t was late, and I was tired and sleepy. But I continued to think about our busy day. Sallie and I had driven my pickup truck all the way to New York City, loaded with 18 of her paintings. She was having a solo exhibition at an art center in Rockaway, which is in the borough of Queens. I am so proud of her for being awarded the show. She put a tremendous amount of work into doing the paintings and packing and transporting them to the Big Apple.

The trip was uneventful until we hit New York, but things got interesting upon arriving at rush hour on a workday. But eventually we made it to the gallery and unloaded the paintings. To her delight, the paintings avoided damage during this long journey.

Once at the gallery, I had time to spare since other folks would hang the show. So, I decided to make a mayoral call to Gracie Mansion, the residence of New York Mayor Eric Adams. I arrived at the mansion’s front door at about late afternoon cocktail hour.

I knocked on the door, and an aide to the mayor answered. I told him who I was and wondered if I could speak with Mayor Adams. He said wait here and promptly left. To my surprise, in about three minutes, Mayor Adams came to the door, greeted me, and said, "Mayor, come on in for a drink." He asked what I was drinking, and I responded, "A Manhattan, of course."

We sat down, and he asked me how things were going in Highlands. I said great, but I thought we could compare notes since we were both mayors. I told him it was like we were in the same fraternity. He chuckled and said, "Mayor Pat, you got that right."  I asked if I could call him Mayor Eric, and he replied, "Of course you can. I watch your video updates and read your articles every week. You are a legend among mayors.”

I started off by saying I thought New York City needed a new road paving initiative. I recounted how, going through Brooklyn and Queens, I thought my truck and the precisions cargo paintings were about to fall apart. I asked him if his city council had ever thought about fixing all those potholes on the neighborhood streets. I told Eric that Highlands had started a vigorous road paving project in Highlands five years ago, and about every road that needed paving had a fresh layer of asphalt. He was extremely impressed until he asked me how many miles of town roads we had. I responded about 30. He had an incredulous expression as he took a big gulp of his drink, and we moved to the next issue.

Next, I told him about the Highlands BeeKind Program that our nonprofit community has started. I told Eric it might help New Yorkers calm down by pointing out all the honking horns and finger gestures I saw in their rush hour traffic. I even pointed out some of the horn blasts, and gestures seemed directed toward me! One irate taxi driver who had been following me came up to my left and shouted, "Get off the road, you stupid Tar Heel!”  I confided to the mayor that I thought Highlanders were more courteous than New Yorkers and nice to our visitors. He did not challenge my assumptions.

While I had the mayor’s attention, I told him he needed to get rid of all the traffic speeding cameras stationed on every street. I said, besides, you have so much traffic that no one can go beyond a snail's pace in your town anyway. I bragged that we did not use speed or intersection cameras in Highlands or used in-person policing. He responded that the tactic must take a lot of personnel for any one shift. I said, “You bet, sometimes all two or three officers on a shift are monitoring traffic.” Eric had a one-word response, “Amazing!”

He followed up by asking what our murder rate was in Highlands. He pointed out that his administration was committed to bringing it down in New York City. I told him I believed our rate was zero. He responded, “per week?” I said, "A lot longer time than that, but I couldn’t remember if we have ever had a murder.” He smiled, took another sip of his drink, and said, "What kind of a city is that?"

We then shifted the subject to town and city parks. I complimented Mayor Adams on all the neighborhood and city parks they have in New York, especially Central Park. He asked me if we had a town park. I said, “Oh yes, we have Founders Park!” His response was how big of a park was it? Hard to maintain? My reply of a little over an acre made him have a puzzled look on his face. I sensed the New York Mayor was beginning to feel our two situations were not the same and that we did not have as much in common as I initially suggested.

I tried to reconnect with Adams by talking about folks trying to give us major gifts. I emphasized a mayor cannot take gifts for vacations and trips to special places nor accept personal gifts like Rolex watches without drawing scrutiny. He replied, "Tell me about it." I did by suggesting he follow the emoluments statutes in North Carolina as a guide to keep out of trouble with the Feds. I stressed that following North Carolina laws, I cannot even accept a box of Christmas cookies given to me by a constituent without sharing them with all the town staff. Adams said he would follow that same spirit next time someone offered him a special gift. I replied, “Good. Just trying to help one fellow mayor!”

After finishing our drinks, I knew I had overstayed my welcome. I got up, shook the mayor’s hand, and invited him to visit Highlands next time he is in North Carolina or Atlanta. I realized I needed to diplomatically fib, so I told him our restaurants were not as good as the top New York restaurants, but they were rather good. I had to make something up to give a departing compliment about his town.

Then I woke up! Darn, in my dream I forgot to set Eric straight on an orderly parking system. Unlike Highlands, New York doesn’t have one.