

COMMENT

FROM THE EDITOR

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I'm sure my wife thinks I'm losing it. Last night I was sitting in my little home office off the kitchen when she walked by the door and gave me a funny look. I realized I was reading the proofs for this issue of *EID* with a goofy grin on my face. It took me a while to puzzle out where this childish glee came from.

When I woke up this morning, I remembered having had this exact joyful feeling a couple of decades ago (and more, don't ask). I was sitting in my undergraduate adviser's office. We were struggling through my transcripts and aptitude test scores trying to zero in on what my major should be. I liked my engineering courses but didn't want to be an engineer. I did really well in the premed courses I took but didn't want to be a doctor. I really clicked with my psychology professors but didn't want to be a clinical psychologist. Art, music, statistics – all the same story.

I liked knowing how the mind and body worked, and I liked understanding how the physical world worked, and I liked applying my creative ability to design problems (visual and auditory). I just didn't want to have to give up one to concentrate on the other. I was sitting there agonizing over a dismal possibility (perhaps I was simply incapable of making up my mind) when the secretary walked by the office door and said to my adviser, "Janet, this notice just came in about a new major." She dropped it on the desk, and – I swear this is true – a breeze caught it and it wafted into my lap. There, at the top of the page, it read, "Just approved: Bachelor of Arts: Human Factors." Janet and I looked at the description and the requirements and were flabbergasted: This sheet of paper was describing my interests to a "T."

Occasionally, a colleague will ask me why I dedicate most of my professional contributions to HFES rather than to other organizations that specialize in my area. For me the answer is simple and is evidenced in this magazine: HFES represents a stimulating breadth of technologies and pursuits all dedicated to a common set of goals. Those are the same goals that were embodied in that new field of study that captured my imagination and gave me that gleeful feeling of finding my academic home so many years ago. Where else can a computer systems practitioner like myself simultaneously exchange insights and methodologies with people interested in such a variety of other areas? The 200 articles published in *EID* since its debut nearly 10 years ago have touched on topics as diverse as systems development, professional issues, industrial ergonomics, medical systems, consumer products, forensics, environmental design, testing, safety, surface transportation, training, aerospace systems, and aging (to name just a few – see <http://hfes.org> for a complete list of HFES Technical Groups).

As part of *EID*'s tenth anniversary celebration next year, we have plans to further enhance this synergy and bring even more value to practitioners and consumers of HF/E work. Watch this space!

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