

Long Ago and Far Away

In 1984 I made my way north from coastal Alabama to the far away land of Illinois, to the town of Evanston, where I began a bold new adventure. If memory serves, and it has been a while, I was the fifth person hired for the new project at Northwestern University Library, to help with training our new customers. My adventure began with a trip to Missouri, I think it was, on a six passenger "puddle jumper", flying through a thunder storm, with a rather pregnant Peggy Steele. There were green blobs all over the weather radar in the cockpit that we could clearly see from our seats. I am sure we all have "war stories" of our travels, especially in and out of O'Hare, affectionally called ORD. One of mine is of hauling a briefcase and a suitcase—in those days we could bring luggage onto the plane—of large binders with freshly printed documentation, trying to load them into the overhead, as the seasoned business travelers watched in amusement. Or the time I came home from, probably, some place warm and sunny, to an airport with 10 plus inches of still falling fresh snow, hoping and praying that the faithful turquoise and white 303 cab could get me home to downtown Evanston. Or another of a mad dash to O'Hare, through mid-day traffic, with two newbie trainees trying to make our flight to who knows where.

Other memories include the ever growing staff needed to serve our rapidly increasing customer base, as we took over more and more of NUL, until they finally booted us out of the library. I was on the committee that chose our new digs, the beautiful Shand Morahand (sp?) building, which just happened to be across the street from my apartment, and being accused of having fixed the choice. And of course there was the infamous "hissy fit" that I pitched when my IBM computer was summarily replaced by a MAC. Of course now I am all Apple all the time, loving my new iPhone 14 and writing this on my MacBook Air. And last but not least there was The Band! I bet none of our competitors had a cool band that entertained at the customer meetings or just jammed in the office.

As the company grew exponentially in the next four years, I got to travel all over the country to libraries great and small. More importantly, I got to participate in the dramatic evolution of NOTIS, from a basic

circulation system to the integrated system it eventually became. Jerry reminded me that one of my personal contributions was naming modules, like GTO and VITLS. I still enjoy naming things, especially the characters in the books that I now write.

After I left the company, I continued to be involved as Systems Library at Eastern Kentucky University, as the universities explored acquiring a state-wide library automation system. Naturally I put in a good word for Voyager, the second generation system. I will never forget the look on Jane Burke's face, as we sat in a meeting of the university presidents and their systems staff, discussing the possibility of purchasing Voyager, a look that said, "What kind of mess have you gotten me into this time, Roberta." The whole very political process was like herding cats, feral cats!

And speaking of names, I seem to remember that my moniker was "Hurricane Roberta". I assume it was said with affection, at least most of the time. Sadly over the years I have been downgraded to a "tropical storm", but never, never to a "tropical depression". I am retired-retired now, enjoying writing and gardening and watching livestreams of deep ocean research dives.

I have great memories of my time in that far away land and of the places I visited. But mostly I remember all the people, the staff and the customers. I am very proud of what we accomplished together, with Jane leading us and dear Doris nurturing us.