

Magical Florida



by George Lanegraff

It's the final night of the rally, Saturday, October 23, 2010. Florida skies have transitioned from sunny to dusk and it's now 9:00, time for Epcot's fantastic "IllumiNations" fireworks show. Club members are enjoying dessert in France (a variety of countries are featured in Epcot's World Showcase area, which is why I'm being honest when I say we were in France) on the Terrace des Fleurs waterside patio following a delicious dinner at the American Adventure parlor.

Although "Magical Florida" officially began Tuesday, October 19, most attendees were signed in and parked at Disney's Fort Wilderness Campground the day before. Over three days, coach owners were led to and helped into their sites by a dedicated crew of attendee parking volunteers; Bob Nolan served as leader of this important committee. Three attractive display

coaches were placed together in the center of the club's parking loop—dubbed "Disney Street Central"—which provided a gathering point for registration, activities, and general hoopla of one type or another.

Rally registration took place Tuesday, October 19, at "Disney Street Central." Pam Watson and her registration volunteers signed attendees in for activities and distributed the welcome bags, which were filled with fun Disney gifts, including a Mickey Mouse watch. Thanks to all the ladies who helped with registration.

Just after 5:00 pm the seven first-timer families were assembled on Clementine Beach—a pristine eddy west of the Marina and a short walk from the campground—for an open-air social on the sand with the club's officers, board members, and the first-timers' "buddies." (Each



first-timer family was assigned a “buddy”—an attending couple—whose responsibility was to make sure their first-timers had a wonderful time at the rally. Thanks to all of the “buddies,” you did a great job!) Around 6:00 the rest of the attendees joined the group on the beach. Thanks to the attendees who volunteered to serve drinks to a very amenable crowd—this was beach hospitality at its finest.

The opening evening’s highpoint was experiencing Disney magic at the “Hoop-Dee-Doo” in Pioneer Hall. This classic music show was a foot-stompin’, handclappin’ Western revue, which included dinner of all you-care-to-eat homestyle food—fried chicken, barbecued ribs, cornbread, baked beans, even strawberry shortcake. This evening, though pretty silly at times, was enjoyed by all.

The club’s second day began at Disney’s Hollywood Studios, where brunch was served in a “hideaway” location. After brunch attendees were escorted to a nearby stadium to watch one of Disney’s most popular offerings, the “Lights, Motors, Action! Extreme Stunt Show.” We had wonderful seats from which to experience this action-packed show. The high-speed driving, tricks, and amazing coordination of the drivers were impressive, to say the least. This wasn’t NASCAR, but it was still very entertaining. The show featured an assortment of stunts with cars, motorcycles, over land and over water, speeding under and over props. At 2:00 the show was over and everyone was given the option of returning to the campground on the bus, or visiting a theme park on their own (passes were provided). The rest of the after-



Lou and Pam Watson helped extensively with the planning of this rally. Thank you both!



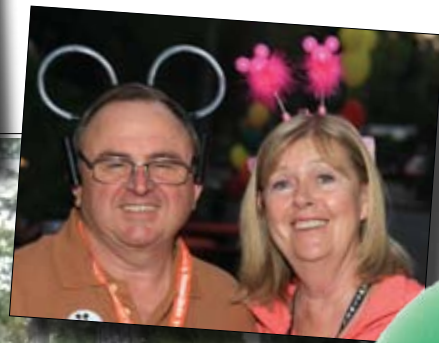
The first-timers, left to right: Pat & Robin Corbett, Chuck MacLennan & Sylvoie Boivin, Al & Mary Ellen Hermann, Terry & Brenda Irwin, Ginger & Bill Miller, Nancy Benson & John Schneider, Lori & Mike Ports.

noon was open until early evening, which was when, back at the campground, our fabulous "Disney Street Party" began.

By 6:30 lots was going on: a talented guitarist was playing everything from Jimmy Buffett to the Eagles; volunteer decorating committee members were doing "photo shots" with blinking headpieces and affixing Disney stick-on labels to everyone; a colorful assortment of balloons lined the roadway on both sides; libations were happily disbursed; and delicious southwestern food stations were beckoning. But it was the two caricature artists, Ted and Michael, who were the hit tonight. In sketch after sketch

they highlighted the countenance of club members—both lady and gent—noting a distinctive trait or twist or favorite activity or misstep... it was great fun to see what they came up with for each attendee. And yes, our party included dancing in the street. This outdoor party, with its cajoling and merriment, was something that all attendees really enjoyed.

The rally's third day began, like the others, with many walking the dog, while others made it a point to come to "Disney Street Central" for a cup of coffee and a donut. A few headed to the Trails End Restaurant in Pioneer Hall for breakfast (vouchers were provided for this). By



10:00 am the "Behind-the-Scenes Innovation in Action" tour was underway, which explored some of the fascinating, never seen places in Disney. We visited the park's extensive topiary, where the designing of Disney characters and creatures take place (each character is built

over an intricate and expensive metal framework that has its own irrigation system). We also saw Disney's gargantuan textile area, where astronomical volumes of towels and sheets are processed, as well as the "Utilidors," underground walkways/offices/storage areas found under the Magic Kingdom. We learned that *Walt Disney World*® has 170 miles of paved roads, more than 63,000 employees and 2,200 individual job descriptions, 650 horticultural staffers, all of Disney's water is recycled, and there are 60 miles of canals and 46 square miles of property. By 1:00 everyone was back at their coach for a free afternoon (no scheduled rally activities). Because it was a beautiful and sunny day, many attendees were out and about, either visiting a theme park, or sitting outside their coach getting



better acquainted with their neighbors.

At 5:00 the rally committee held an impromptu social by the display coaches prior to our bus ride to the Swan Hotel for dinner at the Il Mulino New York Trattoria Restaurant. Before the entrées were served, Club President Lou Watson stood and said a few words. He welcomed Prevost guests Steve and Brenda Zeigler to the rally, as well as thanked Prevost Car for its generous support of the club and its contribution to the rally. Lou also acknowledged Marathon Coach, thanking Bob and Kay Schoellhorn for their support of the club, as well

as officially welcoming everyone to the rally.

On Friday morning a slightly larger number of attendees came to "Disney Street Central" for coffee, donuts, and morning conversation. At 10:00 am, a small group of ladies boarded our transportation bus for some "smart and serious shopping" at a couple of high-end malls that were nearby.

Because Friday was a free day and evening, a lot of park passes were handed out (these were part of the rally fee). Of interest to many was visiting Epcot and its annual International Food and Wine Festival. Friday's schedule in-



cluded activities such as a tequila tasting in Mexico, a French regional lunch, book signings, culinary demonstrations, and an "Eat to the Beat" concert series. The popular ride "Soarin'" is also found at Epcot—"the best ride I've ever done," according to one attendee. Two other popular Disney theme parks attendees visited were Animal Kingdom and Blizzard Beach Water Park. Although it was October, this fantastic water playground was jam packed with people. I heard that a couple in our group did the ultimate—took the "Summit Plummet," a 120-foot vertical free-falling body slide—not just once,

but twice!

The rally's last day began with a well-attended "TechTalk," led by Marathon Florida technician Jamie Gard. The operational ins and outs of a volt meter were discussed in this morning technical session; a question and answer period followed.

Saturday afternoon was free, so attendees who wanted to prolong their Disney experience and visit another theme park were given a pass to do so.

At 5:30 we were on our way to our farewell dinner at Epcot's American Adventure parlor.

Disney
Blizzard Beach
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Upon arrival, we were escorted to the American Rotunda Pavilion and the second floor parlor, where the setting was traditional and comfortable. Announcements were made preceded dinner, with President Watson thanking everyone for attending, as well as encouraging everyone to come to the rallies in 2011: "California Wine Country" in Paso Robles, and "Historic Washington" in Washington, D.C. Attendee Bill Miller was fortunate to be cele-

brating his birthday this day—he was a good sport and stood while everyone sang the birthday song to him.

After dinner it was a short walk to our dessert location at France's Terrace des Fleurs and the evening's grand finale, Epcot's fireworks fantasia, "IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth." This show of brilliance was the perfect conclusion to a special evening, and a memorable rally week, for all who attended "Magical Florida." •