

News

On being the new kid on the block

Nearly a month ago, I was walking down a New York City sidewalk full of strangers in Monolo Blahnik heels.

I had my Upper East Side apartment with my best friend from grade school. I was fresh out of college and working in a great pub in the city.

Romantic evenings were spent on the Staten Island Ferry at dusk while my summer days were spent in Central Park and at Rockaway Beach.

I enjoyed an occasional dirty martini with my girls and sang karaoke on Sunday. The Korean at the bodega knew me by name.

My life was simple and routine.

Almost everyday I sat down at my Fujitsu laptop and looked for my future career.

I just never thought it would come so soon.

Every journalist I ever knew in New York told me that to make it, to really learn, I would have to leave the city and work in a small market.

I had barely begun to grasp that concept and I was here — working at

The Walton Sun, and living in Destin, Fla.

There aren't any sidewalks in Florida. Apparently developers forgot that key part of the community. That really bothers me.

Where am I supposed to walk my dog? Where do the sidewalk café's go? I suggest the State of Florida look into this concept as a means of bringing together communities.

I am still wearing heels though, in fact, there is a great Saks off Fifth here. I scored a pair of really inexpensive Rickard Shah peep-toe pumps last week. I felt like I was back in the city shopping, except a few minor details.

For instance, people say please and thank you here. They don't do that at home.

And after I finished spending, I got in my car and drove home. In the city we hail a cab or take the subway. Honestly, I always preferred the bus.

My apartment here is great. It is three times bigger than the railroad style I lived in a month ago and a heck of a lot cheaper. It has a washer and dryer

Can't Get There From Here



By Pasha Carroll

right in it. This is a truly amazing concept that I will never take for granted.

I found a great roommate and we clicked immediately. He and his crew of friends have cured a lot of my homesickness.

I haven't met my neighbors yet, which is really weird since the Southern concept is supposed to be ultra-friendly.

I don't have a corner store here, but I do live behind the Wal-Mart. It's much easier to get excited about Wal-Mart when you don't have one. Before, it was an "occasion" to go to a town that had a Wal-Mart.

Now, when I go to Wally World, I am disgruntled because it is crowded and nobody knows how to drive a shopping cart.

Speaking of driving.

FYI, y'all can give me the one finger salute when I cut you off. I deserve it.

The beach here is more beautiful than any other I have ever experienced. Being a beach bunny, I have seen quite a few. The Emerald Coast is truly blessed.

Maybe the best and most different part of my life here is being a reporter for The Walton Sun. I work the county government beat, which in Walton County is a whole new ballgame for me.

The local government that I reported on in New York had problems like how close the new adult entertainment club was to a public school. When people want to develop on top of one another there, it is encouraged.

In New York community meetings, they have a buzzer that sounds after two minutes during the public hearing. It keeps statements short and sweet and five-hour meetings trimmed to two.

I knew how to cover the local government. I just couldn't have ever imagined it would be so differ-

ent.

My first true fish-out-of-water moment happened my first day on the job at a board of county commissioners meeting in DeFuniak Springs.

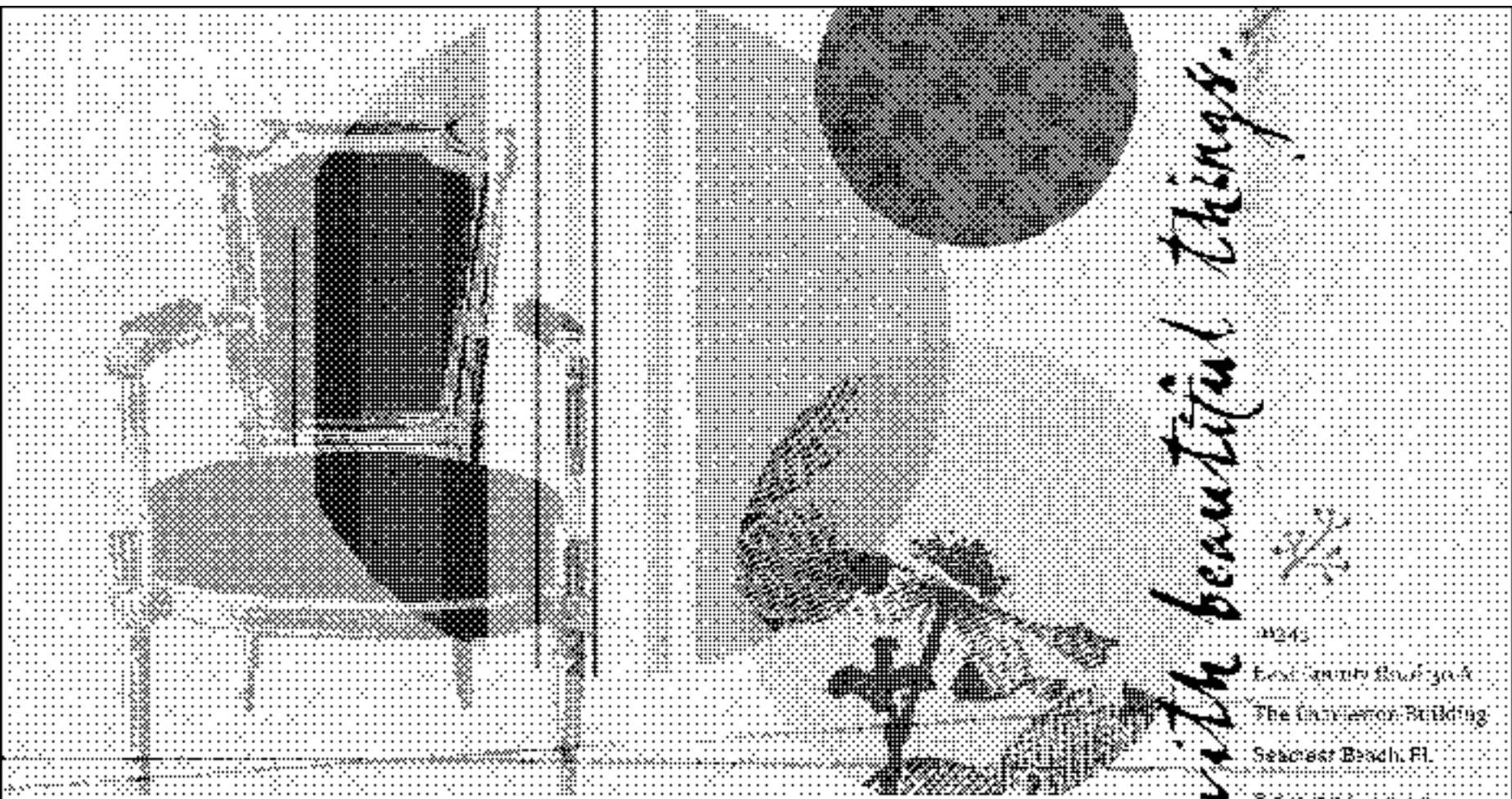
At the start of the meeting, everyone bowed their heads in prayer.

OK, that was something that I had never seen in my entire life affiliated with government.

Immediately after, I plopped down in my chair, only to find everyone around me turning to the flag for the Pledge of Allegiance. I popped up, tried to remember the words from grade school and hoped nobody noticed.

So here I am in your community folks. Next time you see me, feel free to stop and say hi. Forget the stereotypes. I am just a misplaced New Yorker who is just searching for the comforts of home.

Pasha Carroll is a staff reporter at The Walton Sun. Her column appears the fourth Saturday of each month. She can be reached at 267-4555 or pasha_carroll@link.freedom.com



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