

(Our Zeta Tau Alpha Pledge Class, 1993)



## *The Beauty of Old Friendships*

By Tara Rummell Berson (Middletown, New Jersey)



*"The best mirror is an old friend." ~  
Peter Nivio Zarlenga, Author*

**T**here's something truly priceless about the friends who have known you for what feels like an eternity – your "old" friends. They're the ones who didn't come into your life for a reason or a season, but the kind of relationships that have flourished over the years and will continue to thrive until your last breath. Like a song from your past playing on the radio, old friendships can transport you to good times in your life that bring a genuine smile to your face and warm your heart.

Think back to some of the early healthy friendships you formed. While growing up, these friends became a home base you could return to – your safety net, your defender,

your shoulder to cry on, and your source of humor. Flash forward to the present: If you've been lucky enough to hold on to these relationships over the years – the people you've belly laughed with, shared dreams, disappointments and dilemmas with, took adventures with, and now looking back, celebrated all of your major life events with – you are blessed with the gift of friendship.

I was reminded of this special gift when one of my college girlfriends got married last year. Finding time to see your friends can be ridiculously hard to coordinate between work, vacation and kids' schedules, which is why I was so grateful that she did our tight-knit group a favor by deciding to get hitched! It's amazing how a happy and momentous occasion can easily bring a band back together. It's a "life moment," and that's something that old friends really don't

like to miss out on.

We're all in our early forties now, but when I'm with these girls it's easy to feel 20 again. We all pledged the same sorority together back in the spring of 1993, and it's so comforting and refreshing to be with these women. I think you feel most like yourself when you're around people who have known you for a long time. I guess that's because old friends remind you of a time when it was just you. A time before you had a career, a spouse, kids, or life's pressures to really worry about. It was just you – and them. Your chosen pack to walk through life with.

After we were fortunate enough to spend a chunk of quality time together, one of the girls said, "My face hurts from laughing. Being with you all is good for my soul."

I couldn't agree more. Between the hilarious stories we were recounting from our college days (when we were a bit more reckless and uninhibited), the old school dance moves we were busting out together on the dance floor (remember the Roger Rabbit and the Running Man?!), and the warm feeling that was flowing through our veins knowing that we really "get" (and still accept!) each other, is truly a bond that can never be broken.

I never had a sister, but these girls have felt like sisters to me. We've held each other's hands during hardships and heartache, celebrated in each other's accomplishments, and have always "shown up" whenever and wherever we were needed. Regardless of how near or far we live, or whatever life phase we're going through, these friendships have remained a stable and constant force.

Friendships like this have been cultivated over decades. The opening quote by author Peter Nivio Zarlenga ("The best mirror is an old friend.") is true. An old



(Celebrating our friend's wedding, 2015)



friend is an honest reflection of your past as well as your reality. Looking into their eyes can help you see yourself more clearly, and often no words even need to be exchanged. Their knowledge of your history, personality and patterns can help you gain perspective and fit together the pieces of your life puzzle.

When you make these friendships as adolescents, there's no way that you could even fathom all of life's ups and downs that you're going to ride through together: job pressures, marital issues, health scares, the agony of not being able to have a child, the death of a loved one...

Our life's journey may be unpredictable, but these steadfast and unfailing friendships can help you manage the uncertainty.

We can't imagine what the future holds for each of us, but we can cherish the people who have been there to help us navigate through life. These beautiful friendships will continue to provide the wind when your sail is stuck, the hope when you don't have any, the laughter when you really, really need it. While you may not be able to see or speak to these friends on a daily basis, their hearts are with you every day so you are never alone.

**Tara Rummell Berson** is a writer, editor and blogger. She's been on staff at REDBOOK magazine and has contributed to numerous national media outlets. In 2011, she launched The Crankiness Crusher™, an online platform that encourages people to focus on the big and small things that bring them happiness on a daily basis. She lives a blissfully chaotic life at the Jersey Shore with her husband, two elementary school-aged children, two dogs and a fish.

