

March 27-28, 2009

Collaboration of beach memories by beach buddies: Connie Trossbach and Pat Morris

“The Pleasure of the Journey”

Riding down the road to the Beach... what a great day! Yes, Connie and I were registered for the Virginia Beach Genealogical Society 2009 Annual Conference and ready to rendezvous with our buddies Linda, Carol, and Dave in Virginia Beach in a few hours, but first we needed to drive from St. Mary's to Virginia Beach. Connie and I left St. Mary's early Friday morning and we felt like teenagers again – slipping away for a weekend at the beach. We were both anxious to get to Virginia Beach but our mission for this day would be how many treasures we could find in the antique stores along the way. We were pretty sure there would be a few antique stores in the Tappahannock area.

Connie and I talked so much about what treasures we were searching for, and what we expected from the conference - before we knew it we were crossing the Potomac River Bridge. Connie set the GPS for the address of the hotel in Virginia Beach and we really felt we were on our way to the beach. We were soon headed down Route 17 and shortly feeling really hungry. We thought we would never find a place to eat or any antique stores but we knew there must be a couple on the road ahead and then suddenly Connie said “Look there's the golden arches and finally a McDonald's”. I've never been so glad to see those arches. We went in and ordered our breakfast and as we were going outside Connie glanced over at a strip mall behind McDonald's and what did she see – an Antique store.... Connie pulled out of McDonald's and pulled up in front of the store which had not opened but there were people getting ready to open it, so we sat and ate our breakfast and browsed the store windows for treasures. When the store doors opened - right into the store we went. We spent a lot of time browsing and wondering the history of all the items in the store. Who owned the items, the age of the items, what home did they come from, who loved them and of course the old pictures always get the mind wondering. I am always sad when I see beautiful old pictures in an antique store when they should be in the home of an ancestor, someone who would treasure them. We all know each of the items in an antique store has a history just like each of us.

Both Connie and I found a couple of small items and were very happy with our new treasures. We checked out of the store and were on our way again. An hour or so later we were hungry for lunch and lo and behold we found another McDonald's.....so we stopped again at McDonald's. This time we ate in the restaurant and while we were looking around Connie spotted another antique store at another strip mall behind the McDonald's. Imagine that! So guess what Connie and I did – yeah you're right, we went browsing again and this was a large store. We stayed in this store for almost two hours just browsing and we hardly ran into each other the whole time we were browsing - every once in awhile I would check to see if Connie's vehicle was still in the parking lot! I don't think Connie would leave me, but I couldn't find her and you just never know! Little did I know but Connie had checked from the store front to see if I was waiting in the vehicle. Finally, we packed up our finds and were back on the road again. A little later, we found a scrapbook store which was a real nice store packed with lots of wonderful scrapbook paper in all imaginable designs. Yeah, we went crazy in there too! We checked the time and thought we really needed to get going and you guessed it, we finally arrived in Virginia Beach...

Thanks to the borrowed GPS, we arrived safely at our hotel the Hilton Garden Inn at Virginia Beach Town Center (about one mile from the Virginia Beach Central Library where we would attend the conference the next day) without getting too lost. We checked in the hotel (which is very nice inside) and after getting ourselves situated in the room and fighting over who would get which bed (just kidding), we called our buddies Linda, Carol, and Dave to see if they wanted to meet for dinner. Connie looked out the window of the hotel room and spotted a mall with lots of stores located just across the highway. We coordinated with Linda to first meet at the mall and then decide where to eat dinner. Connie and I drove over to the mall and we spotted a Ruby Tuesday's. Connie called Linda and gave her the physical location of the restaurant to use to program her GPS. By this time it was dark and raining but the good old GPS got our buddies to the restaurant and enjoyed a great time and nice dinner we had together. We were talking about our trip and Connie was asked about the location of the antique stores and the scrapbook store. Connie laughed and said they were all located behind a McDonald's restaurant – just look

for the golden arches. After dinner, we all said our good-nights see you tomorrow and left Ruby Tuesday's for our hotel to bunk down for the night.

Connie and I left but did not go back to the hotel – Connie drove down the highway and spotted an ATM machine to get some more money but by this time it was late and dark and still raining....and there were some scary people hanging around. No one bothered us - I guess the two crazy ladies from St. Mary's scared them. Next, we stopped at a thrift store but didn't find any treasures, but once again there were some scary people there too! The store was getting ready to close so we left there and headed down the highway and spotted a Barnes and Noble Book store. Well, we had to stop there and we did, we stayed there until the store closed at eleven o'clock. We both had lots of fun browsing the books. I left with two bags of books and they were heavy. Have you ever walked out of a store and wondered to yourself "What did I just do?"....That's how I felt!

The next morning, Connie and I were up early again. It was Saturday morning time to get ready to leave the hotel for the conference. We stopped at Panera Bread for breakfast and arrived at the Virginia Beach Central Library where we met our buddies Linda, Carol, and Dave. Whow...the library looked so very large and inviting with the conference tables setup in a large room. I couldn't believe it; we had finally arrived at the Virginia Beach Genealogist Society's 2009 Annual Conference titled "Tell Me About It" Research, Discovery, Interviewing, Writing with John Philip Colletta.

All of us signed in and picked up our attendee packets which were filled with lots of genealogy goodies. And because we pre-registered, we were given more goodies than those who registered as they arrived at the conference. The conference room was buzzing with conversations. A number of organizations had tables setup in the conference room with lots of free information, and related materials, books, and genealogy charts for sale. We found seating in the large auditorium for the presentation. The auditorium was furnished with theater type seats and lots of them. The Virginia Beach Genealogy Society President welcomed everyone to the conference. She then welcomed John Colletta, introducing him as the conference's day-long speaker. She stated John's lectures are

famously full of good humor, clarity, useful examples and true, vivid stories of ancestors. As she turned the microphone over to him, the attendees applauded loudly. John smiled, thanked everyone for attending, and stated that his goal is to “help family historians optimize their efforts to uncover and write the stories of their forebears, and to enjoy all along the way the pleasure of the journey.” The early morning topics focused on research and discovery (1) lesser-used Federal Records: A sampling of fresh research ideas (2) libraries, archives and public record offices: understanding resource repositories. The afternoon topics focused on what you need to make your writing more interesting (1) effective interviewing (this topic benefits your future generations as well as helps you preserve your past) (2) turning biographical facts into real-life events: how to build historical context. John asked us “How did your ancestors live?” – John stated that researching your ancestors is extremely time consuming but well worth the effort and your descendents will appreciate and thank you for it. Connie indicated John provided some very good information which will help her locate a missing link or two in her family tree.

During breaks, John Colletta was available to talk with the conference attendees, to discuss his books, autograph his books and pose for photos. He has quite a sense of humor – he displayed a sign by each of his books, one stated he would autograph the book for an additional \$600 and the other sign stated he would autograph it for an additional \$1200. At first I thought he must be crazy, then I saw him autographing one for Linda and I thought she must be crazy. I overheard someone say that he was being funny. Afterwards, I thought I was crazy for even considering the signs might be true.

A number of raffles were conducted at each break. People were winning all around us and then bingo Linda won....then Connie won..... even I won.....and I never win anything, so I was excited! I don't know what happened to Carol and Dave. Maybe, I should give them the book I won. No, no. During our break time we mingled with the other attendees. During one break I talked with a lady from Virginia, she asked where I was from and I told her St. Mary's County, Maryland. I asked her name and she told me Theresa DeSantos, she told me she visited St. Mary's County a couple of years ago to

research the Mattingly family. She laughed when she told me she opened the St. Mary's telephone book and to her surprise discovered pages and pages of Mattinglys and felt she didn't know where to begin her research.

After the conference ended, we all said our good-byes and thank yous to the Virginia Beach Genealogy Society members, packed up our bags, and headed home. Tired but still very excited about our trip, Connie decided to follow Linda straight back to St. Mary's – no stopping except for a break or two. We went home interstate I-64 / I-95. When we stopped to fuel up at the Shell station Connie laughed as we left because our buddies that had fueled up on the other side of Route 301 were now at. ...a McDonald's, and perhaps hoping to find something interesting - like an antique or scrapbooking store?

Next year, the Virginia Beach Conference is planned for March 20, 2010. We should all plan to go and “enjoy the journey”..... what a great way to spend a weekend – at the beach with buddies.