

tales of a crazy lady



CAN THE ANTICIPATION OF A HIGH SCHOOL CLASS REUNION MAKE YOU LOSE YOUR MARBLES? IT'S MORE COMMON THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.

TEXT BY CHRISTA GALA

DID YOU KNOW class reunions can make women crazy? Seriously. Although I learned this tidbit firsthand, my neighbor confirmed it. She explained many women somehow lose all the perspective and self confidence they've gained between graduation and adulthood, reverting right back to the teenage mentality of caring about what everybody thinks.

Interestingly, a study commissioned a few years ago by the cosmetics company Jafra supports this notion. A majority of the respondents, women age 35 to 49, rated attending reunions more stressful than meeting their in-laws for the first time. Nearly 90 percent said they'd spend as much as \$1,000 to get ready for the big event. And nearly 46 percent said they would need at least three months to whip themselves into shape.

NOTHING TO WEAR

Me, I had a good six months. The announcement for the twentieth reunion of Cary High School's Class of 1987 came early – shortly after the first of the year. I marked the date on my calendar: June 30, 2007. So I

had plenty of time. But that didn't stop me from becoming obsessed.

And it wasn't even *my* 20th reunion. It was my husband's. I graduated in 1990, but back then my friends and I loved hanging out with the older kids, especially the guys from the class of '87. So it felt a lot like my reunion too.

Speaking of my friends, they were jealous. "It's not fair you get to go," they whined. "That was the best class."

And I married into it; I felt lucky indeed. The months passed, and I perused catalogs and thought about what I might like to wear. Then, before I knew it, May was upon me.

Dear Lord, a dress! I need a dress. Or maybe a skirt with a nice top.

And thus the saga began—taking me to three malls and countless boutiques way over my price range. Indeed, my journey covered the economic spec-

trum – from Nordstrom’s to Sears. But I found nothing. NOTHING.

I had money to spend, and an urgent need, but everything was too floral, too chiffon-y, too matronly or, frankly, too skimpy. I wasn’t going to be baring any bellybutton, that’s for sure. My mind may have been behaving like a teenager, but there was no denying some things had changed.

I wanted to look chic and a little edgy, but very classy. More importantly, I wanted to look trim and, maybe, just maybe, a little sexy.

I found a possibility at Stein Mart – a nice black skirt with some swanky beads set on the diagonal. But I needed a great top. I lugged that skirt everywhere for the better part of six weeks. I bought six different wraps to try with a tank-shirt I already owned. My friends saw each combination, then my mother, my sister. Slowly, I returned the rejects.

This “reunion preparation” of trying on clothes became a joke to my husband, who was completely unconcerned with preparing himself for the event. He’d come home from work and there’d I be, standing in the bathroom in an array of finery – beaded shoes, purse, elegant wrap, hair pulled back, hair down.

“Where are you going?” he asked me, surprised, that first night.

“Nowhere! I’m trying to decide what to wear to this reunion and nothing’s working,” I said, sighing.

“Well, if it’s got *you* that stressed out, let’s just not go.”

“NO! I’m not stressed out,” I yelled, stressing. “I want to go. In fact, I can’t wait.”

And the next night would be the same scenario, only with different accessories.

“Wow! Where are you going?” he’d deadpan.

“Shut up,” I’d mumble, rolling my eyes. Or sometimes I’d just sigh. I was getting nowhere fast in the outfit department.

HUNGER STRIKES

Time was getting away from me, and at the beginning of June I decided I should go into strict diet mode.

It’s not exactly a news flash to most that losing weight is hard. But this was really hard. Like crushing yourself into a pair of Spanx (those girdle-like undergarments that make you feel like biscuits in a can). I managed to lose about 3 pounds and that was only by being really good and eating fresh produce, grilled chicken and grains all the time AND making the gym my permanent residence. I was so hungry, I started reading the grocery ads like most people read the newspaper. Everything

looked delicious.

Friends would call. “What are you doing,” they’d ask.

“Waiting for lunch,” I’d say.

My hunger quickly turned to crankiness. One day, I nearly stole my four-year-old son’s lunch—the aroma from the Chick-Fil-A bag in the backseat nudging my willpower.

“Honey, are you going to eat those nuggets? Why don’t you pass one to me?”

“Mom-mee,” Tyler groaned. “These are my nuggets!”

“Well, I know, but if you’re not going to eat them, why don’t you pass the bag up here? The fries, too. Pass them up here; I’m hungry.”

No response.

“Tyler! Are you listening to me?”

“Mommy, you’re always hungry.”

True.

NOT ALONE

Less than two weeks from the big night, I still wasn’t happy with my outfit. I was already rooting around in my closet for some unexciting alternatives. If I couldn’t look sexy and chic, maybe I could look smart and professional. These outfits too were carted about town to the same folks who saw the first combinations. My sister was concerned.

“Girl, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you like this,” she said. “You’re getting a little crazy about this reunion. Go and have a good time. Be yourself. Once you’re there, none of this is going to matter.”

Frankly, I agreed with her. But I couldn’t stop. I was undeniably obsessed. And that’s when my neighbor gave me her wisdom about women often losing the perspective they’ve gained when they attend reunions. She’d attended a similar event a few years back and spent an obscene amount of money on her outfit. She agonized for weeks. On the big day, she had her hair styled, then came home, washed it out, and styled it herself. At least I’m not the only one.

‘YOU BETTER TELL ME I LOOK NICE’

One afternoon I stopped by the JC Penney’s at North Hills to buy a pair of sunglasses. There, I spied six racks of trendy black dresses. Of all the places I’d been, it was hard to believe I’d hit the motherload here. My excitement at seeing those dresses was almost as great as if I’d been first in line at an all-you-can-eat buffet (keep in mind I was still really hungry at this time).

The dress-Gods were kind, bestowing upon me exactly what I wanted. I took the slim-fitting halter dress on a neighborhood tour, for a show-and-tell with all my friends, who, by now, were quite weary of me and my outfits. Almost in unison,

1. The author (far left) poses with other class of ‘87 spouses (l to r): Tracie Walker, Dawne Rager, Sandra Flinchum and Jennifer Waterhouse.
2. The author and her husband.
3. Cary High Class of ‘87 (l to r) Rob Ferris (class vp), David Baccanari, Steve Gillooly (class president), Pat Schaffer and Bobby Hewitt.

survey says

Do women feel more defined by looks than men at class reunions? A Cyberpulse survey, commissioned a few years ago by the Jafra cosmetics company, polled women ages 35 to 49 and found:


- 88 percent said they would spend \$1,000 or "whatever it takes" to look their best for a reunion.
- Three of four would buy a new outfit; half would get a new hairstyle or diet.
- 46 percent would need at least three months to prepare.
- One-third of the women polled said they would not attend their reunions if they were unhappy with the way they looked.
- Respondents largely agreed their post-reunion gossip would consist of how other women "held up physically."

they deemed it the perfect dress—out of relief or true admiration I cannot say.

On June 30th, my husband and I got ready for the big night, a dinner and casino event at III Place in Cary. On my way down the stairs, I sung out: "You better tell me I look nice! I worked really hard to find this outfit." Possibly afraid of being bludgeoned, he acquiesced. And we were off.

Nearly 250 people gathered for the Class of 1987's twentieth reunion. The casino tables kept folks busy, and prizes were bought at auction from chips won at the poker tables. But the majority of folks talked and laughed, ate and drank, and generally got reacquainted. I saw so many wonderful people I hadn't seen in so long. I was hoarse from talking, and my face hurt from laughing so much. Afterwards, about 80 folks went in limos downtown to continue the party.

We had the babysitter to worry about so we didn't go, but it was okay. My feet ached from my high heels, and my cleavage was admonishing me: "Come on now, we can't stay up here forever." I was reminded that chic and elegant are typically not comfortable, which is why I'm typically not chic and elegant.

On the way home, my husband and I talked about how much fun we'd had. "Was it worth all that worrying, all that preparation?" "Oh yeah!" I said. "I felt perfect!" And, really, that's all that counts. Every woman has a right to meet with perfection once every twenty years or so. Maybe I'm not so crazy after all. 

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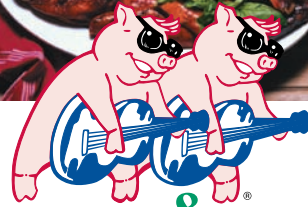
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