



The summer after high school graduation in 1969, I worked my "regular" job as cashier and "Jill-of-all-trades" at Thrifty Drug Store in West Seattle. On days off, I saw my "regular" friends and did the "regular" things, or just slept in until 12:30 when I could get away with it!

As Fall and the first quarter of college rolled around, so did the "what-did-you-do-on-your-summer-vacation" session at the young peoples' Sunday school class at my church. Two of the gals in class had spent their summer waitressing at Canyon Lodge in Yellowstone National Park. I sat entranced at their stories of the Park, their job, the people they'd met and the days off they'd had and decided right then and there that that was what I wanted to do next summer. I got the contact information from them before they left that day and wrote to the YP Company that afternoon. By the first of the year I had my marching orders. I was going to be a YP Savage - a Front Desk cashier at the Budget Cabins at West Thumb.



That first summer was a magic and heady experience. I'd never been so far away from home for so long a period before. With similar aged and like-minded compatriots, going to work was a blast, and days off were beyond compare with all the untamed beauty to see and explore. It was that summer that I met the people on the contact list labeled "West Thumb '70". Folks like Fred Turpin, a room clerk and student minister, Allan Dutch, a room clerk and "songmeister" extraordinaire, Kerry Hanson, a softspoken houseman from nearby Billings, and Jacque Foxx, a cashier at the boat dock down at Grant's Village and so much like me in likes and dislikes, in stature and birthday that we took to calling one another "Twin".



Fred



"Allan"

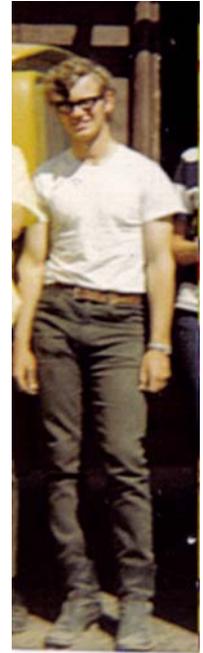


Jacque

The West Thumb Cabins were "Budget" in every way-no heat (presto log stove), no running water, and no insulation (you could see the outdoors between the wall boards!). In spite of that we were full nearly every night. Number 107 was my home that summer. The dreariness of this little abode was made more than bearable by the handsome guy who lived behind. I saw him a lot that summer, but I never gave him a name. It just didn't seem like the right thing to do to a creature so beautifully wild.



"Twins"



Kerry

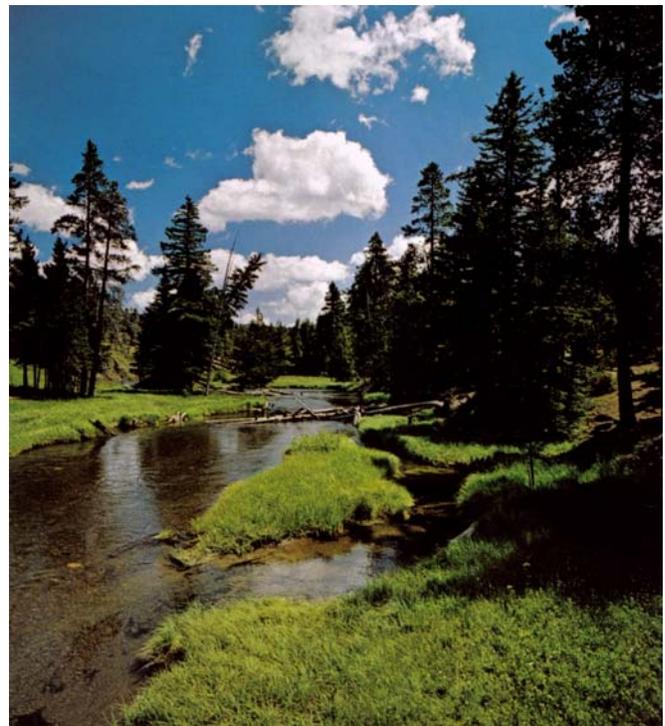


#107



Handsome Guy

The West Thumb Cabins were razed at the end of that summer (you can see why), and the summer of 1971 found me as a Front Desk cashier at OFL. Cinderella Dorm was like the Hilton after # 107 and the crush of people, both dudes and savages, at OF Area felt like Times Square on New Years' Eve compared to the sleepy little backwater of West Thumb. For peace and quiet, not to mention serenity, I'd often cross the Firehole via the fallen log behind the dorm and head up river a bit and just sit quietly where I could hear only the river and the birds talking.



Firehole River

Not quite halfway through the summer of '71, I received a promotion to the job of assistant location controller (bean counter) across the large parking lot at Campers Cabins. I now had friends at the Lodge and at Campers and soon (because Campers employees could elect to eat their meals at the Lodge or the Inn) at the Inn as well. I played volleyball (badly - sorry Bob) on Bob Kavanaugh's team and took camping trips to two of the most beautiful spots I've ever been:

Jenny Lake with "Bob's Harem" (Bob being the only male on that trip)



and out the Beartooth with this motley crew from Campers.



??, ??, Borden, Cindy Unger (aka Brillo)



Cindy U., ??, Borden, Larry, ??

By May of 1972 I was thoroughly "Parksick" (a longing to return to YP which still afflicts me at that time of year) and more than ready to report to OFL for my job that summer as the assistant location controller. We lost Ray Owens to a heat attack at the beginning of that summer (Ray had been a barber while his wife, Ida, was the Manager at the Lodge for as long as anyone could remember) and it seemed to cast a pall on the entire time. The weather was cooler and not so sunny as in the two years previous and for the first time in my life, the days did not stretch endlessly into the future. Still, Betty Chimieliak, a room clerk from Ohio, and Mary Ann McCracken, a cashier from Virginia, and I spent happy days off exploring Cody, Wyoming and Virginia city, Montana. On other days and nights off, I picked up pin money cocktail waitressing for Cal Ione and Jack Hartman.



Mary Ann



Virginia City

It was an odd summer, but I was not ready to leave when it ended. About to enter my senior year at the University of Washington, all I wanted was to stay behind in the Park and work through the winter there. In the end, though, I bowed to parental wishes and returned to school, graduated in the spring and married badly. Divorced after five years, in 1990 I married again, the nicest man I ever met, Steve St. Clair.



Steve

We enjoy traveling, walking (we used to call it hiking), reading to ourselves and to each other, and every minute we have together. Life is good and I am thankful.



Kitt Peak near Tucson, AZ



Trafalgar Square, London

I have had many jobs in the ensuing years from Junior High teacher, to retail buyer to independent sales, but none so magic nor so memorable as those three summers in Yellowstone.



Now



Then