

Comic Not Shy About Past

By David Groves,
Mr. Magic & Home Brew MC

When comic Laura Hayden takes the stage, she takes the room by storm. This blonde goofball leaves people in stitches as she muses about low-rise jeans, and laments how kids today don't remember the time when showing a buttcrack was a bad thing. People are holding their sides laughing as she talks about how, for today's kids, buttcracks are the new cleavage.

You'd never know that Laura Hayden was painfully shy as a kid.

"I was a mute," Laura says. "I was very, very, very, horribly shy. I was didn't-want-to-use-the-telephone shy. Think of the shyest person you knew in school, that was me." There came a point when Laura reached a moment of truth: She didn't want to live her life that way.

Laura grew up in West Covina, attending Edgewood High School. But when she started college at Cal State Long Beach, she began meeting people who didn't know that she was shy.

"And they don't have to know that I'm shy," Laura thought.

Laura began taking speech classes specifically to combat her shyness, "even though I was throwing up in the bathroom before class, I was so nervous," Laura adds.

She became a waitress for the same reason.

"Every night, a waitress has to talk to strangers," Laura says. "In fact, everybody should wait tables, because you learn a lot about a lot of things. I waited tables for 15 years while I worked my way through school.

"People are always asking waitresses, 'Where are you from?' and 'What are you doing?' And they ask them really rude, crude questions, too, and you have to be able to deal with it.

"There's a whole psychology to waiting tables. People who are hungry and people who are in pain are very similar: high management, they want things right away, it's like babysitting."

In fact, the career that Laura eventually chose involves people who are in pain: She decided to become a physical therapist. While in training at Mount St. Mary's College, her fellow students were always cracking up at her wry and witty observations, so much so that they voted that she

give the commencement address, an early gig that was a huge success.

"Everybody - - my fellow students, my customers at the restaurant, everybody - - was saying, 'Oh my God, you should go into standup comedy,' and I was saying, 'No, I'm not funny,' and they were saying, 'Oh yes you are, you're so funny.' So I gave it a shot. And I was so surprised with the positive response."

Today, Laura plays all the big comedy clubs around town, and has completely conquered the painful shyness.

"I faced my shyness and conquered it," Laura says. "I figure that if I could face the things that scared me the most, then I can certainly accomplish the easy stuff.

"Now, I'm just, like, blah blah blah blah all the time."



No seat is safe from the comic's barbs

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