

2014 PANAMA REDUX

The Grove Returns to the Land of the Canal

In days long ago, when the Grove was still young, and Tara was not even born
We were Panama bound (no Belize trip that year), where we partied from night until morn
We had no wrinkles then, and while we were smart, we were still working at growing wise
And the friends that we made weren't true "sisters" yet (as they now are, much to our surprise)

In that pre-iPhone age, the Grove was unformed, but like Apple, once we hit our stride
We created a vision that changed all our lives, TODAY'S GROVE... which we value with pride
Panama '14 underscored how we've grown, we're now game changers, we've become sage
And our sisterhood is an unbreakable bond -- our beloved Grove has come of age

Meryl captured it all, when she opened the Grove with inspiring wisdom this year
And reminded us all that the Grove's about trust, that it's kindness that we hold most dear

After years sharing friendship, our sisterhood's rich, it is why we can go deep so fast
Our Grove-Tara connection makes taking risks fun, we can bare souls...and still have a blast

The setting this year was a magical one, from the beach to the Corotu tree
At 200 years old, it's gnarled branches spread wide, and embraced our whole Grove family
And our program chairs had every minute jam packed, every panel just made us want more
Thank you Baty and Linda, Melissa, Michelle, and Elizabeth...Brava's Galore!

As always our Edie, the big idea queen, enthralled us with future-think brilliance
Reminding us not to get stuck in the past, 'cause tomorrow requires resilience
She told us we're entering a new Alpha age, so long Beta, we're all moving on
New life forms are coming (think neohumanics)...the world we grew up in is gone

The new age she said is for "cans and cannots" we're done with the have/have not days
Creativity and spunk are what matter now, guides not teachers will be the new ways
The family's morphing, life expectancy's endless (and nothing's is what it appears)
Imagine we might be supporting our kids...for two hundred fifty long years?

Then a Panama panel took us way beyond guidebooks, with insights from experts galore
Who told us why Panama's one of a kind, and what treasures we all must explore
The canal gets new locks, the old city new life, and everywhere 's great reinvention
And this "bridge of life land where most species convene, is a giant world wildlife convention

Then we really went deep, opening up to the core, as we told tales of "knock down and bounce back"
Being fired, being dumped, being publically shamed...and still getting back on the track
We shared inner wisdom, we spoke from the heart and we learned that to get past the bad
We must focus ourselves on the choices we have...not on choices we wish that we had

Falling down, we agreed, is just part of life.... getting up is the true key to living
(And in tough times it's girlfriends who help us get through...Grover friendships are endlessly giving)
A kick in the ass is still one step ahead... great misfortune can lead to great glory
And no matter how tough we each seem at first glance, we ALL have a "bouncing back" story

From disasters in life to disaster at work, Johti shared tales of Taj tragic terror
Of managing teams, in a bomb zone hotel ...when there wasn't a margin for error
And Aliza gave insights to Twitter-view life, are we all in a "who tweets most" race?
Hieroglyphics are making a comeback she said...and emoticons are their new face

We spoke of what's next, of the mob on the move, and of crime without borders or place
And Lauren assured she was not "packing heat", then explained terrorism's new pace
We thought about money and values and meaning, what businesses might have in store
And of pilotless planes, and of Food 2.0 (if chefs ruled the world, we'd end war)

But despite so much “thinking” what captured us most was Helen’s discourse on romance
Learning women post-60 are the happiest group, made some of us get up and dance
Older women, said Helen, keep getting more picky, which poses a challenge to dating
But attitudes toward sex haven’t change since our 20’ s (ergo, we’re gung ho for mating?)

Women’s brains, we found out, can run rings around men’s, ours are built for much better connection
To Grovers and Taras this was no surprise, our close bonds are a perfect reflection
And Hillary, we learned, is testosterone high (campaigners heed what Helen says)
While Bill’s estrogen level’s top of the chart (which makes him our first female Prez)

As ever, we Grovers, did not let our brains overdo all this cutting edge thinking
Our cocktail contest confirmed that we know, the importance of Grove style drinking
We had two winning drinks...Jaye ‘s divine “Go Deep Fast” (named by Sarah M. and Marilu)
And the “Tcha Tcha Tcha Tcha” (thank you Polly and Julie)...they were both so good most drank the two

And the drinks set the stage for our auction this year, with Ms. Melanie back at the gavel
Though a “Melanie wannabe” (with Betty’s sly grin)...almost caused the whole thing to unravel
We bid fast, we bid high, we bid more than we should...for a cause that is worth every cent
And with ‘Becca as chair, we raised top dollar yet.... knowing all of it will be well spent

In the afternoons we all relaxed on the beach...or by pools (yes this year there were seven!)
And we ate the best food any Grove’s had before...we were lost in a hedonistic heaven
Jenifer sure whipped those chefs into shape, thanks to her we’d an unending feast
And our table topics each were a meal for the mind (our Ms. Eiss is a table topic beast)

And of course Project Runway will not be forgot, our bizarre fashion improvisation
Where what we all created with bags full of trim, was a true Tara-Grove inspiration
We’d Ms. Panama Canal, the American Hustle and a Totally Tasteless “unknown”
And a “faux Tara” Toddi who gave birth on stage...while jogging and on the phone

Thank you Marilyn, Betty, Melissa Irene, for creating such marvelous themes
And hats off to our models (each ever so brave) and their haute couture “designer” teams
And kudos Ms. Hudson, the MC’s MC, who should give up her day job for fashion
And to all the team members who stuck to good fun, knowing winning is trumped by compassion

_Rev Sylvia inspired us to be our best selves, we’re big brains but first come big hearts
There’s no problem on earth we can’t impact together....with each of us playing our parts
And “Grover Meet Gover” (thanks Barb and MP) helped each of us make new connections
But the moments we spent taking walks to the beach are what led to our deepest reflections

When a very wise owl who’d been watching us all, swooped down in the midst of our meeting
We all got the message...the mystical sign...a true ancient sisterhood greeting
How far had she flown...just to be with us all? And what special gifts could she share?
Like the rest of our sisters, she’d something to give, and the courage to trust in our care

Theresa, our sage, said it all in her close, capturing Grove/Tara spirit spot on
Thanking Susan for giving us each such connection.... and assuring Grove magic goes on
We were quite brought to tears by Theresa’s remarks, more than half of us openly cried
Knowing friendships we’ve made here are worth more than gold...and that power shared gets magnified

This Grove was tops, but each one just gets better as more of us help play a part
We’ve got ‘Frisco up next , with Livermore Labs, and the wineries and Golden Gate art
And Antigua is coming...the party of parties...as we all help the Grove turn fifteen
We’ll reflect on our past, while we stare down the future.... and try to fix what’s in between

So start planning now for our Gala Grove fest, fifteen years is a really big deal
We will pull out all stops, it’s our “quinceanera,” a party like we’ve never seen
Thank you Susan and Edie for getting us started, thank you all for becoming a part
Thanks for sharing your brains and your great sense of fun, **but mostly ...for sharing your hearts!**

“Meeting Susan Stautberg is like opening a fine bottle of wine. Getting to know her is like getting to drink it!”

T. Behrendt (closing remarks, Panama 2014)