

Originally published on Aug 13, 2021

Since the resounding success of my "next level l33t coding interview, the last coding question you'll ever need to ask a candidate", people have been asking me "Sevki, how did you come up with this amazing technique?", to which I always reply, "in order to invent the future, you must first live in the past."

The apocryphal origin story of "l33t coding" interviews I've heard but not been able to verify goes like this:

Most people assume that big tech came up with leetcoding interviews, but in fact, it was invented in the 1940s by Sir Reginald Arthur Charles Elite III.

Sir Reginald Arthur Charles Elite III

, who was running a very successful public swimming pool.

After desegregation of swimming pools, Sir Reginald's country club was bombarded with applications from minorities, who previously were ineligible to apply, and he very quickly became overwhelmed with applications from minorities.

He needed to slow down the applications to the pool from minorities without spelling out NO MINORITIES.

The answer came to him in the form of an Elite Swimmer Test! I'll say only Elite Swimmers are allowed!

So in order to determine their elite status, I'll start asking applicants something tangentially related to swimming, like sailing, he thought.

It's logical that people who are excellent sailors would be excellent swimmers too. Therefore, we can say if someone is an elite sailor, it should follow they are elite swimmers too.

And since sailing education is out of reach for most minorities, it should filter out most of them and if they do show up claiming to have sailing knowledge, we'll just take them into a room and quiz them until they admit they don't belong here. And if they pass, he thought, they'll have crippling imposter syndrome and will quit soon anyway.

So when years later, Apple, Google, Facebook, and other big tech firms were being bombarded by applications, they thought to themselves, how do we achieve that one black customer support engineer's wish to be in every office photo so he can stay college brochure famous long after he leaves?

They thought about it for a while, but the answer to keeping big tech 70% white male wasn't obvious.

One of the VPs from Google happened to be Sir Reg's great-grandson Reginald Tiffany Elite IV.

Reginalds Elite IV, III

Reg the fourth took some time off his busy schedule of sexually assaulting female colleagues and organized an intercompany off-site in a resort in Half Moon Bay.

He spent a total of 5 seconds to present to them his vision, the "Elite's Coding Interview."

"How about we just put candidates in a room and interrogate them for hours, like pop-pop used to at the old country club?"

The VP from Apple went, "Hell Yeah!"

The VP from Facebook went, "Hell Yeah!"

The VP from Microsoft went, "Hell Yeah!"

The VP from Amazon went, "Hell Yeah!"

"Here's the best part, we question them on Big O," said the fourth.

"It's tangentially relevant, practically useless knowledge, that is only within the reach of people who can afford university and especially Ivy League/Oxbridge unis."

The VP from Apple went, "Hell Yeah!"

The VP from Facebook went, "Hell Yeah!"

The VP from Microsoft went, "Hell Yeah!"

The VP from Amazon went, "Hell Yeah!"

"Think about it, when was the last time you actually had to use Big O?"

"I've never used it," said the VP from Apple.

"Neither have I," said The VP from Facebook.

"I don't even know what Big O is," cackled the Amazon VP.

"Wait really? Why is it tangentially relevant? I thought they taught it at universities," said Susan, the only female VP in the room, who was only invited because Reg the fourth couldn't figure out how to book a conference room for 20.

They all laughed.

"Big O is to algorithms, what a pinch is to salt."

"It's only good for guesstimating stuff. Why would you create yourself more guesswork when you can benchmark it precisely?" said the VP from Microsoft.

They laughed more. "Ah, that makes sense."

"Wait one more second," said Susan, "isn't calling it the elite's coding interview a bit on the nose?"

"Gesundheit!" said the VP from Apple.

I didn't sneeze, Susan thought.

"As I was saying before the Girl VP interrupted me" said Apple VP,

"Calling it elite might come off as elitist, we don't want to offend any snowflakes do we?"

To which everybody replied, "Oh yeah, that's true, good catch Tim, don't know what we'd do without you."

"Fuck!" exhaulted the girl VP as she pulled a muscle rolling her eyes, but the pain soon faded away and she was happy once again, secure in the knowledge that she wouldn't stop attending Grace Hopper Conferenceany time soon.

"Drop the 'e', just call it 'leet', it sounds a lot less racist when you say it that way," whispered Justin Timberlake's character from Social Network.

The VP from Apple went, "Hell Yeah!"

The VP from Facebook went, "Hell Yeah!"

The VP from Microsoft went, "Hell Yeah!"

The VP from Amazon went, "Hell Yeah!"

They took the rest of the week off to talk about blockchain.

And thus, leetcoding interviews were born.

And that's how we're able to keep diversity in tech 50 shades of eggshell.