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I've always perceived myself to be relatively young. That perception has begun to fade. I'm continuously aware of the bracing reality of relentless temporal progression. It's my birthday this week.

As you read this, I'm within days either way (depending on how quickly you consumed your copy) of qualifying for Social Security benefits. One of my daughters is married and the other plans to wed in May. I remain very youthful both physically and in spirit (by my measures), and my activity level is very high. But there's no forestalling the inevitable...ironically, as I type this at my on-campus office in Statesboro, I do so with squinted eyes. Unfortunately, I left my reading glasses at home in Savannah this morning and this deadline eliminates the possibility of a drug store trip to find replacements.

Like me, this magazine is no spring chicken. With this iteration, we've published every two weeks (save two annually to accommodate vacations) for 23 years. That's close to 600 issues in circulation. A near identical total to MAD Magazine, the iconic humor periodical that launched 74 years ago. I ran a mathematical approximation: We've produced and distributed approximately 115,772,800 pages of paper-printed-and-bound material, all with our compliments and thanks to our enthusiastic and loyal advertisers and those among you who have spread the word about us.

We remain profoundly grateful for our engaged and supportive readers and our client-partners. They choose to promote their products and services within our pages. They believe we deliver valuable access to a connected audience that we have cultivated over decades.

Perhaps I'm most proud that we have never operated with the luxury of a staff larger than three regular employees. For a while now, and quite sensibly, we have two. I'm not included in that count. I just edit all the material, make basic business decisions, contribute an occasional feature article or a few photos, and pen this column with unyielding regularity.

I'm a student of business and I've operated in competitive environments at sometimes-daunting scale. I've always recognized the brutal challenges to growing an enterprise like *The Skinnie*, and I've elected to allocate many of my resources (capital, energy, and large shares of my attention) to other projects. "Print is a dead medium." We're not deaf to the axiom. But when we launched this thing, it wasn't for the purpose of eco-

nomic enrichment nor widespread fame. We had dual objectives. First, and I'd be lying if I didn't admit foremost, I sought a creative outlet to augment my finance work. Secondly, we felt a strong emotional connection and commitment to our community, so we sought to build an authentic outlet for the meaningful exchange of information among our neighbors. And we believed that in a media world trending towards click volume as the only meaningful metric, a contrary hyper-locally focused platform could work commercially. I suppose 23 years at least partially validates our instincts.

Anyway, as a lifelong learner and teacher in the commercial arts, what we're doing here doesn't make textbook sense. We haven't built significant equity. We don't have an obvious exit strategy. We haven't constructed an organization that could obviously thrive without my direct participation. We haven't formulated a succession plan. We never grew to significant scale. The opportunity cost of the time I've devoted to our *Skinnie* work will never be tangibly recouped...and, at 62, time is a (if not the) most precious asset in one's broad portfolio.

Not just time measured in span length, but time of the highest-and-best-quality. I've pushed hard to remain youthful with reasonable success, but stuff happens, as my family and yours, undoubtedly, is acutely aware.

So, where do we go from here? Not sure, truthfully. I can't predict past our continuing effort to make this thing in hopes you enjoy something about it and we take some pleasure in doing the work. Twenty-three years, 62 years...if we keep going as we are for as long as we've been at it thus far, I'll be 89 and, if I have anything to say about it, still an avid hiker and daily exercise addict with the mental capacity to write a pithy and cogent 1000-or-so words. Even if life-on-earth is not eternal, hope can be.

Scott A. Lauretti

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