

Distance no obstacle for these two best friends

As Eddie's father used to say: people, let me tell you 'bout my best friend.

Deborah MacGregor and I met on the first day of fourth grade in

**CHRISTINE
MACKINNON**

GUEST COLUMNIST

Violet Knowland's class. We were 9 years old and sat side by side in a circle on the floor, dressed, I'm sure, in plaid dresses and Mary Janes.

By the time we were sitting next to each other in our caps and gowns at Norton High School, we were best friends. We rode to school together every morning. We could finish each other's sentences. We could recite each other's family trees. We walked endless loops around our Knollwood Estates neighborhood, discussing everything from fashion to college to the cutest guy of the week. She could see my front yard from her back porch, and sometimes we'd wave while we talked on the phone. She loved Aerosmith and I loved the Eagles, but we worked through that. We were inseparable.

Now, as adults, she lives 2,000 miles away, and we talk and e-mail like we're still only two house lots apart. We are double-handedly responsible for putting the children of all AT&T corporate heads through college.

Deborah was in Norton last week, in for her father's wedding. Before her arrival, we were sending each other e-mail that screamed, "See you Saturday!") For a solid month before she got here, I excitedly told anyone who would listen that my best friend was flying in from Phoenix.

And I notice we always refer to one another that way. She is not my oldest friend, or a childhood friend, she is my "best" friend, better than a sister because we picked each other.

She was there when I had two left feet at the middle school dance.

I was there when she needed help with long division.

She was there when that senior I had such a crush on walked right by me like I was invisible.

I was there when she had an emergency appendectomy the week before the junior prom.

She was there when I got on a plane and went, sight unseen, off to college in Minnesota.

I was there when she, who had

such homesickness she sometimes stayed home from class trips, packed up and moved to Arizona.

She called me when she bought her first house.

I called her when I sold my first poem.

She held my hand while I came to terms with my childhood demons.

I held her hand while her mother died.

With the day-to-day business of living, it's easy to put off that phone call or note until tomorrow, then suddenly realize it's been a year since you've talked to someone you love. Deborah and I work at staying in touch. We sometimes block out hours to chat, giggling ridiculously at politics, the weather, our families, or nothing at all.

We're still best friends because the geographical distance is irrelevant, and we can still finish each others' sentences.

And because, still after all these years, no one else I know could still dance the Hustle with me.

And just might.

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