



December 5, 1996

Dear Diana,

Karen and I enjoy reading your letters so this time I asked for a turn to reply. Since Karen hasn't yet told you about our weekend in Bakersfield, I'll begin with that. It started when I was at the computer, browsing through the Internet. I found that country singer George Jones has his own Home Page complete with a concert show schedule. He was to appear in Hanford, then some days later in Bakersfield. The last time I saw George Jones perform was 14 years ago at the infamous Palomino Club. Karen called the Majestic Fox Theater and got tickets to his show in Bakersfield.

We were looking forward to this event for two months and decided to make a weekend out of it. We worked a half day that Friday and got an early start for Bakersfield. We expected to see some fall color as we did two years prior during the Thanksgiving holiday, so we packed the cameras and plenty of film. Our first stop on arriving in Bakersfield was the Antique District that runs along H Street between Brundage and 18th. It felt great to walk around and see the pretty fall foliage after a week of being cooped up at the office and the warehouse. After a Chinese dinner at the Far East Restaurant, a vintage '50s diner, we headed for the motel where we would spend the next two nights. Tom Bodett even left the light on for us! We hurried to get ready for the concert.



The restoration of the Majestic Fox Theater was advertised in advance and Karen was looking forward to seeing the historic theater where she had attended many a matinee. A different crowd was in attendance for this event. We saw more cowboy hats and fringe in the theater's lobby than we did in a week's time in Texas last Christmas. Although I had never been to the Fox, I could appreciate the work that went into restoring its interior. That ceiling and the night sky effect with sparkling stars added to the excitement. After waiting somewhat patiently along with the other concert go-ers while a boisterous warm-up band went through their paces, George Jones and the Jones Boys finally made their entrance onto the stage. The audience stood to greet the living legend. Then, under the dramatic stage lighting he performed a medley of his well-loved songs dating back some thirty years. He is still recording albums from which he threw in a few unrecognizable melodies but soon to be country standards.

After the concert, we stopped into a Carrows Restaurant in anticipation of seeing some of the performers from the show as had happened some years earlier in Nashville at a local Shoneys near the Opry. They never arrived. Evidently, they all went to Bakersfield's newest attraction, Buck Owens' Crystal Palace, to see another legend.

The next morning we had breakfast at Hodels before dropping in to visit Karen's Aunt Harriet. We spent the afternoon with her at Hart Park visiting Bakersfield's zoo. It's called the California Living Museum. It could not have been a nicer day. Volunteers from a local church were there to rake fallen leaves and the air was nice and crisp. Since Karen knows Bakersfield much better than I do, I let her do the driving and point out places of interest. We stopped at Dewars, an ice cream and candy shop that has been around forever. Every seat at the counter was taken and people were standing behind us for service. It's too bad there isn't a Dewars here in the South Bay. We would probably be there every weekend. They sell 99 percent fat free ice milk (I ate a pint).



That Saturday night Karen called the Crystal Palace to find out whether they take reservations, have a cover charge, etc. I called them back to ask who was appearing and was told it would be Buck and the Buckaroos. When Karen asked, I replied to her that it was some group called Buck and the Buckaroos. I don't think she made the connection until later. The establishment is a museum of Country and Western music that not only showcases Buck Owens and his contemporaries, but much of the newer talent as well. It reminded us of the Opryland museums; lots of rhinestone suits and western boots on display along with gold records and awards. The club's centerpiece is a 1973 white Pontiac convertible that belonged to Elvis before Buck acquired it. The car hangs from the wall behind the bar at an angle that allows viewing of the interior. You can see the leather saddle between the seats, the steer-horn hood ornament with the Winchester rifle and the six shooters on the trunk and side doors. Dinner there consisted of a Kansas City strip steak and chicken Caesar salad. It was delicious and the price very reasonable. At

showtime, Buck Owens and his band came on stage and sang while the patrons made use of the dance floor. Karen and I got up to dance to *Together Again* and take a close look at a familiar face. He made me laugh when he said, "You all can come down here and dance or just sit there and stare at me. I'll just stare right back". He's managed to stay current, even singing the Macarena. I've gone back to the Internet to get the lyrics of his revisited hit, *The Streets of Bakersfield*.



We spent Thanksgiving Day at Karen's folks' house having dinner and watching the video, Apollo 13. It was a nice afternoon. It may have been nicer if not for having to work the next day. Since there won't be a Company shutdown this holiday season, Karen and I will be at home for Christmas. There is an artificial tree stowed away that we'll decorate if we can gain access to the community storage room. I thought it would make a story for Seven On Your Side if someone on the staff here at the complex doesn't unlock the storage room so we can have Christmas. It looks as if we *will* be getting access to our tree this weekend. Karen and I certainly hope that you and Bob are doing well and that your holiday season is a happy and healthy one. I'll be looking forward to your next letter, Diana.

Love,

Randy

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