Part III

The End of an Era

Retire: verb, to leave one's job and <u>cease</u> work (emphasis theirs)

Transition: noun, the process of a period of changing from one condition to another

Progression: noun, the process of moving gradually towards a more advanced state

—the Oxford Languages online dictionary

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If you've made it this far, you've explored all of the lessons that I've learned with students, colleagues, family, and friends over the past half century. What's left to talk about? Each of us eventually and inevitably recognizes that the time to ~~retire~~ transition has arrived. I've come to dislike the term *retire*, since, to me, it is synonymous with *cease work*. Lisa and I are not ceasing to work. We are changing the ways we work, and the tasks upon which we work, transitioning from our Lafayette projects to our Savannah projects. (I was tempted to go even further and say we were progressing, but the

phrase *towards a more advanced state* may be a bridge too far.) Why did we make the transition? The old projects became tiresome and draining, while the new projects promised fulfillment and joy. Seeking happiness is important.

Another aspect of the word *transition* that I like is that it implies a *period of change*. My transition from Lafayette to Savannah took a few years, and during that time my role at the college changed. I wanted to continue teaching full-time, of course, but was willing to meet with groups of colleagues at different stages of their careers to discuss with them some of the classic mistakes I had made and the corresponding lessons learned. Those talks were really just a new set of stupid Jim stories designed for colleagues rather than students. There was plenty of material from which to draw. The lessons I shared with colleagues during my final year at Lafayette are the subject of chapter 8. As part of that discussion, you'll suffer through my "Greatness Is Earned at the Margin" talk and learn more details about my unusual views on tenure, including a possible alternative.