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Another Side of ACL Conference

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ANOTHER SIDE OF ACL CONFERENCE

ACL Conference 1999 at Lee University was a great deal of fun. The text comes from my notes rather than letters to my friend and business partner, Mark Vetter, although I kept in touch with him this year via e-mail. I hope you enjoy following me around again as you read "Another Side of Conference."

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SUNDAY

ACL started a few days early for me this year since I am to take part in an editorial meeting for *The Christian Librarian*. This year, since I planned to visit friends following conference, I took my car. I left home before 9:00 Sunday morning and drove all the way to Cleveland (Tennessee) in one day.

The drive took me 12 hours, dodging 18-wheelers all the way. I stopped at the Lookout Mountain exit outside Chattanooga for dinner. I want to come back and explore.

I called home once I'd settled in. The phone was in the lobby where Michael (Sturgeon), one of our conference hosts, was getting ready to close down the registration table for the night. I helped by alphabetiz-

ing name tags as I picked them up by their white elastic cords.

MONDAY

I slept in. I finished my snacks from home for

breakfast and went to the library to explore my e-mail. I had to call home for the address of our server and still could only send, not receive mail. I'm partially back in contact with the world.

I spent the afternoon in a productive TCL editorial meeting following lunch in the spacious Deacon Jones Dining Hall.

After dinner in the same building, one of the student workers from the library gave a bunch of us an informal campus tour. She, ice cream cone in hand, told us the campus had housed the kyaaker's and other athletes during the Atlanta Olympics. It certainly looks classy enough for an Olympic venue with its nice buildings, good landscaping, and friendly atmosphere.

I made my way back to the library to try e-mail again. I was able to send messages to Mark, Sandy (the friend I planned to visit after conference), and my staff.

When I left the library, I met Ron (Jordahl), Linda (Jones), and Lynette (Sorenson) at the curb in Ron's car. They were off to Wal-Mart. Lynette was excited at visiting her first super store. I guess I was unimpressed coming from Wal-Mart country; we have five super stores (including store #1 in my home town), a Sam's Club, two Neighborhood Markets, the home office, and numerous warehouses.

We all bought something at Wal-Mart then went across the street to the Mall. Ron went in the back way; jokingly he said it was to avoid being seen by any of the guys. Ron is the only one of us who found something to buy.

We found a Dairy Queen on the way back to campus. After ice cream all around, we headed back to our beds and some well deserved rest before the activities planned for tomorrow.

TUESDAY

I was up early for breakfast. Barb (Nelson)

was at breakfast and I asked her if she had my name down as a mentor. She wasn't sure since she had misplaced her list. I'll have to check with her later.

I made another trip to the library. This time, as well as navigating the e-mail maze I got some sightseeing tips from the library staff. Wayne (Standifer) suggested Warehouse Row in Chattanooga.

Later, I found out that he was "my" mentee. We enjoyed a chat that evening about my experiences at the First Timer's Reception.

I went into Chattanooga, past the Choo Choo, to downtown. I walked through Warehouse Row and took pictures in front of the Federal Court Building before my twenty minutes expired on the parking meter.

Back on the interstate I headed for Lookout Mountain. My first stop was Cavern House where Union forces routed the Confederates in the "Battle Above the Clouds." The view was wonderful, the monuments were mainly Union, and Cavern House was closed for repairs. The house, used as a Confederate headquarters, had been looted when captured by the Union. When its owner, Mr. Cavern, returned all he found standing was the foundation and chimneys. He rebuilt and rebuilding efforts continue as the Park Service keeps the property in good repair for visitors.

Continuing up the mountain, I enjoyed the scenic overlooks and the beautiful homes. I passed Tennessee Temple University as I made my way down the backside of the mountain. Its site is impressive; I hope the students appreciate the view.

Needing gas, I finally stopped at a station with the wonderfully evocative place name on my credit card receipt of Rising Fawn, Georgia. I enjoyed a leisurely, rambling drive back across country to Cleveland, stopping for a snack lunch along the way. My final discovery before reaching Cleveland was Red Clay Historical Site.

My home is at the western end of the Cherokee Trail of Tears. Red Clay was the starting point for the massive removal of the Cherokee from East of the Mississippi. The museum, at the last capital of the Cherokee in the East, is attractive and informative and I left feeling well rewarded from my travels.

I enjoyed dinner that night in the company of Dennis (Tucker) and Esther (Matteson). We talked about Esther's recent stay in Russia and how different it was from America. She said she walked a lot more in Russia and really missed the exercise.

After the library tour following dinner, my mentee, Wayne, and I arrived early for the First-timer's Reception. This event was successful, as usual. It was nice to see so many new faces at Conference this year.

I ended the evening providing transportation for Michael (Sturgeon) and Gregory (Morrison) to Captain D's for a later supper since both had missed the evening meal.

It's fun having my car to run around town on spur-of-the-moment adventures like this.

WEDNESDAY

I didn't make it to devotions this morning. I got lost and wandered around until I found the lecture hall in the DeVoss Education Building where we are meeting. I was seated right down front though for our main speaker, Kate Nivens. She quoted Wayne Gretsky during her speech: "You miss 100% of the shots you never take." I liked it so much I e-mailed it to Mark. It sounds like timely advice for our little business.

Barb asked me to chair the Sui Generis meeting in the afternoon as she had to attend a board meeting. I borrowed a marker from an administrative office down the hall from our meeting room and made sure I returned it since they are regarded as scarce commodities. I used it to help keep us on track as we discussed shop for an hour. Actually, we were having such a good time it was hard to break up.

The Commission on International Library Assistance (CILA) meeting this evening was very funny, informative, and challenging. It was followed by the ACL Talent Show. Amy (Puryear) stole the show with a glittering lip sync performance of a Whitney Houston song. There were other great performances, including vocal, piano, and poetry reading. One of the most amusing was Ron (Jordahl) talking about the differences between the Southern U.S. and Alberta, Canada. Canada may have blizzards, but the south has kudzu, and Ron would assure anyone who asks that one can get lost in either!

Following the talent show, a group of us went to Denny's. I had to wander around a bit to find it but my passengers were good sports. I resisted the ice cream and pastry treats but had cream and sugar in my coffee.

THURSDAY

I started soon enough after breakfast to get to devotions but I didn't make it — again. I went to the prayer chapel in the library for a private time of devotion instead. The prayer chapel is a lovely, stained-glass retreat on the third floor, quiet and private but accessible to all. It is used for some services but is usually available for personal meditation and prayer.

I noticed that all the workshops I'd chosen were technology-related. I especially appreciated Tony Krug's session on a novel solution to taking notes off the web. Ron (Jordahl) and I ganged up on another presenter, Dennis (Read), and got our old friend to agree to write up his workshop and maybe even do a column on useful Internet sites for TCL.

It was raining following the workshops, so I lingered in the computer lab to surf the net before going to dinner. I hurried through the raindrops not only to stay dry but to keep up with Roger (van Oosten). We joined another conferee who had taken the campus tour earlier in the day who told us about how the DeVoss family had contributed to the school, including the DeVoss Education Building. Mr. DeVoss was

one of the founders of Amway.

I went back to my room for a rest before going to the vendor's reception. There was, courtesy of Emery Pratt and Avery Weaver, a wonderful chocolate sauce with strawberries to dip in it, but I resisted temptation although I went back again just to sniff the rich smell.

Following the reception was a storytelling program. Two very different but equally talented storytellers captivated the audience. The first, G. Lee Hearl, told stories like my father used to do. We all sang along with him in a silly rendition of "My Biscuit Baking Baby, from Bristol (Tennessee)". The other storyteller, Rebecca Kefauver, demonstrated sacred storytelling techniques. I ended the evening in tears but I didn't mind. It was a healing experience. I finally felt I could tell my father's stories again, which I haven't done since his death.

My day ended with a trip to Wal-Mart for supplies for Saturday's hike. I also got my canteen out of the trunk of the car. Then I was off to bed after finishing my notes for the day.

FRIDAY

I took my car to devotions this morning because I was determined to make at least one session. I enjoyed singing with the ACL congregation. I used it again when Jan (Bosma) and I drove to lunch. We left her rental car, a red 1999 Pontiac Grand Prix, in the DeVoss Education Building lot. We both wished we owned it, taxes and insurance paid of course.

My car came in handy again that afternoon. I found Max (Burson) in his socks dreading walking to the library to get his roommate's key since he had locked himself out of their room. I was glad to give him a ride. He made his way gingerly across the grass to the library in search of Michael (Sturgeon) but that was better than having to walk all the way.

I got out my dress and dress shoes. Diane (Sullivan) took "writing" pictures for TCL of me on the bed with my notebook for TCL. Finally dressed, I went to the banquet. I enjoyed the kind compliments on my outfit, the good food, and the conversation around the table. Following the meal we had the pleasure of being entertained by Drs. Jim and Doris Burns, including a funny song, "What is ACL?" and a reading of "Dr. Seuss for the Computer Age." They were followed by the Lee University Barber Shop Quartet. This group won a national award for their performance and are very good. Even non-Barber Shop Quartet enthusiasts like me can appreciate their quality performance. I left humming their closing number, "It is Well With My Soul."

Following the President's Banquet, I changed and joined the group headed for a post-conference bash at Steak and Shake. Dennis (Read) and I decided to drive rather than crowd onto one of the vans. On the way downstairs we picked up Jane (Hopkins), our hardworking conference chair who hadn't had much time off this week, and Steve (Brown).

Steve is this year's recipient of the Emily Russel award. Modest about his achievements, he won even more of our appreciation by

not making an acceptance speech. At Steak and Shake, Dennis made up for that with a speech of his own, topped with whipped cream. The manager aided and abetted Dennis by supplying the can of whipped cream. Dennis got Steve, Woody (Moore), and several others and got treated with flying globs back. By the way, Steve says he doesn't get mad or even — he gets revenge! I think Dennis had better watch out for practical jokes next year.

I drove my crew back to the campus. I'll have to check my upholstery tomorrow for sticky spots. After saying goodnight and goodbye to Dennis and Steve, Jane and I went into the main lobby. We found Ferne (Weimer) and Cheri (du Mee). We talked about Sunday schools, other conferences, and our plans for Saturday. Ferne and Cheri are going rafting. Since I'm going hiking I went back to my room to get ready and get a good night's sleep.

SATURDAY

I was early for the van rather than being just in the nick of time because I got the time wrong and had an unexpected half hour. Lynette (Sorenson), Georgie (Bordner), and I rode with the people from Northwestern (St. Paul) in their van. Dale (Solberg), Candy (Sherry), Nathan (Farley), and Linda (Rust) were great traveling companions. We enjoyed a scenic drive into the Great Smokey Mountains. One memorable scene was of a tobacco field running up a hill to a peaceful white church. Once on the trail, Candy and I brought up the rear. We walked about the same speed, a provision for both of us. I had borrowed Steve (Preston)'s extra walking stick, one thing I had forgotten to bring. The trail followed a beautiful creek with many small falls and rapids. The rhododendrons were blooming white and pink. We noticed that the further up the trail we went, the rhododendron stopped blooming. They were still in bud. We also saw colorful butterflies, but we didn't hear any birds. Finally we stopped to share some trail mix and a drink, sitting on upended logs left on the trail from a downed tree. It was warm but not too hot. We almost reached the end of the trail before turning back.

I met the Northwestern staff that evening to go to dinner. We returned to Steak and Shake for a much quieter meal. The van went to Wal-Mart, but Dale and I came back to the college. My day ended sitting in front of Jones Dining Hall at one of the tables on the plaza to write and reflect on the week.

I thought about having to accept my own and others' strengths and weaknesses; we learn to value each other even though we don't always agree, and to accept the differences in our perceptions. ACL provides new ideas, but it also gives us continuity, history, and inspiration. We are a vibrant Christian fellowship as well as a professional organization, and that makes ACL timeless as well as timely.

It is peaceful and beautiful here, with fireflies dancing in the evening darkness. ACL conferences are a little like the fireflies — ephemeral yet returning year after year to the delight of all. I am thankful for God's gift of fun, fellowship, and learning through ACL. It has been a good day and a good week.