

“You won’t know where you’re going until you know how to get there,” or something to that effect, was the mantra of one of my college dorm buddies. It took me years to finally understand what he meant. Before I get into that, let me tell you a real life story.

In June of 2018, my younger daughter Laura had just graduated from Wake Forest University’s PA (Physicians Assistant) program and was preparing to begin her job search. She wanted to take some time to recoup from the intense academic regimen before beginning work.

My sister—Laura’s Aunt Jen—had invited her up to New Hampshire to visit. Laura wanted to go but didn’t want to drive alone, and she asked me to accompany her. I was more than happy to oblige. I would enjoy the trip with my daughter.

We started off the trip by setting the GPS on one of our cell phones so that we had a map that would show us every step of the way from Apex, North Carolina to Concord, New Hampshire. We re-routed a bit so that we could visit and stay the night with my brother, Barry, in Winchester VA, which was about half-way to New Hampshire.

The next morning, after a leisurely breakfast, Laura announced that, instead of going around NYC, she wanted the experience of driving through the city (but staying on interstate highways, not getting down into the local streets). We were doing a good job of weaving our way through the heavily congested roads until we saw a large toll booth area up ahead. Ten lanes of toll booths loomed in front of us. The left-most lane had by far the shortest line of cars, so we veered that direction and positioned ourselves into the lane.

As we went through the toll booth, we saw the exit sign that we wanted ... and it was on the right side of the toll booth exit lanes. We had no choice but to take a left exit, down into Manhattan. So there we were, on the streets of the city.

We drove around for several blocks—I remember Laura saying, three times, “Dad, look. It’s Trump Tower!”—while we looked at the GPS map to figure out how to get out of Manhattan and back up onto the highway. The road signs were cryptic, plus there was some road construction, and we also missed a couple of turns, but eventually we made it back up to the highways and were back on our way to New Hampshire. We passed Hartford, we passed Boston, and now we were finally nearing our destination of Concord, NH.

The GPS said we were getting closer and closer to Concord. We were anticipating the arrival. My sister had always been the ultimate host, and she most assuredly would greet us at the door having already set out a cake and/or some cookies for us to devour, or maybe she would have a campfire going in the backyard accompanied with roasted marshmallows.

The GPS lady told us that we were near Concord ...

We had driven to New Hampshire before, but I couldn’t quite remember which exit to take.

Then the GPS lady told us we were at Concord ... we drove by an exit that looked familiar, but the GPS lady didn’t tell us to take that exit.

“Maybe Jen lives on the other side of Concord,” I suggested.

“Yeah,” agreed Laura, “maybe we came from the other direction last time.”

So we drove on, just waiting to hear from the GPS lady.

We were playing some kind of musical quiz game, trying to guess songs using the rhythm of the first two bars of the song. We got into the game, and maybe twenty minutes quickly passed. Then the GPS lady said, “Take this exit.” We did.

“This isn’t how I remember the exit looking.”

“Me neither,” said Laura—though, truth be told, Laura is almost as directionally challenged as I am.

So we followed the directions another three or four blocks. We were in a (quite) rural setting. Cows were mooing around, pigs were oinking around, and donkeys were braying loudly.

We ended up at the right street address.

“I don’t think this is Aunt Jennies house,” sighed Laura. “I don’t remember any pigs.”

Indeed, it wasn’t my sister’s house.

But ... but... I had entered 202 Horseshoe Pond Lane Road, and the GPS told us how to get there. Laura looked at my phone. My address request had generated a list, and I had assumed that the GPS would know my sister’s contact information and would have put her address first on the list. The GPS did not know my sister’s address, and it was not first on the list.

We called my sister, arrived at her house about forty-five minutes later, and we laughed about it all night long. We had a wonderful time that week. Laura and I returned home, tired but rested, if that makes sense.

I’m just glad that the first address in the list wasn’t 202 Horseshoe Pond Lane Road, Odessa, TX