



# Aha!

Today is the first day of the rest of your life. ... It may be a cliché, but there was a day for each of these Lynn alumni that contained a **defining moment** that led to a new beginning. Taking one path and then another, they followed their hearts, not their heads.

*By Debbie Stern*

## Gregg McBride

They say life begins at 40—or 30 or 20 (depending on your milestone age). For Gregg McBride it wasn't the age, but the pounds. For him, life didn't necessarily begin—but it did blossom—at 175 pounds.

That's because after being a fat kid, an obese adolescent and ballooning to a whopping 450 pounds in college, he finally was able to shed the weight and has kept it off for the past 12 years. It took a lot of hard work and determination, but started with one aha moment from a one-sentence piece of advice given to him by a co-worker.

He got the courage to go up to a slim man and asked how he managed to stay so trim. "He turned to me and basically said, 'Just stop eating so much!'" says McBride.

Now it sounds like a simple and obvious statement, and McBride admits he was angry at first. But after thinking about it, he took it to heart. And that advice led to the dramatic weight loss and ultimately a book, a TV appearance on *The Today Show* and most important, a whole new lifestyle.

McBride, a military brat, attributes his weight issues to his parents' strict eating rules.

When he started to put on weight, "my parents initiated martial law and banned all junk food," he recounts in his blog. "Suddenly there were no chips, cookies or candy of any kind to be found in our military base apartment..."

Always the class clown in high school, "I compensated with humor," he says, "and food was my drug of choice."

He has happy memories of his time at Lynn University—the College of Boca Raton then—where he received his associate's degree. Though his major was liberal arts, he dabbled in communication and did lots of theater.

"I've always been a total ham, no diet pun intended," he says with a laugh.

Though he was admittedly nervous when he first got to Lynn, even forgoing the cafeteria and ordering his meals in, it didn't take long for him to feel at home and comfortable.

"It was such an accepting place, a real melting pot of different people and personalities," he says of Lynn's diverse community. He felt at ease with the idea that "what makes us different, bonds us," he says.

Lynn was so accepting that he found his self-esteem

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growing, and he even lost some weight while here.

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From his warm experience at Lynn, he went to Florida State University (FSU), where he was a little fish in a big pond. He didn't get the same kind of feeling or attention, so the weight came back on. By the time he graduated from FSU, where he got his bachelor's degree in organizational communication, he found himself tipping the scale—and actually thought he broke it when the window read "error"—at 450 pounds. No wonder: he was consuming 9,000 calories a day.

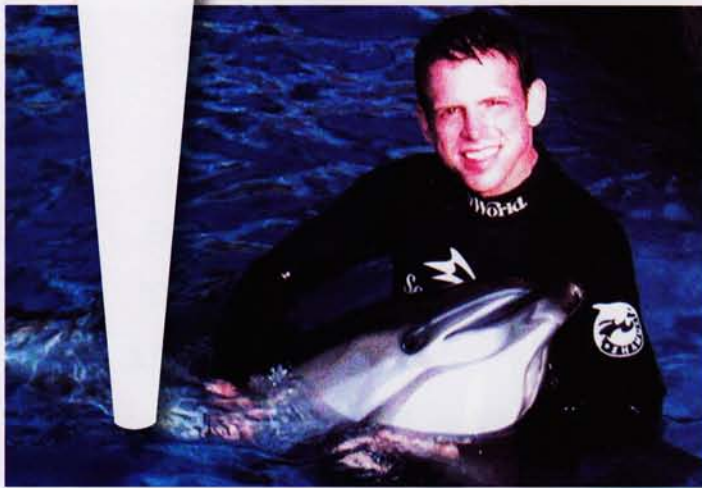
His weight affected the way he was treated on job interviews. People didn't make eye contact, and he'd be out of breath just talking on the phone.

"The perception of you is so difficult; you have your armor on when you walk outside." But he landed a job at Macy's in New York, writing fashion ads. "There's a lot of judgment in that business," he says.

So he moved on to the West Coast to an ad agency in San Francisco and then to Hollywood, Calif., where he switched to freelance work so he could spend more time on his real passion—writing screenplays. He remembers selling his first screenplay, *Epicenter*, "which was a disaster," he says, in more ways than one. "I imagined Jennifer Lopez in the lead role and ended up with porn star Tracy Lord."

He wrote for MTV and Disney, and has sold several screenplays, many still in development. He does advertising work as well.

But it was his experience with the weight loss and that phrase, "just stop eating so much," that inspired McBride to write "a skinny book about a skinny subject." Titled after the phrase, the book is filled with his advice, recipes, his trademark humor and common sense approach that led him to lose 275 pounds through exercise and 1,700 calories a day.



**Lighter side:** Greg McBride today (above) and (left) at Lynn



So, though his life did blossom at 175 pounds, there were a lot of things to get used to. “My body was thin, but my brain was still fat,” he says.

His writing and communication experience have served him well. He started a blog (<http://juststopeatingsomuch.com>) in September and is included in an upcoming book featuring the most inspirational stories from *The Today Show's* Joy Fit Club segments.

“I love getting the word out,” he says. “Everyone can do it. It’s an extreme fresh start, but you have to believe in yourself. People do crazy things to lose weight. I ‘get’ that Oreos taste so damn good,” he says, “but it’s all about balance and small portions.”

## Emily Lipman

Take this job and shove it!

Well, she didn’t exactly say that, but it was how Emily Lipman felt the day she quit her job at a sports marketing company selling packages to major sporting events.

“I was miserable and hated it,” she says. “You had to fib to your customers. So, after the Final Four was over that year, I just quit.”

These days the shoe is very much on the other foot. She is the owner/proprietor of her own business, a boutique store called Raw Denim, in Atlanta.

Though she admits she really didn’t know what she wanted to do when she started college, she eventually gravitated to Lynn University’s sports management program.

“I was clueless when I started,” she says. “Like what does the word ‘major’ even mean?” But she loved Lynn. “I miss it!” she exclaims. “My professors were amazing. Professor Ted Curtis was my favorite. He really cared and wanted us to

experience sports.” And she got her job in the sports field because of her hands-on experience with Curtis’ Final Four course.

But her first love was minor league baseball. She worked with the River Dogs in Charleston, S.C., for a summer while she was still at Lynn, and when she graduated, with the River Bandits in Iowa. “I was very lucky to have a job right out of college,” she says, “especially with the economy the way it was.”

But after working in the minor leagues for two years, she discovered there was no future and not enough money in it. From there, she went to the sports marketing company, where she eventually got tired of the cold calling. It especially hit home that this was not what she wanted to be doing when fellow Lynn student and good friend Courtney Hayes perished in the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

“It hit me hard. They [the Lynn students and professors in Haiti] were doing something they loved, and I was sitting behind a desk and hating it,” she recalls. And I know I would have gone [to Haiti] also since I’m so into charity.”

So, what to do? She and her friend Jessica Lowman always talked about owning a boutique, so Lipman called her and said, “Let’s do it.” Lowman already owned a boutique in North Carolina, so they went into partnership and Lipman opened the store in Atlanta.

“It was a huge process that took months, but I put my hands on everything.” She liked the name “raw denim” because it was both masculine and feminine and they wanted to sell to men and women.

This venture was her new beginning. “Holy moly,” she says. “It’s not easy.” Though Lipman says she was nervous about opening the store and is “nervous every day,” she “wakes up loving life.”

She followed her bliss and plans to make more fresh starts.

“I want another boutique,” she says, “maybe in Mizner Park in Boca Raton.”



**Setting up shop:** Emily Lipman in her Atlanta boutique, Raw Denim