

Sandie

“You ready?”.

“Yes. Down to the second pier and back?”.

“Two miles each way. I’m ready so lets go” Sandie said and we put on our swimming goggles and ran into the sparkling freezing cold Manhattan Beach surf. We jumped through the first breaker. “This is really cold” I said as I surfaced. “You are just a wimp. Keep on swimming.” Sandie said as she plunged through the second breaker. We swam out beyond the surf, about 500 yards and then started our swim south toward the first pier. Sandie was a great swimmer and a wonderful looking girl. It was 1960 and we were sophomores at Gardena High School. Stroke, stroke, stroke breath right. Sandie was right there swimming about six feet away. Stroke, stroke, stroke breath left. About six feet away was a beautiful gray dolphin swimming effortlessly next to me. It veered towards the shore to play in the surf. We passed the first pier and Sandie was right by my side swimming with her extraordinary smooth stroke almost as effortlessly as the dolphin.

At last we reached the second pier and Sandie rolled over onto her back and slashed me. I asked, “Did you see the dolphin that was swimming with us?” She had and said, “He or she was amazing. It went to play in the waves.” We rested for a minute and then started back. The current was running south so the swim back was much harder and by the time we got back to where our towels were on the sand we were tired but happy and excited. We swam to where the surf was forming and made our egress with a wave shooting forward like a race boat listening to the vociferous thunder of the surf. It was as if it were saying *good job, I’ll see you tomorrow.*

We grabbed our towels and dried off and then laid down and waited for the rest of our group to arrive. We were both cheerleaders and this was the beginning of the summer vacation. We arrived at the beach at nine in the morning for our daily swim. Today was Wednesday our cheerleader practice at the beach. Practicing at the beach on the sand meant that if we dropped one of the girls she would not get hurt.

Sandie was six feet tall and she liked to do things with me because I was six foot three. She really did not like to be inches taller than her companion. Sandie had short light brown hair, blue eyes and a really nice figure for a 17 year old. I was tall and slender at 165 pounds. We were friends and that was all, at least to start. Sandie loved to wear three inch high heels which made her the same height as I was. When we went out places I would always have to stand as straight as possible or she would be taller than I.

There were eight regular cheerleaders and four kids trying out for the squad. At the beach we would practice our jumps and rolls. The one we practiced the most was the jump and catch. The girl would run towards the boy who would make a nest with his arms for her to jump into. This was not all that hard for the little girls but Sandie and I needed all the practice we could get. Sandie was 130 pounds of high speed freight racing at me at full speed. She would launch herself into the air and I would attempt to catch her. This did not always work and we would go head over heels into the sand. "Didn't quite catch me that time." Sandie would say as she brushed the sand out of her hair. "You were too high and too fast." I said and she would laugh and smile at me. "OK lets try it again." The team would all line up and make it look easy as the girls jumped and slipped into the arm nest. Then the boys would gently throw the girls up a little and they would spin horizontally and manage to contort themselves so they landed on their feet holding the hand of the boy. "Ra Ra team". We had a litany of phrases we would shout out as the girls picked up their pam pams and shook them with delight.

We did pyramids with four guys on all fours on the bottom then three girls and then one girl at the top. Sandie would stand on the backs of the three girls and wave her pam pams high above and then jump down and roll. This was pretty easy on the sand but you had to do it just right when we were on the track during a football game.

Summer was fun and we tried to go swimming every week day. Sandie and I would swim then get something to eat and then she would drive us home. She had her fathers 1958 red and white Corvette which her dad let her drive all the time. She loved to feel the wind in her hair and she drove a little too fast most of the time but we were young and we loved it. I would ask, "Should I

drive?” knowing what her response would be. “No I’ll drive I can get the Corvette and it will be fun.” Everything was fun with Sandie. She liked to have fun but she was really a very focused young woman. She had a 3.9 grad-point average and she was very competitive and was always trying to beat my 4.0. She never did beat me and she graduated number two in our class.

We would go out to movies or a dance and she would always kiss me good night, but it was always a pretty platonic kiss and I never thought of us a going together. We went out and had fun.

When we started our senior year we started thinking about college and our SAT test. We had both taken the pre-SAT test as sophomores and done very well but now it was the real thing and we both studied hard for the test. The SAT is really a hard test to study for as it encompasses so much between the math and language tests. The SAT took over three hours and it was the hardest test we had taken. Sandie and I did very well with scores that would get us into almost any college. Sandie wanted to go to an eastern college and applied to all of the best ones. She and I had each received the California high achiever scholarship and all we had to do was send out resumes and wait for the results.

Half way through senior year thing between us changed and her good night kiss lasted longer and was much more passionate. We gradually became much more than friends and as school came to an end we were boy friend and girl friend.

Now it was summer again and we had our diplomas and we knew where we were going to college. I was going to UCLA and she was going to Harvard. She wanted to become a physiologist and after four years at Harvard she transferred to Stanford for her masters degree.

All during summer we went to Manhattan Beach and swam and tanned. She drove the Corvette and we kissed and hugged and experimented like kids did. Still the ever present realization that come the end of summer we would be separated; she would go east and I would stay west.

Finally the day came when she had to leave. Her mother and father and I drove her downtown to the Central Station to catch the train to the east. She had tears in her eyes as she kissed me and said, "I love you, I really do. Promise you will write to me every day." I kissed her back one long kiss and said, "I will write. I promise." but we both know we were not really in love. We were the best of friends and we would keep in touch as the years passed but we were not and would not be lovers.