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The Tuffies

Seven guys met during their first year of medical school and decided to become roommates the following year. Each had a distinct personality, yet they got along well together. They chose to rent two adjacent apartments and made themselves a home: three lived on one side and four on the other.

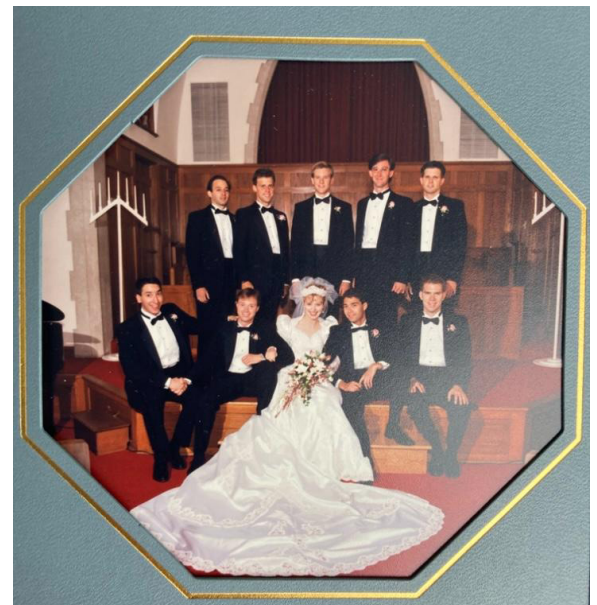
In one apartment they placed a long table—discarded by the school library—to make a proper dining room for their weekly “Family Night” dinners. They furnished their living room with a matching sofa and loveseat—used, but in good condition. Even their art prints were framed. Everything was kept tidy and clean. This was not your typical “guys pad”—except perhaps for the used, red-felted pool table.

As budget-minded students seeking low-rent accommodations, the seven roommates found themselves living in a rather sketchy neighborhood. They grew accustomed to the sound of sirens. Nearby they could shop at the “maximum-security” grocery store, manned by an armed guard. The guys humorously dubbed themselves the

“Tuffies.” I married one of them.

I had met Mark during his third year of medical school. We married the day after he graduated. Mark's six roommates served as some of our groomsmen. One Tuffy had married a classmate a couple months earlier, and another tied the knot a week after us. Since Mark and I were the only ones staying in town, his roommates gifted us the matching loveseat and sofa. The guys then dispersed across the country to attend various residency programs.

Years passed. So did the matching loveseat and sofa. The Tuffies completed their residency programs and many pursued fellowships. Everyone married. Most had children. One even had grandchildren. Each ended up working in a different medical specialty: general surgery, infectious disease, interventional cardiology, pulmonology, anesthesiology, psychiatry, and pediatrics. They lived in different places: New



The “Tuffies” (Mark's six medical school roommates) and others served as groomsmen in Mark and Mona's 1992 wedding. Left to Right: Back row: Tom, Brian, Andy (future brother-in-law), Jeff, and Brett. Front row: Courtney (Mark's college friend), Mark B. (Mark M.'s childhood best friend), Mona, Steve, and Dave.



*In October 2025, all seven Tuffies and some of their wives reunited for the first time in 33 years.
L to R: Jeff, Steve, Mark, Mona, Tom, Ingrid (Brian's wife), Brian, Katherine (Dave's wife), Brett, and Dave.*

Jersey, Indiana, Tennessee, Florida, Texas, the Middle East, and West Africa. But they fondly remembered their days as roommates and the friendship they shared.

Last month, the Tuffies reunited for a weekend. It was the first time in 33 years that all seven of them were together. I was curious to see if their individual personalities had changed. They had not. There were slight adjustments in a few hairlines, but they all looked good and seemed happy in their chosen professions.

The sweetest time was when we all shared dinner together at a restaurant on the last night. We had a banquet room to ourselves, and our servers indulged us with coffee refills long after we finished our meal. The guys sat around and talked for hours—updating one another on their present lives and reminiscing about their med school days. As I listened to their conversation, I was interested to see the energy of their former group dynamic reemerge. Everyone came alive and laughter abounded!

I had a reunion of my own this past summer with my best friends from grade school, middle school, and high school. I have also had reunions with my buddies from college. I have often marveled how I could go years without connecting with a particular girlfriend (my bad!), and yet when we finally got together, it seemed as if no time had passed. Those deep friendships remained intact. I knew this was true of female relationships. But was it the same with male friendships?

Apparently, it was. The Tuffies established a group chat on WhatsApp, and I was delighted with the messages they shared after our big weekend.

Steve wrote: "I had a fantastic time reconnecting with everyone yesterday—brought back so many amazing memories of growing up together. I feel so fortunate to have been part of such a fine group of people as yourselves."

Brian added: "It was so great seeing everyone. So awesome that we can just pick up our brotherhood after so long."

And Dave concurred: "Yes, it's crazy how it was just a long break in between, but we just pick right up."

There is something special about the bonds people develop when they share significant life experiences, especially during their formative years. It's never too late to reconnect. We have the technology. True friends don't keep score; their zone is guilt-free.

As we approach the holidays, consider reaching out to a buddy or two with whom you've lost touch. You might be surprised by the strength and resilience of those former ties that bind. May all your friends be "Tuffies."

Have a delightful day! 

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