like, you see, stuck, and so he would have to say that, in his professional opinion, things weren't going as he had hoped. You see.

Plainly, he was talking about a C-section. It took a few more minutes to finally coax the words out of him, but finally he said that it looked unavoidable to him, almost bursting into tears in the process. He agreed to call Dr. Woodard at home for a second opinion but told Kate to stop pushing and take it easy. The nurse came in a short time thereafter and prepped Kate to head for surgery. It was a grim time.

Then Dr. Woodard arrived on the scene. He had decided to perform the C-section himself. He did a fast examination of Kate. Paused. Did a slower check. Finally he spoke. "This isn't a cyst. This is the catheter. It wasn't placed properly. Let me just push it back into place . . ."

Will was born half an hour later, a nice, normal, vaginal birth. Normal, of course, means long periods of screaming in agony, throwing sharp, pointed objects, swearing that certain... appendages... were going to be removed forcibly from my personage, and other crazed reactions to massive and unbearable pain. Like I said, pretty much a normal birth.

We headed home shortly thereafter. I took the first week off, but we realized that if we did end up moving to Boston, we would need as much vacation as we could save up, and Will, thank the Gods, was a very mellow baby. So I went back to work the next week for two days. I flew out for Boston on Wednesday. Hitting the sub-zero chill outside the airport terminal in the t-shirt I wore in from L.A. almost convinced me to fly back to L.A. that night, but I carried on with the perseverance normally demonstrated by prize fighters who remain standing even after being pounded enough to have every ounce of gray matter ooze out their ears.

Thursday morning, I interviewed at Thompson Financial Services. It was a ho-hum interview, a maintenance job leading four programmers in upgrading an already existent software package to utilize newer hardware and operating systems.

I interviewed at Interleaf in the afternoon. Interleaf sounded more interesting, producing a distributed documentation system supporting hundreds of simultaneous users and providing automatic configuration control and routing of the finished versions. But they were also very odd to deal with. The only way things came together when they wanted me to fly out for the interview was because one of their human resources people had access to and used the internet for Email. I almost never managed to reach anybody by phone, and they never answered the messages I left on their voice mail system. But I managed to coordinate with this one individual by Email, and they agreed to pay for a rental car while State Street paid for the plane ticket. State Street actually took the brunt of the costs, since they purchased the tickets just a few days prior to the flight and ended up paying full fare (\$1350!).

When I arrived at Interleaf, I checked in at the reception desk. They asked me to wait for a moment. The next few minutes was filled with the receptionist quietly and nervously dialing six hundred and forty two phone numbers and whispering "There's a guy her for an interview... have you seen Kim? Vivian? Bob? Jack? Tim? Dianne? Any manager? A programmer? A secretary? Janitor? How about a poster with a face on it???"

Finally Vivian came down and escorted me to Kim's office. Where I waited. And waited. And waited. Finally, after a half hour, Kim arrived. "Dave? Dave Dickie? Are you supposed to be here?"

"I hope so" I replied. "I mean, you did rent the car for me, so I thought you might expect me to actually arrive in time to pick it up."

Well, I spoke with Kim, who apologized profusely, then Jack, then Tim, and finally ended up back with Kim. By the time I was finished talking with her, she said (an honest to god quote as close as I can remember it):

"Dave, I really think you're perfect for this job. I need to talk with Jack and Tim, but I think I'm safe in telling you that I'll call you Monday with an offer."

This, needless to say, made me feel confident. And you know what they say. "Confidence is the key to stupidity."

So, when I arrived for my interview at State Street Bank, I decided to push, and push hard. It was actually a tough interview. State Street had insisted on a full day for it. I found out why when I got there. I ended up talking with eight people, including Pete (my potential boss), some of my peers, some of his peers, and his boss. Some of these interviews were honest-to-God tell us what you know type interviews, too, not the friendly sort of chatter that I got at the other places.

At the end, Pete and I talked turkey. "What would it take to get you to sign up right now?" he asked.

Truthfully, Kate and I had decided that getting out of LA was our real priority, and money wasn't that critical. And State Street had the most interesting job (more about that later). And, surprisingly, Pete made a significant difference. The people I talked to at Thompson and Interleaf were more or less average people. Pete was a bundle of energy, full of enthusiasm, the type of person you knew could and would squeeze every ounce of productivity out of you and make you enjoy the hell out of it. If it were the two of you battling Godzilla with your bare hands, Pete would be saying "For God's Sake, he's only two hundred and twenty feet tall"... and he would mean it.

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But State Street had the worse commute of the three, and Interleaf seemed a moderately close second. So I thought for a small but perceptible time, and replied "I can't decide right now. But one of my other interviews was very enticing, and they are offering a twenty-five percent pay raise. If you're really interested, matching that and adding a sign on bonus might swing the decision when I make it."

"How much?" he asked, obviously not in the least phased.

"Ten thousand?" I almost squeaked.

"Not a problem" he replied.

The euphoria from that particular statement lasted until about an hour after I left State Street at 4:30 p.m., an hour attempting to make the eight mile drive to Logan Airport, stuck in traffic that made LA rush hour look amateurish in comparison. Needless to say, I missed my non-stop flight. Then the direct flight with a stop over in Chi-town. By the time I actually made it to the American counter, they had one flight through Nashville, leaving at 6:30, that I ran through the airport to make.

The funny thing was that the other two companies never made an offer. One actually wanted to fly me out for a second set of interviews ("I am sorry. I forgot to take notes while you were out here the first time..."). The other was concerned about my stated dislike of travel, since the job entailed spending ten days of every month in Switzerland.

But State Street came through, and it looked like Boston was going to become a reality. Kate, a native Californian, was a little concerned about the weather, to be sure, but we were headed into spring in New England.

Of course, with the kind of coincidence that convinces many people that God does exist (and is out to get them) the weekend before we were scheduled to fly out to Boston the "Storm of the Century" broke over the entire east coast. "Dave", said Kate in a questioning voice, "I thought you told me that the weather in Boston is nice enough for them to have a Club Med on Cape Cod."

"That... might have been a slight exaggeration..." I muttered.

Actually, the real problem turned out to be the house. I should have known by the conversations with the few head hunters I tried to use in finding a job before I started to apply directly to the companies.

"Yes Mr. Dickie, your background looks outstanding, and your references are impeccable. I think we can probably place you today, if not sooner. Let me ask one further question... do you own a home in Southern California?" "Yes." Click.

But we had equity in the house. Almost a hundred thousand dollars worth of equity. And we were willing to sacrifice some of it in order to get out ahead of the crowd we were sure would be streaming out of Southern California after us. We called a local real estate agency. "Ring... ring... ring... hello, you have reached the number of Joe Schmoozer Real Estate Agency. I'm sorry, but our entire office has relocated to Boise, Idaho, in order to get out of Southern California ahead of the massive crowds which have been fleeing SoCal for the last year. If you leave a message, a representative may contact you some time after the year 2000, when conditions in L.A. might have improved to the point where someone is actually willing to buy a house here."

This isn't as funny as it sounds. We put the house on the market at a price we thought was high, but not unreasonable. We had about two walkthroughs in two weeks. We dropped the price. A few weeks later, we dropped it again. Then, a few more weeks later, we dropped it again,

to a price where we would be paying part of the real estate agent fees out of our own pocket. We finally got an offer... for much less than our asking price. And the movers were coming to pack up our furniture in two weeks. I finally sent a letter to the bank and asked them to accept a deed in lieu of foreclosure, pointing out that our children were our primary concern, and that if we had to abandon the house in order to get them out of L.A. we would. They called back a short time later.

"Have you received any offers on the house?"

"Yes, one, but it was so ridiculously low..."

"Take it."

"I don't think you understand..."

"We understand completely. Take whatever you can get. We'll short the loan the amount necessary to cover your costs so you break even. Do you know the number of foreclosures going on in Southern California right now? If we took a deed in lieu, or foreclosed, and it only took us another two months to get the house back on the market, the property will probably lose another quarter of its value."

And that is what we did. We didn't even finish closing the deal before we flew out for Boston on Saturday, resorting to continual faxing back and forth of documents to wind things up. Yes, if you remember way back in BLISS 2.0, our plan was to



Well, we finally did it by paying someone to take our house and moving more than three thousand miles.

Of course, the stress of those last few weeks was going to be offset by taking a little time off between jobs to settle in and get use to New England. Heck, if you count the time on the plane I had almost 32 hours before I had to show up at State Street for my first day on the job....

TO BE CONTINUED



1795 SONOMA DRIVE ALTADENA

This traditional home offers an exceptional value combining choice location and exquisite condition. Rarely will you witness such attention to detail as presented here. Your most discriminating buyers will come to the end of their search here.

FEATURES INCLUDE:

- New Custom White Built-In Kitchen
- New Double-Glazed Multi-Lite Windows
- New Interior and Exterior Paint
- Newly Refurbished Hardwood Floors
- Newly Refurbished Brass Appointmentss
- New Roof
- New Stucco
- New Decorating
- New Garage Door
- New Landscaping

SPECIFICATIONS:

Living Room: 22' X 14'
 Dining Room: 12' X 10'
 Kitchen: 13' X 13'
 Breakfast: 10' X 6'
 Bedroom #1: 16' X 13'
 Bedroom #2: 15' X 10'

Den: 16' X 8'
 One Full Bath
 Basement: 8' X 8'
 Square Feet: 1552 (A)
 Lot Size: 50' X 150'
 Year Built: 1937

OFFERED AT:

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PRESENTED BY: ERNIE BOEHR (818) 446-1854