

## THE TOUR

10-13 & 14-2003

There goes the alarm--4:00 AM! I can't believe I signed up for this tour, but I've always wanted to go on one and never heard about them on time. People must have connections because they are always filled so soon. This seems appropriate because the lady who books them lives in Whitelaw (though not a relative!), the dates were open on my calendar, and it was a Mystery tour, which sounded like it might be fun.

Am sure glad I got my car back from the body shop in time--I would hate to have to wake Mike to take me to the Holiday Inn in Manitowoc where the bus picks up the people who are going. He would probably just roll over and go back to sleep and I would miss the whole thing--says he wouldn't, though.

Well, I had my little red bag all packed already Sunday, with a list of last minute additions like my clock, pills, etc. We would stop for breakfast at 8:30 so I don't have to eat that early.

First time I have the car out of the garage and the steering feels so tight--will have to have that checked and the door has to be really slammed to get it to stay shut. Well, when I get back I can take it back to Vogels and see what can be done.

Left home about 4:50 and thought I was early, but about half the people were already there even though the bus and tour guide weren't yet. We stood around and talked and I got to meet a couple folks--Edna, who had told me about the tour introduced me to some. She and her sis go on quite a few and said they are fun.

Here comes the bus--I took my bag along inside so I could reach for anything I needed. They have storage compartments above the seats for small bags and coats. Because I was the last to sign up, I got to have the back seat (next to the john!) all to myself. I didn't mind, but then the man who was to be ahead of me had cancelled, so I could move up a notch, but still have a double seat to myself and with a little better view.

Just before the bus started off, the "guide", Audrey, passed out frosted donuts--just what a diabetic needs. I picked off the frosting with the napkin and ate the donut.

It was still dark when we took off and headed west out of town. After awhile, we stopped in a small town and I wondered where we were--turned out to be Whitelaw, where we picked up about five more people. When I saw the old cheese factory in the headlights I recognized the town. It felt strange going through towns I knew well and not recognizing them. By the time we reached Appleton, the sun was coming up and that felt better.

I decided to write down the towns we went through--Weyawega, Waupaca, Fremont--I didn't get them all, and forgot to write where we stopped for breakfast. It was a nice clean place and I had my usual--two eggs and toast. Sat with a lady who I thought was alone, but her husband joined us a little later. She was originally from Rockwood and we chatted about the Gosz family. Unfortunately, I can't remember her name!

Had time for a quick pit stop and then back onto the bus. We went through Stevens Point and on to Marshfield. I may have some of the itinerary confused, but I think that is where we toured the Weinbrenner Shoe Factory. That was very interesting. I can't believe all the various parts and procedures that make up a shoe. They do a lot of work for Armed Services and are very well known for excellent work. (Linda recognized the name and said the shoe company she worked at would make some of the uppers and ship them to big factory.)

The next stop, I believe, was at the Casa Loma, a bar and restaurant. Not sure what town. They tried to be "classy" but I was not impressed. The salad was minimal with only one kind of "oily" dressing available. The small portions of meat could have been done a little more. There was a big portion of dressing with cranberries which was fairly good and your choice of beverage. People sort of expected a dessert, but when we got back to the bus, Audrey passed out chocolate chip cookies--I took a small one, but of course that was still "cheating" on the diet.

At Neilsville, we toured the Clark County Jail, a very old building converted to a museum. The Sheriff's family had lived in a rather nice area, but the cells were small and very heavily barred--they must have had some real desperados there! There was a small school room and library, and various other rooms with artifacts from the past that one finds in most smaller town museums. I'm old enough to know what they are!

Near Augusta, many people are Amish and still use buggies, etc. but a few are modernizing a bit with machinery on the farms. We stopped at a store that was filled with all kinds of foods and jams, nuts, etc. I bought some sugar free pecan pralines, some raspberry syrup, and a "Miracle" cleaning cloth--it has a most unusual feel and is supposed to be great for dusting and washing things. Well, I liked the color and will hang it in the kitchen to enjoy and remember the tour. Also got a chunk of horseradish cheese for Mike. He likes it and was pleased when I gave it to him tonight.

Our stop for the night was at a Holiday Inn in Eau Claire. I think we were all ready to get off the bus and find our rooms. As I was alone (almost all others were couples or pairs) I had a room to myself--big, a queen-size bed with 6 pillows, TV, coffee, hair dryer, iron and board, etc. It was a little more since I wasn't sharing the cost, but I enjoyed being alone.

The evening included a dinner and show. I sat with Edna, her sister and about six other people, including the bus driver, who was rather portly, and obviously knew many of the "regulars" who take other tours with the same group. The bus, by the way, is called "Have Group-Will Travel" and was reasonably comfortable as buses go.

The meal, again, was not to my taste--but then I have fussy tastes so maybe most people liked it. The salad was better and had French dressing. I really don't remember what the entree was, but I ate it anyway. They accidentally gave our dessert to another group and we ended up with cookies again.

The show was by a group of 10 or 12 who were called the Jail Bailers. They did some great barbershop type singing, but also more other types of songs, by one or two or all. They were quick change artists according to the songs. One was dressed like a sheriff, a couple police ladies. The one who was working the sound system near our table overheard our driver, Roger, say "There's one for you" to a lady who goes on lots of tours and is always fun and point at him. Since they were all very good at impromptu comedy, he came over to our table and started to "romance" the lady. She didn't quite know what to say or do, but we were having a lot of laughs, especially when he really began coming on to her strongly.

After he had to adjust his sound stuff, he must have talked to the "sheriff" and they added in some impromptu stuff that developed into more laughs. The sheriff came over to our table and "arrested" the lady and handcuffed her, pulled her to the stage, and handcuffed her to the chair. After some more ridiculousness and a lot more laughs, she was released and ushered back to our table. If the Jail Bailers ever play Manitowoc, its worth going to!

By this time I was really tired. I tried to find the news and weather on the TV, but "settled in" pretty soon. I found out that some others went swimming, played cards, etc. Don't know how they get up in the AM, but no one missed the bus!

The "Continental breakfast" was very disappointing--a little nook in a corner of the lobby with coffee or juice, your choice of small bran or blueberry muffins and we had to sit on the chairs and couches in the lobby. By the time I was done with mine, the clerk came with a small basket of fruit (for 54 people!). I took a small orange and went back to my room and ate it there. There were a lot of "comments"--I think the general word was "chintzy".

While my room was luxurious, it had a few flaws. The faucet on the bathroom sink was very hard to pull and when you put a little more effort on it, it suddenly came up and splashed the whole area--the coffee maker, the hairdryer on the wall and most of the countertop--even my pants--had to use the dryer on it.

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Another "bug" at the Holiday Inn--I ran a cup of water to set on my bedside table--even putting a folded napkin under it to protect the table. In the morning, the table and items on it were all wet--the foam cup had a leak (I think on the seam). I reported these things to the desk clerk so they could fix those things and not lose customers.

I thought we would be stopping for a proper breakfast, so I didn't take my "with food" pills and then they didn't stop. I forgot the pills until we stopped at a Culvers for supper and I took them then and the supper ones for bedtime lunch!!

Once again on the bus, we went through places like Pleasantville, Osseo and Whitehall. We had acquired a tour guide at one of the towns and he kept up a running line of comment about everything in Trempealeau Co., pointing out places of interest like the Ashley furniture, which has a long history and great reputation.

Another stop was at the Independence City Hall. The building which had the main hall used for storage, had been restored beautifully. It had the metal ceiling like the one at Washington House in Two Rivers, the stage had a luxurious red curtain and an antique ornate organ was in one corner. A balcony with seats was another interesting feature. The first floor, I think, is their current city hall and police department.

The tour guide explained that, while most of Trempealeau County was settled by Norwegians, there were areas of Polish and German settlers and some Irish. At Arcadia, if I remember correctly, we toured a Polish church, very old and very beautiful. The side wall contained many huge stained glass windows and the church was large and seated about 1200. At the end of the church tour, we were invited to the basement hall where we were served the best meal of the trip--good Polish food made by the ladies of the parish and served buffet style.

The people of Arcadia chipped in on buying land for a park. Through the middle of the park, there is a wide sidewalk they call Soldier's Walk. It has lifesize statues of famous war heroes from all American wars in our history. Most all of the group walked the Soldiers walk to the far end where the bus was waiting for us--and I think some even took a detour through a building with more information.

A town called Ettric had Irish and Norwegians. At one time, there was a mountain range in the area, but the glaciers cut it down somewhat. We went up to a high spot on the road called Grace Point--I believe the guide said it was 1600 feet high.

Another stop on the tour was at a taxidermy place on property owned by Jim Brush. The building was a huge house with an unusual shape. It was said that the taxes on the building are over \$61,000 yearly!! A driveway to the basement below was the workshop of two (or three?) brothers who would do all the

mounting of animals the owner hunted all over the world and many that they themselves hunted. Over the years, there were so many "stuffed" animals mounted that they decided to build a museum to show them. It is most fascinating and beautifully done with mountains, a waterfall and many other appropriate settings for the types of animals. They range from an elephant giraffe, mountain goats, ostrich, foxes, wolves and many others. Some even move and some have sound. If you ever have a chance, go to see it. The Brush property is at least 2000 acres!

Near Centerville, our tour guide left us and it was time to head back home. No more stops, except for some scenic places where we could take a photo, supper at Culvers and the bus driver stopped to buy some cranberries at a farm with a sign-- but they were out of them. Once it was dark, many of us just closed our eyes and rested, though there was a lot of talk and laughter from up front. I think they were reliving the events of the entertainment Saturday night!!

If any of my pictures turn out, and some of the brochures I was offered, I will include them with this story for my remembrance of my first (and maybe last) tour. I learned that I am not a tour person--I like to sleep late, eat meals on time, know where I am going and where the stops are when I need them, etc.

Hope you enjoyed my "Travelogue".

Lu Kleckner