

## Adrian Fedorko – How I got started

*Sitting on a sofa in a creek*, I was five years old and visiting my grandmother one summer when my mom took the four of us kids down to her childhood creek. It was our favorite spot. This time, as we hiked through the woods, there was something new. *Boom!* A giant flowered sofa was sitting in the middle of the creek. What a find! I peeled off the path and beelined to the sofa, stumbling, and nearly tripping over roots and bushes. *Kerflop!* I bounced onto the sofa as my siblings raced to catch up. It was the most peculiar and interesting thing I had ever seen, and believe me, my mom took us on countless outdoor “treasure hunts.”

After my initial astonishment at the misplaced sofa and my wondering as to how it got there — as though it had somehow hobbled through the woods and plopped down in the middle of the creek all by itself, proudly displaying its floral pattern — I began thinking of things to do while relaxing with my feet in the cold, rippling water. I dangled my toes among the pollywogs, minnows, and crawdads. With my hands behind my head and a sprig of wheatgrass in my teeth, I got a grand idea.

Had anyone ever fished from a sofa? I guessed not, but I did that day. I grabbed a twig and found some fishing line snagged in a wad of leaves from the last time the creek had flooded. I sat on my throne and fished for hours. While I didn’t catch any fish, I certainly left with a bucketful of ideas.

What I didn’t know that day, at the ripe old age of five, was how that particular afternoon would have the slightest, or perhaps most significant, impact on my view of the world. *The pure randomness and juxtaposition of that experience infected my mind like a virus, causing me to see angles and connections that I might not have otherwise noticed. I now see parts and their relationships rather than just the whole. I now ask “what if?” and “why not?”*

**What if** my Mother's Day card wasn't a card? What if it was a fabric sash she could wear with my message sewn on it? I'm not sure how old I was, but it was the first time I used a sewing machine.

**Why not** make something from that stack of scrap wood just sitting in our basement workshop? I was six and had seen my dad use the drill, so I used it to drill holes in a few choice pieces of "scrap" wood. Armed with rope and my "scrap" pieces, I headed out to hang them from a tree. They weren't scrap; they were now polygonal swings in our yard!

This past summer, our dehumidifier broke, and my mom had it sitting on the curb. Ha ha, yeah right! I didn't even have to hunt for this treasure! I immediately dismantled it and found a perfectly functioning compressor. As I looked at the compressor, all sad and alone in the remains of the broken dehumidifier, I instantly knew that I could use it backwards as a vacuum pump. I wanted to build a setup for magnetron sputtering, and the vacuum pump was the final component that I needed. Weighing about fifteen pounds, that compressor was my baby until it grew up and became my vacuum pump. I am now sputtering copper atoms onto glass microscope slides, making mirrors. I'm going to make the mirrors required for a telescope and a CO<sub>2</sub> laser.

That curious virus I caught while **sitting on a sofa in a creek** has enabled me to see relationships and connections everywhere, and it has led me to what I love most: thinking, investigating, discovering, and creating. For me, there are sofas in creeks everywhere; it's just a matter of finding them!