

Rachel Zients Schinderman '89 Chronicles Parenthood

by Julie Otton, Alumnae/i Coordinator

Rachel Zients Schinderman '89 has found a new career in motherhood: she is the founder of “Mommie Brain” writers’ workshops, which are aimed at helping parents document pregnancy and parenthood and have been featured in L.A.’s *Daily Candy Kids*. Her personal experiences as the mother of Benjamin, now three years old, are chronicled in a popular column she writes for the Santa Monica *Daily Press* and in her recurring appearances as a monologist in the L.A. stage production of *Expressing Motherhood*.

Where did the idea come from for “Mommie Brain”? My son, Ben, had a traumatic birth, so when I decided to stay home with him, I was having a hard time and needed a way to build myself back up. There were many classes being offered for new parents, but nothing to get your mind back into shape. I had the idea to offer writing workshops for moms for a while, but didn’t implement “Mommie Brain” until the summer of 2008, when Ben was turning two—and was much stronger and doing very well. A couple of months later, I began writing my column [for the Santa Monica *Daily Press*].



Rachel Zients Schinderman '89 and son, Ben

How are your columns different from other articles on parenting? If they are different, I guess it is because I focus on some of the parts that people don’t talk about as much. Sometimes I struggle with writing about Ben and sharing too much, but then other people who are having struggles contact me and I realize that my writing sparks conversation about special needs. I am not an expert; I’m just honestly writing about my experiences. Now that Ben has started school, I am trying to get my pieces into other publications and focusing more on teaching. I am also documenting Ben’s whole life right now, which is another way to cement this time.

What inspired you to write about your difficult experiences with motherhood? When my father died, my mother, Eileen Douglas, took a bad situation and wrote a book about it called *Rachel and the Upside Down Heart*. This was how she processed [his death]. I realized that the book helped other people, that you can write about yourself and it’s not self-indulgent. Nothing is wrong with exposing yourself and writing about your own challenges.

When did you start writing? After graduating from Syracuse University and then the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre, I moved to Los Angeles in 1996. I tried acting at first, but eventually became a TV producer and freelance writer. I worked for the TV show *Blind Date* and the E! Channel; freelanced for *The LA Times Magazine* and *Backstage West*; and did readings around L.A. In 2004, I completed a master’s degree in professional writing from the University of Southern California, with the grand hope of finishing a book. Ben was born and the book wasn’t getting written, so instead, I started approaching local newspapers with the idea of a column about motherhood.

Do you still have any connections to Calhoun? It’s great to be back in touch with my Calhoun friends through my writing (posted on Facebook). It’s easy to feel an instant closeness with the people you went to school with, and they’ve been really supportive and equally honest about what they are dealing with, too. I am still best friends with Allyson Lieberman '89. We Calhoun girls need to stick together!

Learn more about Rachel at www.mommiebrain.com and check out her column in the Santa Monica Daily Press at www.smdp.com.

PROFILE

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