

My most memorable trip

Business, Company



In Hong Kong, 1.

25 million chickens were killed due to the outbreak of the dreaded bird flu, Princess Diana died, and gas was only \$1. 22 per gallon. I was newly divorced and working pizza delivery for about nine months when the call came in for a delivery to Eastern Ave. in Manchester, NH. It was much different than the inner city that I grew up in. Buildings were riddled with bullets, the streets were filled with thugs and the part of town that I grew up was labeled " The Combat Zone". I was excited to deliver to that section of town as it has been known to tip well.

I didn't realize that it was the address of an old high school crush. This surprise was better than any tip I would ever receive. When she opened the door, I could place the face; I couldn't put a name to it. " Donna", she said. " Ah, dang it", I said, frustrated with myself. We were both " war veterans". I don't know why it is that I forgot the name of the girl that turned me down to go to the company Christmas party when we were working at a local grocery store when I was seventeen.

It was nearly ten years later. Human evolution seemed to distort my pubescent view of her over time, although her effect on me hadn't faded. With some small talk and pizza in hand, she had told me that she just came home from the hospital as a first time mother. " Her name is Allison" she said. I loved kids and was very eager to meet her. I asked if I could hold her. With an expression of surprise, she happily obliged.

A smile ear to ear on Donna's face said all I needed to know about her thoughts. She stated that Allison had never gone to anyone without crying

before. Much to our surprise, Allison seemed quite content to be cradled in my arms. When I asked what was new in her life besides the omnipresent baby in my arms, she explained that she was single and going through an interesting time in her life. We continued small talk for a few minutes before I left to continue my night at work. A few nights later, I had another delivery to the same building that Donna lived in. After the delivery, I knocked on her door.

“ Donna, would you be offended if I asked for your phone number? ” I inquired. “ Not at all” she mentioned, as she reached for the pen out of my shorts pocket. She didn’t realize I already had her phone number. It was listed on the pizza box from our first encounter. Phone calls and dates were the next, natural step. We exchanged stories about our work history, education level and more importantly, our moral standards and family values. She explained how disturbed she was about her mom’s passing when she was young.

I informed her of the natural progression of my prior marriage blessed me with a son. I shared the joy that I experience when I am with my son Matthew. My old crush and I were catching up on old and current times very quickly. We laughed about the fun times shared at one of our first jobs. We fantasized about hypothetical situations. How would our lives be if she hadn’t gone to the company Christmas party with Allison’s father? What would fate have in store for her if I had beaten him to asking her first? He had emotionally abused her. Our relationship was progressing very well and within a few months I asked her to go on a weekend trip.

I owned a sporty car and wanted to take it for a six hour drive southwest. I asked her to go for a trip to New York City. Although surprised by the suggestion, she swiftly accepted the offer. Technology wasn't as good then as it is now. Getting to Manhattan was going to present a problem for a young adult with little driving experiences to distant places. It would be a long ride with my two year old son and Donna's new baby. I wasn't well prepared to drive in bad weather if it crept up on me.

Further, I had heard many horror stories of what congested traffic might be like at any time of day as any driver gets closer to the hustle and bustle of the big city. I was up for the challenge. For young adults, going to Manhattan for the first time can be overwhelming. Tall buildings towered over us as I encouraged my girlfriend to take pictures through the sunroof of the car. There was so much history in this super sized city. The landmarks represented strength, stability and resilience. There is so much to see and do.

Everything seems as utter chaos! No matter how overcrowded the new environment was for us, I knew it would be quite an adventure. I had pre planned the whole event. The hotel that we stayed at was the Presidential Hotel. It sounded awfully important to me. I thought it sounded impressive before I ever made the phone call to reserve our room. Once we checked in, my instincts were validated. The hotel's elevator appeared as gold.

We could smell the polish on the brass surrounding the eleventh floor button. The reflection of her nervous face was evident. There wasn't a single fingerprint to be found. The hallways and our room had an elegant chair rail,

ceilings were recessed, and lighting was very romantic. Regardless of the view through the window; which was only loud traffic and tall buildings, we were extremely excited. The room had a four post, cherry wood bed. I had always fantasized what it would be like to sleep on one.

I didn't know what a mini bar was, but was anxious to find out. The room had a Jacuzzi in the bathroom. It was the perfect setup for a romantic weekend, and even though we had two extremely young children in tow, we were going to make the best of it. It would be far from the life we had always known and grown accustomed to. We slept really well that evening after checking in. Allison didn't seem to mind having the company of a two year old boy with her. I didn't mind having a beautiful woman in the bed with me.

The myth of having trouble sleeping in an unfamiliar place was quickly dispelled. The following day, we decided to explore the new scenery. It was time for Donna to figure out what the day had in store for her. She had envisioned possibly going to the Empire State Building or perhaps the World Trade Center. Maybe we would enjoy Central Park. It didn't really matter to me where we were going to go. Regardless of the decision, any experiences enjoyed together would be moments to cherish.

Ultimately, I surprised her with a short drive to the dock. A few moments later, we were on a ferry to Ellis Island to enjoy the Statue of Liberty. I quickly realized that enjoying the seven point spiked rays representing a nimbus (halo), holding a stone tablet close to her body in her left hand and a flaming torch high in her right hand would not be happening. The tablet bears the words " JULY IV MDCCLXXVI" (July 4, 1776), commemorating the

date of the United States Declaration of Independence wouldn't be realized up close and personal. I understood the extent of my mistake as we viewed the monument at a distance. The ferry was floating right on past it. Ellis Island ferry or Staten Island ferry was the furthest thought on my mind at the moment I dropped to one knee.

Her torch signifies enlightenment. The tablet in her hand shows the date of the nation's birth, July 4, 1776. I asked her to marry me. The ring was brilliant. The back drop was perfect. I had a burning desire to express the commitment to Donna in a way that would be memorable and romantic. I believed an exhibition of liberty and independence would be best expressed in a historic way.

Broken shackles lie at lady liberty's feet, in symbolism of the United States' freedom from the king. I preferred proposing in a different environment that displayed a possibility of romance without insecurity of battles at home. Vowing commitment isn't always scripted. Marriage will continue to require dedication and work. Although there will continue to be risk of failure in life, we have the drive and determination far beyond any "combat zone". There will be detours along the way and there will be lots of chaos, but one thing will be clear. We will endure it together.

There will be many triumphs to celebrate together and we will remain king and queen of our own empire.