



## Reviews & Retrospects

### Are We Having Fun Yet?

Spring. It's that time of year when families enjoy the special closeness of shared activities—planting a garden, the simple pleasures of picnicking, frolicking in the backyard, even cheering their favorite team at the ballpark. These family activities can be so much fun that parents are often inspired to plan even more ambitious outings. At our house, spring fever has arrived with a vengeance in the form of The Family Spring Vacation.

It began as a great idea. My dad couldn't have made us happier. He informed the family that we would be going to Disney World over spring break. The thought of a week in the warmth of the Orlando sun, the excitement of Epcot and the anticipation of playing golf every day painted a beautiful picture in my mind.

Then he dropped The Bomb. It would be great fun, he explained, if we would drive to Orlando instead of fly. We'll see scenic I-95. We'll sing in the car. We'll play games. We'll share the pleasure of one another's company. "We just don't see enough of one another anymore," was what he said. It was as if he had thrown a gallon of black paint on that beautiful picture. Amid his rendition of the perfect family fantasy vacation could be heard our cries of protest. I think my father was the only one in all of Short Hills who couldn't hear them.

We leave in four weeks. I can see it all now. The four of us will squeeze inside the truck, sandwiched between mounds of suitcases. The minute my father's key turns in the ignition, my little sister will instantaneously complain about being carsick. We'll start out pretty civilized, but give us time! Before we leave the state of New Jersey, we'll all be suffering from a severe case of the shakes. To mitigate the tension, my mom will start singing those hideous "road songs" you see families singing in old movies. We'll play the license plate game, then the

states game. We'll have a spelling bee. We'll stop for lunch at Bob's Big Boy, where we'll examine the menu for fifteen minutes before we all decide on hamburgers.

My sister will whine because she's too carsick to eat. My father will grow annoyed with my sister's whining. Ever so slowly, he'll begin to realize this wasn't such a great idea. I'll know this by the way he'll be grinding his teeth while forcing a smile. I saw him do that once before when a straight pin in his suit stuck him as he was delivering a speech. (The tailor

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had forgotten to remove the pin.) After lunch, we'll pile back into the truck to continue our journey. My sister will continue whining because my leg is a quarter inch on "her" side, or because she thinks I'm looking at her when I'm really looking out the window. My mother will rebuke me for teasing her. Correction—my mother will scream at me for teasing her (which I wasn't doing, of course).

All of this is tolerable when compared to what will happen next. My father will reach down into his cassette box and insert a Kingston Trio tape into the tape deck. He'll sing "Hang Down Your Head, Tom Dooley, Hang Down Your Head And Cry" until I too feel carsick. My dad is great, but he has no taste in music, and he can't sing, either. But he'll enjoy it so much that I'll have to endure it.

Eventually, we'll stop to sleep. My father sees no point in luxury accommodations for one night, so we'll wind up at Motel Hell. There won't be a television, but there will be a bed and running water—cold only, of course. The room will reek of mildew. It'll make me sneeze, and it'll make my mother crazy. Her idea of no frills is no flowers on the nightstand. My father will get the pin look on his face again. But he won't say a word. He'll never admit this was a bad idea. Not even when we all have to share the same towel.

After what will seem like a month, we'll arrive at Disney World. The sun will be shining; our rooms, complete with towels and hot water, will be ready; a multitude of things to see and do will be at hand. We'll each be talking about what we want to do, what we want to see. My father will be very, very quiet. He won't be talking. He'll look uneasy. His hair will be sticking straight up in the air. His eyes will be bulging. His hands will be trembling. I don't know how much more family togetherness he can take. Relax, Dad. You're in Disney World now! By tomorrow this will be a bad memory. You'll play golf and unwind. Rest. Relax. You're going to need it for the ride home.

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[This piece is reprinted from the December/January 1991 issue of Merlyn's Pen in celebration of our tenth anniversary.]

