

Friday Follies 04/12/2002

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Hey!

Spring has sprung, and I love it. It is (1) time for the Pilgrimage in my home town of Columbus, Mississippi, (2) college baseball season, (3) and time to visit the "Tax Man."

(1) The pilgrimage is a time when all of the Dogwoods, Azaleas and Wisteria are in full bloom, and with over 100 anti-bellum homes in Columbus alone, people from all over the world make the "Pilgrimage" to see the gracious architecture and costumes of the pre-civil war and civil war era. It truly is like stepping back in time. It is considered an honor to be asked to "serve" in the Pilgrimage at someone's home. Basically, you are there as a docent, greeting guests and giving tours. You meet the nicest people, and you feel as though you have been transported to another time and place.



Here is a photo in 1980 or so with my son, Jeremy, (two), my sister-in-law, Vicki, and my nephew, Allan, (around six or so). The home is my brother-in-law's sister's home, which has been in *Southern Living* magazine so many times, we stopped counting.



Colonnade, 1860



White Arches, 1857

The name of the home is Colonnade, and we lived right across the street between Colonnade and White Arches, in a small Victorian home we had restored.

My two other favorite homes in Columbus are Riverview and Waverly. Riverview was built on the banks of the Tombigbee River, and the cool thing about this home is, the front and back were designed to be identical so guests would get the same glorious

greeting whether approaching by land or by water. (Tennessee William's birthplace is just around the corner.)



Riverview, 1852.

You may have seen photos of Waverly before. Waverly is famous for many reasons. Built in 1852, it was the center of a very large cotton plantation which was located on the river for easy transportation of crops by barges. But the years were not good to Waverly, and when the current owners accidentally "found" it while walking through the country one day, it had been vacant for over 50 years. There were even cows sleeping in the living room. They restored it, and it is truly one of the most magnificent homes I have ever seen. Oh, and guess what? It is haunted! There are several books written about the Ghosts of Waverly. Interesting place.



Waverly before...



Waverly after...



Main staircase

So, it is getting to be time for me to go home for a visit...not only because I want to see my mom and hometown, but because it is so breathtakingly beautiful there this time of year, AND there is COLLEGE BASEBALL!

(2) You have to understand where I come from....baseball is sacred in Mississippi, especially at Mississippi State University. There is a place called the left-field lounge at the ballpark at MSU. Basically, the space beyond left field does not have bleachers, so years ago, they started renting spaces for fans to pull up their trucks, vehicles, flat beds, etc. so they could tailgate, cook and enjoy the games all at the same time. People buy season passes to the "Left-Field Lounge". I do not know how to properly describe it, but the following passage written by none other than John Grisham, captures the almost "spiritual" aspect of Spring baseball at MSU. In all seriousness, it literally brings a tear to my eye when I read it.

"I guess every ballpark, in earlier times, was something else. Great things come from humble origins and all that, but it's difficult to believe Dudy Noble was once a cow pasture. I discovered it early in March of 1975 while a sophomore at State. This was before Polk, and the crowds were small.

On those cool spring nights, I would take a thermos of coffee and sit by myself in the bleachers by first base. I was 20, older than some of the kids I was watching, and had just recently hung up my spikes because I couldn't hit a junior college curveball. I was sad because I wasn't playing, yet I loved to watch the game. It was a pleasant place to be in the spring, but the park wasn't magical, yet.

The following year State hired Ron Polk, and Dudy Noble snapped back to life. He won, as he always has and always will, and suddenly the stands were full, the crowds were loud, the trucks and trailers appeared in left field, the Lounge was open for business, and the clouds of barbeque smoke became a symbol of baseball success at Mississippi State. We outgrew the old park, and he convinced us to build a new one.

The older I become, the more I find myself drawn back to Dudy Noble. There are many reasons. It's great baseball played by very talented kids. The game is pure and uncorrupted by money. The place is filled with memories, both of my college days and of the great games and moments since then. It's a wonderful place to unwind. The mood is festive. Time is meaningless. The game is played without a clock. There are no telephones in Left Field. Deadlines are more distant. Appointments seem insignificant. Regardless of wins and losses, I always feel better when I leave Dudy Noble than when I arrive. There are few places of which this can be said.

Several years ago, during a regional, Brigham Young played one of the early games in the first round. The gang I hang out with in Left Field always adopts a visiting team. It's nothing official...like everyone, we live in fear of the NCAA and its regulations...It's just our effort to make sure these kids are well fed and taken care of while visiting Starkville. We sent word through our sources to the BYU players, and during the late game a bunch of them arrived at our truck in the Lounge. They were hungry, and tired of fast food. State was playing, and Dudy Noble was packed. We fed them for three hours.

Late in the game, I sat next to one of the BYU players and watched with amusement as he tried to eat crawfish. He'd already been served spareribs, pork shoulder, catfish, frog legs, steak and smoked sausage, and as we watched the game I helped with the crawfish. A dense charcoal fog hung over left field. The mob pushed toward the fence. Jim Ellis boomed from an amazing assortment of speakers. There was a constant roar. The kid was awestruck. "Unbelievable," he kept saying as he looked around. "Unbelievable." I've seen this reaction many times from ballplayers, and for some reason I always feel compelled to share my knowledge of Dudy Noble and its legends.

I filled his ear. Someone passed up a plate of boiled shrimp, and he quickly forget about the crawfish. I told stories about Polk, many of them true, and of the stadium and how it was built and the record crowds and the history (my version) of the Left Field Lounge. I unloaded a dazzling array of statistics of past teams and players. I told tales I knew to be false (how could he know?). It was quite a performance, really. He didn't hear a word. He ate

his shrimp and watched the chefs at play in the fog. He studied the zany architecture of the trailers and trucks and vans packed together. He stared at the crowd of 9,000 rowdies who had gathered for a college baseball game. "Unbelievable," he said again. "I wished I played here."

I wish I had played there, too, but I never came close. And so I return year after year to watch the best of college baseball, to see old friends and make new ones, to cook and eat, to see the show. There may be larger parks, but not larger crowds. There may be prettier parks, but I doubt it. Dudy Noble is college baseball at its absolute finest."

John Grisham

And now for a few baseball shots.



At Benny Agbayanis's wedding,..



Booge Powell



Harmon Killebrew



Cal Ripkin



Jeremy and the "Babe"



Jeremy with Rip-Tide



Judi with Rip-Tide



And my personal favorite – Mr. MET! THIS ONE is another story for another time!

Grow in peace and wisdom...
Remember, life is short...we need to make it a good one.
Grow in peace and wisdom.
Your Friday Friend,

Judi Godsey

PS. NOTE OF CAUTION... 20 employees were fired from The New York Times here in Norfolk for sending lewd and indecent e-mails. (To my knowledge, none of the 20 were on our list - even though some of the attorneys who represent the company were!) I have asked each and every one of you on this list to tell me if these "Follies" place you in jeopardy, or even if they offend you. Please understand that they are intended to be light-hearted and are not mean-spirited in any way. If you are ever offended, do not hesitate to ask to be taken off the Friday list.

PSS. If you send a joke and I don't use it, it is because it has been used before, and I try not to repeat. Remember, I have been sending these since August of 1997. You tend to go through huge numbers of jokes that way.

Disclaimer: When anyone asks if I type all of these jokes, the answer is, "No!" I cut and paste one evening during the week (30 minutes, TOPS). I don't have time to sit, read, and retype jokes all day! If you would like to see a small portion of what I actually do, look up our homepage at www.chcs.pvt.k12.va.us and check out the Soundings section, a publication I produce four times a year which pretty much recaps most of what I am involved in.

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