

MOTELATHON

by
Doug Wilkins

The Bates Motel stands as a sort of flagship of fear in the cinematic realm of hotel/motel horror, but this is only because Hollywood doesn't have the intestinal stamina to display the cabalistic atrocities which take place in motels on "speech" weekends.

When you were a kid, hotels and motels were nifty places to visit. The basics and then some were all supplied to you, and, since you were under the age of 10, the question of money didn't phase you. It wasn't your money. Life was good to you.

... "the reservation has vanished into thin air. No one thinks to blame anyone but you..."

Then somehow you ended up as the forensics coach at your school. You were minding your own business; prepping four different English classes, grading papers until 3:00 a.m., serving as sophomore class advisor, taking two night classes, and mowing the school lawn (next time, read the small print in your contract, I guess), when your principal called you in and asked, just hypothetically, if you would be willing to serve as the advisor for the forensics program.

Your first reaction was one of disgust. After all, who wants to be in charge of a bunch of junior Quincies? (Future Morticians of America?! Yuck!)

Once the initial misunderstanding was clarified, your principal assured you that (perjury time) "The activity doesn't take too much time or effort, and the students tend to run the program themselves." (This statement is all too true.)

The realities of forensics have chilled many a discussion. "The Motel Manager Always Rings Thrice," and "Invasion of the Dozens of Noisy, Obnoxious, Completely Unsupervised Brats from Ranch Suburbia High in a Dangerous Neighborhood Where the Hotel Has Hourly Rates" are but two of my gloomier, and therefore more successful, epics.

A few synopses, are, I suppose, in order. You will be able to verify them, unfortunately.

"The Invisible Hotel Reservation"

The title is self-explanatory. It's late, your students are in pain and being quite vocal about it. You trudge into the hotel at the State Tournament (it was State Tournament in my case, anyway), and *voila*, the reservation has vanished into thin air. No one thinks to blame anyone but you for the screw-up. Inga, the desk clerk, isn't much help.

"Invasion of the Sleepless Wonderfreshmen"

Consider yourself lucky if they were only watching Triple-X video porn in the hotel jacuzzi at 4:00 a.m. with four free-spirited stewardesses.

"Track Meet from Hell"

You might have missed this one if the vibrations caused by their endless thundering up and down the hallways hadn't spilled a glass of water from your nightstand into your sleeping face.

"Sorority Hegemony"

A bad comedy centering on a singularly "blonde" error. Six young Future Debutantes of America-types wander through the passway door between their room and a room which

is not assigned to your group, and which is eventually destined to be assigned, late at night, to a pair of hard-driving, hard-working, hard-living truck drivers. Somehow, this one isn't **entirely** your fault.

"The Realm of the Beast"

You tell them and you tell them and you tell them: "Let me know where you are going!" I just wish I had been there to watch as four or five of my more intelligent boys left the motel and climbed a fence into a pasture occupied by one rather possessive bull.

"The Realm of the Beast: Part Two:"

No charging bull is a match for a motel manager I will call "Zelda." Armed with a cunning variety of booby traps, Zelda relieves her boredom and insomnia by calling **your** room and complaining:

1. Every time a room door slams (There are diabolical devices which are set to a single setting, "Autoslam!")
2. Every time a hot water pipe clanks (They are designed that way.)
3. Every time an eighty-nine pound girl in the room above her office rolls over while sleeping on the Mega-Squeak Mattress.
4. Every time it's "too quiet," and Zelda thinks your kids are "Up to no good."

But, of course, I am guilty of poetic license here.

There is no way that a forensics weekend would be like any of these. **Any** typical forensics weekend **COMBINES** most or all of these simple pleasures.

THE TYPICAL FORENSICS WEEKEND

(Tighten yer seatbelts and ex yer digits)

Friday Afternoon

Leave school, but don't leave school on time since Oswald had to find his magnetic chessboard, Bartholomew had to wait for his mom to bring a special snack, and Millie left her lucky pillow, "Mr. Fluffenstern," in the classroom.

Friday Evening

Eat at the traditional, sacred, junk-food Nirvana at the confluence of two of the ugliest freeways in the region. Tell the students that they should limit their stay there to 30 minutes, and then watch helplessly as Oswald and Aaron disappear in search of the convenience store you passed roughly two exits earlier. Wonder what normal people are doing now.

Stop again, five minutes after Oswald and Aaron finally return, because Millie, who slept (with the help of her lucky pillow) through the food stop, now needs to go to the bathroom.

Friday Night

Standard Operating Procedure, Yassir, the night clerk, has no record of your reservation. As a creative alternative, he recommends the "Puce Penguin Motel" just down the street a few furlongs. If you are a veteran (he doesn't say "of what") you might get a break in the already reasonable rates, since they give special discounts to servicemen.

Your students rise to the occasion, whining and complaining just as mightily as they would no matter **where** they stay. They dub your rather sinister-looking accommodations the "Puke Penguin," and settle down to the usual routine of screaming across courtyards and jumping on the beds. Oswald suffers a slight ankle sprain during an abortive attempt to abduct "Mr. Fluffenstern" from a surprisingly capable Millie.

Saturday Morning

Just as the twin boys finally fall asleep (with some persua-

sion on your part) at 4:00 a.m., the four freshmen girls launch themselves into a morning routine consisting largely of thunderous showers and vast quantities of hair spray. Everyone orders "breakfast" at the counter at the nearby Denny's. Millie knocks Aaron's double-fudge sundae into your lap with her lucky pillow. Nobody tips.

All Day Saturday

You have to judge. The students don't think they're doing very well, and you receive much of the credit for their difficulties.

Saturday Night

Aaron and Oswald do cannonballs off the Coke machine into the jacuzzi while repeatedly shrieking, "We're high on Coke!" (Sploosh!) "We're high on Coke!" Bartholomew's mother calls after you've finally fallen asleep to complain that a boy said "something vulgar" in one of "Little Barty's" rounds of humorous interplay today, and that she wants you to bring Bartholomew home at once should this happen again tomorrow. Finally, peace settles over the motel once the local SWAT team rousts the seven Marines who refuse to leave the room of the four "hairspray" girls in the room next door.

Sunday Morning

No one wakes up on time. No one packs their stuff. Arrive at the tournament during the 5th speaker's draw in Extemp Prep.

Sunday All Day

Goofy Wendy Guardrail makes it to the semi-finals of expository with a speech on "The Legend of Mister Clean," so all have to stick around until 10:00 that night (awards were supposed to start at 7:30) since this is one of those tournaments where semi-finalists receive "pet rock" trophies.

Late Sunday Night

Millie hyperventilates when she discovers that she's left "Mr. Fluffenstern," her lucky pillow, back at the "Puke Penguin" Motel.

Maybe next year your administration will let you do something less demanding, like supervising the intramural gang fights. (*Doug Wilkins is the former coach at Clovis HS, CA. "Motelathon" is reprinted from an earlier California Speech Bulletin and the March 1989 Rostrum.*)

shorts and a T-shirt—right in the pool!" junior Denise Neumann said. "We were singing our school song, but we changed the words to make fun of the a-holes on the football team."

The combination of the wet bodies, caffeine, and general spirit of revelry even resulted in some intra-squad flirting.

"Eric [Yetter] is so funny," sophomore Kim Ault said. "He was pretending to fall asleep, and he'd sink down into the water and act like he was dead. Then he got my hair all wet, even though I wasn't going to put it in the water."

Later that night, Yetter and Ault disobeyed the "no co-ed room activity" rule, professing merely to be "sharing passages from their Advanced English 11 journals."

"I don't know what went on, but Eric is, like, Kim's man now," said Wendy Druyan, Ault's roommate. "We kept knocking on the door and calling their phone until they took it off the hook. Then we went in Denise's

room next door and banged on the wall."

The only student who did not participate in the tomfoolery was Jay Gawlikoski,

"We are *livin'* it up."

who spent the night in his room.

"If we get in trouble, it could go on our permanent record and colleges would see that," said Gawlikoski, two-time recipient of Knauf's Most Valuable Debater award. "I'd be more than up for some charades or maybe a game of euchre, but I really have no interest in doing something stupid that'd hurt my chances of getting into Northwestern."

According to anonymous sources, Gawlikoski is a "puss" and "just mad because everyone teased him for bringing a huge suitcase for an overnight stay." The

unnamed student also claimed that Gawlikoski actually phoned his mother to tell her the results of his competition and was in bed by 10 p.m.

Unlike Gawlikoski, the other students were more than ready to party late into the night. The last to turn in, sneaking back to their respective rooms at 4 a.m., were Randy Lund and Tim Farber, a pair of juniors who earlier in the day went head to head against the co-captains of the vaunted Eau Claire Memorial High School squad.

"Yes, we were ultimately vanquished, but our 11-4 record is nothing to sneeze at, and we made some very persuasive arguments on the WHSFA debate topic, Weapons Of Mass Destruction," Farber said. "What's more, with just two graduating seniors on the entire squad, the Abbotsford debate team will be a force to be reckoned with next year. We had more than enough reason to make merry this eve." ∅