Steve Jobs

Stanford commencement Speech 2005

I am uh... honored to be with you today for your

**commencement** from one of the finest universities in the

world. Truth be told, I never graduated from college and

uh... this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college

graduation. Today I want to tell you three stories from my

life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories. The first story

is about connecting the dots. I dropped out of Reed College

after the first 6 months, but then stayed around as a drop-in

for another 18 months or so before I really quit. So why did

I drop out?

It started before I was born. My biological mother was a

young, unwed graduate student, and she decided to put me

up for adoption. She felt very strongly that I should be

adopted by college graduates, so everything was all set for

me to be adopted at birth by a lawyer and his wife. Except

that when I popped out they decided at the last minute that

they really wanted a girl. So my parents, who were on a

waiting list, got a call in the middle of the night asking,

"We've got an unexpected baby boy.

Do you want him?" They said "Of course." My biological

mother found out later that my mother had never graduated

from college and that my father had never graduated from high

school. She refused to sign the final adoption papers. She only

**relented** a few months later when my parents promised that I

would go to college. This was the start in my life.

And 17 years later I did go to college. But **I naively** chose a

college that was almost as expensive as Stanford and all of my

working-class parents' savings were being spent on my college

tuition. After six months, I couldn't see the value in it. I had no

idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college

was going to help me figure it out. And here I was spending all

of the money my parents had saved their entire life. So I

decided to drop out and trust that it would all work out OK. It

was pretty scary at the time, but looking back it was one of the

best decisions I ever made. The minute I dropped out I could

stop taking the required classes that didn't interest me and

begin dropping in on the ones that looked far more interesting.

It wasn't all romantic. I didn't have a dorm room, so I slept on

the floor in friends' rooms I returned coke bottles for the 5􀋉

deposits to buy food with, and I would walk the 7 miles across

town every Sunday night to get one good meal a week at the

Hare Krishna temple. I loved it.

And much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity

and intuition turned out to be priceless later on. Let me give

you one example.Reed College at that time offered perhaps the

best calligraphy instruction in the country. Throughout the

campus, every poster, every label on every drawer, was

beautifully hand calligraphed. Because I had dropped out and

didn't have to take the normal classes, I decided to take a

calligraphy class to learn how to do this. I learned about serif

and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space

between different letter combinations, about what makes great

typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle

in a way that science can't capture, and I found it fascinating.

None of this had even a hope of any practical application in my

life. But ten years later, when we were designing the first

Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed

it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful

typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in

college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or

proportionally spaced fonts. And since Windows just copied

the Mac, it's likely that no personal computer would have

them.