

TRAVEL NOTES

How many times have we been told that we should never assume anything? And how many times have we ignored that advice?

Case in point: when you travel, as when you are checking your suitcases through to some distant spot, you should never assume that “Portland” means Maine and not Oregon or, as in our case, that “Fayetteville” means Arkansas and not North Carolina. No matter that the printed itinerary says “AR” and not “NC.” No matter that you have forgotten, at least temporarily, that Fayetteville, North Carolina even exists. Don’t assume anything.

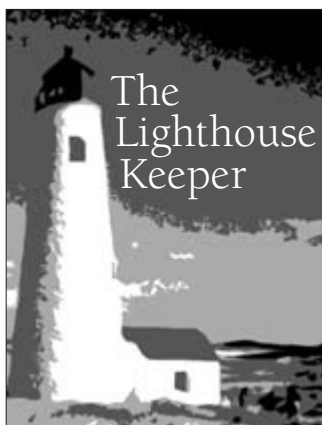
Needless to say the bags did not arrive in Fayetteville, Arkansas. And it was only later after writing down the pertinent information on the top half of a sheet of a scratchpad as an airline baggage claim form and being well on our way, that we realized that, while the flight number was correct, our copy of the baggage check tag said “Fayetteville, N.C.”

Our daughter, the reason for the visit, made a quick trip to Wal-Mart to get us the necessities and we survived the night.

There being no way known to man to reach the local airline office by telephone, and no one in India being willing to help without a claim number – which was not noted on the scratch pad, a trek back to the airport in the morning was in order. There, the agent was able, miraculously, to telephone his counterpart in North Carolina and learn, yes, that the bags had been seen, the problem identified, and they were on their way to the correct Fayetteville. And they did arrive later in the day.

I had been to northwest Arkansas once before, in 1953, as I recall, for a family wedding. It was 106 degrees and unspeakable. I vowed then that I would never find a reason to return. While the word “never” is appropriate as it relates to assumptions, it may come back to haunt one when used in the context of the future. Ever since last spring, when I learned that my daughter and her family were moving to Northwest Arkansas, I have been choking on that vow.

Northwest Arkansas has promoted itself. The “N” is now capitalized and the area is now the fastest growing part of the state. In addition to Fayetteville,



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the location of the University of Arkansas, the area includes Bentonville and a number of other up and coming metropoli. It is the home of Tyson Foods, one of the largest poultry producers in the world. JB Hunt, a huge trucking firm makes its headquarters there. And Bentonville is where Sam Walton, the genius behind Wal-Mart, got his start in the retail business when he opened a “five and dime” on the town square, across from the courthouse, in the 1950s.

On the way back from the airport, we drove by the Wal-Mart headquarters building. Surrounded by a sea of parked cars, the structure itself is as unprepossessing as it could be. Faced with brick, it looks like a warehouse or, perhaps, a power plant on a university campus. It is remarkable both in its modesty — no edifice complex lurked in that CEO — and in the fact that it has almost no windows. Mr. Walton believed that one of the ways to keep productivity levels high was to avoid distraction. Looking out a window is a distraction — thus, no windows. It doesn’t make for a great looking building, but it’s hard to argue with the rationale.

The Bentonville town square could be the prototype for almost any town in America. The large plaza is dominated by the courthouse at one end. The rest is framed by what, at first glance, appears to be retail space. In fact, closer inspection reveals that out of the 30 or so buildings around the square, only about five are still used as retail or eating establishments; most are offices. Wal-Mart has done the same number on Bentonville, its home town, as it has done on hundreds of towns throughout the country; it has drained the downtown area of its vitality.

The difference is that Bentonville and Wal-Mart have the resources and the will to do something about the problem there. Wal-Mart’s visitor center is located at the site of Walton’s original 5 & 10. (The original Wal-Mart was actually in the next town, Rogers.) A farmers’ market that runs every Saturday, from the spring through the first weekend in November, fills the plaza with stalls selling produce and handicrafts.

In the context of the debate on Nantucket about donors putting large sums of money into specific projects like the Dreamland and the NRTA hub, this trip provided some perspective. Clearly the Walton

family has put a lot of money back into Bentonville and the surrounding area. One family member was the driving force in getting the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport built a few years ago. These days, her energies and treasure are being directed towards the construction of a world class art museum in Bentonville. When it opens in two-three years, the museum will house a significant collection of 20th century American art. The assembly of the collection has been under way for some time and some of the pieces have already been loaned to other museums for their exhibitions.

The football stadium at the University of Arkansas has been renovated recently at a cost of more than \$120 million. At one end of the stadium are a fair number of plaques which commemorate gifts for the renovation. None of the gifts so memorialized, I was told, was less than \$5 million. The stadium is a great place to watch a Razorbacks football game – just as, we all hope, the Dreamland will once again be a great place to watch a movie. (The stadium was also a great place to ride out a tropical storm on Nantucket.)

The sheriff in one of the local counties makes \$28,000 a year. He has 11 deputies and they are the first responders to any emergency in the county.

The terrain of Northwest Arkansas is varied; some is flat but much of it is rolling hills, interspersed with lakes. The Ozarks are close by. The foliage at this time of the year gives most of the Northeast a run for its money.

It is fair to say, that not only did I break my vow never to return to that part of the world, but I am going to do it again. Not only is there a grandson on the ground there who merits some attention, but I look forward to seeing the art museum when it opens, as well as visiting the nearby Pea Ridge National Military Park. That battle, in March, 1862, effectively ended any designs on Missouri by the Confederacy although the victorious Federal army had to withdraw when it ran out of supplies.

And if I were to run out of things to do, there is always Branson, Missouri, just up the road.

Do you think I will remember, the next time, to say “Fayetteville, Arkansas”? ■

The “Lighthouse Keeper” reflects the views of the author and does not necessarily represent the editorial position of The Nantucket Independent. Please send any ideas or comments to drake@nantucketindependent.com.

NOEL

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come within 75 miles of Nantucket. That was the core of the storm, so it was a very sprawling storm.”

The storm took out power and long-distance calling services for varying periods of time during Saturday, Sunday and part of Monday. The usual low-lying areas around the harbor flooded at high tide around 8 p.m., but the town was not forced to open its emergency shelter at Nantucket High School.

All in all, said Nantucket Fire Chief Mark McDougal, “I think we did all right.”

THE MADAKET MESS

Four houses on the southwestern end of Massachusetts Avenue on Smith’s Point were hit hard by the pounding waves generated by Noel.

Four days after James and Barbara Heneghan of North Granby, Conn. were forced to demolish their beach house at 47 Massachusetts Ave. because they had run out of room to retreat, Noel left the Heneghans’ neighbor, Martin Levine at 45 Massachusetts Ave., with little doubt of his house’s

short future. The seas scoured sand from beneath his porch and claimed a nearby utility pole.

The Conservation Commission issued an enforcement order on Monday to compel Levine, of Westport, Conn., to move his house back onto cribbing in the dunes behind his house, and to clean up the debris left on his lot. Levine, however, may not have much land left on his .20-of-an-acre lot to re-establish it permanently.

“They have room to store it on their lot,” said ConCom Administrator Dirk Roggeveen. “I don’t know if they can put it on their lot, but they can certainly keep it out of the water.”

Levine’s enforcement order, the Conservation Commission’s citation of a wetlands violation, reads: “Dwelling extending over coastal bank at risk of falling onto beach and breaking up in ocean as the result of high tides and storm events.”

Just to the east of Levine’s house, at 34 Massachusetts Ave., the ocean took a huge bite out of Brooklyn, N.Y.’s Ronald G. and Diane R. Russo’s cottage, aptly named “Breaking Away”. Perched high on its cinderblock foundation, one could walk into the basement of the house from the crumbled concrete

and debris on the beach.

The next house east, at 36 Massachusetts Ave., owned by Wellesley, Mass. resident Francis Callaghan Jr., also lost significant bluff. Fortunately for Callaghan, his house is built on pilings driven into the dunes. The ConCom has yet to issue enforcement orders for these two properties, but did dole out one for Smith’s Point Association President Tom Erichsen at 34 Rhode Island Ave. on Tuesday, the last Madaket property owner to feel the sting of Noel.

With his septic system exposed, utility wires and pipes jutting out of his dunes and part of his deck suspended over the beach, Erichsen has little room to move inland, having completed a move to a new foundation earlier this year.

Erichsen could not be reached for comment.

THE FAR EAST IS SPARED

Although Nantucket’s eastern shores usually take the brunt of nor’easters, the bluff and beaches along imperiled Baxter Road suffered surprisingly minor erosion and little damage to terracing installations, said Siasconset Beach Preservation Fund

Executive Director Cheryl Bartlett.

“I don’t know the exact percentage of the terraces, but it looks like most of them fared pretty well,” said Bartlett. “I think the good news is it moved too fast to wreak havoc.”

As required by its order of conditions from the ConCom for the terraces, SBPF — after every major storm — must submit a detailed damage report to the commission within 30 days. Bartlett will be submitting a preliminary damage report to the ConCom this week.

ALL-YOU-CAN-CATCH SCALLOPS

In Nantucket and Madaket harbors, Marine Superintendent Dave Fronzuto said about 12 boats broke free of their moorings and washed ashore. Also, hundreds of bushels of adult and seed scallops washed ashore along Hulbert Avenue and from the UMass field station to the end of Fulling Mill Road. They were also found in thinning numbers all the way to Abram’s Point.

Damage in Nantucket Harbor included the flattening of a section of the catwalk extending from Old North Wharf out to its boat slips and some

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