

A blast from the past

MY HIGH SCHOOL CONSEQUENTIAL

It's about a three-hour drive to my old high school — from Calgary straight up Highway 2 to Edmonton. It's all rolling prairie meets big blue sky, but Edmonton starts about half an hour sooner than it used to. The fields at the edge of town where we'd drink warm beer, puke and squat up against trees to pee are covered with houses and strip malls.

My uniform is the same as in the bush party days: boots, T-shirts and jeans. They call them skinny jeans now, and they start at my Cesarean scar. The first time around, we called them stovepipes and you didn't have to wear them with long shirts to prevent people from seeing your bum when you sat down.

I still like to listen to The Who's *Quadrophenia* on road trips. It's on my iPod, not a cassette, and I have to massage my aging hamstring on long drives so my ass doesn't cramp up.

I graduated in 1980. I don't know why we're having a 28th reunion; perhaps the thought of a 30th was too much to bear.

At this gathering, with most of us pushing 50, there were many exclamations of "Oh, my god, you look exactly the same!" We don't, of course. Except one woman, whose hair has not changed since 1976.

The skinny boys with mullets are now men with paunches. A few women have gained weight. One has lost it, having long ago traded her Export "A"s for triathlons. Another old friend has a suspiciously smooth forehead. She smiles as she shows me where the needles go.

I don't think anything could help with the deep canyon between my brows. It started forming the night I snuck out of my friend's wedding rehearsal to go for a smoke. I was tiptoeing between the pews, tripped on a kneeler and smacked my head on the metal bracket. Blood poured down my face and the bride's mother screamed.

The bride's older brother — with whom I was hopelessly in love — helped me and my miniskirt step up into his giant truck while I held a massive wad of bloody toilet paper to my head. It. Was. So. Romantic. He took me to the hospital so I could get four stitches and a pretty white butterfly bandage overtop. (The next day, one particularly observant wedding guest com-



plained to the bride: "Your bridesmaid isn't doing a very good job of hiding that zit.")

The bride and her groom are at the reunion and remind me they've been married 22 years. I remind them of my forehead. It used to be an obvious scar, a crooked line between my eyebrows. Now it's a big, deep wrinkle.

There are lots of wrinkles, greying hair and extra pounds at the reunion, but I think we'd all recognize one another anywhere. Except for the balding guy with glasses. He asks about my brother, and I smile and chat back and have absolutely no idea who he is. Maybe it's his hairline or lack thereof, maybe it's perimenopause or maybe it's the dope I smoked 28 years ago.

There's no dope smoking anymore. If there were, I might enjoy more the loud thumpa-thumpa electronica blaring in the background. But I'm tired and hoarse and my hamstring hurts. Around midnight, I swap some business cards, swear I'll keep in touch and limp into a cab. It's a different kind of curfew these days. **M**