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From Laguna With Love: The Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory

By Elaine Barnard

I was in a hurry. When am I not? It was a last-minute birthday gift for a friend who had everything in the world but chocolate. Yes, I'd thought, he'll love some chocolate, but maybe he won't? He was always concerned about his weight. If he gained one pound over his limit, he dieted strenuously, no carbs for a week. He was tall and slender, so this whole dieting thing seemed absurd, but there it was. And there I was driving past Rocky Mountain.

Where to park? It was Saturday in Laguna Beach, a beautiful sunny Saturday, so it was tourist's heaven. Parking easily was just a dream, so I turned onto Ocean Avenue and took a right into the nearest alley thinking I'm not sure what. But there next to a sign that read "Private Parking" was an open spot! What I was doing was illegal. I could get a heavy fine or be towed, but I'd only be a few minutes.



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Submitted photo

Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory on South Coast Hwy

I scurried through the alley and rushed into the shop, praying that "please, no ticket" mantra. A large group had invaded the chocolate store wearing sparkly masks and backpacks – something no Lagunan would be found dead in – so I knew they were tourists. They seemed to be on a chocolate high, ordering

everything in sight. Oh boy, I thought, I'll get a ticket for sure. They're never going to leave. But I decided to be patient and keep my six-foot distance.

The cases were jammed with luscious bars of chocolate, chocolate cookies, chocolate apples, chocolate chocolates, and more. I felt a bit dizzy with the milky fragrance. What to get him? I avoided chocolate myself (too many calories, bad for my teeth, could give me acne), so I had no favorite as I'd never tried any. I stood there balancing on one foot and then the other for exercise, wishing they'd go away when one of them turned, this big guy with a loud mouth.



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Submitted photo

Yum

"I'm treating everyone," he grinned. "What would you like?"

"No thanks," I replied, thinking it the polite thing to say even though I would have loved to sample one.

"C'mon," he urged. "I'm treating everyone today." His girlfriend giggled, snuggling next to his hefty shoulder.

In Iran where I'd visited a few years ago, you're supposed to refuse three times before accepting. But this wasn't Iran and everything looked irresistible. I pointed to a walnut-filled chocolate cookie.

"Great," he smiled at the pretty young clerk. "Give this lady one of those."

I bit into the dark chocolate. Dark chocolate is healthy they say. My mouth was filled with crunchy chocolate sweetness. "Thank you," I gushed through heavenly bites. I ordered a dozen in a gold birthday box. The hell with his diet.

Elaine Barnard and her friend can be found at Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory most weekends disregarding their diet addictions.