

3 Minutes with 3S Member Joe Moreno

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3S member Joe Moreno's life is as varied as a mosaic. Ask him what he does, where he's been, where he's headed, and soon you'll realize he may very well be a possible contender for the Most Interesting Man in the World.

From flying his single-engine propeller plane, to publishing articles in *Los Angeles Times* and *Business Insider*, to serving as a high tech consultant for San Diego start-ups, and software engineer to Apple Computer, to being an active alum of the United States Naval Academy, this cancer survivor and former Marine major has no doubt found the coveted balance of work, leisure and passion.

I sat down with him to find out what stories lie behind his multi-faceted approach to life:

You started blogging 8 years ago when you were working at Apple, though you weren't able to write about Apple at the time. Since you couldn't write about Apple at the time, what did you focus on?

Prior to blogging, I had written a handful of articles that were published in magazines and newspapers, but I didn't write regularly. In 2006, I decided to start blogging about things that I explained to people. If I had to explain something to someone, either written or verbally, then it was probably worth a blog post. One of my earliest blog posts was explaining the differences between prepaid and postpaid cell phones after my father had asked me questions about them.

How has your blog evolved since leaving them?

Ten years ago, blogging was trendy. Unfortunately, it felt like there was an unwritten rule at Apple that you shouldn't blog. Well, at least we felt like we shouldn't blog about anything at Apple. This made it a little tricky since I had started blogging while working at Apple. After leaving Apple, I blogged about Apple including posting a [photo](#) that I took of Steve Jobs' car without a license plate. (Steve was notorious for never putting a license plate on his car which made it stick out in the Apple parking lot at 1 Infinite Loop.)

Then I met Dave Winer and started collaborating with him on several projects. I think of Dave as the father of blogging. He's blogged on a daily basis for 20 years at <http://scripting.com>) and I'm proud to be the subject of a fair number of his blog posts beginning with this one when I founded a startup called Adjix:

<http://scripting.com/stories/2009/04/27/adjixHasABreakthroughIdeal.html>

Dave taught me the key purpose of blogging: *To narrate one's work*. So, when I have an idea or discover something I try to blog about it, even if it's only on [my Twitter account](#).

People love hearing about your time working with Steve Jobs at Apple. How was it like working with him?

I didn't actually work with Steve (although I have spoken to him and asked him questions about the initial iPhone market – and, unlike say EDS or Perot systems where Ross Perot was always referred to as Mr. Perot, we called Steve Jobs, "Steve," even in face to face conversations. He may have had a reputation for being pretentious, but he was fine with people calling him Steve and he didn't have his own parking spot).

Do you have any stories of your time at Apple that stick out the most?

Here's a story that's important to me, personally and financially:

When I started working at Apple in 1998 they were almost out of business. The year before, Steve had returned to Apple after a 12 year "exile" to NeXT. Just prior to his return, Apple had been within 90 days of bankruptcy. When I arrived the stock (adjusted for splits) was less than \$2/share. (Yes, I still have shares that were originally issued to me at less than \$2/share.)

When Steve returned he took the title interim CEO, abbreviated as iCEO. He realized that he needed to make Apple relevant since the company had been losing desktop market share throughout the 1990s. His first step was to cut all the product lines that weren't part of Apple's core competency: the Newton (first PDA, years before Palm), printers, digital cameras, etc, were cut. Then Steve filled in a simple 2 x 2 matrix with beautiful products over the next few years.

Once these products were brought to market, Steve started looking for new markets to enter. Going after the enterprise seemed like the next logical step, but Steve didn't want to just go after market share. He wanted to go into new markets where Apple could make a big difference which lead to the iPod, iPhone, iPad, and who knows what's next? iWatch? iTime? iTV? Apple tends to start with 100% market share and then, as competitors mimic their products, they move on to a new market.

One of your articles was picked up by CNN. How did that happen and what was your reaction?

Hmm, good question. I don't know how CNN/Wired found it. About once a year I write a blog post that spreads around the Internet and ends up with tens of thousands of page views. I was ecstatic when I saw the article on CNN. I found out about it when a friend saw it and posted the news on my Facebook wall: "Smile, you're on CNN.com!"

So, I hear you have wings! Tell me about your plane, how you got into flying, and where you like flying to:

In high school I learned that the Marines had their own “air force” of jets and helicopters. I wanted to fly for the Marines but that required 20/20 vision, which I didn’t have. Back then, eye surgery wasn’t an option like it is now so I gave up on that dream until four years ago when I learned to fly.

Once I got my private pilot’s license I started looking around and found my plane at the French Valley airport in Temecula. It’s a Cessna 182 Skylane that I keep at Montgomery Field by Miramar. It seats four people and it can fly just over 1,000 miles without refueling. I’ve flown it to NY and back which is a great experience. Since it’s a single-engine propellor plane, the coast-to-coast trips take about four days.

By far, my favorite destination is Catalina Island which takes about 50 minutes from Montgomery airport. Catalina Airport is 1,600’ above sea level and the ride into the town of Avalon is scenic since you can frequently see bison grazing along the way.

How has your military experienced impacted your career today?

It really honed my skills in leadership, management, and time management. The travel to the Middle East (Jordan, Kuwait, UAE, and Bahrain) and Asia (Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Bali, and Australia) exposed me to a lot of different cultures which makes me appreciate both America and my lucky personal situation.

Did you find any similarities in being in the military to working for Apple?

I stayed in the Marine Corps Reserves while working at Apple and I was called up to active duty several times. One day I’d be working for Apple and the next day I was working for the Marine Corps. What’s interesting is that both organizations are highly respected in their fields, but they go about business in completely different ways. One is very methodical with concrete processes; and the other is very creative and innovative. Learning how to

switch from one “mode” to the other wasn’t too difficult for me since I was indoctrinated in both – it’s like switching from riding a bike to driving a car – but the experiences were key: being constantly exposed to each organization one gave me a great balance when it comes to problem solving.

What is your approach to work and getting things done?

Time management is a pet project of mine. I used to teach time management classes when I was in the Marines and then as an entrepreneur. The key is to write down everything that I need to do, even steps as part of a bigger item. Then, not only do I check each item off my list once it’s complete, but I also jot down a couple notes about the task if it was a complicated item. I’ve had dozens to over a hundred people reporting up to me so tracking tasks, like this, is key.

For events, I make sure to put them on my calendar as soon as it “crosses my desk,” along with event details like addresses and contact info.

For writing... since I have to proofread my own work I miss a lot of typos and grammar mistakes. I love Hemingway’s writing style and, earlier this year, I discovered the Hemingway App which is free (<http://www.hemingwayapp.com>). This helps me make my writing as clean and clear as possible.

You said you like to brag about [beating Stage 4 Cancer](#). Brag away:

People frequently ask me how I discovered my cancer (Hodgkin’s Lymphoma). Hodgkins has no specific lifestyle risk factors. My risk factors were simply being male, between 15 – 35.

After going for a short (3 mile) run I was wiped out as if I had run 10 or 20 miles. After I got home I noticed a lump near my groin while in the shower. The next day, thinking it was a hernia, I went to the doctor’s office and saw the nurse practitioner. Her eyes got real big and round as she examined my

lymph nodes. She knew, immediately, it was some type of lymphoma and she had me make an appointment with a surgeon for a biopsy.

After I was diagnosed I went through six months of chemotherapy every other Friday and I was cured (technically I was in remission for five years, after five years it's classified as cured). I didn't need any other treatment besides the six months of chemo and now it's literally like I was never sick.

Luckily, Hodgkin's is very curable.

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