

REFLECTIONS ON ACKMA 2001

BY A FIRST TIME VISITOR TO AUSTRALIA

- Kriste Lindberg*

DELEGATES!

I swear, that word is still ringing through my ears. Well, maybe not constantly but when it does, it brings back some good memories of my first visit to an ACKMA conference. Actually, my first visit to Australia.

Planning for travel to the land down below began a couple of years ago, when I was hoping to go to the ACKMA 1999 conference with Bob Vandeventer, Tom Rea, and the others. However, it wasn't meant to be that year as it just so happened to fall during the same time I was leaving Indiana University to work for the more enriching City of Bloomington as the park manager for Leonard Springs Nature Park. It would have to wait until 2001, no problem. Or should I say, "no worries"?

The next thing you know, two years passed and Tom Rea and I were flying across the ocean (14.5 hours from Los Angeles, California to Sydney, New South Wales). Then, we're getting picked up at Goulburn train station for the exciting ride through Taralga to Wombeyan Caves (yes, I know who drove you – Ed!).

Arriving at the conference was an exciting experience, as was the rest of the week. So many things were familiar yet just a little bit different. Take, for instance, the seasons. They're reversed. Heck, even your caves form from the bottom up! ☺ Also, there are the accents and new words to get used to. The words to describe things are similar enough to get the gist of. For example, those used in caving, listed below, are some more common terms in Australian and American lingo:

Australia

shawl
straw
abseil
torch
catchment

America

bacon
soda straw
rappel
flashlight
watershed

track

Once again, not too difficult. As a matter of fact, it just made things even more interesting. Then, there were the people. My goodness, I've never seen so many happy people. No wonder, it's probably because Aussies tend to be more open and straight forward in their expression and have a more laid-back lifestyle. The US could learn a big lesson from you.

trail

I'm really impressed with the way you ran your conference, too – having papers presented in the morning while the mind is fresh and more able to absorb challenging material and taking a break in the afternoon with field trips. Excellent. Of course, morning and afternoon tea were a bonus. Again, very refreshing... literally!

Well, those are just a few brief reflections. It's been fun. Guess I better head back off to work, though. We have an exciting event planned for tomorrow, *Earth Fest*. It's a collaboration between the City of Bloomington and Monroe County. This year the topic is geology. Yes, yours truly did have a hand in selecting it. We will feature trips to Leonard Springs Nature Park, a man-made cave for visitors to explore and be educated on, rock-related activities, and many booths staffed by various agencies involved with local geology.

Hope to see you all again in 2003 at Chillagoe and Undara, if not before!! I'd be interested in hearing your tales after a first-time visit to the US, if possible. Remember, our version of ACKMA, the National Cave and Karst Management Association (NCKMA) is coming up this autumn, well your spring, in October. Feel free to look me up. Details are, I believe, elsewhere in this edition of the ACKMA Journal.

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