

Branson, 2012

Last year, I didn't get to Branson. My sister was very very sick and I couldn't find anyone to keep my dogs. Paying for a kennel for 5 days would have been cost prohibitive. So this year, I was very excited to see everyone again. There were some new ones I'd spoken to online but hadn't met in person and of course, the ones who come every year and I miss seeing the rest of the year.

Five AM on Thursday morning found me stumbling around, bleary eyed, checking my list of Items I Must Remember To Take Along. I called Sheri to make sure she was awake because she was going to drive me to Omaha to meet Phil and Jean Vrana, with whom I was riding to Branson. A quick stop at Casey's for a cup of coffee and a slice of breakfast pizza and we were off.

The ride to Branson was as much fun as the rest of the trip. Jean and I always have a lot to chat about and once in awhile, we'd let Phil slip in a word or two. It made the nearly 8 hour trip go so fast. A stop for a bite to eat at a Subway and before you knew it, we were getting the van unloaded.

Janet Williams, who is my cyber little sister, was already checked into our room, which was right on the main floor, not far at all from the hospitality room. She and I had a chance to meet in person after many posts online. I talked to more people, finally got my bag to my room and got on the folding scooter that the Vranas had so thoughtfully put at my disposal. I could not have had nearly as much fun if I'd had to walk all that time!

I didn't go to Lambert's as some did, preferring to chip in and get pizza from the Pizza Hut just down the hill from the Stone Castle where we stayed. Lambert's is nice, but I preferred to just visit quietly with the others who chose to stay at the hotel.

There were several new people that I was so happy to meet: Beverly and Joe Bucaletto, from Michigan, Joe Bugert from Indianapolis spring to mind. Bev, because I'd been corresponding with her for a long while and wanted to meet her and her husband and Joe because he'd come such a very long way. Also, Ron and Barbara Aksamit, who are friends of Judy and Don Eades. Probably others were new as well and I apologize for not mentioning them. I plead Polio Brain Fog, caused by having 5 days of unmitigated fun and being exhausted.

Our Friday night Survivor/Supporter meeting was great. The new people joined in. I helped Judy Eades moderate, although she really did not need any help. Good job, Judy! Janet felt the group needed to know that I snore really bad! Can't argue with that! We learned a lot from each other, as we always do.

Saturday night was our usual banquet. Our theme this year was Pirates. There were cardboard pirate hats for those that wanted them and the tables were decorated in a pirate theme. Linda DeRyke furnished a man's pirate costume that she'd picked up just after Halloween and we got John Dulany to wear it. My picture of him, unfortunately, was so blurry he was barely recognizable. We also had Dustin Rogers aka Roy Rogers, JR as a speaker on Saturday night.

He was wonderful. He told stories of growing up with Roy and Dale Evans and had us laughing. When asked if he'd brought along any of his CDs, he said no, that he'd wanted to just come and visit with us because his grandmother was a polio survivor and his father was very interested in polio for that reason. He told us that Roy would visit the children's wards, talking to the children in the iron lungs and giving them either Roy Rogers or Dale Evans toy gun sets. They were promised that if they worked hard and got better, he would let them visit him in Hollywood.

After Dusty's speech, he allowed as many people as wanted to get photos with him. Joe Bugert took my camera and got some pretty decent pictures of him for me. Thanks, Joe!

There were a couple of speakers as well, during our stay. One was a woman who showed us all kinds of gadgets to help make life easier for anyone with a disability and the other was an orthotist who showed us all the latest in bracing. I thoroughly enjoyed both speakers.

As usual, the reunion was a great success, due to the efforts of our board members. They all worked so hard to make it look so easy. The food was good and there was plenty of it, we were allowed time for naps and visiting and for those who wanted to see some shows. I can't thank you all enough. Annie, Linda, Mary...I know there were others...Thank You for a wonderful reunion.