

Jan 5, 1999

Dear folks,

We made it back! Tom did too. He started back 6:00 PM on Saturday and got home about 7:00 on Sunday, staying Saturday night in a motel somewhere in Arkansas. He missed all the bad weather. We didn't. We started back about 5:00 Friday morning and stopped in Sikeston MO when the rain started freezing. Saturday was real rough. We took highway 70 from somewhere around Effington, Illinois to Indianapolis. The road was ice-covered and we were stuck on the highway a couple times, once for over an hour, while accidents were being cleared. We should have stopped earlier, but we continued to Indianapolis and got there after dark. The roads were slushy and slippery, but we got through and finally stopped about 7:00 on I-69 just north of Indianapolis. We got a room at a Motel 6, and although there were all kinds of restaurants around us, none were open. We later learned from the television that the mayor had declared a "snow emergency" and nobody was supposed to be on the streets. We did find an all night gas station where we bought 2 cans of ravioli and a can opener and went back to the motel and ate it cold. Yum. Sunday morning, Bob Evans was open, so we ate a hearty breakfast and started the last leg. The roads were slippery at first and we didn't go over 35 miles an hour for a while, but by the time we got to the Michigan border, it was mostly clear except for blowing snow. We got home around 2:00.

Our rooms in New Orleans were just 2 blocks outside the French Quarter, in a 200-year old house that was purchased about 2 years ago and fixed up by a young gay couple who moved to N.O. from Chicago. The weather was warm on Sunday, the day we arrived, but cool the next 2 days. We checked out the galleries on Royal Street, had cafe au lait and beignets at the Cafe du Monde, visited the aquarium, and saw an IMAX movie on the Serengeti. In one of the galleries, we saw several paintings by the 13-year old prodigy from Rumania - can't remember her name, but I've seen her on TV. Very impressive stuff.

Carol and I drove across the bridge to the West Bank and to Jean Lafitte State Park, where we walked along a boardwalk through the swamp. Saw a lot of trees covered with Spanish moss, but very little wildlife. Thursday night we went to a new nightclub opened on Decatur Street in the Quarter just before Christmas by Levon Helm, a member of the band called The Band. They used to play with Bob Dylan. The concert movie "The Last Waltz" was mostly about them (I haven't seen it). Irma Thomas performed with her 8-piece band. She is a famous New Orleans blues singer. They were very good, except it was hard to hear her over the band at times.

Friday was warm and sunny and we spent the day at the Audubon Zoo. Friday night we went to Funky Butt at Congo Square on Rampart Street to hear a band called "Los Hombres Calientes". Tom had read that they were good. One of the Marsalis kids was the drummer and Irvin Mayfield (son of Curtis?) was on trumpet. It might have been good jazz, but it only reminded me how much I dislike jazz. Carol and I skipped out after one set and caught a taxi home. (Tom had driven.) We learned from the taxi driver that where the New Years Eve fireworks display

was being prepared, there had been an explosion and 2 people had been killed.

We didn't have any expensive meals. We had breakfast one morning at Mother's in the business district, which I had read was one of the best breakfasts in the U.S. It was small and packed, no table service. You stand in line, place your order, and they holler when it is ready. But the food is good. I had an omelette, grits, biscuits and cafe au lait for about \$8.

Wednesday night Carol and I ate at the Cafe Marigny, across the street and down the block. It was small - there was only one other couple there. But it was very good. I had the Crawfish Ravioli: "Cheese ravioli and crawfish tails are found in a rich seafood broth with Roma tomatoes, roasted corn & fresh basil". Carol had the soup du jour (we can't remember what it was) and we both had the house salad: "Fresh mix of baby lettuce, served with Roma tomatoes, a julienne of carrots, and your choice of dressings".

Thursday night we ate outdoors at the Gazebo, just down Decatur from the Cafe du Monde. Tom picked it because they advertised all-you-could-eat boiled shrimp for \$9.95. He is on the Atkins diet - all meat and fat. They lost money on him. Our meals were good - I think I had something with crawfish, pasta and artichoke hearts.

The Quarter was packed with people there for the Sugar Bowl. Saw lots of people with Ohio State jackets.