

Avatar Press

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UP FRONT

Hi Guys,

My life has been very hectic and I've been struggling to get caught up. Needless to say that a lazy man's work is never done. Since time is short, and my printer needs a toner cartridge, this issue will be brief and spare in the ink coverage department. Hope to see y'all at WorldCon in Philadelphia.

ALL OF ME

Well, I've gained 12 pounds in the last two months by falling back into my bad habits of eating a lot of fast food and not doing any exercise. It's really a shame. Hopefully I can get back into the swing of things soon. It's a nice half-mile walk around my neighborhood (on sidewalks) so there's really no excuse.

HOME SWEET HOME

I'm a homeowner now. I moved all my belongings over ten days from my old apartment to my new home. I've still got lots of boxes of mostly books and magazines left to unpack. I just cashed my apartment deposit check that I got yesterday. I love not being in an apartment. It's so much quieter. I don't much care for having to mow my yard though other than the joy of mowing a yard that belongs to me. I still have lots of COA notifications to get down, among other various homeowner activities. I have been spending some of my spare time looking at furniture in stores and on the web. I was leaning toward Mission Style. After seeing some in a friend's home, I have reconsidered and am leaning toward light color Shaker style now. Specifically, I want light color hard wood Shaker style tables with drawers and shelves if possible. I want a square coffee table. I have seen a Lazy Boy large comfortable cloth sectional and matching separate recliner that I will probably end up getting. I want a home theater system with a 36 inch digital ready HDTV and a multiple DVD/CD player. I want a Queen size bed. I want a large simple round mirror to go over my mantle. So if you know of any good stores on-line or off to get this type of stuff, let me know.

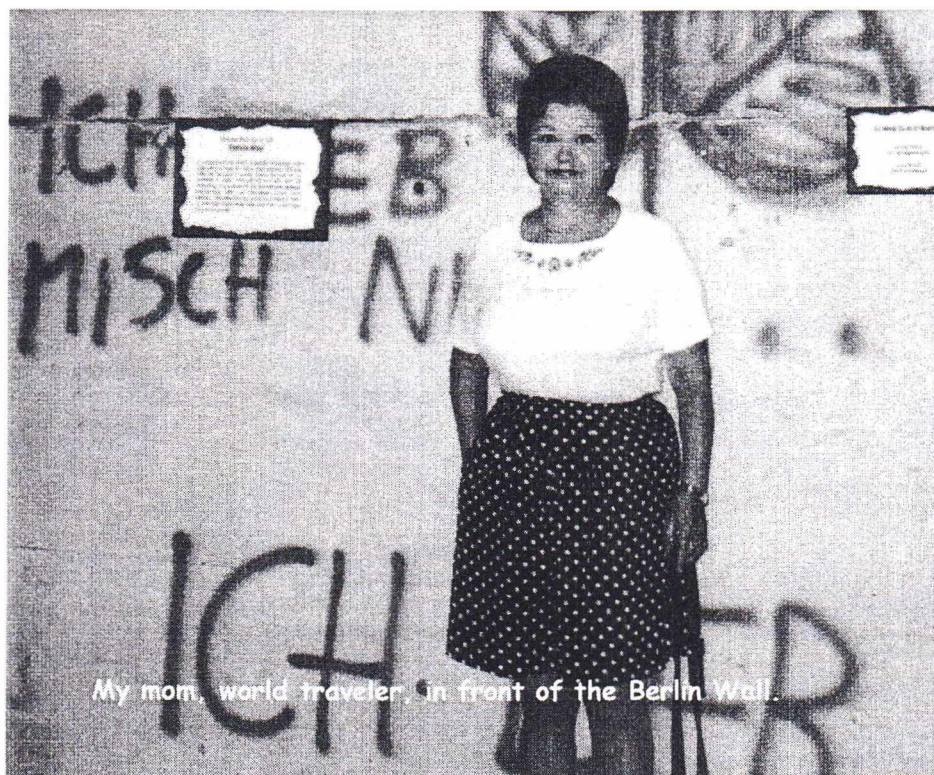


My nephews, Stevie Ray (10 years old) and Jeremy Scott (17 years old).

VACATION

I went on vacation in June with my Mom. I generally had a pleasant time spending six nights in Florida, one night in NC, and driving 2400 miles round trip. I shot six rolls of film but I have only included a few captioned photographs this issue.

On Friday, June 16. My sister and her family drove my mom down from Lexington, North Carolina to my Aunt Rose Lee's place in Debary, Florida. I drove down from Madison, Alabama to Orlando,

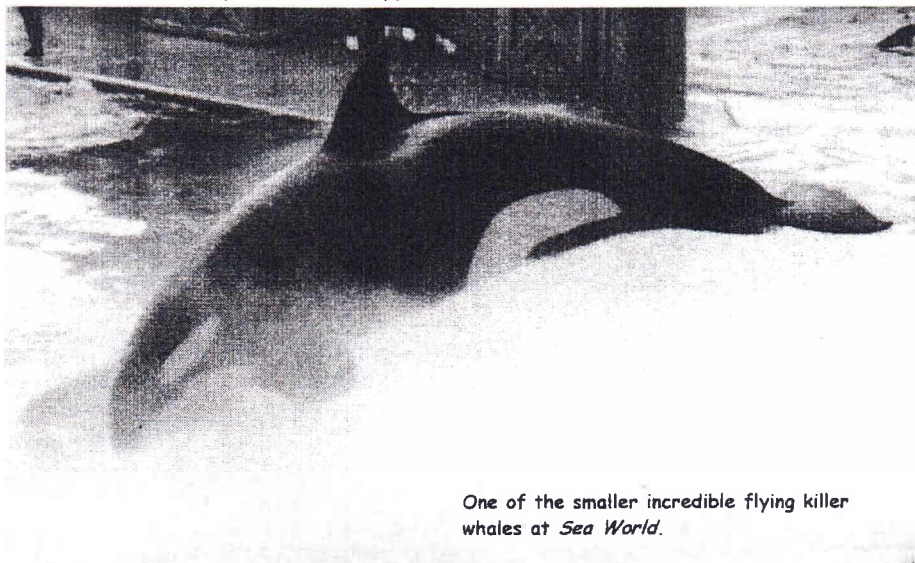


My mom, world traveler, in front of the Berlin Wall.

Florida after I had spent the night in a *Red Carpet Inn* in Georgia for only \$19.95. It was a dive but it was late and storming and I was tired. I checked into the very nice *Star Island Resort and Spa* on Saturday, June 17 and ate dinner at the *T.G.I. Friday's* nearby. The villa consisted of three rooms (bedroom with two beds, living room with kitchenette, and bathroom) and a foyer. The resort had lots of recreational areas and events but we took little advantage of them. It was pretty nice except that the connecting unit neighbors were pretty loud sometimes. I spent the rest of that day and wee morning hours drawing some artwork that Guy Lillian had requested for *Challenger*. I'll run it here after he uses it.

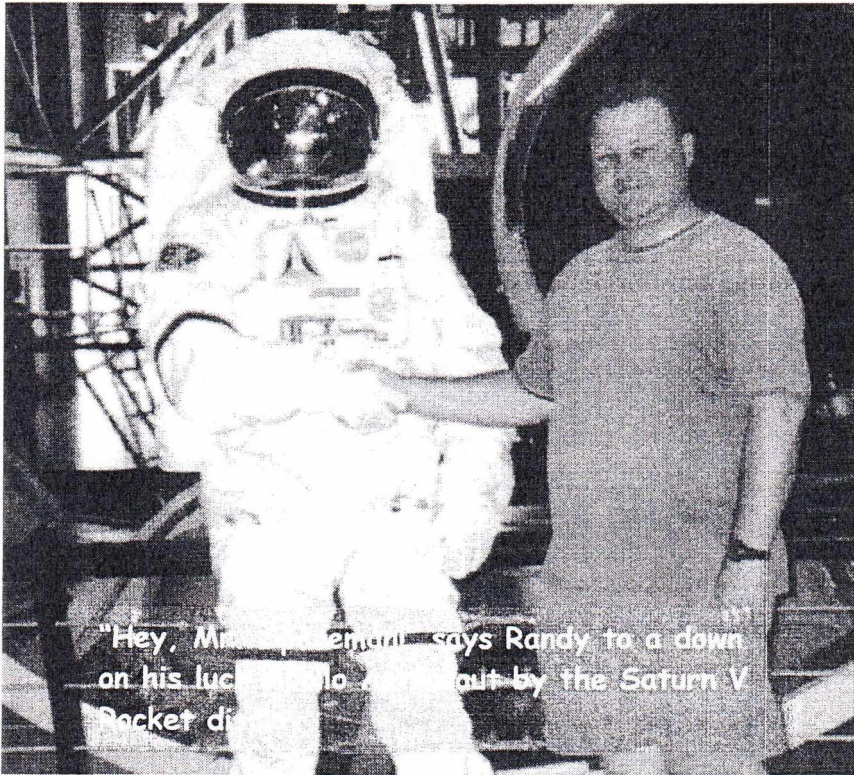
The next day, Sunday, I went up to Debary. I spent the day with my mom, my aunt, my sister, my nephews, and my cousins (my aunt's children) on the *Saint John's River*. My cousin Tony took us out on his large boat. My cousin Johnny Ray took out his family and friends in his pontoon boat also. Johnny Ray has terminal cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy right now. We are all praying for him but the prognosis is not good. So it was nice that he was feeling up to an outing. We met up at an island and they ate lunch. Later, we went swimming in a cool natural spring that feeds the river. Then we cooked out on the boat. It was a quite a nice day and a rare event to spend time with my extended family. Tony said Johnny enjoyed our visit. I took my Mom with me back to Orlando. My sister's family was returning to North Carolina the next day. My sister saved me a lot of driving as I was originally going to have to pick my mom up in North Carolina myself. My ulcer gave me some fits that evening but I was fine the next day.

Monday, I took my Mom out to find a *Mail Boxes Etc.* where I could make some copies of the *Challenger* artwork and express mail them to Guy Lillian. I just beat the deadline for next day delivery. (Unfortunately, I later learned that Guy had moved up the publishing date since we last



One of the smaller incredible flying killer whales at *Sea World*.

talked and went to press without my art. Que sera, sera.) Then we ate at a nice Chinese place. Next we went to *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. It was pretty dull except that I thought it was pretty cool to get to see and touch an actual piece of the infamous Berlin Wall. I remember the goose bumps I got when I watched the News when they first started tearing it down. Then we went shopping. I had found a few SF/Comics/Gaming/Etc. stores on the web before going down and was able to visit them on Monday. They were comparable



"Hey, Mom, Randy says Randy to a down on his luck who is out by the Saturn V Rocket di

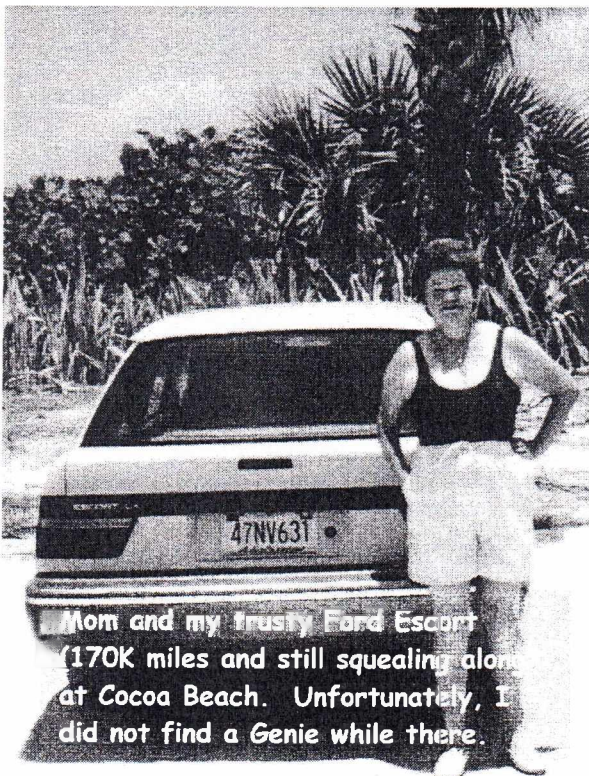
to a large dealer's room at your larger conventions except that the prices were fairly high. I did end up buying a cool *Flash* symbol T-Shirt though. Then we went to some Factory Outlet Stores. I had thought Mom might enjoy that but she did not do too much shopping. I ended up buying several SF DVD's and VHS tapes at great prices at one store though. I also got a great deal on some new Reebok basketball and running shoes. We ate at the *T.G.I.Friday's* in front of Star Island for dinner.

Tuesday, we went to *Sea World*. But first we attended a free resort breakfast where I was obligated to hear the sales pitch for buying a time-share there. Ugh. If you ever want a time-share, be sure to never take the first three or four pitches as they will really deal to

try to get you buy. We had never been to *Sea World*. It was warm at times but the rain cooled things down some in the afternoons. It stormed everyday we were down there in the evenings. Mom got her first taste of all the walking involved in a theme park but was up for it. It was interesting seeing all of the ocean and fresh water mammals and also sharks and other fish in person. The walk-through-and-under aquariums were especially impressive. The aquatic shows were pretty good also, especially the killer whale show. Mom wanted to sit down close, as she could not climb stairs easily. After the shows, she was glad I made her climb the stairs, as she definitely would not have been happy in the splash zone. The ski show was cute but not great. The Circus of the Sea show was pretty cool also and had human acrobats, jugglers, and fire-eaters. I got pulled from the audience onto the stage for a comedy bit with some other audience members. It was fun and I did not have to

do much. Mom seemed to enjoy that the most. She was pretty tired from all the walking though. I got some pretty cool pictures. That evening we ate at a *Perkin's*. It's a chain but we had never been to one. It was surprisingly good American family dining fare.

Wednesday, we drove from Orlando to the *Kennedy Space Center* and took the basic tour. I loved it and was in total awe. Unfortunately we did not get to see the Space Shuttle *Atlantis*. It was still inside the huge *Vehicle Assembly Building* being prepared for the launch. Truthfully, I think the local *Huntsville Space and Rocket Center* is a better museum but you just cannot beat a working spaceport for sense of wonder. I really will have to make a launch one of these days though. Mom would not go up in the observation tower where you get a good view of the area, as she is very afraid of heights. I took some good pictures of the massive crawler and the shuttle launch gantry. I enjoyed the space art gallery in the IMAX Theater also. Mom was walking pretty slowly that day. Fortunately, there was not that much walking there in comparison to *Sea World*. When I left, I bought a souvenir NASA shot glass (so I can do real "space shots") and an die-cast Apollo rocket for my nephew, Stevie. That



Mom and my trusty Ford Escort (170K miles and still squealing along) at Cocoa Beach. Unfortunately, I did not find a Genie while there.



evening, we ate at another family style restaurant, whose name now escapes me. It was pretty good also.

Thursday, I had planned an easy day, as I knew Mom would be worn out. So we drove to *Cocoa Beach* and parked at a public park. We stayed out for a few hours. I swam, walked, and laid out in the sun. I got a little sun burned that eventually peeled. I made mom wear SPF 48 so she was fine. We also went shopping at the world famous *Ron Jon Surf Shop*. I had lost my hat on the Saint John's River off the boat so I bought a new one that says Cocoa Beach. It's very comfortable and is my new favorite hat. I

also bought a T-Shirt but got the wrong size and ended up just giving it to my sister. We had packed some sandwiches and ate them in the picnic area. It was nice to see the Atlantic Ocean again. It had been a while for me. Then we drove back and got ready for dinner at the *Arabian Nights* dinner show. The Arabian Nights dinner show was quite interesting with several horse acts involving many stunts and trick riding. The food was pretty tame though. Unfortunately, the lighting was not good for my point and shoot camera, so my pictures did not turn out well. I've included the coolest one though here. The fog outlines the black horse nicely.

Friday was a big day. My cousin Kathy works for *Disney World* as a floating costume dresser. That is, she fills in for all the *Disney* theme park shows when one of their dresser's is out for vacation, sickness, etc. She helps collect the costumes, deliver them to the shows, and helps the performers do their costume changes during the shows. Her first week, she said she saw more T and A than in her whole life. Her husband asked if she needed any helpers. She and her husband Gary met my Aunt Rose, my Mom, and I at McDonald's. Then she got us in free at *Disney's Animal Kingdom* where she was also working that month. We could have gone to any *Disney* theme park, but I had been to them last year and felt Mom would enjoy this the most. After the first show, *The Lion King*, we got some wheel chairs for Mom and my Aunt Rose. Both of them have heart problems and recent broken knee (my Mom) or hip (my Aunt). They said they wanted to walk but once they got the wheel chairs, they seemed happier. Plus, we got to move a lot faster pushing them than waiting for them to walk slow and rest often. At the next show, *Tarzan Rocks*, which is quite loud, my Mom actually keep falling asleep in the front row (I guess it had been a long week). Afterwards, since Kathy knew the performers, we got to go backstage to met them and have some pictures taken with them. It rained



Aunt Rose (feeling up Tarzan), "Tarzan Rocks" show. Mom and I hanging out.

right during lunchtime but let up eventually. We rode the Safari trucks and saw the animals up close, then took an African train to the animal information and learning center. Then we took the Asian animal walking tour. The tigers were the most impressive but the huge fruit bats gave them a run for their money. We finished up with the cute *"It's tough to be a bug"* show and did some shopping. Kathy gets a 20% discount at the stores. I bought some shirts as birthday presents for some friends of mine in North Carolina. Overall, we had a nice time despite the rain. However, upon exit, we

discovered that Gary's car had a flat tire. He also did not have a jack. Fortunately, we were able to use mine to change to the emergency spare, so he could get on his way. It was nice seeing my cousin Kathy and Aunt Rose. Mom and I could have parked hopped to *Magic Kingdom* but she was too tired. So we stopped at *Orange World* where my mom did the bulk of her souvenir shopping (including Florida Oranges), ate at *T.G.I.Friday's* again and went to bed.

Saturday, we packed up, checked out, and drove 14 hours back to North Carolina. Mom slept a lot but I did get her to hold a conversation or two. I spent that night at her place, got up early and stopped by renewed friend, Jill Nichols', place to visit with her for about half an hour before driving back to Alabama. In Athens, Tennessee, my car died on the road. Fortunately, I was just a mile from a rest stop that still had a customer service center open that let me use their phone to call a local wrecker service. I thought I was going to have to spend the night in Athens but the wrecker driver was able to eventually diagnose the problem (after a few false starts) and fix it. Thus I only had a three-hour lay over and it only cost me \$60 bucks! That included the \$30 part (firing control module), the tow, and the labor. I was glad to get home though.

It was nice to spend some quality alone time with my mother. She says she enjoyed it. I tried to make it interesting for her. I still chuckle over her constantly asking how much things cost and always declaring that it was too high and/or things were cheaper back home. I had to keep telling her not to worry about it. Now that my nephew no longer lives with her or is allowed in her apartment, I hope here life will be much more stress free. She had decided to move in with me and I was all set to move her down here but once Jeremy was kicked out, she decided to stay up there. Jeremy is now living with his mom (my sister) and driving her crazy instead of my mom. I only pray nothing tragic occurs before Jeremy moves out on his own.

FAMILY NEWS

My Uncle Lloyd (my mom's brother) died suddenly recently. He was getting on and had health problems but was doing okay. My mom took it hard, I think. My Aunt Catherine (the wife of my Uncle Clayton) died also. She had been in serious pain for a while and it was considered a release since there was nothing that the doctors could do for her. My mom is the baby of her family of ten brothers and sisters. There are now only five siblings left. I know it's tough on her even though I would not consider ours to be a close type of family.

We had a serious health scare lately with my Mom. She's been having upset stomach problems for months. She finally went in to be examined for that specific complaint. The X-Rays showed a suspicious growth or mass at the base of her stomach. She went in for a biopsy the following week. Fortunately, the doctor says it's just fatty tissue and does not require surgery. She's on some new medication to see if they reduces or eliminates her stomach problems. I was a little worried there for a while. I'm still not relaxed until she gets better. Hopefully now that her live should be less stressful (sans Jeremy), she will generally get better.

CLOSING

Well, I'm almost out of time and space so I'm afraid mailing comments will just have to wait until next issue. My apologies. I hope everyone enjoys the rest of there summer. Take care and be good guys. Look for my LibertyCon report in the upcoming *SFC Bulletin*.

GALLERY

One of the reasons I ran out of time this issue was that I was determined to do some more clip art. I hope to have a little hard copy clip art package to leave at the *WorldCon* fanzine area. I also want to mail it out to various fanzines along with my COA. This is just a page of 12 little quick doodles that I did over the last week. Feel free to use them in your zines if you wish.

