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Class reunion: 'And what do YOU do?'

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The Santa Barbara High School class of 1962 had their 20-year reunion Saturday night at the Miramar Hotel, an event I never pictured myself going to because I am probably like most people when it comes to reunions — hesitant.

In any case I hadn't graduated with the class of '62 but had left after my years at Montecito Union (grammar) and La Cumbre (junior high) for a small, all-girls' school in Seattle.

But Raelene Hooker (a SBHS '62 fireball who is now Raelene Somebodyelse) insisted I come ("You started with us, you can finish with us," she said).

But the real reason I went to the '62 reunion was (the same as everyone else who was there) — curiosity. The kind that kills cats.

I think everyone is a little timid about going to reunions because, firstly, they want to make good impressions and secondly, they want to make good impressions. If you were shy or out-of-it in high school, you want to show that you've developed a certain calm; if you weren't popular, you want to waltz in having developed in the past 20 years a finesse from having been all over the world and back.

But thirdly, reunions are, in many respects, a not-so-private peek into aging. One judges, maybe, how he or she is weathering the years by looking at others — not an entirely comforting feeling because one never knows what one will see.

Lining up for name tags on Saturday night was like lining up for a rite of passage: after all, wasn't it always our parents who did this sort of thing? Never us kids.

The name tags were both hilarious and disconcerting. Each one had a picture of the person, xeroxed out of the 1962 high school annual, with the person's name right next to the picture. That way, one could study how the tag-wearer looked then and compare it with how the tag-wearer looks now. Before and After.

At reunions, one is allowed to become ridiculously rude: look at the picture on the name tag (Before), look at the person (After), and then comment on the difference.

(Actually, everyone at this event looked better now than they did back then, since the teeny-boppers of the 50s and 60s were, in true "Grease" style, a little strange-looking.

With name tags in place (mine had no picture) we all stepped into the room and the magic transformation took place. 20 years vanished.

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It seemed everybody looked better

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The same girls who clustered togeth- daily in junior high and high school ere now clustered together and rieking about old events as if they'd appened yesterday. They now live in ew York or Maui or Hemet or Idaho, ut reunited on Saturday night they ere back in the halls of Santa Barba- High School. The cliques that were ien became cliques again, and the 20 ears that had opened us up, made us ower and sensitized us to all human eings disappeared.

Those are the more subtle aspects of eunion behavior, but some responses ere not so subtle. With the years aturing us and refining us and mak- g us better ladies and gentlemen, we now better than to walk up to some- ne and say, blatantly, "What do you o?" After all, decency tells us that a erson is who he is as he faces us, and e needn't size him up by his occupa- ion.

But Saturday night there was a big oom full of people and one had to nove fast to make the rounds. I was the chief offender of them all. "What do you do?" I asked everybody and anybody, whether they remembered me or not.

"I do as I please," said Suzanne (by far the best response), and Judy, a straight-A scholarship student whom everyone figured would be a nuclear physicist said, "I'm a housewife, would you believe it?"

Carole, a former pep club chairman now wearing a slinky black sequined dress said she lived in Arizona where she sold real estate and wrangled horses ("I'm a real cowgirl"), and she also said she had been married/divorced/ didn't have kids/saw no need to do either ("I've made it this far, why bother?").

Bill and Bob (twins) were in electronics in town, still married to their original spouses — ("Friends come to see us to get a little stability," said one of the wives, referring to the high number of divorces in the group).

Bob, whom I'd not seen since Montecito Union days, jokingly referred to the fact that we had been soft on each other in 6th grade: "You had your chance and you blew it," he said.

I found this to be an interesting comment because I have half felt for years that everyone was unconscious in junior high school and certainly catatonic in 6th grade — such that we would not remember such emotional involvements as being legitimate enough to even mention.

Many reunionites had children — some offspring not even a year old, others age 21 and going for their own college degrees. Women talked about "starting late" in having kids, a reflection on a zero population time and momentary emphasis on careers. The emcee of the evening gave the person with the most children (seven) a smoke detector, and Marshall Rose, 1962 student body president, asked who had the longest second marriage — a pertinent question since many of the group were well into their second times around.

R.L. Strang, 1962 homecoming queen, was then announced and cheered. Just prior to this, R.L. had reminded me that she had come for a quarter term to the same school in Seattle I had been attending and that I and my classmates had spent a lot of time trying to cheer her up about being there. I had forgotten this fact and as I watched R.L. being applauded as SBHS homecoming queen, I became convinced that I was not only unconscious in 6th grade but in 12th grade as well.

Then there was dancing to live music such as "The Twist," "Sixteen Candles," and all those other songs the '60s were known for, and after some prolonged shouting over the noise I and several others prepared to leave.

I stopped to look at the bulletin board with the pictures of the 1962 football team and pep club girls, and as I heard the loud sounds of "Oh, Blue Angel" from the band in the background, I thought how strangely amusing the whole thing was.

But also, I suddenly wanted to go forward — as fast as possible.