

60 YEARS LATER, THE FAIR STILL OFFERS A GOOD TIME

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My first visit to the State Fair was in 1937 when I was 10 years old. I bought a candy apple and a Mexican jumping bean. I attended this year on my birthday and spent considerable more.

A new Shop Smith - five woodworking tools in one has left me feeling like the guy in the Alka Seltzer ad: I can't believe I spent so much money.

In the late '60s when I worked in the Cortland Department of Environmental Conservation Regional Office, I was responsible for setting up the DEC Lands and Forest Exhibit. Manning it throughout the Fair gave me plenty of time to fully appreciate and take advantage of it. In particular I recall that it took watching every performance of Abby Lane's act from the front row to fully appreciate her artistry and talent.

This year's fair boasted the second highest attendance with over 850,000, The exhibits ran the full course from the midway attractions through all phases of industry represented here in New York State.

It is impossible to see and fully appreciate all of the fair in just one day. There isn't time or room to present all of the attractions at one time.

The livestock and farm animal exhibits are just one example. On the day we attended the swine had been replaced by the llamas and the Holstein breed of dairy cattle had been displayed earlier in the week.

The horses, with every breed represented, make up one of the largest single attractions. A continuous performance for judging and competitive events is held in the International Horse Show Coliseum.

One group of farm animals I had never seen displayed before was the emus. Although the ostrich is also gaining popularity as a farm animal, I didn't see any of them on display.

The arts, crafts, government, health and numerous industry exhibits took up much of our time. As usual, they are much improved and several innovations are available each year. It was obvious to me that it will soon be necessary to expand the facilities to fairly represent everything of interest.

Personally, I gave top honors to the State Police for the government exhibit and to Niagara Mohawk for industry.

On the way to the Fair I wondered if we would run into anyone we knew among the thousands attending. As we stepped from the car in the parking lot, my question was answered.

The first person we saw was Bob Shue. Bob is a Technical Sergeant with the New York State Air National Guard. He was on duty with the 174th Tactical Fighter Wing at its exhibit. When I visited the exhibit later, I ran into another local from Port Leyden. He was Staff Sergeant Mike Kraeger who is also a member of the 174th. Both men saw service during Operation Desert Storm.

The display featured an F16 fighter plane, which I speculated must cost at least \$2 million. It cost over \$20 million and the Maverick Missile it fires cost \$125,000 each. It also is armed with sidewinder missiles costing \$75,000 a blip. It tools along at Mach II, or better than twice the speed of sound.

I normally am not too keen on spending a day rubbing elbows with thousands of people. I confess it turned out to be a good day and visiting the Guard exhibit on the way out and seeing the hometown boys was the icing on the cake.