

Lynn Thomas
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SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

It would be a short flight from Portland, Oregon to Los Angeles and I was grateful. I would meet my childhood friend at the airport. Even though we kept in touch, I hadn't seen her for all forty years I had been away. There would be new sights to visit, especially the Getty Art Museum, though I was nervous about driving the freeways to get there. Especially the Harbor Freeway built my freshman year in high school which, by my Senior year, I drove repeatedly with ease. But that was 1958 and now it was 2024.



I knew things would be changed. Now leaning back in the seat of the airplane I recalled so many moments of the past - my childhood bedroom, especially on Saturday mornings when I could stay in bed and be mesmerized by the songs of birds, the rhythmic scraping of the gardener's rake outside my window against the asphalt driveway, even my mom pitter patting along the flagstone walkway beneath to change the sprinkler that watered the many colorful fuchsias in bloom. I remembered how we saw the Santa Monica mountains surrounding the Pacific Ocean from our living room before a slew of tract houses were built to border the line of Palos Verdes and Hollywood Rivera, ones right next to us taking our view. Even the Indian burial grounds a few blocks away now had high rise condos built. We used to hunt arrowheads and roll down the sand dunes. So much had changed.

Janet, who I was visiting, had ridden horses with me growing up. Once, against my father's rules I knew better to disobey, we decided to ride our horses all the way from the stables to PV Plaza, about five miles. There a

hitch post was available for riders to tie up their horses. Inside the drug store we ordered a cherry coke, our favorite, sitting at one of the bar stools at the counter. Afterwards, returning to the stables along a horse path, we passed one of my parent's friends to whom I offered a big "hi" wave. Suddenly, taking a deep breath to lean back in the plane's seat, I remembered the horror of my father discovering I had disobeyed him. He received a call saying "I just saw your daughter riding horseback by our house". There's nothing worse than being caught, and I sure was. I thought of how the privilege of riding in the upcoming horse show was taken away from me. My freedom of independence had been robbed. I would rebel often in childhood after that, learning as I grew, learning how to handle authority by being rebellious.

Once the plane had landed in Los Angeles I took the escalator down to the baggage claim area and was not surprised to see Janet waiting, looking just as I expected, the same but seasoned by age. Hugging each other with excitement we collected the bags and headed for Janet's car to soon drive to her home in Manhattan Beach.

"Janet", I began as she cruised along Pacific Coast Highway, "I'm really taken that you want to visit the Getty Art Museum, it's been on my wish list for a long time. Do you drive the freeways now?"

"Wouldn't dare! Unless you want all your nerves tested, it's not worth it. Even looking at a road map the Los Angeles/Pasadena freeways and beyond look like a ball of snarled knitting yarn, and I don't knit! "

"What do you do then?" Silently I wondered if people just hung out in their small towns forever, never venturing anywhere.

"Los Angeles is a rich man's paradise, that is, if you can afford it. At age 84 I wouldn't dare risk driving the freeways. That's why I enlist Lyft for special occasions, and relish sitting in the backseat of a car being chauffeured. There are some things I've learned to do with aging that keep life being beautiful. That's one of the things. I have others, too. And I bet you still rebel a little yourself. You got to beat the norm, just like we did as kids. No harm in doing it at this age!"