

The Second Leg of a Marketing Journey ~ BTT in Charlotte, Atlanta, Orlando, and Miami

Jo Diaz

CHARLOTTE HISTORICAL:

The Ballantyne Resort venue was an example of true Southern Hospitality: delicious food, delightful guests, delectable Petite Sirah. One guest, Ms. Cat Williams confided, "This is the best food ever at a wine tasting." (It pays to pair exact foods with exact wines.) For this stop, we had already connected with Angelus Rickenbaker of the Carolina Wine Club, a local chapter of the American Wine Society. They had heard of our tour and wanted to know if they could help, and if their wine club members could attend. Having consumers attend always adds an element of excitement, as their enthusiasm is infectious and energizes the party. So, this became our busiest event so far. Something that needs explaining, too, is how in each city, members of the trade had heavy impact. Distributor sales managers came out in droves. For some of them, this was their first definitive explanation of what Petite Sirah is. Between Syrah, Shiraz, and Petite Sirah, there still exists much confusion. Anyone who attended the Blue Tooth Tour will never be confused again. Son of Syrah and Peloursin, Petite Sirah has its own separate, noble identity.

CHARLOTTE HYSTERICAL:

Leaving Baltimore, as we began to cruise down I-95, miraculously, "Willie" reappeared... "On the Road Again..." Our faces lit as we heard our familiar theme song, and we began to sing with an unmistakable passion... Ah, the glee of being "on the road, again." We passed by a restaurant that was called Dodo. Russ exclaimed, "I'm not eating anywhere where doo-doo's in the name." Chuckling all the way down the highway, we reached the Ballantyne Resort, which

is an awesome location. This was the last time we were staying in a hotel, versus being "in the Chalet," overnight. In North Carolina, Russ finally filled the motor home with water (Yes!), and we were back in motor home business! Not a moment too soon, either. The absence of Chalet living was beginning to wear on me... I needed a good shot of "hysterical" to recharge my batteries. This was Melanie Diaz's last venue, as she was flying back to California and her office. She never experienced the pajama parties, and her fluffy pink slippers would have been a natural addition to our nightly romping, but her part of the adventure was over.

ATLANTA HISTORICAL:

Atlanta - Land of ... "If ya can't fight 'em, join 'em..." We knew we were coming into town on a day when the Atlanta High Museum holds its Annual Vintners Reception and Auction. Trying to compete with 12 years of a successful event would have been utter failure; so, we asked to join the celebration. Graciously (we were still enjoying the same Southern hospitality we experienced in Charlotte), the event coordinator Woodie Wisebram gave us two connecting tables, and a very prominent position in the tents. It was here that vintners each told his or her individual Petite Sirah story. Over-and-over again, I heard vintners say, "All we're pouring is Petite Sirah. We're on a road trip - the Blue Tooth Tour - and we're telling everyone what Petite Sirah is... the Son of Syrah and Peloursin." The Atlanta High Museum has a spectacular parade at the end of the two hour pouring. It circumnavigates the main tent a couple of times, then heads into the second tent, ushering everyone into the silent and live auction areas. This is after the initial



tastings of many, many vintners' wines. Proceeds benefit the Atlanta High Museum, and is a positive testimonial statement for how a community rallies in a self-sustaining way to keep the arts alive.

ATLANTA HYSTERICAL:

After the event... "You feel like you're trailer trash when..." My husband Jose replaced Melanie. Russ, Jose, and I delivered the crew that wouldn't be sleeping in the motor home to their hotel, and drove next door to a mall. We brought out all supplies needed to finish our journey. Russ worked out at the gym. Jose and I visited a deli for drippingly juicy pastrami sandwich fixed in an East Coast way. Decent pastrami sandwiches never made it over the Rockies. California, land of lean, under supplied pastrami sandwiches, just doesn't cut it. A knock.... "Maam, this isn't an RV park? Ya gotta move!" I didn't notice the gun he was toting, but Jose did. I said, "Our friend's having dinner and will be right back. Since he's our driver, we need a bit longer." He said, "Okay, but ya gotta go!" Well, not sure where the hospitality went, but we knew that we weren't welcome here, even though we used the gym, the tanning salon, the deli, the grocery store, and Cost Plus. Reality check... The next morning, visiting the same deli to have "on-the-road" pastrami sandwiches (ya gotta get 'em while ya can), we were approached by other motor home folks who wanted to know if we needed anything. Our dreams of Southern hospitality were once again restored!

ORLANDO HISTORICAL:

Orlando - The Orlando Museum of Art is set in a lush, tropical location. Water, so missing on the West Coast is matter-of-fact on the East Coast; and, probably what those of us who are transplants miss the most (besides our loved ones). Dino Roussia of DinoVino.com told us that he'll help with Petite Sirah, since he's a wine and spirits educator. Many National Distributing Company found their way to the Museum, along with The Vineyard folks... People came from Tampa, Miramar, Deerfield Beach, and Boca Raton, making it seem like a heavily attended event. Actually, as diverse as this event was for bringing everyone from many localities, this was our lowest attendance event. However, those who did attend were able to

glean maximum benefits that the Blue Tooth Tour had to offer.

ORLANDO HYSTERICAL:

We had all of Sunday to drive to Orlando. Russ was thrilled, because we were finally going to find an RV park, and experience the glory once more (taking us back to Phoenix's desert scene). Well, not really. By the time we reached Orlando, we needed to find an RV park just to off-load water. Somehow, we had managed to fill up every tank. This was where Jim Concannon got to learn about grey water, black water, connecting pipes and what they do, where it all goes, where it all comes from. Russ couldn't restrain himself, and wanted to re-live his prior experience with a cigar hanging out of his mouth, but this time there were too many chiefs wanting to help, and no time for a smoke. I took a walk, looking at all the rigs and the culture that exists in an RV park. From museums and zoos, to lush city reception rooms, to off-loading water. We were truly doing and seeing it all.

MIAMI HISTORICAL:

Miami - The perfect way to end our journey, on a Yacht! The Blue Tooth Tour had created a Blue Tooth happenstance, and Miami delivered the final hoorah! We invited members of the media all along the way. The 2004 Blue Tooth Tour ended on a really high note when "The Wine News" limo pulled dockside. Always willing to print creative, offbeat stories, in 1995 The Wine News published a story that I had been writing about winery cats (that's "cats" not "cabs"). I queried them about submitting an image of a cat leaning against a wine barrel for their last page called "Grapescapes." They not only wanted the images, but they also wanted the story. Editor Kathy Ferguson-Sinnes dubbed it "Cat O'Wine Tales." This story was coupled with another article about sustainable agriculture, which cats are also part of. (Sidebar: Wineries love cats. They keep the rodent population down. If cats don't do it, rattlesnakes will. Pick your pet!) Because this was Miami, we had a bit of a late start, but once rolling, it never seemed to stop. San Francisco Wine Exchange sales manager (at the time) Paul Moe (represents David Bruce and Foppiano) told me that Miami has so many vintners coming to town that it's become difficult to get anyone



out... We managed it in grand style. We learned a lot, and know what we can do in 2005 to make it better. The next one will be short and sweet. We be rolling down the Mississippi on a riverboat. For this final venue, being dockside along the intercoastal waterway, we knew that this was as good as it gets... a very special finale for the The 2004 Blue Tooth Tour...

MIAMI HYSTERICAL:

Miami - Our last joyride down the highway (from Orlando to Miami) was the one where we had obviously become the most familiar and ridiculously silly. As we rode down I-95, we were listening to "Drifting along like a tumblin' Tumbleweed." Banjo playin', slide guitar pickin'... it didn't take much to amuse us. I handed Jose a pair of spoons, and only God knows from where the talent emerged, but before our very eyes, he was playing the spoons. What made us really hysterical was that he was good! He finished with a spoon solo to his head... Dan and Jim traded the bed for frequent naps. The 2,000 mile journey had taken its toll. (I even broke down and slipped in an hour on the bed.) I have a wonderful lasting visual memory of Dan Teldeschi. He entered the bus and sang (for the second time, but it only vaguely registered the first time), "Here comes my 19th nervous breakdown." He headed to the bedroom, approach-ed the bed, jumped straight up into the air, and in one smooth motion, landed squarely in the middle of the mattress. He pulled up the covers, and was gone! It hit me. "Alice In Wonderland,"... The dormouse who came to tea and would pipe in occasionally with words of whimsy... our Dan! Miami's 81 degrees took us full circle. The palms swaying in the breeze melted away our memories of Boston being a brutal 18 degrees. The yacht melted away the weariness in our muscles and bones. We had arrived at the end of this journey, leaving us dreaming of the Mississippi River and what 2005 would hold for Blue Tooth Tourers.

