



All who wander are not lost

(J.R.R. Tolkien)

# Uncommon Travelers

*"An Unusual Group of Exceptional Wanderers"*

Our meetings are held the second Saturday of each month (September thru May) from 5:00 to 8:00 PM

[www.uncommontravelers.wordpress.com](http://www.uncommontravelers.wordpress.com)

September, 2016

## Directions to Beef O'Brady's

2471 N McMullen Booth Rd.  
Clearwater, FL 33759  
(727-614-9717)

The restaurant is located in a shopping center at the SW corner of Enterprise Road and McMullen Booth – you actually have to get onto Enterprise (heading west) and take a left into the shopping center. For those coming from Hillsborough County – if you live in the northern part of the county, the best way is to head west on Hillsborough Avenue. Just past Racetrack Road, you'll take a left onto SR #580 West in Oldsmar. Once you reach N. McMullen Booth, take a left and continue to Enterprise Road (then see above). From the southern part of Hillsborough Co., take Courtney Campbell Causeway, then a right onto McMullen Booth Road. Our Pinellas folks are probably familiar with getting to McMullen Booth Road.

Newsletters are mailed only to members, and two consecutive issues to prospective members.

## Contact Persons:

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*We look forward to seeing you Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup> at Beef O'Brady's. And remember, if you see someone unfamiliar or new at our meetings, please say hello and invite them to join a group or table and make them feel welcome. We start with dinner and socializing between 5:00 and 5:45 PM, followed by our business meeting and a short slide presentation. After a brief break comes our main program.*

We're back to starting our regular meetings once again! Hope you all had a wonderful summer. We had good attendance at our summer restaurants: Rain-Sushi Thai Restaurant in St. Pete in June (a last-minute choice when Sohkdii Restaurant closed unexpectedly – they gladly accommodated 20 of us with only 4 days' notice), Happy Fish (Peruvian) in Tampa in July, and the Hofbrauhaus in St. Pete in August.

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**NOTE NEW MEETING VENUE:** The most important aspect of this newsletter is the fact that we have a new meeting place. IHOP at Bearss wasn't quite working out, so our "restaurant investigative committee" got to work and after checking various locations, it was a unanimous decision that going forward, our meetings will be held at Beef O'Brady's in Clearwater, on North McMullen Booth Road. Yes – a bit further for the Hillsborough folks, maybe some will want to carpool. Information and directions are in the column to the left. Their private room is very nice, we have it booked thru May of 2017 (including December, in case we have our Christmas party there), the menu is more comprehensive than that at IHOP, and we were heartily welcomed. We are always open to other suggestions if you happen to know of a suitable venue (private room that can hold 30+ people, no charge for room, food available, etc.)

Many of you may remember Lew Toulmin, an inveterate traveler who gave a wonderful presentation back in December of 2006 on his book "The Most Traveled Man on Earth." The editor recently received the following email from him and thought many of you may be interested:

It's here -- the Female Chiefs of Maewo Expedition is really here! I will be leaving tomorrow for the Republic of Vanuatu in the SW Pacific, to lead the effort to document the female chiefs that no anthropologist has ever before written about, or even found!

We hope to learn about the female chiefs' responsibilities, recruitment, practices, grades, cooperation with male chiefs, and place in the justice system. We also want to find out how widespread the female chiefs are throughout the three islands of PENAMA province in Vanuatu. All of this will be brand new information to science and anthropology. A true "first"!

For more information on the Expedition (and to support it if you like), please go to: <https://www.gofundme.com/femalechiefs> to see a short video on the effort.

After leaving Vanuatu, I will be off to central Thailand to try to find a still un-found temple cave that Jim Thompson, the legendary, missing "Silk King of Thailand," was searching for in the years before he disappeared.

For updates on both efforts, check back frequently on my website, [www.themosttraveled.com](http://www.themosttraveled.com).

Wish me luck! - Lew Toulmin

## SEPTEMBER 10<sup>th</sup> PROGRAM: "Up With People"

At our program in September, member Glo Crandall will share her "uncommon" experiences traveling for two years as a Promotion Staff member with the international singing group Up With People. She worked in the US, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Venezuela and Spain setting up housing, meals and community involvement for the 100-member cast, as well as handling publicity, ticketing, and technical arrangements for the shows. Between her 28 assigned cities, she sang and danced in the shows, and lived with 108 host families, which gave her a broad experience of people in the places she traveled.

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### **7 Genius Ways to Hide Valuables While Traveling**, by Shannon McMahon

Nothing ruins a once-in-a-lifetime trip like losing your wallet, phone, or passport—yet many tourist destinations are rife with [talented pickpockets](#). Luckily, you can defend your stuff with everything from secret underwear compartments to shoes with built-in money slots. Here are seven truly genius hacks for hiding valuables while traveling. (<http://www.airfarewatchdog.com/blog/29484615/genius-ways-to-hide-valuables-while-traveling/>)

**Disguise Your Money Belt** - Forget about the fanny pack-esque money belts of yesteryear. Leather smuggler's belts like the [Duluth Trading Co. option](#) have inner zipper-closure compartments perfect for hiding emergency money and spare keys. The versatile men's option comes in brown and black, and boasts a 19-inch hidden pocket. It costs \$70, but there's no telling how much trouble it could save you on your travels.

**Stealthy Bra Pouches** - For women, a secret bra pouch is the better option. [Eagle Creek's Undercover Bra Stash](#) is affordable and easy to hide under clothes. Throw your cards, cash, and keys in the silk pouch and fasten it safely around the center of any bra. It's washable, comes with a lifetime warranty, and can comfortably fit small valuables in its three-by-four-inch interior. It's also a wise investment for just \$14.

**Stash Cards in a Phone Case** - Consolidating your phone and credit cards into one easy-to-hide case will lighten your load and keep your most important cards out of sight. [Incipio's Wallet Cover](#) doubles as a kickstand case for watching videos on the plane, is on sale (at time of publication) for just \$14.99. It also comes in an array of colors and sizes.

**SlotFlops** - If the age-old trick of hiding emergency money in shoes is more your style, stop stashing cash in your smelly socks and get some summer-friendly [SlotFlops](#). These travel flipflops have a built-in pouch big enough for cards and money, and come in an array of colors for about \$25. As an added bonus, you can get a card-sized travel tool that includes a metal wrench, saw, ruler, bottle opener, and sun compass. Just be careful about where you take it—the TSA could confiscate it from your shoe or carry-on, but it's perfect for fishing trips and camping.

**KangaROOS** - For a sturdier shoe with compartments, try the original sneaker made with an outer money pocket: [KangaROOS](#). The hidden compartment is big enough for some emergency bills and a spare key, and thieves won't notice the tiny outer pouch beneath the ROOS logo. On sale (at time of publication) for \$73, these durable walking sneakers will last long enough to prove their worth.

**Make a Decoy Wallet** - If all else fails, it's smart to have a decoy wallet handy in the event that you get pick-pocketed or held up. Thieves will probably go for any old wallet you pack with old gift cards or the cardboard junk-mail cards banks sometimes mail out. You can throw or hand over a decoy wallet in the event of a mugging, or keep one at the top of your bag in case a pickpocket strikes. To take it one step further, keep your actual valuables in an [unassuming maxi-pad wrapper](#) that thieves won't want to swipe.

*(With thanks to **Judy Butler** for sending this article)*

**Russell Winer** forwarded the following information from an article in the Wall Street Journal, with the intention of it being distributed to our newsletter readers.

### **Get Through Airport Customs Faster With This Free App**

Skip paper forms and kiosks with Mobile Passport—and get on the fastest border-control line at large U.S. airports. It's a model for how government and the tech industry can team up to join the mobile revolution, writes Geoffrey A. Fowler.

Stumbling off a 13-hour flight from Hong Kong a few weeks ago, I dreaded the long queue at border control. But instead of joining hundreds of other weary travelers in the cattle drive, I launched an app. Like an angel from on high, an airport employee whisked me to an empty—yes, empty—line reserved for tech-savvy travelers.

I waved my phone over a scanner and was done in two minutes. Maybe one minute. It's rare to find a government technology so efficient it makes you do a little dance of joy.

Even if you're not planning a trip immediately, do yourself a favor and download the free Mobile Passport for Apple and Android phones now.

With the app, American and most Canadian citizens can skip the slowest part of U.S. Customs by using a smart phone to import passport details, snap a selfie and answer basic questions.

By entering all your info in the app, there's no filling out forms or queuing to use one of the newer photo-booth kiosks that immortalizes your airplane hair in a government database.

Even with the app, you'll still need to travel with your real passport. And you'll still have a brief customs interview—the one where an officer looks you in the eye and asks whether you handled any livestock abroad or are smuggling snails. Think of Mobile Passport less as a replacement and more like a Fastpass at Disneyland.

This app earns props from me because two decades into the mobile phone revolution, so much of the U.S. government feels stuck on the rotary dial. Only one state, Iowa, has begun testing a smart phone driver's license, even though the tech could vastly improve the security, not to mention the convenience, of our most ubiquitous form of I.D.

Mobile Passport brings the government and tech industry together to solve a real pickle: Funding for customs officers hasn't kept pace with surging international arrivals at U.S. airports. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Airports Council International, a trade group, teamed up to make the Mobile Passport app with Airside Mobile, whose founders helped introduce the first mobile boarding passes in the U.S. It is paid for by sponsors including Boeing, and its functionality could be incorporated into future airline apps.

The result: Wait times are going down. Other tech efforts are helping, too, including automated kiosks and a \$100 program called Global Entry that requires your fingerprints. But Mobile Passport is free and about as fast as Global Entry. It's especially good for families and takes zero planning, other than remembering to download an app.

Though simple, it can be confusing if you don't know what to expect. Here's the play by play:

**Step 1:** Open the app. Add your real passport details, either by typing them or by scanning your passport with your phone's camera. Then take a selfie. No hats or duck face, please—this is official business.

If you're traveling with your family, you can add the whole gang to your app. And you can do it all from home, from the airport or even on board the flight (assuming you already have the app). All your family's personal info is stored on the phone for future uses, locked behind a passcode you set.

**Step 2:** On your never-ending return flight, you'll have a little bit of homework. Pull out your phone—yes, even in airplane mode—open the app, tap New Trip, select a participating airport and answer four basic questions.

It's an abbreviated version of the standard white-and-blue U.S. Customs form. You and your family members won't need the paper form; if your flight crew is pushing it hard, show them you have the app. Bonus: No scrambling for a pen. You can also fill out this information in the airport after you land.

**Step 3:** When you're back on American tarmac, turn on your phone's cellular or Wi-Fi connection, open the app and press a button. The app submits all the info you just entered to customs, and gives you back a digital receipt with a QR code. This is your ticket to the express lane.

**Step 4:** When you get to the border control area, find the dedicated Mobile Passport lane. It should be much, much, much shorter than the regular lane. If you don't see it, just ask; it's so short, it may be hidden.

When your turn comes, hand over your passport to the customs officer and wave the app over a scanner. After you answer a few questions, you're on your way to the luggage carousel. You'll scan the app one more time after you grab your bags.

Since it launched in 2014, Mobile Passport has been used more than 380,000 times. Now it's available in 13 airports, covering 62% of international fliers. (It should pass 20 airports by the end of this year; find a full list here.) It doesn't currently work at land or sea ports—and, of course, it won't speed up queues outside the U.S.

I had a smooth experience using Mobile Passport at San Francisco International Airport, but my parents had more challenges on a recent flight into Newark. There, airport staff who weren't familiar with the app hustled my parents along to the regular line. Ouch. If you get pushback from airport staff, "be somewhat insistent," said Dan Tancier, the CBP's Director of Travel and Tourism Initiatives.

I followed up with a few more questions:

***Aren't phones banned in customs?*** That used to be the case, but those signs are coming down. Still, don't even try filming officers or their computer screens.

***Does the government use Mobile Passport to track us?*** No. Your information stays on the phone until you transmit it upon landing. "Nothing extra is being collected other than what is on your passport and what you enter into the app," Mr. Tancier said.

***Is it secure?*** It is, so long as you are mindful of your phone. The app encrypts your data and stores it on your phone; you never create an account in the cloud. Your data is protected by a four-digit code; please don't choose 1234. When you submit your data to customs, it is encrypted and never saved on a nongovernmental computer.

***Does using Mobile Passport make you more, or less, likely to be questioned by customs staff?*** Officials say they treat you just like any other passport holder. If you're smuggling goods into the U.S., they're still onto you, even if you use the app.

***When more people find out about this app, won't it be less efficient?*** When Mobile Passport first came out, some flight attendants were hesitant to recommend it to passengers out of fear passengers would fill up their secret fast line. But at airports where it has grown popular, such as Miami, local officials have been able to add additional Mobile Passport lines, because it doesn't require much overhead.

More to the point, studies have shown a Mobile Passport user requires about a fifth as much time at border control as a traditional passenger because there's no futzing with forms or data entry. The lesson: Using Mobile Passport speeds up everyone, so there's no reason to keep it a secret.

Reach Geoffrey A. Fowler at [Geoffrey.Fowler@wsj.com](mailto:Geoffrey.Fowler@wsj.com) or on Twitter @geoffreyfowler

**Here's the government site:**

<http://mobilepassport.us>

## In Memory of Mary Arneaux, Much-Loved Patroness of the Uncommon Travelers

For those of you who never knew Mary, a little history. Back in the mists of time, a few internationally-minded attended a short course on travel at BayWinds (something like today's Meet-Ups). When the course ended, they didn't want to stop getting together. This was the inception of Uncommon Travelers. A Hospice of Hillsborough co-worker got me involved (a task easily accomplished).

Meanwhile, I had become friends with Mary, who was rattling around in her enormous 1920's home on Hyde Park Boulevard near Bayshore Boulevard. Mary complained frequently of boredom and loneliness, but wasn't interested in programs for "old people". She was in her seventies at the time.

At the same time, the Travelers needed a place to meet. (Insert light bulb representing an idea here.) I introduced them to Mary, *et voilà!* - a match made in heaven.

For years after that, the Uncommon Travelers met at Mary's house. In addition to the regular monthly meetings, there were many other festive occasions. Mary often cooked huge meals for everyone. A good time was always had by all. Mary owned a large parking lot next to her home. On Gasparilla Parade days, the Travelers charged parade-goers to park there.

I recall one of the birthday celebrations we arranged for Mary. We outdid ourselves. There was singing, a jazz saxophone player, a very large female impersonator and a male stripper. I've probably left someone out. Mary treasured the photo of herself with the entertainers.

On September 19, 2001, eight days after the Towers, my husband, John, and I left as planned for France. Mary and I had arranged to meet in Paris two weeks later. Worried friends tried to discourage John and me from going. My question to them was, "Do you think the regular criminals in Tampa have retired?"

After we explored Paris and other areas of France, I saw my husband off at Charles de Gaulle, and met Mary's flight a few hours later. She reported that friends had asked her, "You're not still going, are you?" Her response was, "I'm eighty-six years old; if they get me, they get me."

I was sixty years old at the time, but I was no match for Mary. At one point she was bent on going to one of the extravagant Paris shows. She finally settled on the Lido. I don't go to things that start at ten o'clock at night, so a young French friend went with her. Mary rolled back to the hotel at four o'clock in the morning, clutching her bottle of Lido champagne (which she hauled back to the U.S.) and a large, glossy showbill featuring buff, practically naked men spray-painted gold. She popped up the next morning ready to go.

After that, Mary and I "did" Paris. She wore me out.

Our plan was to then fly to Barcelona, and then to Calafel in the south of Spain where friends from Tampa were staying. A day before our departure from Paris, we went down to breakfast at our hotel. The breakfast room was abuzz with excited conversation among the Americans. French newspaper headlines screamed: "U.S. attacks Afghanistan!" Friends and relatives in the U.S. were calling, frantically urging Americans to come home. Several people asked us, "What are you and Mary going to do?!" "Well", we shrugged, "we're going to go to Spain." And we did. And nothing happened. Mary wore me out there, too.

Years later, Mary collapsed at her home, and spent the remainder of her years in a lovely nursing home on Davis Islands. Her memory was erased, but her body was still going strong. Mary died in Spring this year, she was ninety-nine years old.

She could no longer remember us, but those of us who knew her remember her. She was a generous friend, a Traveler who was game for anything, and an inspiring role model. Thanks for everything, Mary. We miss you.

Alexa Herrington