



Coordinating: Bill Crowell, Park Ridge High School, American Chemical Society

Special Web Page at <http://nationalchemistryweek.org/usa2006>
National Chemistry Week is a program of the American Chemical Society

St. Louis • Denver • Chicago • Knoxville • Cleveland • Greenville •
West Lafayette • Chicago • Woodbridge • South Bend • St. Paul •

Somewhere Over Canada on American Airlines October 10, 2006

The hardest part of a blog is getting started.

Some of you will remember last year's 10 day, 15 city, 13,000 mile Extreme National Chemistry Week Tour. Heaven knows I do. We documented what we did in pictures and blog, which you can still find on the ACS website.



About a month ago an Extreme Farewell Tour (XFT) team constituted itself and we decided to do it one more time. What do I mean by "Farewell?" Well, NCW sure isn't going anywhere—it gets better every year and probably always will. On the other hand, my term as Immediate Past President ends on December 31, whereupon I drive my ACS Chevy to the levee. I thought of a farewell tour in the style of Elton John...or Barbra

Streisand...or perhaps more appropriately, Spinal Tap.

So, this team of volunteers, with no thought for their own welfare, got together and said, "Let's do it again, but this time no more wussing out on the hard stuff like you guys did last year." A reprised blog became an inevitability, which is both fun and daunting.

Right now I'm on AA flight 70 on my way to Frankfurt and then on to meetings in Moscow and St. Petersburg. I can hear my college son Will saying, "Dude! World X-Tour! Rockin'! Really sick!" For those of you who are not anchored in Millennial Generation patois, the words mean "It would be a good thing."

The true XFT starts on the 21st. Eight days at meetings in Russia is just practice and lets me warm up my blogging skills.

I'm actually a little nervous about this trip. I've never been to Moscow, the arrangements have been made by a local travel agent there, I'm to be met by a driver I don't know, who will take me to a Soviet-era hotel somewhere on the outskirts of the city. The whole trip feels like a Tom Clancy novel right now. Fodor's puts a rosy face on it and says don't drink any vodka you buy on the street. Could be worse than

the water, which itself might kill you. Be careful crossing the street, because stoplights are considered guidelines and you might get killed. And don't change any money on the street. It might not be money and the guy changing it might kill you. Note to self: stay out of the street.

Funny how those of us of a certain age—54 to be exact—have this Cold War view of a black, white and gray Russia. About 18 years ago when I was involved in licensing our technology, we had a group of Soviet scientists come to hear our sales presentation. All I remember was being called into a darkened room to make the presentation to a number of refrigerator-shaped gray men in bad suits. A light was shining on me in the dark room—probably the slide projector, but it seemed like an interrogation spotlight. I vaguely remember a voice that sounded like Peter Lorre saying, “So. Dr. Carroll. Vat is zis hybrid plastisol technology ve hear so much about? Take your time and tell us *everyzing*.....Doctor...Car...roll.....”

My youngest son doesn't feel that way. Quin is a Russophile, and all he wants is a Russian national team hockey jersey. He thinks the red is cool. OK, those of us who remember the 1980 Olympics and do believe in miracles might take a different view, but I'm going to grow through it and see what I can find him.

But I started this posting by musing about how you start a blog. Probably the best way is to see how we ended the last one. We finished the original Extreme Tour at the Texas State Fair, the home of the deep fried PB&J with bananas on a stick. Then I put my handler and co-conspirator Dave Harwell on a plane back to DC. I wrote:

“The Extreme Tour is over. What started as a silly idea in my head turned into a dynamite event that staff and members alike got into and enjoyed. We had people greet us with posters using the Tour logo; quoted the blog and podcasts to us, contributed to the internet radio and most importantly picked up the true spirit of NCW; that is, Chemistry is fun, Chemists know how to have it, and Chemistry means benefits for us all.

“Maybe there'll never be another week like this. Maybe.”

Well, dude—no maybe, we're back, we're rockin' and we're not even sick yet, although the Russian water and street vodka lurks ahead. XFT is in the house.

I will keep you posted on the trip to Russia if you will participate in the blog, especially when we get back to the states. We're mostly in the car this year, and all over the Midwest.

We're experimenting with new and different media and the goal is to learn how to use it in a way that will enhance the new ACS web presence you will see in 2007.

And there's one other goal; to help lots of members and students have a great time during National Chemistry Week. We're still raising money for Project SEED. As you know, SEED is a 40-year-old program to give economically disadvantaged high school students an opportunity to experience a real laboratory summer job. Donate \$25,000 and I'll shave my head; add \$25,000 more and write your personal message—within limits—in Sharpie across my bald pate. And I won't wash it off ALL WEEK LONG. Even if you can't donate that much, you'll get a personal thanks from me, to say nothing of the gratitude of some great students.

McDonald's is running its "Monopoly" game again this year and we'll be collecting our own game pieces on the road to see if we can win the big money and donate it. What's a road trip without McDonald's? We hope you'll save pieces—no fair checking for instant winners—and send them to us. All proceeds go to Project SEED, except the food prizes which we will eat.

We have more stuff coming, and we'll describe it here as we go.

So chemistry activists, your week is coming. One week a year, we take it to the streets. Get your extreme on and join us.

Izmailovsky Alpha Hotel—Over Something Like Pizza and Beer
October 11, 2006

Maybe if I apply a bit of imagination to it, this melted string cheese and ketchup on corrugated board under fluorescent lighting could be a candle-lit Italian dinner.

Nope. Not working.

There were a few moments of excitement when I landed in Moscow. I couldn't find my driver after passing customs. Now, this probably doesn't sound like a big deal to you as you sit comfortably wherever you are, but after the horror stories I'd been told about Russian taxicabs, I was pretty, well, concerned. I heard campfire stories from other delegates who saw on the internet about how the cab drivers kidnap you, remove a kidney, roughly sew you up and leave you along the side of the road to hitchhike to the nearest hospital. Hyperventilation and tachycardia really inhibit your ability to use a cell phone, especially when it slips out of your sweating hand, so it took me a minute to figure out the Russian system.

Fortunately, there were only about three permutations of country code, area code and number necessary until I got through to the travel agent. Three dropped calls later, my driver ambled up—20 minutes past the time he was supposed to be there, and a bit indignant that my plane was 10 minutes early. Moments later I got connected to the person who could make sense of it all, who was superfluous at that point. Timing is everything in this business.

We started driving. I was hoping it was toward the Izmailovsky Alfa but I was a bit concerned as Moscow faded into the rear view mirror. The driver pointed out it was to avoid rush hour traffic. I quickly looked for “kidnapping” and “hospital” in the Fodor's guide.

But he seemed harmless enough, and he was driving a relatively new Ford. The trip eventually became interesting as I saw nascent gated communities under construction—small houses, but recognizable new subdivisions nonetheless. After about an hour we pulled up at the hotel.

The Alfa has been updated a little since the Soviet era, but only a little. After a stringent passport check at the desk, I went upstairs to obtain the room key from the floor monitor. In olden days here, a dumpy old lady with facial hair and a lot of attitude passed out the keys and recorded the comings and goings of guests. I remember similar treatment in China twenty years ago. Now the monitors are attractive and dressed in nice uniforms.



I'm pretty sure the fixture on the wall of my room is a sprinkler and not a microphone. Pretty sure. As Elmer Fudd put it, I'm going to be *vewwy, vewwy qwiet* just in case.

The hotel is also a casino, which is kind of a surprise. It's not quite Las Vegas. Not quite even the WinStar quonset hut on the Texas-Oklahoma border, but occupied at all hours of the day and night. Roulette, beer and cigarettes at 8 AM: Breakfast of Champions. Some nights they have live entertainment: two guys singing to prerecorded tapes. The action is non-stop, if a bit slow. The workers look a little bored.

Tonight I decided to use the free evening to explore. I took a shot on figuring out the Metro in order to go down to the center of the city. But to get that done, I first had to develop confidence in reading the signage. The Cyrillic alphabet is a bit off-putting, but is so similar to Greek that if you were in a fraternity you can kind of dope it out. Once you do, there are a lot of similarities in the language.

There are a lot of similarities between the Cyrillic and Greek alphabets. The letter Д is like Δ (delta) and is a D. Once you also know that Π is like the Greek pi and is a

“P;” “P” is like the Greek rho and is an “R.” Then, “И” is sort of like “ee;” and “H” which looks like a Greek eta, is really “N” and of course “Г” is a gamma or “G.” Thus, the totally unintelligible **ЛАРКИНГ** becomes “PARKEENG”. It’s a straight lift. And it’s a good thing it is, because there is very little written in English as a second language.

I stumbled around downtown for a while, first going to the **ЦУМ** that is, “TSUM,” which is an acronym and translates roughly to “You Can’t Afford This.” Around the corner from the ЦУМ are the Bentley and Ferrari dealerships, which are located on a six-lane boulevard. Moscow harbors some serious money.

I eventually found Red Square, alongside the Kremlin, or “fortress” which has guarded Moscow for hundreds of years. The recognizable, brightly colored St. Basil’s is beautiful, especially as it is lit at night.



As a Cold War child, to have had the chance to visit the three most recognizable Communist places—the Berlin Wall, Red Square in Moscow and Tien An Men square in Beijing, seems a bit surreal. Red Square isn’t as large as Tien An Men, but the Lenin Mausoleum occupies a similar place there as Mao’s tomb does at Tien An Men.

A propos of the Extreme Tour, there is a McDonalds—or, rather МАКДОНАЛДС—that is not 100 meters from the huge statue of World War II hero Marshal Zhukov that guards the entrance to the Square. And that Mickey D’s is dead full at nine at night as well. No Monopoly promotion, though. I doubt it would translate in language or spirit. There is a mall next to Red Square—which has been there since Soviet times—called “ГУМ” or “GUM.” Judging by Red Square and the GUM mall adjacent to it, Moscow has a lot



of hip, young, good-looking citizens. Of course, this means I blended right in. With the 400-year-old buildings.

The subway is quite a monument as well. It was built in 1938 and is very ornate with statues of Lenin and dozens of other imposing bronze statues representing all walks of the Russian proletariat. In keeping with the utilitarian theme there is liberal use of granite and marble. The escalator moves at about 30 mph.

Now I'll take my last bite of veal scaloppini, blow out the candle, and it's time for the rack.

Nope. Still not working.

Tomorrow we'll see what things look like during the day.

Daytime in Red Square October 18, 2006

October 12, 2006

Izmailovsky Alpha Hotel

We've been very lucky with the weather and today is no exception. Chilly, but bright. I was hoping for a fast shower, some breakfast and maybe another trip downtown.



The shower is one of those European telephone-shaped devices, and it wasn't immediately obvious to me how you got the water from the faucet up into the telephone part. I tried turning the knob—that didn't work. I tried pushing it down, and that went nowhere. When I tried to

pull it up, it wouldn't move so I pulled a little HARDER. Whereupon the plug came out in my hand and water shot ten feet high out of the hole in the top of the faucet and all over the bathroom.

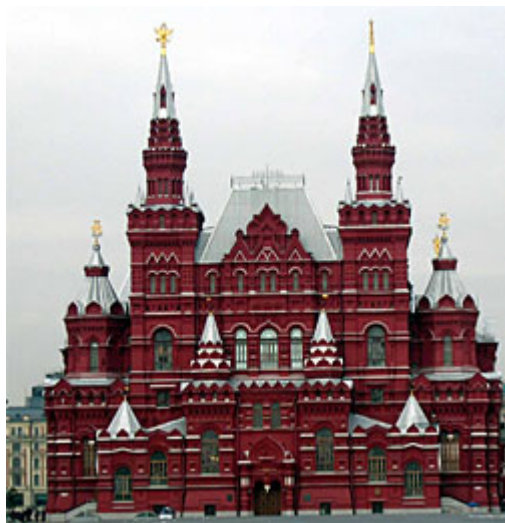
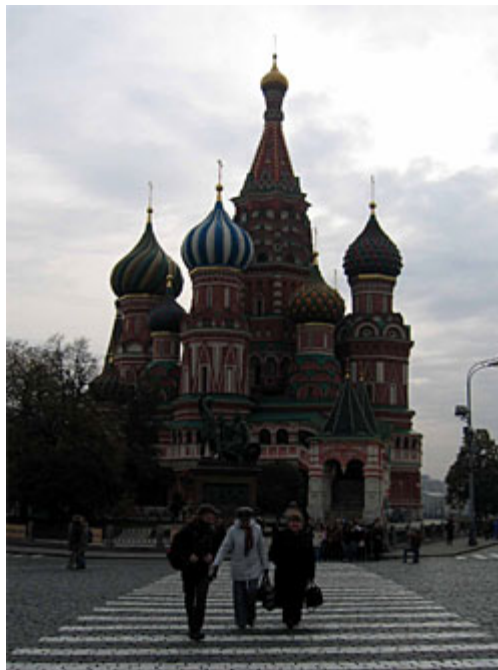
I shut the water off, replaced the plug and decided a shower was out of the question. An ad hoc bath was organized—I had to think how to do it, it's been so long—and next came breakfast.

The Alpha has a buffet for breakfast that reflects the breakfast habits of people around the world who stay there—and they differ markedly. They had kippers and other fish like the British eat; cold cuts, cheese and hard rolls for the Germans. They'd fry you an egg if you wanted. I looked around and settled for pizza and weenies, because I didn't like the look of the kim-chi and ratatouille. If the pizza were colder, a case could have been made that was an American breakfast. It was only much later that I found the Cocoa Puffs. I have no explanation for the weenies.

The big guy sitting across from me, roughly half contained in his suit, had the farm boy breakfast: fish, weenies, boiled potatoes, rolls, cole slaw, meat and cheese all doused with ketchup. And he washed it down with a beer. Sheryl Crow once sang "I like a good beer buzz early in the morning." She didn't mention boiled potatoes.

Jim Feast of the Royal Society of Chemistry and Bryan Henry of IUPAC wandered in, and I volunteered to show them how to use the subway to go down to Red Square, being as I was a seasoned veteran by now. Off we went, but when we got to the subway station, we got to experience a good old fashioned Soviet-style line for tickets.

Of course, St. Basil's is pretty neat in the daylight as well. Lenin's Mausoleum is also in Red Square, in the shadow of the Kremlin walls. He is actually there to greet you, as he has been mummified and lies on top of his casket. The experience is to be treated with reverence; the mausoleum is dark and deep, there are lots of soldiers to move you along and the whole presentation is quite striking. As I was standing there, somber as the situation was, I felt I should do something, but didn't know what. A prayer didn't seem quite right somehow.



There are other graves there, in what is known as the Kremlin Wall Necropolis including nice big markers for Leonid Brezhnev and Josef Stalin, somewhat to my surprise. Their bodies are buried below the markers. Then on the Kremlin wall are black markers for other Communist dignitaries including the first Cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin. Journalist John Reed, about whom the movie "Reds" was made, is there. You may remember that he bore a striking resemblance to Warren Beatty. Their ashes are interred behind the markers. I saw a couple of names scrawled in chalk on the sidewalk. Heaven only knows what that means.

On Red Square is the beautiful History Museum, which is red, but that's not why the Square is called that. Turns out that the Russian word for "red" also has an archaic meaning "beautiful."



There is also a mall, known as the GUM. GUM is an acronym in Russian for “big flippin’ mall” and there are hundreds of stylish stores on three levels. I found Quin’s shirt there. Did I also mention that one of the less archaic meanings of the Russian word for “red” is “bloody expensive?”

After finding our way back, we went to the EuCheMS meeting. EuCheMS—the European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences—is a federation of the 50-some chemical societies in Europe, all but three of which are members. They are building infrastructure gradually, including both programs and funding. Ann Nalley attended their first Chemical Congress this summer, as did nearly 3,000 other scientists. Combined, the societies have about 150,000 members.

EuCheMS is growing in programming quickly, and has a clear focus on advocacy in Brussels, recognizing that there will be pan-European science funding agenda, that so far is not generous to chemistry.

There was a long discussion of current issues, including alternative energy, government relations and communications both with other chemists and the public. After that, we prepared for the banquet by watching the car fire out in front of the hotel.



The banquet, held at the Pineapple restaurant, was quite an affair—not unlike an endless Chinese banquet, with ten or twelve courses. Oh. And vodka for toasts. These are shooters—no sipping, please.

Our hosts also had entertainment—three opera singers who were really accomplished. The crowd listened to them attentively at the beginning, but after about four hours were more difficult to bring to attention. Except for a few people who wanted to sing with them. Could have been the toasts.

There was every kind of food imaginable, most of it either pickled, mayonnaised, or in a heavy butter sauce. Some I had never imagined, frankly. There's no point in asking what something is—even if you find out the name, it will be Russian, and it's no help anyway. If it's good, eat it; if not, don't.

The last course was some kind of stewed meat-like thingies in a grayish-brown sauce, cooked with small fruit that was mostly pit. Reminded me of apricots. It tasted pretty funny, and I asked others what they thought it was. The best guess was veal. We'll never know. After I ate it I got that same sort of sinking feeling I had when it dawned on me that they weren't kidding when they named Steak and Kidney Pie. That the sinking feeling was still there when I got back to the hotel tells me that this story is clearly not over.

Leaving Moscow October 19, 2006

October 13, 2006

Izmailovsky Alpha hotel, 7 AM

All I can tell you is, if it was veal it was one talkative calf because it kept me up all night. Tums seemed to only make it angry.

I don't do well with international travel. Under the best of circumstances, I have a very rigid biological clock that really likes Central Time. As a result, sleep comes in spurts of about three hours tops, and usually not at night. Being awake in the middle of the night away from home is not fun.

What frosted me is I had planned for illness. Based on previous experience, I brought enough Imodium to plug the Alaska pipeline. I had enough antibiotic to disable a yogurt factory. None of that was to the point.



The 13 inch TV in the Alpha had about 20 channels with cartoons, movies, infomercials and propaganda—all in Russian. There was one English channel, the BBC News, but that carries 24 hours of information about people and places that were, frankly, irrelevant to a guy with alimentary war breaking out. It doesn't matter to me that Madonna is trying to adopt an African child, and there wasn't even a cricket match. To

be fair, CNN International is no better, and when I get home from abroad usually the first thing I want is ESPN or maybe Spike. Geez, I'd even sit and watch HGTV with Mary.

Naturally, my ACS report would have to be that morning. Nothing I like better than having to give a presentation while fighting dietary distress. Breakfast was out of the question: not pizza, not weenies, not even Cocoa Puffs. I dunked my face in the sink to avoid further enraging the shower gods. Fortunately, washing what little hair I have left requires only a heavy fog.

The EuCheMS meeting itself was very good, and I enjoyed meeting the Presidents of the European societies. We have many of the same problems: public perception of

chemistry, research funding, concern for the future of local industry, hope and optimism for chemistry as the source of the next generation of innovation, particularly in energy. I felt welcomed by all.

I did manage to get through my report. Being nearly last on the agenda helped, as did copious amounts of carbonated water.



Moscow Train Station, 11 PM

My next meeting is in St. Petersburg, and given the traffic and the state of the airports, everyone recommends taking the eight-hour overnight train. The station was not deluxe, and was once again a reminder of Soviet times. A bust of Lenin dominates the main waiting area. Given his presence in the subway as well, he must be the patron saint of train travel. Seats have been deemed irrelevant and do not clutter the waiting area.

On the other hand the accommodations once inside the train were quite clean and nice by Amtrak standards. The seats flip down to make beds, and there's space underneath them for your luggage. The Russian train system provided a box lunch: couple of dinner rolls

and butter, small bottle of salmon roe, slices of dried salami, yogurt, and chocolate squares. Oh. And a half pint of "cognac." Given what I ate all day everything but the salmon roe looked reasonably good.

First class in Russian overnight trains includes two berths in each sleeper car. Five of us—Dave Garner from the Royal Society of Chemistry and his wife Pam; Evelyn MacEwen, EuCheMS Secretary, Reto Battaglia of the Swiss Chemical Society and I—made our way to the station for the Midnight Special.

The perceptive reader has already done the math and noticed that one of us will be rooming with a new friend tonight. I drew the short straw. His name was Aleksei.

Aleksei spoke a little English, and apparently is in the publishing business. He licenses, translates, augments for Russian audiences and reproduces a couple of popular American magazines. He wasn't a bad guy—makes this trip every week.

But here we were. I was sweating like a pig because I have no idea of the etiquette associated with sharing a sleeper car with someone you don't know. Do you say, "Should we go to sleep now?" and does that mean something else when translated into Russian? I pulled out my computer and worked for a while to see if the situation resolved itself naturally.



Eventually, when he polished off his "cognac" and went out for a cigarette, I put my bed down, crawled under the covers fully clothed, buried my head and went to sleep.

In the end it all worked out. I woke up a couple of times because we were near the rest rooms, and the toilet flush sounded like a rocket launcher. Since there was no getting up to read or work, I had no choice but to will myself back to sleep, which kind of worked. I was glad to see dawn, and the station. Touring St. Petersburg is next.

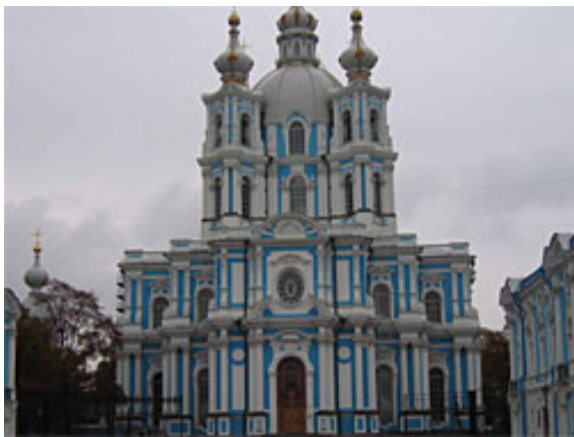
St. Petersburg: The Great One's Window on Europe October 20, 2006

Saturday, October 14, 2006

Grand Hotel Europe 11 PM

Today was kind of a deadhead day between meetings so the five of us toured St. Petersburg. After saying good-bye to Aleksei, we started the city tour while it was still dark. Couldn't see much, but the traffic wasn't bad.

Two cities could not be more different. Moscow seems gray and dominated by high-rise 1950s architecture that is at best, antiseptic and at worst, threatening. St. Petersburg is all low-rise, classic architecture, dominated by near-pastel yellow-orange, green and blue. St. Petersburg looks like Venice or Amsterdam, cities that inspired its design. Moscow is Metropolis.



Or maybe Beijing—the capital, more politically idealistic and uptight. St. Petersburg is more like Shanghai; further away, more relaxed. In St. Petersburg as in China, much of the beautiful art and artisan work done in the pre-Communist period in the name of royalty or religion was neglected or destroyed in the early and mid-part of the last century; it has since been restored and is incredible.

Anna, our tour guide made sure we bought souvenirs at a reputable place. This is not trivial. Russia seems to be one big negotiation. You can stand on the street and flag any car as if it were a taxi and negotiate a price for a ride. The taxis aren't much different. In this system, buying stuff on the street seems like guaranteed disaster.



We had lunch, at a very nice restaurant that tested my still touchy digestive system, but came complete with entertainment. A band showed up and played a Russian song—Moscow Nights. I recognized it because it had been remade by Kenny Ball as Dixieland jazz in 1962 and renamed “Midnight in Moscow“. I bought that single when I was in fourth grade.

I was sort of hoping they’d play the Beatles’ “Back in the USSR,” which might have been tasty with the accordion. Instead to our surprise, they put down the instruments and took up the group’s “Yesterday” on ocarinas.

The ocarinas are designed so you blow air in a bird’s tail and music comes out. I’ll pause here for you to insert your own metaphor.

I was utterly not surprised when we were offered the “opportunity” to buy their cd’s and the ocarinas. Yes, the theme from Dr. Zhivago is on there. What, no 2006 World Tour t-shirts?



More sightseeing. At the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul, we saw the tombs of all the Romanovs, and this interesting bronze statue of Peter the Great, advertised as being to scale. Peter was over 2 meters tall, but had small feet, and apparently a very small head. The head for this statue was taken from his death mask. The real thing, by the way, is in the Hermitage, and a facial replica is also there, fitted with his actual hair. His mustache as recreated in the replica looks a little cheesy though. Presumably, it was not his original mustache.

You'll notice that his right forefinger is pretty shiny and rubbed smooth. Local legend has it that if you rub his finger, your wish will come true. I said, rub his finger, not pull it. Be careful what you wish for.



Eventually I wound up at the Grand Hotel Europe, site of my next meeting. It's nice. Most importantly, it has a fully functioning, understandable bathroom. I cracked off the clothes I wore all day and all night and took what seemed like my first shower of the year. Just to show St. Petersburg my technical savvy, however, I missed that the sleeping room curtains were on a rod with a drawstring and managed to pull them down instead of pulling them closed. Sigh.

The five of us eventually regrouped for dinner at a restaurant called Demidov. The concierge at the hotel said, "Oh. You mean the one with the Gypsy show." Note to self: One ocarina per trip is enough.

The specialty of the Demidov is bear filet. I thought I misheard the waitress and asked if it was difficult to filet a pear. No, she said, not Pear as in Bosc, Bear as in Yogi. The filet was tempting, but at \$90, a little pricey, so I went for second best—what amounted to bear sausage with fruit sauce.

Having bear for dinner is another pretty good metaphor opportunity so go ahead and take your best, ahem, shot. My Cold War self thought, "Eating the Russian Bear...priceless." One grad school friend used to say, "Some days you eat the bear, and some days the bear eats you." Tonight we evened the score a little.

The standard culinary wisdom might be that everything tastes more or less like chicken; to my palate, everything wilder than, say, chicken, tastes pretty much like liver. Don't look for a McBear anytime soon.

I've been here three days and I'm still sleeping at odd times. The good news is, at 4 in the morning I'm really productive. The bad news is, 2 PM comes awfully early.

Back to the USA October 22, 2006

Thursday, October 19, 2006

American Airlines Flight 71

Frankfurt Main Airport

The past three days have been taken up with industry meetings; wonderful things in themselves, but they don't make much of a story. Still, I suppose, after 27 years in this part of the chemical industry, this is my tribe, and it's nice to see all those tribe-mates from all over the world.

I visited the Russian State Museum on Sunday. It's mostly artists you never heard of, but incredibly, the art you see follows the same timeline of development of techniques followed by artists you have heard of. Very interesting, but time ran out on me and I didn't get to see the exhibit of Soviet Cold War poster art, which would have been dynamite.

We had one other Fodor's moment, when walking back to the hotel we were impeded by aggressive sellers of postcards. The situation developed quickly, but in retrospect, when the price for 24 cards dropped to a dollar, it was clear the goal was simply to



get you to show them your wallet so terrible things could happen. Thank heavens I didn't have my money stored close to my kidney. They did look like nice postcards, though.

The Hotel Grand Europa was pretty nice, which explains the \$37 breakfast. Geez Louise—my suits don't cost that much. Needless to say, I hiked down to the МАКДОНАЛДС for an ЭГГ

МАКМУФФИН. In Russia the standard McMuffin comes with sausage, which was pretty good. The eggs are different here too, and it takes a while to get used to them. The yolks are much more orange than yellow—but they taste the same—which I think reflects what the chickens are being fed. By the look of it, they've been eating either carrots or traffic cones.

And I dare you to find a 20-ounce cup of coffee to go. There are no Starbucks in Russia, and they desperately need a 7-11.

It rained most of the week, but wasn't terribly cold, so I walked around the city quite a bit. It really is a pretty place, and I remain struck by the pastel colors of the buildings, the incredible mosaics, especially in St. Isaac's, and my favorite—the statue of Alexander Pushkin. If you come at just the right time, you can see eighteen pigeons lined up on his arm. Overflow seating is on his head.

We had a wonderful banquet last night, but to be honest, I'm not going to miss four-hour dinners where the vodka comes in tumblers and the water in shot glasses, especially when they end at midnight and you have a 3AM wakeup call. I never did get sleep-acclimated this trip, so once the fog in my head cleared it was pretty easy getting up.

Jeff Sloan and I dutifully showed up at Pulkovo Airport in St. Petersburg two hours before our 6:15 flight, and were in the waiting room with about an hour and 50 minutes to spare, trying to swallow a Power Bar with nothing to wash it down. I love a small airport when everything is closed.

The Lufthansa flight was pretty uneventful, but they did serve us a hot breakfast. It was kind of like eggs, only different. And they had the smallest cans of Diet Coke I've ever seen—150 ml. The can nearly weighed more than the soda. It would take about 7 of them to make a Big Gulp.



So now here I sit on AA 71 back to Dallas, finally able to exhale. This is always the best part: the last leg of an overseas trip when you're finally on the plane and you can reflect on the good stuff and no more adventures are possible, or at least likely. Yeah, I'd come back here.

When we get back to Dallas the preparations for the tour start in earnest. I can't wait. Two meals a day at the Dashboard Diner; windows down, music blaring so as to annoy old people in the other lane. Ain't nothin' better than a road trip, and we'll document it all the way.

Now three requests. First, I hope you'll stay with us as we cover the Midwest next week, especially by using the RSS to automatically have the blog fed to you as new posts appear. You can subscribe to RSS feeds by clicking on either "full" or "comments" and then copying the URL into your favorite RSS aggregator.

The links are the following:

<http://nationalchemistryweek.wordpress.com/feed/>

<http://nationalchemistryweek.wordpress.com/comments/feed/>

Second, I hope you'll take the time to comment on what we say and do. I expect the ACS crew that's keeping me out of the ditches may file a minority report, and you can too. Finally, if you write a blog and you like what you see, link to us so we can turn more people on to National Chemistry Week.

Warm-up in Houston; Day 1 in St. Louis October 23, 2006

Friday, October 20, 2006

11 PM

Dallas, Texas

The Chemistry equivalent of football's Bowl Week started tonight at the Southwest Regional Meeting. I had told the organizers that because of the Russia trip I might not make it, but a couple of weeks ago I switched reservations to make it possible to do a fly-by. Literally. Extreme Farewell Tour Day 0 is on.

Travel doesn't get much easier than this unless it's taking the bus to work. Come to think of it, a flight on Southwest IS taking the bus to work. I drove 20 minutes to Love Field, and parked, carrying only two weeks of neglected periodical reading.

Why I needed to be scanned, wanded, searched and patted down when I had neither laptop, video camera or any recognizable liquids or gels is a question for the statisticians, but getting past security was the hardest part of the trip. They gave me enough radiation to do my crystal structure. They didn't bring out the dogs to sniff me, but I heard barking as a warning. I thought about asking the guy patting me down to scratch my back since he was already giving me a massage. There was one of those intriguing "what if" moments when the inspector saw my ACS pin and asked if I was a member of Congress. What if I'd said yes....

Once through, it took only 25 minutes from load-out to wheels-up. Houston Hobby was 45 minutes down the road—or rather, air.

In Houston, I met Rodney. Rodney drives a cab and likes to talk. I've discovered by traveling a lot that even if you don't like sports, a knowledge of professional football and basketball is critical to getting the best service in a taxicab. To be blunt, Rodney did not want to discuss the pointillist art at the Russian State Museum, but a deep drill on his true passion, the Denver Broncos guaranteed that we got to the Marriott Westchase expeditiously.

SWRM organizers Joe Hightower, Mamie Moy, Dave Singleton, Monte Pettitt and a number of others did a great job. They took a risk and invited high school students to come for a special smokin' price, and as far as I'm concerned, it paid off. I met a number of girls from St. Agnes who were taking AP Chemistry. They were self-

assured, interested and fun—they have great futures ahead of them. I pity the grad students in the poster session who got the third degree from them.

At 7:30 Rodney picked me up and we were on the way back to Hobby where we debated the relative merits of the Houston Rockets and Dallas Mavericks, and I was back in Dallas before 10. The cab ride was longer than the flight.

So, to paraphrase Peter, Paul and Mary, the tour shirts are packed and we're ready to go. The next cab arrives at 6:15 AM.

Saturday, October 21, 2006

11 PM

St. Louis

First off, I need to explain the XFT staffing acronyms.

Um, eXtreme Farewell Tour for those of you who are new.

It's a rotating three-person crew so as to assure that we 1) capture good content for the web and 2) keep me from wandering off. For this leg, Judith Jankowski is the Handler of the Team or HOT because of her superior organizational talents. Dennis Loney is the Techie on Tour or TOT, but is also the WP, which is Web Presence or Wing Person. I think the latter means if we need an order of wings, Dennis gets to go pick them up. I am known as the WHAT NOT—While Holding A Title, No Obvious Talent.



I cruised into the St. Louis airport with no problem, and Lisa Balbes met us there. Every airport has distinguishing features, and Lambert Field is no exception. Of course you can get Budweiser, the hometown brew on tap but there is also a place in Concourse C called the “Tequileria” where it seems you can get lots of different tequilas, also presumably on tap. Must make 9 in the morning almost bearable.

The St. Louis section had its annual event at the marvelous Science Center. You are first greeted by a T-Rex that has just TKO-ed a Triceratops. Reminded me of what Monday Morning Staff meetings were like in a previous incarnation.



There were nearly twenty demonstration stations, manned by Southern Illinois U at Edwardsville, St. Louis U., U of Missouri, St. Louis and St. Louis Community College—as well as companies, Monsanto, Sigma-Aldrich and individual members. SIUE was a big hit making polyurethane “buns” on the spot, which only one kid ate. They had hundreds of kids and parents come through—a big success. Greg Wall was the general chair. .

Somebody did a super shrinky of me and prepared it so I could wear it like a medallion. Nice, but that’s somebody else’s hair.



I met lots of teachers in preparation, including a woman with one career completed already. It warmed my heart to see another “second career” teacher—we pushed that program pretty hard last year. She’ll be great. The other common major was Pharmacy, and most of those kids said they picked it because they had worked in a pharmacy at some time and liked it. I continue to believe that we lose kids from chemistry to Pharmacy and Forensics because they don’t know what chemistry “work” looks like. I wish we could show them.



I’m keeping count of the number of “slime” recipes we have this week. Today there were two, and the champion was Sigma Aldrich with its glow-in-the-dark clear slime. Honorable Mention to Monsanto.

The World Series is on. Tonight we’re in St. Louis, tomorrow in Detroit. This town is truly rockin’ for their Cardinals. We sat in the nearly

empty bar of the Adam's Mark and watched the end of the game that St. Louis won 7-2. The bar sound system broke into "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang, and a few ecstatic patrons decided to dance. What followed was a late '70's trash disco music/dirty dancing review, executed by people who were old enough to remember it well from the first time, as do I. My heavens.

I've seen it all before. I thought I didn't need to see it again. I was right.

So tonight we stay downtown, Day 1 in the books, hard by the Gateway Arch. Makes me think of Egg McMuffins. Wheels up tomorrow at 8:15 AM.



Day 2: Detroit. Have mercy. October 23, 2006

Sunday October 22, 2006

12 PM

Leaving the Detroit Airport

The day started innocently enough, but then it always does. We rallied at 6:30 to go to the St. Louis airport, and after stacking a cab full of luggage, I slipped into the front passenger's seat. I guess the driver hadn't imagined having someone in the front seat, but I found a bit off-putting the half-full cup of brown liquid with twelve cigarette butts in it that was sloshing perilously in my cup-holder. I had visions of a brown shower if there were any potholes along the expressway, but it didn't happen.

When using one of the automatic ticket machines at an airport, you should know that any sentence that begins "For your convenience..." roughly translates to "In order to inconvenience you..." In this particular case, it read, "For your convenience we have rebooked you to a later flight." Say what?

I herded us to the counter and decided not to tell the whole story of the XFT, although the attendant would have been enthralled, I'm sure. Instead I simply said we had appointments in Detroit and could she explain what was going on with our flight. What I'm about to tell you makes No Sense Whatsoever, but the reason is because our flight out of Detroit had been cancelled due to a schedule change. Why that impacted our flight in the morning is a mystery, but with a bit of patience we were back on the early flight.

Or rather, we were booked on that flight. As we made our way to security, we stood at the back of a 45 minute line. But since we arrived an hour and a half early, and paragraph 3 only took twenty minutes, we still had time.

Not everyone was so fortunate. The man in front of me still had 20 minutes of line and 20 minutes before his flight. He went up to plead his case. I saw him 20 minutes later sitting next to the screener, despondent. I tell this story in order to illustrate a fine point of the security system. If you ever look down at your boarding pass and see "SSSSSSSS" it means you have been randomly selected for full dress review (or undress as the case may be.) This process disassembles all of your bags and searches you in that intimate sort of way. He had the infamous "SSSSSSSS" and was dead in the water.



The current procedure allows you to take liquids through security only if a) the individual containers are 3 ounces or less and b) they all fit in a one-quart Ziploc bag. Dennis has a clear vinyl zipper bag and has been testing the Ziploc-only rule. He has passed the first two flights after some close questioning—especially in St. Louis, but more on this later.

We got to Detroit, rented the car and off we went. Lunch was a fast stop at McDonalds, and we maxed out on Monopoly pieces with a chicken sandwich meal and a couple of ancillary drinks. We are now in proud possession of an instant winner small drink, and various other bits of trash that may eventually prove useful. Judith did not eat all her Large Fries.

Since Judith would be relinquishing her title as HOT after this stop (well, really she's more of a Handler on Tour, Taking In Everything or HOTTIE) we let her pick the music.

What's In The Player: "Judith's Workout Mix" or "Tunes for Elliptical Trainer and Water Bottle." This is particularly pertinent with the large order of fries steaming away in the front seat. Good stuff—mix of old Motown and relatively new dance; ranging from Michael McDonald to Black-Eyed Peas; Dexy's Midnight Runners to Eiffel 65. The second CD was Madonna's first album, which contained the hits Holiday, Borderline and Lucky Star. This 1983 offering was a middle school favorite of Judith's and really showed me no evidence that Madonna would have the star longevity she turned out to have.

Sunday, 7 PM
Detroit Airport

Another dynamite afternoon. The Detroit Section's annual event was held at the Cranbrook Institute of Science. Established in 1930, it is first a natural history museum, housing a great collection of minerals and paleontology artifacts. The Institute is part of a spacious green campus that is home to other institutes and a number of schools.

Denise Grimsley of BASF is NCW chair. She greeted us and escorted us first to the bullpen where donuts, sodas and various other essential nutrients were housed. Still being full from the fries, we went to the auditorium where the University of Detroit Mercy Chem Club was preparing for its Chemistry Magic show. Professors Mark Benvenuto and Matt Mio presided.

Gina Ludwig of Henkel took the initiative to alert Senator Debbie Stabinow's office, and a member of her staff extended her greetings to the crowd. This particular show was a great learning experience for both presenters and audience because there were numerous glitches in the first show, and the students came through like pros. The kids loved it.

Detroit is as nuts about baseball right now as St. Louis is, which is not surprising. In an obvious and appreciated attempt to co-opt me, Mark invested me with a Tigers home jersey, which I wore during the afternoon and for all the pictures. I traded an official XFT t-shirt, which of course does not represent any kind of a championship, but we like 'em.

There were a number of other schools represented: Wayne State, Oakland County Community College, Lawrence Technical University and the Roper School. BASF and Henkel were out in force, and volunteers from GE Plastics and Ash Stevens also did hands-on science with the hundreds of parents and kids present. There were experiments from the NCW tip sheet for this year and previous years. You keep thinking these things can't get any better, and then they do. And two more slime recipes.



At 4 we were off in the car back to the airport. There was yet a nasty little mission to be accomplished. We still had to exchange our Northwest tickets for the cancelled flight. We had backed up reservations with United, and were given seats, but the agent let us know in no uncertain terms that we were considered refugees and if any bona fide United passengers showed up, well, we would be removed from the plane. Whatever.

I passed security with no problem, drawing compliments for my correct use of the Ziploc bag. Dennis' 1 liter—not 1 quart; vinyl not polyethylene, zipper—not Ziploc

bag was called into question, and he was sternly lectured that with heightened need for security such deviations from standard issue could simply not be tolerated. He was advised in the future to get religion on this—and a Ziploc bag. There may now be an all-airports bulletin to be on the lookout for him.

So we're off to Chicago. It's an early call tomorrow as LaTrease Garrison joins us for the longest driving day of the trip.

Day 3: 'Cross the Heartland October 24, 2006

October 23, 2006

Evansville, IN, 11 PM

First of all, Happy Mole Day.

Dawn came early to the prairie, as the XFT crew prepared to traverse the length of Illinois. LaTrease got in from DC and picked us up in a Chevy Equinox, which is something between a van and an SUV. After a half hour search for the cupholders, we had the car under control and off we went.

We were the tiniest bit late, but since LaTrease was driving we comfortably made up time. I was amazed at how as I watched the cars we passed recede into the distance, they looked redder than I thought they were when they were right next to us.

Our first stop was at Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby, IL. Their Chemistry Club is a perennial student affiliate award winner and thought leader for 2-year-college ACS involvement. We were met by Professors Matt Johll and Jeffrey Carver, who introduced us to about 20 of their students. In many ways, IVCC is typical of two-years. Lots of non-traditional students and many young students who see community college as an affordable start of an education. Specifically, in this group, there were lots of nursing majors.

You can't help but be impressed by the focus of these students, many of whom have a very clear view of what they want to accomplish. I spoke to one serious student, who was managing a life, motherhood and a job and was torn by the fact that she was becoming interested enough in the chemistry of drug design to consider an 8 or 9

year path to a PhD. I told her if she loved chemistry to go for it. She will be a success in whatever she chooses.



Then it was off to lunch. Near the college was the Root Beer Stand Drive-In. We could have had curb service, but opted for the dining room since it was cold. The root beer was outstanding—frosty mug, some of the root beer frozen on the inside. I looked at the menu and

really wanted the jumbo chili cheese dog, but realized it would be followed by a trip

to the hospital to have my stomach pumped. I can't eat that stuff any more, so I had a hamburger and it hit the spot. So did Dennis. Oh—he also had the fried mushrooms. No matter how long you let them cool, the first one always burns a layer of skin off the roof of your mouth.

LaTrease ordered the Bar-B-Que, expecting thinly sliced, vinegary sauced brisket on a crusty baguette. I should have told her that in this part of the Midwest, “Bar-B-Que” means “Sloppy Joe.” I think the root beer would have made her feel better but she had lemonade. We won't discuss the lettuce salad.

Then we were off to Holy Family Elementary School for an NCW demo show. At school we were met by Principal Jyll Jasiek. The science program is overseen by Lynn Quick.

Employees of Carus Chemical conducted the show, and Lynn Solario facilitated our appearance. The show was good and the kids were better. Audience participation included a hands-on experiment of pushing the kabob skewer through the balloon. They called up four kids and me to give it a try. No pressure—even considering that while I've seen it done, this is my first first-person attempt at balloon skewering. It worked out. Did you hear the sigh of relief?

They had some great twists on old demos, including pulling numerous balloons out of a liquid nitrogen cooler and letting them expand (instead of pouring liquid N₂ on them and watching them contract).



Carus is a family operation that has been in business for nearly a century. Their main business is KMnO₄, especially for water treatment, but another passion of the Carus family is education, which is an outlet for their philanthropy and their personal service. Carus also has a publishing arm that produces Cricket magazine and other educational publications for children.

After a quick plant tour we were on the road for Evansville, five hours away. We made a refreshment stop on the road, and food choices of the group were

informative. LaTrease had her usual of Doritos and a Mr. Goodbar, washed down by healthy, all-natural water. Dennis also got a candy bar on the 2 for \$2 program, coffee and savory peppered beef jerky. I typically don't eat something that smells like that. Same issue as the jumbo chili cheese dog. I was driving and had a sensible cup of coffee and Cinnamon Toast Crunch bar; by definition, a manly snack with fiber and vitamins. OK, at least a boyish snack with some fiber and vitamins, if you eat the coffee cup too.

We're making progress on the McDonalds game and used our final stop three hours later to obtain a couple more game pieces. We are now three to the railroads, and have two instant winner breakfast sandwiches and a small drink. I live for this.



There were two scary moments on the way to Evansville. A dog ran across the highway, which Dennis swerved to miss. It was a small white dog, about 10 inches at the shoulder. Dennis claimed he first thought it was a small deer. Clearly, we've been driving too long. Dogs should not have antlers like that.

Second, we had carefully downloaded directions to our hotel and the road went through some country areas. One of the final directions was to make a right on St. Josephs Road and look for the expressway up ahead. Dennis was driving and LaTrease was in the co-pilot's seat. Five hundred yards ahead, LaTrease spotted a street sign with St. Josephs written in four-point type and insisted that Dennis turn. He made a U to go back to the road he missed.

As we drove down roads that went from four lanes to two lanes to virtually nothing at all, I realized that if there was an expressway up ahead it would be one shared lane for both directions. In addition, it was flippin' dark and getting darker. I expected to see a guy with a hockey mask and an axe charge the car. When it came to a T we decided to turn around to go back to the main road.

Who would have thought that there was another St. Joseph's Road, with a big electric sign, not three miles down the road? Eventually we made our way into Evansville and the Casino Aztar Hotel. Scientists at a Casino. Brilliant! We'll see how everyone acts tomorrow.

What's in the player: Lots of stuff in seven hours, but of note is Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Choir, 20/85: the Experience. LaTrease brought this cd which commemorates his twenty years in Gospel music and it is amazing. Mostly uptempo, up-register and infectious.

More students tomorrow, and the Indiana-Kentucky Border section meeting. Then we see whether any of us remembers our statistics courses.

Day 4. Food comes to the foreground. October 25, 2006

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

11 PM

Aztar Casino Hotel, Evansville, IN

Breakfast came at the bountiful breakfast bar of the Casino. They had a unique dish; kind of their own version of “Toad in a Hole.” Take a piece of toast, cut out a 4 inch diameter circle, drop in an egg and fry it in situ. Then put the little 4” toast piece back on as a hat over the egg. Nice, but no match for the elegant simplicity of the Egg McMuffin.

Today we were all over Evansville. First off, I spoke to a group of HS students from a number of schools in the Evansville area after they had participated in a Mole Day chemistry bowl. Of course, it was a sub-optimal situation; I had to follow longtime ACS activist Marie Hankins who did a great demo show. Marie is the first person I’ve seen who will use dry ice to blow up a soda bottle...indoors. She does it inside a 50 gallon polyethylene waste basket and stuff still goes flying, to say nothing of a huge report. She says she has to be careful or the ceiling tiles suffer. These types of experiments outdoors typically draw police from ten miles away.

Then it was time for lunch. An ACS staff member, Rebecca Achurch is a former resident of Evansville and a fellow DePauw alum. She wrote us to make sure that we knew that a trip to Evansville was not complete without a meal at Turoni’s pizza



parlor. So insistent was she that LaTrease, Dennis and I decided to go there for lunch instead of Corky’s Bar-B-Que, which initially brought tears of joy to LaTrease.

Once in Turoni’s we ordered the house special, augmented by anchovies. I can’t get anchovies on pizza at home because Mary says they will crawl over to her half of the pizza, but that’s just wrong. If you

just put them more than an inch from the border there’s no problem because they’re so slow you have the pizza eaten before they can crawl that far.

Dennis and LaTrease also had a House Salad. LaTrease was sorely disappointed by the Lettuce Salad at the Root Beer Stand yesterday, and declared that for the rest of the trip she would be ordering House Salads. I didn't understand. It was billed as a lettuce salad, and she got a bowl of lettuce. By analogy, what would you get when you order a House salad? A bowl of houses? And that's better?

I've had a hard time with salads on the road lately. Lots of fast food salad places only have "Lite Italian" dressing as a fat free option. Lite Italian has the taste and consistency of a rather thin NCW slime recipe. However, it can be retrieved. Squeezing a packet of ketchup into it and mixing thoroughly turns it into kind of a sundried tomato vinaigrette. Peppercorn Ranch is harder to synthesize in the field using the materials at hand.

By this time, our trip to Evansville was turning into a Rachel Ray restaurant review. We even started making the "mmm" sounds she makes for the camera during her Food Network show close-ups.

The house salad showed up with slices of peppers and pepperoni. The vote was mixed. Also, the Root Beer was not up to the standard set yesterday, but to be fair, it's not Turoni's Salad or Turoni's Root Beer, it's Turoni's Pizza, and it did not disappoint. Thin crust, lots of stuff including pepperoncinis baked right in. Mmmmm.



In the afternoon I had an hour with students at the University of Southern Indiana, and we talked about the state of chemistry in 2015. I was hosted by Marie, section Chair-Elect Mark Krahling and Jeff Seyler, acting department head. A good crowd; bright kids and an interested faculty working to grow the department and the university. I did better this time because I didn't have to follow fire and explosions.

Dinner with the section was more oriented to the University of Evansville, and the section officers. Conversation at one time turned to that regional southern Indiana treat, fried brains. Brains can be had as a sandwich on a bun or, in some places, as a side order with eggs. The BSE scare of a couple of years ago moved the standard brains from beef to pork. One observer noted “it just isn’t the same.” Yo Rachel: Can I get a “Mmmmmm” to that?

At the Indiana-Kentucky border section meeting it was great to see Rama Konduri, who is a ball of energy for the Younger Chemists Committee, and Ihab Odeh, current section chair, both from GE. Brian Lynch from U of Evansville introduced me at the section meeting, which had a number of business majors as well as upper-level chemistry students.

It was also nice to see Ken Miller, eminence grise of GE’s polycarbonate technology group. Ken and I were grad students together back when there were only 67



elements. There are too many stories.

After the seminar, LaTrease and I went to check out the Casino. Casino marketing is wonderful, leading you to believe that such places exude non-stop excitement. There is a huge wall of winners who pocketed unheard of sums—literally HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS. It’s

difficult to resist getting some fuel for the gaming expedition by stepping up to cash a check, obtain a credit card advance, or pawn the rental car you came in.

I have to go every now and again just to remind myself what it’s really like. We put \$2 in a nickel slot machine, and it took about 10 minutes to lose it. I suspect that the result would not have been markedly different if we had put \$2000 in a \$50 slot machine. We were too tired to attempt the experiment at the blackjack tables.

Maybe it’s just that having had a statistics course ruins the idea of success at a game of chance, wall of winners notwithstanding. I had hoped to have some pictures of us at the slot machines, but my camera was flagged, stripped of pictures and

impounded. It was for my convenience and security, you see. Apparently what happens in Evansville stays in Evansville. Perhaps that's best.

So tomorrow is a 5:00 call and off to Cleveland. There will be no casinos, but there may be pizza. Mmmmmm. Thank heavens I have my elastic waist pants.

Day 5: One Day in O-hi-o October 26, 2006

October 25, 2006 11 PM

Somewhere over Indiana

I could tell it was time to turn in the rental car this morning. After you've had a few days on the road, all the trash tends to accumulate on the floor of the back seat behind the driver. My general rule is: When the back seat is full of trash, it's time to turn in the car. It was, and we did.



It was an early call for the flight to Cleveland through Detroit, but both flights went smoothly, then it was in a cab and out to Magnificat High School in Rocky River, OH. The cab ride was relatively uneventful, but if that 15 minutes was any indication, the Cleveland city motto is

“Use Your Horn.”



Magnificat is a Catholic girls school of about a thousand students, and we were at the school to present the official charter for their Chemistry Club. Our Chem Clubs program is a new pilot to determine whether there is interest in establishing a high school analog of our Student Affiliates. Interest seems to be high, and I hope the pilot goes forward to become a full scale program.

The advisor for the Chemistry Club is Betty Dabrowski. Betty is a long-time high school teacher and ACS member, innovative and respected. There were about twenty girls present, mostly juniors, for pizza and the ceremony. I had the chance to talk to most of them.

Their goals and planned courses of college study were quite diverse: from a French major to a budding ultrasound technologist. But

they all had an ethic oriented toward public service in some fashion, and they were a pleasure to meet.

The pizza didn't match Turo's, but that didn't prevent me from ramming down a couple of pieces. At 1 it was time to meet Mike Kenney and head on over to Case Western Reserve. Mike has taught at the university level, worked at ACS, been Director of the American Society for Materials, and now is teaching again at both high school and college level. He arranged for me to meet an introductory class of his.

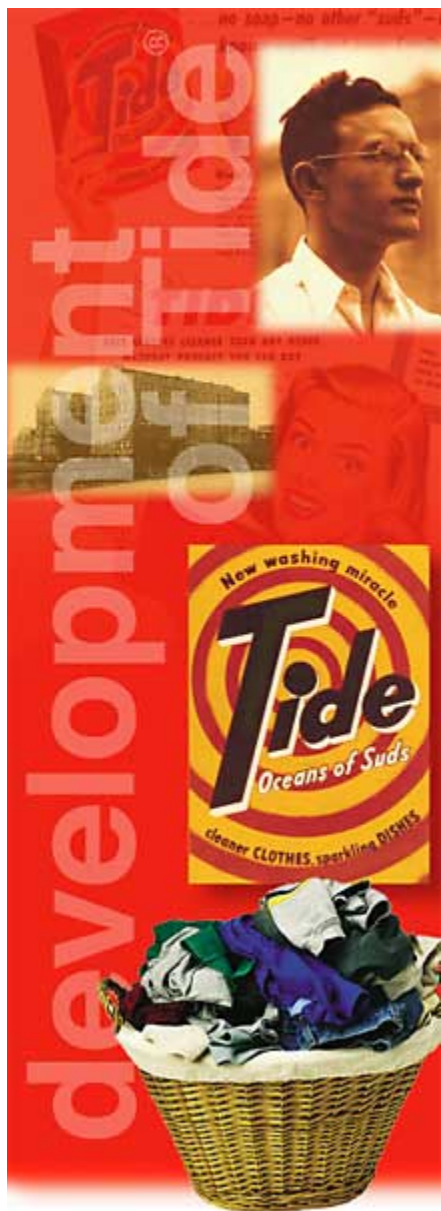
The class and I discussed a number of issues that would matter to those students during their adult lives—disease, energy, you name it. I tried to leave them with the idea that there was no time when innovative technology solutions were more needed, and I hoped they would consider taking on the grand challenges.

Two rows up from the bottom was a group of four students who showed up in new black t-shirts with the message: $\pi\rho$ on the front. Pronouncing the Greek quickly comes out “Pi Rho” or “Pyro” which is an odd but not totally unimaginable message to be bringing to a chemistry class. Keep an eye on them in lab, Mike.

Sal Castenada arrived from DC and took over from Dennis as TOT (Techie on Tour) and will manage the web presence materials for the next couple of days. LaTrease is on the way back to DC as well, so we are officially without a HOTTIE (Handler on Tour, Taking in Everything). The WHATNOT (While Having a Title, No Obvious Talent) remains the same. By the way, Dennis got a favorable reading from the Evansville TSA on his clear, non Ziploc bag—“That'll work”—and made it home, no problem.

It was Italian for dinner and a salad for me. Yes, it was a House Salad. What's your point? The conversation was lively as Jesse Bernstein of the Hawken School joined us for dinner. Jesse is also a master teacher with 33 years of experience and great perspective. We exchanged notes on class demos (his were better) and educational policy, but quickly Mike headed us off to the final event.

The South Euclid-Lyndhurst branch of the Cuyahoga Public Library is housed in a 26-room early 20th century mansion and is both a peaceful and beautiful place to



encounter books. During National Chemistry Week, kids can also encounter science, courtesy of the Cleveland Local Section.

Tonight Mike Zehe and Lou and Sue Velenyi organized hands-on chemistry in the form of concrete-making for a group of young girl scouts and a few others. The crowd was small but attentive, and I have a feeling that most of them went home motivated to repair the driveway before winter set in, but we didn't find out because Mike whisked us off to the airport for the trip to Indianapolis.

As an aside, today was the dedication of the Chemical Historical Landmark for the development of Tide laundry detergent at Procter and Gamble in Cincinnati. Tide was the beginning of modern detergent technology using "builders" in addition to detergents to clean clothes in hard water and do an improved job of removing dirt. It was a great party and Katie Hunt was there representing the Presidential succession.

I have great admiration for P&G, especially recently. I bought one of their Gillette division's new five-blade Fusion razors, and I love it. One wonders what the optimum number of blades is. One version of Moore's law seems to state that the number of blades

on a standard razor doubles every five years.

But Fusion razors shave well, especially because they seem less likely to nick me. So good are these razors that I have found that I can use them to shave the hair on my ears without risk of a nick. Ears are sensitive places. Perhaps you've never had either a cut ear or a burst water supply pipe under your sink. Please don't ask exactly how I know, but from experience, I can tell you that liquid gushes from each at about

the same rate. The ability to do a quick ear touch up on the road without a clipper is a real boon for those of us of a certain age who travel a lot without a barber on board.

It's in to Greencastle tonight; DePauw and Purdue tomorrow.

Day 6: Back Home in Indiana October 27, 2006

October 26, 2006

Hotel Allegro, Chicago IL

11 PM



I think the closest thing to the feeling of waking up at home is waking up in the town I went to college. I walked, and sometimes crawled its streets for four years. I woke up this morning in Greencastle, Indiana, just as I did regularly for four years in my youth. Many of the buildings at DePauw haven't changed in the thirty-five years since I stopped actively living there or the hundred before I got there; even so there have been and great additions

more are on the way.



Now, to be fair, I seldom woke up as early in those days as I did this morning because I had an early breakfast with Professor Jeff McCall, with whom I roomed for a semester my senior year. Today Jeff is a media expert and sought-after pundit. And to think, I knew him when. Jeff set me up for an interview with campus station WGRE where I was once program director, and helped him get his introduction to radio.

After breakfast we went to the Percy Julian Science Center, where the department of chemistry and various other sciences is housed. In the center is the ACS Chemical Historical Landmark honoring the synthesis of

physostigmine by DePauw graduate Percy Lavon Julian, one of the first African-Americans to receive a PhD in chemistry in the US and a giant in the field, both scientifically and business-wise. He achieved that synthesis in Minshall Lab, which was built in 1901 and demolished nearly 75 years later.

I took my first three years of chemistry in Minshall Lab. That anything was synthesized there ever is a miracle in my eyes—I certainly couldn't.

Bridget Gourley, Chair of the Chemistry Department, was my faculty host, and I was invited by Connie Shim on behalf of the Chemistry Club. There were about thirty students there, and I regaled them with stories of how I was pretty much lucky to graduate at all, given how much fun I had. I was exaggerating, but not much. I also tried to leave them with some thoughts about managing their careers in a world of globalization—pretty much a short review of the Chemistry Enterprise in 2015 report.

Indiana is cold and rainy this week. We left Greencastle for points north after a



brisk, damp walk. Soon it would be time for lunch—time for us to get back on the McD Monopoly program that we missed out on yesterday.

We bought supersized everything—not to eat it, mind you, but for the game pieces. We are slowly sneaking up on the victory that will certainly be ours, now lacking only one of the pieces for each of the top money prizes that will write our names in the annals of Project

SEED forever. No jokin', as they say at Red Hot and Blue, we're smokin'.

When we arrived at Purdue, Jessi Fautch quickly led us out to the Klondike Elementary School, home of the Fighting Nuggets. Care to venture a guess about the school colors?

The ACS at Purdue and the Purdue chapter of Iota Sigma Pi took on this project. Klondike is a great school and we saw about 60 really sharp third graders. Kurt Keyes, Gianna Starck and Kelly Hutchinson did a marvelous job of making salt dough with all these kids. The synthesis kind of got away from one of the groups,

which had to repeatedly retitrate the water and flour to get the right consistency. This eventually resulted in a rather larger ball of dough. Klondike also has a nice little garden where there are memorials to a couple of former teachers. They also have a couple of goats in the garden as well. I doubt there is symbolism.



All of West Lafayette is celebrating NCW, and I have to congratulate the Purdue department on its public outreach. Notice the day spa that is advertising an NCW special. After a fast tour of the Purdue department by Mildred Rodriguez, we headed toward Chicago. Lots of guy discussion: cars; sports; occasionally cars; sometimes a little sports. You know.

Speaking of cars, we're in a Ford Explorer, following on our Chevy Equinox, we continue our celebration of National SUV Week. We sit about 15 feet above the road, in full command of all we survey. And it has a really good turning radius too.

On the way, we stopped in my home town of Crown Point, Indiana. I wanted to show Sal around a little, but at the same time see I wanted to check the development progress of our old farm.

Regular readers in this space will remember that last year at this time we had sold the property and 50-year contents of my parents house. I told you then how strange it was to see it empty, and in the rear view mirror. Some work has been done to prepare the area for development; the house is still standing, but the inside has been stripped of hardwoods and fixtures; windows have been broken out by accident or vandalism, and it generally looks similar, but somewhat tired and bruised.

I didn't feel as badly about it as I thought I would. It was almost like viewing a beloved relative at a wake. You know the identity of the body there, but stripped of a soul, that's not the person you remember. I remember Christmas after dinner, noisy with children and loud with relatives conversation; the smell of my mother's baking;

breezy summer evenings on the porch. And I realized that stripped of its soul, it's not the house I remember. Amazingly, I felt nearly nothing. It just was.

So we headed toward Chicago in our eighteen-minus-fourteen wheeler. Somewhere at the farm I managed to get a stick jammed in the undercarriage, and we had to turn the radio up so we couldn't hear it scraping the ground. We got to Chicago, and the stick is still making that noise.

We're staying at the Hotel Allegro downtown because that's where our first appointments are. This is a new old boutique type hotel; kind of hip, kind of homey. Fireplaces and alternative music in the check-in area. I'm not sure I fit here unless, remembering Huey Lewis, it's hip to be square. We had dinner in the bar and watched the game. At 8:30 there was room at the bar; at 11, it was packed with people about the age of 30. This is not my tribe.

What's in the player: Sal's Salsa Sampler. Sal brought along a CD of music with a strong Latin beat—some Shakira, some old Marc Anthony, some Enrique Iglesias some Santana. Not too surprising from Sal, the drummer.

It's also comforting to be in Chicago, a great city. Tomorrow is Walter Payton High.

Day 7: The “Sweetness” of Chicago October 29, 2006
October 27, 2006
South Bend, Indiana
11 PM



The rain stopped overnight in Chicago, which allowed me to get out and forage for breakfast. Aided by the Web, I found a McDonalds three blocks down from the Allegro, still in the Theatre District. We're coming to the end now, and we're going to have to bear down on the Monopoly thing.

Unfortunately, there were no bears to be seen this morning, as we have now filled the sheet with everything but winners. I was leaving the restaurant, with dejected mind and aching heart, sipping

my Diet Coke, when a city worker approached me and said, “Can I have your stickers? I only need one railroad for the \$5,000,000.” I said, “Ma’am, that makes you, me and about a million other people.” I know she feels my pain.



The only thing to do was find a Starbucks and apply coffee to the injured area. That turned out to be difficult, and frankly with the pressure of the Monopoly thing, I was a little miffed. I think no one should have to walk more than 15 feet to find a Starbucks and a McDonalds. I did find a Dunkin' Donuts, which was fortunate—it's my road coffee “Plan B.” Now we're ready.

Sal and I jumped a cab and headed north. Our first appointment was at 8 at Walter

Payton College Prep. This is a new, marvelous selective school of high performing

students, located in downtown Chicago, that specializes in math, science and languages. It was named as a memorial to the late Chicago Bears' running back whose own nickname of "Sweetness" was both a professional and personal description. We quickly found the school office and Principal Ellen Estrada and teacher Maggie Folk. They asked us if we needed any time to "set up" which we found unusual since we were expecting simply to have a dialogue with the first and second period classes.

Many people have recurring nightmares such as discovering you have a final exam in a course you don't remember registering for. When you have them, it means you're under stress and you're worried that you're not performing well. My particular performance nightmare is: it's opening night of a play, I'm offstage but apparently the lead, the place is packed and the stage manager loudly whispers to me, "What do you mean you never got a script? Get out there, you're on!" If I'm particularly stressed, in the dream I'm also naked.

Maggie and Ellen explained that they had rearranged all the classes to give us a two-hour block in the auditorium with all the chemistry classes. They thought we were bringing a major demonstration and hands-on show. It is now 7:55. Class begins at 8. I can hear the stage manager whispering. I checked to be sure I was dressed.

There was not much we could do. I hadn't even brought my computer that would have let me give a prepared seminar along with the dialogue. We had no props, no materials, just the prospect of two straight hours of stand-up. This is what dead in the water feels like, and it felt awful. So, they unwound the class rearrangement and I simply spoke to about three classes for one class period. Even that was a little difficult because the orchestra was practicing in the room behind me and I could barely hear myself think. It pretty much worked out in the end, but I hated that we had disappointed them even though it was an honest misunderstanding.

So we headed back to the hotel. Sal went back to DC and Marisa Burgener came on board. At this point we are without a canonical TOT, but with a new HOTTIE who has some pretty fair TOT qualifications. Marisa performed in, and later staffed "Up With People," a dynamic musical review featuring young adults. She is pleasant and energetic and is stepping in to anchor the week. She knows the road and the pace of the XFT and is largely not daunted. She is even a certified spotlight operator if we happen to need one. (See previous postings for acronym glossary)

Our second appointment was cancelled and I had a tasty lunch that yielded NO winners. Judith and LaTrease warned me that McDonald's is not Marisa's restaurant of choice, so she provisioned herself for the two days with a supply of organic flaxseed-green tea-vitamin-blasted-God-knows-what bars. I looked closely the "Cool Mint-Chocolate flavor. Chocolate is ingredient number I couldn't find any mint or for that matter any coolant. The warning label says it contains "SOY AND SEEDS, MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF DAIRY, PEANUTS OR OTHER NUTS. WE SOURCE INGREDIENTS THAT DO NOT CONTAIN WHEAT, DAIRY OR GMOs." I can't tell what holds it together, but it looks like a cowpie. The company slogan is "Simply delicious."



at
32.

I'm still on for the grilled chicken sandwich, thanks. I do feel a bit guilty, though, that I'm not sharing in the pressed leaves and twigs experience.

So, we were on our way to South Bend for the Midwest Association of Chemistry Teachers at Liberal Arts Colleges—mercifully abbreviated MACTLAC—conference. To get there we had to fight our way through construction on the Tri-State Tollway. The Tri-State is only under construction in years containing a July, and unfortunately we caught a spate of construction. Well, it's only an hour out of your life, lighten up.

What's in the Player: No NCW trip is complete without John Mayer's album "Room for Squares." It's the only CD I know of with a periodic table on it. It's there because when John was a high school student with big musical dreams, his chemistry teacher was the only one to understand what he was trying to do in music. Another example of a perceptive chemist. Good music, good lyrics, good chemistry, great for driving.

Marisa brought some excellent tunes: uncommon, but directly experienced. She heard the group Almost Recess at a concert that took place in a park across from her house. It's good a capella music, covering some songs even I knew on their album "Full Speed Ahead" including "King of Wishful Thinking" originally by Go West and "This Everyday Love" by Rascal Flatts. There are also albums by friends of hers from her show touring days, such as Yawo—great African rhythms.

Finally we break free from the Tri-State and onto the Indiana Toll Road. One fast stop along the way for a soda, and even Marisa had one. No, we didn't win yet. Why do you ask?



Phil Bays and Chris Dunlap, MACTLAC co-organizers met us at St. Mary's, and we had dinner with about 90 chemistry professors from around the Midwest. I spoke after dinner, but before chocolate fondue and beer. They listened politely to the Chemistry Enterprise 2015 seminar while anticipating dessert and a

refreshing beverage if the speaker would please, **JUST WRAP UP.**

Tomorrow we hit the finale, and the schedule is the tightest of any of the days. The drive back through Chicago will be critical. I certainly hope that Peterbilt we're squiring around is up to the task.

Day 8: Leaving on a Jet Plane. Or Are We? October 29, 2006

Saturday, October 28, 2006

Somewhere over the Great Plains on American Airlines

7 PM

The way I know it's time to go home from a long trip is when I hit the last pair of clean underwear, and that happened this morning. Fun as this has been, it will be great to get home to see what it looks like. Mary will probably have remodeled the house in the years I've been gone.

Judith picked the hotel for us for South Bend, and I'm sure she knew that the Hampton Inn was next door to...what, class? Did everybody get McDonalds?

Despite what I said about her all-natural compost bars yesterday, Marisa has really gotten into the spirit of the XFT and took one for the team this morning, eating parts of an Egg McMuffin with no cheese. Unfortunately at breakfast this morning we were shut out again. I'm trying to maintain faith. Hang in, Bill! Refuse to lose! Yeah, I know. Sounds a bit hollow to me too.

Today's schedule has been a challenge from the very beginning. Originally, we were leaving from South Bend to Minneapolis-St.Paul, but we decided to add a stop at the Chicago Section's event on Saturday morning, then fly out from O'Hare instead.

Great plan...until a huge fire in downtown Chicago closed off the entire area where the event was to be held for four days. It was too late to move it, and nothing could be done, so it was cancelled earlier this week. I'm really sorry we missed it.



Instead, we decided to make a stop at the Science Spooktacular in Elkhart, which is about 15 miles further away from Chicago than South Bend. This put us under time pressure with a 12 noon flight. We were there right at 9, did a fly-by and hit the road. It was windy today, and piloting the Explorer was like driving a billboard. It fought me the whole way.

We drove safely, but there was no grass growing under the Queen Mary. Along the way, I saw a makeshift sign in a corn field: "Leprechaun Hunt, October 6." It made

me wonder: if you actually shot one, could you eat it? And if so, are they tough to clean? I thought it odd to be having a Leprechaun Hunt that close to Notre Dame. Probably a USC alum. And if I happened to be the Notre Dame mascot, I might make myself scarce that night.



What's in the player: We changed the rules this morning and sampled three or four cuts of various things. The Best of Strawberry Alarm Clock, psychedelic music of 1967 and 1968; Love Riot's "Killing Time;" "Birthday," by the Association—once again from 1967—containing a couple of hits and a few really interesting songs and harmonies; some new songs

from Jenny Bruce; the Carole King "Living Room Tour", an acoustic retrospective recorded last year and "The Who Sell Out" a strange 1967 album—is there a theme here?—that contains "I Can See for Miles" and some licks that would eventually reappear on "Tommy" which was recorded the next year.

We had just barely managed to fill the Explorer's back seat with trash as we pulled into O'Hare...only to discover that United had cancelled our flight, and they had rescheduled us on one that would have had us missing the event in St. Paul. We negotiated our way onto an American flight just an hour later, and went to security.

Remember the dreaded SSSSS on an airline ticket we discussed last Sunday? Marisa caught one of those in Chicago and got full scrutiny. Tear apart the luggage, x-rays, wands, ion mobility spectroscopy on a computer wipe sample, pat down...they didn't bring out the dogs for a full sniff search, but that's only because the dogs were on break having a smoke. At about this point I'm remembering that she told me on Friday that she'd been having bad travel luck lately, and with the number of events and flights cancelled the last two days, I'm starting to believe her.



Now it was lunch time, and while there is a McDonalds in Terminal 3, I saw the look on Marisa's face and gave her a break. We both enjoyed the salad at Chili's as a refreshing change. If the \$5 Million is won at O'Hare, I'll just have to shoot myself.

The only problem was: this later flight in ate up our time in MSP and put us right up against her outbound flight—we would have about 15 minutes at the event, then back to the airport. When we landed, we were prepared to run, but checked the departure



board. Marisa's flight out was delayed and we would thus have some time at the event at Concordia University. Finally a glitch that worked our way.

And what an event it was. Ten universities developed ten displays summarizing chemistry in the ten decades of the Minnesota section. They dressed in period costumes and were quite versed on the science. There were about ten

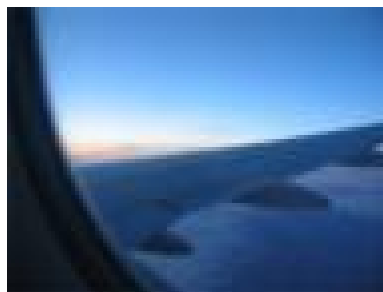
companies exhibiting, and lots of hands on activities for kids. Marilyn Duerst, who was the general chair, did a great job.

Concordia is an interesting place. While it has 1000 traditional students, it currently has only a chemistry minor, one chemistry professor—Dave Blackburn—and only one person majoring in chemistry. Nathan Burrows is a senior who augmented his Concordia coursework with transfer credits. He has been President, heart and soul of the Science Club, and will go to grad school next year.

Nathan introduced me and I presented a Salutes to Excellence plaque to Section Chair Joanne Pfeiffer of Century College in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Section.

By that time, we needed to move on and Dave whisked us back to the airport. I said goodbye to Dave and Marisa (who was going to a different terminal). Just like that, the Extreme Farewell Tour was over. Sitting on the airplane now, I can exhale and reflect.

Some closing remarks are yet to come.



Epi-blog October 31, 2006

Sunday, October 29, 2006

The comfort of my own home

7 PM

What a great week we had. Thank heaven I wrote the blog—I'd probably forget most of it in the whirlwind.

Was there a best day? One kind of stands out for me—in Oglesby, Illinois. The look on LaTrease's face when a Sloppy Joe showed up as a "Bar-B-Que" and discovering that the Principal of Holy Family Elementary liked stale Peeps as much as I do.

I guess I forgot to mention this. Peeps are these marshmallow candies that are customized for every holiday. If you let them sit out in the air (or for that matter, condition them in a microwave) they get stale and chewy. This is my favorite way to enjoy the subtle taste and texture of Peeps. I let them sit for about a year before eating them. Mary finds old boxes and asks if they've reached their peak of flavor yet.



Anyway, the Carus Company demonstrators used one to show the effects of vacuum by making a marshmallow Peeps ghost expand to three times its size. Discussing this beforehand, I discovered that the Principal, Jyll Jasiak, also liked stale Peeps. It was like finding a lost sister.

So now I'm back home. I'm playing the online McDonalds Monopoly game now, since we couldn't easily access it on the road. It involves one roll of the dice on a Monopoly board for each game piece you have. I still hope to hit something for Project SEED, but I think the dice are rigged. I've hit Electric Company 15 times. And while I like McDonald's, I have to tell you, it sure was nice to have a Whataburger chicken sandwich with jalapenos today.

Over the course of the week I gave away most of the tour t-shirts, but I kept one, and I will treasure it. I can start working on the list of people who should get thank you notes—and it's huge—but in this space I need to thank my co-conspirators in the Office of Community Activities: Judith, Dennis, LaTrease, Sal and Marisa who took a crazy idea and not only made it real, but made it run like clockwork by dint of huge

effort while making it look easy. And the Local Section ACS activists who arranged for me to participate in their activities. And back at ACS Intergalactic Headquarters in DC, Frank Walworth, my long-suffering assistant, who kept me from being two places at once.

As my term comes to an end, I have a greater recognition of the potential and the reality of our assets: our members, our staff, and the transforming power of chemistry itself. There will be more National Chemistry Weeks. There will be more Presidents who will do a better job of energizing volunteers and educating the public. And there will be more benefits to the world as a result of those who practice chemistry. But there will never be anyone who had more fun than I did.

Let's take this ride together again some time. Happy National Chemistry Week!

Finale: Cleaning up Monopoly and a Bright Red Shirt

Sunday, November 5, 2006

The comfort of my own home

Dallas, Texas

Now that everyone has had a chance to relax a little, including me, it's time to clean up a couple of last little bits of action from the Extreme Farewell Tour.

First of all, Monopoly. I took all of our lovingly collected game pieces and played the online game. It's really pretty spiffy—lots of action and graphics. The way it's played, each game piece has a code number which entitles you to one roll of the dice. Collect all of a group of properties and you have a chance to win prizes. Land on Community Chest or Chance and you could win a ringtone or game for your phone.

So I played. Took me six days because you can only spin ten times a day. We got three railroads and two of a number of sets of properties, but no scores. Well, that's not quite true. I think I hit Community Chest about eight times, and am the proud winner of eight ringtones. I'm a little underwhelmed since I always keep my Blackberry on "stun" and don't use a ringtone. Extra ringtones for me are about as useful as a windshield ice scraper in Saudi Arabia. Oh. And we have a couple of free breakfast sandwiches. After last week cereal started to look good again. I'm going to have to save the freebies for a while.

But here's the thing. I'm a little nonplussed because I don't think the dice are honest. In ten trips around the board I hit Electric Company eight times. So anyway, unless Project SEED has a big use for ringtones or a sausage biscuit, Monopoly shut us out AGAIN this year. Man.

But that's not to say there were no winners on the tour. How 'bout them Cardinals, huh? Now, I'm not sure what to make of this, but when we were in St. Louis, the Cardinals won. The day we were in Detroit, the Tigers won. The Detroit section gave me a spiffy replica jersey, which you saw in the blog posting for that day.

Now, the St. Louis Section was miffed that I appeared in public in the Tigers jersey, and immediately bought a Cardinals shirt and sent it to me. It apparently followed me to hotels around the midwest, eventually catching up with me in Dallas. it was embedded in three express mail envelopes by the time it got here.



So here's my theory. The St. Louis fans should probably be glad I DIDN'T get the shirt. The Carroll effect lasted in Detroit for exactly one game, then the Tigers went down the hopper. Heaven only knows what would have happened if I'd worn the St. Louis shirt. Is it possible for BOTH teams to lose a World Series?

But, speaking as a lifelong Cubs fan, and looking forward to next year, here is a picture of me in the Cardinal shirt. I've taken it off now in the hopes that it will impact next year's National League Central race.

So that pretty well closes out a wonderful trip. Thanks again to everyone in St. Louis, Detroit, Oglesby, Peru, Evansville, Cleveland, Greencastle, West Lafayette, Chicago, South Bend and St. Paul. It was a hoot!