
ON THE ROAD

--Nancy Murdock

That's where we were for a lot of the past 2 weeks - on the road, traveling over half of the country. We had a super time and sampled some wonderful hospitality on the 5 visits that highlighted our trip.

Our friend Lynda Brugge had just completed a trip to MN by herself, so we used her advice: do something fun each day. That was easy to do when we were visiting, but we also worked in a few other items: a walk around a river park in Elkhart, IN, home of most of the school band instruments in this country; a stop at a Cheese House in WI and an Old World bakery in Pella, MO; a wonderful tour of the Museum of American Quilting in Paducah, KY; and a spin through the county museum of art in Greenville, SC.

I had my favorite traveling companion and navigator with me, along with 48 tapes, our favorite pillows, a stack of romances and mysteries from the library, and food enough for 4 people. (The diet started the day after we returned.) It was a great trip. Bob said, "It turned out to be even better than I believed possible."

CAT PEOPLE

--Nancy Murdock

Four of our 5 host families had cats. The Frosts have the highest number of "bosses," 3: Regina and Zippy (Siamese ladies who know how to get what they want) and Puff, who realizes he's #3 on the list.

Chris and Gene have a large blue-gray cat named Bubba (AKA Mr. Tudball) and his sister who is half his size and named Bitty (AKA Mrs. Wiggins). Bubba will follow you to the ends of the earth, yowling all the way, if you start petting him.

Roy and family have 2 new kittens. Their beloved cat Dollywood perished in the electrical fire that badly damaged their rented house, and after 2 weeks the kids declared that they needed a new cat. They saw an adorable litter of 4, and Roy feels they did well to stop at taking 2.

Joyce and John Mortison have a laid-back cat named Dotty, whom they describe as "our Holstein cat" because she has large black patches on white. They keep her in at night while the raccoons are roaming around the property and eating the wheat bread and dog food provided by Joyce, because "they're bigger than she is."

KICK BACK AND RELAX

--Nancy Murdock

Darrel, Toy, Tony, and Nikki were our first hosts. We were really ready for their instructions to "sleep in and make it a relaxing day." It was surprising to realize how quickly we learned not to rush around in the mornings.

Toy cooked one of her famous Thai meals, with plenty of toasted garlic in the cellophane noodles. Nikki read books with us and Tony read and re-read the comics we brought. It seemed good to have our usual long philosophical talks with Darrel. We admired both Toy's and Darrel's new cars and wished for his cruise control.

Monday we picked up Jason and Nick after school and visited briefly with Dawn and Chris. We had a blast at the Museum of Natural Science, which had few visitors. We could do any experiment we wanted without waiting in line. The museum, Jason's suggestion, is Nick's favorite place to go, because "it always has something different." We had to tear ourselves away when our stomachs reminded us of dinner, which we ate at a large buffet that the boys love but their parents scorn. Ah, pig-out heaven!

Tuesday we shopped at the Mall of America, a huge 4-storied building with a theme park in the center. We watched kids enjoy Camp Snoopy as we browsed. One big surprise was a Filene's Basement, a store we remember as strictly a Boston phenomenon. I bought a Bergdorf Goodman suit for half price.

Minneapolis also gave us a chance to eat at a real vegetarian restaurant, the Mud Pie. It was great to find more than 1 item on the menu.

And Darrel and Toy gave up their water bed to us - to help with the relaxing!

KIRKSVILLE KAPER

--Nancy Murdock

Orrel and Charlie Frost welcomed us with a 2-pie supper: Carrot Pie and Peach Pie. As usual, they were superb hosts. They gave us a whole bathroom to ourselves and even rented extra beds, since they had moved the guest beds to Maine.

They gave us guided tours of their city and Northeastern MO State University, where Charlie teaches Criminal Justice. NMSU had banners all over to let us know they had just been named by Money Magazine as #8 in the nation for quality

education at an affordable price.

We saw NMSU's Olympic swimming pool, fine student union, and excellent library with a user-friendly computer system. The Frosts are such NMSU boosters they hope their grandson chooses it.

Charlie and Orrel showed us all the places that make Kirksville a pleasant place to live, such as a great gourmet coffee shop and Selby House, an attractive combination craft shop and restaurant. We enjoyed the county park, which has an unusually good display of petroglyphs (symbolic drawings on rock, made by long-ago Indians).

Orrel and I cooked a dinner of Chana and Paratha from the Muse Cookbook, and Charlie made copious batches of cappuccino and espresso. Bob and I joined Orrel and 2 friends on their 2-mile morning walk, and Charlie demonstrated the range of his computer software, including a travel planner.

Their daughter Pam and her family brought us a beautiful bouquet of homegrown marigolds and asters for our 43rd anniversary, and Orrel surprised us with a cake. We left early the next morning with happy memories of Orrel's great breakfast - and cappuccino made by Charlie before he went to work! We are blessed with wonderful friends.

THE MURFREESBORO MURDOCKS

--Nancy Murdock

We arrived in Murfreesboro at 9:10 PM after a 675-mile drive and a quilt museum tour, glad we had guaranteed motel reservations. "Sure, come on over," Roy said, welcoming us from the start. Ben, Khendra, Tami, and Roy had rented a camcorder and showed us a tape of their informal basketball games, etc. Then they filmed us doing rock and roll dancing. We definitely have to buy a camcorder!

Sunday was a perfect day - sunny, clear, and breezy. Last year our picnic ended up inside because of rain, but this time we made it outdoors. Roy suggested a supermarket deli, where we bought all kinds of picnic goodies, including 2 kinds of potato salad.

Tami and Khendra elected to watch the football games while the rest of us went to a beautiful park with splendid walking trails. After a huge meal and a little football toss, we took a hike that began on the foot path and ended on the horse trail. The ranger, concerned that we might get lost and need to be hunted for in the middle of the night, steered us back on track.

Bob joined Tami for TV football while the rest of us had a Game Night. In the 2 days we were there, we played a fun geography game, Tri-Ominoes,

Monopoly, and Scrabble. Khendra would play until the typewriter lured her to record more football trivia, but Ben and Roy were ready for any challenge. Tami stuck with her current hobby, updating football statistics during the game.

Monday we ate at a breakfast buffet, visited the home of Civil War hero Sam Davis, browsed book and video stores, and played Scrabble at the motel. We ended back at the football game, happily talking about all that's happened in the past year.

ALABAMA ANYTIME

--Nancy Murdock

This was the shortest leg of our half-continent trip - only about 110 miles, so we had plenty of time for a guided tour around by Gene while Chris was doing her volunteer job at the nursing home. Several varieties of butterflies greeted us from the herb and perennial garden by the front door. Birds sang in the nearby woods.

Gene is about halfway through his re-landscaping operation and announced happily, "I can cut the grass in 1 hour with only 1 tank of gas now." He's converting the rear of the property into a wooded area plus garden.

We were given the royal treatment: a large bedroom with private bath. Chris, always a caring person, had made sure it had all the amenities, such as a card table to lay suitcases on to avoid stooping! She had also cooked various components for meals, so we could all spend time together.

Gene showed us how he researches at the Mormon genealogy center. We checked out some of our ancestors.

We joined Gene on his morning walk in a park with good trails and views of the water - complete with a Great Blue Heron who looked like Bubba [pg. 1]. Gene shared some of his knowledge of tree lore.

Gene and Chris took us on a great tour of the area, including natural resources and the TVA's Gunterville Locks, where we arrived just in time to see the gates open for a tugboat and barges. It was perfect weather to watch the whole process. Then we continued on to Huntsville, where we lunched and bought a lot of books, CDs, tapes, and maps. We finished at Chris's favorite shopping place, Unclaimed Baggage, in Scottsboro. If you get a chance, be sure to visit these hospitable and interesting Musers.

GEORGIA ON MY MIND

--Bob Murdock

Joyce Mortison worked with me at Univac in Minnesota back in the Sixties. She was a software expert who later headed the entire Systems Programming department. We have stayed in touch over the years, exchanging Christmas newsletters. Now Joyce and her husband John live in Georgia, where they own six franchised Great Clips hair salons. Nancy and I spent two nights and a day at their castle on the edge of the woods in Roswell, which is a comfortable distance north of Atlanta.

The Mortison residence is, in addition to a haven for raccoons, a wonderful bird sanctuary. John fashioned a squirrel-proof set of feeders which can swing out from the second-story porch deck, toward a hickory tree on the edge of the woods. We saw ten or twelve species of birds during our short visit. One time I saw a cardinal, a red-bellied woodpecker, and a titmouse all on the same tray!

On Friday, Joyce and John took a day off from their business so they could show us some of the area's features. First we went to the Jimmy Carter Center in Atlanta. It houses a presidential museum, the Carter Library, and meeting rooms for diplomatic conferences. We spent a couple of hours in the Smithsonian-like museum, and had lunch in the garden restaurant. After lunch the Mortisons showed us one of their salons - a cheerful, modern, nifty place. We also visited Bookstar, a big bookstore in Marietta.

Later in the afternoon John drove us to Lake Lanier where they keep a cabin cruiser, "Leisure Lady." We had a thrilling boat ride on part of the 47,000 acre lake, which was formed from the Chatahoochie River. Back at the castle, John topped off our great day by cooking a tasty spaghetti dinner.

THE NIGHT THE STARS CAME OUT

--Richard Clark

An exciting adventure took place this summer when Charlie and Orrel Frost loaded their furniture in a U-haul truck bound for Maine and their new summer house. I accompanied my in-laws, providing muscle and a relief driver.

After 1500 miles we arrived at the new house, which was of course equipped with brand new appliances. We surveyed all the conveniences that Americans cannot live without. Refrigerators, ranges, dishwashers, and even microwave ovens are a must in this day and age. It was fun to look around and touch each piece. However, we found that even a new refrigerator needs freon or it is not much good!

So, for that night we relied on our Yankee ingenuity and kept all the perishables in the ice water of the Igloo that we brought with us. The stove wasn't switched over to LP gas, either, so improvisation again came into play. Microwaving pizza which is not designed to be micro-waved provided us (Charlie and me) with a new adventure in the art of cheese cardboard!

We were so punchy from the trip and so excited to be in this new house (Ask Nancy and Bob) that our funny bone must have been in overdrive. I noticed that Orrel was enjoying something on the TV. Good, I thought, after the long trip we can all sit and enjoy a nice classic movie or whatever. No way! Because of the trouble with the fridge and stove, Orrel decided she ought to check the washer and dryer. The Maytag company had provided a video tape on the operation and care of their product. That's the film she was enjoying, to my great surprise!

Now Charlie and I really did get silly. I started it and Charlie replied in the same spirit. A sample of our craziness follows:

Richard: Oh, I wonder who is the star of this movie - maybe that great movie actress, May Tag.

Charlie: Yes, and co-starring Spinn Dry!

Richard: And directed by Rintz Cycle!

Charlie: Don't forget that hot new star, Micro Waive.

Richard: Yes, he is an up and coming young actor, and we mustn't forget the musical score by Crock Pott!

We laughed and laughed and there were many more stars that I haven't mentioned. Orrel thought we were nutty. Boy, was she surprised when May Tag opened on stage in Kirksville, of all places. And to prove that I'm not kidding, I have enclosed a photo of her top billing and the phone number for tickets.

KIDS' PAGE

CATALINA CAPER

--Carol Murdock

Christie had a good time in Catalina at a contest where people dressed up in Pirate costumes. Then Christie, like her dad, woke everyone up by her big "catch." Only hers wasn't a fish!. She had to pay Robert a dollar to unhook the huge stingray that was at the end of her line.

FAVORITE BREAKFASTS

Your senior editors asked Khendra the Cartoonist and Ben the Big Football Player what were their favorite breakfasts.

"Cereal. Any cereal," said Khendra, as she finished her cartoon for the Muse. Ben got a happy look in eyes. "Hashbrowns and gravy and biscuits and gravy," he said. "He means at the same meal," his dad said, "both together." Ben sighed. "But I never eat it any more, because I'm on a low-fat diet," he said. The gravy Ben likes best is good ole country milk gravy, very popular in Tennessee.

So what is your favorite breakfast? Let us know, and your answer will be on the Kids' Page.

MY LIFE WITH DOGS

--Christel Michelle Murdock

When I was younger, my Grandma Hanson on my mom's side introduced me to dog shows. The first thing I learned was all the AKC (American Kennel Club) Standards; then I learned some of the English Standards.

I'm still in junior classes, but my special goals are Westminster and finally Crufts, the National shows. My favorite dog is Comet, Valgo's Shooting Star.

He's really smart for a Bedlington Terrier. My Grandpa Hanson and I have taught him to jump hurdles and kill rats, everything a champion terrier should learn.

If you want to know anything about your dog, you can ask the dog nut of the Murdock family.

CASEY I & CASEY II

The 2 latest members of the Howlett and Murdock families are both named Casey. Last month you saw a picture of Jacob and Shawn Blakley's little brother. This week we announce the birth of Casey Karin Howlett, daughter of Regina and Scott, and granddaughter of Editor Nancy's brother Andrew. Two Caseys. Do you think they will both like baseball? (Ask your dad about that question.)

A JOB AND A CAR

Jason and Nick Murdock are very ambitious. Jason (age 15) already has a job at a big hotel, and Nick is planning to apply at Dairy Queen when he turns 14 in December. They both have deep voices and sound about 18 on the phone.

Jason has his learner's permit and plans to buy a car from his mom and stepdad when he gets his license.

A 79th BIRTHDAY - Aug. 27, 1993

--Kenneth A. Murdock

First, let me call attention to my article called "Happy Time" on page 2 of the October 1992 Muse.

This year it began with birthday cards from Charlie and Goldie Holmes in Colorado, Mil's sister Georgie Goins in Taos, N.M. (with a letter enclosed), cards and note from Gene and Chris in Alabama and Bob and Nancy in Maryland, and Georgie's daughter Denise in Florida, as well as a couple from here in Thomaston CT and nearby.

On the actual birthday, Aug.27th, the same circus, Roberts Bros. 3-ring circus was scheduled to be in the same place in Woodbury CT as last year. This year I went with my oldest son Brian, also known as the clown Bingo the Great. Going with him made it necessary to be there for both performances.

We arrived and parked in the shade near a group of circus people. As soon as I got out of the car I was handed a birthday card by clown Jo-Jo (Ed Ellis) and one from clown Bingo (Brian). Others in the group all wished me happy birthday - including the top clown, Rod-O.

In the first show (5:30 P.M.) I sat in a chair Brian had placed in an ideal spot near the center ring. Here I watched all the acts and really enjoyed them. Then the ring-master, Bill Schreiber, announced that they were celebrating the 200th anniversary of circus in America and the 20th anniversary of Roberts Bros. and - - the 79th birthday of Ken Murdock. Happy Birthday, Ken! At the time I was sitting with a lapful of stuff and could only wave recognition. Yet others around me (paid customers) also wished me happy birthday.

At the second show (7:30 P.M.) I first just sat just outside the tent in Clown Alley and chatted with clowns and workers. Then I moved inside near the music man and ringmaster. This was on the opposite side of the tent so all acts were directed away from me. This didn't matter as I had seen it all before. Again the anniversary announcements ended with my birthday greeting. This time I was on my feet and could step out beyond the bleachers and "style". This consists of both arms out and a little up with a slight bow - aimed at various segments of the audience. I ended with a one-handed recognition of the ring-master. Brian was impressed.

From then on I heard "Happy Birthday" almost continually - probably half to two thirds of the circus performers and employees and dozens of customers. The latter came over from 50 to 100 ft. away. One woman said it was her 40th birthday and she hoped that at my age she would be able to

enjoy things like circuses. Some had birthdays just before or after mine. Others just came over to give their congratulations.

My tee shirt with Bingo's picture and Roberts Bros. on it made a big hit, but I had to say it was not available - only 3 or 4 were made.

Needless to say I arrived home in a high state of elation. There my son Keith called from Mass. with greetings and said his friend Darryl had tried to call earlier. I recognize that as another greeting.

What a day!! Never before, so many greetings and such a range of sources! And it was made even better knowing that my late wife, Mil, was there with me in spirit through our eternal bond of love, and that she was enjoying it, too!!

Thanks for sharing your celebration with us, Uncle Ken, so that a lot of Muse readers could partake.

--Bob and Nancy

* * MURDOCK MUSE * *

October 1993

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The editors also thank all who call each month with news.

To become a member of the Murdock Muse staff, submit three offerings: letters, articles, cartoons, pages of jokes, etc. You may get on the mailing list by submitting articles, etc., by sending a donation, or by telling us how wonderful the publication is and how much you would like to receive it each month.

CALENDAR

Charlie Frost is ready to update our Muse Calendar. Please send middle names where we omitted them, plus anything else.

IN THIS ISSUE

We introduce a new contributor, Richard Clark, Orrel and Charlie Frost's son-in-law. Carol Murdock becomes our latest Staff Journalist with her 3rd submission, and Staff Journalist Christie tells about her interest in dogs.

Ken Murdock fans will enjoy his latest article. The Frosts review a hot item, and we report on all the wonderful hospitality we enjoyed on our trip.

OCTOBER CELEBRATIONS

We have 3 anniversaries: Warren III (Polly Soberg's son) and Maria Leary on the 3rd; Bill and Denise Chapman (Steve Howlett's daughter) on the 11th; and Doug and Carol Howlett on the 15th.

Carla Howlett (Gregg's wife) has her birthday on the 2nd, Angel Howlett turns 21 on the 6th, Eric Murdock (Gene's son) celebrates on the 7th, and Doug Howlett the Younger has his 26th on the 9th. Eric Howlett (Steve's grandson) will be 2 on the 19th. The 20th is a banner day: Jason Murdock (age 16 and old enough to get a driver's license); Tim Howlett (Steve's son); and Melissa Leary (Polly's granddaughter, age 1). Benjamin Hiscock (Bill and Sandy's grandson and Dawn Wylie Hiscock's son) has his 1st birthday on the 24th; Grandma Christel Murdock will be 87 on the 29th; and Adrianna Howlett (Tom's granddaughter) will be 9 on the 30th. **Grandma Christel loves to get cards!**

Hope all your celebrations will be joyous and lead to many more. Our apologies to all who didn't receive cards from us in September. We had great intentions and even took the list with us, but we were too slothful on our vacation.