

# A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

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My classmate Karen Griffin Tate '69 has enjoyed a fulfilling life after high school. Personable and energetic, she was involved in a number of activities. She served as president of the school public relations club and from there evolved into a career as the owner of a successful project management training business. She is the author of several books and makes presentations throughout the country. After high school my contacts with Karen have always been enjoyable, yet at the same time several of them have had an element of mistaken identity that has followed us throughout.

It began at a class reunion years ago that both of us attended. When Karen mentioned to me that she was now living in Cincinnati, I told her that my cousin was married to David Mann who has served as both mayor of Cincinnati and as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Unfortunately this did not initially elicit a positive response from Karen. I was learning two important life's lessons at that moment. First, it is not necessarily wise to mix political issues into a social occasion. Second, other people might not think as highly of your family as you do. At that point as Karen was graciously trying to give me a way out of my dilemma she referred to David Mann as "that bald guy." I then mentioned to Karen that David has a full mass of white hair. Her response: "Wait a minute! I LIKE David Mann. It's the guy in there NOW that I don't like." I was thankful that my dignity had been fully restored. And since that time whenever I have seen Karen I tell her that David Mann sends his regards.

The mistaken identity issues surfaced again a few years later when we were both in attendance at a memorial service for a deceased classmate. At the end of the service Karen came up to me and said "Bill" thinking I was fellow classmate Bill Earls. I told her that I was not Bill Earls but that if she was going to mistake me for someone else I couldn't think of a better person to be mistaken for. I then asked her "how is your husband Gary?" I was then quietly yet directly told "it's Andy" (it has been Andy for 37 years and counting). I had met and spoken with Andy at several class reunions but unfortunately had not remembered his name. From there I corrected myself and asked Karen to give Andy my regards.

And it didn't end there. Recently I received what appeared to be a business E-mail from Karen addressed to Linda Denny (my wife is Linda Lukat Denny '70). Confused, I responded back to her asking what I should do with the information I had been sent. As it turns out, Karen has a business colleague named Linda Denny who is based in Washington, D.C. The message had been sent to me by mistake. Amused, Karen sent me a profile of the "other" Linda Denny. Like my wife of 36 years and counting the other Linda Denny seems to be a highly competent woman. I can only wish the other Linda the best in her future endeavors.

Most recently I saw Karen at a class gathering at Chubby Ray's restaurant and it appears that for now we have fully addressed all of our issues as to mistaken identity. Afterward I had a thought as to the name tags all of us are wearing that night. It seems that shortly after high school we had no trouble recognizing our fellow classmates. As time went on we wore the name tags so that other classmates

would know who we are. Now we continue to wear the name tags but for an additional reason—so that we will know who WE are. And wasn't that one of the challenges of the high school years—trying to find out exactly who we were? So wherever you might be as to your life's journey it is hoped that each of you finds who (and what) you are looking for. All the best to each of you in that endeavor.

Sam Denny  
Class of 1969