

There it was, Graduation Day, something that took me 10 years to reach due to working full time, raising a family and commuting from Canton during the 1969-70 quarters. And I was damn well ready for it after taking 23, 25 and 21 quarterly hours that year to complete the graduation requirements.

The first set-back was the university limiting tickets to three per graduate, which meant my children could not attend. That decision reportedly was made because the administration feared rooftop snipers could pick off several people if the ceremony was held at the football stadium.

Thus, we all were to gather outside Memorial Gymnasium. I remember questioning the wisdom of that decision, even remarking to a fellow graduate, "You know, a couple good snipers could take out, what, a handful of us? But one decent bomb placed in a corner of the building could kill all of us in one fell swoop. (Approximately 5,000 in attendance, in my memory) I think I'd rather take my chance outside." My now co-conspirator uttered something that sounded like a hangover agreement.

From the language coming over the loud speakers, it would have been hard for anyone to realize those speakers were directed at people who supposedly were smarter than the average freshman. About every five minutes, the speakers would blare, "Make sure you are carrying your degree in your left hand and your ticket in your right hand." This went on for more than an hour before all us lambs were led to the slaughter I was sure was impending. I may not have the greatest recall capabilities, but how hard were those instructions to remember? Most of us agreed to just accept the insult and let it go.

One of my funnest memories was of the girl, in all her disheveled glory, robe falling off one shoulder, hair splaying out in all directions, sprinting embarrassingly athletically past me and my fellow conspiratory confident yelling, "Curt, you fucking jerk, why didn't you wake me?"

"Obvious English major," I said, smirkingly.

Once inside, further evidence that administrators may have been Peter Principle examples when it came to making the decision to move the ceremony indoors quickly became evident. As the speeches and the music episodes lengthened, the ambient inside temperature and humidity rose in direct proportions, bringing bodies (some who obviously overslept and didn't make shower-time before arriving) into full sweat mode, and "Pomp and Circumstance" hadn't even ended.

I think a few people passed out, probably from the heat, not the smell of arm pits, but the ceremony, somehow through all this uncomfotableness (is that really a word) was able to maintain the proper dignity and solemnity that are typical of graduations.

In life, many of the bad things that happen to you become some of the most intriguing, even comical, stories you tell later in life. So it is for me with this graduation memory. In spite of all the angst preceding and during my, our, graduation, it is a cherished memory. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. And I mean the whole wide world.