

WHITE

Quest for purpose: a look into an Islamic convert's life

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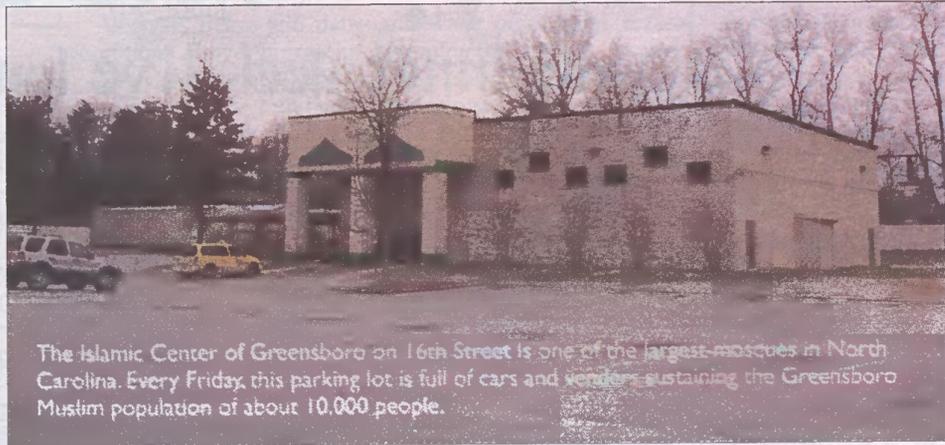
for new Muslims and the curious.

White's childhood began in a Greensboro household that was essentially secular. He recalled that his mother was a part-time Christian on those Sundays when she chose to attend church. White's perception of God developed from outside influences.

"My first real experience with the creator was going to a Christian camp in the mountains where it was drilled into my skull that there is hell and hell is waiting for everyone that doesn't believe," said White. White believed that God accepted his prayers from that point forward.

An adoration for music eventually led White into the recording industry as a teenager. He soon found himself immersed in a lifestyle of parties and pleasure.

"You get involved in the music world, you're going to be surrounded by every single solitary sinful thing you can think of," said White. "All I did was play music. When that wasn't meaningful to me anymore, I had nothing really to hold onto."



The Islamic Center of Greensboro on 16th Street is one of the largest mosques in North Carolina. Every Friday this parking lot is full of cars and vendors sustaining the Greensboro Muslim population of about 10,000 people.

TOM CLEMENT/GUILFORDIAN

The life of excess, magnified by the untimely death of a close friend, posed an existential dilemma for White.

"I kind of had this awareness that came over me that 'the lifestyle I'm living is going to kill me too if I don't get out of this,'" said White.

White consulted multiple philosophies and religious texts in pursuit of some resolve.

He admired the Qur'an for its clarity and as a literary standard in the Arabic language. As he absorbed the teachings of the Qur'an, White was inspired by the life of prophet Muhammad, a man of humility who lived what he preached.

"That's what really did it for me — the character of prophet Muhammad," said White. "No matter how much he had been

through, no matter how much power he gained from his message, he stayed a regular humble person. We're talking (about) a man who at the height of his career as a prophet and messenger of God ... still slept on a mat in the dirt in a house with nothing in it."

It took White months of debating with himself to decide whether he could handle the responsibility of becoming a Muslim.

"Becoming a Muslim is the real deal," said White. "There's not religion and then your life ... Religion is your life; everything in your life is Islam."

The Qur'an provided a method and prophet Muhammad provided a model of self-discipline in White's journey. His personal enlightenment occurred about four years ago. White continues to dedicate his time spreading the word of Islam and dispelling ignorance about the faith.

An open invitation is offered to any student who would like to attend a prayer at the Islamic Center of Greensboro. Guilford College's various religious organizations also offer options for students exploring questions of faith, spirituality or religion.

LIFE AFTER GUILFORD: Matt Haselton

By Meredith Brown
EXECUTIVE PRINT COPY EDITOR

Imagine that your job is to make video games that can change someone's life. Imagine that you get to do something that you love and that incorporates your favorite pastime every day as your job. This is the life that Matt Haselton '07 lives.

Matt was an English literature major at Guilford College with a concentration in medieval/early modern studies and is currently an associate designer at Filament Games, a company which makes educational video games for all ages. It may seem difficult to understand how a degree in English can translate into designing video games, but Haselton has managed it flawlessly.

"My English major skills are used every day," said Haselton. "There's not a lot of demand for people writing papers on 400-year-old texts, but (the English major) is helpful in figuring out the deeper meaning of ideas or how to put together (other) people's ideas into a cohesive argument or pitch."

Haselton believes that his Guilford education was fundamental in helping him in ways that a degree from a different school would not have done. Learning how to communicate within a group and also how to figure out a problem outside of class are very Guilford-centric lessons.

"Having taught at a Big Ten school, it's a totally different experience," said Haselton. "At big schools, there are students who aren't able to find themselves because they're so busy running around a giant campus. Guilford has a sense of being encouraged to work on an individual level."

This individualism and knowledge of how to synthesize ideas translate perfectly into game design, according to Haselton. His job is to hear Filament's clients' pitches and then figure out how to take out the pertinent information and figure out how to make a game out of the pieces. He then makes that into a concept document that is eventually made into the final game product.

Originally, Haselton wanted to be an education studies major, because he "loved explaining things to people." However, after taking some English classes, he quickly switched his major to English and joined The Guilfordian. Now he teaches through video games.

"I love making a complicated idea accessible for all

people," he said.

He credits The Guilfordian for much of why he was able to translate his English degree into video games.

"The Guilfordian was a place that gave real-world traction to the concepts we learned as English majors," he said. "It's all about writing for real people and not in an academic context. In the real world, I'm writing at about a fifth grade level, and that's the tone you need to explain things really well. So much of my work is explaining things to people, so that's the only way to get better."

He also believes that Heather Hayton, associate professor of English, Jeff Jeske, Dana professor of English and faculty advisor of The Guilfordian, were integral parts of his Guilford education.

"Jeff was my advisor and Heather was key to pushing me to do stuff with graduate school," he said. "She sent me to my first conference and told me to apply what I was doing to video games, which I'd never even considered."

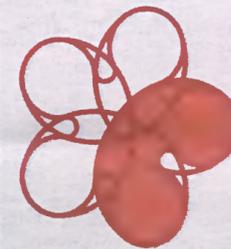
"They definitely kicked my ass a lot when I needed it, but when I deserved it, they didn't kick my ass as hard as they could have."

When asked what his favorite Guilford memory was, Haselton could not choose just one.

"My friend Ben and I would make a movie every year and Jeff would come in and give us feedback for that," recalled Haselton. "And it was so fun. Also, the multitude of times I thought Heather and Jeff were going to kill me and they didn't — that was really fun. Guilford was great the whole way through. Cleaning out the Guilfordian office for the last time I was thinking 'Wow, that actually happened and I didn't burn the paper down' and that was really satisfying."

He recommends that all Guilford students realize how integral to their future life their education here truly is.

"You're learning a lot of academic skills, and the key is translating that into tangible, real world things," said Haselton. "In the real world, they're asking you how long it will take you to have a final product and you really need something to measure yourself against. Being in school is the only place you can find that out about yourself, if you give yourself the time and space to do that. Take advantage of people telling you if it isn't good or if you need to spend more time on it. Now, the consequences are more than just a bad grade, they're being fired."



National Kidney
Foundation™
KIDNEY WALK



March 17th

Registration starts at 9am

Walk begins at 10am

Sign up at

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TZYRR9Y>



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