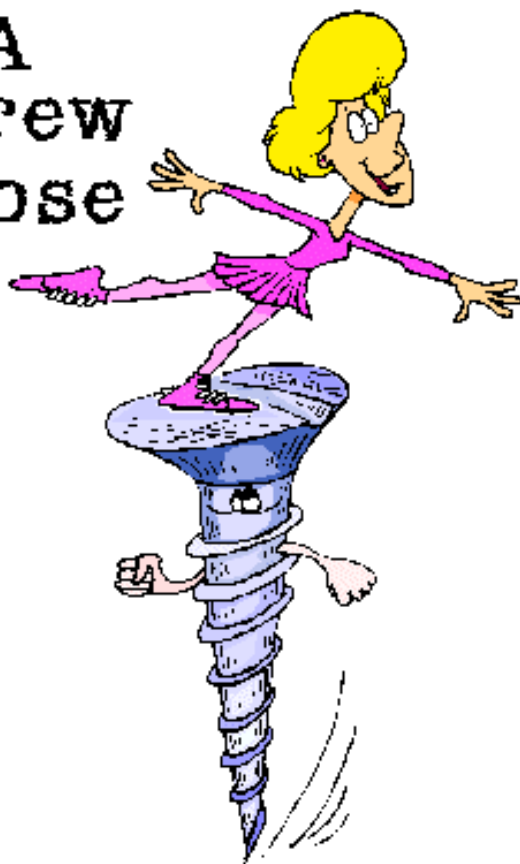


A Screw Loose



by Liz Holzemer

Blonde & Brain Impaired

To all those women feeling blessed, er, or rather cursed at times (with) being a true blonde, I can relate. I entered the world as a tow head, but not even sun and saline summers I spent year after year along the Pacific coast could preserve what Mother Nature had bestowed upon me. At nearly 40, (ok, only 38!) it's actually sandy blonde and I have to pay what freelancing income (rather pittance) I don't have, to achieve the gorgeous caramel and honey hues my 4-year-old daughter was naturally blessed with.

Lest I digress, I've had my fair share of "Dumb Blonde Jokes" sent to me. You all know the ones I'm referring to like "How can you tell if a blonde's been using the computer? There's white-out on the screen." Or "Why do blondes take the pill? So they know what day of the

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week it is.”

And if being blonde wasn't bad enough, five years ago I discovered I had a brain tumor—A BASEBALL-sized brain tumor known as a meningioma, which shockingly had occupied my cranium for well over a decade. So large was my uninvited guest that, like a schoolyard bully, it had actually shoved and pushed the right side of my spongy brain into its hemispheric left-sided counterpart. I'm convinced, or at least I tried selling this argument to my parents for years, this is why I wasn't granted admittance into Columbia, Northwestern, Cal, (it's too painful to name the rest), prestigious journalism programs.

Within days I was scheduled for surgery to remove the roommate that had invaded my brain and my life. I was told at the time that had my neurosurgeon not already been booked (I thought you only booked airline tickets and fancy dinner reservations), my nearly 9-hour surgery would have taken place within 24 hours.

It's a miracle I survived considering how life threatening my blood thirsty tumor was and the fact that it was so tough and fibrous (as noted in my play by play path report) that in order to extract it, it was thinly sliced like deli meat.

Not long after my surgery I became more aware of how people reacted when I proclaimed I was a brain tumor survivor. Inevitably, the common reaction was, "You look too good to have had brain surgery." Translation—why didn't I resemble Herman Munster? OR people nearly gave themselves whiplash wondering how and where my tumor was removed. It didn't take long before I offered an automated response, "Yes, the entire new line of Home Depot Dual Bevel Slide Miter Saws and DeWalt 18 volt compact drill drivers were demo-ed on my head!"

In fact, it's become one of my many favorite mantras, which I don't hesitate to share—the world needs to know that you can survive major surgery, including brain surgery. If you can't talk about it and laugh at yourself, then this scary life altering subject will only continue to be shrouded in secrecy. And I've noticed that when I talk openly about not only being blonde but a brain tumor survivor as well, people lose the nervous laughter. They usually move in closer, cautiously inch by inch, curious about the bowling ball grip (courtesy of neurosurgeon drilling and tumor excavation) I point out

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***Livin' In My Head**

***Sigh, Moan &
Garfbuckle**

***Don't Get Me Started**



beneath my highlighted hairline.

The best part about being a brain tumor survivor is being alive and reinventing myself. So without further adieu and in hopes of catching David Letterman's attention, I present...

Top Ten Brain Tumor Survivor Benefits

10. Botox injections are painless if your face is paralyzed like mine. I actually look forward to them!
9. My brain was occupied by a roommate, which explains why I wasn't accepted into an Ivy League school.
8. It's a great conversation starter: "I survived a brain tumor."
7. It makes for really cool show and tell. I have an upside-down scar that resembles a question mark along my right ear.
6. I have a legitimate excuse for misplacing my keys, putting milk in the pantry and forgetting where I parked my car.
5. I'll be on drugs for the rest of my life and am privileged to carry a dog-eared Walgreens frequent RX punch card.
4. I'm on a first name basis with the MRI techs at every hospital in my vicinity.
3. I love to gauge strangers' reactions when I tell them, "I'm blonde; I don't have a brain."
2. I get my kicks when my titanium screws set off airport security alarms.
1. I'm waiting to get pulled over for speeding so I can say, "But officer, I'm blonde AND brain impaired!"

***Dad Libs**

***LadyOfTheHouse**

***Blissfully Numb**

***MommyChronicles**

***DomesticEngineering**

***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**



Liz Holzemer is the founder of Meningioma Mommas www.meningiomamommas.org. She is a freelance writer and has written for a variety of newspapers and magazines. Liz lives in Colorado with her husband, Mark and their two miracle children. She continues to raise Meningioma awareness and funding for research. Liz also maintains her sense of humor on a daily basis and keeps her roots blonde every 6-8 weeks when at all possible. And she DOES have a brain!



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You can reach Liz at lizholzemer@comcast.net. Just go easy on the blonde jokes...

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