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with Jim & Judy Schorner

December 1997

Judy had mentioned that she would like to see the Nutcracker Suite on Broadway some day. Generally she tells me this in December around Christmas time when there is no way that it could possibly be arranged. Last year I put a tickler in my tickler box dated September 1. When it came up, I asked her if she would like to go. She said yes and when we told our son, Rob, he said that he would like to join us and go to Times Square for the New Year's Eve celebration. Our daughter, Lisa, and her husband, Dave, were less sure because they had their new baby and Dave was new on the police force. They were unsure whether they could arrange his schedule as he had not earned vacation time yet. Nevertheless, it all came together and we flew into New York on Saturday, December 27, 1997.

We arrived after some air traffic delay in leaving Atlanta. Our plane was detained due to snow conditions in Newark. We were to meet Rob and Tricia whose plane was to arrive just 15 minutes before us but they had already left for the hotel. We took a bus for \$10 each that stopped about four blocks from the hotel. We walked over and were then directed to our room.

Our room is beautiful and large with a sitting area at the end of the long room. We set up Abbie's play pen under an attractive, artificial Ficus tree. We had the play pen so that when we kept Abbie, she had her own bed.

We waited until Lisa, Dave & Abbie arrived at 2:00 a.m. Their plane was also delayed. As they were all very tired, Rob took a quick look, his first, at his new niece.

We got up early so that we could eat and go to Radio City Music Hall. We had eggs and bacon at a pizza place and then returned to the hotel to pick up Rob & Trish. We took the subway to the theater to see the Christmas Spectacular Show with the Rockettes.

The show surpassed my expectations with colorful costumes, expert dancing and special effects that exceeded my level of creativity. I was amazed at how the stages rose and fell, moved forward and rearward. Even the curtain rose with artistic creativity. A special event was when Santa read a letter (received by E-mail) from a little girl who asked how Santa could be so many places at once. Santa replied that he had many helpers and then duplicated many times from the dropped screens. They danced and made synchronous patterns. Finally, there was a living nativity with three camels, sheep and donkeys. They told the Christmas story well and emphasized that this celebration was the real reason for Christmas.

We walked from there to the hotel to pick up Lisa, Dave and Abbie and then ate lunch at a convenient pizzeria as we continued south to the World Trade Center. The sun was shining brightly and though the weather was brisk it was a pleasant stroll. Inside the World Trade Center we stood in line to visit the observation deck at the 107th floor.

Upon arrival we were entertained by a simulated helicopter ride. The theater was hydraulically manipulated so

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that one felt the illusion of banked turns as you saw the sights of New York from the sky. There were self-guided tours via computers that gave explanations of the sights from each vantage point.

The pictures and captions on the inside walls told the history of New York, specifically the backgrounds of the famous people and the well-known neighborhoods of the city.

We took the subway back to Rockefeller Center and had dinner at Houlihan's before dropping Lisa and Dave for their view of the Christmas Spectacular. They went to a different show because our show was sold out when they confirmed that they could go.

Rob, Tricia, Judy, Abbie and I then went to see the big Christmas Tree at Rockefeller Center and to see the people skating below. Rob and Trish stayed out while Judy and I returned with Abbie to the hotel. I wanted to catch up on the sleep we missed the prior night. Judy bathed, fed and got Abbie ready for bed.

We got an early start and ate breakfast together at the nearby Diner on the Square. We then took the subway to the Battery park at the extreme south end of Manhattan to see the Statue of Liberty. Street buskers entertained us as we waited to board the ferry to Liberty Island. There was a two-hour wait to reach the museum so we stood in line. We all became very cold as the line did not move. Rather, groups of 10 or 20 were admitted through metal detectors while we waited. Dave was target for a mallard who had to go and provided some excitement on the otherwise dreary day.

I was disappointed that the computer log of the contributors to the renovation wasn't working. I had seen my Aunt Vi's name there last time and wanted to show off.

As there were further lines to go up to the crown, we did not try. We visited the museum, ate lunch, and proceeded home. We did not have time for Ellis Island as the Nutcracker started at 6:00 p.m. in Lincoln Center and we needed to stop at the hotel to don our festive attire.

We proceeded by subway to Lincoln Center while it rained cats and dogs overhead on the street. I promised that we would be exposed only for a few feet outside the door of our hotel as I was confident that the subway exit led directly to the auditorium.

The Nutcracker was well done. Half of the ballet was performed by children. Though I don't know how to appreciate fine dancing, the audience was very pleased with the two masters. The music of the Nutcracker is familiar and was enjoyable in its own right. Judy thought it was well worth the trip to see.

After the show we bought some souvenirs while the rain continued undiminished. We decided to return home via the subway as we knew that could be done dryly. We then went to a nearby Tad's Steakhouse.

We had our destination in mind as we picked up doughnuts and coffee to prepare for the day's outing. David Letterman is one of Rob's favorites so we waited in line for a number to be entered in the lottery. Alas, the representative said that no tickets would be available, they were turning away existing ticket holders.

As we were in the area, we looked for my grandfather's high school. He attended Dewitt Clinton High School in 1913. It was not where he had remembered but was a few blocks south. We took a picture of the Dewitt Clinton Graphic Arts School.

On our way back toward the hotel we stopped at some theaters to check out the tickets. None had space available during the holiday. At one theater they were about to hold a drawing for 34 seats in the first two

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rows. You marked your name on a card. If it was drawn, you provide your identification and paid \$20 cash for each ticket that would regularly sell for \$75. The show playing was "Rent." Each of us put in our names and Tricia was drawn first! She and Rob were so excited. They said they enjoyed the show but that we wouldn't have liked some of the homosexuality and language.

That evening we visited Macy's which is not far from the hotel, we then went to the Hard Rock Café for dinner. The music was as would be expected, the food was good. We had nachos and ribs. Our waitress was particularly amiable and attentive.

The Empire State Building is near our hotel so the kids went up to see it while Judy and I fed Abbie. They said the view was good but the wind was incredible. It was so strong that they would blow into each other.

The phone awakened us as Lisa and Dave asked about breakfast plans. Lisa, Dave & I wanted a real breakfast so we went for bacon and eggs and brought back donuts, muffins and coffee for the others. The taste of a genuine NY hard roll is so good and quite completely unavailable outside the "Big Apple." We also bought "bear claws" (big cinnamon rolls) for Dave and me.

We made our plan for the day, to visit the UN and NBC studios. Judy stayed in with Abbie as the weather was so bad. We rode the bus to the UN as it was very cold and the bus stopped right in front whereas the subway would drop us off four blocks away.

The UN tour was interesting. The UN was established two months after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, to assure that there would never be another world war. The allied powers, US, UK, France, Russia and one other I can't remember (if you know the answer, please email to become the Security Council permanent members. Ten other countries from around the world who are elected by the General Assembly also participate on the Security Council. Nine of the 15 members must vote in favor of a proposal for it to pass. In addition, any of the five permanent members can veto an action. The UN Security council is now active in Bosnia and Iraq.

Though much of what the newspapers report is about the Security Council, 80% of the activity in the UN takes place in the Economic and Social Council. Here delegates operate the IMF, WHO, UNICEF and attempt to resolve matters of humanitarian aid and welfare.

After our visit we stopped for some genuine New York pizza before we continued to NBC studios. We had hoped to see a tour of the studio facilities but found them sold out. Other stations we called did not offer tours or were not in New York City. We stopped to watch the skaters in Rockefeller Center and to take pictures among the monuments.

St. Patrick's Cathedral was nearby. We were awed by the imposing Gothic architecture. Inside many candles had been lit and the sanctuary was decorated for Christmas with evergreen boughs and red ribbons. There was a nativity crèche in the northeast corner. Masses are said at 7:30 a.m. each morning. I offered to go with Trish. She hasn't said yes yet.

Returning to the hotel, we prepare for dinner, the theater and the Times Square celebration. The guidance was to dispense with style for the evening, prepare for the cold.

En route to the restaurant for which we made reservations, Abbie began to cry so the kids ducked into the subway. I gave them the paper with the restaurant name and address and attempted to memorize the address as we continued our walk to Pergolas.

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I thought the address was 242 49th Street so Judy and I walked there and found a hotel in the place of the restaurant. I couldn't remember the name of the restaurant so it wasn't possible to ask anyone. I asked a few policemen where the Imperial theater was but none knew as many policemen had been brought in from other boroughs for the New Year's Celebration. We walked back and forth down each street until we found the restaurant on 46th Street.

A special menu was prepared with Champaign, escargot, rack of lamb, pastry desserts and coffee. The food was special and excellent.

As the crowds gathered for the midnight celebration, we needed to cross Broadway to reach the theater. The police had the roads blocked to regulate the packing of the crowds. I explained to the officer that we had tickets and showed him my handwritten confirmation. He allowed us to pass.

We picked up our tickets and went to go in but were stopped by the usher who demanded a ticket for Abbie. Fortunately, standing room tickets were available for \$10 so we all took our seats. I enjoyed the show this time as much as the last and at the intermission I tried to give my face a rest from all the smiling. This was the second time that Judy and I had seen "Beauty and the Beast." I particularly enjoyed the dinner party and the beer stein dance. The colorful, imaginative costumes were truly incredible. Afterward the front doors of the theater were closed as Broadway was full. One had to exit through the street exits. We directed Lisa, Dave and Abbie to the street where they could get a cab or subway. We then returned to the throng.

As we attempted to enter Broadway, a policeman told me that we could only enter to reach our hotel. The Hotel Stanford was on Broadway and 32nd Street. I showed him our safe deposit key and we were allowed to pass. We had a spectacular spot at Broadway and 47th Streets, right across from the TV cameras and directly in front of the famous dropping ball. When we arrived there was an hour and 40 minutes to go until midnight. It was very cold and windy. Our salvation was the packed people act as a giant windbreak to reduce the effect of the cold on the lower body.

Finally, in the last minute, the crowd began chanting 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 as the confetti flew, the streamers and balloons blew in the air and the fireworks exploded here in Times Square and in Central Park, shortly after midnight.

Promptly after midnight, the crowd dispersed and we went with the flow to our room. We watched the news as we prepared for bed.

We went around the corner for breakfast because the temperature was in the teens. I had the traditional eggs benedict which were good. Afterward, we returned to the room to plan our day but wound up watching the football game until Lisa and Dave were to leave for the bus. After dropping them off we took the Long Island Railroad through Brooklyn to Hempstead where we walked to the house Trish remembered as her grandmother's 10 years ago. The family living there saw us standing out front and approved our request to take a photograph of the house. The owner said she did not buy it from Tricia's grandmother so it had changed hands in the meantime.

We then walked to the nearby gas station to get a cab to the Italian restaurant she had frequented as a child. The food was good. We scarfed up the garlic bread with mozzarella shortly after it was delivered. Even the regular Italian bread was served warm with a crisp but delicate crust. I had tortellini with meat sauce. I ate it all. Tricia and I split a half bottle of Chianti to top off our Italian fantasy.

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After dinner, our cab took us back to the railroad station where we proceeded to our hotel. Rob surprised us with an offer to get cappuccino and cookies from the restaurant around the corner. We watched "Seinfeld" and "Just Shoot Me" as a family around the TV while we sipped our drink and ate the cookies. During commercials we reflected on some of the joys of this trip and planned the day for tomorrow.

This morning we had genuine New York eggs, bacon and hard rolls at my favorite pizza joint. Now the eggs and bacon are not unique but the hard rolls are fantastic. It must be the butter that the contended cows make that makes them different from anywhere else.

No one wanted to join me so I ate the whole "bear claw" cinnamon roll myself. I still can't get over how much quality food is provided for 50¢ here in the "Big Apple." I took the roll with me on the subway. Beginning January 1, one gets a free ride for every 10 on a Metrocard. In addition there are free transfers and up to four ride on one card. I put \$15 on the card and ran all of us thru the turnstiles on our way to see the New York Stock Exchange, one of the free attractions still available here. Your ticket gives you a time to return. Ours was a half hour later. In the meantime we had a surprise visit to the Federal Building National Monument. The present building was the customs house in the mid 1800s but previously was the sight of our nation's first Capitol. Shortly after the Revolution, the Continental Congress met in Philadelphia to establish the Constitution and thereafter the Congress met right here in New York City. George Washington was inaugurated as the first president here. There were copies of plans and artists' renderings of the original building along with an interesting video portraying the preparations and first inauguration. Difficult issues to resolve included the rights of the newly annexed states of the Northwest Territory, then Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, Michigan and Indiana. They decided that they would be equal in voting power with the original 13. The impetus for moving the Capitol south was the matter of paying the bets of the states that were incurred in the Revolution. The Northern states incurred the most debt. To encourage the Southern States to allow the nationalization of this debt, the Northern states agreed to move the Capitol to a new place, neither north nor South, hence the District of Columbia was established in its neutral position. The Capitol moved to Philadelphia as its temporary quarters while the new arrangements were being made. Travel was arduous in those days. It took up to six days by sea to travel from Savannah Georgia to New York City. The new location would improve that considerably.

Our time passed quickly so we joined the line again, this time to see the stock exchange. We were led around the building, metal detected and herded up one floor to the educational area. Signs and a video depicted the operation and background of the present stock exchange. A feature that differentiates the stock exchange from the over-the-counter market is that each transaction is made directly with the other party. In the OTC, transactions are made with a market maker who trades for his own account. Thus the stock exchange eliminates intermediaries and thus assures that the buyer pays the same amount that the seller receives, net of stated commissions. This assures a particularly fair and efficient market for trading securities and raising capital. If you ever tried to sell a municipal bond, you will understand how important that is.

After viewing one of the trading floors and seeing the brokers, specialist, clerks and traders in action we saw the web site on computer screens that were provided.

While we clicked our mouses, Judy checked out the gift shop, looking for a Christmas ornament.

We then boarded the subway for NBC studios but upon arrival found that they were sold out for the day. Tricia and Rob wanted to see the Museum of Natural History. Judy wanted to see Lord & Taylor and get theater tickets for the evening. We split up and I took the kids to the museum. We used our Metrocard to transfer to a Central Park bus so we paid no extra fare.

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At the museum, the entry foyer was very crowded. As the weather was balmy and we were tired of standing in lines we considered passing on the museum. A helpful assistant suggested we enter on the lower level where there was no line. She assured us that many of the exhibits had reasonable crowds.

As we walked outside to go downstairs, Rob remarked that this was the first dinosaur skeleton he had ever seen. He had thought that Natural History was like American History. Most of the parents had younger children with them. This was my first opportunity to take Rob to the museum. Beside the dinosaurs, Rob enjoyed pointing out the mammals he had seen in the woods and the fish he had seen or caught. I picked out those native to Florida and East Africa where we had seen so much wildlife. Recollections of our Alaska trip also returned in viewing the bears and ground squirrels.

Sadly, I had been confused when I gave Judy directions and she walked 10 blocks in the wrong direction before turning around. She did not have the opportunity to go to Lord and Taylor as she had wanted. Instead she found a long line at the tickets facility. While waiting, a FOX TV reporter asked if she would like to be on TV. He asked, "If you had the opportunity, would you go to the grave of Princess Diana?" Judy said she would not because, "I would prefer to remember her for the great lady she was and the charities she represented."

Judy got us half price tickets for "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum." We met at the hotel and freshened up before going out. Judy had wanted to go for a carriage ride in Central Park so we took a bus on our transfers.

We had no waiting and our carriage driver from Cork, in Southern Ireland took us up the west side of Central Park, across the middle and back to the origin for \$40. Rob was gracious to give us this farewell treat. Following pictures we headed for the theater as there was not sufficient time for both dinner and carriage. En route I stopped for cash. Judy had counted out her last pennies for the tickets that were cash only. I borrowed \$15 from Rob for the subway this morning.

Surprise, surprise! No fee was charged on the Chase cash machine. I got \$500 as I was expecting the worst. We went on to see the comedy musical that had a few standing at the end and though it had its light moments, I thought it was fair. Rob & Tricia said they liked it.

Following the theater we had planned to go to Broadway Joe's steak house. Judy had a 25% off coupon. I saw an ad in the Playbill offering 20% off so I thought it was a hoax, high prices brought to reasonable by giving everyone a discount. So instead we went to Ruth Chris Steak House where Tricia and I wanted to eat. The entrees were expensive but are designed to be split. The food is excellent and we all enjoyed the steak, sautéed mushrooms, stuffed mushrooms and broccoli.

I set the alarm wrong and overslept so Rob and Tricia went to mass at St. Peter's church without us. They picked up tickets for the NBC studio tour, being the first ones in line.

We joined them at 9:05 and had some marble cake, coffee laté and orange juice while we waited for our tour to begin at 9:30. The tour showed us the studios where the late night talk show and the Rosy O'Donnell show were taped. They had a video showing the advent of the National Broadcasting Company, a joint venture of Westinghouse, General Electric and RCA. NBC pioneered the first commercial radio programming in the mid 20s and followed with the first commercial television in the late 40s. They pioneered color broadcasting in the mid 50s. Over this period, GE bought out the RCA and Westinghouse interests and continues to be the sole owner of NBC.

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NBC is now pioneering the use of digital recording so that the television of the future will have CD sound and DVD picture quality. They are planning to have all of their programming stored in digital form.

Finally we went to a small control room where news and weather broadcasts were made. Our guide asked for a volunteer and I spoke up. I would do a simulated weather report in front of a plain green background. The meteorologist looks in the monitor as he points to the areas on the simulated map imposed on the screen behind him. However the image is a mirror image so it takes a short time to get used to doing your actions backward to get your finger in the right place.

I read from the Teleprompter and Rob thought I might have another career opportunity in my future.

On the way back to the hotel we stopped at the Manhattan Mall. Rob had seen a custom cap maker in the kiosk area and had a cap made for his friend. It said, "Deer Dozing Dillard" and had a deer head design to commemorate a hunting trip that he and Cecil had when Cecil let 12 deer pass without shooting. \$35 for a cap seems a bit much to me but Rob thought it worthwhile and expected that Cecil would be impressed that he had remembered him while away on vacation.

Our ride home was uneventful with a bus ride from Manhattan to Newark, dropping Rob & Tricia off at their terminal and continuing to our gate.

There was a short delay while baggage was removed from the hold. Certain international travelers bound for Central America had checked bags but did not board the plane. The captain decided it would be wise to remove the bags rather than risk terrorism, I agreed.

It is written that people on their death bed rarely say, "I should have saved more money." More often they say, "I should have spent more time with my family." We are employing that principle. We hope that our children enjoy the times we share together as much as we enjoy being with them.

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