

AVCON 2007

Day One: Friday, 07.27.07, Studio Tour and Filming Sites: We all met in the parking lot at Black Creek Pioneer Village around 9am. It was nice to catch up with past attendees and old friends, and to meet new friends. There were many people from the States (Nebraska, Ohio, Wisconsin, New York, California, Texas, Michigan, New Hampshire for example). There were also people from Europe (Hungary and Scotland to be exact), and local Canadians (Milton, Toronto, Peterborough). About 40 people came to the first day. This day was very popular and was sold out. There were people who were on the waiting list, but because of a few no shows, a lucky family of three from Omaha, NE, the Websters, were able to join in. We were grateful to have Dan Matthews, Sullivan Entertainment's location manager, as our tour guide extraordinaire again this year. Throughout the day, he regaled us with behind the scenes stories, facts about shooting RTA episodes and interesting trivia about the actors, filming sites, props, horses, and much more! Our first stop was the Sullivan Entertainment backlot in Scarborough. We had a 7 to 9 car caravan, and it was a major feat to keep us all together. A few times, we lost someone but no one got lost permanently. Currently, the backlot is being rented out to the cast & crew of 'Paradise Falls' a Canadian television show which actually might be coming to the States. However, we were able to look at costumes worn by Felicity, Sarah, Aunt Olivia, and the other cast. It was fun picking out the clothing, and many fans knew exactly who wore what and in which episode. But we did have to be quiet as mice whenever they started the cameras rolling in another room. We didn't see any actual filming, though. We also saw and took pictures of furniture, dishes, and other props from the show. Dan also took us to a set that looked like a living room, and we saw what would have been the streets of Avonlea and Bedford (in the 'Wind At My Back' Series). For lunch, we drove to a nearby mall area to dine at Wendy's or Tim Horton's. Some even had time to do a bit of shopping. Next, Dan took us to the harbor front area in Toronto where we were able check out the site of some of the harbor scenes in Anne 3 and RTA. We saw where Diana & her chauffer met Anne when she came off the ship near the beginning of the movie. It was also there where they filmed some of Gus and Felicity's harbor scenes. The area was relatively small and was surrounded by a chain-linked fence, and we saw mostly cement and low buildings. Next, we stopped at the Distillery District which is lined with red brick walkways and had some wonderful architecture. Some scenes from "When She was Bad..." were filmed here. Right now, there are art galleries, shops, a theatre, and many restaurants here. Our last stop for the day took us to the historic Spadina House where we enjoyed some refreshments of hot tea, iced tea, lemonade, drop tea cakes (scones) and cinnamon cookies. While we enjoyed our afternoon tea, Doug Fyfe from Spadina House told us a bit of history about the Victorian house and the wealthy Austin family, and then Dan talked about some of the filming that went on at Spadina House from the Anne movies and RTA. We then split into 3 groups and were given a guided tour of the 19th/20th century House which included the beautiful greenery-filled parlor where Aunt Josephine and Anne had tea. Lastly, we took a group picture in the back garden before we all went on our way to rest up for the next fun filled day.

P.S. Zsolt and his Hungarian friends ran into Jackie Burroughs in the subway in downtown Toronto before the convention weekend! Of course, she remembered him, and they all chatted and took pictures. She was off to Mexico the next day, so could not attend AvCon.

Day Two: Saturday 7.28.07, Black Creek Pioneer Village: Doors opened at BCPV at 9:30am. It

was a bit slow going at first while the committee members tried to get the 85 to 90 attendees settled, registered and seated. While we waited for the first guest speaker to arrive, soothing RTA music played in the background, thanks to Bobby, and attendees wandered the village to check out the buildings, as this was an RTA filming site. They also looked at scrapbooks from AvCon 2004 and 2005 and at a photo book from the RTA Reunion in 2006. A reporter from the Toronto Star was in attendance, and at the end, he interviewed some of the attendees and the guest speakers. Finally our first guest, Kevin McCabe arrived. He is a lecturer at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario and compiled the *L.M. Montgomery Album* and *The Poetry of Lucy Maud Montgomery*. As well as discussing LMM, the Anne books, and their relationships to the movies, he answered questions, took photos and signed autographs. While Kevin was busy with fans, committee chairperson Ruth Williams, along with some of Angel's kids, called out ticket numbers to award door prizes. Everyone who paid admission received a ticket for a chance at winning some awesome door prizes. Some of the prizes were cute blank journals that people could use for autographs, an Anne doll, Anne stickers and paper doll kit and much more. Soon after, everyone broke for lunch and Zsolt, Krisztina, and Sonya took Kevin McCabe out to lunch at Halfway House at BCPV where they learned more about his interests and future writing plans. After lunch, James O'Regan (Constable Jeffries) was the next guest speaker, and he was quite enthusiastic about his time on RTA and also discussed his current projects and acting career. While James was speaking, Ian D. Clarke (Simon Tremayne) was standing by looking quite dapper and distinguished in summery white slacks and shirt with a blue blazer and safari-like hat. When it was his turn to speak, he had many funny stories to tell about his experience on RTA and also his personal experiences with fans when he visited Dalvay By the Sea/White Sands Hotel. When Ian was done, it was cookies and lemonade and raffle prize time! James and Ian did double duty by helping to draw winning raffle prize numbers and do their "star" duties by signing autographs and posing for pictures. Winning tickets received some really great prizes such as a plate with a picture of the King Family, a Mickey plate, mugs with the AvCon logo, a Chef LaPierre apron with gourmet chocolates (modeled by the dashing Hungarian Zsolt), RTA basket filled with goodies, etc. The money raised helped to offset some of the convention costs (renting BCPV and audio/visual equipment, refreshments, etc). Our next guest speakers arrived together—John Welsman and Michael Mahonen. They stood up near the podium together and took turns talking. Of course, John talked about the music and gave us insights into each of the character's theme songs. Mickey talked about his RTA experience, and of course, somebody requested for him to say "Felicity" in his Gus accent. Then, all four handsome gentlemen sat at a table up front to sign autographs, take photos and talk to the fans. There was certainly a loooong line of fans waiting! Finally, at 5pm, we had to close up shop and say goodbye. It was a good day for everyone, and the attendees and guests all seemed to have a great time. However, for some, it did not end. Ian, John and Mickey were gracious enough to join us for dinner at the Italian restaurant, Alice Fazooli's. There were about 40 people, and we had a private room which was awesome because we could all get up and mingle, and the honored guests were able to spend time with all the fans. As usual, no one wanted to leave at the end.

Day Three: Sunday 7.29.07 at the Royal Ontario Museum: Our last day of AvCon was held at the ROM in downtown Toronto. The day began at 1030am where people signed in and were assigned auction numbers for the bidding. We were in an auditorium with stadium-like seating and at the front, were the auction items on display. People were excited to take a look at some of the wonderful items up for auction which were donated by Kevin Sullivan and some of the committee

members and fans. Examples of some of the items were beautiful cellophane wrapped baskets filled with RTA season DVDs & the *Beyond Green Gables* book signed by Kevin Sullivan & other goodies. Other auction items included some black and white photos of the RTA characters, puzzle boxes, beautiful framed artwork, a Mickey gift box, posters of RTA, Jasper Dale's coat, a complete set of RTA paperback books, and much more. The Toronto Star reporter and a photographer were there to report and chronicle the event. Again, we were lucky this year to have Mike Matthews as our auctioneer and Dan Matthews, his son, as his assistant. It was a very fun and lively auction with bidding going up in the 200 to 300 dollar ranges for some of the items. One lovely young lady, Corey won the Anne Picnic Basket which she wanted to use for her wedding later in the month. A set of some Anne/RTA goods went to a cute little girl in front who got some help from Mike Matthews—he gave her \$5 to add to her bid money! No one dared bid against her. The highest winning bid went to Mike Williams in which he won a Sullivan basket of all 7 RTA seasons for \$600 (?) for his beloved Ruth. There were a lot of laughs as Mike Matthews was being outrageously funny and teasing a lot of the bidders. No mishaps this time...we didn't have any breakables. Lynda recorded the winning bidders and final prices, and Kate helped distribute the items to the winners. We ended up raising \$4700 for the ROM. People paid for the items and we broke for lunch. At 2pm, we gathered again with anticipation for the "Reunion" hosted by Mag Ruffman and Kevin Sullivan. Unfortunately, none of the other actors were able to attend as it was a busy summer of acting for them. However, Mag was enough for everyone. She brought along her husband Daniel Hunter and was her usual funny, outgoing, happy, enthusiastic self. She spent many hours making a DVD of outtakes, behind the scenes shenanigans, and interviews starring her fellow castmates. It was a wonderful DVD and we all had fun and laughs watching it. There were many things we had never seen such as Felix and Izzy practicing a dance together. Mag then answered questions from the audience. Next came Kevin Sullivan who talked about the making of RTA and showed us many clips from the episodes and about character development especially in the one episode, "A Dark and Stormy Night". He answered questions about Anne 4 and "The Magic Flute". They wrapped up by signing autographs, talking to the fans and taking photos. All in all, the convention was a big success due to the hard work of Ruth and the AvCon committee members and the guests. A lot of people wanted to know when the next AvCon would be and many said they would be back. The attendees traveled great distances and many planned just weeks to months to even as long as 2 years in advance to attend this event! Ruth says she will likely give up her title of "Fearless Leader" which she has held for 4 years. We're all grateful to her for putting her energy, time, money, and efforts into organizing the committee and producing the 3 AvCons. They were all successes! Thanks, Ruth and all the committee members! Maybe see you all in 2009, perhaps in the spring or early summer this time? Toodles for now, Sonya.

Side note: After AvCon, the Hungarian contingent (Krisztina, Orsi, Judit & Tamas) led by Zsolt along with Ruth, Mike, Kitty and Sonya headed off for more fun together in PEI.

BTW: As far as I know, these were some attendees that frequent the Anne3 message board—muppets123 (Ruth), Ilse Burnley (Beth), coreyann (Corey), Pioneer Pal (Marilyn), Alecking (Bobby), Tammara (same), Emily (same)