

February 20, 2000. Ninety-eight years ago today, my Father was born in Hornick, Iowa. Happy Birthday Dad. Your presence was most emphatically a major influence in my life, and I miss you.

Neither you nor I sugarcoated things around us. Yes, there were ups and downs in our relationship, but my memories of our time together are precious.

Recall with amusement that Spring day in 1933, when you took me to "A Century of Progress", the much heralded World's Fair on Chicago's Lakefront.

Three memories of that day stand out, the Sky Ride, Sally Rand, and our ride back home to Glen Ellyn, in our 1924 Hupmobile.

Recall vividly the awesome structure of the Sky Ride, twin towers reaching up 1000 feet, an impressive example of engineered steel structures, separated by several thousand feet, but connected by heavy duty steel cable. Gondolas traversed this cable, offering their passengers a breathtaking vista of the Chicago skyline, its beautiful lakefront, and of course Lake Michigan. To a seven-year-old boy, a ride in one of these Gondolas held great appeal for wonder and excitement. "Ok", said my Father, "I will buy you a ticket for the Sky Ride, but you must go up there alone...by yourself".

Now I was reasonably adventurous youngster, but the temptation of riding the Sky Ride alone was overridden by fear. There was no way that I would board an elevator and ride into the unknown without the reassurance and security of security of Dad by my side.

So a memory book adventure was lost forever. Still wonder why he would propose sending a second grader alone, into a high rise elevator and a ride across cables that looked precariously fragile from my child's eye perspective on the ground.

Testing my mettle? Maybe so, but if that was the test, I lost. A decision that today, some 65 years later, I feel was appropriate for my age and mindset.

Another recollection of that day is the Sally Rand Exhibit.

Oh yes, I do remember the adventurer, Frank Buck, who offered exciting exhibits of his forays into Africa, including lions, tigers, Africans in their tribal gear.

But it was Sally Rand, who was considered *tres risqué*, especially for those times of muted sexual expression.

Miss Rand was known not only for her youth and beauty, but how she exposed her exquisite feminine torso.

Miss Rand, it seems, created a mystique, a burlesque of strip tease, only she didn't come on stage and "take it off". When she appeared before her audiences, she was already totally "au naturel", covering her body parts with several large feathered fans, which she maneuvered gracefully, deftly and seductively. And her positioning of these fans never left her "indecently exposed", although the fundamentalists of the day, were protesting loudly. It was the ultimate tease, truly a class act that left young and old Depression males in a state of erotic fantasy. My Father was no exception.

Now, don't misunderstand, seven year old boys were not permitted to attend such an "adult oriented" display. My exposure, you should pardon the phrase, was limited to my Dad's reaction that day and other times when he visited the Fair with other family adults. I have very vivid memories of how Miss Rand tantalized everyone, even the ladies. And yes, it was considered very bold, daring and sinful. No doubt about it, Miss Rand exuded glamour excitement and eroticism, when fantasy was one of the few escapes out of dark economic times.

Now as my mind wanders back to that day and the non ride on the Sky Ride, it all becomes crystal clear why Daddy proposed my solo trip. It would give him time for a few stolen enraptured moments catching bits and pieces of Miss Rand and her unforgettable performance.

Mystery solved. Amusing but sad interlude, yet if we had taken that Sky Ride as a duo, the memory probably would be lost in time, one of many mysteries and ironies in my life.

Interesting that my recall of this most wondrous Fair is so heavily laden with sex. Even then, I was tuned in to a precocious sexual awareness, a precursor, I'd have to admit, to a lifetime of appreciation for this most powerful force

It was as we returned home, something occurred that still puzzles me, and yet maybe it shouldn't. While leisurely driving on Highway 64, or North Avenue through Elmhurst, I suddenly grabbed the gearshift, and pushed it into another gear, looking up at my father with the question, "What does this do?". Obviously this gesture was an attention getting device, and it worked.

It is a wonder I didn't strip the gears. Fortunately that did not happen. Suffice it to say, I got Dad's attention. He was startled, puzzled, and furious.

So ended our excursion from the suburbs into the city, and home.

Yes, it was a day for the memory book.

Titling at Windmills

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