OUT & ABOUT

By Gayle VanVooren, Mascot Editor

How are you with surprises? Do you like to be the giver of the surprise, or the recipient?
I think it's an adventure to know that a surprise is planned for you. Of course, trust has a little to do with it.
If you trust those you are dealing with, then you won't be afraid of what the surprise is.
There are some folks I just wouldn't trust about this sort of thing — probably because I'm owed a trick or two!

Anyway, we visited our youngest in Woodbury a couple weeks ago and learned that we were in for a surprise.
They have done this a few times to us already, and each time was an experience that we have enjoyed. We've gone to a concert, went out to eat in a nice restaurant, went on a winter light tour. All were fun.
The latest surprise was scheduled for July 4. A quick plan to visit them and watch fireworks together sounded like a good deal.
No matter that it was 3 1/2 hours away — what's a few miles between family?
The "kids" were very secretive and asked us repeatedly if we had any idea of where we would be going.
We were oblivious, and not concerned at all about the destination. We thought, maybe a concert before a light show. Doesn't that sound normal?
The evening approached and we found ourselves taken to Mystic Lake Casino. I was a bit surprised, as none of us do a lot of gambling.
The chairs were taken out of the car and we boarded a shuttle bus that took us to the main

parking lot of the casino.
Here we found a place to sit and began to enjoy the Minneapolis band that was playing. The kids kept exchanging glances and I began to wonder what was next.
I was delighted as the afternoon sun began to sink and we were out in the fresh air among thousands of friends.
What Pete and I soon realized was that this band was the opener for the country western legends, the Oak Ridge Boys. What a shock!
We have always wanted to go to one of their concerts, and just haven't managed it. And here we were, in a free concert staged for folks for the July 4 celebration.
They came onto the stage with a rousing number, "The Boys are Back", which is actually the title of their new CD. They sang many new numbers from this release — from sweet ballads to boot stomping songs.
There were no breaks. Just an hour of incredible music, high energy and astounding accompaniment by their band.
There were two moments that were electrifying — thousands singing "oom papa, oom papa, oom papa, mouw, mouw" (from Elivra) and the entire group standing to sing "The Star Spangled Banner".
Then began a light show that boomed with rockets and colors that lit up the night sky. It seemed to go on forever — this celebration of America's freedom.
What a night. It's now catalogued as one of my "favorites" of memories.
I sure do like surprises!