

Raging Gorillas, Mint Juleps and Time Travel; Just Another Day In Orange County

The ability to use my suspension of disbelief in everyday living has strengthened as I have grown older. Living in Orange County has heightened this useful skill.

We all do it. Most of us can sit in Lucille's BBQ in The District and think, "I just love visiting the South. What a simple and sweet place it is." We can suspend our reality enough that we are no longer in a restaurant in the parking lot of Lowe's, but enjoying a pulled pork sandwich in the sweltering heat of the Deep South.

This is really quite a talent, honed by growing up with Farrell's (oh how I miss Farrell's) and I suspect possible vapors from Disneyland looming in the air.

I don't think this ability is a bad thing in and of itself. People do it in the theater, walking through "Venice" in Las Vegas, and even at the occasional corporate retreat (you know, we're not at the Ramada in Bakersfield, we're at a luau in Hawaii!). But, where it has become sort of a faint, nagging quandary for me lies in my fear that I like the illusion of the experience more than the actual experience.

Here are a few examples (I can't believe I am going to share this as it reveals my utter inanity); I much prefer the "pier" at Disney's California Adventure over an actual pier. I know, it is pitiful. I like that it is clean; not a chachki store selling wind chimes in sight; and even the weather (the weather!) is better than an authentic pier.

I like the carnival-like rides and atmosphere at the various outdoor malls in Orange County more than the rickety, future-

tragic-headline-producing rides at your random fair or carnival. The carousel at Irvine Spectrum is my absolute favorite (the bunny being my absolute, absolute favorite).



Another pathetically revealing example is, I think I like the animals in the zoo more than truly wild animals. If I were walking in Africa and saw a wild Lion right in front of me, to tell you the truth, I would be scared, not charmed by the cute way he grooms his big killer paws.

Well, that one is just silly, but you get the picture.

Sometimes my sensibilities return to me and I get annoyed at this trend of theme living. If it is not a motif that is appealing to me, I don't want it around me at every turn. The Rainforest Cafe is a good example of this. I don't think raging gorillas, torrential storms, lurking snakes and trees dripping with moss are conducive to eating a salad. It just makes me jumpy and too vigilant to enjoy myself.

So, now you know the worst of it. My deepest shame is "out there." But don't judge me until YOU have had a Tuna Melt sitting at the shining counter of Ruby's, sipping a Vanilla Coke, while The Andrew Sisters sing "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy." I love living in the 40's.

