



Buggin' for Business "2"

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Dear John,

A week later, Eric and I are to varying degrees recovered and uncovered from our Buggin' "2" adventure. We aimed high and overachieved. These trips are so fun, that we literally can not wait for the next one. Below, is my favorite story from our trip, as promised.

Joe Webb is President of [Nansemond Insurance Agency, Inc.](#) in Suffolk, VA, which was my final stop on our tour last Thursday. I arrived at my hotel late the night before and set about writing one of these newsletters that we sent out each day. I was tired, and was really ready to get home to my wife and family. These are great trips, but it's good, isn't it, when one misses ones bride? Joe's story, told as we drove around Suffolk with his son and co worker Joby in the back seat, capped our trip perfectly and has kept me smiling for a week. We hop in Joe's car and his story begins:

42 years ago last fall, Joe's life changed in one riveting moment. Bouncing down the steps at Suffolk High School he gazed over the landing and locked stares with one Nancy Bailey, a knock out red head. "It was one of those riveting moments you can never forget." Smiling, Joe enthusiastically took me to the exact spot he stood, put his hand on the stair rail, and looked down at the worn stone step where he first peered Nancy. Joby snapped the picture -- we all said "Wow" and stood for a few seconds.



Earlier on our drive, before we reached the high school, Joe explained how during the school year when he would see Nancy, his opinions about her strengthened, though they really had no conversation other than the occasional "Hi" in the halls. Some months later, before Christmas time, Joe's mom, Faye, asked him to take her car and pick up young brother Bart from his Cub Scout meeting. Having just turned 16, Joe jumped at the chance. "Not many kids had access to a car in 1967." As he drove past the local drug store, which was a popular Suffolk High hangout, Joe decided to pull in and see "What's up." Wearing his Letter jacket and twirling the car keys for effect, as Joe walked in the store, sitting back in a booth, behold, was Miss Nancy, pretty as ever! "Hey, would you like to ride with me to pick up my little brother from Cub Scouts?" stammered Joe. Nancy replies "Sure!" and out they together stroll. "Talk about the dog that finally caught the car, that was me!", relays Joe. Smile from me, sigh from Joby. Below, Joe and I stand outside the old drug store, long since closed.



The story continues as we hop back in Joe's Toyota (His Lexis is *made* by Toyota, he points out to me). "Hey Joby this is good stuff," I say from the front seat. "I've heard this whole thing I don't know how many times, all my life", replies Joby. "OK, but this is still a great story," I encourage, "pay attention." Respectful silence. A minute later Joe pulls into the Retirement Center where the Cub Scouts met. Nice looking brick building with a large pond out front, Joe circles the drive saying "This place hasn't changed much other than the railings they've put up on both sides of the drive where it passes over the pond." Some stupid Federal Regulation, I think. Anyway, Joe points and says, "This is where I stopped in the car line, hopped out, grabbed Bart, looked sternly down into his trusting eyes and said 'When you get into this car you do NOT see the red headed girl in the front seat -- Understand?'" Anxious to hop in the warm car Bart says "Sure" and bounces into the back seat. I am imagining now Bart's thoughts as he, Joe and Nancy waited for a lady named Audrey to pile six boys into her station wagon directly in the line ahead. Loading complete, as the cars both begin to wind off the property, Audrey right in front of Joe, turns around to check on some Cub and drives her wagon right into *the middle of the pond!* I sit straight up in my seat! "You're kidding! Is it deep?" "I'm serious, very deep", replied Joe. Throwing his letter jacket to Nancy, "Here, hold this!", Joe dives in arriving at the wagon as Audrey is somehow tossing little boys onto the roof of her car while cussing like a sailor, history confirms. Miraculously, everyone was rescued safely, though drenched and frozen to the bone. I did not ask, but imagine that Audrey's station wagon is still at the bottom of the pond -- I think *I* will tell the story that way, now that I am a partner to this adventure.



Reverting to 2010, as we drive on towards the actual Suffolk High building, I ask Joe, "Did your Dad clobber you for having Nancy in the car?" (Jack, [Nansemond](#)'s founder, who at 86 handles "his accounts", and his bride Faye, are also Suffolk High sweethearts, and today very much in love, happy and healthy.) "He never knew, Mom covered for me. It's a small town, the fire department, police and newspaper converged almost instantly upon the pond, and as you might guess this became a pretty big story. After we were sure everyone was OK, standing there drenched Bart and I got a ride home." I didn't ask how Nancy got home, but I want her to tell me this story the *next* time I'm an Suffolk, and I'll give you this all again from the lady's perspective. "Here drink this quickly!" Joe's mom handed him a small glass of medicinal bourbon, which being the good 16 year old boy he was, Joe obliged. "It did warm me right up" he relayed as we pull up in front of the restored Suffolk High School, now [The Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts](#).



Though a "hero" Joe nonetheless faced as he put it "a big problem." Nancy's mom, Unity C. Bailey, was none to fond of Joe. Seemed she had unfair, insider information. "Nancy was a new student at Suffolk High because her Mom got a job there as a math teacher. "I was taking Trigonometry, and had pretty much given up on math. My future mother in law was not impressed." This proved a problem for some time, *eventually* overcome. Above, I point to the step dedicated to Nancy's Mom that Joe donated during the transformation of old Suffolk High into the new Arts Center. Joby knew right where to look for Unity's step, "Third from the top on the left Dad", he has been here before. Turns out Mrs. Bailey did acquiesce and let Joe take Nancy on their first date four weeks after the "Pond Accident" as it became known. "A Banquet thrown by Suffolk officials to honor the Pond heroes, did not hurt my cause." Joe smiles, I laugh, Joby sighs again.

Impressive from the outside, as we walk into the building I wonder how many old abandoned school buildings in our Country could be restored and serve well their communities once more. Joe shows me around what is an absolutely marvelous facility. As we enter the auditorium he points to the stage where his niece performed recently in a community play. That is another story -- all it's own. One that Joe's business partner and brother-in-law Joy Dorschel would love for you to hear. One that I must write and tell you at a later date. One that brought tears to my eyes.

As we walk towards the front entrance and Unity's step, I look at the big bronze plaque and note that Jack Webb was a member of Suffolk School Board when the facility was first renovated in 1962. That's a good insurance man, I think to myself and not atypical of the great community service I have witnessed by so many folks in our industry. That's me below pointing to Jack's name on the plaque.



As we walk down the steps on the way to our car, I tell Joe, "You win! Hands down, this is a great story you acted out for me today!" Then it dawns on me that as much as I enjoyed the event, Joe's story was *supposed* to be an *insurance* story. Telepathically, sensing a hitch, Joby chimes in. "There's more." Right after the Center renovation was completed in 2006, returning home from a run, Joby's wife greets him at the door. "Honey, they're calling from the Center for Cultural Arts -- something about the sprinkler system." Before the water would turn off the Orchestra pit had six feet of water in it. "It was a million dollar claim and it's my account," grimaced Joby. Oh well, at least they had a great agent.

After lunch I drove my last three hours of Buggin' "2" towards Burlington in a driving, freezing rain. No longer tired, but energized and anxious to see my hot red head, give her a hug and remind her of the moment we met and how, just like Joe, my life changed for forever.

