



I have been obsessed with investing ever since I can remember. When I was in first and second grade, I remember getting the stock page in the newspaper and combing through the prices like I was a broker. But we didn't have a nickel to invest. My mom worked in public schools (thanks for the pension!) and my dad worked in construction and was a lot better at spending than he was at saving (he lives off Social Security now). I always loved numbers and data, and to see those pages and pages of stock quotes was fascinating to me, even when I didn't totally understand what they meant.

In the 1980's, when you were good at math and only knew other families that also didn't have money to invest, people would say that maybe you could become a "stock broker." It was like a mythical creature to me, someone that looked for trends in those pages and pages of data and made tons of money. When most kids were dreaming of hitting a home run in the World Series, I dreamed about buying and selling stocks while wearing suspenders and smoking stogies.

I started studying the stock market in high school, and went on to study economics as an undergraduate in college. I spent several years at the Boston College Center for Retirement Research, where I learned that financial success isn't just about buying and selling stocks. I then went on to work several years in economic consulting. But my true passion was always investing, and so I went back to business school to study "asset management."

While I was studying, I always had a feeling that there was some yet untapped "secret sauce" that nobody had figured out yet when it came to investing. Like so many other ego-driven business school students, I thought I was going to be the best stock picker of my generation. Throughout school, I worked on crafting quantitative models that I thought were sure to win me a Nobel prize, but nothing ever came of them. At the same time, I had a little money and I started actually investing. I had some wins and losses, but all I could ever think about was why the "market" was unable to see what I was seeing when I was losing. Sometimes I bought a SURE THING that dropped in value and sometimes I laughed at those who bought something that I thought was overvalued as it continued to soar.

As I continued to study the great investors of previous generations and read new research, I started to realize that maybe there really wasn't a "secret sauce." The 401(k) I'd forgotten about from my first job was doing pretty well, and I hadn't done a thing. I didn't need to be banging my head against the wall to figure out what stocks to buy; I just had to invest and let markets do the rest. It was a humbling realization, until I realized that maybe that WAS the special sauce. Maybe, instead of making everything so complicated, what someone needed to do was make it all SIMPLER. I needed to re-program my first grade brain from believing that the best investor was the guy buying and selling from his leather chair.

I came to the American Institute for Economic Research and spent a couple of years writing papers about financial planning, before finally coming on at American Investment Services (AIS) as the Director of Financial Planning. AIS has been promoting a message of low-cost, diversified, and disciplined investing for nearly 40 years – not exactly the gun slinging, wild west brokerage I'd imagined as an 8 year old.

I finally have the opportunity to actually help people invest their money (as well as figure out other, potentially more difficult, financial questions). And I'm glad it took me so long to actually work with clients, because now I realize that investment success isn't about being the best math student or the savviest gambler at the table, it's about crafting and sticking to a sensible and proven long-term strategy. I finally have the maturity to realize that investing is as much as psychology as it is about analysis. The nuances around investing aren't about creating the best quantitative model that no one can implement, it's about creating something attainable and realistic.