

BASILE: Been to more than 100 countries? Join the club

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THE TRAVELING LIFE

Frank Basile In October, Katrina and I took a cruise from Los Angeles to Ensenada, Mexico. It was fun and interesting, as cruises usually are. However, it's not the cruise itself I want to write about. It's the reason for the cruise: a celebration of the 60th anniversary of The Travelers' Century Club.

TCC is a not-for-profit club consisting of about 2,000 people from around the world who have traveled to 100 or more countries. The cruise consisted primarily of the club leadership—the officers, board members and the 20 state and country coordinators (including me).

To give you an idea of the membership: At one point, the workshop leader asked, “Has anyone NOT been to Cuba?” Only one of the 36 people raised his hand.

The club was founded in 1954 with the motto “World Travel ... the passport to peace through understanding.” Though the organization has a website, a bimonthly publication and a formal sharing of information about out-of-the-way travel destinations, its main activity revolves around state meetings. Not all states are organized into chapters—Indiana just formed one two years ago when I was named its first state coordinator. (Katrina says I need to learn to say “no” once in a while when asked to do volunteer work.)

Not having many TCC members in our state, I opened the meetings up to non- members who have a passion for travel but haven't hit the 100-country mark. If Paris or New York City is your ideal travel destination, you might not enjoy hearing these folks talk about their trip to Mongolia, Turkmenistan or Bhutan. We have had talks, accompanied by slides, on “Roman Sites & Post-Gaddafi Libya”; “Antarctica” (by a member who has been there seven times); “Cuba: Forbidden Fruit”; and “Syria: Just Before the Meltdown.”

Our next program will be “On the Road Again,” which will be about the 500-mile journey in northern Spain known as Camino de Santiago.

So far, the Indiana chapter has had seven quarterly meetings, attended by 15 to 25 travelers. Each takes place on a Saturday at noon in a private room at Seasons 52 restaurant. We start with a 45-minute reception in which the participants entertain one another with tales of their latest escapades

at the North Pole or the Galapagos Islands. After lunch, introductions lead to discussions that are often as interesting as the featured presentation.

Sometimes, programs are built from the members' responses to questions. What was your most exciting travel experience to date? What was your most dangerous? What was your most humorous? Have you had any unusual border crossings?

One member who has attended every meeting so far is 94 years old and drives herself there. She is planning her next trip to Seychelles (I'll save you the trip to Google—it's an island nation in the Indian Ocean). Other club members come from a variety of backgrounds, each with his or her reasons for their extensive travel. But probably all would agree with Mark Twain, who said, "Travel is fatal to bigotry, ignorance and narrow-mindedness. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."

These folks would probably also agree with my comment in the book "Traveling with Frank and Katrina" that there is nothing like the enjoyment and thrill of experiencing other places, cultures and people. We find that travel never gets old or boring. No matter how far or often we travel, the thrill of adventure and discovery intensifies with each trip to a place we have never been as well as places to which we choose to return.

Interested in attending the next meeting? Send me an email, and I will reply with the date and subject of the next meeting. If you want to learn more about TCC, you can go to its website: www.travelerscenturyclub.org.•

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The Traveling Life columnist

Basile is a professional speaker, author, community volunteer, philanthropist and retired executive of the Gene B. Glick Co. He has presented 1,400 speeches and holds the designation of certified speaking professional. The author of 13 books, he wrote a weekly column on management for IBJ for 20 years and has penned more than 1,500 articles for various other publications. Basile served as board chair of nine not-for-profit organizations and currently serves on the board of seven. He was senior vice president of the Gene B. Glick Co. for 33 years and has received numerous awards and recognition for his volunteer and other activities. Basile was born in New Orleans, graduated from Tulane University and is married to Katrina, who is a Realtor. Besides speaking, writing and

volunteering, his hobbies include ballroom dancing, reading, attending movies and plays, collecting art, exercising, travel and philanthropy.

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