

October 27, 2018
(September Letter)

Dear Samantha,

As you can see from the date, I am certainly behind on my monthly letters. It's not as if you are unfamiliar with what I was doing in September, however, since the clear highlight for me was visiting you in Orlando. There were plenty of lovely features to that visit – not just being able to hang out with my three generations of wonderful women.

I was apprehensive about the trip. It came about the end of a two-month visit to BC that included our Westfalia trip to Sicamous. I knew these activities were bound to be fun, but I had to come back to Montréal twice during that time for my myeloma checkup so I expected them to be exhausting as well. It was feeling like a long time on the plane, and I expected to be rather tired from the travel.

I was also not particularly excited about visiting Walt Disney World. My image of it was a lot of Disney hype, people everywhere, long lines, and great expense for items which were unattractive to me (and the basics – like food). Except for your presence and the opportunity to join Daegan and Fran, I expect I would have given it a pass.

I remember how much fun that Disneyland was to me as a teenager, but this was mostly the result of my age and the non-costing parts of the place – like Tom Sawyer's Island – so I didn't anticipate that there would be much for me to enjoy this time around.

Besides arriving to Daegan and Fran's welcome in the Orlando airport, my first pleasant discovery was that we had chosen a hotel which was close to the Disney activities. In fact, we were able to walk from the hotel to the Disney site via Disney Springs. I greatly appreciated that we didn't have to find a cab to get to the site – and that it was particularly convenient for you to stay with us. It was a bonus to discover the various shuttles that allowed us to visit the various Disney sites. I enjoyed turning up at your work in Disney Springs on that first day.

In the end, the visit to Disney World became a delightful experience – not because of what Disney did, but because of your thoughtful and knowledgeable curating and guidance. I was particularly impressed with the sites you chose for us to visit, the organization of our days to do so, and the up-to-date information you provided regarding the sequence of events. Your knowledge of the place allowed you to quickly change itinerary when lines were long or special events occurred. I was very impressed!

Thank you for your kind attention to us!!

Since my time there, I have also appreciated your suggestion to visit the Fantasmic event. Like many of the other places you mention in your blog, by being there in person, it provides a rich context for understanding your blog stories as I imagine what things are like for you in your daily activities. Without the first-hand-experience my imagination would have been locked in the past (with my experience at Disneyland) and in my distorted view of Disney World as solely an opportunity to separate people from their money.

I can also now see how much you are learning during this semester. It's not only about how a theme park runs, but also about how to live with others. Your stories of activities and conflicts with your residence-mates brings back many memories of my own experiences in living closely with strangers. It is

an important opportunity since it requires us to figure out ways of coping with people who are different from us, who are annoying, and with whom we disagree. We get some of this when working on group projects at college or university, but it is not the same as sharing living space with non-family.

You are now able to add this type of experience to your time living on your own at the suite. It is necessary to experience both of these directly since it is impossible to anticipate what it is like if you only have your imagination. I remember thinking that the main points of friction among live-in-mates in our SCM work camps would be the big-issue items – like sharing our earnings or dealing with people with perspectives which are very different from mine – but in the end it was the little items that created the stress. These included things like how thorough people cleaned up, whether they helped at dinner time, respected other people’s items, or left their own stuff all over the place. It sounds like you faced a similar experience in your residence.

We managed much of this stuff by having weekly meetings and trying to communicate about the issues on a regular basis, but even these sessions were inadequate for some stressors since preferential relationships developed over time and some people felt cut out of activities or otherwise marginalized. This just complicated an issue of cleanup in many ways!

The experience and exploration of ways to cope are important, however. This is especially the case since so many current careers require some sort of sharing of this type. It is also important for getting a reasonable perspective on what living with one (non-family) person might be! I feel that in general, people are poorly “trained” to engage comfortably with people who are different than them at the best of times, so that actually living with them is an added challenge.

In my mind, your semester at Disney World is providing you with experiences that go far beyond recreation management!

Love,

