

The Movie Studio

We were parked in the visitor parking lot just outside the double arched entrance to Metro Goldwyn Mayer Studios, or M. G. M., as it is known, awaiting the arrival of our friend, Bill, a Public Relations Specialist for the studio. Inky was very excited, as were the others including Libby. We were all standing outside the car with our eyes fixed on the gate to see if we recognized anyone driving in. A steady stream of cars and busses passed through the gate, but no sign of Bill. We were about ready to go back to the car when a beautiful young lady pulled up in her convertible and asked if we were waiting for someone. I told her we were waiting for our friend, Bill, and she said she was sure he would be along any minute. As she drove off, she said, "I'll see you inside." Suddenly I felt a tap on the shoulder. I turned around and it was Bill. "Hey, we thought you'd come out of the gate." I said as I shook his hand.

"This is early for me. I usually don't show up until after noon. But enough about me, Introduce me to your family."

Libby smiled broadly and shook his hand, then she introduced Inky, Pancho, and Spots. Bill asked if we were ready to go inside and we said Yes, we had been for our walk and we were ready to go. As we went through the gate, Bill gave each of us temporary badges. I clipped the pup's tags onto their harnesses and they were really proud of that.

Once in the gates, we climbed aboard what is best described as a stretch golf cart, and with Bill at the wheel, we were on our way. Along the way, Bill related some of the history of M.G.M..

"The studio opened in 1924 with silent films. In 1928, we did our first sound movie called *Leo, The Lion*. In 1930, we signed Clark Gable, who became one of Hollywood's greatest stars. In 1932, the studio came out with "*Grand Hotel* which set the standard for star ensembles in a single movie. We presently have ten major films in production. We are going to the set of "*Heartbreakers*" a little later, but right now I thought you'd enjoy a trip to the famed 'Backlot' here at M.G.M.

When we entered the Backlot we were immediately transported into another world. First, we were on a dirt street with hitching rails on both sides. There was a saloon, a mercantile, a barber shop, and various other buildings, all made of weathered, rough cut lumber.

"This is Tombstone, - - or Deadwood, or Carson City, or any other 1880s western town you'd like it to be. Parts of many old late '30s and early '40s westerns were made here." We continued on down the street and soon we were in front of a small white cottage with a picket fence, with trees everywhere. Around the corner and down and we are in 1930s Chicago and you can almost hear the Tommy guns and see the old cars as the gangsters fought each other over territory.

We went to Bill's private office so he could catch up on his calls. After a catered snack, I took the pups for a short walk in a park-like area in back of the offices. On our return, Bill told us it was time to go to the sound stage to see a movie being made. It was just a short walk and, on the way over, we met Ross Weatherwax, and he had the latest Lassie with him. We were introduced and I told him how much Spots admired the big Collie. I slowly led Spots over to Lassie and, when they were close, Mr. Weatherwax said something to Lassie and she licked Spots on the nose. I thought Spots was going to have a stroke. Then Pancho and Inky had to meet Lassie and, yes, I'll admit it, I got to pet her a little. Then we said our goodbyes and entered the sound stage door. Once inside, Bill told all of us we must be very quiet. We were not allowed to go very near so I could not see the actors well enough to identify them, but not so with Inky. I noticed him pulling at my pants leg, so I picked him up. He whispered in my ear, "John! That's the girl who stopped and spoke to us outside the gate! That's Jennifer Love

Hewitt!" I looked closer and realized he was right.

"How about that, little pal? That's something to tell the gang about!" We watched for a while and then, when the cast and crew took a break, Jennifer came over and signed the pup's visitor passes. They were all excited, but none more than Pancho, and his body language showed it. She picked him up and he was in love all over again. But soon they returned to work and we decided we'd better head back to our hotel, because tomorrow we must leave for home. We all thanked Bill for his wonderful tour of M.G.M. and he took us back to our car.

On the way back to our hotel Inky hopped up in the front and gave Libby and me a big kiss.

"John, we just want you and Libby to know what a great trip we've had! We love both of you very much!"

I thanked him and gave him a hug. "It was a great trip for us, too, Inky, but I think I'm ready to go home."