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Topic: Fear or Connections

Old Friends

I miss my old friends

'Cause they know when I need them the most

I made some new friends and they're cool friends

But they don't know

What I do, what I got, who I am and who I'm not

I miss my old friends

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(Excerpt from Lyrics by Jasmine Thompson)

As the plane touched down in Oakland, I was thrilled to return to my beloved Bay Area where I resided from my late twenties to mid-forties.

My husband and I had visited from Colorado three years earlier, but this was the first time going back on my own.

Waiting outside the airport in the brilliant midday sun, I was greeted by my friend Andrea (aka "Renny") in her bright blue all-electric Chevy Volt. We drove to her colorful house, situated on a hill with fantastic views of San Francisco and the bay. The scene was completed by a dog named Cinnamon, Hawk-eye (a vibrant chartreuse and green parrot) and her husband Tobin.

After three days of reminiscing in the East Bay, I had an equally wonderful time in San Francisco, staying in a gracious, shabby-chic Victorian in Pacific Heights with Barbara, another old friend. Museums and dinners at Japanese, Italian and French restaurants colored this time.

And now, returning from my trip, I came back with a new insight. The years I had spent in the Bay Area were life-forming years where I met exceptional women, and, through our late twenties, thirties and early forties, we navigated our lives together.

Single and unformed in the beginning, we took the world by storm. Landscape architects and architects, we all had common interests and careers. And there were parties, dinners, marriages, divorces and children.

I first met Renny when she employed me as an apprentice in her landscape firm. She had decided at age 20 that she would open her own business and there it was! Born and raised in Berkeley, California, she on her way to a thriving career.

Kathleen, from the more low-key environs of Manhattan, Kansas, came to Berkeley after college to create a new life. Working for Renny initially as a landscape architect, she quickly became a part of the group.

Kathleen's best friend from college, Barbara, was another essential member. Also schooled as a landscape architect, she was inventive and clever, re-creating herself as a developer and property manager.

Renny eventually took a job at the U.S. Park Service, working on high-level projects in San Francisco. Kathleen became an architect and found her niche in upscale residential design in affluent Marin County. Always the wheeler-dealer, Barbara now manages properties in San Francisco and Nantucket.

Our lives have changed but we remember clearly the events and moments that we experienced together. Dinners out, parties and drinking, children before marriage, wild weddings – we did it all. The shared history of those years still connects us.

I am grateful I have new “old” friends in Boulder who will journey with me through the next and final years of my life. But, oh, how I miss my old friends.

*Old friends, pitching pennies in the park
Playing croquet 'til it's dark, old friends
Mmm old friends, swapping lies of lives and loves
Pitching popcorn to the doves, old friends*

*Old friends, looking up to watch a bird
Holding arms to climb a curb, old friends
Old friends, lord when all my work is done
Bless my life and grant me one, old friend
At least one, old friend*

(Old country song sung by Willie Nelson and Roger Miller)