



# SWEET SIXTEEN *in* the City that never sleeps

“Once you have traveled, the voyage never ends, but is played out over and over again in the quietest chambers.”

~Pat Conroy, author

BY: SHANNON LINDEN



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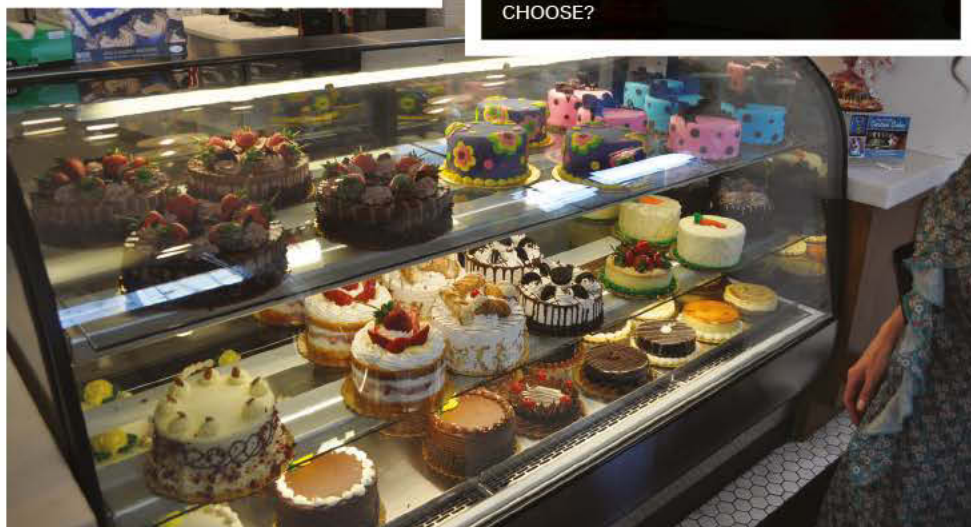
Last issue, Shannon Linden reminisced about the special sixteenth birthday gift she and husband, Paul, gave their son, Nicolas.

Three jam-packed days in San Francisco—the city Nic dreamed of seeing—was pretty teen-tastic.

Twenty-one months later, it was his sister's turn.

LEFT: TAYANNA LINDEN AND HER MOM, SHANNON

BELOW: NOTHING LIKE CELEBRATING YOUR 16TH BIRTHDAY WITH A CAKE FROM TLC'S THE CAKE BOSS BUT WHICH ONE TO CHOOSE?



While Nic's birthday gift came as a complete surprise, you can't fool the second child. Hip to the plan, Tayanna proclaimed her city of choice: "Rome!"

"Try North America," we said.

"Okay." She smiled.

"I'll take New York."

And so would we! Always on our bucket list, we couldn't wait to take a little bite of the Big Apple.

## On—and off— Broadway

On a warm and wonderfully sunny afternoon, we took the subway to the Golden Theater—an Off Broadway beauty—where we saw *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. It's a mouthful of a title, but a show that had

us laughing in jaw-dropping awe, as well known actors, Sigourney Weaver, and David Hyde Pierce took to the stage.

The play revolves around three middle-age single siblings, two of whom live together and dread a visit by the third. We loved the matinee. It was delightful to emerge from the dark theater into the golden, summer light, walking to dinner at the well-known, after-theater joint, Bar Americain.

Funny as that play was, the Broadway winner of the 2011 Tony awards for best musical, best direction, best book, best original score, and more—*The Book of Mormon*—was the best I've ever seen. Created by the writers of *South Park*, it's not for the faint of heart; nor the easily offended—but it is downright hysterical.

Two mismatched Mormon boys embark on a Mission to Africa, where their culture and beliefs are seriously misunderstood—both by



the locals and the boys themselves. As the *Village Voice* says, it will have you asking, *Dear God, how do I get tickets?*

## A Night Tour of the City that Never Sleeps

Are there more iconic sites in any other city? We opted to see as much as we could in a short time by joining an organized tour with [getyourguide.com](http://getyourguide.com), an online site I have used to tour several cities.

For 5 1/2 hours we climbed on and off a very comfortable bus—or as the site called it, “an air-conditioned motorcoach.”

It was a very civilized way to see Manhattan, including the World Trade Center site, Rockefeller Plaza, Times Square, and the Brooklyn Bridge. While we drove through Soho and Greenwich Village, the knowledgeable guide gave a brief and fascinating history.

A highlight was strolling Highline Park—a two-kilometer linear park, built on a section of a disused railroad. Community vegetable and herb gardens, flowers, and seating line either side of the old tracks, poised high above the street in the trendy meatpacking district.

Next we enjoyed dinner at one of Little Italy’s oldest restaurants and took a cruise on board a New York water taxi to come up close to the Statue of Liberty, where we toasted “the old girl” with champagne. The evening ended with a ride to the Top of the Rock Observatory.

LEFT: THE STATUE OF LIBERTY BY NIGHT; RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL; AND PAUL LINDEN AND TAYANNA, NOW 17

## Central Park

New York is an expensive city but one of my favorite moments came completely free. Where just a few decades ago Central Park was in a state of decay, 100-year old infrastructure crumbling, garbage strewn where grass might grow and angry graffiti defacing surfaces where art could bloom, the space has been lovingly restored and is a favorite with locals and tourists alike.

Thanks to efforts began in the 80’s by Betsy Barlow, a Yale educated, urban planner and writer, the 800 acre park in the heart of Manhattan is a wonder to wander. Brimming with mothers pushing babies in strollers, kids skateboarding, elderly people walking, horse-drawn carriages carrying lovers—or parents with kids too tired to walk—it’s spectacular.

## A Little of This and That—and then 9-11

We shopped a little; we ate a lot. We visited the Cake Boss Café and marveled at the TLC hit show’s confectionary creations. We stood outside the New York Times Newspaper in awe.

NYC is non-stop fun and excitement but amid the good times, a visit to the 9-11 memorial is a sobering must.

Ten years after the September 11, 2001

RIGHT: 9-11 MEMORIAL WHERE THE NEARLY 3,000 NAMES OF THOSE LOST IN THE 9-11 ATTACKS AND THE 1993 WORLD TRADE CENTER BOMBING ARE IMMORTALIZED. THE MEMORIAL’S TWIN REFLECTING POOLS ARE EACH NEARLY AN ACRE IN SIZE AND FEATURE THE LARGEST MANMADE WATERFALLS IN THE NORTH AMERICA.



terrorist attacks that killed nearly 3000 men, women, and children—including emergency personnel who died in the line of duty—the site opened as a sacred tribute honoring the lost and offering hope for a peaceful future.

We made time to tour the Ground Zero Museum Workshop, where the official photographer of the aftermath, Gary Marlon Suson, has set up shop. Wearing headsets, we listened to survivors and first responders tell their stories, as we worked our way around a small room brimming with Suson’s photos and random memorabilia recovered from the ashes. Not a dry eye in the place, it was a soul-stirring experience.

In fact, the whole long weekend was one the three of us will never forget. *“So your sixteenth birthday presents—better than getting cars?”*

I recently asked my kids.

After a fairly lengthy pause, they laughed and agreed. Memories are gifts that last forever. *w*

ABOVE: THE POOLS SIT WITHIN THE FOOTPRINTS WHERE THE TWIN TOWERS ONCE STOOD.

BENEATH: NYC SKYLINE VIEWED FROM CENTRAL PARK

BOTTOM RIGHT: THE LUCKY BIRTHDAY KIDS, NICOLAS AND TAYANNA LINDEN, NOW 19 & 17

