

SENIOR

When writing life plans, put them in pencil

By Phenola Lawrence

As soon as I unzip my biodegradable cap and gown, I'm on my way to Vegas.

OK not at that very moment, but ... a week after I graduate, I'm on my way to Vegas. It's an idea my best friend and I came up with while talking one night.



MY OPINION

"Let's go to Vegas," she said. "Let's do it," I said. And just like that, I pulled off what my mom loves to call one of my many "rash decisions." The original plan after graduation was to figure out the rest of my life. For whatever reason, Vegas sounded like a better choice. (The movie "The Hangover" might have had something to do with it.)

This is clearly what my mother must have meant. Sadly for her, these rash decisions ended up happening quite often throughout my college career.

For instance, two weeks ago, I decided to call up a friend and head to Cafe 210. Several hours and \$30 later, my white load of laundry was still waiting to be folded.

It happened again during my spring break in China, where I missed my group meeting and ended up at a secluded area of an outdoor market haggling with a sketchy street vendor who spoke little English as I spoke no Chinese.

And one time, two years ago, I decided to skip my afternoon class to come take a try-out exam at the Collegian.

There were a lot of things I should have been doing during those times: folding laundry, reading for one my three English

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classes, attending our group meeting or even just going to class.

Doing one or all of these things could have probably made my semester a lot easier.

I wouldn't be writing 15-page papers the night before they are due or reading a book for one class during another class.

But when I leave the Bryce Jordan Center on May 15 with my cap and gown and stand in line to have my photo taken at the Lion Shrine, I won't be thinking about folding laundry, modernist poetry or the inverted pyramid.

Instead, I'll remember the laughs shared over a pitcher of Blue Moon, the great knock-off

wallet I brought from the street vendor in China before the police came and the days and nights spent in the basement of the Collegian.

After spending the last year designing and laying out what I expected the front page of the Collegian to look like every day, I learned that you could never really know how things would happen.

Redesign is usually necessary, and just like life, it never really goes according to plan.

You may have a sketch, but it isn't final, and you have to be flexible.

From deciding to attend a party last minute or not going to



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class, they are the small, unexpected news events in our lifetime that comprise our college experience.

There have been many times where I have had to start all over and redesign the front page of the Collegian.

Although I may not have always enjoyed starting from scratch, it made for a better product.

I, too, have a rough front-page sketch for my life.

I just made sure I did it in pencil.

Phenola Lawrence is a senior majoring in journalism and is the Collegian's Visual Editor. Her e-mail address is pml5020@psu.edu.

Four years show why senior became photographer

By Abby Drey

Everything happens for a reason. It's so cliché and obnoxious when you hear people tell you this over and over again in attempts to make you feel better about the crappy situation you've gone through.



MY OPINION

I was robbed and threatened in the wee hours of the morning in my dorm room my second week at Penn State.

If everything happens for a reason, explain that to me please. "What doesn't kill ya makes you stronger." Yeah, yeah, but why me?

Why did this terrible thing happen to me — tell me one good reason for that?

Through many sleepless nights and constant support, I finished out summer session and returned

to Penn State for the fall. Everything happens for a reason.

There was a reason that, despite every imaginable reason the photo adviser ("PL," as we like to call him) could think of to not bring me onto the Collegian photography staff that fall semester. I still got the e-mail that said I'd been accepted.

Several hours earlier, I had sat in his office, my photographs being torn to shreds as I listened to the oddest reasons to not bring me on staff: the traumatizing experience I had over the summer had me not mentally ready, I was a freshman and my brother had just graduated from the staff.

Four years later, I sit here and think that, though PL still won't tell me the reason he did take me on staff, I know in my heart the reason.

I was brought onto a staff of 20 some photographers who took me in without hesitation.

For that first group of them, I knew they were the reason I

made it through my freshman year.

They were always there and willing to listen. They could make me laugh.

They would let me sit there and cry, and they would walk me home if we'd hung out until the early hours of the morning and I was afraid to walk alone. I started to spend a lot of my time in the small space we called our office, whether I was actually editing photos or just hanging around on our blue blanket-covered sofa and staple green chair that juts into the hallway.

Through the years, photographers have come and gone, but there is one part of it that has stayed the same: We've always been a family.

I've grown from being the baby to the rowdy teenager to the grandma in the matter of eight semesters.

We laugh and go out to eat as a family, and we even fight and make up like a family.

And through those moments

"I've come to the conclusion that everything does happen for a reason, and everything includes the good and the bad to the beautiful and the ugly."

when my photography has not been up to par, this family was the reason I would always stay. I could go and shoot for another media outlet, but they wouldn't be my family.

Every new introduction and tearful goodbye shines through in this photo family. Each semester has been its own journey and has been filled with ridiculous adventures and entertaining photographic proof of everything we do together.

There is a reason we're all working at the paper, and it's to learn more about photography. But photography isn't the only reason to many of us.

I've learned how to be a college student, how to lift someone's spirits when he or she is down,

how to be a leader and how to pass on the knowledge I've learned to those who will fill my shoes when I graduate.

Each person who has been on staff has had their own reason for being there, but they have all affected my life.

So I've come to the conclusion that everything does happen for a reason, and everything includes the good and the bad to the beautiful and the ugly.

All the things that have happened to me in my time here at Penn State are the reason I am who I am four years later.

Abby Drey is a senior majoring in photography and is the Collegian's Photo Editor. Her e-mail address is ald5123@psu.edu.

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