

It all starts with a leap of faith

The crowd gathered around for an impromptu ceremony. This was a rare occasion where the evening shift people who worked 4PM-2:30 AM were asked to come in for 3 PM. The dayshift finished at 3 and the 1 hour transition was normally a cleanup period. This was a special day as we shared in the announcement of one of the 25-year employees retire from the factory. She had worked the same riveter machine for most of the last 5 years, which was for securing aluminum window frames for pop-out windows in Ford and Chevrolet vans.

It was amazing to watch the joy and emotion as she was presented with a completed, glazed window, sealing inside it a printed picture of her at her riveter. Proudly holding up a picture of her grandchildren, she smiled and held back tears as she knew she would spend lots of time with them starting the following Monday of her retirement. The career started as a job. A temporary gig she took in her mid to late twenties to hold her over and save up for potential college. A temporary gig just like the one I took 18 months earlier here at the same factory at age 19.

At the end of the celebration, I made my way to the door. My time card was punched in at 3:25 and out at 3:50, never to be punched again. I would get on my bicycle for the 40 minute ride home and call Human Resources from there. With enough money in the bank for just a bit more than the next month's rent, I quit. I vowed to the HR person that I would never retire from a factory and thanked them for their help and support over my 18 months of work.

It wasn't about some new dream. It wasn't about not being happy for those who would retire from a factory job if that made people happy. I just knew it wouldn't make me happy. I didn't even have another job lined up. All I had was a countdown to the end of my savings and a desire to do something more.

Make every day a day you decide whether this is the thing in your life you would be happy looking back on.