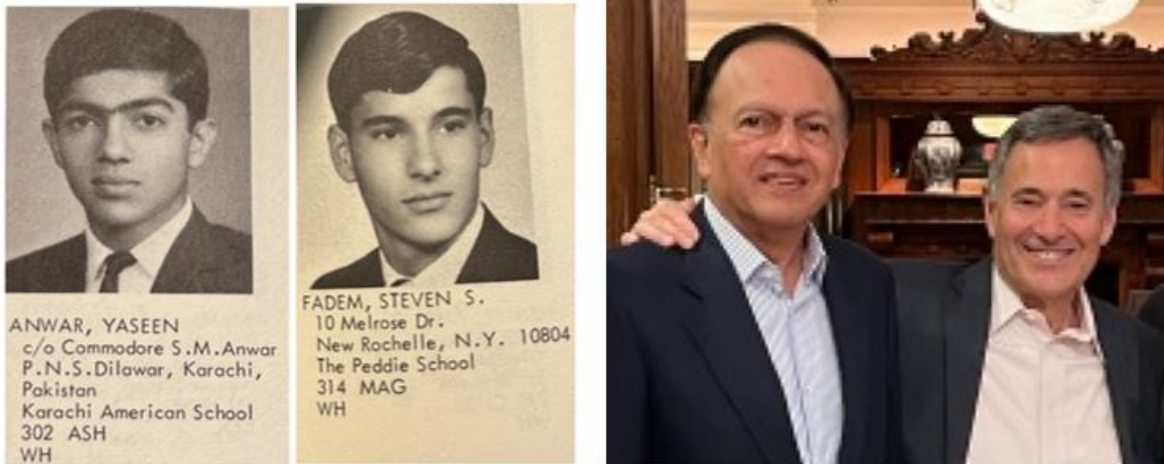


Now and Then

Co-authored by Steve Fadem and Yaseen Anwar



It was the fall of 1968 and the newbies on the 3rd floor of Ashurst/Magee in the Men's Quad were navigating life away-from-home. Our RA, whose claim-to-fame was that he was dating Julie Nixon (imagine that, in the middle of the anti-war movement), had just told us that he wouldn't extend the Friday/Saturday night female exit from the dorm curfew because "if you haven't scored by 2:15 you won't score by 2:30[am]" and we were unnerved by the horrendous odor from the ginkgo tree outside our windows, a tree made famous by Candice Bergen posing in it a few years earlier when she was a student at Penn. And then there was this quiet exchange student from Pakistan who didn't fit the description of anyone we knew from home. But Yaseen Anwar was a really wonderful, friendly and endearing soul and we all bonded with him.

Yaseen's roommate was Sandy Schussel, who became the lead singer at Mask & Wig, and mine was Steve Barrer, who went on to a successful career as a doctor.

Soon after the start of the semester Yaseen went to White Castle on Spruce (does that sequence of words bring back conflicting memories??) and, as did we all, wolfed down a few of those nutritionally- challenging burgers. Unfortunately, one of them contained something- gristle, bone, a human finger?- and Yaseen's tooth was shattered. Multiple visits to the Penn Dental Clinic were required to repair that tooth. And we, a motley group of budding lawyers and activists, accompanied Yaseen back to White Castle to seek compensation. Yaseen has described this as the Compensation Stage.

We requested that they reimburse him for his dental expenses and the manager there, in my recollection, gave us a very strong verbal middle finger. Our legal careers stalled before launching and Yaseen was still out-of-pocket.

The next stage, as Yaseen puts it, was the Revenge Stage. As revenge is a dish best served cold, we waited a few weeks and then one Saturday night we called, posing as a fraternity with a broken stove, and ordered something like 250 cheeseburgers, an equal amount of fries and milk shakes and whoops, forgot to pick them up. I only recount this now as I recognize that the White Castle on Spruce Street is no longer, that the Freshman statute of limitations on bad judgment calls has long passed, and that all of the participants in this Saturday Night Order have gone on to successful careers in law, media and finance and have paid society back manifold for this act of justifiable revenge on behalf of Yaseen.

Flash forward to the spring of 2022. Standing on the steps of the Fisher Fine Arts building waiting for our 50th Reunion photo to be taken, after having recounted this story just an hour before to two friends walking together through the lower Quad, I was tapped on my shoulder. I turn around and there is Yaseen- looking exactly as I remember him, smiling a broad smile unimpeded by a broken tooth long-ago-repaired. We hugged, laughed, recounted the famous tooth incident and caught up in a conversation that extended through the dinner that night at the reunion banquet. Although Yaseen had invites to sit at two other tables, he joined me and my Phi Ep alums and as Yaseen said later, "I thoroughly enjoyed yours and your frat brothers' entertaining company."

We discovered that night in Philly that three of our children were in the New York City area and all were graduating this May. So, we arranged a family meeting.

On a crisp spring evening this May my wife Laurie, my daughter Rachel and I met Yaseen and his wife Nausheen, and his twin sons Aleem and Suleyman at, where else, the Penn Club in NYC. The evening flew by as we all got to know each other, the kids engaged in some gentle kidding of their fathers, Laurie validated the story of the broken tooth that she had heard over the years, and we had a fascinating journey of conversation through different cultures, backgrounds, experiences and perspectives (including an amazing coincidence of U.S. Navy connections for Yaseen's Dad and mine). In the end, 55 years after a broken tooth brought two quiet and shy Penn freshmen together, the circle was completed with our families becoming connected in a beautiful way.



Here's a toast to dear old Penn... and White Castle!