

## from Toronto

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I am in Toronto very briefly for a couple of events at the INternational Reading Association Convention. I like the city of Toronto (though I am not here long enough this time to enjoy it much) but I am sadly recalling the last time I was here: September 11th, 2001. Martin and I had flown up here the evening before, spent the night in a hotel near the train station, and then on the morning of 9/11 walked over to the train station and boarded a train that left at 9 AM. We were headed across Canada to Vancouver, where we would meet friends coming up from California and then we would spend several days on Vancouver Island.

We had no idea that the world was falling apart that mornng, as we sped west out of Toronto. Rumors began to reach the train after a few hours; but there were no newspapers, no TV; one passneger had a radio with very unctain reception so by afetrnoon we heard bits and pieces but nothing more. One American couple who were on the train with us had a son who worked in the world trade center. But of course they could reach no one, had no news. They finally left the train in Jasper the next day, to try to find a way to return to the USA, or at the very least to contact relatives.

We simply continued on to Vancouver and spent a subdued few days...our friends did not come from California.....before finding our way home through ominously empty airports in Seattle and Salt Lake.

I remember how kind all the Canadians were, expressing sympathy when they found we were Americans.

And now I am back in Toronto again, six years later, and though the world is greatly changed, this is still a lovely and vibrant city. A cab driver last night disagreed. *No*, he said, *nothing to do here. You drive four hours and look at Niagara Falls, and that's about it.*

Conventions like this are always a great place to see old friends. I sat down on a comfy chair in a hotel lobby, intending to work on a speech; glanced up and found I was sitting across from Lee Bennett Hopkins, who glanced up at the same time. There went the speech. Lee and I always find lots to gossip about, and I hadn't seen him in a while. He was a great pal, also, of Carol Otis Hurst, who died so suddenly in March, and so we reminisced together about Carol.

Trouble is, there is ever enough time for a good visit with friends. Pat Mora and I were at the same dinner party...but different tables...so we simply waved across the room, and will resume our friendship-via-email when we both return home.

Same with Linda Sue Park. Linda's son graduates next weekend from Boston University (as does my daughter, from BU's master's program) but he decided he didn't want his family to come, so Linda will not be using my driveway, as she sometimes does when she's in Boston (one of the world's worst cities for parking) but we got to chat for a few minutes in a hallway at the convention center.

I have said this often but will repeat that I do love the camaraderie of this profession.

But now I must check out of the hotel and head for the airport and back home. I'll have a houseful of company this weekend and I'd better get myself to the supermarket.

Tags: Untagged