

A (Maritime Canadian) Tutor-Style trip with the 'Govern'r' (wife):

Provides 'Inn-Experience' ... 'Inn-attic-quit'ing' a room & 'By Jiminy' - - Too Much Cricket!

By Brian McLaughlin

Another Maritime Canadian Summer is now upon us. And as vacations in the travelogue of the 'twilight zone' go, consider this.....vacations with the marital better-half have a way of clearly defining *true* spousal roles and responsibilities. Personal experience speaking, why if it was a US-election event, it would be tantamount to illuminating a personality spectrum as wide as the gap between 'a *Dem*' and 'a *Republican*' in the last US-federal election. Or at least that is how marital bliss and vacations with my spouse and me unfold.

Often, when travelling on such summer adventures, we husbands think because we're behind the wheel that we're in control of our rusticarian destinies – when, in fact, it's really our wives who ARE driving all the while. It's like a vacation jaunt of Hyacinth and Richard Bucket (in the BBC series *Keeping Up Appearances*). And an even better metaphor: It's akin to living within a Governor ('a *Democrat*' of course) and Warden ('a *Republican*') arrangement. The state? "*The Blissful State of Marriage*" of course. Where we husbands surrender *small d's* (*decision, discussion and deliberation*) to avoid dealing with *large D's* (*Discomfort, Disagreement and Discord*). And like all good long-term, state employees, we just ride it out and exist on the sidelines, in a 'fixer' capacity – only acting when called upon – all the while waiting either for retirement, or death -- which ever comes first-a-calling.

Take my vacation a few summers ago for instance: my wife had planned that vacation with little advance consultation – just browsing the internet site of an English, Tutor-style Inn (located in the Maritime, Canadian province of New Brunswick). Hey, rumor had it: the early-20th century, Pulitzer Prize winning author Willa Silbert Cather (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willa_Cather or www.willacather.org) had frequented this spot for its muses and inspiration. The sought out destination first discovered from a rustic, and not-the-most informative, brochure I picked up in a local coffee shop. So sight-unseen, nor experienced before, 'my Govern'r' decided to book a 3-night stay at this quaint, little inn overlooking the Bay of Fundy. It promised "sighting whales off the shoreline", peaceful nights repose, and exquisite seafood dinning. Perhaps, I should've just trusted my 'male' intuition. Yes, *we men have such a thing too!* You know: the friendly, omnipotent mind-ghost which hints, "*Oh, just go ahead and fix, and find an answer to everything!*" But whatever my premonitions were, I just ignored them.

Male Objections are Angels of Divine Premonition!

Intuition# 1 – I should've been more objecting. Yet I ignored my 'male instinct' to fight harder to cancel, or alter, the vacation before it even started. Surrendering to an Inn Keeper's lame excuse

over the phone: "We've had a really bad summer, so we've decided to change our cancellation policy to three weeks advance notice (*from the standard two weeks*)." This, of course, recited when I called in an attempt to cancel on the first day within the acceptable two week timeline for "required advance cancellations".

But despite my premonition, with my *Govern'r's* pardon ("Let's just try to make the best of it"): we headed out to our coastal, holiday adventure inn on this Maritime Canadian island. Destination: an early 19th century tutor-style inn, and cottage getaway on Grand Manan Island. "Picturesque land-and sea-scape. Quiet. A 3 ½ star accommodation (for any discriminating traveler)" the web-site touted. *Some honest saving grace footnotes: Grand Manan Island was selected one of the Top 10 most photograph worthy destinations in all of Canada in past spring 2013 by Outdoor Photography Canada magazine (<http://www.outdoorphotographycanada.com>) – featured in last spring/summer Grandmansion's feature issue. Also, the dining room/restaurant associated with this quaint little inn is one of the finest dining experiences north of Boston, or east of Montreal in terms of exquisite four-star ranked haute cuisine.*

Are women too conscientious in matters of vacation commerce?

Observation # 2: in matters of personal commerce, women (or at least my wife) thinks more fairly than men (me). To a man (at least from my male slant), personal commerce is like a poker-game. "Where I don't like to play all my cards before the game has even begun." So that's why it seemed strange to act on my wife's submission: "Oh, just pay for the 3-nights ahead of time. And pay it all up front."

Yet, without protest, like most married men – *My Mistake* -- I followed the gubernatorial edict: And just handed-over the cash! A *faux pas* of enormous 'neutering' proportions for my poor male ego.

Male opinion: where women can garner up atmosphere and ambiance from idyllic abstracts, or from online narrative descriptions, men need real visual proof to be convinced. <<<*RWND* -- *four weeks prior – to make my point: the website we sourced in planning the trip from the web-link had no actual digital photo of the room we had planned to stay in during two-of-the-three nights at the inn.* "If there's no actual photo, how do we know it's a good room, dear?" I recall asking.

Well, as it turned out, the first night in the separate cottage, situated adjacent to the inn proved a "thumbs up" experience! A large walk-around fireplace. And a comfy queen-size bed. So, despite the fact it was raining the first day, evening, all night, and the next morning, the spacious cottage and warming hearth erased all disappointment in the inclement weather outside. It was superb! Why, even the sudden discovery that I'm allergic to feather pillows was easily remedied when synthetic fiber pillows were considerably located in the bedroom closet. The first day, came-&-went: with a memorable evening of a great home cooked pepper-steak -- with mushrooms, sweet potato's, cauliflower, and bottle of Shiraz.

"Hey, maybe my '*Govern'r*' does have vacation vision after all!" I recall thinking.

Perhaps, it was the second day and realization of our relocation -- "What, we have to move now?" - to the space ducked up in the ceiling of the inn that didn't settle well with me. It was a tiny – no, rather itty-bitty, teeny-weeny – room tucked away in the crawl space of the inn's upper level, with vines

wrapping around the doorway into the room. Perhaps too, it was my recollection of the misleading online description (as “a small private deck”): as I now peered up the narrow, long outside “stairway and stoop.” Or perhaps, it was the awareness I had two other methods to move our luggage into the room besides carrying them up the stairs. #1 – Slam-dunk shoot it into the window. Or #2 - Go for ‘a three pointer’ by shooting it from outside the key!

How TALL is too TALL for ‘Inn-Attic-quit’ing’ a room?

Anyhow, my standing at 6’ 2” tall, when you take this all in, you start to think my ‘*Govern’r*’ has made a mistake of *petite nes pas* proportions in the lodging arrangements. Standing outside the front entrance of the inn, I felt like the ‘green GIANT’ visiting the hut of the Keebler elves. Or Doc Martin lumbering head-smashing about ‘the surgery’ in Portwenn. Or it was akin to walking up to the quaint little hut of Jepetto and Pinocchio – as, in my humble opinion, minus the feeling of vacation smarm, this inn’s website narrative descriptions were proving to be worthy of a few extra inches of nose!

Another opinion: When a wife – a.k.a ‘test case’ my wife (*my ‘Govern’r*) -- feels disappointed, a husband (*‘Warden, Me’*) needs to know when to act. Because when my sweet wife realizes she has made a huge mistake and has to suffer the disappointment, I know, as the primary employee now residing in the “*not-so Blissful State of Marriage*”, I’m going to hear about it in spurts of ‘F’s’ all weekend – yes, all about it in Fuss & Feelings. Now we married men can suffer most hardships, but we’d rather choose to go for the big “F” – Fix It! – right away!

And it was with this in mind I that left the room. Oh no, my correction, the crawl space! Suggesting only:

“It’s going to be OK, Dear. I’ll go figure out a way to deal with this.”

And with that I ventured down to inquire with the inn keeper about the possibilities of sourcing other accommodations. After all, I had my case prepared: earlier that morning – while I was querying about breakfast timing -- the inn keeper’s little *slip-of-the-tongue* divulged – “Why –you’re it!” I, in due course, interpreted it as meaning we were the only guests in the entire inn. Yes, as turned out, we were the only patrons in the 19th Century inn for the next two nights.

I ventured into the office, and then round to the kitchen, where the inn hostess was vigorously kneading some bread dough. And with friendly tone and smile, I asked with diplomacy: “Is there a possibility of getting another room?” To which I received a *Kaiser Wilhelm-like glare*, and with a body language of a Gestapo-styled inquiry, as the inn hostess asked: (*Unt vas*) is wrong (*vit*) your room?” I hesitated momentarily in my response -- perhaps anticipating her about to undertake an aggressive ‘*goose-stepping*’ towards me at any moment.

It’s at an instance like this a man realizes, it’s do one of two things: succumb to pressure and acquiesce – duck-&-run for cover! Or rise to the challenge! Sword up, and unsheathed, with the belief “all is fair in life and commerce.” So I volleyed back a rebuttal. “Well the 5’6” ceiling attic room isn’t conducive to a 6’2” fellow, like me....Unless, of course, you’ve got the ‘jaws-of-life’ to extricate me when it’s time to check-out two-nights from now!” And then my final volley: “Right now I’m working on multiple concussions when I walk around the room. It’s totally ‘*Inn-Attic’-quate!*”

And though hesitant to give into the obvious defeat, the rather *un-user-friendly-frau* -- in obvious objection -- finally surrendered one of the larger (equally priced) rooms on the main floor of the inn.

A man's pain-in-the-ass nature can come in handy!

Another Observation: When a man has used up all his cards (paying cash upfront), the 'pain-in-the-ass' card up his sleeve can come in very handy. Also, proving that 'fixing' trumped 'feeling and fussing' about it for the duration of the vacation.

Two days elapsed. And now tucked away in a more spacious room, the '*Govern'r*' was pleased. Plus, as Warden, I was feeling *pretty* satisfied. Nothing more could go wrong, right? Well, 'Jiminy-Cricket' you'd hope so!

By Jiminy even some misadventure IS real adventure!

At bed-time on the final night's stay, the summer air off the sea was warm. The breeze was invisibly dancing into our room, gently waltzing the white curtain folds in-and-out, in-&-out. Eventually, my wife and I succumbed to slumber. Yet later, unexpectedly, we were awoken by an unexplained, and a strange presence in the room. Both of us awoke sensing, we weren't alone!

I got up. I walked into the bathroom -- nothing unusual to be found. "There's nothing here," I offered an assurance to my wife.

Back to bed we both lay. The ambient sounds of the outer sea- and country-scape enveloped our senses: distant crickets were dialoguing back-and-forth in the field outside:

"outdoor-tweep, outdoor-tweep, outdoor-tweep, INDOOR-TWEEP, INDOOR-TWEEP!"

Then a startling revelation: a cricket was holed up in our room! Loudly, proudly "TWEETING" a chorus, as if the INDOOR-cricket's song was the reason anyone would take a vacation away from busy, noisy city sounds. And Jiminy offered up again (as if privately musing: 'So, you like the ambience of the country-scape. Well take a listen to this!'): "TWEET! TWEET! TWEET"...in rapid and alarming succession!

So with Warden instinct, my propensity to just 'fix-it' kicked in again. Naked, with only a book (that serendipitously had an author's surname, Darwin, which was taken from the eclectic arrangements of books on the shelves within the room), and an empty water glass, I *crreeeeeeaaaaakkkkeeeedddd* across the wooden plank floor boards into the bathroom to find the nocturnal nemesis to my night's repose.

Solidary confinement has its merits too...

At the very moment of sighting him, and rushing to place the glass to the floor to trap him, he escaped -- to scurry safely beneath a tiny hole between the wall and the floor boards. But not to

worry: problem was solved with a blockage of wrinkled-up tissue tucked into the tiny hole. Now with Jiminy trapped in solitary confinement, I returned to bed. His 'tweeps' now muffled away in another area of the inn.

We were about to doze off. Then suddenly, silence was again sliced aloud with: "*INDOOR-TWEEP. INDOOR-TWEEP. INDOOR-TWEEP!*"

Deliriously tired and now envisioning the cricket as a small pet insect of the inn frau's, I jumped up with attitude. Thinking: she probably placed him beneath my room's floorboards to torment me for complaining about the attic room. So, once again, naked with book-and-glass in hand, I quietly tiptoed across the floor. Stopping momentarily, in silence, so as not to arouse his cricket senses and suspicions. Stepping into the bathroom, rounding the corner, I thrust the glass down quickly! And encased him between a glass cell and the floor, if only momentarily.

From the vantage point of my wife, tucked '*snug-as-a-bug*' in the bed in the other room, she heard a scuffle ensue and a few bumps, and some thrashing about. Then silence. She asked: "Brian?" To which there was no immediate reply. Only a forceful: "INDOOR-TWEEP! INDOOR-TWEEP!"

He only escaped briefly. A chase ensued. And, with dogged determination, I succeeded in encasing him one final time, between book-and-glass.

Peering at little Jiminy: him tauntingly looking back at me in defiance. I kneeling squashed between the wall and the toilet. Exhausted. I began ruminating out loud: "I think I'm gonna flush'm," said my inner-nihilist, looking at the open toilet. Then my inner-Taoist urged: "Maybe I shouldn't." Nihilist: "No, no. I think I should flush'm."

Or perhaps it was the "Memoirs of Ghandi", which I discovered from amongst the eclectic assortment of books, which I had skim-read through the previous day. Whatever it was, in that moment: I was wrestling with a deep philosophical, moral paradox, which most Warden's, who are over-lorded by US-elected state bosses, must face everyday: "Flush'm; or Free'm!"

My verdict: "Flu"..... (*when I was interrupted in mid-thought*)

"You may as well, set him free," my wife said from the darkness of the bedroom. To which I looked at Jiminy, and said: "Lucky you! The '*Goven'r*' called! And turns out, she's a Democrat." 'Feelings' rule!

Free At Last!

So after rushing with the inverted-glass-over-cricket-on-book to the doorway to the outside, with an insect community of "outside-tweeping" brethren awaiting his release, I tossed Jiminy into the

freedom of the night. Then I closed the door abruptly -- to foil any attempts of re-entry. His faint "outside-tweeping" now intermingling with the other crickets in an obvious chorus of celebration. "Free at last! Free at last!"

Both now tucked back in bed, my wife offered a loosely imaginative translation of the *Cricketese* being spoken just outside the door. "He's probably saying: 'Hey fella's. If there's any of the rest of us in the bathroom, TWEET NOW. Cause he works for the 'Govern'r!'"

Mere moments later, my wife was in a deep sleep. And Jiminy was still outside, merrily tweeping. My final thoughts, before my slumber swept me away, were: "If he gets back in here tonight, it's going to be 'Dead Cricket Walking'." Because my 'Warden, just fix it' philosophy -- at 4:05 am -- has no last minute reprieve.



No Innkeeper; Nor Cricket; Nor Wife was harmed in the writing of this story – "Honest, Pinocchio." Brian McLaughlin is a freelance travel-humourist from New Brunswick. Though he desires carefree and uneventful travel experiences, he often finds it's the twilight and serendipitous misadventures that provide the best memories and fun.