



If It Weren't For Bad Luck...

Iva Walker

Well. It's official: If it weren't for bad luck, I wouldn't have any luck at all...when it comes to gambling, that is. On all other fronts I'd say that I'm 'way ahead of the game.

The LAF/SOME expedition to the Bright Lights/Big City bus trip to Wheeling Island (O.K., I lied about the big city part) Casino and Hotel and dog track proves my point.

I managed to get in my usual morning routine work-out and swim before hustling home to suit up for a day of hitting the fleshpots of West Virginia--slots, roulette, poker, blackjack, craps, chemin-de-fer--all of the decadence that could be accessed for the bargain price of \$30. As it turned out, the day started out cold and rainy, with a delay to make sure that the bus was in tip-top condition (Why would anyone complain about that?) but the loading process was uneventful and we were off!...like a herd of turtles...or a terd of hurdles...or something. Interesting drive. Even with all of the industrial insults to its natural beauty, the Ohio River is something to see. Even today, with down-at-heels river towns, discoloring run-off and abandoned structures along the length that we traveled, it was possible to glimpse a little of the hope and heart that drew settlers to the "Wild West" of Ohio (Iroquois word meaning "great" or "beautiful"; it referred to the river) in the early days of our country.

So...we arrive at Wheeling Island, garden spot of the mid-upper-Ohio River, at a sort of industrial-looking building proclaiming itself the number one gaming spot of...somewhere obscure, and beckoning to would-be high-rollers--which we all were, of course-- ready to break the bank. My roll of quarters was just about burning a hole in my pocket (Actually, I had a plethora of pockets, having donned--not you, Mr. Olin--a vest from a camping catalog with some fourteen of these conveniences--not counting the pencil slots--to avoid having to carry a purse).

Alas, the picture of the jaded individual sitting in front of a "one-armed bandit", feeding it quarters while squinting through a ribbon of cigarette smoke and occasionally swirling ice in a glass of amber liquid...not quite. West Virginia does allow smoking in lots more places than Ohio--big surprise there--so there was a kind of ambient haze in certain locations. One woman on my right was punching the game box she was playing pretty regularly between puffs but she did stop at one point after giving a whoop and showed me a picture on her phone. It was a newly-arrived grandson...which she thought looked more like the other side of his family tree. Lots of exhaust fans were doing their best to mitigate the effects of the smoke, with some success but not total. However, the gaming machines work from electronic cards, not pocket change and there are no big gushers of coin coming from their vitals. Bummer!

Made no difference to me, of course, because I was near-totally confounded just trying to figure out how the things worked and which button to push to make something happen...above and beyond the constant ring-a-dings, whoops and whistles,

humming and boopity-boops that accompanied all of the flashing lights that were inside and out of the gadgets. Being of the social studies ilk, I tended to lean toward the machines featuring Egyptian pyramids, kings, queens and knights, California gold miners, riverboat gamblers or jungle explorations. 'Twas all for naught, of course, the twenty dollars of free play got sucked down the rat hole as if it were real money and called plaintively for companionship from the overheated quarters that I still clutched. The pharaohs, fancy ladies from the steamboats and stalking tigers were of no help at all, whether I was playing quarter machines or even lower denominations (Yes, there truly are nickel slots, even 2 cent and 1 cent machines). There were a few of the adventurous types who hit the poker tables and did O.K.. I saw not one roulette wheel (James Bond, where are you?). There were blackjack tables, but I don't know much about how to do that either. We did watch the greyhounds for a couple of races. Seems to me that betting money based solely on color is probably not a big profit-taker. One of our number took the opportunity to bet on every pooch in one contest just so that she could be assured of winning at least once. It worked, of course, but is not a real viable financial strategy.

The lights were another thing altogether...more on that at a later date. There's also a treatise on public restroom policy in eating establishments. Could be a doctoral thesis for the right scholar. See me for publishing rights.



Puppy Tails

Mialie T. Szymanski

*As the moon goes to bed, the sun comes up
And here we meet a sleepy pup,
Who was walking through G-ville one bright sunny day,
Then saw The Villager and decided to stay.*

Several months ago, a little floppy-eared puppy found his way to the office of The Weekly Villager. The editors immediately fell in love with him and didn't want him to leave. Turns out the puppy didn't want to leave, either! When I started working for the paper, Doodle Dog decided he liked me best and wanted to tell me his story. He's a bit shy, so he's been content to live by our warm fireplace, happily serving as comic relief, guard dog, and occasionally even as proofreader ~ nobody knows how to sniff out the news better than Doodle Dog! ~ but now he'd like to make some more friends. There's a whole world out there ready to explore!

So, the staff, writers, and editors would like to introduce Doodle Dog, The Villager's pet pooch, to our readers, young and old, and invite you to come along with our four-legged friend on what is sure to be intriguing insights from a very different point of view. He's shared his story with me, and I know he can't wait to share it with you, too!

For Doodle Dog's debut adventure, he wanted to stay close to home because there are so many wonderful things to see and do right here in Garrettsville! Where do you think he will go this week?

Well, as Doodle Dog padded out the office door, he didn't quite know where he wanted to go, but a particularly crunchy leaf immediately caught his attention. So many colors and sounds! Do

you think he jumped on it to hear it crunch under his four paws? Or do you think he gave a big puff of breath to see it float through the air? *Whoosh!* Doodle Dog would have loved to hear the crunch or see it twirl, but he was curious to see what the leaf would do on its own, so he watched it carefully as it spun and dipped lazily on the wind at first and then faster, faster, as it picked up speed. Doodle Dog ran after the leaf, keeping his eye on the bright red spot as it flew nearly out of sight.

He chased the leaf down the boardwalk where it looked like it might float right over the railing and into the water. Oh no! Doodle Dog watched as it teetered on the edge, holding his breath so not to push it over. And then the wind caught it up again, blowing the leaf along the railing, balancing like a gymnast on tiptoe or a tightrope walker. As it went behind all the stores, Doodle Dog followed the leaf through the alley by the bookstore and across the street, eventually finding his way to the clock tower. *Bong bong bong!* A

freshly raked mound at the base of the tower made him stop suddenly. There it was, the bright red leaf right on top! He scampered after it and landed *SMACK* right in the middle, scattering leaves and twigs **EVERYWHERE!** The loud chimes rang again. *BONG!* It would be dark soon, Doodle Dog thought. He should probably get home. But first, a nap in these nice comfy leaves...

Next time you walk by that giant pile of leaves, you might just find Doodle Dog leaping out at you! Don't worry, he doesn't bite!

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