

“Bolder and better together”: Newcomb alumnae reflect on 50 years of friendship, adventure

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New Orleans was glorious in the late summer of 1969 when Geneen Roth (NC '73) and Janet “Jace” Schinderman (NC '73, B *85) arrived as first-year Newcomb College students. Little did they know they were in for a lifetime of adventure — and friendship.

“What I remember is, of course, we didn’t really like each other right away because we were so different from each other,” recalls Roth. “But she was so open to sharing everything with me — including the roast beef her mother had sent her frozen in the

mail. Whatever she had, from right away, even though she might not have liked me so much.

“She wore me down with her curiosity and kindness.”

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Schinderman was the more musical of the two, playing guitar for up to three hours a day and performing at events including weddings and bar mitzvahs. Her first semester at Newcomb she racked up three pink slips — putting her on thin ice academically. But she was determined not to be exiled from a city and school she adored.

“The second I got off the plane in New Orleans, I absolutely fell in love. I think I was in love by the time I got to the bottom of the steps of the airplane before I had seen any of it, but then I saw it and fell in love even more.”

Roth, too, fully embraced New Orleans. She majored in psychology at Newcomb, where her studious approach was so driven that she says, “I was in the library every day. I can still remember the smell of that library.”

Whatever their differences, the kindred spirits shared a zest for life and a formidable sense of drive that would lead through personal challenges and to professional success. Bolstered, naturally, by unflagging friendship.

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After graduation, though her professors encouraged her to pursue her doctoral degree, Roth decided to do something entirely different. “I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I just knew that I didn’t want to keep doing what I had been doing.”

She traveled widely, spending time in India, started medical school, stopping when she hated “almost every second of it.” Ultimately, she returned to her childhood dream of becoming a writer.

Roth combined her drive, her passion for writing and her deep care for others into pioneering books on compulsive eating such as *Women, Food and God* and *When Food is Love*. She also began holding weekly groups to help those struggling with compulsive eating. With warmth, compassion and humor, her work closely considers the personal and spiritual dimensions of women’s feelings about their bodies. Now a best-selling author, Roth continues to write and lead retreats and workshops where she helps individuals find self-acceptance and growth.

Like Roth, Schinderman decided to travel after graduation, moving to Italy for a year. She moved back to New Orleans and applied to law school. “Which I hated after three weeks, but it took me three months to drop out,” she quips.

When friends mentioned a new program to assist battered women was starting in the city, Schinderman stepped up, becoming the founding director of Louisiana’s first shelter for battered women and children, Crescent House.

Never content to stop learning, Schinderman came back to Tulane for her MBA six years later. After completing her degree, she began a successful career in higher education working closely with the dean of Tulane’s business school to spearhead the fundraising campaign for the first Goldring/Woldenberg Hall. She spent the next 22 years in higher education, rising to become the associate dean of Columbia Business School.

Though she’s since moved on to found her own educational consultancy firm, JLS Enterprises, Schinderman’s passion for learning is undimmed. She’s set to complete her Master of Writing degree from Johns Hopkins next May.

“Everything I did looks like a plan in hindsight, but going forward, I had no clue,” recalls Schinderman. “I might as well just, you know, take on challenges that other people would balk at completely.”

Though their respective paths involved drive, hard work and the willingness to take chances and start over, one element that remained constant is the importance of

their shared friendship.

“I needed to band together with another group of wild hooligans, to experiment and experience who the hell I was,” says Schinderman. “I was bolder and better with us together than I would have been on my own.”

“With Jace, I felt like I could do anything and go anywhere” says Roth. “It just felt like together we could conquer the world.”