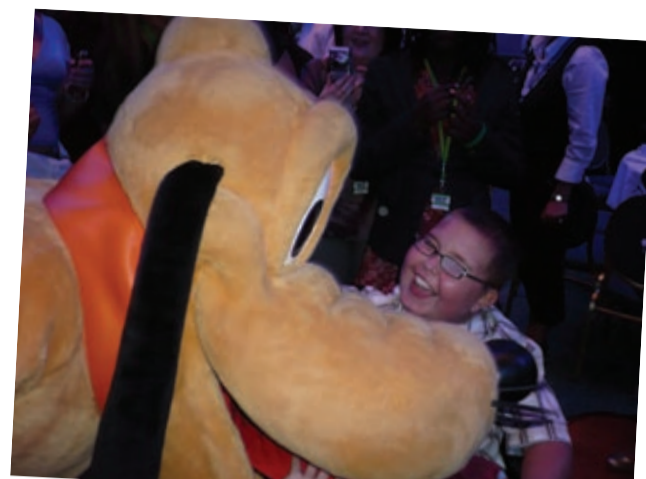


by Sandie Goodwin



As we neared Paris, those drivers who had made this trip before were somewhat surprised to find themselves directed off the motorway by the French police on to a road we have not used in previous years. It soon became apparent that the officer had made a mistake and we were in the suburbs of Paris, in the middle of the Friday afternoon rush hour. But all the drivers stayed together in convoy and the police found somewhere safe to re-group and guide us back to the right road again. The professionalism of the taxi drivers in the convoy shone through, no-one broke the convoy much to the relief of the Committee. The convoy arrived at Disneyland Resort Paris in the early evening sunshine and everyone made their way to their rooms before having their evening meal in the Chuck Wagon.

Next morning, the children and their carers were all up bright and early ready for breakfast before going into the Park with their taxi drivers. Everyone had priority passes which meant they did not have to join the long queues for the rides. As the day was so warm and sunny there were many visitors to the Park and these passes were invaluable.

After an exciting day in the Park, everyone was invited to the Gala Dinner, held this year in the New York Hotel. This venue was new to the Magical Taxi Tour and proved extremely popular with everyone. After dinner, the party began with Disney characters joining the children, signing autographs and joining in the dancing to the disco. It is at this Gala Dinner that the adults involved in making this trip possible get a real insight into the

enjoyment this trip makes to the children and their carers. When there are so many gathered together, including those in wheelchairs, there really are miles of smiles. Everyone has a different tale to tell about their day in the Park and the excitement of seeing all the characters melts even the toughest of hearts. This year, one of the carers was a 75 year old grandmother - whose children had persuaded here to go on Space Mountain, one of the more adventurous rides - but she had loved every minute!

The following morning is an early start as the drivers start to load the taxis ready for the return journey. Again the sun was shining brightly and the convoy left the hotel with the sunlight showing the lovely colours of the trees of the well maintained grounds of the Disney complex. The roads were quiet and good time was made back to Calais and the return P&O Ferry to Dover, and from then back home.

The amount of organisation that goes into this trip each year is amazing. The Committee make it all look so easy but it is thanks to their hard work that so many drivers are prepared to give up their time to make dreams come true for so many children on the trip. Everyone involved plays an important role, from the Marriott Hotel supplying packed lunches, to the Mount Blanc Climbers sponsoring the Big Breakfast, P&O for the ferry crossing and of course all the sponsors for helping supply the funding for the trip.

