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A Screw Loose



by Liz Holzemer

36B In The OC

I'll be the first to admit it—I hail from the OC and loved it long before it was popularized by shows like *The OC*, *Laguna Beach : The Real Orange County* , and more recently, *The Real Housewives of Orange County*.

I spent my entire childhood, teen angst years and early twenties in rustin' Tustin before I turned my back on it in search of open space, trees, and people who didn't punctuate their sentences with "Like ya know" and "I'm like" and "Oh my God!"

Tustin to be exact. Tustin *where*, you say? Put it this way, don't blink on the I-5 as you drive by or you will miss it and land up in South County or Santa Ana ,

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depending on your direction.

I am now one of those expats who say, "I remember dusty trail walks through orange groves and strawberry and sweet corn fields before they were horrendously destroyed and replaced with cinemplexes, chain box stores and 700 square foot apartments with monthly rents surpassing my Colorado mortgage."

A shame really, but home nevertheless. My parents still reside in the ranch style home I grew up in. The one with a backyard, towering trees and freedom from covenant controlled covenants. There are no varying shades of beiges, blues and grays here.

At least a couple of times a year my family and the coastline—my sanctuary when I need a self-imposed time out for recharging and reflection—beckon me to return to the OC. Recently, I contemplated returning home for another reason—my 20th high school reunion. Never having attended one—I was a no show at the 5th and 10th—I would be entering virgin territory. Would anyone remember me? More significantly—with two brain surgeries under my cranium—would I remember anyone?

Two decades is a long time. Nearly half my life to be exact. As Classmate.com and Reunion.com reunion reminders infiltrated my inbox, an element of excitement formed. It continued gathering momentum until I decided that, if not for curiosity's sake, then at least why not attend the reunion to recapture the past that had molded me into the person I am today?

I booked a last minute ticket sans hubby to spare him from boredom and meeting those he'd most likely never see again anyway, and flew back to the land of long gone orange groves.

Held at a venue not in Tustin, I excitedly entered the upstairs clubhouse and signed in. The gals manning the table were the same ones who'd organized pep rallies and the like 20 years ago. I was warmly welcomed, hugged and thought, I'm off to a great start.

With Simple Minds, Reo Speedwagon, the then Material Girl and other 80's artists' music wafting through the air, I scanned the room for a familiar face. I reasoned if I could instantly strike up a conversation with at least one classmate I'd be set the rest of the night.

*Bad Hair Day

*Mommy
Hullabaloo

*dirty laundry

*The Morrison Boys

*side dish

*Comments From
The Carpool

*The Foggiest Idea

*Home Away
From Home

*Small Town Soup

*Mommy - Daddy
Dance

*From The Frontline

*Life At 40

*livin' in my head

*Stgh, Moan &
Garfbuckle

*Don't Get Me Started

*dad libs

*Blissfully Numb

*MommyChronicles

*DomesticEngineering



Following the credence of flocking to where those most congregate, I headed straight for the bar. Nice suit in front of me. As he turned around, we eyed each other then concentrated on our name badges, which embarrassingly boasted our senior class portrait.

"Is that? Oh My God! Is that you? WOW!"

"Yes! I know! Yes! Wow to you too!"

I was dialed in.

Similar reactions echoed throughout the room as it registered among former classmates how much our physical attributes change—er, improve or decline—in two decades.

I meandered from one classmate to another. Thankfully, I didn't have any ex-baggage and didn't have to worry about running into anyone who'd broken my heart. Books, not boys, was my mantra in the good ole Tiller days.

I had to admit, it was a bit of an ego boost to be noticed by those that never paid me any mind back then. Could it have been the braces or the parted dead-down-the-center feathered hair that made me invisible? Naaaaaah.

I did have my great boy friends though.

One had become a neurologist. "Hey, doc, did you notice anything out of sorts with me back in the day?" As a harbinger to a long since evicted brain tumor I had to know. No he reassured me. As far as he was concerned, I was still the same Dizzy Lizzy, brain tumor or not.

Another had become a school principal and proffered sage advice now that my daughter had just begun her elementary education.

The tall lanky water polo player who grew up with me on my street had become an actor. He even apologized for the occasions when he hadn't been very nice. How endearing. Uh wait Liz, he *is* an actor.

The general consensus among us was the room wasn't lacking for hardware. As fellow classmates repeatedly

*College Daze

*midlife cometh

*The Imperfect Man

*bereft on the left

*Mommymorphosis

*MomsAlwaysWrite

*HorseSense&Savvy

*Scrambled Brains

*Desperate Working Mothers

*urban momfare

*Family Business

*My Brain On PB&J

*You Can't Be Serious

*Hoochy Mama

*I Screw Loose

*Snakes, Snails & Puppydog Tales

*sammon says

*father goof

*on the wagon trail

squinted to make out my maiden name hoping that would jolt their memories, I couldn't resist blurting out, "Bricker and the boobs are real!"

What struck me the most from my foray back to the past was that those who had fled the OC, had padded their midsections, shed on top and developed deep lines and saddlebags, whereas those who had stayed were—shall I just say—surgically enhanced, blonder, smoother and perkier.

Yep, 36B in the OC.

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Liz Holzemer is a freelance writer, www.LizHolzemer.com, and is excited to announce that her first book, *Curveball: When Life Throws You A Brain Tumor*, is set for release in Spring, 2007. She is also the founder of MeningiomaMommamas.org, a non-profit support group she founded after surviving a baseball-sized meningioma brain tumor. Liz is a 2004 *Woman's Day* "Women Who Inspire Us" recipient. She lives in Colorado with her husband and their two miracle children. Liz also maintains her sense of humor on a daily basis and can be reached at lizholzemer@comcast.net if you have a plum writing assignment to offer her.



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