

Invitation
By Rachel Loveday

You are cordially invited to return to the revamped gymnasium at Hillsworth High School for the class of 2002 reunion dinner on Saturday February 25th 2012 at 7.30pm. Please RSVP to Mrs Joanne Hiller by Saturday January 28th 2012 and inform her of whether you will be bringing along your spouse or any other plus one.

Dr. Rita Wilkinson

(Known as Rita Millner in 2002, Hillsworth High School Head Cheerleader)

I dominated in high school, I was the queen bee. No one at Hillsworth walked freely, talked or even breathed without my say so. I had two sidekicks; Heather Kitten and Georgia Armonson. They were my two best friends, although I did treat them horribly at times. To tell you the truth, I didn't really enjoy high school. I know you're thinking "poor little popular girl didn't enjoy high school! Boo hoo! Cry me a river!" I don't blame you for thinking that, but popularity isn't all it's cracked up to be. People want to be like you and they want to be you. They constantly watch you and know your business and will try to find any little insecurity or flaw to break you down. I didn't want to be broken down and the only way I could keep myself above water was to be a bitch to everyone. I actually wanted to be a nobody and I was ecstatic when I graduated from Hillsworth.

You'd think that because I was the Head Cheerleader and I dominated in high school that I would fall hard in the real world that seems to be the stereotype for girls like me. But I didn't. I went to uni and studied philosophy and psychology. I just recently obtained my PhD majoring in philosophy. Ten years of hard work and I've finally achieved my dream! Next year I will be lecturing in philosophy, I'm so excited and my husband is too! I met Bill at my first year of uni and we've been happily married for five years, our little girl, Erin has just turned three.

It's going to be weird to see everyone after ten years, I actually haven't seen anyone, not even Heather and Georgia since graduation day, because I moved away to go to uni a few months later. I miss Heather and Georgia and I hope they'll be there.

People constantly said to me that high school will be the best years of my life, which was quite depressing because I thought to myself; "If these are the best years of my life, than I must not have a lot to look forward to." And they were wrong! Completely wrong! Which makes me laugh.

Phillip Huntinghouse

(Hillsworth High School's 2002 Senior Track Athletics Champion)

I got the invitation for the reunion in the mail two days ago. I don't know if I'll go or not. In high school, I dominated in sports. I was always winning the Sportsman of the Year award, in fact I think I won it every year and I was always the champion at Athletics-both track and field, but track was my love.

After I graduated high school, I moved to Canberra and trained at the AIS for two years before competing at the 2004 Athens Olympics, I got a gold for Australia! It was the best day of my life! But little did I know then that only a few short months later, I would experience the worst day of my life.

I kicked off 2005 with having my left leg amputated. An impatient idiot overtook a slow moving truck on a narrow road and crashed right into me, crushing my car and my leg. My car was pulled apart piece by piece by emergency services; the whole thing took almost two hours. I lost consciousness because I lost two litres of blood. I woke up in hospital with only my left thigh remaining; my right foot was so lonely. They told me that they had to amputate otherwise I would have died. I don't blame the doctors, I did back then, but for the first year afterwards, I did blame the doctors and the world for what happened to me. The driver was charged, lost his licence and got a huge fine. He apologised, I bit his head off, but after I had extensive therapy and discovered wheelchair basketball, I apologised to him for my behaviour and moved on.

I'm now a paralympian, a champion wheelchair basketballer. I'm proud of my achievements both before and after the accident, but I still get judged and that's why I'm not sure if I'll go to the reunion. I know it's been ten years and these people, hopefully most of them would have grown up, matured and changed and won't judge me, but a missing leg is hard to miss and I have the feeling I'll be judged for my "disability" and not my abilities. My wife tells me I should go, but I just don't know.

Leo and Talila Gregory (nee Robinson)

(Teen parents in 2002, their daughter; Kadie is now nine)

LEO:

Talila and I weren't popular like Phillip Huntinghouse and Rita Millner in high school, but we were labelled the cutest couple. We started dating in year seven. The popular kids, being arrogant and immature as they usually are constantly asked me whether I'd "nailed" her yet. I'd never answer and they'd make assumptions and fun of us. It's not that it didn't get to us, but we didn't care, eventually we learnt to stop caring. The other kids thought we were sweet and cute.

Talila and I always kept to ourselves, we had the same group of friends throughout high school and they were the only people we confided in and spent time with. We were both "A" students, the teachers liked us and we always got awards at the merit assemblies. We weren't friends with everyone, but we were well liked.

But that all ended when we had to tell the school a few weeks into the first term of year twelve that Talila was pregnant. It happened on our first time, if we were the age we are now, we would have been the envy of other couples, but at eighteen, we were the couple everyone judged. It's a long fall from being the cutest couple. The teachers and the principal couldn't force Talila to leave due to the Anti-Discrimination Act, which Talila knew about, because she was taking legal studies, but they didn't want her there. It didn't take long for word to travel. Everyone, even our own friends sneered at us, gave us looks, judged. Surprisingly both our parents, although angry and shocked, were very supportive and eventually came around to the idea of becoming grandparents. And even though we were young and naive, we were looking forward to becoming parents and we were lucky that we got to finish our HSC and graduate before becoming parents-Talila gave birth to our beautiful little girl; Kadie, the day after her final exam. We got married on New Years' Day 2005.

Talila went on to work at the Women's Centre and set up a support group and several programs for teen parents so they wouldn't have to go through what we went through. I became the store manager for the supermarket I've been working at since I was sixteen, last year.

We got the invitation for the reunion yesterday and it only took us a minute to decide that we're not going to go. We're not going to go back to that school and spend time in the gym with those people, why would we want to spend time with people who didn't support us and chastised us when we needed them? No fucking way! Although the only thing we'll miss out on is being able to brag about our beautiful and smart daughter.

TALILA:

I loved being a student at Hillsworth High, if I wasn't, I wouldn't have met Leo. I was smart, but not the smartest, that was Jenna Xavier. I was blown away that she became the Prime Minister and so proud. Leo and I use to be friends with her and I think she was the only person who was there for us in our final year of school. I'm sad that we lost touch. But with us having a baby and her political career developing, it was going to happen. I get the occasional email from her; I knew she would be going places.

When I showed Leo the invite for the reunion he went off his nutter. I seriously thought that he was going to throw furniture across the room. He was surprised that we were even invited because they were quick to shun us when I told the principal and teachers I was

pregnant and he thought that they were trying to sweep it under the rug or trying to make up, maybe a bit of both. I had to give him three scotches to calm down. I didn't want to go to the reunion for the same reason Leo didn't, but I've never seen him so angry.

Our life since then hasn't been easy, but I wouldn't change it for a minute. We love each other and we love Kadie and I love my job, because I'm giving something back, I don't want other teen parents to go through what we went through. Of course they're going to be judged, but with new laws and new Centrelink payments, there is hope for them. I don't understand the need for high school reunions.

The Hon. Jenna Xavier PM

(Hillsworth High Schools' Smartest Student in 2002. Current Prime Minister of Australia)

I was the high school nerd. The kids made fun of me and the teachers loved me, I was a blessing to teach according to them, most likely because I worked my arse off and was quiet and obedient about it.

When I was in year nine, the school decided to perform IQ tests, which caused a lot of controversy, which got the school a load of publicity. My IQ is 160 and I was officially labelled the Smartest Student in the school, a label that I never lost, which resulted in even more flack from the kids, but I didn't care, I was determined to go places, to better and higher places.

I didn't plan on becoming PM, but I was never going to turn it down. Who would? And I do love the job. I developed a political interest in my first year of uni at the University of Sydney and joined the Student Liberal Party. At the beginning of my last year of uni, I became the leader of the Party. I eventually worked my way up the political ranks after I graduated, a little too quickly for most people and for all of them I'm too young. I'm the youngest PM at 28. I was sworn in a few months ago.

I got the invitation for the reunion a couple of days ago, but I can't go. The President of the United States is arriving that day, the whole country has been waiting for it and there is no doubt in my mind that every single one of my former classmates knows about it. The majority of them will understand, but some of them will think that I think I'm too good for them to take a night off, but I don't care, I have a job to do and a country to serve and represent.

God Bless Australia!

Bryan Armonson

(Georgia Armonson's younger brother, who graduated from Hillsworth High School in 2004)

I've always looked up to my big sister. She was pretty, smart and popular-what every girl wants to be. Despite the uniform and the stereotype, she wasn't your stereotypical dumb or mean cheerleader. She was nice to everyone and she couldn't keep her head out of the books, being a cheerleader was only for fun and from what she told me, popularity wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

Georgia always looked after me, protected me from bullies and told me that being the teacher's pet isn't always a bad thing, you can have a great ally in a teacher and I did, one teacher encouraged me to become a teacher myself and I did.

Georgia lived with me for the last two years of her life and that's how I got the invite for her school reunion. I called Mrs Hiller last week to tell her that Georgia passed away last month after battling cervical cancer for four years-she was four days away from her 28th birthday. Mrs Hiller was shocked, and I could have sworn she was crying, she apologised and gave condolences. She said that I was more than welcome to come on her behalf and that she would inform everyone of her death in advance. I said no at first, but I'm planning on calling her back, the thought of hearing stories about her was too painful, but the more I think about it, the more I want to know what they thought of her and I want to hear stories about her, I want to know about the things that she never told me.

Sam Quinton

(The School Bully, Bestselling Author and Gay Rights Advocate)

I'm not proud of my actions in high school. I emotionally and physically bullied almost everyone in my year, except for Talila Robinson when she fell pregnant. I may have been a bully, but that doesn't mean I didn't have a heart or morals. I saw Talila and her daughter a few months ago at the mall, she didn't see me though, and her daughter is beautiful. My home life wasn't ideal, my father left my mother just before I started high school, which was actually a good thing considering that he use to belt her every single day, he belted me a few times for defending her. My mother killed herself after my father left, she couldn't live with the beltings but she couldn't live without him either. I moved in with my Aunt Sylvia after her funeral. I put the poor woman through the ringer during my high school years, but she wouldn't let me leave high school. Thank God! I haven't stopped apologising to her since, I still live with her too, but I bought us a bigger and nicer house when my earnings for my bestseller started pouring in.

I came out to Aunt Sylvia when I was twenty-five. She was shocked but understanding, her and my partner; Dominic get along like a house on fire! They love the Sydney Swans! He's become a second son to her, she was more of a mum to me than my own mother ever was. He will officially be her second son when we get married in New York next year.

I bullied my classmates because I had nothing to go home to and no power or control in my life back then, it was so horrible! I want to go to the reunion to apologise, some of my classmates would have forgotten, hopefully, but the majority of them will still remember what I put them through. But I also hope that they see me for who I am now: a happy and together man and not for the horrible, sad school bully that I use to be.

Mrs Joanne Hiller

(Science teacher at Hillsworth High School and the Year Advisor for the Class of 2002)

This is the first high school reunion ever for Hillsworth High School. It was my idea. Being a Year Advisor isn't easy, but it's very rewarding, being able to help out the kids and watch them morph from scared little children to mature young adults. The 2002 class was the last class I was an Advisor too and I wanted a reunion because I wanted to see them again, I actually want to know how they are doing. Writing out and sending out the invitations has brought back lots of memories.

I didn't agree with the way that the school treated Talila Robinson when she fell pregnant, but she was determined and she graduated, clever girl! Her daughter, Kadie is absolutely beautiful! Talila was always a lovely girl.

I'm so proud that a student of mine went on to become Prime Minister. I knew Jenna Xavier would be going places, but this, I never even imagined! I get the occasional email from her, she's a great Prime Minister, although she might be a bit too young for the job and I worry about how much stress she is under.

I can't believe Georgia Armonson is dead, when Bryan called me, I actually cried, I had never cried over a student before, but then again, none of my students have died, well at least none that I know of. I had both Georgia and Bryan in my science classes, they're sweet kids. She didn't deserve to die like she did, or that young, she deserved to live a long life. I read her obituary-she never got married or had any children, it's such a shame. I never understood how she ended up with Rita Millner and the "popular" crowd. I understood why she was popular, but she didn't seem to fit in with the crowd, that was one of many good things about her. I invited Bryan to come to the reunion but he said no, I understand, but I hope he changes his mind. I will be spending the next few days making calls to the rest of the class to inform them. Rita and Heather Kitten will be so upset, everyone will be.

I became a teacher to give children the best education and guidance possible and I hope I achieved that with my kids.

I can't wait to see them again!