



Country music singer Naomi Judd and Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer A. Scott Berg chat at Wrigley Field on Friday.

Tribune photo by Bonnie Trafelet

A meeting of the minds

Hollywood A-listers, Nobel Prize winners, Mayor Daley and myriad other geniuses rub elbows at International Achievement Summit

By Ellen Warren | Tribune senior correspondent

There's not much in this life that will get Mayor Daley to cheerfully put on a Cubs cap.

But on a glorious afternoon, the city's most renowned White Sox fan seemed almost giddy to be wearing Cubby blue, sitting along the third-base line at Wrigley Field.

In fact, Daley wasn't there to watch a ballgame. The Cubs were playing in Anaheim.

The mayor was at Wrigley to listen to the unmistakable rumble of actor James Earl Jones who was perched atop the dugout, reading a poem about the Cubs written just for this occasion by Pulitzer Prize-winning fiction writer N. Scott Momaday.

A few rows behind Daley was George "Star Wars" Lucas. And, yes, that was multi-Grammy winner Naomi Judd wolfing down a hot dog. Oh, also on hand were a bunch of Nobel Prize winners, a few multimillionaires, some certified geniuses and people working on a cure for cancer, manned space flight, world peace and such.

But wait. There's more, so very much more.

The Friday visit to Wrigley Field was merely one outing in a four-day extravaganza that ended Sunday, an utterly unpublicized meeting

of a group that its chairman, Wayne Reynolds, calls "America's best kept secret."

This was the 43rd annual International Achievement Summit. It is a jaw-dropping collection of talent from virtually every area of human endeavor, including politics. This is where Daley comes in.

At the annual meeting in Dublin two years ago, Daley was one of 29 people named to the Academy of Achievement, which sponsors the summit. He was so wowed by the gathering that

a month or so later, at The Prime Rib restaurant in Washington, he launched his campaign to bring the meeting of big shots here.

That's the short version of how it came to pass that publishing phenom "Chicken Soup for the Soul" Jack Canfield was able to cross paths at the Peninsula Hotel here last week with Nobel Peace Prize-winner Shimon Peres. Canfield enthused to the grand old man of Israeli politics — who probably knows a thing or two about chicken soup — that he respected his striving to end the enmity between Jews and Palestinians.

The Peres-Canfield pairing was just one of scores of intriguing, unlikely encounters that make the academy members return to these annual gabfests (expenses are paid but that's it) hoping to chat with other all-stars.

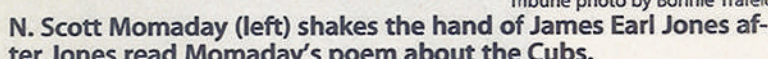
Another reason that the gathering has such drawing power is the central reason for these summits: To put some 150 boldface-name achievers together with the next generation of

PLEASE SEE **ACHIEVERS**, PAGE 4

But there's also a been-there-watched-that feeling to this, the second time around. Paris and Nicole, even if they are just being themselves, aren't exactly three-dimensional characters, and watching them use their blondness and tanness to mooch

But did she notice? There may be a twist.

"I couldn't believe it. I was [in the men's room] and this guy in a red shirt came in and said, 'Hi,



James D. Watson; Walter Payton;

— *Ellen Warren*

"It's a group of people you'd never think would be together," said John Horner, the Montana paleontologist whose work on dinosaurs was the model for the "Jurassic Park" character Dr. Alan Grant. A teacher at Monta-

"It's very eye-opening for the kids," George Lucas said, to learn that most of their heroes are "human beings just like them" who didn't know where life would take them when they got out of school. "Nobel laureates and basketball players are the only ones who don't fall into that category," Lucas said.

Scott Berg.

Monmady, 70, an American Indian who lives in New Mexico, says these meetings are "a little euphoric" because of all the interesting smart people he gets to talk to. "Some stranger sits down and it turns out to be a Nobel Prize winner. I'll be sitting next to a physicist and I can learn something. Chances are he doesn't know anything about poetry so I can throw in my two cents."

Momaday rhapsodized not just about all the intriguing people he was meeting, or hoping to meet — author John Updike, tenor Jose Carreras, paleoanthropologist Meave Leakey among them.

"It was a thrill to be at Wrigley Field. Its history is magnificent and its tradition of losing is magnificent. ... To see where the uniforms were hanging. I wish to hell I'd brought my camera."

Life is waiting.

Claudia Page, USA TODAY

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