

## Notes from the Club Car 52

for KAPA mailing 98, produced by G. Patrick Molloy, P.O. Box 9135, Huntsville, AL, 35812, phone (256) 830-4471 email [mephan@advicom.net](mailto:mephan@advicom.net) (shared with Naomi) or [gpmolloy@hotmail.com](mailto:gpmolloy@hotmail.com) (just me).

Well it looks like we have come through with a fairly mild winter - a mixed blessing, as although I generally dislike cold weather, a warm winter usually results in a nasty year of insects such as fleas. But Spring is definitely in the air as I write this, the flowering cherry trees in downtown Huntsville are spectacular this year, and the dogwoods are on the verge of blooming, so I can't be too pessimistic about things. Besides, since the invention of Advantage flea treatment, fleas have not been a significant problem.

Before I get bogged down in trivial matters, I'd like to announce the major news of the zine. As of March 21, Naomi & I are officially engaged. Yes, after more than 10 years, I finally persuaded Naomi to say yes. I feel very fortunate to have convinced her to do so. I haven't yet figured out who is more delighted by the news — me or Naomi's parents. Naomi gave me an extremely conditional "yes", entirely contingent on my obtaining agreement from her parents. So we set up an evening with them on the 21st to meet for dinner at the Opryland Hotel. I asked for their blessing before we went to dinner, and they said yes before I could even finish my lines. I don't think Naomi's mother quit smiling the entire evening. They had suspected what the evening was for — her father even brought along his camera, just in case! But, surprise or not, it made for a joyous atmosphere the rest of the day. After a marvelous meal at **Beauregard's**, we went to see a performance of **Riverdance** at TPAC. It was a fun and lively show, and one I've wanted to see for a long time. I've seen it on video, but it is something else entirely to see live.

We've set a date of November 27 — that's the Saturday after Thanksgiving - which will mark 11 years (and one week) since we met. Pending final arrangements, we are planning to hold the ceremony at the Opryland Hotel, just across the street from where we first met. We are planning a very informal ceremony and reception, more like a party than a traditional wedding. In fact, Naomi, who is not quite over her matrimonophobia, refers to it only as "The Party." I'm not particular as to what we call it; I'm just delighted and grateful that she has agreed to it. Though I've managed to talk her out of catering the entire thing, she's still insisting on doing the cake (that's probably as much as I can get her to compromise). Yes, all KAPA members will be invited! We sincerely hope all of you can come.

The honeymoon (or "Post-Party Trip") will be a return to Australia. We'll be going back to some favorite places, and hopefully seeing a few new ones. Plans are still being formulated, but will very likely include scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reef.

Now on to less important events. ConCave has come and gone since the last mailing. The attendance was down a little this year, which is probably a good thing, since the Park Mammoth really can't handle any more than we currently

draw. The art show, I'm glad to say, did quite well, going over \$3500 in sales for the first time. We're rather proud of our sales figures, considering that we are a relatively small convention, and a very small art show. We were once again filled to capacity (and then some) with a good mix of local artists and mail-ins from farther afield. One artist, Robert Daniels, who usually mails his work, actually showed up in person. He really didn't hang around the convention much, instead choosing to play tourist at Mammoth Cave and Nashville for most of the weekend.

We managed to arrive on Thursday in time to get the panels constructed that evening, which made setup go much faster on Friday. Naomi & I hosted the Annual Meet the Art/Artists party on Friday night in our room, which connects to the art show. She prepared an amazing variety of foods, and I bought a selection of beer. We opened the art show during the party (food & drink not allowed in the show, of course), which again helped increase our exposure (and sales too, we suspect).

ConCave had its southernmost attendee ever, as Australia's Stephen Boucher made it his last stop on his U.S. visit. He spent almost all of Friday night at our party, which we took as a great compliment, since there were several other parties that evening.

The rest of the convention seemed to run pretty smoothly, as far as I could see. The annual "what's the Park Mammoth going to do to us this year" turned out to be a non-problem this time. Some time over the last year, the hotel dropped its Best Western affiliation. My first fear was that they had dropped below BW's standards, which, from everything I've seen, are not very high to begin with. It turns out, however, that Best Western wanted the Park Mammoth to change its decor to be in line with standard Best Western furnishings. This meant getting rid of all the antique cherry furniture in the bedrooms and replacing it with "modern" furnishings. The hotel owners, to their credit, put their foot down and said no. Since I have a keen interest in historic preservation (railroad and other), I applaud this move. Since all the ConCave room reservations go through Gary, members have no need for the Best Western 800 number. No other services seemed to have been diminished, and frankly it doesn't matter to me if the little soaps say "Best Western" on them or not.

We stayed over Sunday night. The dead dog party was a much smaller than usual affair. We moved it to the emptied dealers room on the first floor, since we didn't have enough people on hand for an "elevator committee" to get Annette Carrico up & down the stairs. If I could pick one thing to improve the Park Mammoth Resort, it would be to install an elevator, or even just retrofit a wheelchair lift to one set of stairs, so that Annette (and others) could have easy access to the Barn Room and other second-floor areas without the indignity of having a crew of people carry her up & down the steps.

That about sums it up for another ConCave. It was another good one this year, and I'm looking forward to next year already.

The next weekend I took Amtrak down to Meridian, Mississippi to attend the southeast regional meeting of the National Association of Railroad Passengers

(NARP), which is a sort of lobbying group for passenger trains that I belong to. The meetings were held in the beautifully rebuilt train station in downtown Meridian. There was a good turnout for the meeting, probably around 80 people or so. In addition to several officials from NARP and their corresponding state organizations, there were a number of other notable attendees. These included officials from Amtrak, Meridian Mayor and Amtrak Board member John Robert Smith, and former Federal Railroad Administrator Gil Carmichael. It was an interesting meeting that provided a lot in good information interchange about current and future passenger rail projects. There are several exciting developments in the works, assuming that Amtrak and the states can work out the necessary funding, which is always a question mark.

So how about the Oscars? Were you as surprised as I was that *anything* beat out **Saving Private Ryan** for Best Picture? I was really surprised and pleased at how **Shakespeare In Love** seemed to come on so strong at the end of the year. Even so, there was not one dominating film, as there have been in many years, some deserving (**Titanic**), and some not (**The English Patient**). I'm still miffed that **The Truman Show** and **Waking Ned Devine** got passed over, but that's the breaks. Overall, I was quite pleased with the results. The actual show was another matter. Whoopie Goldberg started out funny, but she wore thin after the first hour or so. I could have done without a few of the tributes, especially the "tap dance" number supposedly honoring the musical score nominees. . However, Roberto Benigni's acceptance speeches were quite memorable, even if they didn't make much sense! I didn't particularly like the move to Sunday, especially since we had a conflict, and had to tape the show and watch it on Monday anyway.

The only new movie that I think worth mentioning is **October Sky**. This film is based on the true story, written by one of my former co-workers, about growing up in a West Virginia coal-mining town, and how the launch of Sputnik kindled an interest in rocketry, which ultimately led to a career at NASA. It is a very inspirational story, and those of us who knew and worked with Homer Hickam are very proud that his book and movie have been so successful. By the time you read this, the film will probably be at second-run theaters or in video stores, but I highly recommend it.

Now on to the...

### **Mailing Comments**

(this shouldn't take long, considering how thin the mailing was...)

**Nicki** (*Vanish With the Rose*) — It's really hard to believe that with all the hotels in the D.C. area, Disclave can't seem to find one. I guess their reputation must be pretty awful with the hotel folks. Have they thought about changing the name? Ω The party at the Finnish Embassy sounds like a great time. I was amused by your statement "...in just stockings in 10 degree weather..." Just what kind of party was it? ;-) Ω yct me: It looks like your comments to me and Bryan got merged together. Ω Interesting analysis of the Reagan White House: It does seem that things have gotten more and more polarized. The Democrats didn't push nearly as hard on the Iran-Contra investigation (though there was an independent

counsel) as the Republicans have pushed Starr's unlimited investigations. In my opinion, Iran-Contra was much more impeachable than anything Clinton has even been accused of. Yet the Democrats did not push for Reagan's impeachment because they knew that it probably wouldn't pass, was against the will of the people, would only serve to smear the President, and distract both the administration and Congress from running the country. The Republicans let no such considerations stand in their way. They let their own seething hatred for Clinton blind them to what was best for the country, and what the people wanted. I hope the electorate does not have a short memory, and that they will remember this in November 2000. Ω Your description of **Seven Days** sounds vaguely familiar. I think I either read a story with a similar synopsis, or perhaps saw a **Twilight Zone** episode or some such. I can't quite put my finger on it, however.

**Bryan** (*Sailing the Abnormalcy*) — How are the Japanese lessons going? I've heard it is an extremely difficult language to learn. I wish you well. One thing I found out after taking Russian lessons is that if you don't use it regularly, you forget rather quickly. I'm afraid I'd have to start all over again if I needed to know Russian. Ω yct Guy: Can anybody explain why Clinton is being blamed for a "Chinese missile technology deal" that was started under Reagan & Bush, and merely continued by Clinton? The alleged theft of nuclear technology also occurred in the 80's. Yet now it's all Clinton's fault. People seem to have gotten their timeframes confused. It reminds me of how Bush started the mission to Somalia, but as soon as Clinton took office, his critics hit the airwaves moaning about how it was such a useless mission, a waste of money, endangering our troops, and on and on, losing sight of the fact that he inherited the situation. Ω yct me: I believe that 90+% of the people who own SUV's don't need the cargo or passenger space (most of the ones I see are single-occupant). I guess they are considered "masculine," especially here in the south where "masculine" seems to equate to "screw the environment and natural resources." ∞ Another thought on Nashville's unofficial Confederate monument. I seem to recall several years ago a large sign being erected alongside I-65 filled with the typical Libertarian/Conservative diatribe "notifying" those who bothered to read it that the city council was conspiring to take away your individual property rights, blah, blah, blah. I believe that is where the monument was eventually erected, so he must have been fighting his battle for some time. I assume it had something to do with zoning or other land use regulations, which is a favorite rant for these types.

**Guy** (*Bluegras*) — Glad you came through the blizzard okay. Snow is no fun to drive in. Next time take the train! Ω yct Nicki: Oh, now it's the McDonald's cup that was "ill-designed"! I thought it was that the coffee was too hot (I believe that was the basis of the lawsuit). Where did you come up with that line about Vietnam vets, bayonets, etc.? First of all, the phrase "skin boiled off" is an extreme exaggeration. And second, I still don't see how it is "another's negligence" if I were to put a hot cup of coffee between my legs and end up spilling it on myself. I sure wouldn't blame the people who sold me the coffee. yct Bryan re: Clinton & the wingers. I couldn't agree more.

That about does it for this edition. See you all in (gulp!) #99!

Pat