

May, 2004

Downtown Frederick, MD, Freak Show

So today is a gorgeous day most of which I wasted reading the Washington Post and a book about the origins of Delta Force. When I could not take it anymore I fired up the puter and the scooter, printed out instructions and contact information for my cat sitter, and took those along with a key over to her house. Of course I had to take the long way...scooter through downtown. Show the flag...you know what I mean. Feel the power!

So today is also May Fest. What the heck is that? There were bums on the sidewalks with guitars pretending they were talented. They should have called it "Bum Fest." Not to be confused with "Bum Fist." May I have another please?

Anywho, I get the directions and key dropped off and head to the Raw Bar. Mistake? You make the call. As I walk in I see a guy leaning into the bartender's son, who is on my side of the bar. The leaner is apparently not making a good impression since there is another guy pulling him back to the sane side. The leaner is hammered. The other guy, Dave, is trying to get the leaner out of the bar. He gets him out once but the guy comes back in and asks Cathy, the bartender, to call the police. Dave, upon his return, grabs the drunk by the scruff of the neck and forces him to the ground.

Just another day at the Raw Bar... Yuhuh! Eventually, the drunk guy leaves. Thankfully he was not driving...hopefully he did not get run over. Dave, owner of a cleaning service who seems to make good money, comes back in...he is kind of buzzed but says he is leaving. Three "I am leaving...may I have my bill"s later, Dave is annoying a couple and their 11 year old daughter as they try to chow down on mass quantities of oysters and then eat burgers for dessert!

Finally, he breaks himself loose from their table, trips and almost recovers, but winds up under a bar table on the outside wall. It takes him a while to get up from this one. He continues to drink shots of Goldschlager. At long last he rests his head on the bar. That is taboo. Moments later he motivates and gets in his 5000 lb. truck and drives home to his fiancée for whom he just bought a \$4600 engagement ring.!

This dude, Dave, is one of the most out-spoken, obnoxious, and dangerous individuals I have ever met. He should be put down! We were all afraid to suggest he take a cab or walk home. I hope that everyone on his route made it home safely.

The boxer? painter? lover? These two dudes come in to the bar...one black...one half black half Mexican. The HBHM orders a round for the bar as soon as he gets his beer. It was his lucky day because only a few of us took advantage of his generosity. He starts out by saying that he is a painter and cabinet maker and the black guy works for him. Then, after the black guy's girlfriend and kid drag him out of the bar, the HBHM holds his fist up and starts saying that "These make my money." He's asking all these people if they know his brother, his cousin, and Don King, who he says is his promoter. He seems relatively stable so I accept his offer of a drink.

Cathy, the bartender, says she has seen him before. He leaves shortly but comes back with his significant other, two kids very young, and a much older black women who I might or might not have seen before. He keeps up the boxing banter and grabs the attention of another brother at the bar who might have been too polite to tell the guy he was nuts. Meanwhile, some dude comes in wearing some kind of twisted Superhero/Ballet/Equestrian outfit. The "too polite" guy next to me and Cathy say hello to the brother but he just looks around and walks out. I am at the end of my rope...fortunately it was not tied around my neck. Come to find out, the guy has all these get ups that he gets up in to to dance in Baker Park for the Summertime Sunday concerts.

I need a freakin' reality check. Perhaps, I need, as the Greaseman says, a check up from the neck up. Montana...here I come. Yeah baby!

OTR Again

I am off to Big Sky country for a few days to see my friend Danny Mack.

No Rain

It is raining like crazy up here in Frederick. Windy...lightning...no thunder.

Montana Notes 1

Having a great time in Montana. Danny picked me up in Helena Monday evening after which we went into town for a drink and some dinner. Then we drove up to Wolf Creek where he lives. Wolf Creek has a full time population of 75 apparently.

Tuesday morning there were about 12 Bighorn Sheep in Danny's back yard...which actually is someone's 30,000 acre farm. We watched them for awhile and took some pictures. We saw them again later in the day when we were hiking in the mountains behind the house. They saw us coming and watched us cut across their path...not getting underway until they felt safe.

Other wildlife sightings included Pronghorn Antelope and a dead Elk along the highway. I have seen hummingbirds, a bald eagle that flew past the bay window to his roost further down Wolf Creek, bluebirds, a Hairy woodpecker, grouse, Prairie dogs, and a Long-billed Curlew.

I have checked out a couple of eatery/bars including the Windbag Saloon where Danny once worked. We had an excellent quesadilla there and I tried their Harvest Moon Belgian White (brewed in Belt, Montana). It was average for a White but the orange slice commonly served with it detracts from its mild flavor.

I stopped in the Windbag last night Danny was at a basketball game and tried the Sleeping Giant Tumbleweed IPA which was tasty. It had a flowery bouquet, was decently hopped, but a touch heavy.

Wednesday we drove up north to Augusta and then west to the edge of the Rockies in search of the elusive trail 210 in the Flathead National forest. The scenery is stunning. You practically go right from the Great Plains into the Rockies before you know it. We never did find the trail but drove through the beauty till we found a trail that followed the Sun River and then one of its tributaries. We got a good walk in and saw some scenery that neither of us had seen before. All along the trail the prairie dogs were chirping at us and running for their hidey holes.

Today we are off to Yellowstone. More notes as soon as I can write them up and post them.

Yellow Kidney Stones

Today Danny and I drove from the hotel in Gardiner to Mammoth and from there out the northern road to the northeast exit. On the way up we saw people with tripods, binos, and cameras lined up at a few stops on the way. Danny got excited about possible animal sightings and was antsy on the way up. We turned around at the entrance and drove back down to the river plain to see what was happening. At two different sites, we saw bald eagles, black wolves, a grey wolf or coyote, and other creatures.

From there we drove back down to Mammoth and from there south to Norris, Madison, and West Yellowstone. On the way to Mammoth we stopped for a 3.7 mile hike, 2.0 of which were on the edge of the Yellowstone River Canyon. It was gorgeous but very windy. Sand was blowing off the bluffs so hard I thought I was getting sandblasted. Danny was not happy.

Everywhere we went were buffalo. At West Yellowstone, the buffalo were grouped up with groups of elk. That was pretty cool. We drove out of the park to route 191 north which winds right back into the park and then out again 20 miles later. We headed up through the canyon in which wound the Madison River. The Gallatin Mts were to the west.

On the way to Boulder, off of route 90, headed back to Wolf Creek, I got flashed by an oncoming cop. I pulled over and waited for him to return but he never did so we drove on.

Still in Montana

Well it is Monday and I am still in Montana. We went out hiking in the mountains out back this morning, scaling a couple of peaks, but cut the hike short a tad because of the heavy wet snow that was falling. It was supposed to snow tomorrow but got ahead of itself.

I will be adding more details of our Yellowstone trip...some to the blog but more than

likely, most to a trip log including photos. Look for that early next week.

New Format

It should be obvious that my web site format has changed considerably. Please note that I will try to make regular entries to my blog. In addition, see my "Picture of the Day" feature in the top right corner. Below that are regularly updated articles from various sections of the Washington Post. Please comment on my new format and make suggestions as to how I can improve it.

I will be working on this for some time reconfiguring links and material and design so please bear with me. In the meantime, check out these these pictures from Yellowstone that I took on my May 2004 trip to Montana and Yellowstone. More pictures to follow as I scan them in!

Doh

Art is meant to link later.

Iraqi Prisoner Abuse

The news just keeps getting worse for the American position in Iraq. The description and pictures of Iraq prisoners being systematically abused is disgusting. Washington Post, 21 May 2004. America holds no moral high ground anywhere anymore. The abuses appear to be so flagrant that I find it very hard to believe that the chain of command was/is unaware of them.

It is disappointing enough that the guards and MI personnel felt that they could get away with these abuses but that their morals and ethics were so perverted is frightening. Sadly, the perpetrators will get punished (as they should) but Rumsfeld and his cronies will probably walk away with the lightest of punishment. I feel that from President Bush down, all parties in the chain of command should take responsibility for their actions (or lack of actions). Public trials and apologies and realistic punishments are the only way to handle this matter.

As it is, it will be years before America has any clout with the rest of the world. Bottom line, President Bush's government is amoral and corrupt. Bush and Rumsfeld do not live in the real world. They need to be replaced as soon as possible. We as Americans need to take responsibility for that by requesting resignations or, if that does not work, voting Bush out of office in November.

12 Hours of Blues

Life is good when you are unemployed, making more money than when you were employed, and there are 16 bands playing over a 12 hour period at your local pub...in my case...the Bentz Street Raw Bar in Frederick. Cover charge \$10 for the day. Sponsored by the Frederick Blues Society.

Bands playing include:

Ramon

Dominica

Carmen Velarde

Black Coffee

Blues on Board

Ronnie Ray and the Coolers

Wescott Brothers (opening for Southside Johnny at the Birchmere soon)

Sookey Jump Blues Band

Janine Wilson

Hard Fish Swimming

Jon Jeffries Band

Bobby Flurie Band

Smokin' Polecats

Reverend Hookems

Gregor and the McGregors

Yul Nevanowuss

R & R

I am listening to Blue Oyster Cult realizing that it has been 29 years that I have been listening to this band. "On Your Feet Or On Your Knees" I purchased on vinyl in 1975. Absolutely great back of the head music with guitars playing off each other and great drums and bass and consistency (thick or thin you make the call), you rock and roll.

Photo Album Pic Size

FYI,

I am going to start posting my photographs at a width of 600 pixels which will make the file size closer to 100K than what I have been publishing at a width of 500 pixels which makes the file size about 70K. Please let me know if it is not even worth publishing my pictures and/or if I should alternatively publish pics at a lower resolution for those of you with dial up. I guess that is a good part of the world.....

Tom Clancy

I just read Tom Clancy's "Red Rabbit," the title of which gave the whole book away for me but... NTL, while I like Clancy, this book was odd in that it had a few phrases (pieces of dialogue, statements by players) that were glaringly repeated a few times in the book. This speaks of bad editing. Of course I have a hard time spell and fact checking my writings but then I am not getting paid multimillions for it either.

Additionally, the storyline found Sir John in a time and place that did not fit into my prior readings of Mr. C. Finally and unbelievably, the story played out through a story of attempted assassination of the Pope by the KGB and the defection of a key communications officer from KGB HQ without any evidence of the KGB being aware of the West's intentions.

I would think that the KGB might have been more aware but then I just read the books. Maybe the CIA and SIS are almighty.

Unattended Checkout

I just used my first unattended checkout station at the grocery store. It was at my local Weis. Considering the average intelligence of the people that shop there, the three stations are not likely to see more than infrequent use. It worked okay for me though. For once I may come out ahead in that place.

John Warner Speaks and I Agree with What He Says

Armed Services Committee Chairman John W. Warner (R - Va.), according to the Washington Post on 28 May 2004, while defending his probe of prison abuse in Iraq from more conservative Republicans, said at the recent University of Virginia commencement ceremony that he was a bit of a "maverick" and noted that "Sometimes you have to say politics be damned."

I agree with statement... especially when politics interfere with what is fundamentally right and wrong! Unfortunately, politics are mostly about what is wrong with the world. We need politicians that can see beyond the political sphere and into the personal realm. People make political systems and politicians...not vice versa.

2004 Honda Odyssey

I like the vehicle in general but am not real sure about the "Rear Entertainment System." I would probably skip that option.