



*On page 27, you'll begin to see our annual homage to high school graduates from the Skidaway Island community. The pages-long array of fresh faces illustrates the vibrancy of your home – a place filled with families and people of all ages and interests. Along with the photos, we include text blurbs that detail each young person's post-high-school plans and aspirations. Try to remember your own sense of excitement and wonder when the world beyond your childhood was beginning to reveal itself to you.*

I do.

September – college – couldn't come soon enough. I had lived in the same room of the same house since I learned to walk. Everything I needed and much of what I wanted was generously provided to me. My family was intact, close, supportive, and comfortable. Streets, roads, routes were etched into my psyche such that moving through my universe was automatic. I had a girlfriend, a car, and a bunch of white-blond hair. And an aching awareness that there was much, much more...

What "much-much-more" looked like was hazily unclear. What it proved to be was beyond my wildest dreams. Borrowing shamelessly from the graduation-season cliché: The journey (to your wildest dreams) begins with a single step. My single step was a two-hour straight-shot – most of it on US 22 East (now I-78), from central Pennsylvania to the foreign land of Bethlehem (also in PA) – to Lehigh University and a set of opportunities that have fortuitously landed me at this keyboard, right here, right now.

Come that September – 1982 – I would meet the best friends I have ever had, who remain so today. I would learn – and fail to learn until I was forced by the specter of expulsion – chemistry and computer programming and calculus and how to write. I would drink alcohol – lots of it, often – something for which I was ill-prepared having done so only once (to disastrous results) during my high school years. I would lose interest in my girlfriend almost as quickly as she lost interest in me. Eventually, I would improve my freshman-year GPA by a full 1.3. I would share a disgusting room in a cut-rate hotel in the Bahamas with 10 guys and slurp clam chowder at the counter of the Nassau Dunkin' Donuts franchise at 3 in the morning every day for a spring-break week. I would wear a new, dark grey suit with blue-windowpane piping that I bought with my mom while I sat on a plump leather chair in an unimaginably big and fancy office with views of Central

Park as a movie-star handsome partner-in-charge-of-recruiting with perfect hair named Dennis ("Denny," as he signed the offer letter) Reigle promises me \$28,000 plus overtime, an Arthur Andersen business card with my name on it, and a chance to live my New York City dream.

Some nights, it's unavoidable, wish to the contrary as we might: The dreams come in the form of nightmares. Other nights, they are so idealized that our subconscious

attempts to suppress the instinct to awaken. So it was with my New York dream. On balance, though, the New York dream exceeded my most elaborate fantasies and wound its way to a completely surprising and never-before-seen off-ramp in coastal Georgia.



All of this proceeded both exactly as it was supposed to and in-very-few-ways according to plan. What began with the end of high school was a long series of incredible and ordinary things that would have seemed vexingly disjoint and random if evaluated in advance. Yet they are perfectly logical in retrospect. And my relatively unformed mind had no way to predict or process any of it...so we figured things out together in real time.

We're still figuring things out, every day, my mind and me. And high school graduation was a humbling, distant 41 years in my past.

Congratulations; good luck; enjoy every day, now and always, as they will one day be precious memories if you approach them with proper care.

*Scott A. Lawrence*

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