

Gerry
Beltz

Reunited

Ten-year high school reunion offers glimpses into past, present

School is hell, sex is heaven. We're the class of '87!
Hoo-rah.

On the heels of class reunion flicks "Grosse Pointe Blank" and "Romy and Michelle's Class Reunion," I myself attended my 10-year Lincoln Northeast high school reunion over the past weekend, foregoing other more entertaining options, such as Haymarket Heydays, Husker Hoops competition, or having Laurence Olivier give me a root canal. (Film buffs take note on that last comment...)

I didn't pre-register for this glorious event. Perhaps it was a subconscious desire to not go, maybe it was just procrastination, or just the idea of paying 15 bucks to hang out at a bar with a bunch of people I barely knew a decade ago that kept me from sending the registration in.

Still, Friday night came, and I was sweltering in the back party room at Barry's (the A/C was supposedly broken), exchanging stories and who's-got-the-firmer-handshakes with my former classmates. I had my name tag on, and like everyone else, I was staring at breasts-and-chests, trying to catch a glimpse of a name or a familiar face to say hello to.

It was ... interesting, to say the least.

Like many - or all - high school classes, we had the separate groups, cliques, and memorable people, and while some had changed, others were still the same.

Many of us had grown thicker in one way or another. Some around the belly, some had lost the pipe cleaner physique and a few had even ballooned out. For some reason, it was easier to recognize the women than the men, possibly because they weren't always huddled around the bar.

Most everyone was married, and usually to someone from our school, if not our own graduating class. One couple I remember as being like cobra-and-mongoose ten years ago, but are now happily married with two children and a third on the way.

Also on my mind was what to say about what I have accomplished over the last ten years. Most of these people were already on the interstate of life with the cruise control on, and I'm still stuck back on an off-ramp behind a '73 Pinto.

Does this mean it's time to lie? Absolutely not. Time to have some fun? Quite possibly.

By the end of the evening, I convinced two or three people I was a pet psychiatrist, and I think at least one person believes I do work for the DEA. I think my biggest surprise was when a couple people didn't believe I work as a volunteer Christian youth camp counselor, which is actually true! (Evidently, back in high school, I was known as the Emperor of Smut, probably for my steadfast arguments and views on censorship and adult films.)

I continued to mill around, listening in on conversations and desperately trying to find someone I was actually looking forward to talking with about the past ten years.

Finally ran into a couple of old chums, and they hadn't changed one iota. Steve was still a quiet beanpole who carried a very sardonic sense of humor, and Brenda, who still as lovely and sarcastic as ever. She always had a strong personality in high school, and it had only gotten stronger. We both quickly got our 10-year summaries out of the way and went on to making fun of other people at the reunion.

Before long, it was last call, and we took that as a time to leave, but most of us would be attending the semi-formal dinner/dance the next evening, yours truly included.

Yep. Hit that one too. At least, I started to, then changed my mind.

I walked in to the grand ballroom at the Ramada, complete with smiley-face tie, and looked around the room.

It was a well-dressed high school cafeteria. All the groups had separated to their different tables by clique and whatever. It's not like I didn't expect it, but it was just like a blatant slap in the face to wake me up.

No matter how hard you may try, friendships always remain the same. So I did just that.

I went and spent time with my friends. The friends I made after high school and continue to see today.

Life is hell and also is heaven. This is 1997.

Hoo-rah.

Beltz is a senior English Education major and is features editor for the Daily Nebraskan Summer Edition.

Haney's
View



Cliff
Hicks

Starving (for) artists

Society should appreciate, encourage creative spirits

Art lives.

I've been chanting this mantra in my head for over ten years now, ever since that momentous day that I decided I wanted to write for a living. The path has changed a little, and I'm more than a little eager to try my hands at some other things along with way (I play guitar, dabble in computer art & graphic design, etc.) but I'm still an artist.

No matter what anyone tells you, no matter what they want to do, if you want to be an artist, by all means go for it.

It's a tough life, I won't lie. You'll be pressured to produce something that inspires people, if you're a writer, artist or musician, or to draw emotions from people, if you're an actor, dancer or singer. It does not come easy.

Support has been cut out over the past few years in the schools. Art classes are being seen as "wasting children's time." I once heard a parent say that kids "should be focusing on the more important things in life, not wasting their on foolish drawings and telling stories."

This breaks my heart.

I know the rat race. My parents are part of it, and my grandparents before them. Just about everyone in my family is involved in the rat race. My uncle, the

most artistic member of our family other than myself, says he's going to write the great American novel ... someday. He's in advertising right now. My father lamented to me, once, late at night, that he often wondered what would have happened if he had chased his dream and gone to Broadway. He wanted to be a director.

I will not join the rat race willingly.

It's unfortunate, but I may have to, but they won't take me without a fight. If I go, I'll be kicking and screaming, striving to get loose the entire time. I may have to pay the bills, but just because I does doesn't mean I'm going to give up.

I'd actually drifted from my art until recently. I moved into a new apartment, starting working a steady job for the summer and was busy with other things. Then I sat down to write this column and I thought about it. Am I reneging on my promise? Will I go gently into that dark night? Is the rat race going to overwhelm me and am I going to be stuck in a job I hate for the rest of my life?

Have I forgotten my art?

No.

In writing this column, I look at myself, hold up a mirror and see that I am a hypocrite. I am forgetting that an artist

who produces nothing - is nothing. An artist creates. It is the essence of an artist.

See, what those parents don't understand, and what those cutting funding from the schools don't understand and what maybe a lot of America doesn't understand is that art is what makes life worth living. Artists are the people who produce the movies we go watch, who write the songs we sing, who paint the pictures we marvel at, who tell the stories that live with us forever.

And if we don't have our artists, then we don't have anything at all.

Artists create because they need to, they have to, they're driven to. There's been a story that's been floating around in my head for over three years now. I think it would make a pretty good novel. You'll have to excuse me, I'm going to go get started. My story won't change the world, but then again, I wonder if Shakespeare knew how many people would know the words "To be or not to be, that is the question..." So who knows...

Create.
Art lives...

Hicks is a junior news-editorial and English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.