

Bunch and Happy Days. It's nostalgic nirvana. By then, I'm wiped out, and I take a short, two- or three-hour nap. After I wake up, if I don't go to a friend's place and hit the pool or start a marathon video gaming session, I'll flip right back to ESPN for Around the Horn, followed immediately by Pardon the Interruption.

After that, I kind of play it by ear, if the Yankees game isn't being televised—you can't hope to plan a whole day without tempting fate just a little. And I make sure to brush my teeth and mix in a shower or two during the commercials. And I listen to a little Bob Dylan. You know, just to keep me centered.

It wasn't too long, maybe a month or so, before both my parents started grumbling about the general state of my existence and demanding that I get a job of some sort. I'll admit the thought had crept into my head. Usually, it crept in between Jeopardy! and Rap City: Tha Bassment. Just when I was getting into a groove, too. They can be a real pair of wet blankets sometimes.

So, I started applying everywhere.

I applied to valet at a hoity-toity high-rise apartment building in downtown Dallas, but they took one look at my hairstyle (or lack thereof), thanked me for my application and said they'd keep me in mind. I mean, I think they may have been less than sincere in saying that. I don't think

they really did keep me in mind to fill the position. I think they kept my application in their waste paper basket.

Occasionally, I'd get my foot in the door, and get an interview with a manager or human resources director. At one particular restaurant, where I'd applied as a busboy, they told me I lacked the necessary experience in the service industry.

"I lack the necessary qualifications to pick up dirty dishes from the table and put them into the sink?" I thought. "Really? Because I do that for free around my house, occasionally."

To be honest, my resume is pretty short on what one would call "real-world experience." I didn't realize it would be a such problem until I actually tried to find what one would call "real-world employment." I'm sure many an employer looked on my resume, saw my two semesters working as a staff writer at my college newspaper, and thought "Oh, well that's almost like a real job."

Other times, they told me my BA overqualified me to work a concession stand at the movie theatre or wash dishes at a burger joint.

They were probably afraid my liberal arts background might make me a risk to their harmonious working environment. I imagine they feared that I'd start handing out literature to the other workers describing how the proletariat was being

exploited, detailing how, if all the world's oppressed united, we could topple the whole system. Or something like that.

On the bright side, I learned more about how to deal with rejection and varied degrees of failure. My heart wasn't too set on flipping burgers, even in the short term, so not getting work doing so didn't exactly eat me up inside. Still, some form of employment would have been nice for my self-esteem. Aristotle said that we are what we do. What am I if I do nothing?

Going out with friends, as I sometimes did, underlined my feelings of social inadequacy. I imagined my friends and I introducing ourselves to attractive members of the opposite sex.

"My name's Stephen," one friend would say. "I'm rehearsing for the lead role in a play that opens in town next month."

"I'm Will," another friend would say. "I'm leaving in a few weeks to tutor prodigious kids on philosophy at Johns Hopkins."

"I'm Sanjiv," I'd say. "I'm currently unemployed, but a lot of the jobs I've applied for have been telling me I'm overqualified."

Too many nights ended with me alone in my bed, falling asleep to the two a.m. version of Sportscenter.

I finally found gainful employment at the local franchise of an international chain of coffee shops.

The work isn't too bad, even if it isn't too rewarding. The people working there with me are nice enough, but the shop is set up across the street from a few office buildings. So every few hours, you get a lot of self-important junior executives with frosted tips, wearing half-silk, half-cotton button-down shirts, their cell-phone earpieces firmly in place.

"I want a grande, half-caf, non-fat cappuccino... AND I WANT IT TEN MINUTES AGO!" they shout. I'm consistently unimpressed, but I'm sure they feel pretty good about themselves. At least it's good real world working experience.

Pretty much all of the other people working there are just like me, stuck in that purgatory between the lives of a student and a professional. It's not a bad dodge, all in all. And I get free coffee too. Even though I'm not really that into coffee.

For my own part, I'm also applying to some graduate film schools, and I've got this little gig writing a piece for Toner. I know I'll eventually find regular work doing something I really enjoy. I like to think I'm a talented writer, and I hope you agree, after you're done reading this.

Looking back over the last four years, there are probably a lot of things I'd do differently. I might have gotten more real world experience. But, all things being equal, I've led a pretty eventful life, and I'm curious to see where I end up next.

the Summer of Sanjiv

BY SANJIV SOLANKI

To be honest, I don't remember my graduation ceremony too well. I wasn't under the influence or anything like that; the whole thing was just a blur of mercilessly long speeches and kids' names being read out from a list and all. I switched to my university's school of journalism after two and a half years as an engineering major, so I ended up not really knowing who most of the people graduating with me were. And the sound system wasn't really set up too well in the graduating students' section, so I could only get a faint murmur out of whatever the speaker said.

Apparently, he was this big shot in the television industry, back in the day. You know how, at the end of some old TV shows, they used to show a guy at a typewriter who'd yank a piece of paper out and toss it away and it would turn into the production company's logo? Apparently, our commencement speaker was the guy at the typewriter. It was a very big deal, I guess. My dad knew who he was and seemed pretty excited about it. Make of that what you will.

Anyway, the indistinct sounds

from the speaker made for a decent bit of white noise, and I spent most of the time just spacing out, nodding off occasionally. I do remember one time specifically when our speaker said something that really gave the crowd of parents a chuckle.

I turned to the girl next to me and asked her, "What'd he just say? Was that about me or anything?"

"No," she said. "He just said that it's important to have a plan of what you want to do when you graduate."

"Oh," I said. "Definitely not about me."

After he was done, all the different majors went up and got their diplomas from their different deans, each student doing it to varying degrees of applause from the audience. I remember a girl, a film major, I think, seated in front of me turning around and saying, "Will you do me a big favor? When I go up to get my diploma, will you just cheer for me? Otherwise, no one else in the audience will and I'll feel like a loser."

I guess the idea of having a complete stranger cheer for her made her feel like a real winner. I said I would, but I didn't know her name,