

Biographical sketch of George K. Lewis Jr.

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In the brutal heat of mid-July Washington, D.C., George Lewis ascended steps to rarified air. Literally. Between the interior and exterior wall of the U.S. Capitol dome is a narrow, metal spiral staircase that only Senate pages can climb.

It's not a helix-style staircase - like that in a lighthouse - but an elongated-style that wraps around the entire dome and leads to the Statue of Freedom.

In 2001, prior to his senior year at the public Andover High School in Andover, Mass., Lewis served as a page to Sen. John Kerry. His days were filled with running bills, running errands and tagging alongside legislators. Senate pages are required to wear Brooks Brothers suits, and Lewis was still dressed for work when he made the hour-long climb in the summertime heat. Once at the dome's top, in a 130-year tradition, Lewis and eight other pages carved their names into the wooden base of the statue...and entered history.

In many ways, George Lewis - now 24 years old - has always thrived in rarified air. He was a hockey MVP and led his high school team to the state championship finals round; he's hiked the White Mountains; as an undergraduate student at the University of Miami (Fla.), he started and operated a private tutoring company with his buddies, and made enough money to buy a home and a 25-foot motorboat for graduate school at Cornell University. (Cornell is located in Ithaca, N.Y., at the southern tip of the longest of the Finger Lakes.)

Lewis started making waves in middle school, when he became interested in ultrasound and hung out at his father's laboratory at Analogic in Peabody, Mass., fashioning crude transducers. "I didn't know what I was doing then, but I had fun doing it," he says. His high school physics class cemented his interest in science; on one field trip, Lewis and classmates visited Canobie Lake Park, Salem, N.H., to grasp basic kinematics, and to reconcile mathematics and engineering calculations. They determined the velocities, friction and heights of a wooden roller coaster called The Yankee Cannonball, an upside-down coaster The

Corkscrew and the Boston Tea Party log flume. “Then we got on the rides with a stopwatch to see if our calculations were right – and they were,” he says.

Now Lewis is a doctoral candidate at Cornell, attending on a Presidential Life Science Fellowship – among the first graduate students offered such a fellowship – where he chooses from any major in any department. “It totally lets you mix it up. It’s very flexible. I chose biomedical engineering and I get to work with Weill Cornell Medical College (New York City) clinicians,” he says. Lewis also has a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship from 2007-10.

In addition to the tutoring company he founded as an undergraduate, Lewis is a partner in Kool Kennel, a company that makes thermo-electric air conditioning units for pet travel cages. He recently founded Zetroz, a start-up company, that will make portable, low-cost and efficient ultrasound equipment for medical, industrial and military applications. Zetroz will be the first company to go into incubator space at Cornell’s brand new Weill Hall.

When Lewis is not conducting graduate research, tinkering in laboratories or running businesses, he spends his time running trails or relaxing in the kitchen, making coq au vin, chicken Marsala, seared scallops and even sushi. “My style of cooking is to make things simple and elegant,” he says.