



The Tolopka Tattler

2010 Totally Awesome Edition
"All the News It Gives Us Fits to Print"



What Next?

Remember 2009?¹ Last year's Tattler reported marching in the Presidential Inaugural Parade, the San Francisco Chinese New Year's Parade, zip-lining in Alaska. 2010 may not have topped 2009, but we sure had fun trying! So you may² be asking yourself, 'What could these people be up to next?'

Well ... Suit up! And we'll tell you what's next in this Totally Awesome Edition of the ... (wait for it) ... 2010 Tolopka Tattler!

Cocktails and a Big Kahuna³



Janet & Tom Higham take on NAMM

In January we hit sunny California with the Get a Life Marching Band (GAL). We were at the Anaheim Convention Center⁴ to participate in the [Winter NAMM⁵ Show](#), one of the largest music trade shows in the world. 87,000 music merchants, music educators, and professional musicians come from all over the world to check out the latest instruments, sheet music, and musical gadgets displayed by nearly 1400 exhibitors. The show is not open to the general public; you have to be "in the business" to cadge an invitation and this year GAL did.⁶

general public; you have to be "in the business" to cadge an invitation and this year GAL did.⁶

¹ Surely you pull out the Tattler regularly to refresh the de-

² And if not, why not?

³ Which itself sounds like the name of a cocktail. And in fact, it is: 500 ml Tahiti Treat (like carbonated Hawaiian Punch), 100 ml Dr. Pepper, 50 ml vodka, 1 Tbsp Tabasco sauce. Yikes! (and Urp!)

⁴ A venue approximately the size of Delaware, but with fewer witches running for U.S. Senator.

⁵ We believe the acronym stands for North American Music Muckety-Mucks.

⁶ Rumors that the motivation was "to give GAL the business" are scurrilous, unfounded, and beneath mention.

For the 40th consecutive year, NAMM was kicked off by the [Fernand L. Petiot⁷ Marching Band](#).

The band normally consists of show attendees who select a horn off the show floor, rehearse strenuously for 10-15 minutes right before the show opens while drinking Bloody Marys, then parade through an amazing mob of press coverage and the vast show floor.



Rehearsing with the Petiot Band

In a regrettable lapse of judgment, GAL was invited to participate in the 40th anniversary Petiot Band. The 2010 Grand Marshal of this little parade was trumpeter, composer, arranger, conductor, record and TV producer and humanitarian [Quincy Jones](#). Since Steve is GAL's music director, he actually got to meet Mr. Jones and they had quite a



The inimitable Quincy Jones



Yet another celebrity

nice little conversation, reported here in its entirety.⁸ Quincy was selected as grand marshal because he produced the album and video for the song to be played in the parade. You may have heard of it ... Thriller!



⁷ We are SHOCKED that you don't recognize this iconic personality. He's the inventor of the Bloody Mary!

⁸ QJ: What's the name of your band?

ST: The Get a Life Marching Band.

QJ: (nodding sagely) Get a Life I like that!

Later in the afternoon we got a coveted slot on the Courtyard Performance Stage. Despite having what was probably the largest group at the show,⁹ everything went smoothly and we knocked 'em dead. That left the next couple days to wander the show floor and (best of all) try out every top-end saxophone and clarinet in the joint. Ah, heaven!



Running the stage show at NAMM



Goofy is Just Business as Usual

Since we were already in Anaheim, GAL made its third appearance in a Disney parade. By now, we're like the "pros from Dover" when it comes to marching for Disney. We're even used to the crowd reaction.¹⁰ This time we talked the Disneykins into letting us do a special Main Street Performance, stopping during the parade to play a couple extra tunes for our adoring fans. No matter how many times we've done it, that Disney crowd is still a major rush!!!

A Pizza the Action

In between our various Anaheim performances, we stopped for pizza at Napolini in Downtown Disney. Wow, pretty fine pizza.¹¹ Good enough that we went back a second night. The place is crowded, so we're waiting for a table.

Suddenly Janet stops this couple who are leaving; she noticed they were wearing red and one of them had a small WKU on his shirt. Janet told them we had gone to Western Kentucky as undergrads, lived in Portland, and were in town for NAMM. 20 more seconds of benign chit-chat and they leave. A minute later they're back – "Hey, do you guys play saxophone and run a marching band?" While Steve picked his jaw off the floor, Janet managed to say yup. "Gee, you guys are famous – we've heard all about you!" Turns out that they run Royal Music in



BC's Takakkaw Falls



Making friends at Icefield Centre

Bowling Green, KY (our old stomping grounds) and know Kent Campbell (our WKU band director), who apparently has been more than a little chatty about the exploits of some of his old students. As Disney says: It's a small, small world!

Yoho: Not Just for Pirates & a Bottle of Rum

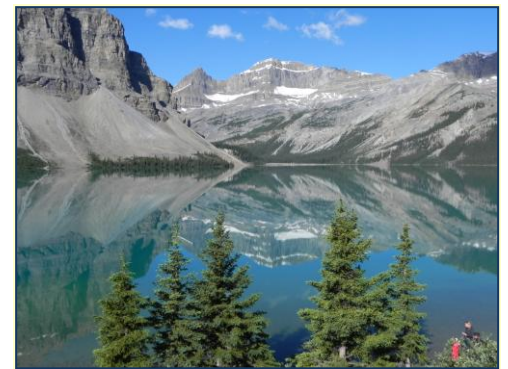
In July we did a fly-drive vacation to the parks of the Canadian Rockies, something Steve had talked about doing for years. We reserved a room at [Emerald Lake Lodge](#) in Yoho National Park (follow link for great pix), so after picking up our car in Calgary we headed north following directions. Along the way we stopped at Lake Louise, where we hiked part of the lake trail in the rain and were rewarded with a spectacular rainbow. Eventually, we got back on the road and headed for the Lodge.



Fairmont Chateau at Lake Louise

As darkness fell we pulled onto a little side road that headed into the middle of nowhere. We're creeping along at 30 mph.¹² Couple miles pass, forest deepens, it's getting darker—where the heck are we? Few more miles ... ah, there's a sign for the Lodge so we turn left. After two bends there's a parking lot,

nothing that looks like a lodge, and we're trying to remember all the mistakes people make in slasher movies. We try the tiny outbuilding anyway, where we find ... a phone to call the Lodge. Turns out there's no parking at the actual Lodge (half a mile further down the road), so they have to come pick us up. Whew!



Spectacular Bow Lake along Icefields Pkwy

Once we found the place it was truly beautiful, a [gorgeous green lake](#) surrounded by eight and nine thousand foot peaks. When we weren't

⁹ Stage Manager: You can't fit 43 musicians on that stage!

ST: Watch me. And don't accuse us of being musicians.

¹⁰ Hey! Those guys are old! They aren't in high school!

¹¹ Janet once did an entire Toastmaster speech on our pizza snobbery.

¹² Oh sorry, we're in Canada so that's 50 millicuries.

pigging out in the restaurant we hiked round the lake and even spent an afternoon canoeing.¹³ Other days we checked out the visitor center to

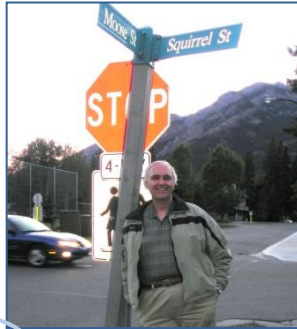


Continental Divide between Banff and Kootenai National Parks

learn more about the world-famous [Burgess Shale](#),¹⁴ drove the [Icefields Parkway](#) through Jasper National Park, took a cruise on [Maligne Lake](#), gawked at countless waterfalls, and everywhere EVERYWHERE

marveled at the stunning natural beauty all around us.

On our way back to Calgary we spent a night in Banff where we ate a luscious gourmet dinner (thanks Tom!), rode the [Banff Gondola](#) to the top of Sulphur Mountain, soaked in the [Banff Upper Hot Springs](#), and discovered the ancestral home of Bullwinkle and Rocky. All in all, a very cool trip. If you haven't discovered the Canadian Rockies yet – go!



our rock band (Treble in River City) played two hours of good-time rock in the Intel courtyard. Sweet!

Love & Marriage

They go together like a horse & carriage – but do they go with a marching band? In August, we received an e-mail inquiring whether GAL would play for a wedding. Steve promptly replied with the 47 reasons the couple probably DIDN'T want a marching band for their wedding.¹⁵ They responded thoughtfully. Turns out they really DID want a marching band for their wedding! The couple owns two Portland restaurants and the wedding location was a farm where the restaurants purchase their veggies. So off we went to a lovely little island south of Portland, and about 20 folks from the GAL kicked off the wedding with a parade of the groomsmen using their requested tune, *Brick House*. Go figure. The bride later danced down the 'aisle' to GAL's rendition of *Hey Baby* while the wedding guests sang along, later listed as "favorite detail" in their [online wedding recap](#).

Holy Moly, We've Gone Viral! - Portlandia

Also in August, GAL was invited to take part in a TV shoot for a show called *Portlandia*. The show features Portland and its quiriness and has just hit the air in January 2011. We had to sign releases saying we wouldn't talk



Portlandia and Saturday Night Live's Fred Armisen

about what we did at the shoot.¹⁶ So if we told any folks about it, you guessed it ... we'd have to shoot them (or should that be ourselves?). Anyway, the [publicity trailer](#) came out on YouTube¹⁷ and the band [stars](#) in it!¹⁸ Check it out and read our interview on the [Portlandia Face-book page](#); maybe you can be visitor number 300,000! Oh – and if you didn't already recognize it, that's *Portlandia* in the Tattler header.

(Late-breaking news flash: Just saw the first episode; we not only stayed in the show, both Steve and GAL even made it into the credits!)

A Little Bit Country, A Little Bit Rock 'n' Roll

Way back in 1992, a tiny Intel lab team showed off its projects to a couple dozen people via a low-key event Steve called the Country Fair. Eighteen years later the Fair is still an annual event, though



Treble in River City plays the Country Fair

it's grown a bit. This year, 800 visitors scrutinized 60 demos covering a plethora of technologies. Even more interestingly, the Intel CTO moved it outdoors "under the bigtop tent" and surrounded it with hay bales, steer roping, popcorn and snowcones, a ring-the-bell-with-the-sledge test of strength, and live music. And if you want live music, who ya gonna call? Yep –



With the official Country Fair cow

¹³ Without killing each other – a significant achievement!

¹⁴ For some reason it bothered people when they kept finding stone sea animals that looked like something from the Star Wars cantina on the side of a mount at nearly 9000 ft.

¹⁵ Not the least of which is that it's murder on the h'ors d'oeuvres!

¹⁶ Final answer: Not much. But watch the video and judge for yourself.

¹⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVmq9dq6Nsg>.

¹⁸ Or at least didn't wind up on the cutting room floor.

Westward Huh?!

In September we loaded the marching band onto a bus and headed to Eastern Oregon for the 100th anniversary of the [Pendleton Round-Up](#), one of



Janet wails at the Pendleton show

the ten largest rodeos in the world. Though we drove east, the town's flavor was clearly Western; [Hamley & Company](#) has been supplying finely-crafted saddles and other cowboy necessities from the same building since it set up shop on the Oregon Trail in 1905. We were very near the front of the Dress-Up Parade line-up, which was fortunate since those folks have a *lotta* horses¹⁹ in their parade.

Afterward we played a

show in one of the local parks and were thrilled to receive the President's Award from the [Main Street Cowboys](#), the civic organization that runs the parade. Yeee-haaaaw!

Holy Moly, We've Gone Viral! - Flash Band

Have you heard of flash mobs?²⁰ A flash mob is an event where one person begins singing or dancing in an unexpected venue and gradually others join in till there's an entire ensemble performing. In November, we played *America the Beautiful* with a flash band at Union Station in downtown Portland. It was about the most fun we could have in less than 5 minutes! [In the vid-](#)



Flash band at Union Station

[eo](#),²¹ Steve is the conductor. Janet is the one in the long, electric blue coat playing the alto sax solo in the beginning. Hiding instruments so passengers in the station wouldn't suspect was tricky; the

place was full of bulky-looking people with odd-shaped bags studiously ignoring each other. Since Steve was conducting, he had nothing to hide.²² Janet was hiding her sax under her coat (one of our flute friends said she looked like she

¹⁹ The supreme foe of marching bands.

²⁰ If you're thinkin' there are naked people involved - well, it's not nearly that interesting.

²¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igvC6RM7DCM>.

²² Not true for most other areas of his life. If something weird is going on, he's definitely on the prime suspect list!

was with child). After we were done, a passenger remarked to Janet that "you guys just came out of nowhere". One passenger wanted to know where we were going next so she could follow us.²³ We're looking forward to the organizer putting together another event.

Is This the Pits or What!

No, we're just band junkies! In December, we got the opportunity to do something Janet has been interested in doing for a long time (and no, it has nothing to do with sky-diving or hang-gliding). We volunteered to play in the pit orchestra for [West Sylvan Middle School's production](#) of *Guys and Dolls*. Though only a middle school, West Sylvan has gained a reputation for putting on musicals on par with some high school productions. Over the past 5 years they've done *Godspell*, *Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and *Little Shop of Horrors* to name a few. We had a blast doing this and would do it again in a heartbeat!

Shy & Retiring!

Ok, not shy, BUT retiring! After 29½ years at Intel, Steve decided the time was ripe for retiring. Since he had lots of vacation and a sabbatical to take, his last work day was in October. A big party was thrown for him that included a surprise visit from a subset of GAL disguised as a small herd of elephants.²⁴ Somehow, our disguise wasn't quite good



Retirement 'Louie Louie' with GAL - Steve gotta go!

enough because he recognized us right off! His official last day at Intel was January 3. Now we have several boxes of 'god knows what' in the house that he brought home from his office!

Mom's the Word!

The week after Steve's retirement party, he headed off to Kentucky to visit with his mom and to help with whatever needed doing. Mom returned to Portland with Steve for a nice visit

²³ The answer: Nowhere. The idea is to disappear into the crowd after it's over.

²⁴ Ask - it's a loooooong story!

through November and December. We're sure she thought we'd lost our minds as she watched us run around like gerbils working away at this or that. But she was a good sport about all the insanity and the irregular feeding schedules. She even came to a couple of the events where we performed and, amazingly enough, we think she enjoyed them. She was here till we all flew off to spend Christmas with the Florida Tolopka's.

Can Lightning Strike Twice?

We had a great time in Florida visiting with family. We did a lot of eating, hanging out, eating, going for walks, reading, & going out to eat. The day before we came home, we visited [Universal's Islands of Adventure](#) with Steve's brother Ken, Ken's spousal unit Sharon, and the two child units, Nick & Kris.²⁵ While it was pretty chilly most of the day, we had a pretty wonderful time visiting various venues, including the 'Wizardsing

World of Harry Potter' where we flew after Harry and Kris got a wand especially suited to his talents. WE don't know what those talents might be, but hope the wand does since it picked him to be its owner.

On December 29, we decided to try hanging out on Ken & Sharon's patio to see if we'd get another crazy phone call like the one we received from the Presidential

Inaugural Commission two years ago to the day. Alas, no such luck ... stifling our disappointment we headed home.

Duck's On!

So it was quite a year. We started out by going to the NAMM show in January and finished it off on December 30th by playing for a University of Oregon pep rally. In between, we didn't even tell you about playing the [Puyallup \(Washington\) Fair](#) where we hijacked a six-year-old out of the crowd to use his bubble gun while we played *America the Beautiful*; or the dances that our jazz band played; or the 2nd annual [Sax in the City](#). Suffice it to say we stayed busy.

Anyway, getting back to U of O ... You may recall they played for the National Champion-

ship on January 10th. The pep rally was at Bridgport Plaza, an outdoor shopping mecca just south of Portland. Did you catch that? An OUTDOOR shopping mecca on DECEMBER 30TH!

And yes! It was really cold! Fortunately, we spent most of the time playing in a huge heated tent, though we were out in the cold enough to freeze our poor little fingers almost to our keys.²⁶ Still, a fine end to the performing year.



Puddles, the U of O mascot, lends assistance

Out With the Old Decade—In with the New

We welcomed the new decade at a New Year's party with several long-time friends. The potluck food was great and spending the evening with some really wonderful friends was the perfect way to kick out the old decade and kick off the new one. We hope this new decade will be a great time for all of you and will bring new joys and memories to your lives.

With love,

Steve & Janet



Steve's directing, not measuring that flag!



We're outa here!

Wanna see full-size versions of the *Tattler* photos? Check out the online version at www.tolopka.com. Our web page also has pointers to all the band websites, where you can get audio, video and more pix. And drop us your email address; we're steve@tolopka.com and janet@tolopka.com.

²⁵ Actually, Nick's pretty much an adult unit at this point!

²⁶ Steve's note: It wasn't that bad, this is just Janet whining.²⁷

²⁷ Janet's note: It absolutely was!!!