My journey with literacy began very early. I don't remember, but my mother told me this story over and over as I was growing up. When I was just beginning to learn how to read, around the age of 4 or 5, I was sitting on my father's lap reading a book to him. My mother walked into the room beaming with pride saying, "Look, she can read, aren't you proud of her?" My father looked up and said, "Hell, I was proud of her before she could even read one word." So why did my mother tell me this story, because before I turned seven my father died quietly in his sleep of an aneurysm. I think my mother who values education and reading above all other subjects wanted me to know that once upon a time there was someone who loved me not for my accomplishments, but for just being me.

My mother was a teacher and after my father died, she went back to school to earn a Master's Degree in Education. I remember sitting in the back of many of her college classes listening to lectures on education. She went on to become a reading specialist and create a reading resource room for teachers in her district. She became a master teacher and taught other teachers. She wrote a book about teaching self-esteem in the classroom. Her world was and still is all about reading and writing. This is her literacy.

I wish I could tell you more about my father's literacy. All I know is that his parents were immigrants from Germany. They only finished 8th grade. My father and my mother were the first ones in their families to graduate from college. From the stories I hear, my father was not the best student and without my mother's help would have never finished college. I don't believe reading and writing were his literacy. Maybe it was numbers and people as he was a successful controller of a manufacturing business. To be honest, I will never know.

We lived in Memphis, Tennessee. My mother was uncomfortable with the hatred present in the South. These were the volatile years. Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed a couple of weeks before my father passed away, I remembered the passion of the words coming from the television and of the fear in the adults. The Vietnam War was being waged, I remembered the nightly news announcing those killed or missing in action and the names that were scrolled across the screen. Man walked on the moon for the first time, I remembered the United States flag waving in the imaginary wind. Theses words and images flashing across the television were my first introduction to literacy in the form of media. It left a powerful impression. Before the Southern schools were desegregated, we left Memphis and moved to Phoenix, Arizona. It was a whole new culture within my own country.

In my early years, literacy was reading and writing. I absolutely loved to read. It was my escape into worlds that I could never image. Growing up one of my

favorite books was *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle. This was my introduction into thinking outside of the box. To this day I still love a book that pushes my mind beyond the limits of my own imagination.

As my journey of literacy continued I expanded to the creation of images. In college, I studied photography, sculpture, graphic design, calligraphy and architecture. Words were nice, but images embedded themselves on my mind. The power of light, color and texture evoked my emotions. I was not one to write down my thought, but I could express them in different forms for others to interpret. These were the years to explore and express whom I was in ways that were not shown to me in my early days of school. Of course, I had art and music in those early years, but it was scripted or prescribed. College was different or was it the same?

One of my professors in the College of Architecture introduced the computer as a design tool. This was the early 80's and the Apple computer was but a gleam in the eye of Steve Jobs. We worked on mainframes learning a new form of literacy, computer programming. For some unknown reason, this all made sense to me. I learned to read and write code and create images inside of a computer environment. The world was my oyster; until the dean of the college told us we were all wasting our time. He told us this computer stuff would never replace the boards!

Luckily this man did not deter our group from continuing to explore this new literacy of expressing ourselves through computer technology. I went on to graduate and found a job as a computer graphic artist and 3D animator. In an act of sheer joy and a bit of defiance, I threw my job contact on the dean's desk. He ate a bit of humble pie, but did not change his views. I often wonder where he is now.

I was fortunate enough to be on the ground floor when the technology elevator started to rise. I understand computers from the inside out, because that is where my journey began. My literacy of computers is both learned and acquired. I stayed on the cutting edge of computers with formal learning by attending conferences and workshops. However, my daily engagement and experimentation helped me to really become computer literate.

My literary journey took me further into the college classroom where I learned how to integrate technology and education. Some teachers enjoy watching the discovery of reading or writing in their students. I enjoy watching my students discover the power of communicating ideas with technology.

My passion is to help others discover the power of literacy through the creation and self-express with technology. This passion was ignited when I first watched my 18-month-old child pound away on a computer keyboard creating images and sounds. This child is now 16 and computers are his first choice of literacy. He wrote his first JavaScript last year, I was so proud…but really I was proud of him before he ever started pounding on those keys.