

one dollar

CHILDREN'S

*The
Young Adult
Issue*



#4



cul-de-sac #4

January 1999

Published by

Julie Halpern

&

Liz Saidel

For correspondence or to order past issues,

-Issue #1 - The Grow Up Issue

-Issue #2 - The Obsession Issue

-Issue #3 - The Loser Issue

Send \$1 per issue/trades to:

cul-de-sac

p.o box 6074

Buffalo Grove, IL 60089-6074

or e-mail us at cul-de-sac@prontomail.com



Darlings of the **cul-de-sac** world,

We know -- it took us forever to put out this issue. Liz and I have had a lot of life going on lately which has made it difficult to do fun stuff, like the zine.

I am currently working in an elementary school library, and Liz is in graduate school to become a high school English teacher. My job provides me with enough toilet humor that I have decided to pursue a graduate degree in school librarianship. Here is an example of the typical conversation overheard in an elementary school:

Student: I'm number one!

Other Student: No- -you're number TWO!

(points to his butt)

Not only is this job rip-roaringly humorous, but I find fifth graders much more stimulating conversationalists than most guys I meet in bars. And - get this - I run the student newspaper!

With both of us in schools, this was originally supposed to be the "School Issue." However, Liz took a Young Adult literature course that really pumped her nads, and I have always got some teen angst novel going while I'm on the toilet. This led us to the YA issue.

There's much to be debated about what, or whom, young adults really are. Liz will cover her opinion of that later in this issue. Personally, I think it's the whole time period post-puberty, pre-whenever you think you've become an adult. A lot of you are still probably there.

Now sit down, and be sure to use your library voices!

Ms. Halpern



The Definition of a Young Adult

by Liz

Just by the title I have really set up quite a task for myself, haven't I? It is hard to define a *young adult* because the fact is, everybody disagrees on what the definition of a young adult is, let alone what age it starts at. Some people say you're a young adult when you start puberty. I got my period when I was ten. So that means I was a young adult when I was ten.

However, I have also heard it said that young adult can be a junior high student, or even high school graduates! Personally, I picture the young adult phase as being those ugly swan years between fourth and eighth grade. I envision the first bra, the first wet dreams, getting your period, the first real, meaningful fights with parents, first cares about popularity, etc. But those things happen to everybody at different times. A girl who doesn't start her menses until her mid-teen years still encounters many of the same issues her peers who got their periods earlier did. If she's encountering issues, even if she hasn't had her period yet, I say that makes her a young adult.

That's where it stands. You are a young adult when your own maturity dictates your encounter with particular *issues*. Stereotypically people seem to think it's in those gawky years between nine and fourteen, but everybody's maturity is different.

In terms of my own progression into young adulthood, I was physically ahead of a lot of my peers. I was towards the back of the line for photo day, and I had the biggest tits in the fifth grade though I was the last one to get a bra. I even remember thinking at the time that the *Sweet Valley High* series was aimed at grade school girls fantasizing about high school (even though I read it, knowing it was trash). That's why I found it so odd that Mrs. Swyftun told my parents that fifth graders like me weren't mature enough to be reading that series. What did she know about where I was in my development?! I mention this sore memory to prove the difficulty in defining a young adult. Maybe there were some

real nits soiled by devouring *Sweet Valley High* too early, but I have hard time believing that.

Everybody's different about when they hit whatever it is they're going to hit. Julie and I were very precocious kids in some ways, which probably set us apart from our peers in grade school. I still say it was because we were way into Split Enz, "Strange Brew," and "My Tutor" before we were even into a full year of junior high. Certainly we wouldn't be caught dead reading Beverly Cleary in sixth grade.

What exactly are the issues you encounter that define you as a young adult? Well, for that I turn to young adult novels. I took this class called the Young Adult Novel and noticed that young adult books really were more than just children's books with sex, though sex is a big issue for that age (whatever "that age" is). I read thirty young adult novels over the term and noticed some reoccurring issues and needs, including: the need for belonging (preferably to a peer group or family), beauty, organization, some type of enlightenment, search for identity, needs of wanting to love and to be loved, the need to achieve or be the best, survival, first love, sexual preference and experience, problems of good and evil, separation... This list is by no means comprehensive, but it does serve as a helpful outline for the definition of a young adult. Simply put, a young adult is someone beginning to "deal with" issues such as these.

In terms of what age you are when you become a young adult, well, you are a young adult when your own maturity level dictates it. I know, trite pseudo-philosophical answer. Oh well, so be it.

It's not like children don't think about these issues. Certainly they do! I was miserable as a child precisely because I was so precocious. (Aren't I just the shit?) A lot of kids think about this stuff early. The point is that what separates young adults from children is that these issues are bigger. They are ISSUES. But you don't know how to DEAL with them (whatever "deal with" means), so you're not an "adult." Long live the young adolescents, "transescents" and "tweenagers." They are people too! 🐾



I Love Hot Dog Days

by Julie "Wienerdog" Halpern

One of my duties as library assistant is LUNCH DUTY: I walk around the third grade lunch tables looking for evil-doers and rabble-rousers. But what I am actually doing is admiring the plethora of nauseating, yet tempting, treats that most of the kids take one bite of and throw away. We never had it that good back in the day. Come on, Lunchables? Parents are actually lazy enough (and rich enough) to buy a pre-made box of crap for their kids to eat. The most bizarre ones are the cold mini hamburgers and mini hot-dogs, complete with mini buns. Then there are the pizza/taco kits, where they get three round "pizza crusts"/tortillas, squirt pizza sauce/taco sauce, and then sprinkle cheese atop. For desert, a packet of chocolate goo is included to blop on your third crust, along with a sprinklin' of M&M's. MMM MMM good. Some of the kids get so into designing these culinary delights that they bring place-mats.

What happened to the days of bologna sandwiches and Fritos? When the most exciting thing to happen to lunch bags was Capri Sun? Sure, the contents may not have been that thrilling, but with a little imagination, we beat the crap out of Lunchables. Here are some exciting concoctions from my childhood lunches:

MEATY FRUITY FRITOS

This was a treat in first and second grade. Take one Frito, a bit of bologna and a raisin to top it off. Voila!



THE BOLOGNA BUTT:

Take one piece of bologna. Fold in half. Now fold in half again. What does it look like? Try it yourself and find out!

THE BRAIN:

This one came from Andrew Hefflefinger, a very quiet boy. He took a large, grape Fruit Roll-up, crumpled it into a ball, and said, (in a slobbery, slow voice) "Look, a brain."

A LUNCHROOM SEX GAME (CIRCA 1980):

This is a rhyming game, so pay close attention. Ask your friends what rhymes with Venus. Say penis. Then ask them what rhymes with China. Say Vagina. maybe this is where men and women *really* came from.

There were Hamburger Days, Hot Dog Days, 25¢ Nutty Buddy's and 5¢ milk. The good ol' days of simple school lunches are over. Kids these days have more complex lunches and bigger requests. Would you have had the balls at age eight to ask for a microwave and pop machine to be put in the hall? But at the same time, would you have been stupid enough to eat cold mini wieners? Now, go practice making your bologna butts. (••)



Slumber Birthday Parties Are More Trouble Than They're Worth

by Liz

Here's a secret: I remember more bad things than good about the slumber parties I had in grade school. They were always more trouble than they were worth. If you think about it, the idea of a birthday slumber party is touching. In theory, you only invite people into your house that you want to celebrate this special occasion with, people you will let go with, letting it all hang out. You're sleeping in the same room, and you might fart in your sleep! What trust. In actuality, what always happened was that everybody just got in fights. We were just invading each other's space. Perhaps this tension was created because there was no structure so late in the evening; all the games were over, no more presents to unwrap or cakeandicecream activity. Chaos was bound to erupt in that type of atmosphere. Something always got broken: a thing, a relationship, whatever.

At my party (1984) the broken thing was a brandy snifter filled with seashells. It had a bison on it and said, "Town of Buffalo Grove." Julie broke that. At Beth's party (1986) it was the leg of the table we were hiding under during all-girl strip poker. I broke that.

Beth's party was a roarin' affair. There was the big Harris Bank Lion Fiasco. Perhaps you read about it in the paper? One large, stuffed animal was lacerated and its white bead stuffing coated the basement. We misbehaved so freakishly that Beth's parents separated the people who planned to really sleep and take them upstairs. Even though I was one of the naughtiest outlaws, I still pretended I was superior and went to sleep. I made it a point to announce I needed to prepare for my soccer game the next day. Who was I kidding? I sucked at soccer.



The climax of the occasion was always a fight or some type of latent confrontation. There would be one faction in the living room and another in the TV room. Maybe that was a way to subconsciously deal with the need to want your own space when you sleep. Perhaps we weren't meant to share rooms when we sleep. One year at Katie Barry's party (1985) I just wanted to make friends with everybody, because I was only friends with Katie and not all her other friends in the "popular" group. But the rift in the complex superstructure of the *socs* was bigger than a *greaser* like me could ever imagine.

This stuff always broke out when parents had gone to bed. No supervision! Whoa, baby! Well, except for at my parties where my mom always came down every twenty minutes to tell us to shut up. I never understood that. Adults can't possibly expect any sleep with grade school females sleeping in the house.

The whole idea of girls in their bras and underwear pillow-fighting is bunk. For one thing, we were like eight. We didn't even have boobs big enough for bras until we were in fifth grade. For another thing, slumber parties don't happen in high school or college, when women have the developed body parts for the "Animal House," giggles'n'lingerie, slumber party stereotype. Sometimes I can't even stand what I call "tiny sleepovers" now. Those are when I sleep over at my boyfriend's house. Cuddling is nice, but then the appendages get in the way. I wish I had a dollar for every time I said, "Willyoujuststoptouchingme?!" I really do not like sharing a bed or covers, let alone sleeping in the same room as someone else. Whatever size a slumber party, sleeping in the same room is a bad situation all 'round. It'll all end in tears, I just know it. ♣

I'm a Bloody Mess:

A Period Piece

By Julie

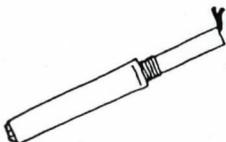
As young adults, women get to experience the joy of finding a brown, circular stain in their underwear sometime between the ages of 9 and 16. All of you boys get to experience nightly orgasms due to your raging hormones. Who's got the better deal, here? Yeah, you get messy sheets, but chances are your lazy asses never had to wash them anyway. But do you boys and men have any idea what it's really like to menstruate? Here's a blow by blow description:

If you are one of us fortunate enough to experience cramps (not everyone does, and different women do to varying degrees), you will know of your impending bloodiness several days in advance with this fine, natural warning system. Some women feel pain during ovulation (14 days before bleeding starts, when the egg is released). Personally, ovulation cramps have never been that bad. They are only foreshadowing the painful event. This is a wonderful, natural signal to begin taking ALLEVE. (Product endorsement: Alleve works amazingly on cramps. Take one or two the week before your period to get it into the system. Then take one when the real barfers start, and you should be OK.)

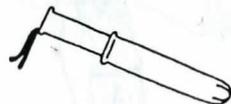
If your period is regular or you are on the pill, you can know exactly when to start wearing pads/tampons to prevent underwear stains. (Remember boys, tampons are no good when there is no blood. Too dry a cooch + tampon = pain.) When the bleeding begins, this is what you will see:



As the period progresses, the flow becomes greater. The blood will fill up a good 3-5 inches of pad length, like a pussy kiss. It is good to change your pad every 2-3 hours. Tampon changing is more guess work because you can't see how much is filled. You *do* know that the flow is heaviest on days 2-4.



A sanitary pad



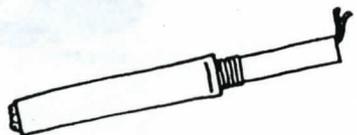
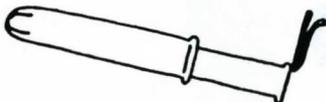
Your period can be a very painful time. I have spent many a day writhing on the linoleum tiles of my bathroom, calling out for my mother to kill me. The pain can be so strong, that you will want to excrete whatever possible from any orifice on your body. Bad cramps make you go to the toilet. My cramps could get so bad, that I would alternately throw up and pass out. I know many women suffer the same (or worse) experiences. And those who don't, I am very happy for you.

Here are some more lovelies for you boys: you can actually feel yourself bleeding. Rarely does this mean that you are conscious of rivers of blood running between your legs. Periods don't really flow at all; they drip or chunk. The dripping process can be felt by the acquisition of wetness on your pad. The chunking is far more unpleasant. This is when you will actually feel chunks of your uterine lining passing through the walls of your vagina and plunking out onto your dri-weave. Cramps often coincide with these, along with a gushy, uncomfortable feeling in your pants.

Periods smell different on different bodies, but are probably similar in the way that most B.O. is similar. The "fish smell" thing only really happens if you neglect to change your pad often enough because it's not the stuff coming out that's stinky; it's the exposure to the bacteria in the air that begins to decompose it.

While the flow is heaviest, it is sometimes difficult to sleep without fear of bloodying up your sheets. I have found that lining up two, extra-long pads is a good, preventative measure. Once the blood flow slows, it goes through what my sister and I call a "burnt sienna phase" (because it has the color of that particular crayon). The pads and tampons should also decrease in suck-ability.

Whoomp, guypriends, there it is. I just felt that you needed to know that we women go through a lot of very natural shit every month, and that makes it OK for us to talk about it whenever we need to. Remember - there are more people out there who menstruate than who don't. And if you *don't* allow me or any other woman to discuss menstruation openly, I will stick a bloody, chunky pad under your pillow. Sleep tight. 🍌



You Know My Name, Look Up the Number
by Elizabeth Ann(e) "of Green Gables" Saidel "TB!"

In third grade I added a "TB!" to the end of my name. Not tuberculosis. The Best! I'm not sure where "TB!" came from. I must have been influenced by all the buttons I was buying for my *windbreaker* that exclaimed such profound statements as "Don't ask me 4 shit" and "You can't afford me." How much does a third grader charge anyway?

I'm not sure why I did this "TB!" business. I don't want to dismiss it as some arcane "search for identity" thing, because that sounds like I was having an identity crisis. I'd like to think I was always too mature for one of those. It's just that the notion of it being called a "crisis" is unfair. Exploration is not a crisis, nor is it immature. It's just a thing. Trying on different names is like trying on different hats to see which fits you best.

I read somewhere that frequently when a character in a book changes their name, it's usually a teenager wanting to be on a new plateau in the world, like how In *The Great Gatsby* James Gatz became Jay Gatsby at seventeen. I can relate. When I got to college I wanted to be sophisticated, so I decided I would tell everybody my name was Elizabeth. Of course the first person I met I automatically told them my name was Liz.

The same way I couldn't break old habits (or take on new identities?) in college with my name, I had just as much difficulty in grade school. I added in "Quebert" as my middle name. I think maybe I played the video game twice. I just liked the name. Q! Nothing had Q's! Except for Queensryche. The funny thing was that these nicknames only appeared on my papers for class. There were a lot of quotation marks to connote that "Quebert" and "TB!" were not part of my real name. These shenanigans lasted until I didn't feel like writing all that extra stuff on my worksheets...Or until Quebert went out of vogue.

In fifth grade I decided to add an extra z to my name. I was proud that my name already had such an uncommon letter that to have an extra one made me an ultra-freak. The extra z affair ended when I made the connection between that letter and processed food. See Cheez-Wiz.

At one point Julie and I adopted citizens band names even though we didn't actually transmit private radio communication. That is, unless you count the phone. There was Tiger x4 ('cause it was TUFF) and Pinky x4 (as in the Pink Ladies). We never actually designated who was who. We just liked the idea of having the codes. The irony is that we never actually used these names in speaking situations, just in our letters we mailed to each other, spanning one block.

Now that I have a stronger sense of self I want everybody to call me the Artist Formally Known as Fat-Melt City. 🐾



P.E. IS FOR PUSSIES

BY JULIE

Beginning in junior high, PE really terrified me. That's when the long-distance running thing was implemented. I didn't know exactly what it was that terrified me about running long distances, but I could guess that it was the wheezing, sweating and vomiting that generally came with it. Now that I look back, I think I may have feared it due to my age-old fear of being trapped.

It may seem odd that running would be associated with immobility, but hear me out: I had no choice. We ran in a circle, over and over again. There was always either a time or a distance that had to be reached before we were allowed to stop. So, as you see, this fear of entrapment is very logical.

In junior high, we were tested on the twelve minute run twice a year. This was a one mile run that needed to be completed in under twelve minutes, or you had to do it again. The sheer horror of this "threat" convinced me I'd never make it and would be subjected to my own personal running hell everyday in gym class getting twelve minute and one second times. Having gym last period, I was panic-stricken all day. I was never the most in-shape girl in school, but more than that, I'm just not a long-distance runner. Once, I requested that Liz and I wake up early to prepare myself for The Run, but we only made it two blocks before I was completely worn out and ready for breakfast.

I allowed everyone to join in on my phobia, so much that when I actually completed The Run (in 11 minutes and 32 seconds, thank you very much), my class actually cheered for me. Then two classmates



threw their arms around my shoulders and escorted me into the locker room James Brown-style.

The terror didn't end with junior high. In high school, we had what were known as "fitness days," mandated by the state of Illinois to torture me. Every Tuesday and Thursday we were subjected to laps upon laps upon laps, which was apparently something to do with "fitness." Twice a year we had fitness testing where, yet again, we had that damn twelve minute mutha of a run. People in "high gym" would sprint around the track whilst I casually strolled around the outer edge. Once, just to make it through the twelve minutes, another girl and I sang the entire lyrics to "American Pie." The theory was that, being an eight minute song, there would be only four minutes left of running once we were done. Luckily my other fitness scores (flexibility, jumpability, the ability to play pickle ball...) were high enough that I always passed.

The idea of four years of fitness days was unacceptable, and I began to devise ways to get out of it. Sometimes I'd be sick and have my mom call me out. Other days my cramps would be too bad to run (that always creeps out male gym teachers). Once, I began running, then ran right out the door and hid in the bathroom. But two class periods a week is hard to get out of without getting in trouble. The heavens shone down upon me my senior year when I was put on an anti-depressant that made me too dizzy to run. I got myself a mighty fine doctor's note, and I was no longer forced to endure that claustrophobic torture we all know as running. Such a happy ending. 🍀





Plays I Have Been In

My Theater Resume

By Liz

I've always said that I've loved performing. Really I just love how people go, "Wow! You were so good!" It's just a severe case of "Look ma, no hands!" exhibitionism. It's not hard to convince people you're talented in grade or high school. The fact that you have merely enough nerve to get up on stage in front of people is sufficient to convince them you have talent; they confuse guts with skill. Here are some high points...

Second Grade

I was an Arab in "The Nutcracker." It really sticks out in my mind because earlier that night I was buying material with my mom to make a new blankie at Minnesota Fabrics.

Third Grade

I only had one line in "Wheels" about the invention of cars, and somehow I managed to flub on it. I was wearing these mega high heels my mom gave me. All I had to say was, "Darling, have you heard the latest word?" But before I even started speaking I fell over. I stepped on stage, got the heel caught in the dress, and splat!! My friends' parents still claim I was intentionally hamming it up, but even at the tender age of nine, I prided myself on snootily looking down on sight gags. Julie says she still gets the chills when she sings the words to "Thank You, Henry Ford."

Fourth Grade

I was a Glitch in "The GIGO Effect." Yes, I was a virus in a play about computers. Total cheese. I remember the main song "This is the Age of Computers." Everybody whispers it in rounds, and there was even a reprise of it at the end too. I got to wear my army fatigues and be snotty -- pretty punk rock. Check out the lyrics to our little ditty:

*"We are the Glitches and we're here to say
We're gonna cause distortion every day
We're gonna bring computers to a halt
And when the system fails it's gonna be our fault!"*

Fifth Grade

I was narrator of act two in "The Story of Music." I had my hair professionally feathered for this one! Matt Sloan was the narrator for act one, and since I had such a huge crush on him, I loved that we always had rehearsals together. Ms. Durfurt (Music Teacher of Many Wigs) finally changed it so that we had

rehearsals on different days. I was disappointed. By the way, do not confuse being the narrator in "The Story of Music" with urinating on "The Sound of Music." I actually wanted to do that when I quit a production of it at my synagogue on account of reasons relevant to artistic integrity.

Sixth Grade

I did a baton dance to a J. Geils Band song for my music class. They used to have these places in malls that provided the music to popular songs and you sang along with the song you chose. Then they give you a tape of your performance. Well I just got the instrumental part of "Flashdance (What A Feeling)" and really spiced the life up for the entire sixth grade on a weekend trip to Pleasant Valley, IL. What a passion! Make it happen!

Seventh Grade

I did a performance of "Manic Monday" with the cheesy taped instrumental music for the variety show this year. For the dress rehearsal I did the Susannah Hoffs hoop earring/black dress thing, but for the actual performance I changed my outfit at the last second. It was crazy, but I did it anyway. I did a risky one-eighty and ran onto stage with Vans shorts and a t-shirt. It was madness. Sidenote: Beth did a Steve Winwood song, but I can't say anything bad about it because she has copies of all our junior high variety shows on video tape, and it's sort of a blackmail thing.

Eighth Grade

I was Alexander Hamilton in a one-act about the constitution. During my big monologue I went improvisational, sticking the quill pen behind my ear. I also had a classic variety show experience: "Dancin' With My Mirror" by Corey Hart. A real show stopper. Beth advised me to nix the idea of performing any Suzanne Vega, and I was unsatisfied with the production qualities on the "Every Breath You Take" instrumental tape. Beth did "Live to Tell."

I have *conveniently* left out high school and college. Don't even get me started about the summer I spent at the Renaissance Fair. I am not proud. One thing I realize now is that actually, I hate performing. I spent years on speech team, acting and improv workshops, theater camps, the whole bit. Finally I realized, I just don't like it. I suck at memorizing, and I get anxious and nauseous before I go on. However, I am beginning to cultivate a certain love for the spotlight when Julie and I go to karaoke. Meet us at Lounge Ax the first Sunday night of every month! Please, no autographs. ♣



Lawrence of Arabia was Gay

by Jalle

I have often asked myself the question: What have I actually learned in school? Yeah, math, reading, writing and what not, but what have I learned that's really important? That's when I remember World Cultures, an elective course Liz and I took together our junior year of high school. It was a bizarre class where we learned about different cultures and historical events through watching really long and old historical fiction films.

Every week, broken down into forty minute chunks, we viewed such classic films as *Dr. Zhivago*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, and *The Good Earth*. This is what I recall: Lawrence was gay, Dr. Zhivago couldn't stop saying "Lara," and there were no actual Chinese people in *The Good Earth*.

We also watched *Exodus* and *The Missiles of October*, in which Martin Sheen plays President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis. This movie was soooooo boring -- just a bunch of men in suits, standing around a room, discussing. Each new day of the crisis a number would appear on the screen signifying day 2,347, or whatever, of the crisis. I like to refer to that period of the class as "nap time."

The other thing we did in World Cultures besides watch movies (or have erotic dreams about the school tuba player) was play a game about relations in the Middle East. We each had to choose a Middle Eastern country to portray. (There was a big fight amongst the class Jews as to who got to be Israel.) Liz and I chose Syria, although I don't think either of us knew why. Each country was assigned a mission; ours was to get back the Gaza strip from Israel. We could negotiate with other countries and higher powers, like the USSR and USA (played by our teacher). Liz and I pulled a fast one on Israel by telling them we knew where the PLO was. (Now I realize that none of us had any idea that the



PLO could be anywhere at any one time, but the boys over in Israel had no idea either.) For handing over the PLO's whereabouts, Israel gave us the Gaza Strip. Ha ha. We had completed our mission which left us with lots of free time to make greeting cards for all of the other Middle Eastern countries. Good public relations, you know? The game ended when our teacher realized we were all buying weapons from the USSR to bomb Israel. Not because it was Israel, understand, but because the guys *playing* Israel were major assholes.

While this class probably sounds useless, I got more out of it than most classes I've taken. I don't know how many times I've seen or heard some reference to *Dr. Zhivago* and felt just a little bit cooler knowing that I've seen that epic crap. What more could you ask for out of a class than a little coolness? ☘



My Darling, My Hamburger: The Picks

by Liz

Fact: The Golden Age of Young Adult Literature was from the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties. Perfect timing, because I was a young adult in those years. It has also been said that the start of the young adult novel movement really kicked off bigtime when S.E. Hinton printed *The Outsiders* in 1967. She printed that when she was sixteen! What the hell was I doing when I was sixteen? Certainly not publishing books. At the most I was writing self-absorbed "narrative essays." Oh, wait, I still do that. (See **cul-de-sac** #1-present.) There are so many awesome YA books. Here are some new personal faves. Although there are some classics here, I tried to explore more recent stuff, too. Hey, just keepin' ya up to date because I know it is of paramount priority to be on top of the young adult novel scene.

Blue Heron by Avi (1992)

Maggie's parents are divorced. The summer she turns thirteen she visits her father on the East coast and falls in love with a beautiful, blue heron. But then she meets Tucker, a fifth grade bully that wants to kill it! On top of that, Maggie's father has heart problems. There's all this spiritual communion with birds and talk about magic. All these fantastic ISSUES are fascinating, like terminal illness, death, divorce, crisis, judgment, personal responsibility and change. I listened to it on tape because I spend so much time in my car. (Driving, not just hanging out in the Arnold's parking lot.)

Seventeenth Summer by Maureen Daly (1942)

You might not think of YA books as being aimed at teens, but I've seen lots of books I consider adult ones on library and ALA reading lists, all classified as YA books, like *The Bell Jar*, *Song of Solomon*, etc. This makes sense because teens deal with similar issues. After all, the term is "young adult." Anyway, Angie's first love is Jack, a basketball player

who was part of the “in” crowd in high school. He is upset when she agrees to go on a date with Martin (a “fast boy!”). Although she feels strongly about Jack, his table manners are vaguely barbarian. This book’s from the forties and it shows: class rings, a soda shop, notions that all women MUST have boyfriends and that girls can’t call boys. I happened to pick a prize copy that had an on-going dialogue scribbled between unruly young adults with articulate comments such as, “I love this book hey cool” next to “This book blows!” Also, one sentence that originally read, “Feeling like a married couple, we went into a church, and he filled me with joy” was altered to read “...and he filled me with sperm.”

***Catherine, Called Birdy* by Karen Cushman (1994)**

This one’s a funny journal of a fourteen-year-old sassy English girl named Catherine in late thirteenth century England. She picks fleas off herself and despises her domestic chores. She wants to be like the birds she loves and fly away, but her greedy father tries to marry her off to any wealthy suitor just to make a buck. And in addition, all the suitors are heinously dirty. With anachronistic but satisfying women’s rights flair, she scares away many potential suitors, though it doesn’t scare away Shaggy Beard. Corpus bones! Don’t we all just want a mate who’s clean?

***Ella Enchanted* by Gail Carson Levine (1997)**

Fourteen-year-old Ella has been under a secret spell since birth where she must do whatever anybody tells her to do, or else she becomes violently ill. She befriends Prince Char and they fall in love, but she must turn down his advances; she knows that if knowledge of her secret were to get into the wrong hands, she could be harmful to his reign. The moment she refuses his hand in marriage the spell is broken, because she has finally **TAKEN RESPONSIBILITY**. It’s a Cinderella story. No really. I mean, it’s a reworking of that fairy tale, with the glass slipper, the step sisters, the whole bit. But it addresses the feminist complaint that the



well-known, Disney Cinderella character is unnecessarily subservient and a pushover. In this version, (Cinder)Ella takes control. In a true you-go-girl world maybe she wouldn't marry the guy, but I don't care that she does.

***Ender's Game* (1985) by Orson Scott Card**

Andrew "Ender" Wiggin is really just a little peacenik. But the American government selects him to save the world against the buggers in the Third Invasion, because he's a six-year-old child prodigy. What logic. This (I've been waiting patiently to use this term, but I'm ready to burst -- here it is) *Bildungsroman* (coming of age novel) tracks him through levels of suffering as he rises through the ranks in the academy. It's stocked with philosophical issues and moral tribulations. Ender's experience is mirrored by this interactive, allegorical, fairy-tale video game he plays. Oh, yeah, he comes from this genius family where he loves his sister and hates his brother, both of which are these secret political theorists that post their dissertations on-line before they even exit childhood. The book after this one is really good too, *Speaker For the Dead*, a fantastic anthropological, multicultural SF epic. There's a third one, but to avoid looking like a BIG GEEK, I'll just drop it.

***The Giver* by Lois Lowry (1993)**

This Newbery Medal, "big brother" novel is so cool. I think it mere coincidence that in my later years of grade school I got into the whole dysutopia thing, reading Orwell and Huxley, and look, now there are books written by YA authors with that theme! I was delighted to notice that the last name of the author, Lowry, is also the last name of the protagonist in "Brazil," a negative-utopian movie just like this book. In *The Giver* people cannot experience color, a sense of past, or feel pain. At twelve years, Jonas is training to be the Receiver of Memory. Daily he works with the Giver, the elder who held the position previously. Jonas is burdened with all the memories that the Giver transmits to him, painful

memories like starvation, war, and loneliness. He learns that his job is to carry memory: see color, learn history, and feel extreme emotion, being a martyr and carrying all of it for society. Jonas is distraught to learn the "Soylent Green"-esque background scoop on society. If there's only one YA novel you read in your life, make it this one.

***Habibi* by Naomi Shihab Nye (1997)**

Just when fourteen-year-old Liyana Abboud has her first kiss, she suddenly moves with her family from St. Louis to Jerusalem, her father's homeland. While she becomes more aware of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict first hand, she falls in love with Omer, a Jewish boy, which brings tension to the family. She goes veggie, makes her baggy men's shorts into a purse, and exits childhood. I bet she'd shop at Urban Outfitters.

Perhaps you will find yourself reading some of these during Teen Read Week. If you keep your eyes peeled you may find me behind some dorky Anne MacCaffrey *Pern* novel. Remember to look for a yellow piece of tape on the spine of the book, with a big, red YA on it. When you have explored these books you can then say "I Am the Cheese." 🐭



"A real prick! Two thumbs down! You'll hate him!"

-Liz and Julie, *cul-de-sac*

"He used to tell everybody how I ugly I was in junior high!"

-Rachel Ratger, Cooper Jr. High

"He grabbed my tits in the middle of class!"

-Kim Zalaff, Cooper Jr. High

"I switched lockers to get away from him."

-Beth, *The Canine Daily*

"He sexually harassed me backstage of a play; he grabbed my ass!"

-Sara Bherg, Buffalo Grove High School

Liz Saidel

Julie Halpern

Never forget an asshole.

*Scott Rubin,
The Biggest Dick on the
Planet*



In the world of mules
There are no rules.

COMING SOON.

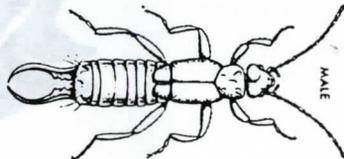
The Earwig Trilogy

Part One

By Julie

This is the first installment of what shall be known as "The Earwig Trilogy." Earwigs have always been an evil presence in my life. Even after I got over my childhood fear of insects, earwigs still remain on my freak-me-out list. Perhaps it's their wiggly antennae, their great speed or their pinchers. Or perhaps they're just nasty beasts, waiting to take me away in the night. In any case, enjoy this segment of the trilogy, and look for the other parts in upcoming issues of **cul-de-sac**.

My junior year of high school, I became increasingly incapable of sitting through my classes. It became so bad, I was put on a homebound program where I didn't attend school. I went a couple afternoons a week to take tests and get help with my calculus. My tutor (not to be confused with the 80's tittie flick of the same name) is just a tiny blur in my memory. We met in a tiny, cubic room hidden deep within the bowels of the library. This room encompasses all of my claustrophobic nightmares. There were no windows to the outside, only one that led to a hallway, covered in a heavy, mustard curtain. As the tutor would prepare to leave me alone to take an exam, I began to notice earwigs peeking out from crevices in the floor and walls. It would only be a short while before she left, and they were able to free themselves and torture me. Seconds after the door was closed, earwigs seeped out of the nooks and crannies, raining down from the ceiling. One of the heinosisities of earwigs is that they provide a constant fear that one will

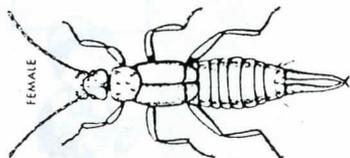


decided to unstick itself from the ceiling and drop onto my head.

With all of the earwigs closing in on me, my panic attacks raged big time. Normally, I would rush to my safe haven: The Toilet. However, the nearest toilet was solely for the in-school daycare program. I was told specifically by my tutor that using these toilets was a no-no. Was this to protect the innocent kiddies from accidentally stumbling upon unsuspecting freshman lighting up? Or could it have been to protect the high school students from the way that kids so adorably love to look underneath stall doors? The power of the earwigs was so strong that I broke down and broke the law and used the kiddy potties. Of course, I chose the perfect time because as soon as I undid my pants, a troop of tots waddled in. What could I do? The jig was up! I had to make a break for it. As I opened the stall door, a hagish teacher glared at me. I mumbled something about being on homebound and earwigs and stumbled my way out.

To this day, earwigs haunt me. I couldn't believe it when I was in the bathroom in Australia (you know, that one bathroom they have?) and there was an earwig! Half way around the fucking world, and there was an earwig! It makes sense, though, considering the bloody Brits imported the earwigs to America and Australia. It's no wonder the English rub me the wrong way.

Stay tuned to **cul-de-sac** for more earwig terror! 🐛



**Rite of Passage, Shmite of Passage:
My Bat Mitzvah
by Aliza Saidel**

Most cultures have some convention for initiating the youth into adulthood, a rite of passage. Some cultures send the kids out into the wilderness and tell them to come back in x amount of days. You become an "adult" merely by learning how to survive...if you survive. Now that's an authentic initiation into adulthood because you actually become an adult during the rite of passage. Unfortunately in Judaism a rite of passage is something other people say turns you into an adult, which frequently makes it meaningless. Just because you go through some ceremony doesn't mean that suddenly you're an adult. Ceremonies don't automatically propel you into adulthood, events do. And usually it takes more than one. I never actually had a singular event that made me an adult, and I suppose it stands to reason; somebody told me once that the American rite of passage lasts many years.

One of those imposed "rite of passage" ceremonies for me was my bat mitzvah at age twelve. That's the Jewish coming-of-age ceremony for females. I read some holy scripture in front of an audience without getting my lips caught on my braces, chanted a bit, the rabbi said some nice things about me in front of everybody, then I ate with my friends and family while listening to cheesy music and everybody gave me gifts. I had a good time.

But what was the significance of it? It wasn't that I didn't understand the significance of a bat mitzvah. I did. I went to Hebrew and Sunday school for several years, learning and studying about it. It's just that a bat mitzvah was a situation created by adults to "propel" me into adulthood. At twelve? Me, an adult? Who's an adult at TWELVE?! I know my parents meant well, and I am thankful for the wonderful attention. But I think what my bat mitzvah really meant to me was lots of gifts, obligatorily written thank you cards, and most importantly, graduation from Hebrew school! Ra! Ra! Ra! 🎉

**The Undeniably Entertaining Aspect of
My Bat Mitzvah
by Liz**

My Haftarah portion (that's the part of the Torah when you conduct the service) was about the guy who was going to kill his on with a knife because God told him to. Then one of His inkies came down to cancel the affair. Now that's a sick joke. I had this freakish tutor to learn this portion in Hebrew. She wore purple and gold eye shadow. Also, she was big on stirrup pants. She got it into her head that I loved Torahitic study and presented me with a comic edition of it. A real page-turner. She had me chant my Torah portion along with the tape she made me. It's out now with a rare, William Orbit Stereo Odyssey remix.

The party (Algourer's, Glenview, IL) was perfectly absurd. I loved it. It had a theme! Musicals. I fancied myself quite the espian, all because my voice teacher of three years had me do show tunes and the fact that I had spent the previous summer at theater camp where all the cabins were named after Broadway plays. Other potential theme ideas were Corey Hart, decorating my locker, and modeling clothes in front of the mirror.

I wore a blue dress and matching pumps (from the Style Shop, Highland Park, IL, known as the bat mitzvah store). My hair was permed and short. We had everybody sign a blown-up photo of me cheerleading (yes, for the park district, the truth is out now) with their mazol tovs. We gave out picture frames shaped like director's clapboards to tell people where to sit. My mom gave specific instructions to the band, telling them I said no Barry Manilow (because I thought he was a geek) and no Corey Hart (because I thought he was a god). I spent some of my gift money on Madonna 12"s. And that's that.

By the way, there's that whole "Star Wars"-themed bar mitzvah (guys are "bar") in "Deconstructing Harry." Well, I have to tell you that in 1982 my brother actually had the original "Star Wars" bar mitzvah. He had posters mounted in silver-painted rock as centerpieces and white chocolate droids. So don't EVEN start. 🎉



LORD OF MY FLIES

BY JULIE

How desperate can one teenager become when seeking companionship? Desperate enough to fall in love with a little boy in a book that gets killed. The psycho teen is me, and the character is Simon from Lord of the Flies. My love for him was so great that he even showed up in my diary. Here is an actual excerpt from December 1, 1989:

Simon is a character in a book I'm reading for Lit/Comp called Lord of the Flies. I fell in love with him. I don't know why. I think it started at this part of the book where he walked away from everyone and sat by himself, thinking. Also, his long, black hair intrigued me. But I had to find out if he was going to die because it just seemed like something logical that would happen. So I asked someone who read the book. They said yes. I have this horrible feeling in the pit of my stomach. I was reading through some of the questions the teacher asked us, and one of them mentioned "Simon's death." Without thought, I threw [the paper] on the floor. I can't believe I'm in love with a character in a book. He's a character in a book and there is no one in the world that is him and that makes me sad.

So there you have it, folks. Almost as touching as a Judy Blume novel, and only slightly less perverse. I wonder if Simon and I would have hooked up if he didn't die. Or if he was of legal age. Or if he was real... 🍷



MUSICAL GOODS I BROUGHT TO SCHOOL

BY LIZ

For someone who just wanted to be normal I sure knew how to draw attention to myself. I always had to have some medium for playing music. I don't mean I was this talented musician who could play any instrument. I mean that I had to have something to listen to music on at all times, even if what I was listening to was Huey Lewis or the "Vision Quest" soundtrack. Now I look back and question my ability to be discriminating about musical choice. But then I just liked showing off my tape player.

In fourth grade I had a one-speaker tape deck. It went well with the terry cloth wrist guards and Journey "Frontiers" t-shirt. In fifth grade I brought this huge, two cassette "ghettoblaster" to school (Julie's little sister thought a "ghettoblaster" was a gun, har). I made a tape just for the occasion, because I couldn't sleep the night before. Scandal was on it. (What happened to them? "Goodbye to You" was a really good song.) Anyway, that was the year *everybody* brought their BOOMBOXES to school.

In sixth grade I played it cool. I brought a walkman to school. I even wore it while the orthodontist put my braces on (me, not himself). At the end of sixth grade my teacher gave me an award that read "For Liz, With Walkman Fever."

Bringing all this equipment to school was really about wanting to be a rock star, the coolness archetype. Yeah, I've always wanted just to be normal as in the normal that means "healthy and not screwed up developmentally." But at the same time I wanted to be the cool kid, the special, talented one. Blasting music, even if it's not my own, was the closest I could come to being that cool rock star figure, because I couldn't play any real instruments. Don't you think I'm extra cool for listening to Huey Lewis? 🎧



Fantasy Creeps

By Julie

Fantasies were a prevalent, perverse presence in my young adult life. I swear that every night after I'd watch a TV show, I'd go to bed fantasizing about, well, what I thought what having sex was like. The thing is, as a non-sexually active young adult, the only thing these sexual fantasies were were images taken from films I saw. It was always some skinny, well-dressed version of me doing "it" with a guy. But there was no "it." I don't even think I got naked in these fantasies, and I sure as hell never pictured a guy naked. I spent many a Saturday night writing soft-core love stories for my friends encompassing much of what I thought was sex and what was sexy, but very rarely through descriptive images; it was all a bunch of "made out"s and "you have sex"es. Here are some examples of sexual fantasies I shared with friends in my young adult life just to show you how diluted and uninformed sexual situations are pre-experience.

Foreign Sexpots (circa 1988):

This was a letter-writing thing where Liz and I (I also did this with other friends because it was sooooo fun!) pretended we lived in other parts of the world with various members of our dreamboat obsessions. My list was pretty long, including Bono, Michael Hutchence (RIP), and various boys from Buffalo Grove High School (and those who went there - they're not who you think!); Liz usually spent her time married to Corey Hart. The letters would tell of sex romps on the beach, sex romps in castles, romantic dinners, and what kind of underwear our boys were wearing.

Passing these letters had to be very secretive; if anyone got ahold of them - oy! The embarrassment!. Another friend I played the game with, Denelle, and I came up with a system of using discrete, brown envelopes. Part of the juiciness of it all was being passed a brown envelope while in school and having no one see what you were reading.

Quizzes for Pervs (circa 1989) :

Denelle and I (obviously a perverted team) used to give each other these grody sex quizzes about what we'd do in situations with the boys we liked. I remember one of them I wrote for her had a multiple choice answer of "You give him a blow-job." What the fuck was I

thinking? Number one: I know I didn't really know what that entailed. Number two: Is that really something I thought was sexy to do to a 14-year-old guy? Number three: Shouldn't that be part of *his* fantasy?

Get this - my dad found the quiz! He tried to reprimand me for writing such a thing, but what do you say to your 13-year-old daughter when all she's doing is *writing* perverted things? I think the best advice he could've given me was to keep at it - I could make a lot of money with those things one day.

The Top Songs to Fuck to List by Liz and Julie (circa 1987):

I don't remember the specifics (Corey Hart and U2, I'm sure), but they were probably songs that we thought had sexy rhythms or panting or something.

Interestingly enough, it is rare that music plays a part in my actual sexual situations of today. It's just that sex to chosen music just turns into this fake, ooh-we're-trying-to-be-sexy situation.

Sure, sex is a super-fun thing to a 12-year-old when it's as basic as we made it -- no pregnancy, no diseases, no wondering if he'll call and, really, no penetration. Even "honest" portrayals of sex in pop culture never really say how things feel or show how they're really done. Sometimes I think my sex life was better pre-sex life. Even dry-humping, which is really like masturbating with a partner, had a sexy, fantasy-like element to it. Nothing I've had since young adult-hood has really blown my mind more than my mind can blow itself. The sad thing is, you can never go back once you've had the real thing. No matter how many times I'll try to go back and get off on Judy Blume's *Forever*, I can't help but think this: AS IF ANY FEMALE HAS EVER HAD AN ORGASM THE FIRST TIME SHE DOES IT. And if Judy Blume was supposed to be our tell-it-like-it-is young adult writer, then maybe the way it is for Judy aint the way it is for the rest of us. ☹



Are You There God? It's an Interview with Dana Goodman! By Liz

Julie and I went to see *What Every Girl Should Know*, *An Ode to Judy Blume* opening night at the Annoyance Theater. I loved it so much that I refused to get up to go pee even though I really had to go. This funny and touching interpretation of three Judy Blume novels delighted audiences in Chicago, reenacting scenes from *Deenie* and *Forever*. Dana Goodman was excellent as awkward tweenager Margaret in *Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret*, exploring issues of puberty and religion. Oh, the triumph of finally getting your period! I had a nice chat with Dana on the phone about her experiences in the play and her own young adult issues at that awkward time of life as well.

Liz: Why those three stories?

Dana: Me and another girl [the girl who played Deenie, Dana's roommate] begged the director for the show for a year. We came with the idea for Judy Blume and the director basically picked the plays...It's [the play] about three different episodes, the *Margaret*-period thing, *Deenie* and being popular, and *Forever*, about sex...*Forever* was the book with the parts you pass around school.

What was your experience with audience reaction (during the play and after)?

The show that turned us into rock stars. In rehearsal we'd question whether it was funny. We didn't think people would laugh. But the opposite happened. The first night we sold out and turned 150 people away...They loved it. Judy Blume is such a magnet. The show rocks. Every night the audience is different. It adds a new experience for me...People laugh at different things every night. There's a total energy in the crowd, different each week. It's awesome to be part of. In a way it's hard while we're up there performing. Each audience finds different things funny each week.



...e say a line and pause, the laugh won't come. Each week we have to plow through not expecting a laugh.

...o you get paid?

...o, but every agent and their mothers and fathers are there; that's what pays off. And I'm noticed everywhere I go.

...hat do people say?

...Margaret?!" One group took pictures with me. I was like, c'mon, I work in a bar.

...ave you had any goofy auditions?

...McDonald's commercial. I had to be a Cubs fan outside of Wrigley Field to catch Sammy Sosa's ball. It was retarded. They took us into a room and we had to fight over a ball, which shows that it takes no talent for a commercial. You just have to be what they're looking for.

...ny horrific period (or otherwise teen/young adult) experiences do you want to share?

...was the last one to develop. I got my period junior year of high school. The doctor said it was because I had no body fat. By the time I got my period it was no big deal because I had gone through it with all my friends. I'd heard all their horror stuff. They'd already moved on to other things like boys.

...id you have any parallel stuff as Margaret physically, events, or mental development?

...ONE. I had a difficult time playing her. I came from a very different family. My director told me, "Pretend you come from a normal family..." I was awkward...I played around with Margaret a lot. Her biggest issue was "Am I normal?" I was the last one to go through that.



Are You There God? It's an
Interview with Dana Goodman!

How did you end up with that character?

The director hand-picked. There were no auditions. Even though I have huge boobs, she said, "Let's keep it in the show."

Was that intentional [the comedy of an actress playing Margaret having huge boobs, even though Margaret was flat-chested]?

Oh, yeah. I mean, I have thirty-six C boobs...It was an adult take on it.

Did you have a different reaction to the book now than you did as a kid?

When I read it as a kid I thought it was something I shouldn't have been reading. When I read it as an adult I thought it was funny.

Because it was kitschy or because it was really funny?

No, it's a funny, great book. It reaches thousands of people who don't have anybody to talk to. When I met her [Judy Blume came to see the show] she said that people went up to her crying and telling her it changed their lives.

What's your favorite Judy Blume book?

Are You There was my favorite growing up. Then again, *Forever* and *Wifey* were my favorites. We stole them from my friend's older sister and folded down the pages.

Starting January fifteenth, *What Every Girl Should Know, An Ode to Judy Blume* is slated to run for another six months at The Annoyance Theater on Friday nights. ♣



The Bus Driver Vs. The Truck Driver

By Julie "Potty Mouth" Halpern

I've always had a potty mouth. I was the first one amongst all my friends to swear. Beth still reminds me of the day: We were probably five years old and playing in Beth's basement. Somehow we lost a pencil of her sister's, which in Beth's house is akin to murdering and eating a small child. Frantic, I blurted out "Bullshit!" Although used incorrectly, it was a monumental occasion for us all.

Of course because I "sound like a truck driver" [thanks, Mom], I was ultimately setting myself up for some authoritarian confrontation.

I was riding the bus home in sixth grade when this punk-ass fourth grader started making fun of me. He was just one of those pure evil folks that was mean for mean's sake, so I don't even remember what he was saying that time. But I was sick of it, so I told him to fuck off. (As you can see, my swearing had matured to using appropriate swears in appropriate situations.) He kept razzing me, so I yelled, "Fuck off!" Apparently, our bus driver was in some world war against people who swore a lot because he screeched the bus to a halt, jerked back the parking brake and stormed to my seat at the back of the bus.

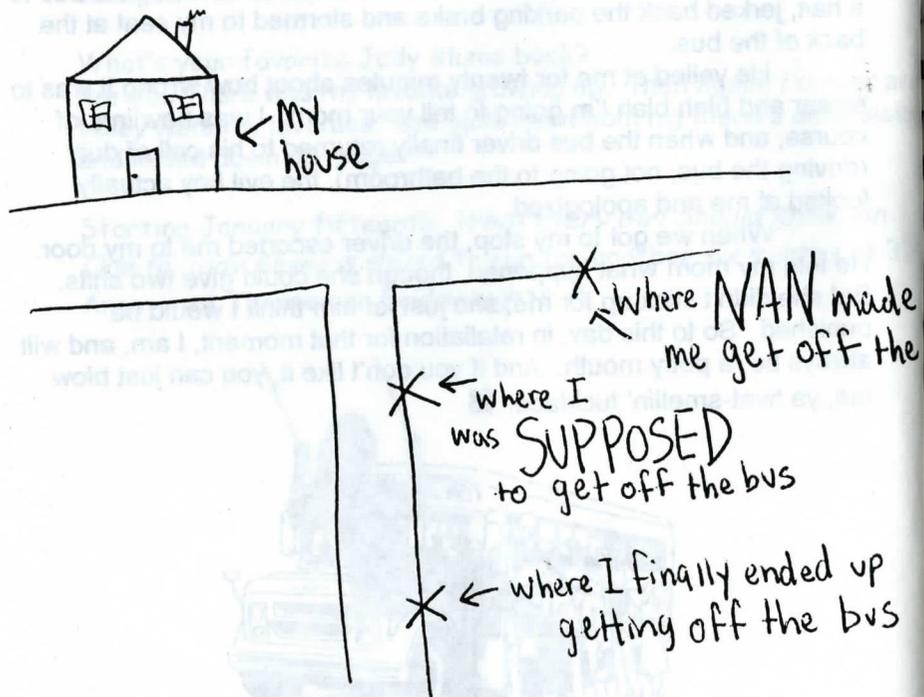
He yelled at me for twenty minutes about how wrong it was to swear and blah blah I'm going to tell your mom. I was bawling, of course, and when the bus driver finally returned to his call of duty (driving the bus, not going to the bathroom), the evil boy actually looked at me and apologized.

When we got to my stop, the driver escorted me to my door. He told my mom what happened, though she could give two shits. But she didn't stick up for me; she just let him think I would be punished. So to this day, in retaliation for that moment, I am, and will always be, a potty mouth. And if you don't like it, you can just blow me, ya twat-smellin' fuckface. (👊)



Liz's Controversial Bus Stop Treat or "I Got a Rep to Protect"

All I wanted was to be normal in fifth grade. I just wanted to come home from a hard day of school to eat Fruit Roll-Ups, Ding-Dongs and Gatorade. Instead I had a daily battle with a psycho bus driver, Nan. On the way home she wouldn't let me off the bus with the other kids at my stop. First she would let everybody else off. Then she rounded the corner for me. It was really embarrassing, and I will never forgive her. The set-up was like this:



Everyday I tried to get off the bus with everybody else to avoid being made fun of for being singled out. Nan yelled at me to get back on the bus, and I'd just run away. Somewhere along the way my parents got called about the whole thing, I guess because They (the school/the Man/the Nan) were simultaneously a) worried about my safety and b) bent on destroying me.

The whole thing went on for days until my mom finally wrote me a permission slip to get off the stop earlier than my originally designated stop. The top of the note said, "From the Drawing board of Midge" with a palette and a brush. I'm sure that wasn't the official notice the school was looking for. My reasoning for getting off a stop earlier was that I'd rather walk an extra block than have everybody staring at me. All I wanted was to be like everybody else. But there's always something that has to single me out for awkwardness. Just another case of the Nan trying to keep me down. 🐛



A Chorus Line

by Liz

Chorus was always a part of my life until high school. Here's a brief history of my choral career with rare behind-the-scenes juice. In grade school it was optional. I liked it enough to give up recess for it. Performances were for all the other students having lunch, always a captive audience. In junior high, chorus was a class. It was always a good creative outlet in the middle of the day, but sometimes we had early morning practice. Everybody loves a good sing, but not at 7:30 A.M. Once in seventh grade I came to early morning practice the wrong day and walked in when the eighth graders were practicing. They stared at me. I felt like an ass. Included here are titles of some of the songs performed, in case you would like to reenact a prepubescent singalong. I had no shame. I'd sing anything.

I Can Sing a Rainbow

This was a cute one listing colors. Pretty flaky if I don't say so myself. But the teacher thought it was so pretty that we had to do it in both fifth and sixth grade.

Theme from Fame

What was great about this one were those parts where they just go "remember remember remember" over and over. We actually performed that part. We had to make it sound like our voices were getting softer while the teacher kept hitting the piano keys on each syllable.

Eye of the Tiger

I'm sure *Survivor 4-ever* was scrawled on folders across the land. All I have to say is that this song is surreal with piano accompaniment.

May the Sun Shine In Your Heart

The sheet music claimed it was from the Donnie and Marie Osmand Show, but the song seemed pretty obscure. One part at the end of it had a note reading: *turns jazzy/rocky*. I was bummed that our teacher ignored that direction. I really wanted to ham it up *jazzy/rocky*. Turn that mutha out!

Fifty Nifty United States

"...And the 13 original colonies" -- that was the snappy chorus. We had to memorize all the states in alphabetical order for this one. The one time I found this useful was at a college party. I was the real life of the party, because I also recited a hundred prepositions a different teacher made me memorize that same year as this Fifty Nifty business. But I don't have a song about the prepositions.

Grease Medley

We did this one as the performance group New Radiance or New Dawn or New Balance or whatever. It was an extracurricular gig in eighth grade in addition to chorus. The only difference was that there was some vague choreography. It had a few of the well-known songs, but really it had all the lame ones, like the stuff they played behind the dialogue at the dance. Is it not the young girls dream to perform "Hopelessly Devoted to You ?!" No, we had to sing "Rock'n'Roll Party Queen." Nobody likes that one! That's an incidental, background song!

The Rhythm of the Night

I would much rather have done "Who's Johnny?" from the "Short Circuit" soundtrack instead. If you're going to do El Debarge, do it right, I always say.

A good singing voice meant a bizarre combination of sounding breath-y yet audible. Sweet. Demure. Whispery. Not full. Nobody had that kind of confidence or ability except for one girl ahead of us in junior high who went on to record a Hanukah album. If I was in a chorus now I'd really like to do memory cue songs like the Fifty Nifty business -- things that help me remember stuff. I'm still on the lookout for cute little ditties about measurement conversion or all of the expressway exits. However, please don't try to book me for gigs now, because I have hung up my choral shoes. ♪



SKITMANIA!!!

By Dulcinea Halpern

I have always loved class presentations because they gave me permission - practically forced me - to showcase my rarely seen exhibitionist self. Being a shy kid with a Liza Minelli waiting to burst out, I used class presentations as opportunities to show a little weirdness. (Side note: I now use Karaoke in this way. You can find me and Liz at Lounge Ax on Lincoln the first Sunday of every month.) Here are some skits I, shall we say, "starred" in:

Don Quixote Disco:

Five years of Spanish made me obsessed with the strange story of Don Quixote - a nut with a fat little side-kick named Sancho Panza who chased windmills and was in love with a hag named Dulcinea (also my Spanish class name). In this skit, I played Don Quixote as he traveled forward in time to the 1970's. I don't know how much Spanish was actually spoken, but I did get to wear a fake mustache and dance to "Stayin' Alive."

European Vacation Train Ride:

I went through a (way too) long period where I watched *National Lampoon's European Vacation* over and over again. I used the vast knowledge I acquired from this fine feat of cinema to create a stupid Spanish skit. Picture me, two other 8th grade girls, and Justin Mandell, token class metalhead. There we are on a train (two sets of chairs, facing each other), reenacting the scene where Rusty sings some song from his Walkman, Audrey pops her gum, Ellen crinkles her newspaper and Clark gets annoyed. In Spanish.

Harry Caray in Times Square:

In fifth grade, my friend (a crazed Cubs fan) and I had to do a book report on *A Cricket in Times Square*. Since, undoubtedly, I didn't read it, the friend wrote a skit where Harry Caray interviews characters from the book. Probably because of my knack for doing stupid voices (I do a mean Charleton Heston), I got the part of the late Mr. Caray. The teacher was so impressed, she had us videotape it.

Hot for *Norskmanner*:

My Norwegian class in college offered lots of opportunities for total retard-om, probably because it's such a goofy, yet sexy, language. Our assignment was to do a fashion show using our new knowledge of colors and clothing. As noted in *cul-de-sac* #2, I quite fancied my Norse TA. I donned a black wig, crazy make-up (OK, fine, I only had on lipstick), and a stupid dress. I paraded into the classroom as we blasted "Hot for Teacher" from the boombox. I always wondered if my TA got that.

I miss the days of skits. It was like being forced to write a play and act in it all in same half hour. I think talent scouts should start scoping out Norwegian classrooms for future stars. So you don't miss me, I'll be the one in the lipstick. 🍷



Reading Is Fundamental

by Jalle, Library Lady

The End of Alice

By A.M. Homes

I read about this book in the newspaper several months before it was actually released because of its controversial content. It's the story of a middle-aged (or older?) man in jail for pedophilia. Written from his perspective, he begins receiving letters from a 19-year-old woman who is lusting after a 12-year-old boy. Sometimes the book follows her story as she works on seducing the boy, the old pervert dreaming about it lustily.

This is not a book to read while eating or in any public place. So much of it is nasty and cringe-worthy, yet I was drawn to it every free moment I had. One of the most intriguing facts is that the book was actually written by a woman. I don't know which is worse, her pervness for writing such a book or mine for reading it.

I have to give away a significant part of the book in order to discuss what I feel is the overall theme of the work. The 19-year-old woman does, indeed, succeed in seducing the boy. But what begins as a powerful situation for her, turns into a fuck-fest for the boy. Not only is he getting off, but the freak in jail gets off at the thought of it. The point made is that **WOMEN ALWAYS GET FUCKED**. It's a striking way to get that message across, but I could really understand that point of view.

Read this book, if only to have something to discuss with me if we ever run into each other at a bar. It's quite a fascinating read. And then I don't have to feel like such a psycho pervert for being the only person I know to have read it. 📖





TAKE JULIE AND LIZ TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL REUNION!

THIS IS A **cul-de-sac** CONTEST OPEN TO ANY OF OUR READERS WHO ARE AT THAT POINT IN THEIR LIVES WHEN THEY NEED IMPRESSIVE DATES. PRETEND WE'RE **15-YEAR-OLDS!** PRETEND WE'RE OLD CLASSMATES WHO'VE HAD SEX CHANGES! PRETEND WE'RE HOT, FOREIGN WOMEN! WE'LL PROVIDE THE ACCENTS IF YOU PROVIDE THE BUFFET! MEN OR WOMEN -- IT DOESN'T MATTER! JUST WRITE OR E-MAIL US TELLING US WHY WE SHOULD GO TO YOUR REUNION. WRITE US AT:

cul-de-sac

PO box 6074

Buffalo Grove, IL 60089-6074

cul-de-sac@prontomail.com



SEE YOU ON THE DANCE FLOOR!

