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Start by telling me what sort of apps you use and how you use them on a day to day?

Ok, well, my approach is kinda two fold. I think there's some value that can be had, in passive tracking of my day and my time, where I'm at and what I'm doing. So I have several apps that I would consider passive trackers, so I use Moves a lot, because it just sits on my phone and just passively tracks my activity, and also my location and then at the end of the day it builds me a timeline, that's more or less a journal, or a representation of where I spent my day or how I spent my day. Other passive apps.. the NYTimes research lab put out an app called OpenPaths, I use that as well. There's an app called PlaceMe that doesn't really get much support anymore. But it's a similar location tracking app... What else do I use.. Withings is more or less passive. Anything that's just accessing the sensors that are in the phone and building up a reservoir of mostly location data or activity data, I use those a lot. And I occasionally go back and review the information and turn it into some kind of a journal.

Another thing I use is this Narrative - I don't know if other people have been wearing a Narrative clip - but I've been wearing a Narrative clip for about 8 months now, and again it's very passive, I just wear it, and it snaps a picture every 30s. And I have this accumulated photographic recall of how I spent my days or where I spent my days or what I'm looking at on a day to day basis.

The more active things I do would be DayOne, so I have DayOne set up on all of my devices, and then also on my laptop I have DayOne kind of giving a reminder about 6pm everyday. Just open up and force me at least attempt to write something. I've found that active journaling is much more challenging than passive challenging. Because it requires a little more effort, a little bout more introspection and reflection, and then actual output of your thoughts. I mean I also consider a lot of... well Saga's another app that's just passively running in the background that's just collecting information about what my phone is doing.

The other tools that I use, pretty regularly, I use a lot of photography, and a lot of video, and some audio recording as ways of kind of journaling my day. And I've kind of experimented with all kinds of different ways of journalling. For about a year, almost nightly, I would do a video journal, so I would just use the eyesight camera on my computer. And at the end of the day, more or less a captains log. I would record a video of me just talking about my day so it was just a video journal. And reflecting on those videos is absolutely hilarious to me. So they're probably the most fun thing to go and review. Just to go and look at these videos. That was actually in 2008, so they're now 7 years old, and to look at myself 7 years ago, video journaling you know my daily thoughts I find, you know, one of the most rewarding ways that I've journaled in the past.

Other ways I've journaled in the past.. is very much.. kind of an experiment for me. Nothing necessarily sticks long term, I kind of do these things for a certain period of time, and it's an experiment and then I can go back and look at that. So the video journaling was very much an experiment. When I was in high school, I diligently wrote, every day wrote, a very comprehensive journal, of you know my feelings, what my day was like, etc. That's the most comprehensive journal I've ever kept, because there wasn't a single day that I missed. So for a year, I had a very solid journal of what that whole year was like. But again I was only able to keep that kind of rhythm for a year, before it turned into just this sporadic, journaling effort. Even today when I have DayOne ping me and have it ask to contribute to my journal. So many days I just hit ignore, because I'm busy doing something else and I don't have the time to kind of devote to that. So in a nutshell that's a little bit about some of the apps I use and some of the solutions I've managed to cobble together...

So DayOne then - how often do you end up writing something?

It's more like 2 or 3 times a week. So DayOne has that sidebar where you can click on a calendar and you can view many previous months. And I'd say that like there's probably 2 or 3 days a week where I've got content loaded into DayOne. And I've deliberated hooking other apps into DayOne, like there's a way you can get your Moves timeline to populate into DayOne, but I view that as too invasive. I like keeping the passive tracking from the active tracking.

Why do you feel it's important to keep those two separate?

I feel like there's some sort of memory association you can make, when your.. deliberately choosing to journal something or capture an experience, that's a lot different from just passively capturing an experience. I can't speak too intelligently on what the link may or may not be. But I definitely feel that there is some value to the action associated with it. Like you're making a specific choice to write something down that happened in your life or in your day. So even from just a motivation perspective I view that as having a unique value. So it might not be more valuable, but it's definitely unique from something that was just passively tracked or captured.

Is DayOne then just writing or do you put photographs in with DayOne as well?

I only occasionally put photographs on DayOne, and I only put photographs in DayOne when I'm making an entry on my iPad. I'm usually typing... I kind of hate fake keyboards, I like a real keyboard, like on a computer. I prefer to type on a laptop. From my experience, the way that I enter journal entries in DayOne, there's no quick and easy way to the webcam to just snap an image. I never load pictures in from my camera roll. The only way I'll load pictures into DayOne is when I'm using the iPad app and I take a selfie to be honest.

When you're writing - what will cause you to go and write, are there particular things that happen or that you seek to record, and make you

want to do something more active like that?

There's various motivations. So if... I had this one experience in high school... so this goes back a long way, because this would have been 20 years ago. But I had a couple of experiences in high school where something would happen and I... more or less knew... that after that thing had happened, life was different. And my life was going to change. And I approach journaling from a - it's time to capture all that I can remember because this is now over, and life is changed, and life will be different. And some time in the future I might want to reflect back to the way life used to be. So there would be like pivotal things that would happen in your life... not like huge things like graduation or something like that. Literally just like a friendship, where a dynamic changed. And I forced myself just to sit down to type out all my most lucid and gratifying memories with that friendship, just to kind of have, for posterity's sake, a collection of memories. And it's interesting because once you do a brain dump like that. Once you get everything out of your head, I personally feel like you free up a lot of space, to have a clear head and go live your life from a blank slate. And I approach journaling in a similar fashion, in a similar way today. If something massive has happened or I've got something that's on my mind, or weighing on my mind, I will find a lot of relief in just writing everything that I can possibly write, and getting all of that information out, with as much detail or clarity as possible so that I can more or less just forget it and move on.

And so would you say the majority of your writing is still like that - it's a brain dump? And is it quite lengthy?

Usually... they're very much like brain dumps and they occasionally will be quite lengthy. And it mainly just stems from the fact that life is long and it changes a lot, and I find value in experience, so I just endeavour to capture as much of the experiences I have so I can go on and have more experiences.

If I can just come back to the data, you've got all these different passive sources, how does that all sort of come together? Where is it and what...

Interestingly it doesn't really ever come together, and that's because I'm waiting for fine people like you to figure out Human-Computer Interaction to resurrect this data in some kind of meaningful fashion.

Another app I wanted to mention is Reporter, by Nicholas Felton. I've kind of experimented with that also. None of these have made their way into... the only apps I've used consistently for a long time, would be Moves, and DayOne. Reporter is another one of those where I used it really diligently for 4 months and then it just fell off my radar.

Are you familiar with Gordon Bell? So in his book... which I think the version I've read is called 'My Life, Uploaded'. He talks about how hard drives were just getting cheaper and cheaper and computational power was getting cheaper and cheaper, so he more or less made the decision to just save everything. So capture as much data as you can, there's no reason to empty your recycle bin,

there's no reason to delete a hard drive, because they're just getting cheaper, so save everything, and trust that technology will evolved to a point, where at some point in the future you'll be able to make sense of all this garbage that you've tracked over the years.

I warehouse tons of things, and I store it, and I do my very best to keep it organised and keep it tidy, and occasionally dive into it to kinda do some research. But for the most part it's just a massive warehouse collection that I'm hoping that at some point in time there'll be tools to help me understand some of that stuff a little bit better.

And having just come from the QS conference in San Francisco, there are a couple of companies out there that are building. I mean like data cleaning, data blending, and data analysis are becoming very popular solutions, and there were a couple that were featured at the conference.

And all of that sort of passive stuff, mostly location and activity - that doesn't get mixed at all with DayOne and the journaling?

Not really.... I mean outside of the fact that DayOne will capture your location, it will capture the weather, on entry. Which kind of brings like contextual information. I kind of feel that contextual information offers a lot of value in a journal as well. If you can kind of capture the context of the environment you were in, that adds like a layer on top of the experience.

Do you imagine at some point there will be a comprehensive solution for you? Ideally would you like to have writing alongside this other sort of data? Or even elegantly done they would still be quite separate thing for you?

No, I feel like it would be nice to have a blended solution. I feel like it would be nice to have, like a 10000ft view that you can then also zoom in on a microscopic level. Where you can kind of back away from your journal, and see activity data, location data, photos, videos, contextual information. Peppered into what it is you've actively chosen to record.

And about the data as well, how much effort so do you put into reviewing it and that it's picked the right things? Is it something you're looking at and editing at all?

No, I do a lot of editing. So like cleaning my Moves data is a daily endeavour. So just making sure that it's a proper.. it has the appropriate activity associated with my activity. So it becomes more active than passive at certain points. Because it passively collects, and I actively curate. **Something you do at the end of the day?** Or the next morning.

Is that a daily chore? Or is that quite an interesting process?

It.... it is not necessarily an interesting process. Once a month I will extract all of my location data and then I'll build a map of everything that I did that month. And

I find that kind of interesting. And once a month I will also sometimes review like where my time was spent with my Moves data. So like my Instagram, I posted pictures of my location data, once I've kind of aggregated them and done one month view at a time. And I find that reflection to be kind of interesting because it will show you the most popular places you went, and what does your most popular commuting look like. It also colours... I can also colour bicycle riding from running, from walking, from transit in a car. And I find those 1 month views of the location data to be kind of interesting.

And those 1 month views seem the right timescale for that? More than a day, no so much as a year?

Erm... I would love to look at the year - I haven't figured out how to do that yet. What I did is - do you know what github is? **Yeh**. So I forked a copy of Nicholas Felton's processing code - so I forked that, I made a slight change to it so I could export pdf's of the map, then I edited the pdf's in like photoshop to tweak them and show my location data a little bit better. And I haven't figured out how to use that script to do a year yet, only a month at a time.

And that's something you then go and share on instagram?

Yeh, I've posted a lot of those maps on my instagram.

Why do you do that and what response do you get?

Well it's kind of interesting, I think a lot of people, again people don't... surprisginly people don't realise that their phone knows everywhere they've been. Even if I wasn't using an app that was specifically requesting my location, the phone itself is tracking my location and it keeps a record of 60 or 90 days worth of location information. And surprisingly an interesting or artistic means of expressing something like that, it opens people's eyes to a reality they might not have ever thought existed. And then when I started sharing that stuff on Facebook, so many people were so surprised. They didn't even realise that you could accumulate that kind of information. And a lot of them wanted to know how they could do it themselves. And I was like 'well it's kind of challenging, you need to fork a repo, learn processing and figure out how to export a map' but if there were a consumer option, people would probably gladly hand over their data so they can get this beautiful artistic representation of where they went.

And that's something you do quite regularly?

I endeavour to do that every month. And I only put the maps up that make sense. If I've done a lot of extensive travel, it just looks like spaghetti squiggles all over the place and it doesn't look like much.

There's another Quantified Self person, her name is Laurie Frick - Frickbits - and she's done a more artistic approach to showing you your location data.

In terms of social media in general - is that data - things you've tweeted, Facebook, Instagram, Tweets - is that something you're harvesting or warehousing or keeping as well - do you have any feeds for that going in

anywhere?

Erm, I put that in the category of experiment, I experimented with harvesting a lot of that. I have like archives... but they're not on a daily basis refreshed. That's like I'll go and download my entire twitter history into an archive so I'll have it. Because if you're wanting to more or less paint a comprehensive picture of what your life looked like - there's definitely a value in a lot of that stuff, whatever you were putting on Facebook or Tumblr or Wordpress or whatever. It's all out there.

You mentioned there, every month you look back at your Moves data - in terms of DayOne and other things, and the social media - how much will you look back at them and what will cause you to want to look back or make you interested?

It's funny - because I don't think I ever really have - I rarely have an intention with reflection. Reflection is something which more or less, seemingly randomly, happens. But I'm always surprised about how much value is derived.

Are you familiar with MadMen? A very popular clip from MadMen is when Don Draper is putting together an advertising pitch for the Kodak Carousel Slide projector? Have you ever seen a clip of that scene? **No.**

Well his motivation, he's an advertising exec, and he's always trying to sell stuff, and he was tasked with trying to sell Kodak's new Carousel Slide projector. And he himself sat in his office at home and he looked back on these slides that he had - so it was like the birth of his children, or his children's birthday parties, or holidays. And he's sitting in his office, being very reflective, and it's hitting him in this very impactful way. So he more or less decides that that's how he's going to pitch this product from an advertising perspective - and I can't remember the exact line he had - but he made a comment about nostalgia. He was basically saying nostalgia is potent, but it's incredibly effective. And so he was more or less leveraging nostalgia as his advertising punchline for the product. And that resonates very strongly with me. I feel like nostalgia is incredibly potent.

And I feel like you have two roads you can go down, you can either go down this road of pity and loathing and longing for the past. Or you can derive you know value in what it is you are reflecting on. I went to the University of Colorado for my undergrad, and the big library on campus in stone inscription, "those who do not study the past are doomed to repeat it". And kind of emphasising the importance of understanding the past and reflecting on our history as a civilisation. That's the macro approach to looking back, I think there's a lot of value in a micro approach. So when you analyse your past I think it does kind of help you make better decisions about how you're going forward. It's also really powerful to notice how you change over time. I mean there's all kind of lessons you can learn from that. It's like - nothing is permanent, everything is dynamic and changing, and change is inevitable. So when things happen and something changes, know that things have been changing your whole life, and that's ok. It's actually a good thing! That's maybe a little bit more than you bargained for!

It's interesting you bring up two sides to that - there's a real pleasure in nostalgia, but also a great deal to be gained from reflection. Is either of them is more important to you?

I'd say for me, it's kind of both of both of those things... Let me think, just recently, I dove back and was looking at pictures of myself just two years ago. I use another app on my Laptop - it's called LifeSlice. There's a member of QS - his name of Stan - his website is wanderingstan.com. And he hacked together this app that would take a picture using your webcam every 30 seconds. So it takes a picture of you but it also does a screens cap of whatever's on your screen. So I've got like a billion selfies as a result of using LifeSlice on all of my computers. And I haven't used LifeSlice for a long time. Long story short, I'll often take the LifeSlice images and create time-lapse movies. And I was looking at mages of me from just 2 years ago. And it surprised me how much older I look in 2 years, relative to just 2 years ago. So looking at 2013 me, I though I looked really long, but then looking at 2015 me, I was like wow, I've aged a lot. But then when you put that in the - add some context to that - a lot has happened to me in the past two years. So All of a sudden it kind of makes sense. Yeh - I'm growing older, I'm maturing. And you can see it visually when you have this massive collections of selfies. It's like wow, I can watch my face change. It's like 'oh yeh, I can watch my face change' and we've all seen videos on Youtube of the guy that took a selfie over a decade and we watched him change, you know massively. But even on a personal level, it was really interesting to me to look at pictures of myself and then see myself to go and go "wow, I've changed a lot".

Would you say the occasions you look back - you get a sense, you want to figure something out, or a question comes to you, I wanna check that out.. I wanna see what happened... ooorr

Both.

Or is it more that you just think 'aw I'll have a look back and I wonder what happened?'

Well.. another app that I dive into every now and again is TimeHop. So TimeHop takes all your old stuff and resurfaces it for you so you can kind of reflect. I feel like that's not answering your question though... It's funny. I'm not necessarily very deliberate with my reflection.

You just do it and you sort of get somewhere with it and that's quite interesting? You don't necessarily go in with an idea of what you specifically want to figure out?

Yeh, not yet. So those occasions are much more rare. So if I am wanting to figure something out... I mean another reason why I hold on to so much information is because I view it more or less as a personal search engine. So if there is something I want to remember, I at least know I can go dive into this warehouse and I can go find out what I'm looking for. However, one thing that I guess.. I view as unique to myself, is I find a lot of uh... inspiration in adventure. So If I'm feeling dull, if I do something crazy like take a trip somewhere, go on a

big bike ride, the adventure associated with that often refills my tank. Often, going back and looking at one of my video-journals from 2008 is similarly an adventure. So, I'm going back and I'm looking at something I've totally forgotten back. And every time I go back, I'm always surprised by something new that I find. So if I go back and I look at pictures, or if I go back and look at locations I've been, or I look back and go oh yeh, I did go to that restaurant. There's always something new that pops to mind, I'm not going back deliberately, and I'm not trying to find anything specifically. But the adventure of it, always yields some kind of benefit. And it's hard to put a finger on and it's hard to label and it's hard to define. But I personally just think it's a ton of fun. And it, may be unique to my personality. I know a lot of people that would prefer to just never look back and only look forward. For some reason it just brings me a lot of pleasure.

Is this something you mostly do on your own time at home or is it something you ever... do you ever share these things as well. Do you ever look back at them with other people or is it a very individual thing?

Oh no, I share clips with the Narrative all the time. You know, if I'm with somebody and I'm playing with their children, and I happen to capture some awesome picture, I share that stuff with the people I experience that with. I do a lot of photography, so I have a lot of pictures of my friends children than probably they do. Because they're busy raising the children and I'm there to take pictures. So it's often easier for me to share my photographs with other people, and they're usually quite happy to have this huge trove of pictures from when their baby was a month old.

And another to this entire... like story, is. And this is not necessarily related to what you are studying, but I have taken the role of family archivist in my family. So the motivation for me, really started about 15 years ago, when I moved my grandparents into an assisted living facility, I inherited their collection of photographs. So photographic negatives and videos. And I literally have been scanning that content for the past 15 years. And it's like well over 3000 negative scans, and kodachrome scans, all this imagery, and the photography selection spans a century. So I've got negatives going back to the early 1900's all the way to like 2000. And I scan all of that stuff, I'd share that with my family. Because often it's pictures of my parents, parents that they've never seen. Because these are negatives, these are not prints. Sometimes we don't even know if it's been printed, it's been developed but... so it's been interesting to look at a lot of that content with other people. Mainly because I look at some of these pictures and I don't know who's in 'em. But if I ask my aunt, who are these people, where they were, and give me a rough time frame of when this picture was captured. So I find a lot of value, or really interesting to dive into the sharing like that. And then sharing like my location data when presented as some kind of art project. I never share my journal with anyone. That's locked down.

That family stuff - does that integrated with, both the older thing, and you've got lots of photos of other people, is that with all your other stuff?

Or is that another separate thing that you've got? Again - do you imagine not only having slog of your own life, but that actually stretching back to your whole family?

Yeh, and that's probably what a little of the motivation has been for me to want to record so much of my life. My great grandfather, on my other's side, when he first got a tape recorder, which was 1960 something.. he would record audio tapes of like his day, and then he would mail it to his sister, who would listen to it, and then record her own tape, and send it back to him. And I have all those tapes, so I have all those recordings. So I can listen to my great-grandfather speak, in the voice he had when he was about 60 years old, actually no, he would have been about 80. He was born in the 1880's. And it's really fascinating to me to hear - I mean he died when I was like 5 or 6, so I don't have any real memories of him, but it's really interesting to me to go back and look at pictures of him, look at videos of him, and then listen to audio recordings he made. And so that motivates me to do the same thing in my life. I also want to also similarly make, an entire year's worth of video journals with the understanding that at some point in the future, maybe a great-grandchild will find it really interesting to see what I was saying in 2008.

So you have all these different media - of everyone I spoke to, you definitely have the most stuff! You have these videos, you have audio recordings from family members, you have photographs, some you've taken, some passively taken, and you've got writing and you've got data. I just wonder if you could reflect on how remembering is different with each of those things? What's the data good for? What's the writing good for? How do they all differ?

Yeh. (pause). I feel like writing is the most personal, so if I want to remember. Because often when I re-read my journal - so if I go back and I look at a journal entry I made 2 years ago, I will often read things that I have 100% forgotten, and always kind of amazed that I was thinking those thoughts at all. So writing is the most personal. So if I want to remember something that was emotional, or deeply personal, writing it down is pretty much the best solution. The videos I've found to be very interesting, just from a - I'm always looking for like the most immersive style of capture, so although writing is deeply personal. You would think the video would be just as personal. But there's something about the on-the-spot nature of the video camera being on that eliminates the ability for your brain to actually emote. So I feel like when you're sitting down in a blank piece of screen, or whatever! And there's no time constraint, there's no pressure, there's no camera rolling, you're more able to capture something authentically. When a video camera's on, it's like you're putting on a show. So although you may be writing with the intention of an audience, you're not thinking about the audience. When the video camera is on, you're aware of the audience, you're thinking about the audience and that flavours the way you are journaling. So the most deeply personal form of the journal is definitely gonna be one that I've actually hand written.

Video is interesting because you capture things like the intonations in my voice, the way that I speak, the way that I look, how I'm breathing, where I'm looking, what I'm wearing. Any of that stuff, I find that really fascinating, and it's interesting to reflect back from a video or a photograph perspective. It's like taking selfies - as ridiculous as selfie-sticks are and as ridiculous as selfie culture has become. Me personally with a 10 year record of selfies, it's amazing to see how much I've changed. That part is something I can't quite escape. And I also can't capture that in a hand written form or a typed out form. So, and then I don't necessarily trust my brain with my memory, and I also prefer to use my brain for creative purpose. So if I'm thinking about my brain, and I'm thinking want to remember everything that's happened or I want to remember all the restaurants that I've gone to, or or I want to remember all the movies I've seen, or or I want to remember all the books that I've read, I cannot rely on my brain for that, and if I was relying on my brain for that, it would be so full that there'd be no room left for creative exploration. So I feel like it's important for me personally to get all that out of my brain, so that my brain can then go do something else, and it can go and be creative, and ponder some other problem and think creatively about something.

And professionally I do software development, and like software development is all about problem solving and you need to have a blank slate if you're gonna approach, you have to think creatively to solve these problems. Anyway long story short, a lot of the passive tracking that I do, with like a little bit of curation is mainly just to outsource my memory, like an awareness that I'm gonna want to know the restaurants that I've been to, the countries that I've visited. Or whatever, I'm gonna want to remember that. And if there's a moment when I do want to remember that I want to have some data or some visual or some context that I can dive back into to bring more meaning out of it. Without having to solely rely on my own mind. So a lot of it is just kind of a way for me to offload a lot of my own you know, biological memory. And free up my brain to think about or focus on other things.