

## Branson 2005

*Millie Lill*

My sister, Nitize, and I arrived in Branson about 3:00 PM on Thursday, June 9, having spent two days on the road. Kathy's directions made finding the Settle Inn very easy. Branson is hot and humid in June, so by the time we got our bags and the two dogs up to our room on the third floor of the second building, we were more than ready to shower. Once we were respectable again, we headed for the hospitality room on the first floor of the first building.

Some of the Bransongoers had already arrived. It was good to see Jim and Margie, Elva and the others. We all gathered there and visited till it was time to head for Lambert's in Springfield for dinner. Due to a mixup in the time we were to arrive, our group did not get to sit with the others. However, this gave me a chance to meet Les Falkenberry and visit with the ladies she brought along. Les stopped in on her way to a convention of the Daughters of the Nile which was taking place in Lexington, KY. We had a nice visit. Les was her usual witty self. We enjoyed our dinner very much. Not only is the food there terrific, but the waiters are wonderful as well. Our server, a cute little blonde, literally bent over backward to get a picture of our group. She sat on the railing and leaned precariously back so that we'd all fit in the viewfinder. I was surprised that she kept her balance and didn't land in the other diners' plates!

We all got a big surprise when Virginia Dugger showed up, although she had told us she would not be able to attend this year. Miraculously, a driver showed up just when she needed it and she appeared at Lambert's in all her glory. Since Ann and Tom were unable to make it this year, due to Ann's illness, it was great to at least have that laugh of Virginia's to brighten our trip.

Friday morning, we were awakened by a surprise 7:00 AM wake up call. Apparently the former occupants of our room forgot to cancel it. We got dressed, walked the dogs, and had breakfast. The Settle Inn had live music every morning. The performer s worked for tips. Quite nice. The room was a bit small for our group, though, as we have grown from the original 17 to around 80. After breakfast, Nitize and I moved our 'stuff' to the hospitality room, picked up our name tags and goodie bags and set out the books and crafts we'd brought along.

Lunch was various sandwich fixin's and salads with Genevieve's famous apple dumplings for dessert. Genevieve is Liz Cross' mom and a terrific lady she is, too. I enjoyed visiting with her and those dumplings are beyond compare.

After lunch, Jerri Dillon did manicures for some of us. I was one. She fixed my problem nails by applying gels. I was quite pleased with the results.

Some of us had paid for a dinner show to be held at the White House theater, where Charlie works. We were told to be there by 5:00 PM or we wouldn't get in. Unfortunately, I got caught up in visiting with too many people and by the time we gave the dogs their last walk, it was 4:30 before Nitize and I left for the theater. Then we couldn't find it. I was so sure I knew where it was, but I think it moved while we were en route. Anyway, at 5:30, we gave up and came back to the hotel. We had a nice quiet evening, snacking on

the goodies we'd brought from home, reading and relaxing.

Saturday was a very busy day. Once again, we had live music with our breakfast. Then, back in the hospitality room, we heard a talk by Virginia Dugger's doctor, Jennifer Clark, MD.

Dr. Clark's talk was very informative although I can't agree with everything she said. She seemed to think we should all exercise and I suppose we should. However, speaking for myself, if I spend the recommended 90 minutes a day exercising, I will be too exhausted to do anything else at all. Even a 15 minute workout exhausts me to the point that I have to sleep the remainder of the day. I think we should walk that tightrope between doing nothing and overdoing. I agree with Dr. Clark that we will lose function if we rest too much, but not resting enough has the same effect.

Right after lunch, we had our business meeting. Many interesting points were brought up. Unfortunately, since Tom was not there to man the camcorder, that meeting did not get recorded.

I can't remember everything that was brought up, but I do vaguely recall volunteering to set up a website for the group. I definitely recall that Don Hansche said he'd help.

Later in the afternoon, I chaired the Survivors' meeting. There were several newcomers who expressed confusion with the exercise regime we'd heard recommended in the morning. I hope we old timers helped clear up some of that. I always enjoy meeting new people and very much enjoyed meeting this year's new crop. The meeting ran rather long and some of us drifted off to our rooms for naps before it was over. Since I was at the front of the group, I couldn't do that myself. As drowsy as most of us were, perhaps I could have gotten away with it and no one would have noticed, but I didn't want to take that chance.

We got our group pictures taken just before dinner. We have grown so much that few of the photos got the entire group. The group with the survivors and supporters together was huge. I think next year, perhaps we should do individual photos, each family together, so we can see the faces. I hope everyone posts their photos to the Bransongoes website.

After Saturday night's dinner, we had our annual door prize distribution. Everyone donates something, between \$3 and \$5 in value, and everyone present gets a gift. There were several gag gifts handed out, as usual. Judy Eades, because of losing her purse last year ("It's black with straps and zippers") received a very ugly green purse with hot pink piping and a J on it. Too small to use, too ugly to lose. She, in turn, gave Toni an even uglier, if possible, purse that her husband Don had spray painted orange. Toni was the one accused of 'stealing' Judy's purse last year, when it was discovered hanging on the back of Toni's chair. When the color of this year's T-shirts was being decided, Jaan Lill said "Not pink. Anything but pink. I get enough odd looks while sitting in the big truck doing cross stitch without wearing a pink T-shirt while doing it." So Gleason Grimes gave Jaan a hot pink T-shirt with our logo on it. I got a matching one. Jaan has promised to have his picture taken wearing said pink shirt while doing cross stitch in the truck.

Once all the gifts were distributed, three plaques were awarded. Don Hansche made one each for Tom and Ann, Kathy and Charlie and Jim and Marge Ellison. Jim was our

MC this year again, and he knew about two of the plaques, but not the one for him and Margie. So when he finished dedicating the other two, I stood up and presented theirs to him. Don did a beautiful job on those plaques. There was also a cash collection taken up and divided amongst Kathy, Pat, Margie and Linda DeRyke. These people work so very hard all year long to make this reunion a success and we simply could not do it without them. They deserve every honor we can give them.

Since Saturday was such a full day, Nitize and I slept in on Sunday. We had breakfast with the Hawaiian Elvis and his half sister, who were performing that week. Great voice, very accessible people, enjoyed it immensely. I bought all three of David Lomond's CD. He told us that Branson has a luau every Thursday night, right across the street from the Lawrence Welk resort. Next year, rather than go to Lambert's (which makes about a 90 mile round trip), I think I will attend the luau right in Branson. It isn't very far from the Settle Inn. Our group is getting too large to all be seated together anyway, so why not break the group up a bit for one meal.

Lunch on Sunday was a potato bar, quite tasty and something a bit different. Nitize and I rested in our room in the afternoon. At least, Nitize rested. I spent an hour talking on the phone to my husband, whom I miss desperately.

Sunday evening was our Karaoke Night, with a 50s theme. Les Falkenberry donated the karaoke machine. We were all supposed to dress in 50s costumes. Most of us were too tired to do so. Rain said the only thing she had left from the 50s that still fit were beads. We prevailed upon her to wear something with them. I did roll my jeans up, wore Jaan's white shirt with the sleeves rolled up, bobby sox and loafers, and a silk scarf tied around my neck. To the best of my recollection, that was what I wore in the 50s.

My sister enjoyed this evening the most of all. She and Jack Fenner danced The Bump together and, although I pooped out early and hit the sack, there were rumors that she and Don Eades sang love songs to each other. Nitize loves to sing and dance. I'm very pleased that everyone has accepted her as one of us. She had a ball.

By Monday, the group was beginning to thin out. Many of us had left Sunday and more left on Monday, so there was a great deal of hugging and goodbye-ing and promises to meet again next year.

My dog Daisy apparently got bored with being left in the room all day every day, so she ate her halter. Yes, ate it. Swallowed the entire collar portion. I put a collar belonging to Nitize's dog Buddy on her and walked her, but the collar was too loose and she got away.

Straight up the embankment behind the grassy area where we walked the dogs she went. I couldn't manage to get the chair up such a steep slope, couldn't let the dog just run loose, so I had to hike up it and follow her onto the street. Three cars stopped with offers to help catch her. We finally corralled her. One man got out of his car, Nitize and Buddy got in, and Daisy thought they were going someplace without her, so she hopped in, too. We caught her and Nitize carried her, struggling madly, back down that steep slope and to our room. Later, Linda DeRyke volunteered to take me to get her a different harness. We couldn't find one suitable, but I did buy a choke chain. And I tightened the collar she was wearing so it wouldn't so easily slip over her head. Thanks so much, Linda. Due to your kindness, I decided against killing the little beast. Usually I love her to

pieces, but when she does this...not so much.

Monday night, most of the remaining group went out to eat. Nitize and I stayed in. There were plenty of leftovers, so those of us who were too pooped to go anywhere ate them. Monday night was an early night for us.

Tuesday morning, the last of the group gathered and said goodbye. It was nearly noon when we got our stuff loaded and then Nitize backed into another vehicle in the parking lot. I told her I knew she loved doing the Bump, but not with vehicles, please! Particularly not MY vehicle!

I was so exhausted that we had to stop early on our way home. At 4:30 PM, I was so exhausted I was sick. I had a fever and chills and nausea. We got a room and I slept for 3 hrs., helped haul the stuff we needed into the room, walked the dogs and went back to bed. By 3 AM I was in a great deal of pain for a few hours, but some aspirin and more sleep helped a lot. By 9:00 AM on Wednesday morning, I was fit to travel again. We arrived home at 3:00 PM.

After a good night's sleep, I believe I'm ready to go again. How long till the next Branson?

hugs,  
Mill

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