

The Storm Front

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North American Edition

DRIVING MISS TINA

Fun, Sun, and Entrails

[Note: I haven't seen the movie "Driving Miss Daisy" so don't draw any inferences just because I decided to rip off its title for this article.]

This is going to make some of my friends a little mad at me. Sorry, but Tina and I took a short vacation down San Diego way. Now, it's not because they don't want me to have fun. Far from it. It's just that there we were a stones-throw from Los Angeles and we didn't call anyone. Sorry Val, sorry Chris. Do you still love us? Thanks.

So what did we do? Had a lot of fun, that's what we did.

Tina and I left Sacramento at 3 p.m. Saturday and arrived in beautiful San Diego around midnight. The drive was totally uneventful so that's all I'm going to say about it.

We stayed at the apartment of my cousin Bart. He's at UCSD studying for his Ph.D. in political sciences. It's a nice apartment. Typical grad student decorating. Including a couch that was banned under the Geneva Weird Furniture Limitation Treaty of 1906.

We went to the "World Famous" San Diego Zoo on Sunday. What a totally super-duper place. They have the only albino koala bear in North America. Sounds cute with its white fur and pink little eyes, but in person it looks like some evil creature from the depths of Hell. You just expect it to break out of its cage and start killing people.

We stayed at the zoo for six hours and still didn't get a chance to see everything. One thing we did learn was that rhinoceros excretions are very odoriferous (they smell big-time). It was great to watch thirty people suddenly decide they should go look at the monkeys (or anything else upwind).

[The next paragraph is a little gross. Squeamish readers beware.]

We also saw an eagle catch and eat a cute little mouse. It was neat until the bird pulled out the mouse's entrails and dangled them while it ate. Did you know that there are about six feet of intestines in a mouse? Sort of looked like a gross little yo-yo.

That evening Bart's roommate Geoff made us spaghetti for

dinner. There's some kind of cosmic lesson there, but we didn't get it.

What trip to Southern California would be complete without a visit to the shrine honoring America's ability to get money without actually producing something: Disneyland. Yes, on Monday we went to "The Happiest Place on Earth." Tina hadn't been since she was eight, so it was an all new experience for her.

The new Splash Mountain ride is far too much fun. They take you through this cute show of robot animals singing and dancing and then they push your log off a cliff. That is one long drop.

It was a warm day and the lines were very short. So we got to go on every ride at least once. We had a blast.

The next day we did a little shopping in San Diego and came home. I had a lot of fun and I think Tina did to (we've been back for over a week and she hasn't returned any of my calls, oops).

**In This Issue:
Back To School,
Holiday Memories,
and
Predictions for the 90's**

Holiday

Sleighbells Ring

by Bart Fisher, Ph.D (almost)

A Christmas memory . . .

Gosh, where to begin? Well, it was when I was very little and my Aunt Frances and Grandma and Grandpa had come to stay with us overnight on Christmas Eve. Because there weren't enough beds to go around, I somehow got put in with my parents, along with my dog Odif. Anyway, about 3 am or so, and I will swear this is true on a stock of Bibles (preferably dumped on Jim Bakker beforehand), I awoke to the sound of . . .

Bells.

Sleighbells.

And not just outside the window, on the ground. Oh, no. These were bells far off, above me. I checked to see if Mom and Dad were there (could be one of their tricks). But no, they were there. And the bells sounded like they were getting well . . . closer. Like they were descending. They seemed to swoop away to the east, and then head back, like they were going to land along the long axis of our house's roof.

Then I woke up Odif, got him to snuggle up a little closer, covered my head with my pillow, and tried to go to sleep real hard. Grandpa had said that Santa would visit only those homes where everyone was asleep. So I tried to be asleep.

Anyway, it must've worked because the next day we got tons of neat stuff and everyone agreed it must've been Santa I heard except, I think, Steph who decided right then and there that I was runnin' a quart low, as it were. Jud, of course, believed every word which is why it took him until 17 to doubt the existence of Santa, and even longer to call into question his metaphysical relationship with the Tooth Fairy.

All I know is that I heard what I heard, and I believe what I believe. Yes, that experience that is so well discussed in some of the nation's finest newspapers happened to me . . .

A Close Encounter of the Christmas Kind.

Twas the Night Before . . .

By Pamela Sparks Nielsen

It was the night before Christmas and all through the complex,
Not a creature was stirring, not even Pam and Chris.

And what to our wondering eyes should happen,

Pam popped out a baby, just all of a sudden.

Chris looked at her and said, "Do you have to do that in OUR
bed?"

The baby looked up and replied, "Hey dude lighten up, cause
now it's mine!"

They heard a knock at the door,

Chris yelled, "Hide it! It's Eric, he won't like us no more."

In walked a tall skinny young man, with cheeks like roses,

And he held out a sack in his hand.

"I've come to take it, it's best you'll see.

You know if you have it, you can't be friends with me."

. . .

All of a sudden Chris woke with a jerk,

Turned to his wife and said with a smirk,

"Merry Christmas Honey, I'm going to work!"

She kissed him good-bye and said with a smile,

"Let's wait on kids for a while!"

And all was calm in the Nielsen home.

They had their friends over and partied and partied.

Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.

Memories

Past, Present, Future

By Roger Hanna

5:03 am, 25 December 1975: I wake up. Jon's awake. What else can we do but go jump up and down on Mom and Dad's bed? Geez, don't they know it's Christmas? . . .

1:45 am, 22 December 1986: Katera and two chicks (who for some reason thought all her friends were weird) have a house. So, of course, there's a Tera-party. This time, though, Lisa doesn't come after me with a knife. Instead, four of us stand around Jeremy and tell him things simultaneously whilst the stereo plays Susan's recollection of a "She-Ra" episode [Editor: I don't get that part either]. Remarkably, Jeremy is able to recite word for word all four of our statements, plus Susan's babblings . . .

9:03 pm, 13 December 1983: Steve Uzelac sings, for the 1,000th time, "Jingle bells, yeah, those jingle bells / Jingle all the way-ay-ay" . . .

9:02 pm, 23 December 1987: Tina and Susan put out a calendar that puts the Sierra Club to shame . . .

12:01 pm, 11 December 1971: Dad dresses up as Santa Claus for Jon's first grade class . . .

8:47 pm, 21 December 1985: "Experience the spirit of giving and the giving of spirits. Friends don't let friends party sober" . . .

23:59 pm, 24 December 2005: I reflect on my friends and where they've gone: Skeeze and Pam, having moved out of Skeeze's parent's house for the fiftieth and last (yeah, right) time, are making plans to open a trailer park in beautiful Rancho Cordova. Jon is in jail for another 10 days because the City of Oakland didn't take kindly to the environmental mural he painted over all of Piedmont (yes, including the Swedish maid). Stubbs could be anywhere, since he can afford to be, after that fortune he made delivering cookies. Tina's back at the Retard Center, calling people various names of fruit; she drives there in her mother's old hovercraft (which has no tires to slash). Katera is in Spain, unable to return to the U.S. after she embezzled all of those free airline tickets. Speaking of tickets: Lisa gets me free tickets to all her shows here in New York. Ginger gets me free tickets to all of Gregg's shows here in New York. Von Sonn gets me free tickets to all the movies he made

which premier her in New York. Susan writes me tickets every time I park in a red zone here in New York (she's become a part-time meter maid). Val is still somewhere in Orange County, but no one knows where, since the U.S. Fax Office refuses to honor more than 250 Change-of-Address cards for one recipient. Jeremy has managed to find a way to get paid to feed his lizard. And Eric has now received more Honorary Doctorate degrees than Bill Cosby, but still has one more class to finish before he gets his Bachelors Degree [Editor: Ok, I changed that last one a little bit].

5:03 am, 25 December 1989: I wake up. Jon's awake. What else can we do but go jump up and down on Mom and Dad's bed? Geez, I hope they don't read this before Christmas.

It's a Bird, It's a . . .

By Debbie Hoover

I remember an experience that happened to me when I was 8 yrs old or so. I saw something that proves Old St. Nick exists.

It was a typical Christmas Eve night. I went to bed late, 9:00. However, I still couldn't sleep. So I decided to just sit up and wait for Santa.

As I was looking out my large picture window, I saw what suspiciously looked like a sleigh and reindeers up in the moonlit sky. Was it a plane? No, a plane has lights and usually doesn't have reindeers. Maybe it was a UFO? No, that was definitely a sleigh I saw.

I actually saw SANTA CLAUSE!!! The Big Guy. I saw him.

Of course, no one really believed me. But to this day, I swear it was him.

More

A Christmas Miracle

By Chris Von Sonn

Once upon a time (I say this only out of respect for tradition), there was a young boy . . . me. This young boy wanted, more than anything, to get a b-b-gun for a Christmas gift . . . wait . . . that wasn't me, that was a movie I saw. Yea, ok, a real Von Sonn Family Christmas.

The year was 1904, it was the Thursday before Christmas and the supply line to our meager Western outpost had been cut off by the Maltees Indian Nation. I remember as if it were yesterday. We were in the middle of a golfball size hail storm. My father said it was too cold to snow (I never really understood the logic behind that, but I accepted it all the same).

The homestead I lived in had its central heating turned off by our evil landlord Snidley Whiplash. It was cold (too cold to snow, remember?), and our french doors to the veranda that looked out on the brick factory that we owned were out for repairs and the winter frost permeated our living room.

Christmas expectations were very low. There we were in the middle of the New Frontier, our supply lines cut, the central heating turned off by the evil landlord, our french doors that opened on the veranda out for repair, and there was only four days to Christmas.

We only needed a miracle in order for our Christmas to be a wonderful thing. One small miracle. Ok, several small miracles. But I believed. I had seen "Miracle on 42nd Street" so I knew Santa existed and he would save the day.

...

It was now two days before Christmas and still nothing. However, my faith was stronger than ever. I knew that at any time it could happen and all my dreams for my family would come true.

...

Christmas Eve came and it was now around midnight. My faith kept me warm in front of our fireplace (which had no fire in it because the flu was frozen shut).

At the stroke of midnight, I heard a sound on the roof. Not a loud sound, but loud enough to wake me from a deep and restful sleep. In fact, it was the first restful sleep I had had since 1903. I shot out of bed and, not entirely awake yet, blindly grabbed a shotgun and ran outside and blindly shot at the roof.

After my tirade of 10 to 15 blasts, the cold woke me enough to realize what I was doing. I shot 5 or 6 more rounds and a fat man in a red suit came in a limp mass of dead flesh off the roof and splattered on the hard frozen pavement. I'm not sure if the suit was red from the blood, or if it started out that way. The man was followed down by three dead reindeer, one of which had a bright nose. I buried the man and the reindeer in a single unmarked grave and thought nothing of it.

The next morning, the Indians were defeated, the heat was turned on (Snidley had a dream about ghosts and Christmas and started to give all his belongings away so his family had him committed and they sold the house outright to us), I found a pair of french doors on the roof and installed them myself. And from that day I didn't believe in Santa Claus, and I knew that if you wanted something in this world, you were just going to have to take it.

Memories

Nothing For Christmas

By Matt Suster

I remember when Jenny, my cousins, and I used to play Dradel (which is a Jewish top) and we'd gamble for M&M's. You see, you put the M&M's in the pot, and then you bet on it. See, the Jews were on the FOREFRONT of gambling WAY back in OLD times, and it's now incorporated into MODERN casinos. You wonder though, WHY don't they have the dradel? I guess It's just one of those fads.

Anyhow, I remember the fire going, and being warm inside and drinking EGG NOG (yeah, EVEN Jewish people drink egg nog!).

And I remember when I was younger -- that I felt SO superior to all those DUMB Christian kids who ACTUALLY believed Santa existed -- because I had been told as a YOUNGIN' that he didn't exist.

I remember being asked what I got for Christmas, and

EVERY time I'd say "NOTHING, my parents NEVER get me things for Christmas." And the kids would think that I had the MOST tight parents in the world. Some thought I was lying, others even offered to give me some of their presents. If only they had asked the right question: "WHAT DID YOU GET FOR HANUKKAH?"

I remember in Elementary School how we'd trade gifts, and we had a three dollar maximum, and we couldn't wait to see what we had gotten, and we'd hope that WHOEVER got out present liked it. And then when we got our present, it wasn't exactly what we wanted, and sometimes we'd even trade gifts. That's a HARD blow to the person who gave the present. My favorite was when someone liked the present HE got the other person, so he traded to get it back.

OH THE MEMORIES!

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BACK TO SCHOOL

Who Needs to Sleep?

This is it, the semester you've all been waiting for: my final one at California State University, Sacramento. It's been a long strange trip, and it's about to be over.

I'm only four classes away from having to deal with the Real World. But what a monster semester I have to get through first.

What can I say about philosophy 101? Contemporary Moral Issue. I'll have to write about 20 pages of weird stuff for it. We've already spent a whole day trying to decide "What is philosophy?" The answer, we don't know. This is the only class that isn't required by the major. It's my final general education requirement.

We are studying management situations in MNGT 182. Lots of case studies about major businesses and how they have changed what they are doing. We've watched the NBC special on Iachocoa (I don't know how to spell his name). Also, the teacher requires us to see "Roger and Me." Expect a movie review soon.

Then there is Database Design. The chapter I just had to read goes into extreme depth explaining indexed-sequential file formats, and then at the end says that we don't need to worry about them because it's all handled by the operating system. I have to program some kind of data management system using R:base later in the semester. What fun!

My fourth class is the one that is going to take the most work. If another Storm Front isn't produced until May, this class is the reason. We have to do a complete computer project from "Hi, can we help you" through programming custom software all the way to "Glad you like it, have a nice day." The average report for this class totals out to about a thousand pages (spread over six different sub-reports). Plus, we have to give a whole bunch of in-class presentations. And I have to dress nice for them, phooey.

So that's what I have to look forward to.

BEFORE THE YEAR 2000

Predictions for the Next Decade

Chris Von Sonn will become head of a major film studio but will be fired when he suggests they make a movie based on the "Speed Racer" cartoon.

Chris Stubbs will fall into a vat of toxic waste and become a Super Hero for one week. But, he will change to a Super Villain because they don't have to pay the liability insurance.

Chris and Pam Nielsen will celebrate the birth of their triplets: Huey, Luey, and Duey.

Katera Forbes will divert two billion frequent-flyer miles and use them to buy American Airlines.

Roger Hanna will win a Tony Award for a stage designed entirely out of Lego blocks and Lincoln Logs.

Susan Goldfried will purchase a bunch of upscale New York hotels, but will go to jail for tax fraud after one of her maids hears her say "Only tall people pay taxes."

Eric Storm will sell part of Stormco International Incorporated and use the proceeds to purchase an Eastern Block country that he will turn into the "Fisher Storm Winery."

Jud Fisher will become the Dude In-charge of Winemaking Stuff at Fisher Storm. His invention of a wine that's red on top, rose in the center, and white at the bottom of the bottle will make him the most famous winemaker in history.

Tina Halstead will win \$12 million in the California Lottery and then move into a two bedroom apartment.

Bart Fisher will appear on Nightline, The MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, and Sesame Street all in the same week to explain something relating to political science. He'll wear the same goofy outfit on all three shows.

Greg Koski will land a lucrative part on "Cheers" playing a gay pretzel salesman who falls for Woody.