

# CATCHING UP WITH THE LOWNIE BROTHERS

*Ask Steve Lownie and Tim Lownie, brothers and King's alumni, about their upbringing and the answers are illuminating: a Canadian Armed Forces family, raised on or near bases across Canada, finally settling in Greenwood, Nova Scotia. Parents who believed in higher education and lifelong learning. A mother who nurtured the brothers' belief in the equality of men and women, both parents teaching them that everyone is equal, to treat everyone the same. Add a dash of their father's military rigour and the kind of parental support that may be key to the remarkably successful careers that both brothers have created: "They always told us we would be good at whatever we wanted to put our minds to," Steve says. "That we could do well at anything."*

## STEVE LOWNIE

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE 1979  
BRAIN SURGEON, PROFESSOR IN THE DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY



STEVE LOWNIE, A BRAIN SURGEON currently working at Dalhousie University, can sum up what brought him to King's and what he remembers most about the college in a word: community. "It was perfect for me, coming from the Valley. I quickly got tied into the King's community ... I sang in the Chapel Choir and became friends with an incredibly interesting group of people." Medical school at Dalhousie followed, and his interest in neurosurgery came about partly as the result of an uninspiring first year. "It was a lot of basic science and I was kind of turned off by it. I was thinking I have to do something where I'm actually interacting with patients. A neurosurgeon, Dr. Renn Holness, was running an elective class on Wednesday afternoons and he took on a couple of students every year. He took me on, and I learned how to assess neurological patients. That's how it started."

An internship and residency in neurosurgery in London, Ontario, followed, then additional training in Los Angeles, and back to London as an attending neurosurgeon and neurointerventionalist at University Hospital, attaining the rank of full professor at Western University. This quick bio, however, barely hints at the accomplishments, the "firsts," the papers published, the Chief of Neurosurgery position, the procedures he helped to pioneer or establish.

Married with four grown children, his wife, Penny Campbell-Lownie, has had her own storied career as both a nurse and a dentist. The two returned to Nova Scotia just weeks before the pandemic took hold in 2020.

Steve is grateful for what his work has brought to the lives of his patients. "The brain is the most complex organ in the human body, a network of billions of wires, each one important," he says. "It's an incredible thing to be able to use one's hands to

restore someone's vision, or their ability to walk, or restore their loss of cognition. And in so restoring function, to help restore their dignity, to return them to normal or close-to-normal life. And there's the 'being human' part—helping people understand the complexity of their condition, empowering them to make huge decisions. And learning to accept one's own humanity, to accept failure rather than deny it."

And then there's the book. Not only has Steve returned to Halifax, he's also returned

to King's. He's finishing up an MFA in Creative Nonfiction, where he's been writing a book about Dr. Charles Drake. One of Steve's surgical mentors in London, Drake was the world's most renowned aneurysm surgeon. An excerpt (you'll find it at [www.sabatboy.com](http://www.sabatboy.com)) reads like an exhilarating sci-fi adventure, a journey into the mysterious vastness of the human brain.

## TIM LOWNIE

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) 1984  
VICE-PRESIDENT, GLOBAL MARKETS,  
GOLDMAN SACHS

TIM LOWNIE MAY HAVE FOLLOWED in his brother's footsteps, but he wasn't in his wake; he arrived at King's in the fall of 1980 after Steve had graduated. "I definitely knew King's because of my brother, but it was actually basketball that got me there," he says. He was recruited by legendary basketball coach Bev Greenlaw to play for the King's Blue Devils, which, he says, is his fondest memory of the university. "In 1982, in my second year, we won the provincial championships, which I think may have been a first for King's. It was pretty exciting." Beyond basketball, it's residence life he remembers most vividly. "There was such an incredible community. It would have been very hard not to have had a lot of friends."

After completing a Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree in computer science (CS), Tim went to the University of Toronto for a masters and then to Queens for a PhD, both in CS. Right time, right place, finely honed instincts, whatever it was, Tim always found himself in cutting edge educational and professional pursuits. "My doctorate was in a subfield of artificial intelligence (AI). Of course, this was well before the internet and cloud computing really unleashed the power of big data and AI," he explains.

While his classmates wanted to become college professors, Tim wanted to work in business, chasing applications of the work



that were practical rather than theoretical. "This was the early mid-nineties. Personal and business computing was really starting to become mainstream and the internet was really starting to ramp up. There was a tremendous amount going on and it was exciting."

He got involved in a couple of tech startups, one industrial, another in the financial sector, then networked his way into a few more. "The use of computers was exploding," he says, "especially in finance. Two of the startups were bought out, and my wife, Matilde Leon-Ponte, who is a researcher at Toronto's SickKids Hospital, and I took a year off to travel. Basically, we got on a big ship and sailed around the globe." At that point, he says, he probably didn't need to work again. "We asked ourselves whether we were really ready to retire. We decided we weren't."

Tim had always been somewhat interested in computer trading in the stock market. "There was a lot of stuff going on around algorithmic, high speed trading—computers buying and selling stocks based on programs. Sort of a weaponization of the stock market using software." He went to work for RBC Capital Markets, his introduction to the world of automated trading. "Basically," he explains, "I was a member of a team of 'quants,' designers of strategies run by computer to optimize trading." Next, he went to Scotia Capital as Lead Algo Equity Developer and, in 2022, to Goldman Sachs as Vice-President, Global Markets, his current position. Any future plans lean towards enjoying the life he and his wife have built. "My wife has a lot of friends and relatives in Madrid and the south of Spain. We're hoping to spend more time there. And Halifax also, of course."