

17 October 2014

Today marks the 25th anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake which rocked the Bay Area in 1989. This is a day when I always think of my friend who lost her life in the Cypress Structure collapse at 32, Big Red.

Big Red was striking. At 5'10", she towered over me, inspiring an odd melange of awe and terror. I'm going to take some time today, on a holy day, and tell you about a friend I knew for a very short time but who might have inspired me to go above and beyond, feeling as if she had left us all behind to carry the torch that she passed to us on October 17th.

Big Red was my boss for a while. She took me under her care and showed me the ropes on the grille and in the dishroom. We haunted the John Muir Cafeteria together. I had quit my short stint with the right wing paper, the Triton Times as a staff writer, finding that, after reporting on the CIA doing economic research on campus I could not stand the hypocrisy of the neophyte Reagan Youth running the paper and found more spiritual work in the cafeteria.

Big Red kicked ass. I remember her carrying two 5-gallon industrial milk cartons, one under each arm as if they were loaves of bread. She showed me how to navigate the slick floors of the kitchen and the dishroom, how to make friends with everyone, students and permanent staff.

Big Red played hockey. Somewhere along the way I got recruited by her and Amy (a friend) to play floor hockey in UCSD's world-rekowned world class co-ed flook hockey league.

Big Red was hot. Smoking (in my book). If I hadn't been some puke 17 year-old freshman, I would have dared to ask her out. Her flaming red hair lives on.

Big Red was Melissa E Maxwell, an assistant DA on her way to pick up a niece on the Cypress Structure when the quake came.

Remember Big Red.

*Your friend Pieno*