Matthew Hand

**Goals**

I love telling stories; I always have and I always will. As an adolescent, if you wanted to know about my day, you would hear embellishments. It’s true. I would have been afraid to admit it then, but almost ecstatic about it now. I was often called a daydreamer because I was more interested in the stories that happened in my mind rather than reality.

Around the fourth grade a teacher encouraged me to write. Not only would this improve my penmanship, grammar, and spelling, it would also allow me to work through my ideas and make them more functional and sound in how they were presented. I took to this like a moth to a flame; writing was my preferred pastime. I wrote short stories, book reports, and independent episodes of my favorite television shows (which would be considered fan-fiction today).

As time passed by and my responsibilities grew, I began working in the world of finance, yet I still found myself telling stories. Believe it or not, financial statistics tell a story, although it’s not quite evident at first. The interpreter must build a narrative supported by figures and data-points and craft messages depending on the audience. If it’s drastic news, it could work has horror or drama. If it was good news, it would work as a coming-of-age story or intellectual comedy. The point is, the need to tell stories never left my blood.

I learned a few tricks with cameras on smart phones and developed rudimentary editing skills through available software, and suddenly I began adding a little flare to home movies. I used those skills to make a few corporate videos we would show at meetings or national gatherings. They always received applause, but I understood that what I intended to create did not quite match what was shown on screen. I could not quite depict accurately what I had imagined.

Again, time moves on, and now I find myself writing different types of stories. I draft resumes, provide technical writing, and craft policy and procedural manuals. This work has allowed me the freedom to invest time and money into finally understanding the gap that exists between what I imagined and what I created.

And so, I write the preamble to add legitimacy to this: I want to tell better stories. I’ve read books on guerilla filmmaking techniques, listened to a number of audio-commentaries on how films have been made, and now I want a practical knowledge and application.

During the interview process for the Film Connection I was fairly adamant about learning a marketable skill-set for the growing film industry in Atlanta. While that is true, I’m impressed that the Film Connection encourages some dreams as well. Sometimes we need that encouragement to allow us to daydream again.

So, what are my goals? I want to learn about making films and creating my own content. I want to know the aspects of the camera, how to determine useful lighting solutions, and how to craft shots that evoke emotion rather than just present what the eye can see. I want to understand the intricate differences between writing a short story and writing meaningful dialogue that build multi-dimensional characters with a story worth telling. I want to learn things for which I’m ignorant of now.

I want to learn the language. Last week I was working as a stand-in for a local production while the cinematographer was given directions for lighting, and I hardly understood a word of it, yet it was fascinating. The crew knew what the DP was communicating and acted in precision to set up the lighting correctly. I also have goals to develop writing for the screen. To understand the subtext of how framing an exterior is a precursor to the internal shot.

Finally, I want to build a network. The film industry seems to be a place where one can only navigate successfully based on one’s reputation. As someone new to the industry, I want to build a reputation of hard work, insightfulness, integrity, and (honestly) be a pleasure to be around.

My expectations are that the Film Connection will help me attain these goals. The instruction in the eBook needs to inform me of the correct methodologies of film and point towards increasing my knowledge after the course is done. I hope it introduces me to new points of view and understanding that might escape the film-enthusiast. I have great confidence that Steve Carmichael, the mentor I’ve been assigned, is going to provide opportunities for me to learn, and it is my goal that I serve him and his team well. It is also my goal that I build a network with other students, especially the local students, so we can build a sustainable community in Atlanta that continues to drive business in the film and other creative arts.

**Assignment – Synopsis**

Synopsis #1 – PHILOMATH

Felix Reust, a directionless 20-year-old, is contemplating moving away to go to college and is spurred to make that decision on the prison release of his father. David Bence and Felix have never met; David has been in prison for the past sixteen years. Felix agrees to travel by bus to meet his father in Philomath, GA. Along the way Felix meets different people that help him understand himself, his father, and the ambiguity of adulthood.

Synopsis #2 – GOMER

In a modern retelling of the Old Testament book Hosea, Daniel Macauley, a pastor in a small Georgia town, receives a vision from God to marry a trailer park harlot. Not only does the marriage ruin his reputation as pastor, it also calls into question his sanity. His new wife, Gomer, does not change her ways even after they have children. Throughout the years Daniel displays anguish, anger, and loneliness for the life he’s been called to, yet remains faithful to his station in life.

Synopsis #3 – OBJECTION

David and Wendy are getting married and it is a happy occasion. Family and friends arrive from out of town and even Claire, Wendy’s estranged deaf sister has decided to attend the event. All goes well from the rehearsal dinner to half-way through the wedding, when Wendy’s old boyfriend stands up to object, in a horrific and bone-chilling manner.