

**For August 12, 2009**

**By Doc Heide**

One of the best things about AFT is the friendships that weave us together.

When my girlfriend Jody came to California this May to help me move to Wisconsin, we stayed with Claudia Russell and Bruce Kaplan at their new home in Richmond, just east of San Francisco Bay. Claudia's been in lots of our fall shows ("Goodnight, Irene", "Sometimes a Song") and Bruce is brother to composer Jimmy Kaplan ("Lumberjacks in Love", "Guys on Ice").

They took us to dinner at a Thai place downtown. Bruce quipped that Richmond couldn't afford a town square, so they have a town triangle instead.

He asked our advice about whether he should finish his college degree, begun many years ago. We suggested he might get credit for life experience. "Well, I do read a lot," he said. "I'm an autodidact." Jody responded, "That's worth three credits right there."

Bruce inquired if I considered myself a Wisconsinite or Californian, then answered his own question. "You're both. Sort of a cheese curd in cilantro sauce."

We all got to talking about our states of origin. Jody said she was originally a "Michigander." I said it would be more accurate to call herself a "Michigoose."

### **Shakespearean Stopover**

We left the next morning for Ashland, Oregon. There we stayed with Sara Phillips, fiancé of my longtime AFT writing partner Lee Becker. Sara was vocal coaching at Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF).

She kindly comped us into several shows, including a sparkling revival of “The Music Man” and “A Servant of Two Masters”.

One morning we all piled into my Pathfinder to head to breakfast. With the back of the vehicle crammed fuller than the Beverly Hillbillies’ jalopy, Sara had to sit on Jody’s lap in the passenger seat.

“Good thing you have such a big car,” Sara remarked. Jody replied, “Good thing we have such small purses.”

### **Joking James**

Back here in Wisconsin, we were thrilled to see that our old friend James Valcq (“The Spitfire Grill”) is music directing at Door Shakespeare this summer. I met James in 1983, when he spent a summer in the Heritage Ensemble. I recall him driving into the back of the theatre with the female cast members, singing notes out the rear window high enough to make Marilyn Horne wince.

James is a fountain of energy, and I feel better just being around him. Among several jokes he told us recently was one about the accordion, which he plays.

An accordion band got a gig at a bar for New Year’s Eve. At evening’s end, the owner invited them back the following year. “Great”, they said. “Can we leave our instruments here?”

I recently heard about research showing that folks with more friends live longer. If that’s true, those at AFT should live to ripe old ages.

See you under the stars.

AFT performs at the Peninsula State Park Theatre Monday-Saturday through August 29. The world premiere ***Cheeseheads, the Musical*** plays Monday at 8 pm, Wednesday at 6 pm, Thursday at 8 pm and Saturday at 8:30pm. ***Sunsets & S’mores***, a centennial celebration of Peninsula State Park, plays 8 pm on Tuesday and 6 pm on Saturday. ***Muskie Love*** returns on Wednesday at 8:30pm

and Friday at 8 pm. Advanced and reserved tickets are available at [www.folkloretheatre.com](http://www.folkloretheatre.com), at 854-6117, at the AFT office in the Green Gables Shops in North Ephraim, or at the box office at the theatre one hour prior to performance. A park sticker is not required in the theatre lot for the show.

Doc Heide is co-founder, playwright, and performer with American Folklore Theatre.