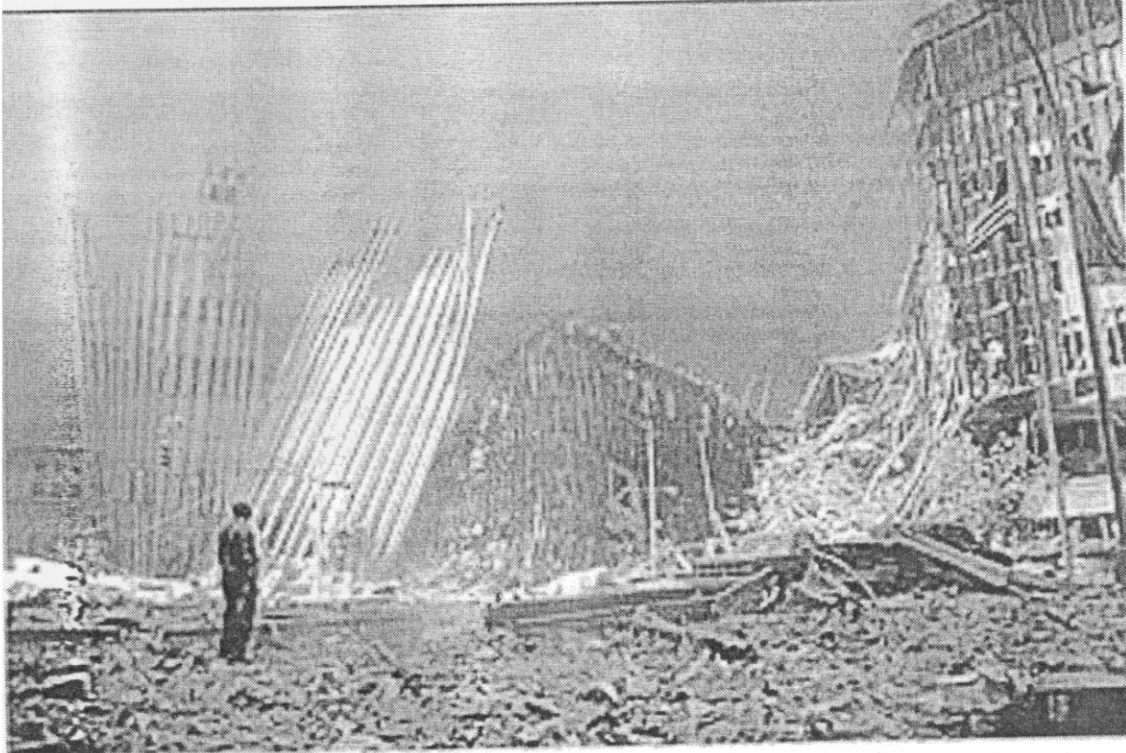


TENNESSEE TRASH # 43

I'd Like To Buy An Adjective. None Of Mine Are Working





Tennessee Trash #43 was produced in a blue funk in the waning days of September, 2001. The mail still arrives at P. O. Box 3221, Kingsport, TN 37664 and the phone still rings at (423) 239-3106. The e-mail, however, now comes to grrobe@chartertn.net thanks to the installation of my spiffy new cable modem!



TENNESSEE TRASH #43

A ZINE BY GARY R. ROBE FOR MAILING NUMBER 223 OF
THE SOUTHERN FANDOM PRESS ALLIANCE

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 2001

I'd Like To Buy An Adjective—None Of Mine Are Working, And Other Post-Attack Quandaries...

I'm at a loss for words. Language simply fails when I try to describe my feelings about the attacks that befell us all on September 11. Horrible? Sure, but so was *Battlefield Earth*. Unthinkable? Not really. Tom Clancy certainly thought of it when writing the climax of *The Sum of All Fears*. Inhuman? Alas, no. This was planned and executed by fellow human beings. Monstrous? That comes closer since the worst monsters in history have all come packaged in human-looking skin. Devastating? Now we're getting close. A whole way of life vanished that morning with the World Trade Center Towers and the smoke from The Pentagon. Until then we lived with the knowledge that this type of attack was possible. We deluded ourselves into thinking that nobody would be soulless enough to actually do it. One of the more chilling thoughts to come to me from the attacks is that we possibly put the idea into the heads of our enemies. After all, we have depicted mass destruction on our movie screens for years through Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis, *Independence Day*, and others. We have seen our national landmarks blown up and people running through the streets of New York in terror so many times. Did this bring a smile to bin Laden's face when he got the idea of turning our own decadent entertainment back on us live on CNN? Ah, but we should not be so fast to blame ourselves for this outrage. At some level the attraction of making monster movies is to help us face the reality that the

real monsters are out there. The people who carried this out knew what they were doing and in so doing gave up any claim they might have had to a place among humanity.

This was going to be a fun zine to write. I was going to talk about our family vacation in the Southwest. I was going to write about seeing the expression on my son's faces when they saw the Grand Canyon for the first time. I was going to write about the fun of stripping down to shorts on a hot morning and jumping into Lake Mead just because it was fun to do and we didn't have anywhere we needed to be. I was going to explain the adventure of driving into the heart of a desert thunderstorm so intense that the hail covered the ground like snow. I was going to write about the good time of attending the successor to Rivercon and how the rookies managed to pull off a credible replacement for one of my favorite fannish gatherings. I was going to tell about the ordeal and excitement of my parent's 50th wedding anniversary celebration. I was going to write on-the-fly about a tour through South America. All of this faded into insignificance and triviality in the smoke of September 11.

On that morning I was busily preparing to get on an airplane and travel to Santiago, Chile that afternoon. This trip was perhaps the most important one of the whole year for me. It was certainly the one I had spent the most time preparing for. The *Congresso Internacional de Tintas* is a huge paint industry meeting that occurs in Brazil every two years. Last December I submitted two abstracts for papers to the technical seminar committee, hoping that one would be

accepted. I was surprised, gratified, and a bit overwhelmed when they accepted both of my proposals. This spring I had six weeks between the acceptance of the papers and the deadline to write, edit, and get approval for both of them. I had not really begun on the writing before that point because there was no guarantee that either paper would be accepted. Out of 79 timeslots on the program I was the only one to appear twice!

The trip added a dimension in late June when Bruce Gustafson, the Director of Coating Technology, (A.K.A. my boss's boss) decided that he had never traveled to Latin America and needed to get a taste of the region. My original plan for the trip was to arrive on Monday, spend a couple of days visiting customers around Sao Paulo, and then attend the show for three days. With Bruce coming along, the trip needed to include more than one country and extend over two weeks. This meant that the originally simple trip now would include Chile, Argentina, a weekend at Igusau Falls, and then five days in Brazil for the Paint Show. I also needed to arrange for calls at important customers and an agenda for these meetings that would not be redundant if those customers attended the Paint Show later.

My preparations for the trip were extensive and I really didn't have a lot of time to complete them. I was in Mexico for half of July, then on vacation for the first part of August, and then had to take a half-week of vacation around my parent's 50th Anniversary celebration. I had to finalize the agenda, verify that the calls were set with all the customers, finish up some lab work that pertained to projects for some of the customers we would be visiting, plus preparing the slide shows for the two presentations I would be making. At the same time, I needed to prepare for the launch of the Cub Scout season and support Corlis and the boys as they started back to school. All told, the time before our September 11 departure date passed too quickly.

On that Tuesday I was working on e-mail, packing my briefcase, and cleaning off my desk when one of the technicians came into my cubicle just before 9 with the news that a

plane had struck the World Trade Center. I flipped to the CNN website for news only to find that the network was not responding. Within a few minutes the TV in one of the conference rooms was tuned to CNN, and I arrived just in time to see the plane hit the South Tower.

The thought that went through my head was: I just saw 1000 people die! Right there on TV. Pearl Harbor was nothing compared to this. The horror was that it just kept getting worse. Half an hour later The Pentagon was hit. Then the South collapsed. The idiot on CNN kept saying that there was some kind of explosion in the tower because from that angle the smoke was too thick to really see the fall. No, that tower was gone. It was obvious to me that once it started falling nothing would stop it. Then we all knew that the North Tower wouldn't last much longer. I was shaking as I watched and waited for it to go. I prayed that there weren't too many emergency personnel in the area.

Then there was the Instant Replay of the street scene with the people running away. Then I knew that hundreds had to have been too close when the towers fell. I blame those monster movies for some of that. Here were hundreds of people watching this enormous disaster unfold and the only thing they could do was stand and gawk. Later on, I listened to a survivor tell how he made it down from the 75th floor with seven others. They all made it to the bottom, but the group broke up as they neared the bottom. He tried to keep them together, but they all were too mesmerized by the scene and stopped to look. This guy had only one thought in his mind—get out. And he did. None of the others were heard from again.

Within an hour it was obvious that Bruce and I were not going anywhere that day. The question was whether or not any part of the trip could be salvaged. If air travel had been restarted within 24 hours, we could have made the trip with only a small change. It soon became apparent, however, that air travel was not resuming any time soon. Then the question became whether or not we would be able to make it to the Congresso. On Friday the airports began to re-open, and I was able to book a seat on the Sunday

evening flight from Atlanta to Sao Paulo. I was also able to track progress on the Delta website and verify that Flight 105 from Atlanta to Sao Paulo flew as planned on Friday and Saturday with some minor delays.

There was supposed to be a significant delegation of Eastman people going to the trade show in Brazil. By Friday afternoon that number had dwindled to Bruce, Eduard Tora, and me. I had so much invested in preparations for the show that whatever misgivings I might have about air travel were overcome. On Sunday morning as I was finishing up my packing Bruce Gustafson called my house to explain his decision not to attend the show. It seems that while Bruce was not concerned about traveling, his supervisors were concerned about him making it to Brazil and then getting stuck because of the US striking out somewhere. He said, "Now don't take this wrong and I know this sounds bad, but [my bosses] have decided that I am involved in too many strategic issues to risk traveling right now. For you, though, it's no problem."

Nice to know how I fit in to the organization.

Actually, in my way of thinking I was the only one coming from Kingsport that was critical to the success of the conference. All of the others were just coming for a junket in Brazil. Eduard and I had actual business to conduct there and were therefore the real strategic people for that meeting. OK, I may be a pawn in the big picture, but at least I'm a knight or bishop in my little part of the picture.

Air Travel in the Post-Traumatic World

Since I had little choice but to fly, I studied all the information I could get about the new rules for flight security. According to the local paper, travelers would not have access to parking in front of the airport, would have to submit all luggage for X-ray inspection, and would not be allowed to carry anything with an edge even in checked luggage. With this in mind, I reluctantly left behind the various knives I normally carry. (I may be a bit gun-shy, but I love knives!) I also knew that I was carrying on my martial arts training.

The new rules mandated that travelers arrive at the airport two hours before the flight. The company did better than that and the taxi delivered me to the airport 2 ½ hours before. Normally the driver would help carry in my luggage to the ticket counter, but he explained that once on airport property he was not allowed to touch a passenger's luggage. I was a bit surprised when the ticket agent asked me if I was checking bags. I handed over my suitcase just like always and it was checked through to Sao Paulo without any further ado. The ticket agent scanned my passport and actually asked fewer questions than usual.

Boarding passes in hand, I proceeded to gate security. There the routine was almost unchanged. I'm accustomed to the metal detectors at Tri Cities International being set for Deep Fat Fry. I habitually strip myself of anything larger than a paper clip. The only real difference was that they went over me with metal detector paddles in order to check everything from my glasses' frames to belt buckle. I was ticketed and through security in 15 minutes. So much for getting there 2 hours in advance.

About an hour before departure a few more passengers trickled in. An earlier flight had been cancelled, so this flight combined passengers from both. All told there were about 20 people on the plane. Without fanfare the flight left right on time and came into Atlanta with no problems. Once inside Hartsfield Airport, I was struck by its emptiness. I was traveling on a Sunday evening, and the place was nearly empty. There were only five people with me on the shuttle train, and four of them were also headed for the International Concourse. Once in Concourse E, the activity picked up to near normal levels. I was at the gate for my 8:15 p.m. flight by 5:15, so I had a long wait.

The gate agent told me that they would not start checking people in for the flight to Sao Paulo until 6:30, so I had time to get a snack and browse a bit. At 6:30 they announced that everyone had to check in for the flight, and a long line formed. The progress was excruciatingly slow. Some of the people in front of me took over 10 minutes to check in.

I had no real problem. I showed my ticket and passport, the gate agent asked a few questions and marked my boarding pass. The whole process took maybe 30 seconds. They started boarding the flight at 7:45 with a long line of people remaining to get checked. This delayed the departure of the plane for about a half-hour, but that was about the only effect I saw from the heightened security. The plane was about 80% full, which was a bit of a surprise. Most of the passengers were Brazilian. I suppose that they were still clearing up the backlog of people stuck in the US for three days with no air service.

Once in Brazil, it was soon evident that the attacks in America were being felt in South America. The billboards and covers of the two major news magazines had either the picture of the South Tower impact or the firemen raising the flag over the rubble. Of course, the attacks were the topic of many of the conversations I had with people there. I had not appreciated how much the news would resonate with people in Latin America. I heard a lot of sympathy and sadness for the US from almost everyone I talked to, but I didn't sense the feeling of anger that is running through our country at the moment. I don't know how that bodes for long-term support for whatever military action the US takes.

We are not in an enviable position. We could, of course, attack Afghanistan at any moment if we wanted. With World sentiment running highly in the US favor at the moment we could do almost anything without criticism in the Western World. The problem is that almost anything we do would not harm the real enemy in this case, and would almost certainly set off repercussions in the Islamic World that would play right into the hands of Osama bin Laden & Co. I just don't know how big our window of opportunity is to retain the support of Western allies while formulating a measured, surgical response to terrorism.

I really don't have much to say about the trip to Brazil. I was working from dawn to after dark the whole time I was there. On top of being very busy I was fighting off a bad cold and a very stiff neck from getting dropped on

my head in a Judo throwing accident on the Saturday before I left on the trip. (Sitting overnight in an airplane seat with a strained neck is not recommended.)

On the return flight I got to the airport more than three hours early. The publications from the conference had been distributed in a nice tote bag. I had decided to use the tote as a carry-on bag for the flight. I had packed a change of clothes, toiletries, medicines, and my camera into the bag. In the haste to leave the booth on Friday evening, I picked up the wrong bag and got to the airport with a bag containing nothing but conference notes!

There was already a line at the Delta ticket counter when I arrived. They did not start checking people in for the 10 p.m. flight until 7 p.m. Once the line started to move, they processed people through fairly quickly. I had my boarding pass by 7:45. I did have time to buy the one thing that people expect me to bring back from Brazil: coffee. I usually bring local coffee back when I visit a coffee-growing country. Over the years my friends have pronounced that the Brazilian type is the best. I bought four kilos, which was as much as my carry-on luggage would permit. The flight loaded right on time but was delayed 15-30 minutes again due to people getting stuck in security checks.

Going back the plane was only 50% full. Unfortunately, I was in an aisle seat in the center section in one of the rows that had three out of five seats full. I was not able to stretch out into extra seats, but I was able to appropriate enough pillows from empty seats to pad myself thoroughly. I still didn't sleep well because of my cold and stiff neck, but I did manage a couple hours of something resembling sleep.

Once in Atlanta, the full impact of the air traffic slowdown was apparent. Our mostly vacant flight was the only one arriving at that time, so the cavernous immigration and customs area in the Atlanta airport was nearly deserted. I was the only one in the shuttle train from Concourse E to C. When I arrived at C Concourse, T came up against the new security measures first-hand. I had left my shaving kit behind in Brazil, and I tried to buy a disposable razor to cut off my

one-day beard. Forget it. Nothing with an edge is available for sale inside the security cordon of an airport. I got an image of a hijacker holding up a plastic Bic razor and announcing that he was taking control.

Once at the gate for the flight to Tri-Cities the holding area it was like a ghost town. I was happy to see that the morning flight in from home did arrive on time. I knew it was the flight from Tri-Cities because one of my colleagues got off the plane. That flight had only 12 people on it.

The bottom line is that at the moment air travel has not significantly changed because of the attacks and yet is completely different. All airline travelers are well acquainted with long lines, waiting, bad food, being treated like cattle, waiting, cramped seating, surly agents, waiting, and delays. Now we add an element of suspicion to the bouquet. The airlines now look at passengers like criminal suspects with false identities until proven otherwise. Fellow passengers scan the others on the plane and ask: Could that guy be one of them? It is going to be a long time before confidence returns to the air travel industry.

UAL Flight 93

Of all the events of September 11, the one that catches my imagination is the fate of United Flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania. It appears that the passengers on the flight rose up, overcame the hijackers, and probably prevented the plane from being crashed into the White House. What happened on that flight that was different from the others?

First, Flight 93 was airborne longer than any of the other hijacked flights. The passengers had time to think about what was happening to them and to act. Second, they had contact through cell phones and apparently knew that at least one plane had crashed into the World Trade Center. Third, either an individual or a group broke the rules.

Until now, hijacking victims—including flight crews—are told to cooperate with hijackers. They were supposed to negotiate and get the plane on the ground so that the Proper Authorities can handle the situation. This

played right into the hands of these terrorists. For the other three planes, the hijackings lasted only a few minutes. Just enough time to take control and crash into the targets. By the time the passengers realized what was happening, if they ever did, it was too late.

Flight 93 was a wake-up call for crew and passengers. If one assumes that the intention of the hijackers is to kill everyone on the plane and the passengers know that, then there is no way that a handful of attackers can maintain control. First there is all that carry-on baggage. Just think what a laptop computer flung Frisbee-like would do to someone's head. A hard briefcase could be deadly. Cell phones, water bottles, Palm Pilots all would make credible projectile weapons. All that is needed is a few seconds of distraction to turn a hijacking into a blanket party for the terrorists. What it takes is courage and a willingness to sacrifice one's life for others.

Already the Airline Pilots Association has changed their rules from capitulation to resistance of hijackers. The pilots are now asking to be armed and sworn in as US Marshals. Congress and the FAA does not seem to be too receptive to the idea. They fear that a pilot gone off the rails might turn the weapon on himself or passengers. This flies in the face of the evidence that for all the man-centuries of flight time recorded, no legitimate pilot has ever used the most dangerous weapon at his disposal, the plane.

With the one strange exception of the Egyptian plane that crashed into the ocean last year, no pilot has become deranged enough to commit a flashy suicide. In light of the attacks, that plane crash seems more suspicious and ominous than before. No, I would trust pilots with guns even more than plainclothes sky marshals. After all, I am trusting these guys to keep me safe when hurling through the upper stratosphere five miles up. I'd like to think that I could trust them to shoot straight if needed.

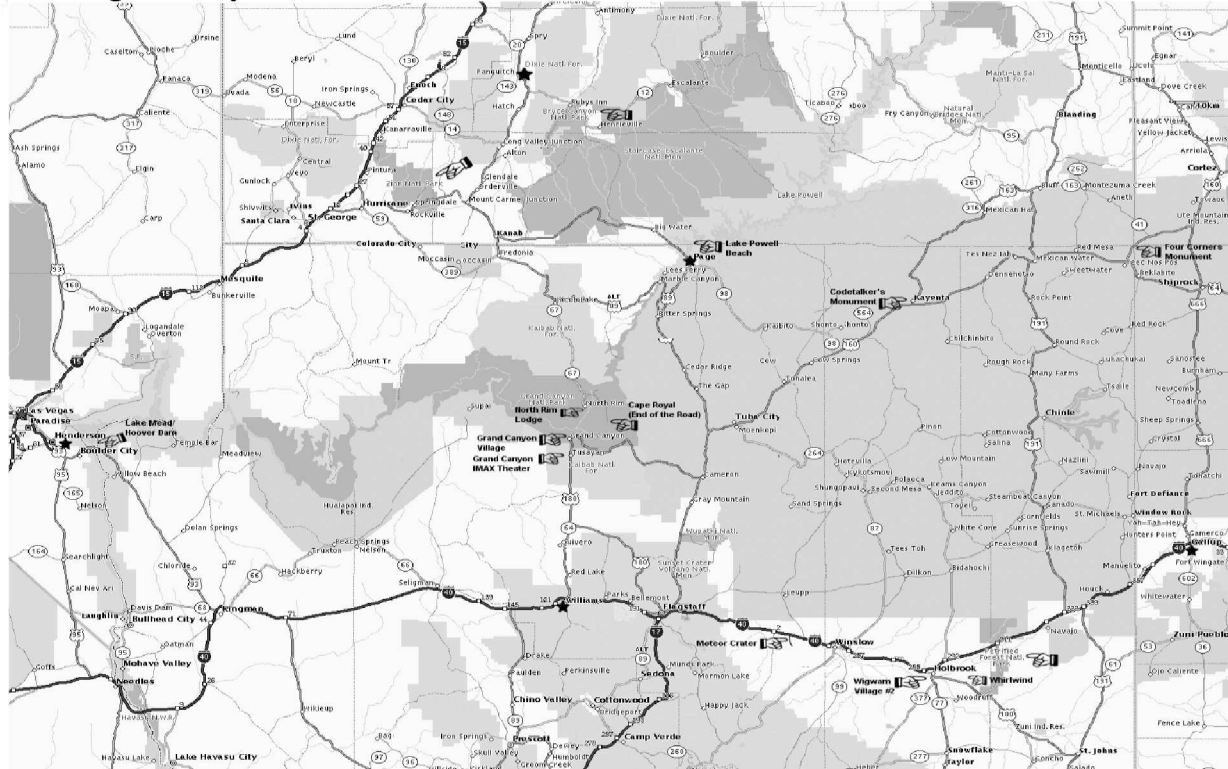
It may be my martial arts training talking, but I feel that airplane hijackers are going to have a much more difficult time in the future. Of course, that still leaves us vulnerable to

suicide bombers, backpack nukes, chemical and biological warfare, and car bombs. I feel safer already.

Vacations, Parties, Conventions, and Other Happier Subjects

OK, enough of this depressing stuff. I would like to include a bit of the Robe Experience's adventures of the last couple of months to cheer things up a bit.

We departed on Friday, August 3 for the first full-fledged family vacation we have taken in



Using Las Vegas as a starting place, I mapped out a route that included Hoover Dam, The Grand Canyon South Rim, The Meteor Crater, The Petrified Forest, The Painted Desert, Four Corners Monument, Lake Powell, The Grand Canyon North Rim, Bryce Canyon and Zion Canyon. It was possible to visit all of these places in one week. The map of the route we used in on the next page. Using the Internet, I was able to reserve hotel rooms in all of our stopover cities, a rental car, and plane tickets. I also got detail maps for each of the hotels and a weather forecast for the day we would be visiting each place.

several years. Although we have taken plenty of trips to conventions, we have not taken a full-week trip for a long time. We chose the Grand Canyon and surroundings as our destination. The reasons for this included Nick studying US geography last year, the place where we could pack the most sightseeing into a short time, and cheap airfares was to Las Vegas. I found 2-for-one tickets from Louisville to Vegas on Southwest for a nonstop flight in both directions. Louisville was a good starting place because we wanted to be there on August 10th to attend Conglomeration.

We left early that Friday morning and drive to Corlis' aunt and uncle's house in Louisville so that we didn't have to pay for parking for the car. The flight was typical Southwest Airlines. I was sure to get to the gate early so that we were among the first group on the plane. The boys both got window seats and Corlis and I took the centers. Once airborne they passed out snacks: crackers and cheese spread, a sausage stick, a fruit and grain bar, and a fun-size Three Musketeers Bar. Nick exclaimed, "I didn't know that airplane food would be so good daddy!" Wisdom from the mouths of babes!

Once in Vegas we encountered Mojave Desert heat. We stayed in a Best Western Hotel in Henderson, that being on the way to Hoover Dam and cheap. It turned out to be a fortuitous choice of hotels because it was caddy-cornered across the street from a hospital. That evening Nick almost collapsed from pain in his ear. It turned out that he had an inner ear infection that could have burst his eardrum if it had gone untreated much longer.

The next day we headed out for Hoover Dam after getting Nick's antibiotic prescription filled. We had a choice of taking the direct route or the scenic route along Lake Mead. We chose the scenic route and stopped for a while and let the boys swim in the lake. I wish I had a picture of their faces when we told them they could jump in the lake if they wanted to. It took about 10 minutes for their clothes to dry once they tired of swimming.

We then toured Hoover Dam and drove to Williams, AZ to spend the night. The next day we drove up to the South Rim and spent the day there. In order to reduce traffic congestion in the park they have instituted a bus system to take people out to the observation points. Although it makes the tour significantly slower, it also makes it possible because there is only space for a few dozen cars at each of the lookouts. We ended the day at the East Entrance to the park with a spectacular sunset to the west and a thunderstorm and double rainbow to the east. That was a sight to remember.

The next day we headed east on I-40 to the Meteor Crater, Petrified Forest, and Painted Desert. A couple of things we found along the way made the day for us. First, in Holbrook, AZ, we discovered Wigwam Village #2! It is in much better shape than the one in Cave City, but it was also closed for the summer so we couldn't see much of it. The second thing was a whirlwind we spotted along the side of the highway. This fascinated the boys so I stopped and rolled the windows down so we could hear the wind. The mini-twister slowly meandered over to the road and I maneuvered the car right into the center. I think that if you ask the boys what the best part of the trip was, they will say it was the whirlwind.

We ended the night in Gallup, NM, the easternmost point of the trip. The next morning, we headed up to the Four Corners Monument. The Monument is 100 miles away from anything and right in the middle of the Navajo Nation. The Monument is run by the Indians, and the artwork available at the stands around the monument were more interesting than the monument itself. We then drove across the Painted Desert to Page, AZ and Lake Powell.

Once again, we went swimming. This time the water was much deeper, and I went in with the boys. It was very fun swimming in the crystal-clear water of Lake Powell, and only encroaching darkness and a thunderstorm drove us out. The next morning, we drove to the North Rim to complete our Grand Canyon Experience. The North Rim is very remote, and you REALLY have to want to get there. Once you arrive, the view is worth it. The North Rim is about 2,000 ft higher than the South Rim, so the view is actually better from there.

In leaving the North Rim, we drove right into the center of a Southwestern thunderstorm. At times the rain was coming down so hard that I could barely see the road even going at 25 mph. At one point we drove into rice-sized hail falling. It was so thick that it coated the ground an inch-thick in places. We ended the day by driving to Panguitch, UT, a small town just outside of Bryce Canyon.

On the next-to-last day of the trip we covered the most ground. We started at Bryce Canyon. That was much improved since the last time I visited there. They have built roads farther into the canyon since we visited there 13 years ago. Now you can drive up to Rainbow Point at over 9100 ft elevation. In the past the only way to get there was to hike. This was the high point of our trip.

Next stop was Zion Canyon. Unlike Grand and Bryce Canyons where the visitors view is from the top rim, at Zion Canyon you park at the bottom and make your way up. As in Grand Canyon, the Park Service has closed the road to traffic in Zion Canyon and provides a bus to take visitors to the scenic points. I liked



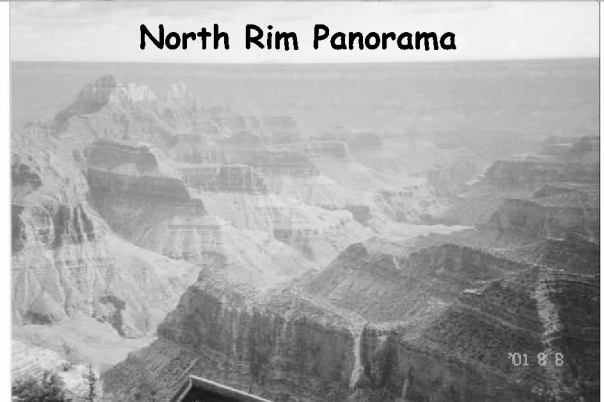
Swimming in Lake Mead



Four States at Once!



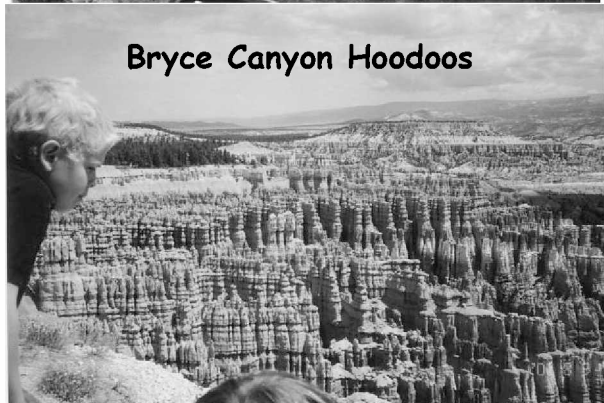
First Look Grand Canyon South Rim



North Rim Panorama



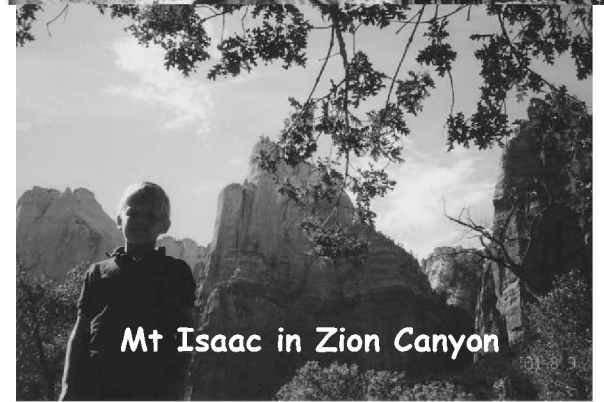
Petrified Forest Whirlwind



Bryce Canyon Hoodoos



Petrified Forest Encounter



Mt Isaac in Zion Canyon

riding the bus even though it slowed down our visit to the park. It was fun talking to and watching other tourists on the bus. Also, the parking at the various scenic points was very limited in the narrow canyon. Given the volume of traffic it would have probably taken more time to make our way up the canyon without having the busses.

After leaving Zion Canyon, we drove all the way back to Las Vegas. The boys crashed in the back seat so completely that they completely missed our drive down the strip as we made our way to our hotel near the airport. On the trip back, we got one last look at the Grand Canyon out of the airplane window. When we landed in Louisville, we were right over the luggage compartments. As we waited to disembark Nick watched in horror as the plane unloaded. "Daddy! They aren't being careful at all with that luggage!" he observed with the sage innocence of a child.

Some of the most interesting things about the trip were the unexpected weather, the open roads and the open sky. The only places we were overheated were in Las Vegas and along the South Rim. Even at the Grand Canyon the heat was no more than a normal summer day in the 90's. I think that Corlis may decapitate the next person who says, "but it's a dry heat." A dry heat just means that you dehydrate faster. The big surprise was the monsoon rains that popped up each afternoon that kept things cool and interesting.

I had not expected to see rain every day in New Mexico, Utah and Nevada, but there it was. Each day started out clear and sunny in the morning but by noon the storm clouds popped up and were chased by rain all afternoon. The openness of the area was deceptive. A storm that looked like it was bearing down on us might be 1000 miles away. Several times we drove for over an hour towards a storm. Because all of the rain in the desert didn't seem very desert-like. /except for the area around Las Vegas, Lake Mead and Northwestern Arizona where the monsoon did not reach the rest of the terrain was covered with green plants and flowers. It was beautiful!

It was not, however, much fun to drive in. I did all the driving for the trip (around 1500 miles) because a) I knew where we were going

and b) Corlis didn't want to drive the rental Lumina that we had. We could have gotten a SUV for the same per-day cost, but I didn't want to pay for the gas. Several times we drove through blinding rain with lightning striking right beside us. I had to be careful driving in low-lying areas and dry washes that were anything but dry.

I did, however, love the speed limits in the Western states. I quickly got accustomed to driving over 75 mph on the Interstates and 65 mph on the back roads. For the most part the roads were so straight that you could see oncoming traffic for 10 miles or so. We also had the road mostly to ourselves when driving through the Navajo Nation. That was fun.

After the second day, the boys began to bicker constantly and lost interest in looking out the windows. We solved this by buying them books to read to keep them busy. We saved the family with Captain Underpants, Anamorphs and R. L. Stine. It wasn't great literature, but it kept the peace and the boys read more in that four-day stretch than I believe they did all the rest of the year combined.

It was exactly the kind of trip I love. We covered a lot of ground, wandered around to whatever seemed interesting, and included a lot of fascinating sights. It was also, thanks to our tax-relief check, mostly paid for already!

The Great Golden Anniversary Celebration

After attending the gala events of some of her contemporaries, my mother decided that her 50th Anniversary party was going to be a Big Deal. My dad would have probably settled for a nice dinner with a few friends, but mom had the final say. I admit that she did the lion's share of the work and planning, but a significant amount of the work fell on my siblings and me.

My brother Gerald, sister Diane and I started up an e-mail correspondence about plans for the party. Mother expected us to put on some kind of program during the festivities, so we had to come up with that. When the guest list started going over 200, the logistics demanded that more help be brought in. Mother hired a caterer to do the food and cake. She was originally planning to have the event in the fellowship hall of their church, but then decided to move everything to their house. That made mom more comfortable, but it increased

the work that we all had to do. We could use the folding tables and chairs from the church, but we had to haul them out to the farm, Unload them, set them up, fold them back down and haul them back into town.

It became apparent that it was going to take several days of work to bring this all together. I took off two days from work in order to help with the setup. Gerald and I sweated through Thursday evening and all-day Friday to get the house ready for event on Saturday afternoon. We did everything from setting up the tents over the serving tables to repairing the wood slats on the second-floor deck. Luckily dad has a F-150 truck, so we were able to haul all the tables and chairs out in just two loads.

ON Thursday night Diane, Gerald and I were finally able to meet to practice all we had collected for the program. Diane and her daughter Stephanie had made an extensive scrapbook that covered everything from Mom and Dad's first dates at Manchester College in Indiana in the early 50's right up to the present. Gerald had researched world events during significant family dates such as birthdays of children, grandchildren, graduations and their 10th and 25th anniversaries. I had hit on writing haiku that described family anecdotes. The idea was to recite the haiku and see if Mom and Dad could guess what we were describing and then tell the story. We also put together a trivia contest from little details that we knew about them. We gave out gold dollar coins and prizes. We holed that was enough of a program.

On the day of the event Corlis and I left the children in the care of her parents, and we did errands and helped in the final preparations. There was a chance of rain that would have seriously put a damper on the plans, but the rain stayed well to the north. The only weather problem we had to contend with was the wind. We scavenged enough clothespins to keep the tablecloths in place and put ricks in the centerpieces on each table to keep them from blowing away. One advantage of having party on the farm was that there was plenty of parking in the hayfield.

The starting time fore the party snuck up on me. I had been working and sweating all day

and was not in shape to be in public when the first early guests began arriving at about 3:30. I took a quick shower and changed into the clothes that Mom had bought me for the occasion – golden yellow pants with a pineapple Hawaiian print shirt. It sounds ghastly, but it actually looked pretty good.

Mom and Dad had sent out over 250 invitations and had gotten confirmations from over 200 that planned to attend. At one point we think there were about 180 people there. I got to see some people I had not seen for about 20 years. I got video of the guests at the tables and serving lines. At an appropriate moment we collected the family and did our show from the balcony. Mom and Dad were impressed and happy with all the work Diane, Gerald and I had put into the presentation, especially with Diane and Stephanie's scrapbook. They managed to include details like a napkin from their wedding.

As it began to get dark, we realized that we had not taken any family pictures. We rushed to gather everyone in the garden before we lost the light. As it got dark most of the guests left. Gerald and I drafted some of the stragglers to help putting up the tables and chairs and moving them back to town. Just like a SF convention, nobody was in a mood to do teardown, but those tables needed to be back for Sunday School the next morning.

As the party would down my mother choked back tears and said that they day was more fun and meant more to her that the wedding. I guess that made it worthwhile. As a family we are lucky to have our parents still alive and healthy in their 70's so that they could enjoy their celebration. Since the party I have been looking at other's Golden Anniversary pictures in the paper and see a few couples that are still as well preserved as my parents. Also, we noted how many of my parent's friends had at least one partner that didn't make it to a Golden Anniversary.