

Ventura, California – AGM

By Shirley Graham Fraser

Tuesday, October 7th

Every trip starts with a song, so why not this one??  “California, Here I Come!”

 Since I decided to arrive a day early, I had to leave the house at 7:00, get to the ‘Park & Fly’ and then find my way to the Air Canada check-in. It all went smoothly and I flew ‘Executive Class’, because at my age, I think I’m worth it! There was a nice young man in the next seat and I discovered that he was from a city in which I had lived for nine years. We knew some of the same people and he couldn’t have been more helpful.

When we arrived at LAX, he collected my bags and took me to the area where I was supposed to pick up the shuttle bus to Ventura. I had wanted to rent a car, but my daughter talked me out of it, because of the traffic around L.A., so I reserved a seat on a shuttle bus. The shuttle bus had been booked for 5:30, but because our plane arrived early, I hoped they would take me on the 3:15 bus. I waited on the little island, surrounded by buses spewing fumes, and I had my little picture of the bus, in my hot little hand, so that I could identify it, when it arrived.

I stood there, for what seemed forever, inhaling fumes, and I hadn’t seen one bus that looked like my picture. When I had been there for 45 minutes, I was beginning to despair of ever catching a bus to Ventura. Suddenly, a man rushed up to me and asked, “Are you waiting for a shuttle to Ventura?” I replied, “Yes, but it looks like this picture.” He then explained that was *his* bus, but it had broken down and they were picking people up in a big van, with overflow going by Town Car. We had a few stops and I moved seats several times to accommodate new passengers. Finally, the second driver left us and I was moved to the front seat.

When we got out on the highway and I watched the traffic, I thought *I could have done this; this traffic is the same as the traffic in Toronto when I drive to work*. The driver decided to leave the congestion and take the Pacific Highway, which was a wonderful treat for the passengers, seeing the Pacific on our left and the hills on our right, not to leave out Malibu, all the fruit farms, and the interesting things the driver told us along the way.

I then had to take a taxi from the hotel that housed the shuttle bus service, so I arrived at Crown Plaza around 7.00 p.m. This had been a long day of going from one place to another, and I needed to eat something. The food was delicious and the hotel provided a complimentary glass of wine (which I needed, by this time). After dinner, it was up to the room to unpack the suitcases. I slept well that night.

Wednesday, October 8th

This is registration day, so I was up early for breakfast (complimentary, again). I had to take some pictures of the view! I had no idea that Ventura Beach is a surfer's heaven and they are out at the crack of dawn.



Early morning view of the surfers taken from the Crown Plaza Hotel

I had left my cane at home, and I knew, with a lot of walking, I was going to need it, so I decided, after breakfast, that I would look for a Mall and a drug store. The girl on the desk gave me a map and told me that I could walk there. After three blocks, I stopped in at the Visitor's Centre and the woman said, "Walk to the Mall? I don't think so!" She then directed me to a bus stop to catch a bus, but no one had told her that the bus route had been changed, because of road construction. Now I had *more* walking to the *new* bus stop.

I finally arrived at the Mall and to my dismay; it did not house a drugstore. I bought some gifts for my family and took a cab back to the hotel. When I entered the hotel, someone shouted, "Shirley!" it was Jim Nethery and his wife, Joyce. Others were at the bar, Don and Nancy Graham, and Linda and Scott Graham. I joined them after taking my parcels to my room and by this time, Alma and Graham Chestnut, Helen and Bill Eisenhower, Norris Graham, Cliff Fitzsimmons and his mother Kathleen had also arrived.



Registration Desk – Jim, Scott, Linda, Norris



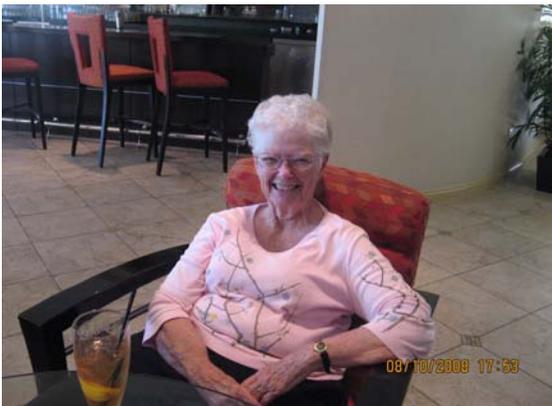
Jim Nethery & Scott Graham



Graham Chestnut & his wife, Alma



Don and Nancy Graham



Kathleen



Helen Eisenhower

Joyce and I shared a 'fish and chips' lunch and it was plenty! I find the portions of food far too much for me, no matter how hungry I am. People started arriving at the registration desk and congregating in the bar, greeting old friends, and meeting new ones.



Joyce Nethery

There was lots of chatting and laughing going on there.

Back in the room, I received calls from Nancy and Linda to join them for dinner at the Steak House across the courtyard from our hotel. I sat with Nellie and John Lowry, and for dessert, John ordered 'Bananas Foster', which was flambéed in front of the Grahams. It was delicious and I think every person in our group had a taste.

Thursday, October the 9th.

We had to be up early, as our Council Meeting started at 8:00 a.m. The meeting lasted all day, with a break for a boxed lunch, and we accomplished a great deal of business. Guy and Wayne made a presentation about Estes Park, Colorado, which will be the site of our AGM in 2009. (It was not by design, but I somehow failed to get a picture of Guy. Sorry, Guy))



Richard, Jim & Joyce



Norris Graham & Wayne Erickson



Joel & Barbara Warren



Larry Nichols and Norris Graham



Bill Graham



Michele Graham & Cliff Fitzsimmons



Don Graham & Scott Graham



Norris in trouble with the ladies
Kathleen & Helen

After the meeting, we had some drinks in Don and Nancy's room and then met in the lobby to go to an Irish Pub for dinner. Norris, Linda & Scott, Nancy & Don and I, all walked the few blocks to this place they had 'scoped out' earlier that day. I had Chicken Curry, which is a favourite of mine. The time change was starting to take its toll, and I could hardly keep my eyes open.



Every time I took a picture, I became more curious about Ventura. Most of the conversations I heard were in Spanish, English, and Eastern European, so I guess I'll go the internet and see what I can find out about this place.

The pool, at the hotel.



View to the left of the hotel



View to the right of the hotel

According to Wikipedia, in 1782, this place was a mission, and named after a 13th century Franciscan saint, San Buenaventura. It was incorporated as the city of San Buenaventura in 1866 and is commonly called 'Ventura'. Settlers came after the civil war and purchased land from the Mexicans, and some came as squatters. Easterners later purchased large tracts of land. Ventura is known to have the best surfing in Southern California. The surrounding areas are known for the growing of citrus fruit and raspberries. About 25 to 30% of the population is Spanish speaking. There is also a fishing harbour there. You can read more about Ventura on a variety of websites.



Little creature in the rocks on the beach.

If you look closely, you will see the head and part of the tail of a little creature that apparently lives in the rocks, on the beach. It looked like a squirrel, but is really small, compared to our squirrels at home. Someone suggested it might be a chipmunk, but I know chipmunks, and it was bigger than a chipmunk, and did not have their distinctive markings. Guy Erickson and I went out to look at them and we decided that they were some species of squirrel. There were a lot of them in those rocks.

Friday, October 10th

We had to be up early again to catch the bus that would take us to the Ronald Reagan Library. When I heard that this library contained 'Air Force One', I couldn't believe it, until I saw it with my own eyes. This is the first Presidential Library I have seen, and I heard that each one is different, and unique to the person to whom it was dedicated.

What a wonderful place this is! Our guide's name was Ken, and as he gave us the 'Grand Tour', he asked lots of questions. Whoever answered correctly, received a package of Ronald Reagan's favourite "Jelly Belly Beans".



The staff outside the Library, awaiting the tours



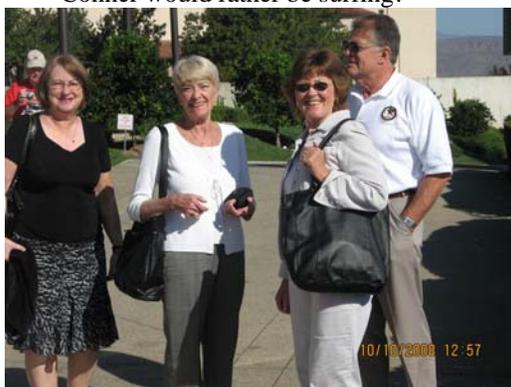
Ken, our guide in the Library



Conner would rather be surfing!



Michele, Shelby, Barbara and Leslie



Leslie, Shirley, Kate & Richard



view from the Library



Presidential Seal



Strategy Room



Air Force One



Painting of 'Air Force One'



Painting of 'U.S.S. Ronald Reagan'



Oval Office

As soon as we returned from the tour we had to rush to get ready for “A Scottish Evening”. This is the brainchild of John and Nellie Lowry and has been held each year, since John & Nellie started the Ventura Games in 2003. This has been a ‘sold out’ event each year and the attendance has also climbed each year. 380 people enjoyed the “homey” meal of baked ham, potatoes, vegetables, and rice. For dessert, Scottish shortbread and coffee. There were five tables of Grahams and friends in attendance. This was a very entertaining evening, as Alex Beaton started off the entertainment, dedicated a

song to Helen Eisenhower and honoured the Grahams by leading us in the song, ‘Bonnie Dundee’. Our own Bill Graham was the Master of Ceremonies and introduced the next act, which was the ‘Browne Sisters. John and Nellie, in their conception of this event, decided to add a fashion show of clothing that had to be ‘Scottish’. All enjoyed this, as the models wore, either their own creations, or creations that were available for sale by the vendors at the games. Linda Graham Gould organized this fashion show. Kudos to Nellie, John, Linda Graham Gould and any others who helped to make this evening a highlight of our AGM.

Unfortunately, I do not have any pictures of this event.

Saturday, October 11th



The first day of the games had arrived and we walked down this Oceanside walkway to the Fairgrounds. The breeze off the ocean was cool, so we were bundled up for the walk. The Ventura Seaside Games were started by John and Nellie Lowry 6 years ago, so this was their 6th festival. Since it is non-profit, John and Nellie run the festival each year, then on the weekend of the games, they have hundreds of volunteers, who each run their own section of the festival. In the first year,

(2003), they had 8,000 people show up for the weekend, and last year, they had 23,000 people attend. Congratulations, John and Nellie for all your successes in making your dreams come true. I can see why the location makes this event such a comfortable one to attend. Sunshine, cool breezes and paved roads, for the most part. Heavy events were held on fields that were appropriate for the events.



This was a well-organized event, with something entertaining for everyone. The vendors were situated in large Quonset huts, which protected their wares. Barbara Erickson and I wandered through and around all the stalls looking for ideas for the Colorado games. I found a walking stick, so that I had some help in walking, but it was too tall for me and I guess I’ll lose it to my 6’6” son, when I get home. Everyone congregated in the Graham

tent and we were provided with coffee and sweets, and at lunchtime, Linda Graham brought all the sandwiches she had ordered for us. One day of all this walking was taking its toll on my leg, so I went back to the hotel, mid-afternoon, to rest up for the AGM dinner.



Clan Graham Tent



I guess she's attended one too many games



Meeting people at the tent



"I couldn't believe my eyes"



At last! A picture of Guy!



Kathleen & Cliff

People were arriving, stopping and chatting and reacquainting themselves with other Grahams. The weather was perfect, until a wind blew up in the afternoon and played havoc with some of the tents. Ours did not fall down or rip apart. Every visitor, to the

tent, was welcomed warmly and invited to join us for coffee, that's the hospitality of the Grahams.



Evelyn



The Fitzsimmons



Kate, her uncle, Mike Graham & Cayley



Don Graham & Norris Graham



Bill explaining to a 'Maharg', how he is related

The Games continued on Sunday, and any entertainer you missed on the first day, you could catch the second day. There were performers playing all over the place, even in the Vendor's Quonset huts. There were food vendors, competitions for pipers and drummers, dancers, and heavy athletes events, as well as herding dogs' exhibitions. It's time to get back to the hotel and get ready for our AGM banquet.



The Head Table



The Youngest Attendee?



Rena & her family



“Are you talking to me?” Helen & Bill



Beth Gay Linda Graham



Larry & Frances



Richard opening his gift.



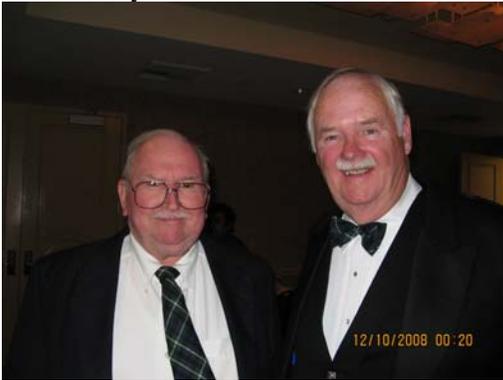
A salver was one of the gifts.



Larry Nichols- our new President



Norris starting the auction



Mike Graham and Donald Graham



Mary Erickson and Joyce



The Fitzsimmons



Norris



The "Jimmy Grahams"



The 'Jimmys' up to no good!



Telling a story



Recruiting new 'Jimmys'

After the dinner, the AGM started, and Larry Nichols was voted to be our new President of the Clan Graham Society. Richard received some parting gifts from the Society; a pewter salver, which was engraved with the Clan Graham Society's coat of arms, his name, title, and his years of service as President. The other present that was given to him was a purchase towards a belt buckle that is going to have his personal Coat of Arms on it. Another AGM finished and it was lots of fun. Bill Graham and Norris Graham, both of whom kept the audience on their toes, conducted the auction. The praise and thanks for this event need to go to Scott and Linda Graham, Jim and Joyce Nethery, and Bill Graham. I know, from experience, the long hours and work that it takes to plan such an event. You did a great job!! Bravo!!

Sunday, October 12th

Some people left today, and others returned to the Highland Games. I was on a mission to find a cane and I was successful. It was pretty quiet in the dining room that night and I'm sure, for those folks leaving in the morning, they had packing to complete.

Monday, October 13th

There were only a handful of Grahams left and I had breakfast with John & Nellie and Bill Graham's brother Scott. I wouldn't be flying out until Tuesday morning, where I would do my routine, in reverse order, to get back to Toronto.

The next AGM will be in Colorado.... I hope to see you there!!