

:: Dana's Weekly Insight ::

05.25.09 – Why I Hate The Beach Boys



I was sitting at my desk sipping a lukewarm cup of coffee, mindlessly surfing the Internet. I was also feeling kind of guilty because I should have been getting some work done when, with a single point and a double click, I transported myself right back to twelfth grade. Without meaning to, I had Googled my way back to high school by stumbling upon my class reunion Web site. Like magic and without warning, I was seventeen years old again. Pulled backwards to a time and a place that I had originally intended to forget, I could not resist the opportunity to take a virtual walk down memory lane.

Mark Stahnke, Amy Gorsache, Michael Grundgeiger, Trina Tinglum — who were these people, all happy and hugging and bonding? And, where the hell was I?

Alone at my desk with a cold cup of coffee, I surfed well into the night, determined to survey every inch of that Web site. Picture after picture, I struggled to put the names with the faces. Page after page, I waited impatiently for the memories to return as I tried to reconstruct that part of my life, secretly hoping that in successfully doing so, I might finally be granted permission to fit into their world.

And then, as my luck would have it, there they were. Dawn Barrett and Ellen Klein. Even their names suggested that they were born to be on prom court. Every high school had a "Dawn Barrett" and an "Ellen Klein" setting the standard for popularity. The blond hair. The blue eyes. Cheerleaders. No memory of being a teenager would be complete without the two of them.

There sat Dawn on the hood of her butter colored Mustang convertible and just a photo away stood Ellen in her green and white varsity cheerleader sweater waving a bottle of beer. Go Spartans!

I cringed. It was all coming back to me now. "Oh God!" I buried my face in my hands in an effort to stop recalling the day that I fell flat on my butt and made an ass of myself trying out for the sophomore cheerleading squad. I had absolutely no business attempting to nail that cartwheel! And, just who did I think I was kidding that I could painlessly do the splits?

The Beach Boys taunting "I Wish They All Could Be California Girls" was all that I could hear as I peeled myself up off the gymnasium floor. All I could see out of the corner of my eyes were coaches decisively scribbling on clipboards. "Not a good sign," I muttered under my breath. "Not a good sign at all."

I tried to avoid making eye contact with any of the other girls while I

gathered myself to go but it was kind of unavoidable since they were all standing right in front of the only way out. I could feel them all staring. I imagined they were all wondering why I had even bothered to try out. I grabbed my coat, tried to hold my head high, and hurried to slip past them as they collectively parted to move out of my way.

Dawn Barrett and Ellen Klein were selected as co-captains of the cheerleading squad that year. Meanwhile, I resigned myself to the fact that I would always be on the outside with my face pressed against the glass looking in. "And, that is about when," I quietly whispered to myself, "that I started marking time."

So anxious to escape, so desperate to grow up, I was ready to hurry up and graduate, leave town and discover something better, someplace else. I plowed through my classes and the parties and my midterms and the proms, fearing somehow that the future might become impatient and maliciously leave me stranded in my teens. And, in doing all that hurrying, I let high school pass me by.

Tired, and feeling as though I had sufficiently tripped, I decided to conclude my cyber journey. As I mentally prepared to shutdown my computer so that I could brush my teeth and go to bed, I decided to visit one more page. I hesitated and then cautiously clicked:

In Memory Of...

I deliberately read each and every word of every single entry in an attempt, if only in private, to honor the lives that my classmates had lived. The more I read, the more I wondered about them and who they really were; about the details of their lives that had not been written down. Had life lived up to their expectations? I thought about the words that had been left unspoken; about the dreams that would remain unfulfilled. What would they have done differently if they could do it all again? The sobering reality I guess, is that there are no do-over's in "real life." A do-over was something that we used to take for granted on the playground.

I sat frozen at my desk for just a little while longer, caught up in the cold reality that "time waits for no one." Time doesn't need our consent to march on and it doesn't require our attention to leave its unavoidable mark on our lives. That's not something that they teach you in high school.

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