

## 2008 Con Memories by Pat M.–

John and I finally arrived at the hotel around 11:00 pm, much later than we had intended thanks to having to work late and getting lost courtesy of MapQuest. While unloading the car, which took about four trips up and down the elevator, we bumped into other con-attendees. Hugs were readily given and received all around; in fact the con could have been called a hug fest rather than a BATB convention. On the last trip we found Sheila, con-virgin wrangler, smoking by the front door and talking to her grandchildren on the phone, more hugs ensued. We got ourselves settled in and collapsed.

Thursday:



The location of the hotel was perfect with the ferry to the city right outside the front doors. A brick sidewalk followed the river on either side of the ferry dock, toward the right it went past a screen enclosed gazebo and around the back of the hotel; to the left it went past an apartment

building that jutted out into the river, what a view these people have! Just past the apartments was a convenience store that I visited everyday, either on my morning walks to grab something for breakfast or to run in for a bottle of water, or a sandwich for lunch. A little further on was a restaurant



called the Charthouse at the end of a pier of its own and just past that a small park with stone tables that had chess/checker boards carved into them. One morning a little old lady pulled up along side the road by the park, opened her trunk, and started throwing out food to the Canada geese gathered there. She was quickly surrounded by them, evidently



something she was used to, and they even allowed her to pat them on their heads. There were benches set all along the length of the walkway, and most mornings saw me parked on one of them enjoying the sunrise and reading from the conzine.



Thursday morning, as I left the elevator to go back to my room, I heard giggles and laughter coming from the room across the hall. Upon inspection I saw that the door had several signs on it, one read “Welcome to the Chamber of the Virgins”, another “Hail Here There Be Riff Raff” and under that a gold star with the name Vicky on it. When the door opened I poked my head in to say hello and was

introduced to a whole gaggle of virgins. After another round of hugs I excused myself back to my room to get ready for our trip of the day.

We boarded the bus, leaving the hotel at 11:00 and drove through Hoboken to Liberty State Park. Along the way the back of the bus, populated with con-virgins, began singing songs from the Sound of Music and The King and I, along with a whole repertoire of half remembered songs. When



we got to Liberty State Park we had to go through a security check and poor J'Ecris had to turn over her small pocket knife, what kind of havoc that could have caused I don't know, but if she didn't give it up she couldn't



go on the ferry. Security check over we loaded onto the ferry and motored over to Ellis Island. My parents are from Holland, but did not go through the island for processing, lucky for them I can't imagine being crammed onto a boat like sardines and sailing for days over the ocean to a tiny island where you are herded like cattle into a room where you were inspected and registered by the American Immigration Service who had the power to deny your entrance into the States. So many dreams started here and tragically many ended here. It was truly an experience and I would like to, some day, go back and take more time to look at and read the many accounts of the people who came through here.



We had to be back at the bus by 2:30 so we rushed through the Island and took a ferry to the Statue of Liberty. I've only ever seen her from a distance; you really can't appreciate how big she is until you get up close and personal. As the ferry drew closer to her island she loomed up against the sky and you could see small specks that were humans moving in and around her. Unfortunately we couldn't go inside her, it takes a special ticket that you have to buy a week in advance, but we walked all around snapping pictures and checking out the souvenir shop.



Back to the ferry and the bus and to the hotel with just enough time to change and get to the bus for the ride to Medieval Times for dinner.



Medieval Times is an experience that I could never get tired of, I had a surprise party here for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and loved every minute of it. Eating with your hands, cheering for your knight, watching those magnificent horse's go through their paces, seeing a falcon soar over your head

it's all wonderful and exciting and fit in perfectly with the conventions theme. By the way we were the cheering section for the yellow knight and it didn't hurt at all that he was very handsome and a fine horseman. Back on the bus and to the hotel, I was pooped and the con hadn't even started yet!



Friday:

I couldn't wait to get down for the beginning of the con! We had gotten an envelope with the schedule when we checked in and I kept it in my tote bag so I wouldn't miss a thing. We all gathered in front of the Delaney Room on the first floor, greeted people we had



since yet and snapping pictures. Once the doors opened we passed under a beautiful banner of the con logo and into a room that was decorated with a simulation of Vincent's chamber done by the Perkin sister's Liz and Sally. The round tables were covered with heavy white table linen and the brick center piece's I had made were in the middle, candle roses were laid at each place. We received tote bags filled with informational pamphlets of New Jersey and of course the con zine. We also

received small bags with information on next year's con which is being held in New Orleans. We picked up name tags, which were works of art in themselves, and tied them around our necks with a bit of string. We were also given two sets of papers; one was an ice breaker that sent us searching for the signatures of people who would fit a statement. For example we had to get the signature of a con virgin, not hard to do since we had so many, or the signature of someone who had met Ron Perlman, you get the idea. It was great fun and fulfilled its purpose. The other set was series of multiple choice questions about New Jersey, I did real well on that one but I'm from Jersey so I should.



Rosemarie led us through the opening ceremony, welcoming us and explaining the meet and greet game which we had all already started, sort of throwing a monkey wrench into her plans. We viewed a vid by Tunnel Mom called smile which I had first seen on the Winterfest 2008 site. Afterward we participated in a mask making workshop led by



WinterRose, it was great fun and some of the masques were so inventive. Plain white masque's were painted, glittered, or feathered with great creativity. While the masks were set aside to dry we were invited to participate in a game from the Chesapeake Bay Group called



“Dirty Minds”. The object of the game was to identify a food through three clues, very sexually suggestive clues, seductively read by Brenda, the gang leader of this bawdy, bunch, of beasties. In fact she read them so well we would make her read them at least twice. Some of the clues had us practically rolling on the floor and peeing our pants. As Bill Murray once said in one of his movies (Stripes?) I want to

party with you guys!

After a lunch break we returned for some Beast Bingo led by Judy Loyd, a recurring staple of the conventions which raise money for the con charities. Then we did a calligraphy workshop with Linda Sobolewski. Afterwards we watched a heart rending presentation of Threads of Love, the charity the fund raising was going to, by Deb Fowler. From sniffing into our tissues to laughing at our attempts of renaissance line dancing with Peggy Gavin, what a transition, to a three hour dinner break to eat and get ready for our costume ball.



8:00 back downstairs in a bridesmaid dress I had converted into a renaissance gown and since I don't wear gowns very often I felt very clumsy and couldn't wait to get out of it. Those that dressed up out did themselves, the colors, materials and styles were all beautiful the room was resplendent in medieval finery. Camera flashes were going off all over the place. We grabbed chairs and got settled down for the talent show, WinterRose



read poetry, Suze sang, the Chesapeake Bay Group, dressed up as aluminum foil knights and along with Vincent aka Lisa got up and did some dancing to the Time Warp and YMCA, absolutely hilarious.



The con virgins did a song that sent everyone into gales of laughter and Judy, along with her sidekick Karen, dressed as Pascal's Plundering Pirates read a witty poem they wrote. Rachel read a poem she had composed about her travels getting to the con which included, among other things, a temperamental car. But by far I would have to say Vicky Codas' rendition of the Carpenters song Close to



You was the hit of the evening, she sounded just like the late Karen Carpenter. In between the talent givers we got up to dance the steps we had learned earlier in the day with Peggy, I can tell you it's definitely harder to do in a gown. We also had a short indy movie we watched called Ninjas vs Pirates and a hilarious skit about Joe Maxwell's interfering mama. We broke to get changed into our PJ's and then came down for the slumber party, where we started reading a story from a previous con-zine, but we were dropping like flies around midnight and soon straggled sleepily to our rooms. Definitely a full day!



Saturday:



I started the day with a walk to catch the morning sun and build up an appetite for breakfast, which started in the Delancey Room at 9:00, consisting of fresh fruit, bagels and muffins. 10:00 began a signing workshop with Daria, which I found fascinating. She didn't have enough handouts for all of us so we shared and later that day she went to Staples to run off enough for all of us that wanted one. Thank you, Daria! At 11:00 David Greenlee, our

beloved Mouse, took the stage for a session of questions and answers. I have to say if you ask David a question he never gives you a short answer, he loves to talk and to tell the truth he's always very interesting. He also took the opportunity to, once again, tell Vicky, who was sitting in front of him, how beautiful her voice was and that she should consider a singing career. We broke for lunch and



Lisa and I walked down to the deli to grab a sandwich. Back for kazoo lessons with that fun bunch from Chesapeake Bay, Jackie gave us instructions while Brenda demonstrated.



Then we were led through a bunch of songs with visuals provided by Jackie. We started with Be Our Guest from Disney's BATB as Jackie danced across the stage with the candle whose name escapes me and the tea pot. Then we segued into A Spoonful of Sugar and Jackie disappeared behind a partition to reappear with a large spoon and a five pound bag of sugar. I can't remember all the songs, I know we did some from The Lion King and Jackie came out in a

grass skirt and a wart hog. After that came Music of the Night and a phantom mask and rose, Memories from Cats and cat's ears complete with kitty cat moves, Man of La Mancha and the Impossible Dream with a lance and stars, I was laughing so hard I could barely kazoo. Everything that Jackie came out with went to Vicky so she could feel (see) what was going on.



Poor Frank Luz (Kristopher) had to follow this act, but he was captivating, answering our questions and, I think, enjoying himself very much. Shelia presented him with a con-  
virgin bag giving her a big hug in return. His time on stage went way to fast and before



we knew it Rosemarie had to interrupt to set up for his and David's autograph session. We went well past the time allotted for and had to move into the dealer's room so that the Sheraton staff could set up the room for the banquet. Back up to change and then rush down to take more pictures, get a Winterfest candle and mingle before sitting down to dinner. We picked up our table tags and took our seats. The table centerpieces were now castles cleverly constructed by Chan, along with a bunch of other goodies at each place setting. I had

ordered the filet mignon, which had to be the best I've ever eaten, along with mashed potatoes and a veggie and can't remember. I think everyone at my table enjoyed their meal, leastwise I can't remember anyone complaining. During dinner we were entertained by the NJ Ren Players who did their interpretation of BATB, it was well done and very amusing. We had half an hour to get changed if we wanted to and then the charity auction started. Joann and Rosemarie started out as the auctioneers but somehow the Beast from the Ren players took over and he was fabulous and really took a shine to Sheila. The other Ren players even took over showing the item up for auction to the bunch of us. There were all kinds of things up for auction, jewelry, paintings, dolls etc. and the original business card Kristopher gives to Catherine in When the Blue Bird Sings and then takes back again because it's the only one he has. I think it went for around \$300, Lisa and I were signing cards while the auction was going on and I can't remember who won the bidding. After the auction I dragged myself off to bed to get some rest for Sunday.



Sunday:



The day started out a little dark and cloudy and I thought we might be in for some bad weather, but no the sun chased the clouds away and it turned out to be a beautiful day. Bruch in the park started at 10:00, we had pancakes (or pamcakes if you're Hellboy) and eggs, with potatoes and other stuff

I can't remember. The tables had a park bench at each place with a small tree branch and leaves scattered around it. A picture of a scene of the park sat in the middle and some copies of a cd Vicky made for us ringed around it. As we ate we watched a video of Central Park



detailing the history of how the park came to be. Afterwards Frank took us through what to expect on our Monday tour. He said we were being very ambitious and he hoped we could fit everything in. After his presentation we went on to another round of Beast Bingo, and then rubber stamping with Karen. We broke for an hour and then returned for the art auction. Once again Joann and Rosemarie became auctioneers with Deb stepping



in to add some DNA into the deal. (You'll have to ask Deb about that one, I think I was rolling on the floor at that point.) After everything was gone, we had the closing ceremony where Rosemarie passed the candle over to Deb for the 2009 con in New Orleans. There really wasn't time to be sad because we had to get ready to go to the movie theater to see Hellboy.

Those that had cars lined up outside the hotel to take people over, once there we lined up to get something to eat at the Nathan's who were totally unprepared to deal with, I think about 50, Ron Perlman fans. I was able to take some pictures before a security guard approached me and told me picture taking was not allowed. The movie was great, better than the first one in my opinion, and when Ron's name came up on the screen we all screamed; the other theater goers didn't know what hit them.



Monday:

The bus picked us up in the parking lot at the back of the hotel and as we boarded we picked up a boxed lunch neatly packed in a white and red box. Al, the bus driver, took us into the city where we met up with Frank on a street corner. He took us to a souvenir shop first because it was basically all ours that time of the morning and they weren't a bait and switch establishment. After about an hour of shopping we walked to the Empire State Building and took the escalator, to the elevators that took us to the 80<sup>th</sup> floor in an eye blink, then we stood in line for the elevator that took us to the 86<sup>th</sup> floor which was the observation deck. The threatening rain never appeared and we were able to take pictures of the beautiful vistas the city offered.



Waiting for us on the first floor Frank gathered his chicks and herded us back on the bus for the short ride to Grand Central Terminal. What a beautiful building! The very high ceiling of the central area was painted a turquoise blue with the constellations depicted on it. In the middle of the floor was a round information/ticket booth with the famous four sided clock sticking out of the center of it. We moved to an arched intersection as Frank explained that it was a whispering gallery. He put Lynn Cavanaugh in a corner, himself going to the diagonal corner on the other



side and whispered something to her that we couldn't hear; she however heard it perfectly. We clattered downstairs to the food court to grab seats and eat our boxed lunches, which we were going to eat in the park, but with the reports of bad weather Frank didn't want to take a chance. Back in the bus to be let off at Rockefeller Center, we walked around and saw St. Patrick's Cathedral, Atlas and Prometheus. We boarded the bus again, next stop Central Park.



We were let off at 67<sup>th</sup> on Central Park West and walked into the park at Tavern on the Green, checked out the Sheep Meadow, so called because sheep once grazed on it, and made our way to the Carousel. It's a beautiful carousel completely enclosed in a red brick building. A few people decided to take a ride on it while some others took advantage of the refreshment cart. We ambled down the mall with its huge American Elms towering over us on either side and stopped at the band shell. Memories of the episode Chamber Music floated through my mind as I



looked around for a grate that our favorite couple might be sitting under, but alas there was no such thing. Onward to Bethesda Terrace where you go down a bunch of steps, through and overpass that has a magnificent tiled ceiling and arched column supports and red brick floor to the famed Bethesda Fountain, which has been seen in more movies than I can count. It is also called the angel fountain for the statue that sits in the middle. Here Frank insisted on taking a group photo of us so we all bunched together and sat on the fountain or on the



floor in front of it and yelled "Vincent". From there we took a short walk to the Bow Bridge, also very famous, and looked out over the lake toward the boat house. Rented boats were being rowed under the bridge and around the lake; it looked very peaceful and relaxing. We then walked to Cherry Hill where there was another fountain. From there we passed by Strawberry Fields and the Imagine mosaic both there in remembrance of John Lennon. Frank told us that there is a man that puts fresh flowers on it everyday. We stepped out of the park on 72<sup>nd</sup> St. and Frank pointed out the corner that Catherine walks through on the opening sequence, but there is no grate there.

It's right by the Dakota where John Lennon lived. Back on the bus again to be let off at 82<sup>nd</sup> St., the American Museum of Natural History is there elegantly lining that portion of Central Park West. We walked toward Delacorte Theater and saw the bench with the BATB commemorative plaque on it. David Greenlee was waiting for us there and a bunch of photographs were taken. People must have thought we were nuts, all gathered around a park bench, each taking a turn sitting on it, with or without David and Frank, such a fuss over such a mundane thing; but to us it's a symbol of our passionate loyalty to a show that has meant and given so much to us.



We go from the bench through Shakespeare's Garden to Belvedere Castle, which unfortunately was closed for the day. Passing through the castle's large loggia we could stand and take pictures of the Turtle Pond, the Great Lawn and Delacorte Theater. The castle is made out of gray stones, with arched windows and two balconies; the whole building is very elegant and stately.

We move back to the bus for a ride down to St. Vincent's hospital where the bus stopped just long enough to for a few of us to jump off and snap a couple of pictures. After that John and I were let off near Madison Square Garden so that we could attend the Bon Jovi concert. I had gotten tickets for it months ago before I knew the Monday add on trip would go to 10:00pm. We missed the warm up group but got to our seats in plenty of time for Bon Jovi. It was a great concert and I'm happy we went, but I was missing my BATB buddies.



Tuesday:

We had signed up to go on the lighthouse tour and met the others going in the lobby at 10:00. Due to a mix up at the car rental place Deb and Rosemarie didn't get back to the hotel with the rental vehicles till after 10:30. We all piled in and headed out to get on the turnpike. We followed Rosemarie until we reached the toll booth where we had to pick



up a ticket. A truck driver had gotten out of his truck and took the ticket that was meant for us so we sat there and waited till a toll attendant finally got us a ticket. By that time Rosemarie had pulled off at a rest area to wait for us and we decided to grab lunch while we were there. We reached Sandy Hook without further incident and made our way to the end of the hook to the lighthouse. As soon as we got out of the cars we were attacked by mosquitoes. Poor Claire

seemed to get the worst of them, she must have sweet blood. Thank goodness Annik had enough fore thought to bring some bug spray with her. Rosemarie inquired about the tour and we were told that only eight people at a time could take it and that they were in half hour increments. So some of us went to the lighthouse while the others went to the museum, which was in one of the officers houses that lined the road. The lighthouse stands in the midst's of Fort Hancock a military base that was decommissioned in 1972.



When it came our time to visit the lighthouse we climbed the metal spiral stairs to a ladder. At the end of the ladder we passed through a trap door to the actual light of the lighthouse. The view was spectacular, but I understood why only eight people are invited to go up at a time, there's not much space up there! When we finished taking pictures we climbed back down, gathered our group and went back to the cars. We made it back to the hotel with just enough time to freshen up, get

changed for dinner and get back down to the ferry. Some of us went to Barbetta's and others opted to grab dinner at other places. John and I went to Mars 2112 since we missed it the night before. We were put into a room with a bunch of other people that turned out to be a space ship, which flew us to Mars. It was a real hoot! When we landed we walked through a tunnel that opened to a reception area where we gave our name and then went down a set of stairs



to a table. Aliens were walking around visiting the tables, taking photos with the human patrons. The whole place looked like we were in a red cave. I enjoyed very much, John not so much; at the very least it was an experience. When we were done we walked



down the block to the theater. Wicked was wonderful, a definite must see; the sets, the costumes, the music were all exemplary. After the performance we asked a cop where to get the ferry bus and he directed us to 49<sup>th</sup> St. where we eventually found one and hopped on. We got back to the hotel, did some packing and crashed. The next morning I went down for hugs and tearful goodbyes. The 2008 Con was over, but we were already making plans to meet for the 2009 Con.

Rosemarie and Deb along with all the other helpers did a wonderful job of making memories for all of us and I for one am very grateful to them.

A big tunnel HUG to all of you!