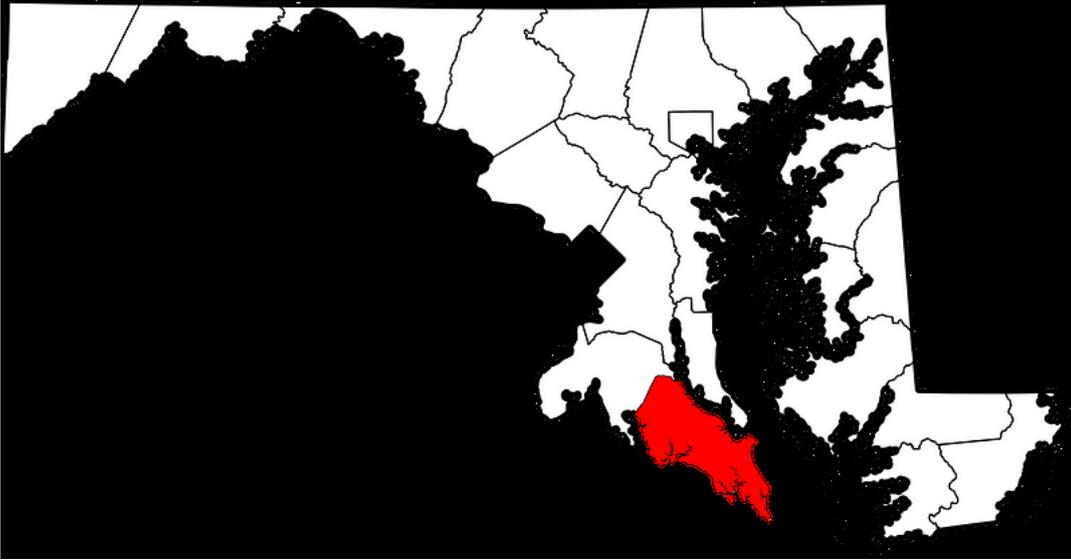


## I Know My Place, But It Doesn't Know Me

Posted by [RJ Bean](#) On 02/24/2016



7 years.

We were away from you, St. Mary's, for 7 years.

That's 2,555 days. 61,320 hours.

A lot happened in those 3,679,200 minutes.

We missed a lot of things that happened with you, St. Mary's. And you missed a lot of things that happened in our lives too.

My father maintained a pertinent role as my social buffer for you as I talked with him on a daily basis.

But unfortunately, I didn't keep in contact with mostly everyone else!

Too many years have passed between my stays with you, St. Mary's, and that length of time will require a lot of social interaction to mend the relationships that once existed.

I left you, St. Mary's, not yet a man, experienced college, graduated, landed a job, had a baby and then became a man, all within 7 years!

All the time I was away from you, I was becoming who I am today.

I'm not the same person I was when I left you, St. Mary's. And because of this, I'm finding it very difficult to feel comfortable in the town I grew up in, even around family and friends.

I feel out-of-place no matter where I go, as if I'm a visitor you haven't seen in a while, welcoming me with your hospitality, but ultimately asking me to leave if I overstay my welcome.

There's a discerning disconnect, one that isn't a fault caused by any one person, but one caused by the lapse in time from my stays with you, St. Mary's.

It's the effect of a natural cycle from being away for 7 years. Even though I've known you all my life, I feel like you don't know me, and I don't know you, St. Mary's.

I know my place here, St. Mary's, but you don't know me. We used to be great friends, but the time in between my visits left us distant.

Don't fret though, St. Mary's, for I'm here to rectify the situation.

Let me begin by telling you a little about myself from 7 years ago:

Hello, St. Mary's. My name is Robert Leonard Bean, Jr. and I moved away from you in 2007.

My wife and I transferred to Towson University from the College of Southern Maryland where I studied Mass Communication with a track in Advertising. Did you know I was only one class away from receiving a minor in Journalism?

That's neither here nor there.

College was a breeze for me, as I was a focused individual who went to class, paid attention, and got done what needed to be done.

Believe it or not, St. Mary's, I was a loner. The only peer-to-peer interactions I participated in were the ones that involved group work for a grade. Outside of that, I was strictly business.

Don't get me wrong, I made some great friends along the way, but they were all initiated from friends of Melissa's, none of which were from my own interactions.

I was as quiet as a mouse.

The semesters at Towson University flew by, and before you knew it, St. Mary's, I was graduating from college! The first in the family to do so!

I graduated earlier than expected in January of 2010, #2 in my graduating class, #1 in my department. You would've been proud of me, St. Mary's, as I was pretty damn proud of myself!

It was an awesome experience. One that didn't last a long time because I needed a J-O-B (look, I can spell job!).

At this point in my time away from you, St. Mary's, Melissa and I relied heavily on my parents financially to get us through college. But after I graduated, it was time I took control of our finances and start my life as a young adult, as opposed to the fresh college puke that I was.

Luckily, I was hired almost immediately out of college!

I started work full-time in March of 2010, just 3 months after graduating college!

2010 was a busy year for the Bean, Jr. family. I graduated and started a job. Melissa graduated and started a job. And we tied the knot to cap off the year.

Life just happened, one decision after the other.

And after several attempts at trying to start a family, we were eventually blessed with our first child, Maxwell Leonard Bean on January 21, 2014.

Which lead us to here, the present, where our lives have converged once again, St. Mary's.

We wanted Maxwell to have the same experiences we did growing up. We wanted Maxwell to know his grandparents, his aunts and uncles, and his cousins.

That was important to us, and it was the ultimate reason why we decided to move.

It wasn't about me anymore. It wasn't about Mel. It was all about Maxwell now.

Melissa applied for a job in your public school system, St. Mary's, and it seemed like overnight, she was hired.

Less than 2 months later, we were moving from our temporary home of 7 years, Baltimore County, back to our original home of 18 years, St. Mary's County.

A lot has changed in both of us, St. Mary's. And I mean A LOT. And I'm not talking about the amount of restaurant and shopping options you have, no ma'am.

I'm not talking about our physical appearances either.

I'm talking about our personalities. I'm speaking of our feelings. We're not the same as we were the last time we lived together. And it's weird.

I don't like the way it feels, St. Mary's, but I hope my 7-year-story will help break the ice the next time we see each other. Because I love you, St. Mary's, and I know you love me.

I know that you've always been here for me, and even though you got on with your life without me, I did the same with Baltimore.

But I want to get to know you better. You know all of the things I've been through and experienced in my 7-year-story, but now it's your turn. It's your turn to tell me where you've been and what you've seen. Feelings you've felt, lives you've touched and things you've done.

Open up to me as I have to you, St. Mary's.

It's time for us to get back in the groove of things. We moved back here for that reason.

Welcome us to your houses. Invite us to your parties. Give us a call out of the blue just to visit. Stop by one Saturday morning for coffee and pancakes. I make delicious Belgian Waffles if that suits your fancy.

We've missed you, and we can tell you've missed us. We can also sense the awkwardness that each of our conversations has.

But I still like jokes. I can still make you laugh. Give me a chance to prove it, and I won't let you down. I promise.

We have a lot of years ahead of us, St. Mary's, so here's to you.

Our roots have always been planted here, firmly in the ground; we just needed to extend our branches to other parts of the world, even if they were only 2 hours away.

If you haven't figured it out, you are our family, St. Mary's, and we love you!

Please remember the reason we left and always remember the reason we came back.

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