

The First Leg of a Marketing Journey ***- Blue Tooth Tour in SF, LA, and Phoenix***

By Jo Diaz

Or... The Hysterical Facts about life's unscripted moments...

Pre San Francisco - As we began to think about six people living in a 32-foot motor home for 13 days, we realized that it would be much better if we arranged for hotel accommodations along the way for Jim and Helen Concannon. As we arrived in each city at night, they would off-load from the "Chalet," which became affectionately dubbed the "Shallot." As anticipation grew about being in the Chalet, I realized that this was going to be an adventure similar to the "Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test" with Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters; except this time, the drugs of choice were going to be Maalox, Midol, and Motrin. And, our Merry Pranksters were going to be Jim and Helen Concannon, Dan Teldeschi (F. Teldeschi Vineyards, who loved the motor home idea so much that Jim and Helen decided to share their RV with Dan), Russ Livingston (Concannon Vineyard's brand manager at the time, and our RV driver, whose lifelong dream was to drive an RV cross-country), along with Jo Diaz and Lyla Diaz from PS I Love You (as the support team).

Many people in every city we visited are still talking about this unique adventure.

San Francisco - With many local support people, the first event in the Carnelian Room was as easy as it could possibly be. Each vintner had been pre-told, "Your table is your temple. Put your best foot forward, and consider every aspect of your presence as an opportunity to showcase who you are and what you're all about." And, everyone did. We were fresh and bright and looking forward to our big adventure on the road.

Livermore - As we said good-bye to the entire Concannon Family, RV driver Russ Livingston pulled away from the winery. As we headed out of the driveway, we all realized our lives were in Russ's hands.

He pulled out a much worn, perfectly-shaped-to-his-head cowboy hat, slipped Willie Nelson's "On the Road Again" into the CD player, and we were off, chuckling all the way to I-5. Lyla and Jo tried to play Scrabble. An immediate motion sickness began, the Scrabble game was put away... for the rest of the adventure. Dan Teldeschi wore his Nascar jacket...

HISTORICAL Los Angeles:

Our L.A. tasting was at Bliss Restaurant and Lounge on La Cienega Boulevard. It was well attended by the trade and media. Also, we did a live radio broadcast on Cable Radio Network. Each vintner was given his or her 15 minutes of fame. Host Mike Horn did an exceptional job of tasting each Petite Sirah, then talking about its qualities. Horn is a wine aficionado who makes himself readily available to the wine world, broadcasting worldwide with an audience that numbers in the millions. This was a terrific opportunity to educate the public about what Petite Sirah is... the Son of Syrah and Peloursin (the emphasis is on the second syllable "lour"). Meridith May of Patterson's Beverage Journal did a cover story on the Blue Tooth Tour in the February issue, then came to the event, took lots of pictures and interviewed each vintner. This story has become a feature in their March issue.

HYSTERICAL Los Angeles:

We arrived in L.A. on Sunday, so we could spend Monday preparing for the tasting. That night, with the Concannons and Dan neatly tucked into their hotel, Russ asked the hotel manager where we could park the RV. He suggested the employee parking lot across the street. It was then that we realized we were going to be camping out on a major artery in LA. We got settled into a distant corner of the huge lot, and Russ turned Lyla and me onto an amazing thing... a good portion of the left hand side of the motor home could slide out, giving us another two feet of floor space. Lyla's bed pulled out (like a Futon), and my bed was



like a Fog City Diner nightmare. As we grappled with the leg of the table, in order to collapse it, allowing the bed to settle on the rims of each seat creating a bridge effect, the leg pulled right off to all of our amazement. (This would become an issue each time the bed had to be made; and, I'd eventually buy a screwdriver and screws and fix it, once and for all.)

HISTORICAL Phoenix:

The Phoenix Zoo was our next stop. It was beautiful. Upon entering the zoo, our host Debbie Beggs escorted us to a tent encampment especially created for events like ours. The food pairing table was extravagant with perfectly matched fare for Petite Sirah: exotic cheeses, stuffed mushroom caps, and chocolate covered strawberries. Vintners who followed us to Phoenix were able to take advantage of a lovely desert setting. The night phoenixed when we noticed a mountain top off in the distance. The first to arrive was a big horn ram. He majestically stood there as our guests continued to sample their wine and watch breathlessly... Then, he disappeared. Debbie took several of us in a safari rig to visit their big cats. Debbie wanted us to see them before dusk would take away our ability to enjoy the majesty of these massive creatures. When we returned, on the adjacent mountain top (which wasn't part of the zoo) the big horn had reappeared with his mate. Everyone continued to taste, and watch the amazing backdrop. One-by-one, another sheep arrived. By the end of the tasting, just before dark had settled in, the mountain top had at least seven wild sheep holding court. Writer Garry Goldberg, who traveled from Tucson to attend our Blue Tooth Tour, was sorry that he hadn't brought his family. Garry knew they would have enjoyed taking in all that the BTT, Zoo, and adjacent mountain had to offer.

HYSTERICAL Phoenix:

After escorting the off-the-bus crew to their hotel, Cowboy (aka. Russ, we were now making up "handles" for each other), took us to an RV park. This was a throwback in time for me... right back to the days of "Easy Rider." We were simultaneously in town with a Harley Davidson event, and we happened upon "where are they now." Walking to the RV office/store, I was reminded of the days when I'd excitedly jump on the back of my brother's friend's hog. "Quinballs" and I would ride off into the distance, leaning with the bike as we rounded each curve. Gone were the days of "wind in your face and bugs in your beard." I only reflected for a moment, then let it go. I had taken a fork in the road that was offered to me, and the days of camping in a tent in Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island had given way to becoming a wine industry diva. I hadn't

spent much time with my brother and his friend; a few adventures, just enough to understand the culture... and here it was again, and I was still on the fringe in the Arizona desert. Now, Cowboy and Chickee (Russ's handle for me) were grappling in the dark with how to off-load what we didn't need anymore, swapping it for what we did need... clean water. As the battery in my video camera died (our new-fangled flashlight), we crashed for the night.

Santa Fe, Dallas, and Houston will be tomorrow...

