Which school do you go to?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

By the time I graduated college, I had some debt in student loans to pay off.

I stuck to the re-payment plan and the loan was done in couple of years.

It wasn't a lot, and I was in the same situation as thousands of other students who just spent four years in a school to hopefully end up with a job in their chosen field. It's the price you pay for wanting to get an education in a certain field.

Although, to be fair, if you chose to get your education in an apprenticeship, you get your education and get paid at the same time.

Choosing which courses you want to take in school is a matter of personal choice ? at least for the most part.

Some diplomas are far more likely to land you a job in the field than others. There's no doubt about that.

Why you choose to go into a particular field can depend on a lot of things. For me, it was because I had a real interest in the field. I got my first camera at ten years old and have been a photographer ever since, although photography was only a sub-category of what I was studying at the time.

Either way, those courses taught me a lot.

I have a friend who was, for lack of a better word, coerced into going to engineering school. His parents insisted he become an engineer.

This apparently happens a lot and in some cultures, kids have no say in what they are going to become. It's expected of them to go into a certain field.

In the case of my friend, he went to a big-time university in New York, and graduated as an engineer. He then went on to become the grounds keeper at a golf course.

His engineering knowledge probably helped in his job, but working at a golf course was what he really wanted to do. He had no interest in sitting behind a desk and designing things.

Was it a waste of several years in school?

I don't think so. Every time you learn something you have gained something.

A recent report came out about the ?best? and ?worst? universities in the country.

I don't know why you would really need a report like that other than to instill snobbery. Unless a school is some kind of uncredited institution that is handing out fake diplomas, why would you say one school is better than the one down the road?

Harvard University in the U.S. it touted as the best school in the U.S. What it is really the best at, is marketing. It markets itself as the best school, and the public bought into it. Students routinely graduate with hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. You have to wonder how that is even possible.

I saw a good interview with a Toronto intellectual discussing the matter of schools with some American professors.

He ripped Harvard pretty good, and asked ?do you really think you're getting a better education there, than at the University of Toronto ? which is a ?state school.'?

I think he was right on the mark.

I found the report listing the ?worst? schools was just some kind of elitist thing which does nothing other than imply the students there are less worthy, not as smart, or are receiving less value for their education dollar.

I know plenty of students who go to these ?lesser' schools for very practical reasons. Notably, not everyone wants to live in, and pay for a dorm room, when they live close enough to school they can live at home and not go through the expense of borrowing of put a financial strain on their parents.

The report listed one school as ?if you can walk and talk' you can go there.

What an insult to students who are going there, and are studying hard in hopes of graduating.

The truth is, at the end of the day, no one really cares where you went to school. I've never been to any social gathering where people introduce themselves based on their status as an alumni of any school.

There's an old joke that really tells the story of what it means to be a school snob.

What do you call a doctor who graduated last in his class? - A doctor.