

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Once a Gopher, always a Gopher



It might as well have been a slumber party in downtown Chicago. The jaded taxi drivers even laughed with us. Five women graduates of Kewanee High School, class of '54 were making our way around the big city while acting like it was nearly 50 years ago.

It might as well have been. We have known each other since grade school. In high school, twelve of us named ourselves the Gopher girls. Our song began, "We are the Gopher Girls — we always go-fer boys!" Our children are even apt to ask, "Is she one of the Gophers?"

One recent Friday morning I hopped on the train in Galesburg, then was joined by two friends in Kewanee. After three hours of non-stop talking, we were met in Union Station by Gophers from Aurora and Oswego. This holiday excursion was an extra event. Every year the Illinois Gopher contingent meets for lunch. Later we get together for a whole week-end, but are often joined by women from Virginia, North Carolina, California and we're working on a buddy from Maryland. We haven't seen her for 45 years.

One of our group has died. Four married their high school sweethearts and are still married to them. Four of us were divorced (including the friend who died.) Our backgrounds were diverse. Three gals lived in public housing as children. Others were daughters of factory workers. Others were daughters of a doctor, lawyer, dentist, funeral director. At least three lived with single mothers. All are living well. Interestingly enough, three of the four of us who divorced grew up in two-parent homes.

We are all married.

Most of us had careers, ranging from a big shot Mary Kay representative from Moline who can wheel easily around Chicago in her pink cadillac, a psychiatric nurse, medical insurance claims representative, school teachers, insurance agency owner, arranger and leader of tours to tennis tournaments all over the world, tour guide and international expert on Inuit Indians and their art, marketing and freelance writing (me) to housewifery.

We didn't shop much. We ate lunch at Berghoff's and had huge sundaes at Marshall Fields. We wandered through Water Tower Place and were in awe of the spectacular Christmas decorations at both places and on the streets.

We even met my big brother, who works on Michigan Avenue, at the Palmer House Hotel lobby to take him back to the past. He had not seen three of the women since high school.

There is nothing as comfortable as being with friends we've known all our lives. I think we may be an unusual group — I can't remember any of us fighting about anything. We're still Gophers, but now just goin'fer our 50th high school reunion in two years. Yikes.

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