

Flume Nude at the Mongoose

11 JULY 1991 – BAJA MEXICO

It is with bared feet that I decide to climb the mountain. The video camera is back on the bus, as there is only room enough for either it or the mandolin. I split up from the rest of the party and choose a route I feel is more 'well suited' to my foot apparel; more rock, less cactus. My Canadian training proves useful as I glide over the rocks' surfaces. Occasionally, I stop and look at the sun. Indonesia, same but different. I readjust my straps, wipe the sweat from my glasses and continue.

Cast your dreams out in front of you and live your way towards them. Allow them to change along the way, and they will be more powerful than you imagined.

I realize that I am in a dream that began two years ago at Lake Compounce, a water park in Connecticut.

5 JUNE 1989 – LAKE COMPOUNCE

College bud Chris and I are on our way to meet a third friend Goldy for an outdoor afternoon concert with Neil Young and the Indigo Girls.

We race along the highway; Chris is still in his navy blue pinstriped business suit, complete with white shirt, and requisite red tie. It's hot outside, hot enough to fry eggs on the pavement. Traffic is moving smoothly and we feel we'll make it to the show on time. Suddenly it stops, it doesn't slow down, it stops, six-lane highway, all traffic stopped. We sit. Cautiously, we cool ourselves with ice cold Budweiser.

People begin climbing out of their cars and wandering around. Chris changes out of his suit and we begin discussing that it's time for a change. Enough of this east coast shit, suits, traffic, nine to five – not that I've ever done nine to five, but I'm ready for a change, too. We very carefully analyze our lives and formulate our plan. We'll move to Hawaii - good weather, great weed, lucrative business opportunities. Building is booming, what with all that Japanese money and all. We figure that Goldy will be psyched as well. The three of us will get a house together on the big island. Chris will do project management for a big construction company. I will do free-lance architecture and Goldy will teach geology to hot Hawaiian babes.

We can think of no flaws with our plan, no matter how hard we try. We laugh with glee, as we know we have found the answer. A man walks by through the parking lot of cars on I-95. "So what's the hold up?" we ask. "Egg truck turned over in the middle of the road, eggs all over the place." We realize that from now on, everything that happens is more than a coincidence.

Quarters, quarters, quarters – it seems like the place must be a freaking quarter factory, everything you buy is something and twenty five cents, so you get back three quarters with every purchase. We're late getting to the park, but we figure Goldy must be late as well, he must have been stuck back there somewhere with us behind the egg truck. We go to the first designated meeting place, the waterslide. It's closed. We hang out for a while talking with Angie, the Waterslide Gatekeeper. We decide to leave a message with her. "If you see a curly headed guy wandering around here, ask him if his name is Goldy. If it is, tell him we went to the bar."

After a few beers, we leave a message with the bartender – "if you see a curly headed guy wandering around here, ask him if his name is Goldy. If it is, tell him we went to the roller coaster." It's closed. We decide to go to the Waterslide and check messages and head back to the bar. We're anxious to find Goldy to tell him about our move to Hawaii and we get into another intense, exciting discussion about how wonderful it will be. At the peak of our discussion, a guy walks by with a t-shirt on, across the back reads a single word, "Maui."

Seconds later, up walks Goldy, "hey guys what's with the smiles?"

“Goldy, we’ve got something to tell you. It’s big, it’s important, and I think we should go for a spin on the paddleboats to get high first.”

We go by the concession stand to get some drinks and food and a stack of quarters and head for the paddleboats. A large sign over the line reads, “No food, no drink, no smoking, stay away from the edge of the lake.”

We slyly hide the goods and slip into the boat. We load the pipe and make a bee-line for the far edge of the lake, huffing and puffing along the way. A voice comes over a megaphone.

“Alright you three, away from the side, and no smoking.”

We paddle back around finishing our dinner, and hop out.

“Ok, so what is it?”

“Goldy, we’re moving to Hawaii.”

“Hawaii?”

“Hawaii.”

“Hawaii, mmm, sounds good, when do we go?”

“Soon.”

A second guy walks by with a Maui t-shirt and we head back for the bar to discuss the details.

It’s perfect, all three of us are ready to do something different, the timing is good, and Hawaii seems to be the perfect spot. We decide we’ll take three months to finish up general shit around here, a month to get across country and out to Hawaii, and a minimum of six months on the island. We run the numbers and figure out worse case scenarios. There are no flaws, it’s too good. The Indigo Girls are playing in the background. We wonder, should we go see them? Naw, this is more important, we’ll wait for Neil. Besides, the mushrooms should be kicking in just about then.

Goldy and I decide to go for a ride in the logs. Just before the big plunge, Goldy disappears into the nose of the log. We go barreling down and with a splash. Water shoots up from the nose of the log, pummeling into my face, while Goldy is in a fetal position in the nose of the log.

“I’m soaking wet, why’d you jump down in the log?”

“I don’t know, guess I got kinda excited.”

“Fraid of heights?”

“Mmm, maybe.”

“I didn’t know.”

“Yeah.”

“Bout time to head into the show.”

We grab Chris at the bar and walked over to the entrance.

“Hey Dave, you look pretty wet.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“Goldy’s dry, how’d that happen? Didn’t he sit in front?”

“Well, kinda.”

During the show, I kept thinking about Hawaii. Neil Young was playing acoustic guitar and his sound was phenomenal. I thought about what I would do for work and decided I should open a bar called “The Mongoose.” There are no snakes in the Hawaiian Islands and mongoose keep away snakes. So it seemed like a natural. Besides, it sounded cool. I kept bouncing ideas off of Chris and Goldy and we decided that it should have a water theme. There would be volleyball and paddleball and of course, waterslides.

The vision was clear. Opening day will be July 11, 1991, the day that a total solar eclipse passes its shadow over the big island. During the eclipse, I will open the park, and Jerry Garcia will be the first one down the flume, butt nekkid, head first on his tummy, with the light of the eclipse reflecting brightly from his butt. I decide that I should get to work immediately on the t-shirt design with a mongoose cruising down a waterslide with the words “Flume Nude at the Mongoose.”

Neil breaks into “Comes a Time” and we all look at each other with ridiculously huge smiles and make our three way hang loose signs. A third guy walks by with a Maui t-shirt. We spontaneously all raise our hands and form a “hang loose” triangle with our thumbs and pinkies. Three guys, one mission.

SUMMER INTO FALL 1989 – THREE ONE

The significance of the numbers three and one became more and more apparent as the weeks drew on. Our plans were getting more solid, incorporating dates, costs and locations. We decided that we would return to Lake Compounce for our second official meeting at the Bob Dylan concert.

I wrapped up whatever jobs I was working on, and passed any projects that I was not able to complete on to other architecture firms. Goldy lined up a teaching position at the University of Hawaii. Chris quit his construction job and lined up a few job interviews in Hawaii. In fact, in preparation for his interviews in Hawaii, he even did a practice interview in Boston with a new growing construction company by the name of Suffolk Construction.

I searched the Auto Want Ads for a vehicle suitable for our cross country trip and located a 1963 Lincoln Continental stretch limousine convertible. We decided that we would road trip across country, put the limo on a freighter, and paint zebra stripes on it while we were sailing across to the islands.

Basically everything is set. We head down to the Truro, out on the forearm of Cape Cod, to spend the afternoon on the beach and make the final arrangements. Chris has the battery powered blender for margaritas. On the way to the beach, we stop by the store for beach snacks and miscellaneous supplies. When we are at the register, I see a package with a pair of dice behind the counter for sale.

“Throw in one of those.”

“What will we use those for?”

“I don’t know, but I feel like we need them.”

We settle in at the beach, spread out, and fire up the blender. Chris has a bewildering look on his face, sort of a forced smile like he is trying to look like everything is alright when it isn’t.

“Guys, I’ve got something to tell you.”

“What is it?”

“Remember that practice interview I did a while back?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, they made me an offer I can’t refuse, and I won’t be going to Hawaii.” We both totally thought he was kidding.

“You’re kidding, right?”

“The pay would be double anything I could expect in Hawaii, and they’re throwing in a car and a cell phone.”

While Goldy and I are attempting to talk reason into Chris, I subconsciously pick up the dice and toss them out onto the blanket.

Three, one. A sign from the heavens. Three guys, one mission. Goldy reaches over, and picks up the dice, and gives them a roll.

Three, one.

“Chris, the odds of this are astronomical. This is a sign, you have to go.”

“Guys, I really wish I could, but I can’t pass up this opportunity.”

“You can’t pass up which opportunity, hey man, where are your priorities?”

“Look, I’ll tell you what. I’ll roll the dice, and if a three one comes up, we’ll do it.”

Chris scoops up the dice and shakes them in his hand for a bit. Although he realizes there is no chance in hell that he will roll a three one, he seems to be thinking, “What if I do?”

He casts the dice high into the air.

Three, one.

Drink with the Bondos

15 OCTOBER 1989 – NEW YORK CITY

I am leaning up against the bar at a smoke filled tavern in New York City, quaffing down an ice cold draft Budweiser, having just gotten out of a Grateful Dead concert at the Meadowlands in New Jersey. The place is packed shoulder to shoulder with deadheads in a myriad of combinations of tie dye and concert t-shirts. I start rapping with the guy next to me, and it turns out that he is the best friend of my ex-girlfriend's current boyfriend.

“Wow, that's pretty wild, so what do you do?”

“I do independent video work.”

“Cool, I have been getting into that a bit lately myself. A couple of my friends and I were planning on moving to Hawaii, but it fell through.”

After Chris backed out, Goldy and I discussed the possibility of still going, but it was like the wind was out of the sails, so to say, or maybe more like the zebra was off of the boat.

“Since I have found myself with a lot of free time, I thought I would explore film and video, a passion of mine since I was a kid.”

Over a couple of beers, we discussed the concept of making a documentary together. We brainstormed locations, trying to think of somewhere that had not been covered, or at least had not been covered in a long time. We decided on the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean. Blaine seemed to recall something years ago in National Geographic, but neither of us could think of any film documentaries. We chatted about finances, and felt that it was too much brain damage to get a grant, and it allowed minimal flexibility. We decided that it would be produced by MasterCard.

Bar talk. Some of the most incredible ideas are created, but never realized through bar talk. There is something about the enthusiasm and excitement from a couple of beers, the aftermath of heightened energy of a powerful musical experience, and the meeting of someone new that fuels the fire of ideativity.

Bar talk. However, this time, we follow through. The next time Blaine and I meet face to face is on the plane to New Delhi. We decide that we will work out all of the details (financial stuff and the like) on the flight over.

I had purchased an ‘around the world, stop where you want’ airline ticket leaving from New York City. The morning of my flight, I visited Hunt's Camera and purchased all of my video and camera equipment for the trip, including battery packs, tripods and loads of slide film, which I crammed into lead-lined bags to protect them from the X-ray machines in airport security.

“Stewardess, four red wines, please.”

17 JANUARY 1990 – DEHLI

The first thing you notice when you arrive in Delhi is the smell, a smell that is akin to a combination of stale dirty smoke mixed with the smell of the inside of a barn at a dairy farm. It permeates everything, the air, the airport, the bathrooms, the people.

After a couple of hours of navigating the mundanely simple yet painstaking process of customs and exchanging money, we found the correct bus for Delhi. A smattering of other non-Indian passengers were sprinkled throughout the bus, all with a bewildered daze, brought on by the combination of jet lag and a continually changing visual menagerie punctuated by a kaleidoscope of sounds, leaving one with a surreally pensive state of mind.

The traffic grew in intensity as we approached Delhi, as thousands of vehicles of all types, sizes, and condition poured together like swarms of bees, never slowing, never looking, and surprisingly, never hitting. We disembarked at Connaught Place with a few of the others and began our search for a room.

Our first stop was Ringo Hotel, followed by Sunny, both of which were full. We then went to the Tourist Center, where we found a room to be available at Hotel Bright, complete with its own bath, for 170R.

The room was small and dingy, without any windows, and only large enough for two single beds next to each other. The beds were comprised of wooden platforms with a thin pad and a single sheet, without any pillows. A single light bulb hung from the ceiling, only providing a bit of light, which was probably all for the better. The bathroom was without towels or toilet paper and was coated with a slippery brown film over all of its surfaces. The smell was that of a dirty wet clay pot.

After unloading our bags onto the beds (I was fearful of putting them on the floor), we set out to see Delhi. Instantly an auto-rickshaw pulled up right next to us, almost hitting us as it stopped, complete with a badgering driver intent on showing us everything. It didn't matter that we knew where we wanted to go; he was determined to take us where he thought we should go. We finally convinced him to take us to the Red Fort (Lal Qila). He waited for us as we toured the Fort and its bazaar of dealers and small shops.

Then it was on to Jama Masjid. If anyone ever wants to have the most surreal experience imaginable, they should walk through the market at the base of the steps up to Jama Masjid with a video camera on their shoulder. Swarms of people surround you, clinging, begging, touching, grabbing. Everyone wants something and even those without arms or legs are rolling around on the ground hoping for a rupee.

We climbed the steps and went into the mosque, where among other things we saw the hair of Mohammed and his footprint which had melted into the stone. We traveled back to the hotel for a brief nap and then we were off for an evening walk around Connaught Place.

We had our first leap into culinary India at a roadside cart. "Hey, this looks good, let's try some of that stew looking stuff, and some of that meat on the skewer", suggested Blaine. I was apprehensive as this was our first food in India and I had heard a dozen times 'you will get sick no matter what for your first few days while you are adjusting to the food.'

The two boys at the cart kept a bewildering ethereal gaze on us the entire time that we ate. I wondered what they were thinking. Was it the way that we were eating it? Was it the combination of things that we had asked for? Were they waiting to see how long it would be before we got sick? Or was it simply that they thought that we looked odd. The food was delicious and fortunately I never experienced any problems from it.

We continued our journey through the dark streets of Connaught Place as scores of children kept coming up to us tugging, begging, for food or money. Every shadow seemed to be a home for at least a body or two. Then it was back to the hotel for a restless night of sleep.

ALLOW THEM TO CHANGE ALONG THE WAY

I climbed off of my bed at 5:00am and 'showered', which was basically the repetitive process of filling a cup partially with hot water then topping it off with cold and pouring it over my head and body. We then packed up our stuff and headed downstairs to meet our bus to Jaipur. The bus was expectedly late, but the ride was without incident.

While we were in Rajasthan, we researched ways of getting to get to the Andaman Islands. The exercise gave us insight into the reason why no one had put together a documentary on the islands. It was close to impossible to get there. We would need to get to Calcutta, find someone with a boat and crew, and convince them to take on a journey of several weeks or even months. We may be eaten when we arrive. It would take way more time, and cost way more money than we had.

We learned of a tribal region in the Eastern Ghat mountains in Puri that was filled with a host of interesting nomadic tribes and decided to reset our sights. Additionally, we were getting some great footage along the way as well, so we thought that perhaps a combo documentary might be the way to go. We decided to hit Agra, home of the Taj Mahal, and Varanasi, the Holy City of Shiva, along the way to Puri.

After exploring Rajasthan for several days and learning that we had just missed the camel races, we headed on to Agra. Upon arriving, I inadvertently stepped in the sewer while looking in one of the shops, as the sewer was basically an open through between the road and the sidewalk. A boy outside the shop was eager to help me clean my shoe and emptied an icebox of its contents and then poured the water over my shoe while I slowly spun my foot around. Next door, a boy who was watching while slowly shaking his head invited me in to play his sitar. He showed me a few strums and then I played it for several minutes.

We stayed at an inn just outside the Taj Mahal, with a roof deck overlooking the entrance to the Taj. The next morning, I walked down to the river, where I set up the audio deck to record the second side of the Agra tape "Morning Sounds". I left the deck by the side of the river hidden beneath a bush, and hit record. On my wandering back up from the river, I observed several families performing their morning chores while packs of monkeys scurried from roof to roof searching for food and pulling clothes from lines.

Of particular interest was a woman who was filling a pot of water for cooking. A faucet was mounted about three feet above the ground which poured water continuously. The woman placed a large metal bucket beneath the faucet. The bucket initially had some amount of water in it. She then scooped the water from this bucket with a small plastic bucket into a third bucket. After about four scoops of water, she poured the water into a fourth bucket; a second person lifted the fourth bucket and poured it into the pot. They repeated this entire process about four times, during each step about half of the water would splash onto the ground. Eventually, the pot was full of water. Why she didn't just fill the pot from the faucet I'll never know.

That afternoon, I went back to pick up the recording deck, and took it back to my room to listen to a bit of the recording. Apparently, there was a bull frog next to the river's edge, and a brown bear had come down to ask him a few questions.

"Oh great Frog, everything seems so frenetic and disconnected. Pray tell, how is all related?" asked Round Brown Bear.

"Even seemingly unrelated things are." responded the Frog.

"Like each of the waves in the river before us, everything is a culmination of all of the events that lead up to it. An instance of space and time is the summation of the components that make up that instance and is affected by all of those components. The mind affects the body. Feelings influence energy. Everything is related."

"But also, everything is exactly what it isn't. Reality is but the perspective from which it is perceived. There is no singular reality, but merely an infinite collection of different realities. Nothing is good. Nothing is bad. Everything is, except is, which isn't."

"Free will is inversely proportional to energy. As do all components, free will contributes to the instance, but as the energy increases, its contribution lessens."

"I think I understand, but I don't know what it all means," declared Round Brown Bear.

"It means what it means to you, and that's all that it means," answered the Frog.

22 JANUARY 1990 – NECTAR OF THE GODS

Later, that evening, I ran into a two women travelers. One of them, Sandy, mentioned that they had just ordered some bhang lassies, which they didn't like the taste of and were unable to finish. Bhang lassies I says to myself, 'just what is a bhang lassie? A bhang lassie is a lassie made with marijuana, also known to some as a hash smoothie.

"And just what does it taste like?" I asked.

"Here, you can have a whole one; we're not going to have them."

I seized the opportunity and guzzled one down.

Afterwards, we walked up the 'road' for dinner with Sandy and sat around an outside table with a beautiful view of a column. Dinner was nerve-rackingly slow and by the time it showed up, the lassie I consumed had kicked in and not only did I forget what I had ordered but I forgot that I was hungry.

We ate, went back to the hotel, and got our things together to head to the train station. Blaine had a bhang lassie while I retrieved my deck from a German guy I met on the roof and exchanged addresses. We made our goodbyes and auto rickshawed it over to the train station. We arrived at a little after 10:00pm, leaving us almost an hour to wander around.

Oh, yes, I almost forgot the reason I was sitting here on the train in the dark writing this shit down, it was to describe the ride over to the train station from the hotel.

A man is looking over my shoulder right now, I think I might possibly be in his seat, I certainly don't know where mine is. Good, he is gone.

Anyhow, on the ride over to the station, uh, he's back, on the way back to the station, I think he's putting his bag up. The conductor is now about to check my ticket. He just nabbed Blaine.

Several minutes later...we are now in our corrected seats, which really aren't that bad. Well, as I was saying, I really felt I was in tune with what driving in India is all about. It's just like skiing. You don't worry about what is behind you; you just try not to hit anything in front of you. The only difference is that a couple of taps on your horn and it's no longer your responsibility to not hit someone. So, for instance, say you are driving in the nighttime where you can't really see what's ahead of you as you spy a shadowy figure through your smudgy windshield. You need only to zap out a couple of taps on the ole tooter and fly on through, never mind that your headlight goes out as you blow your horn, you just keep on going through assuming that it has moved. I suppose with time one gets a feel for which shadowy figures are people walking along with dark blankets over their shoulders and which are dark cows resting in the road.

About half way to the station, I saw something which I had never seen before in India, something which initially shocked and bewildered me, an electronically operated traffic signal, just like we have back in the states. With a red light at the top and a green light at the bottom separated vertically by a yellow light in the middle. My surprise wore off as I realized the position of the light merely suggested which direction the traffic may possibly be coming from, so that you could more strategically plan your approach as you entered into the intersection at full steam; it had no bearing as to whether or not you should stop or even slow down.

I slept for a few hours over the course of the evening rocked in and out of sleep by clankety swaying of the train. I awoke to find people sitting all around and on top of me. One man insisted that my seat reservation was only good for the first portion of the trip and that I now had to share my seat with many other people. I resisted and was able to eek out just enough space to sort of recline over my bag. With every exhalation, people inched in, oh the joys of second class reserved. Occasionally I exited the train at stops for a glass of chai, a stretch, or a couple of bananas.

23 JANUARY 1990 – VARANASI

The cow is the most revered creature in all of India. She brings us milk, she brings us life. She is our mother, our mother God. No harm may befall her, she may go where she pleases, and do as she likes. Blessed is the person who is visited by a cow.

We rolled into Varanasi around 2:30pm and caught a rickshaw to Hotel Surya, in the northern part of the city. Although it was only 100 rupees per night, it was probably the best room we've sleep in since the Palace in Jaipur. It had a full bath attached, hot water, and a garden right outside the room. We unloaded our stuff, dropped off laundry with the desk clerk, and walked over to Indian Airlines in an attempt to get tickets for Bhubaneswar, Puri. It looked like the best we could do is to fly to Calcutta and wing it from there. We hopped an auto-rickshaw from the airline to the Ganges. At first, the driver said it would be 2R, but as we got going he changed his mind to 35R, so we hopped out and stopped a regular rickshaw for 5R. On the way we stopped at a liquor store so Blaine could pick up a pint of whiskey.

When we arrived, a kid showed us the way through the maze of alleys, down to the river, where, by an amazing coincidence, a friend of his happened to be waiting and willing to give us a ride up the river in his boat to see the burning bodies (for, of course a modest 50R).

When we first saw the burning Ghats from the small boat out in the water, it didn't have that much of an effect on me. You could see two or three bodies wrapped up on the bamboo stretchers about to be dipped in the Ganges before burning and about a half dozen fires burning in the background.

It wasn't until we had climbed ashore and walked right up to the fires that I really felt something different. It was certainly a somewhat strange feeling, but also a notably peaceful one. As I watched one of the fires, I felt water splash on my leg, and turned around to find a body being carried by me dripping from a dip in the Ganges.

I watched as men stacked wood, placed the body on top, added a bit more wood and started the fire. About a half an hour later, the cloth wraps and most of the person's skin had burned off and their skull was sticking out of the fire. At this point a man stuck the skull with a long piece of bamboo, knocking it onto the ground. This ritual was to release the soul of the person, which would immediately fly to heaven.

The fire burned for about four hours, during which fire attendees would pick up feet, hands, legs, etc. that rolled out of the fire and put them all back in. When the fire was over, the ashes were scooped up and deposited into the Ganges.

All aspects of life take place along the shores of the Ganges River. People bathing, people eating, people praying. The sound of wet clothes slapping against the rocks creates a rhythmic backdrop to the concerto of Holy Men, living saints chanting praises to the Gods. Men brush their teeth with the same waters that carry human remains from the funeral pyres.

We met a young man named Noresh who was training himself to be a Holy Man. Although he was only twenty, he had made the lifelong commitment to understand the depths of Hinduism philosophy to a point where he could also one day join his elder brethren along the river's shore. He had a personal temple in which he lived overlooking the burning Ghats. His lighted and heated his temple with "holy wood", burning embers from the funeral pyres.

We spent several days with Noresh, both in his temple and rowing along the river in his small boat with his brother as he spoke about himself, the burning Ghats, and Hinduism.

“You don’t know it about your heart,
What is inside the heart.
Inside is also some God sitting.
Rama and Rama wife sitting in heart.
Rama is take the life, Rama is give the life.
Rama is morning give the light,
And night is take the light.”

25 JANUARY 1990 – SECOND CLASS UNRESERVED

From Varanasi, we flew to Calcutta. We arrived at 9:00pm, and decided that we would try for the 10:15pm train to Puri. A gentleman at the airport said that it would be impossible, but we decided to go for it. We hopped into a taxi and ‘shot off’ for the train station.

Calcutta was truly a hellhole. The pollution was so thick we could only see for about 15 feet in front of us. We got stuck in dead stop traffic numerous times, and I began to wonder about the sanity of trying to get to the train station in Calcutta from the airport on the eve of Republic Day.

We pull up to the train station just after 10:00 and dash in. It is a true madhouse, the situation looks hopeless. At 10:05, we find a booth where a guy tells us to go to the other end of the station. At 10:07, the guy at the other end tells us to go to Gate 36, 37 or 38. At Gates 36, 27, 38, we find lines that would easily take several hours, Blaine goes straight to the front of the line, arguments ensue, and by 10:11 we have our tickets. We must locate Track 12 and get on the train. At 10:15 we locate Track 12, get on the train, in reserved, get thrown off and repeat as necessary until the train takes off.

This was a clear example of putting the right person in charge of the job at hand. If I had been getting the tickets, I would have waited in line with all of the others, and we would be on a train (maybe) the next day. Blaine had no problem going right to the front of the line, getting in front of other people, ignoring their yelling and screaming, and demanding two tickets. Everyone has their strengths.

Well, you think that the train ride to Varanasi was crowded. That was second class reserve, welcome to second class unreserved. You know what it’s like when you go to a Dead concert and a couple of you want to get down to the floor, and you walk down and do your best to squeeze through the crowd, trying to find a little crack between groups of people. Eventually everyone adjusts a little bit after their initial resentment and you find a little space.

Well, multiply that feeling of imposition by about 10 million. Instead you are trying to squeeze into a second class unreserved train car packed to the gills with hostile Indians, none of whom want you there, and none of whom speak your language. And just to make it a little more exciting, let’s say that each of you are carrying huge, heavy backpacks, and let’s further compound it by making it the evening before the biggest holiday weekend in India, making it especially crowded (by the way, crowded is no word to describe the phenomenon inside the train).

There was not even room for me to put both my feet on the floor. For 12 hours, I alternated between putting my left foot on the floor with my right foot on top of it and the reverse. Well, I guess I came to India for the overall experience, at least that’s what I am telling myself 12 hours later as we get closer to Puri. The ride was restless to say the least.

After we arrived into Puri, we took a rickshaw over to the Z Hotel where we got a huge double with bath and balcony overlooking the beach for 150R. After dropping the stuff in our room, we headed down to the beach for a dip. The water was ideal, it was the perfect temp with long rolling waves just right for body surfing.

Puri was my favorite place on the trip to date. Villages of fishing tribes lived on the beach in grass huts, fishing from long canoe shaped boats carved from a single log. The boats were so heavy that it took eight men to carry one.

A beautiful girl wrapped in scarlet and ochre sarongs and a huge grin on her face and large golden piercings in her nose and ears, approached me with a dead eel to frighten me, only to have the experience reverse itself when the eel sprang to life and she fled shrieking after it slithered to the ground.

The next morning, we arose around 7:30am. I collected all my stuff from around the room, reorganized, filtered, repacked and compacted, showered and left. We rickshawed it over to the bus stand and got the 10:00am bus for Bhubaneswar. The ride started out fairly un-crowded but quickly reached the usual Indian capacity. Interesting, in India, they pack from the front of the bus to the back. People would rather sit with four people crammed into a two person seat or three across in an 18" aisle than move back two feet to an empty seat. Of course anyone entering or leaving the bus must squeeze past this sardine mob so that they can scrunch up tight to the back of the rest of the people.

It was Sunday afternoon as we entered a taxi with the intent of going to the tourist office. As luck would have it, our driver misunderstood our intent and instead delivered us to the government offices of the Indian Tribal Institute. We approached a man at the entry. After some exchange of sounds and hand motions, we managed to convey the concept that we wished to get information about visiting some of the tribal areas. We were directed to another building nearby titled "Orissa Tribal Affair Office." We again went through our little routine and were taken to an office where a gentleman spoke a bit of English (something that, it seems, not a lot of people around here do).

He explained to us that this was the office which handled the accounting for the disbursement of development monies to the tribes and that where we really wanted to go to the "Tribal and Harijan Research and Training Institute." We took a rather long rickshaw ride to the THRTI and spent a couple of hours chatting with Deputy Director Dr. P. K. Tripathy. He was at the Institute pretty much by himself, as most everyone else was in town at the "Orissa Tribal Exhibition." THRTI's mission was to monitor the tribes and determine how best to help them. In many cases they would teach them agricultural skills as many of the tribes have historically been hunters and gatherers.

He was happy to talk with us and gave us invaluable information, along with names of people to contact. In two hours, we had learned more about the tribes in the Eastern Ghat Mountains than we could have in five years of research back in the States. Sixty three distinct nomadic tribes had settled in the mountains as their nomadic paths had been severed by civilization. They all continued to live in their unique ways of life, each tribe reflecting its individual customs and beliefs. Once a week, they would come together in a common market place to exchange their goods.

We became completely enamored with one of the tribes called the Bondos. The Bondos were a tribe of African descent. They were the most primitive and radically different from the rest of the tribes in their physical features, their dress and their way of life. They were also extremely dangerous as they would frequently fight amongst themselves, their fights often ending in death. The intonation of Dr. Tripathy's voice changed noticeably when he spoke of the Bondos. For some reason, the government had decided not to focus on teaching the Bondos agricultural skills. We got the distinct impression that this was intentional, in the hopes that they would die out.

1 FEBRUARY 1990 – THE MARKET

Up at 6:00am, showered, stocked up the vest, and headed downstairs to leave. But as one might expect, things weren't quite ready. Our guide, Ajit informed us that there were some minor mechanical problems with the car and also that one of the tires needed to be replaced. He said that this should take no longer than 15 minutes, so I knew we had at least an hour. Blaine and I had breakfast, wrote in our journals, and were on the road 1-1/2 hours later, headed for the tribal market in Kudumulu Gumia. Of course, no cameras were allowed and especially no video.

The market was a spectacle of sights, smells and the sound of haggling. Blankets covered with clay pots lay strewn throughout the grounds, surrounded by fruits, vegetables, boiling pots of bubbling oil, dried meats, salted fish, and mounds of raw foods and spices.

Three tribes had come together to trade their goods, the Khonds, the Gadabas and the Bondos. Each of the tribes set up in different areas, each with their unique wares that they had brought to barter. The Khonds were adorned with tattoos and minimal jewelry and wore earth colored clothes, while the Gadabas were wrapped in long sarongs with brilliant bands of greens, oranges and reds. The Bondo were known as the naked people, as they wore nothing except heaps of silver necklaces and a simple skirt which was wrapped about three quarters of the way around their waist.

The women were bald, some with head dress. In Bondo folklore, some women of their tribe had stumbled upon a goddess bathing naked in the river. They giggled when they saw her, so she put a curse on them that they would never have any hair. As a result, all of the Bondo women shave their head to this day. This reconfirmed our feelings when we met with Deputy Tripathy that they seemed the most interesting, and we were not even more intent on visiting them.

After spending several hours at the market, and getting some great photos and video footage, we hiked back to the car and drove a bit to the next roadside village for lunch. While having our rice and dahl, we had a conversation with Ajit expressing to him that it was imperative that we visited a Bondo village. The conversation grew more and more heated as Ajit insisted that we could not go because it was a) illegal, and b) not safe. A young boy nearby who heard us and understood English came up to the table. "You want to go to a Bondo village, I can take you." We told Ajit that we were going to go, and that we would see him in a day or so. Ajit said that while he could not support us going, he could not leave us on our own, and subsequently felt obligated to go as well.

The Bondo tribe is India's most primitive and most aggressive tribe. Subsequently, they are the most protected tribe and no one is allowed to go into their villages. We were most delighted at the opportunity to visit them.

1 FEBRUARY 1990 – DRINK WITH THE BONDOS

We drove as far as we could through low-lying farmlands and Harijan villages until we came upon a dried creek bed, rendering the mechanically assisted portion of the journey complete. Ajit, Blaine, the boy and I set out on foot on a dusty, rocky, journey through jagged rocks and past wind torn trees, while our driver reclined across the rear seat of the car awaiting our return. I kept anticipating showers of arrows to rain upon us from the heavens. After a couple of hours of hiking through the dust and trees, we could see a village of small earthen huts off in the distance.

"There it is, you're on your own from here," announced the boy as he turned and headed back towards the car. Ajit, Blaine and I looked back and forth at each other. Ajit broke the silence with one more attempt to convince us to reconsider.

"This is really not a good idea, the Bondo people are very unpredictable, our lives may be in danger." Well, I for one certainly didn't come this far to not go into the village.

"I'll go in first, you and Ajit stay here until it looks ok," I suggested to Blaine. "And definitely keep that video camera tucked away. There's no telling what type of weapon they may think that to be."

I began the walk into the village. I could see a woman and several children in the middle of the village. When they saw me, they hurried off into one of the huts. I walked on in to the middle of the village and looked around. There were perhaps a dozen or so brown mud and thatch roofed huts and no sign of any villagers. I walked over to the hut that the woman and children had entered and peered in, as if expecting them to welcome me with open arms.

Blaine and Ajit held fast at their self appointed safety spot about a hundred yards outside the village. As I was squatting down looking into the darkness inside the hut, an older man came up behind me. He was wearing a short cloth skirt and a simple headdress. In his right hand, he grasped a bow and arrow. His dark cracked skin displayed his rugged existence. I would have guessed him to be in his forties but there were no confirming indications to ascertain any affirmation. His mouth barely moved as he babbled incessantly and incoherently (at least to me). His voice was loud and he appeared agitated at my presence. It clearly appeared that he had generously been partaking of Salep, the beverage of choice of the Bondo.

Salep is a palm wine that ferments in the tree. One simply climbs this proper tree, taps the trunk, and hangs a gourd to catch the sacred drink. During the fermentation process, ethanol is produced, the same alcohol that resides in wine, beer, and all of the distilled spirits that the modern world have come to love and cherish. However, in addition to ethanol, and largely because the fermentation occurs within the tree, ethanol's nasty cousin methanol is also produced. Methanol, or wood alcohol as it is more commonly known as, has a number of less desirable effects than the relaxing intoxicating qualities of ethanol, such as blindness and death. And it is this combination of the two that is the source of the aggressive nature of the Bondos.

The elder turns and walks towards another one of the huts, continuing his loud rambling babbling as he walks away. I follow him. He walks into his hut. I follow him into his hut. He sits down cross-legged on the ground. I sit down cross-legged on the ground. He continues his babbling and I listen intently, having absolutely no idea what he is saying.

After about ten minutes, a younger male climbs into the hut. He does not sit, but instead squats down slightly behind me resting his elbow on his knee. He also has a bow and arrow, but instead, it is slung over his shoulder. He is silent and motionless. The elder man yells something at him and he rises and exits the hut. Outside, he climbs a palm tree with a gourd in hand. At the top, he fills the gourd from another gourd tied to the top of the tree. He climbs back down and hands it to the elder, who pours a bit onto the ground. The tone of his voice transforms as he chants what is a clear offering to the Gods. He tilts his head back and pours it into his open throat. He is notably well trained in the drinking of Salep. He does not allow it to rest in his mouth and understandable so, as Salep has the taste and texture of what looks and smells like warm curdled milk. He offers it to me, and it is now apparent that he is not intending to sacrifice me to the Gods, (at least for now) but has instead welcomed me as a guest in his home and invited me to enjoy with him his Salep.

Unfortunately for me, I am not as skilled on the drinking of Salep as he, and I instead have to consume it the western way of filling my mouth and gulping it down. I finish the gourd and he gives it to the warrior to refill. At this point, Blaine and Ajit have determined that it is safe to enter the village and are standing outside the hut as I enjoy an afternoon of Salep glugging with my new friend.

With time, the tone of his voice returns to that of our initial encounter. At one point, he repeats the same thing over and over as if I can understand him. I have no idea what he is saying. Initially, I attempt to communicate with him through sign language, but it proves to be totally hopeless. Regardless of what arm and hand motions I do, he repeats his same sequence of motions. He points to me, points to his hand, pulls his finger across his throat, points to the ground, and then points to me again. I am not completely sure what he was trying to tell me, but it does not seem to be totally favorable, so I call for Ajit to assist with interpretation.

“Yo Ajit, can you come over here and help me figure out what this guy is saying, it doesn't seem good,” I shout out to Ajit through a hazy Salep induced daze.

Fortunately, Ajit is able to understand him a bit by speaking with in one of his cross tribal dialects prevalent in the region. As it turns out, the gentleman with whom I am sharing a drink found himself in a quarrel with his brother several months earlier. During a Salep fueled engagement, he killed his brother. And by Bondo law, because he killed his brother, he is now responsible for taking of his brother's family. The young warrior climbing the tree is his nephew. He is now asking his new friend (i.e. me) to help out. The tone with which he is asking me is in what now seems to be typical Bondo fashion, irritable and aggressive.

I offer him several biddies and he leans down and kisses my feet. Ajit determines that this is a most appropriate time to leave. I arise, exit the hut, join Ajit and Blaine and we begin to walk out of the village. The elder stops us, this time with an even more forceful tone with his voice. He is accompanied by his nephew. I offer him the rest of my biddies. He again kneels down and kisses my feet.

The three of us turn and continue walking out of the village, exercising the utmost care to walk smoothly, yet briskly, careful not to look back, as I figure it would be bad form to shoot someone in the back with an arrow. We arrive safely back to the car, where we awaken our driver and continue our journey, in a now enlightened state from my drink with the Bondas.

2 FEBRUARY 1991 – VISITORS OF ANOTHER TRIBE

The next day, we visited Kangarapada, one of the largest of the Gadaba Villages. As we walked through the village, we received unusual reactions. People would either go inside their huts or they would stop whatever they were doing to stare. As Ajit explained to us, they knew very little of the world outside of their village, and thought that we were members of another tribe, who had travelled far distances through the mountains to visit them, and they were honored. The village headman came to us and invited us to spend the day in his village and have a feast with him and his family in the afternoon.

We walked through the village with him and chose a pig for the feast. The headman grabbed the pig behind his hind feet, tied his legs together and hung him upside down from a pole. Two boys then carried the pig off to the village center, while the women of the tribe prepared for the dance.

We walked around the village for a bit taking pictures and video. When we returned, it was time to kill the pig. My throat hurts every time I think about it. Fortunately we got it on video, so you can just watch it and I won't have to get into the gory details.

After the pig was killed, it was laid across the fire and many of the men in the village started drumming. A group of about fifteen women started a serpentine dance and a horn joined in. After about forty minutes of dancing, the headman invited us to join him and the women for a drink. We followed him down a few paths to a space between a couple of huts and sat down with him on the ground. Soon the women joined us, bringing several large urns of beverage (probably salep). We sat and drank and drank. It seems every time I finished my urn, there was a woman waiting to refill it. Most of the women were giggling and the headman appeared quite imbibed. (I think he may have had a head start.)

Ajit had wandered, making any sort of communication very difficult. We could not figure out where he went or why, so walked around looking for him. We saw him across the village as he disappeared into a hut, soon after emerging with a bottle containing a clear liquid. I had no idea what it was, but it certainly was quite strong and had a unique and interesting taste. We finished the bottle with him and then walked back into the village center.

It was now time to eat. The feast was delicious. The pig had been chopped into bite sized pieces, covered with a spicy curry sauce and accompanied by a variety of equally spicy vegetables and mounds of rice, all served on large banana leaves. As we finished eating, we could hear the drums starting and we moved to the dance area. The women had loosened up a bit from their beverages and were moving a bit more fluidly. Several other women joined in and for a while there were twenty four of them snaking along after several more dances.

Arguments began to break out between several of the men, the headsman, who was very drunk, the farmer who raised the dinner pig, and several other men who had taken the overall occasion as an excuse to celebrate. Ajit strongly recommended that we leave while we could, so we did.

From the tribal region, we traveled on through Calcutta to Singapore, where we plotted our next course of action. We finally decided on Sumatra, upon hearing that the monsoon was pretty much over. Just forty five minutes before our flight time, we rounded the corner right into the middle of a parade procession of

Indians with hundreds of needles and spikes in their arms, legs, chest and faces; even through their tongues. The situation began to get a bit tenser as we found that the road that the driver wanted to take to the airport was closed and we would have to take a detour. Miraculously, we made it to the airport in time, caught our flight, and arrived in Medan, Sumatra around 1:00pm.

We hired a car to drive us up to Lake Toba, breaking up the four hour ride with a huge lunch of boiled upang, nasi, mei with fried egg and a heap of fresh Indonesian fruits. On the ferry over to Samosir Island, we met a German couple, Ingrid and Michael, who told us a bit about the island and recommended a place to stay near Tuk Tuk, Tuk Tuk Timbul. It consisted of a row of about a dozen little Indonesian houses right on the water's edge, all different and charming, with front porches overlooking the lake. Ours was number thirteen, more affectionately known as "The Ship." The price was 5000Rh per night, about \$2.50 US. We settled in, and then I headed with Michael and Ingrid to Ambarita, a nearby village, where we played chess and drank palm wine till the late hours.

On the way back, they showed me a grouping of stone chairs with a stone table in the center. A jury would sit in the chairs while wrong doers would have their head removed on the center table. We walked on back to Tuk Tuk Timbul and I went to "The Ship" and on to bed.

9 FEBRUARY 1991 – TUTAP BULAN

On the morning before leaving Singapore, I called my mother back in the states and she read me my horoscope. During the month of February, I would travel to a far away land, where I would pursue creative interests which would grow into a more permanent career. I would meet new people who would help influence long-term decisions, and I would also engage in experiences and activities that would change my life now and also when I returned home. The ninth of February was to be an especially important day as various celestial happenings made significant transitions, with planets lining up and the sort.

It was also the evening of a full moon. I eagerly awaited the ninth and felt it important to make sure that I was in the proper location to fully appreciate its full meaning. In the mountains, on an island, in a lake inside of the crater of the world's largest volcano, on an island in the sea seemed appropriate.

The day began simply enough, with a refreshing swim in the lake and a light breakfast. Blaine and I decided to rent motorcycles for the day and to do a loop around the island. We climbed up the hill to the road, where two men were waiting with two rather used motorcycles. I gave Blaine the better of the two and took the one which sounded like a wild boar choking on a tin can and left a cloud of smoke as thick as tar. Blaine said that he had ridden motorcycles over a dozen times and assured me that he was quite capable of operating one. This soon seemed not to be entirely accurate, as I repeatedly showed him how to start it and the locations and functions of the various controls and levers.

We made a couple of stops for video and photos and then I stopped at a roadside cart for a banana. Blaine whizzed on by. This was to be the last I saw of Blaine, or anyone else who I knew, or even anyone who spoke English for that matter, for the rest of the day. I continued on my journey around the island, smiling and waving to everyone I saw. The day was beautiful, sunny and warm with just enough cloud cover to offer a bit of visual entertainment and a cool breeze over the lake. I occasionally rested to soak in a panoramic vista or to photograph oxen chewing in the fields or one of the many ornate Indonesian homes. Every now and then, I would pass through crowds of children on their way home from school, they would flock around me smiling and yelling, "horas! horas!" I smiled back and returned the greeting. Onward I traveled, along bright green fields of rice, dancing with the wind, and over logs that acted as temporary bridges while men were rebuilding the original ones washed away by the monsoon.

By 3:00pm, I was three quarters of the way around the island and entered the mountain range bordering the southeast side of the island. As I made the ascent, the bike began to cough, sputter and stop running. I found myself having to restart it every kilometer, then, every half-kilometer, then every ten meters. I was disgusted with the motorcycle and wandered into the woods to take a shit and ponder my dilemma.

I deduced that the reason might be perhaps that because the air was thinner on the mountain, the engine was not getting enough oxygen and that I should coast back down the mountain and seek and alternate low-lying route. Along the bottom of the range, the engine ran a bit better and I proceeded along a road, which appeared to go around the south end of the island. Soon, the bike coughed and sputtered and again went dead. I kicked and kicked, but it refused to start. On the final kick, the kick-starter broke off and fell to the ground. I decided that this was to be the final resting place for the motorcycle and that I would hitch a ride back to Tuk Tuk. I rolled it off the road and set it up in what seemed to be a pretty good spot.

A young boy who had been sitting on a fence watching the entire operation walked over. Of course he spoke no English, but I managed to understand that the road I was on ended shortly and that the only way to Tuk Tuk was the road over the mountain. I started to hike back towards the fork in the road. After about a kilometer I looked down to find a playing card, face down, on the road.

Over the past several years I have, on three occasions, found playing cards, face down, in the road. Every one of them was a three of clubs. I have always felt this to be of great significance, not to mention the enormous odds, because the number three has always been an important number to me. Throughout my entire life I have been one side of a triangle of three people, the other two sides of which have influenced my direction of existence; first, my mother and my brother, then Steve and Paul, Ace and Jonatha, Todd and John. Then of course, there's Goldy and Chris, who are arguably responsible for me being here in the first place.

I have also felt sort of a mystical meaning with the suite of clubs, three petals sharing a singular stem. Since I picked up that third three of clubs, I have seen other cards in the road, but never picked them up. Why should I? I've always thought that I already have three three's of clubs, which seems to be the perfect number. A fourth would do me no good, and any other card would ruin my perfect record. However, something compelled me to see what it was. I leaned down and flipped over the card. It was the five of spades.

At first I was disappointed. I had ruined my perfect record of only finding the three of clubs whenever I turned over a card in the street. I tossed it back down and continued my walk. About another kilometer on down the road I looked down to see another card, this one was face up and it was also the five of spades. I stopped as a shiver rippled down my back. This was too much; it had to be more than a coincidence. I thought to myself, perhaps the reason I had not turned over any more cards since that last three of clubs was because it was time for me to enter into a new phase of my life.

Why a five? And why the five of spades? I pondered for a bit. Mathematically, the five made sense. First there was one, me. When I was born, I was a single entity. I have to be conscious of my actions, my desires, my well being and myself. And then three, the most important number for my development in my life thus far. And now five – one, three, five – but five what? And why spades? Maybe it represented some sort of spiritual significance, like an arrow pointing upward towards the heavens.

I heard a voice and then snapped out of my daydream. A man was walking up to me, babbling away in Indonesian. Apparently he had seen me drive by on the motorcycle and wanted to help me get it started. I attempted to explain to him that it was broken. I felt that it was beyond repair without the proper tools and that I did not care about it. It was obvious that he could not understand me, and so we walked back to the motorcycle.

After several attempts, we were able to push start it and I set out again to attack the mountain, of course only after paying him the 1000Rh he insisted on for helping me. I pitter-pattered along for a couple of kilometers and the engine died. I rolled back down the mountain and it started, I rode back up and it died. I repeated this several times and then the throttle cable broke. By this point, I felt that it was totally hopeless and that I should abandon the motorcycle once and for all and seek alternate transportation. I rolled the bike into the ditch and stopped a truck headed up the mountain.

It was a flatbed truck with a broken windshield. The back was filled with old women, live chickens, and barrels of gasoline. The driver was a teenage boy with a big smile on his face. I pointed to him and asked

“Tuk Tuk?” He nodded his head, still with his big smile, I pointed to me and then to the back of the truck. He again nodded his head. Great, I thought, and I hopped into the back.

About a hundred meters up the road, he stopped and a couple of women got off. Another hundred meters and he stopped again, this time to unload the chickens and gas. Another hundred meters, the rest of the women climbed off. He then pulled into a field next to the road where several men were sitting around on benches. I thought to myself, he must have been taking a quick break before the journey over the mountains.

Almost an hour went by and I found out that it was fifty kilometers to Tuk Tuk, there were no buses, and that it was a narrow, winding road up and down several mountains. I was sure glad that I had a ride. Finally the driver got up and hopped back in the truck. I started to get in and he shook his head. He swung his hand around in the air and pointed back down the mountain. This was as far as he was going and now he was headed back. He waved by and rumbled off.

Okay, this was it. Now what do I do? I’m standing in a field with a bunch of men who don’t speak English and don’t appear very interested in helping me. I am 50 kilometers from where I wanted to be, with a mountain range in between and the sun is setting.

I began the walk.

Initially I was even a little excited about the idea of walking through the mountains with a full moon shining down illuminating the lake and valleys. The sun set quickly and soon it was quite dark. An orchestra of crickets, birds, and frogs began their outstanding performance and I began to wonder about mosquitoes. Would I be eaten alive by chlorilquine resistant malaria infected mosquitoes? Would the sunscreen lotion all over my body act as repellent or would it attract them? Why didn’t I wear long pants and a long sleeve shirt? How cold did it get in the mountains at night?

Visions of snakes, wild dogs, and other unknown tropical beasts filled my head. Where was that damn full moon that I’m doing all of this for? I continued my methodical march as these and many other questions flew through my mind. I rounded a bend and stopped. There it was, just over the rim of distant mountain, perfectly round, and as bright as a lighthouse spotlight. A thin covering of cloud pulled away it grew even brighter. It was absolutely as bright as day. Sharp, clear shadows on the ground, I could even read my watch.

I rested for a few minutes and watched it rise a bit more. Under the moonlight, I could see the tall mountains which lay before me and the many bats darting in and out of the trees. I stood, took a deep breath, and continued – clomp, clomp, clomp – the sound of feet on the rocks almost became some sort of Chinese water torture. Clomp, clomp, clomp – I rested for five to ten minutes each hour and began to wonder why I ever decided to walk. When would I get to the top? Was there a top? Clomp, clomp, clomp – I became indescribably thirsty.

Hours upon hours ticked by. I would stop and look up at the moon for renewed energy. My feet were getting sore, my thighs were aching and I was cold, but I was sweating. The thirst became unbearable. I could hear singing in the distance, coming from a building atop a nearby peak. A bit further I ran into a few people walking along. “Tuk Tuk?” They pointed in the direction I was walking. At least I’m not going the wrong way, I thought to myself. I spread my arms apart to ask how far. Thirty-five kilometers, only another ten kilometers and I would be halfway. I converted it into miles in my head and thought of comparable distances in the US. Suddenly I realized how far it really was, better not to think about it that way, better to just keep going and take it ten kilometers at a time. I looked back to the moon for some energy.

For a few hours, I walked along a ridge at the top of the mountains with alternating views of the lake and its reflection of the moon above and valleys filled with rice fields. Everything had a silver blue luminescence, which made me feel as though I was on the moon and the moon was the sun.

By now I was taking a break almost every half hour to sit and stretch my legs and massage my swollen feet. When I stopped, I would choose a soft grassy knoll, stretch out, look up at the moon, watch a few clouds

twirl by it and then look down to the steep cliffs to the lake far below and the silhouettes of ancient volcanoes off in the distance. I would think to myself, yeah this is all worth it, however far I have to walk. Then I would get up, walk a few meters, and my legs would start aching again, and I would think, this is crazy, I have no business doing this.

Baroo, bark, bark. Whenever I would pass a hut, dogs would come dashing out to the road, stand about two feet from me and howl at the top of their lungs. It was as though they were just waiting for the slightest excuse to lunge forward and gnaw off sections of my calves. I kept slowly walking through until they gave up and scampered back to the huts.

Around midnight, I thought that I could not go any further. I stumbled over to a field and plopped down into the grass. I was totally dehydrated, my lips were cracked, my throat burned, I could not even produce the slightest bit of saliva in my mouth. My whole body was sore. I decided I would sleep until the morning and continue then. But I could not sleep. I was too sore to sleep. I lay down on my back, staring at the full moon directly over-head, trying to absorb whatever energy I could from it. I was decidedly cold, wet from the grass, and annoyed by the mosquitoes buzzing in my ears. It was time to go.

As I walked I tried to make enough saliva in my mouth to swallow, but I couldn't. A piece of my lip cracked off. My throat was sorer than my legs. I again looked to the moon, but this time, something looked different. Although there wasn't a cloud in the sky, a black patch appeared over one edge of the moon. I realized that it was the beginning of a lunar eclipse. I pulled out my camera to take a picture. I had one picture left on the roll – click.

As I put the camera back in my pocket, I heard a sound, like running water. I walked a bit further and it got louder. I pulled out my flashlight and saw a path leading to a waterfall. I climbed up to it. There was a pool of water at the base of the fall; the water was crystal clear with little black bugs darting around in it. I figured that if it's good enough for them, then it's good enough for me.

I had fifty handfuls, one for each kilometer. I then stood beneath the fall, letting the water pour over my face and run down my back. I thought of all the things I had with me, each item of clothing, each thing in my pockets, each button on my vest, and how each one represented someone very special to me. I stood beneath the fall a second time, again letting the water pour over my body. The moon was half covered by now. I thought of my long journey through the mountains, my total dehydration, and the discovery of this now sacred waterfall at the beginning of the lunar eclipse. Water from an island in a lake on an island in the sea – this was a bonafide religious experience. I stood beneath the waterfall a third time, I felt reborn. I was no longer thirsty, I was no longer tired, all my soreness had been washed away from my body – waves of warm tingles rushed through me, over and over. I was ready to sprint the rest of the way to Tuk Tuk.

The moon was three quarters covered as I resumed my journey. I felt there must be a sacred resting spot where I should sit, rest, contemplate, meditate, reflect, and project during the period of the total eclipse. I knew that I would reach that point exactly when the moon became completely covered. It grew constantly darker, as the moon sliver grew constantly smaller. The instant the moon was covered, I stopped and turned to my right. I turned on the flashlight, and its beam fell directly onto an elevated area about three meters in diameter. It was covered with grass, although the rest of the area was rocks and boulders. I climbed up and took a seat. It was the highest point around and I had a completely unobstructed view of the lake far below. In the distance, to the north, I could see the twinkling lights of Tuk Tuk, like stars fallen from the sky. On the horizon, orange and gold lightening storms danced between the mountains. Millions of stars painted the sky in every direction, and presiding over all of this, directly overhead, was the faint outline of the total eclipse of the moon. It was as if the moon had momentarily turned down its omnipresent luminance to allow the other lights of the universe to shine their brightness.

And shine they did, each proud of their own contribution, like an orchestra of instruments performing a composition of visual music for the entire universe to enjoy. As I watched reflections of Tuk Tuk in the lake, the lightening on the horizon, and the occasional shooting star up above, I thought of the five of spades I had found this afternoon. I realized that if I ever was going to understand its meaning then now was the time. I

looked down at Tuk Tuk, out to the stars, over to the lightening, and finally up at the moon, as if I expected to give me the answer.

And then it clicked, the five lights, the lights of mankind below, the lights of the heavens above, the lightening connecting the two, and the almighty moon above – but wait, that’s only four, what’s the fifth light, I wondered?

But, of course! My light, representing me as an individual and my contribution to the whole. I turned on my flashlight and aimed it at the village below, then to the lightening, then to each and every star in the sky, and finally to the moon. I made my greeting to all of the other lights and then swung it around my head once more in case I had missed any. (A full explanation of the significance of each of the five lights and the relationships between them is too extensive to get into to get into it at this time, besides I can’t remember it. Maybe it was one of those “you had to be there” things.) I turned off my flashlight and the moon began to reappear. It was time to continue my journey.

As I started to leave, I had an overwhelming sensation that I was forgetting something, but I did not know what. I turned on the flashlight and looked around. Was it a stick for walking? A special rock? No, something else. Then the beam waved over something on the shoulder of the road. I looked again.

There, painted on the shoulder of the road, partially covered by sand and gravel, were the words “To Tuk Tuk” and an arrow pointing to a path leading down the mountain just where I had been sitting. I would never have seen it if I had not stopped at that exact spot to watch the eclipse and had I not been looking for something as I was leaving.

I took off down the path. Although it was still extremely dark, I felt no need for my flashlight. I was operating with a sense of awareness that transcended the need for vision. About fifteen minutes into my spirited hike down the mountain in what was essentially total darkness, I stopped for no apparent reason. It was as if an invisible wall of energy had halted me in my tracks. I turned on my flashlight and directed in front of me, only to see a huge spider’s web spun across the path at face height and a large brown spider the size of my hand right in the middle of it. We were literally looking into each other eyes. And he was on my side of his web.

Now I don’t mind snakes, and all these bats whizzing around don’t bother me, but spiders, spiders I don’t like. Especially ones caught up in their web wrapped around my head. I don’t know what caused me to stop when I did, but I was sure glad I did. I carefully climbed off of the path and around this potential hazard and continued to the bottom of the mountain.

For some reason, I knew that this would be the only spider I would encounter, so I turned my flashlight back off and continued down the mountain. Let fear be your guide. I had faced my biggest fear eye to eye, and I was no longer now afraid of spiders.

The moon was almost completely uncovered by the time I got to the bottom. Several roosters began to crow, thinking that the sun was rising because the moon was so bright. A bit down the road I saw another playing card. After everything that has happened so far today, I thought that I had to pick it up. The seven of hearts, one, three, five, seven – makes sense. Hearts, hmm, too much to think about now, so I just slipped it into my pocket and decided I would figure it out later.

I made it back to Tuk Tuk Timbul around 6:30 am. I waved goodbye to the moon as it disappeared over the horizon, and I climbed into “The Ship” to hit the hay as the sun was rising to take its place. As I drifted off to sleep I wondered to myself, when I would find those nine diamonds.

16 FEBRUARY 1990 – PHRA NANG BAY

Blaine headed back to the states from Sumatra and I traveled on through Malaysia and into southern Thailand, where I took a boat from Krabi to a remote place called Phra Nang Bay. The boat was a brightly

painted long skinny wooden boat with a Chevy V8 engine (with no muffler) on the back attached to a long rod with a propeller at the end. I was both soaking wet and deaf when I arrived.

I had originally intended stay for only a couple of days, but when I walked up to the thatched roof cantina in the middle of the beach and passed an Englishman named Tim sitting at a table in the middle of the cantina with a pile of succulent green weed in the middle of the table rolling a pile of huge joints, I knew I would be staying longer.

Being a world traveler means you have the latitude to try new things, explore new and different cultures, and involve yourself in activities that might not always meet with the full approval of parents and peers. This is all in the interest of an overall enrichment of the experience, expanded the mind and soul, and as long as one maintains control and perspective, then what the hell.

I woke up at 8:00am and checked out every bungalow village on the beach for a mask and fins to do a little snorkeling and was headed back to the Starlight with a mask that was too small and no fins. I was more than a bit frustrated with the prospect of snorkeling all day without fins, and then I remembered how in India if you asked someone for something and they said no, if you kept asking them, miraculously the answer would change to yes. So I went back to Hillside Bungalows three times and on the third time they said yes, indeed they have some fins. Not only did they have a huge basket of fins of all colors and sizes, but they also had an excellent selection of masks. I was much happier now as I walked back to meet Tim with a mask that fit and fins that flipped.

I returned my first mask, hid my keys under a coconut and met Tim at his bungalow, where he was rolling up a day's supply of snorkel joints (Editors Note: Snorkel joints are joints with a base of delicious Thai weed, with a generous sprinkling of heroin). I began the delicate process of creating a pair of prescription snorkeling goggles. Tim willingly sacrificed a double-edged razor for the operation, from which I fashioned a specialty eyeglass screwdriver. A triangular shard of metal with razor edges disappeared somewhere into the room. After removing the ear hooks from my glasses, the lenses snapped into place inside the goggles and I was ready to go, except that I could only see while wearing the goggles.

Down to the beach, we hired a boatman to take us over to Ao Nang. After spending twenty minutes talking him down to 30 Baht for both of us we realized all we had was a 50 Baht note, thus defeating the entire negotiation. That's what drugs will make you do. We hopped off the boat just before getting to Ao Nang and began the day's adventure.

After about an hour of Technicolor snorkeling, we swam up to one of those infamous James Bond limestone cliff rocks jutting out hundreds of meters from the sea and climbed aboard. It was time for the first official snorkel joint. We gingerly climbed up the razor edged lava, slicing and dicing our feet as we went, until we found the definitive spot to get high, a relatively smooth area of rock jutting out over the water.

As we smoke through the first official snorkel joint, we contemplate our existence and decide that, yes, indeed, this rock upon which we sit should in fact be our home. We discuss the various locations of terraces and enclosures and determine that a swim about the rock is in order. We assemble our belongings on level ground and take to the water to explore our newly acquired undersea world. Weaving through mounds of brightly colored coral and undulating ferns, we come to an underwater cave beneath a coral mound. Tim, obviously intensely under the influence of the snorkel joint, perhaps blended with a bit of nitrogen narcosis, has engaged in something beyond the realms of normal swimming activities and has chased a four-foot shark into a hole. He then takes it one step further by actually trying to pull it back out by its tail. He tries to get me to help, but I decide to let him take care of this one on his own.

He eventually manages to pull it out and then struggles with it for several seconds before it breaks loose and swims away. He emerges from the sea with blood on his hands and a huge grin on his face.

"Man, that was crazy! So, what was the idea behind trying to pull a shark out of a hole?"

"I thought we could bring it back for dinner."

We continued around the rock to our original location and climbed back up for smoke number two. The rest of the afternoon was spent swimming through schools of fish and exploring caves, both under water and above. We made it back to Railay Beach in the mid afternoon and walked back to the Starlight. After a shower, I chatted with Peter, Susanne and Francisca and jammed a bit on the saw.

I then returned my mask and fins and met Tim for an evening toke of China White, premium grade heroin. We lazed about in the bungalow for a few minutes and then set out for town.

We floated over to YaYa for dinner and then walked along the beach checking out the phosphorous. We found one area which was particularly intense, so we stopped to smoke a bit more and sat there for a bit quite humored by the concept of sitting on an unbelievable beach in Thailand, smoking heroin, watching the phosphorous.

Afterwards, Tim hiked back to the Starlight to watch some Thai boxing and I walked up to Queens Bar to join up with Susanne and Francisca. We sat for an hour or so on wicker chairs, swinging our feet in the ocean, kicking at the phosphorous. On my way back to the Starlight, I stopped for a Thai massage at Nok's Bungalow. I've always imagined that a massage would be unbelievable while you were on heroin, and this confirmed it. Needless to say, I slept quite well tonight.

Susanne came by the next morning around 10:00am and woke me up and I began the laborious task of gathering together all of my belongings, which by now were totally spread out into every nook and cranny of the room. Then it was over to the Queens for a going away lunch with Toby, Jeff, Susanne, Francisca, Oscar and Peter. It was more than a going away lunch; it was my final exam in joint rolling. Could I roll the entire contents of a 100 Baht bag of ganja into a single joint?

I began by assembling four papers into a singular quad paper and then dumped the entire contents onto it. We smoked several smaller ones in the process as appetizers. It was not only a perfect rolling job, but it was the biggest joint any of us had ever seen. It made Peter's Australian ganja logs look like needles. Even the people sitting two tables away from us were laughing.

After getting the entire restaurant stoned, there was a roach left the size of a film canister. I hopped a boat back to Krabi and got to the B & B right around 3:00pm, arriving just about an hour before I had to leave for my bus to Bangkok.

1 MARCH 1990 – THE TREK

From Bangkok, I headed north to Chang Mai, and then on the Chang Rai, where I met an English artist named Malcolm and we decided that we would check out a jungle trek. There were numerous travel agencies that organized such events, and they all appeared to basically offer the same package. So, instead of choosing a tour based on the agency, I thought it would make sense to choose one based on the group of people that was going on the trek.

I walked up and down the road stopping in at the different agencies and instead of asking them about the tour they offered, I asked to see the list of people who had signed up for the trek. After I examined the first list, I knew that I had made the correct decision on how to make the correct decision. The list consisted of a group of Japanese families travelling together, complete with kids. After checking out a couple more spots, I found a tour that had only three people signed up, a couple and a single woman, all about our age.

We packed up our stuff and grabbed breakfast at the Oasis and took a minibus over to Singha Travel where we met the rest of our trekking group. Including Malcolm and myself, there were five of us, a small group by Chiang Mai standards. Gina was an industrial researcher from Britain and Jane and Martin are a couple of lawyers also from Britain now living in Hong Kong. Our guide, Alida gave us each a small backpack for the trip. I put in my video camera, my regular camera, a few toiletries, and an extra pair of underwear. I then

put my back pack in a room upstairs and locked it to a couch. We then all hopped into the back of a truck and headed northwest for an hour or so.

The first stop was for food, supplies, and to play with a pet monkey in a cage. I discovered that monkeys are quite strong for their size as I attempted to retrieve my black bandana from him.

The next stop was at a tall waterfall, where Malcolm and I went swimming. The cool water was a refreshing change from the dusty road we'd been traveling, and the deep massaging action of the water tumbling down the rocks from above washed away the aches and pains.

Our third and final stop was at the foot of the mountains. It was here that we would begin our actual trek, of course only after lunch and a quick siesta. We hiked for almost four hours, up and down through the mountains, mostly up, until we came to a Liso Village. The village was surrounded by poppy fields, which had just been harvested, leaving only a sparse covering of poppies. We were a bit bummed that we had missed the fields of flowering poppies, but I figured that it must mean that there is a lot of fresh opium around here somewhere.

We made our way into the village and unloaded our stuff in a hut, which was to be our accommodations for the evening. I walked around for a bit, taking pictures and rejoined the group just in time for dinner. Alida was an excellent chef and the meal was outstanding. After dinner, Malcolm and I decided to sample a bit of this year's harvest.

It was fascinating watching the village opium man prepare the pipe. He would first break off a chunk of opium, which he would repeatedly heat over a small flame, and then work with his fingers until it had a consistency similar to clay. He then pushed a thin stick through it and molded it into a tube around the stick. Next, he would push the tube into the hole of the pipe and slide the stick out, leaving a small hole through the opium. The proper way to smoke opium is to lay on your side with your head on a pillow and take one long, consistent breath, pulling the flame from the lamp down through the hole in the opium, melting the opium from the inside out. If you stop during your breath, the liquefied opium will fill the hole, thereby clogging the pipe.

Malcolm had three bowls and I had thirteen. You could tell that it was incredibly fresh from its smooth delicious taste and its wicked high. It reminded me of the time I was in St. Louis and had fresh Budweiser, straight from the factory.

Following our dinner smoke, we mold ourselves through various sublevels of reality out to the front of the hut, where a Liso dance is in progress. Most tribal dances are quite simple and endlessly repetitive, but somehow this one seems magically beautiful. As the women walks around the fire, the flames sway back and forth, swimming through the air like serpents courting in the sea.

After the dance, Malcolm and I philosophized with Rick and Cathy from another group, who had also partaken of the fragrance of contentment. We then hiked up the mountain a bit and watched shooting stars for a couple of hours and listened to the trees.

I actually felt fairly well rested the following morning, considering how many times I was awakened last night. All five of us slept on one giant bamboo bed and I was in the middle. Gina was sleeping in some sort of aluminum space blanket because she was worried about getting germs and every time she rolled over it sounded like a schoolroom full of seventh graders having a crinkle contest with sheets of aluminum foil. As soon as she would get situated, Alida's dog, Opium, would hop up on the bed and run across all of us, starting the other dogs in the village into a barking match. The roosters also had several false starts on the sunrise.

In a Liso Village, outhouse means anywhere outside, and after all of us had wandered back to the hut from our morning doings, we had a delicious breakfast in bed. Then, following, the requisite pictures with the tribes, we began our day's hike. Though the route was not as difficult as yesterdays, my knee started to act

up and I had some problems on the downhill stuff. We had lunch at another village, followed by the standard siesta. I played guitar for a while on a guitar which was not only strung improperly, but was also literally impossible to tune.

Then it was time for the “elephant ride!” I thought it only appropriate to spin up a few doobies for the ride, but forgot all about it until Malcolm and I climbed up onto the big gray hump. All part of the experience, I thought to myself as I gingerly unfolded the newspaper wrapped ganja, which I had just acquired from the odd strung guitarist. With each step of the elephant we were hurled from left to front and right to back, and I just kept wondering to myself do these things ever fall over, and what happens if they do.

The breeze made it just that much more difficult to clean the dope and keep it on top of the book I had borrowed from Malcolm. Now it was time to test those expert joint-rolling skills I had acquired in Krabi. I would have to do it in one swift twirl; else it would be gone with the wind. Success! Now all we have to do is figure out a way to light this baby up. The driver, who was busy finding humor in all of this and not very busy watching where we were going, had no light. So I motioned back to one of the two gents walking along behind us. More success! He chucked me a lighter and I fired it up.

The mental alteration definitely accentuated the experience, so much in fact that I thought a second was in order. Somewhere during the process Malcolm hopped down to walk a bit, and Martin hopped up to take his place. Martin was happy to share the second with me. As we were toking away a horse ran up behind our elephant, literally scaring the shit out of it. How many animals can you think of that shit on their own legs? I can think of at least one.

Well, anyhow, our elephant let into a full gallop nearly trampling the one in front of us, and certainly providing us with a high level of excitement. After a couple of failed attempts to get some water to Malcolm, we hit the final stretch into a lovely Karen Village along the banks of the Nam Mae Taeng River and pulled up to our Hilton Waterfront Hut. I was only too eager to hit the water and did so immediately. Quite refreshing indeed. Some Karen boys pulled out a couple of water snakes while I was in, so I decided not to float around for too long.

Tonight was yet another spectacular feast out on the veranda, followed by a bit of village exploration. It was also the first day of filming our surrealist moving, “Smell Delay.” We were able to tape several scenes in the village and did our final theme scene back at the hut as the battery ran out.

Now comes time for that opium nightcap before retiring. While the man of the house was prepping the pipe, Gina pulled out her space blanket and Malcolm let into her heavy; informing in no uncertain terms, that he was not going to put up with another night of crinkle, crinkle, crack, crack. She reluctantly put it away and Malcolm and I situated ourselves for the pipe. The Pipe Man was quite impressed that I was able to smoke an entire bowl in one breath (he thought he was the only one who could do that, and had never seen another farang do one in less than several tokes). He was so impressed, in fact, that he kept giving me bowl after bowl after bowl to see how long I could go. He eventually got tired of filling bowls and left to go to bed.

I slept in a bit and woke up just in time for breakfast. Yes, trekking fans, today is the day we go “bamboo rafting!” Alida gave us each plastic bags to put our valuables in and I wondered just how long a video camera would last under water in a plastic bag. We tied all of our packs on an erect bamboo pole in the center of the raft and were on our way. Now for those of you not familiar with bamboo rafts, a bamboo raft is basically several pieces of bamboo tied together, which you stand on ankle deep in water.

The ride was excellent. Did some rapids, had some wrecks, and got it all on tape. Also taped the remaining scenes for “Smell Delay” and penned the title track “Smoke it to the Hole.” Stopped at an Ahika Village for lunch, where I bought a few bracelets and we ran into Rick and Cathy and had a smoke with them.

When we got to the end of the raft trip it was time to split up. Malcolm and I had to head back to Chang Mai due to our ridiculously tight schedule, while everyone else continued for another day of trekking. We rode in a truck back to town, unfortunately arriving after Singha Travel had closed, which would not have been a

problem except that all of our stuff, including our money, was inside. We had no money and needed money for a hotel and food for the night. After a couple of hours riding around town trying to find the owner or anyone who had a key and could let us in, we gave up and accepted the 500baht which the driver wanted to lend us so he could go home and go to bed. We had him take us to the Oasis, where they had a double waiting for us.

The kitchen was closed so we walked next door and grabbed dinner. After dinner, Malcolm went to bed and I borrowed a guitar and jammed for an hour or so in the dining room, and chatted with a young American who had decided only today that he should move into a Buddhist Monastery. Then I hit the hay.

4 MARCH 1990 – MAE KHONG IN THAE TON

The next day, we had lunch, rented a couple of motorcycles, and were on the road headed for Thae Ton by about 2:00pm. Malcolm had a bit of difficulty with the bike at first, and I had visions of Indonesia. But once we got on the “open highway” everything was all right.

The ride up to Thae Ton took about four hours and was relatively uneventful, except for the beautiful scenery and all. We checked into the Courtyard for the night. I took a refreshing cold shower to try to remove most of the bugs from my face, and sat down with Malcolm for dinner and a bottle of Mae Khong.

At dinner, I couldn't help but notice the attractive blonde who entered the restaurant and her apparent disinterest in her male accompaniment, so I struck up a conversation. It turned out that Jasmine and her fellow traveler had just met because they were part of a group going a trek in the morning. I invited them to join us and ordered another bottle of Mae Khong and a couple more glasses. We were soon joined by an Australian hippie named Joe, who was also a single traveler. We formed the BBB. I can't remember what the BBB stands for but it was quite funny at the time, and has something to do with single travelers.

We ordered up a couple of more bottles of Mae Khong, another glass, and a guitar from the kitchen and we were set for the night. I recorded bits of the conversations through the night and laid down the background soundtrack as we delved deeper and deeper into various aspects of traveler's insights.

We eventually became involved in a discussion concerning my visiting hill tribes and how they perceived us as visitors from another tribe from a mountain far away. Then I mentioned that we are in a sense a tribe. Travelers share many common bounds and probably comprise the most nomadic of all tribes, having the ability to carry everything they need to survive on their own back.

The next day, Malcolm and I took off for Burma. The road from Thae Ton to Mae Sai was a dusty winding dirt road that was just right for the trial bikes. We turned off occasionally to check out side trails, and rode up to a Liso Village where we decided that it was time for a bit of old school trekking.

We walked through the village greeting the locals, our path being the one of least resistance as determined by the barking dogs. On the way, we took a path up to the top of the mountain towards Burma and chatted with some boys out working in the fields. They said that they were clearing for rice fields, but we were a bit suspicious as the terrain was basically a radically vertical incline.

We continued our trek up the ridge along the top of the mountain, which ran along the border between Thailand and Burma. We rested at a bamboo hut right at the top and listened to explosions in the distance (there is a lot of drug related fighting going on along the border right now). We hiked back down and took off on the bikes. I had a bit of a wipe out on some loose dirt and twisted my ankle pretty well. Not too much further down the road, Malcolm ran out of gas. A fine pair we were, me with a tangled ankle and Malcolm with an empty tank.

We both hopped on my bike and took off back down the road, hoping to find gas before I ran out as well. We pulled over at a roadside restaurant to see if we could find out where to get some gas and decided to go ahead and eat while we were there. A bit further down the road we found some kids in a truck who said that

a bit further down the road was some petrol. We made it there, got some gas, and made it back to Malcolm's bike, put it in and drove back, filled up and were back in the dust.

We kept the bikes wound out at 100KPH as we raced along the winding roads up and down the mountains, whizzing through town and past police check points, getting us back into Chang Mai by 3:00pm, just in time to return the bikes.

We walked around Chiang Mai checking out the bars. The city offered the full gamut, from folk to blues to disco to heavy metal. We ended up at Daret's, where a young monk boy selling roses drew wonderful sketches in my book.

A RICH MONKEY ATE MY BUICK

The next morning, Malcolm was off for the airport by around 6:00am and I got up around 7:30. I packed up and tuk-tuked over to Andrasahn market where I boarded a 9:00am bus bound for Bangkok, arriving around 8:30 pm.

I decided to take the city bus instead of a taxi. The first bus I got on apparently did not go where it said it did on the bus map, the second didn't go anywhere, and the third dropped me off just where I wanted to go, at Kao San Road. 9:30pm is just about the worst time to be looking for a room on Kao San, as everyone is full, so I headed straight for Lek Guest House to see if I could pull some strings since I had stayed there before.

Fortunately, the woman remembered me and gave me a room in a house behind the building, behind the main house, for 80Baht.

Whenever you check in to a place in Thailand, you are given a long black guest register to sign into. When opened, the book is about three feet across and has columns for everything from name and passport number to date of issue, date of expiration, place of issue, visa number and date and place of issue, nationality, port of entry into Thailand, the last place you were, the next place you're going, how long you've been in Thailand, how much longer you're staying, what you are doing here, what you do back home, and finally your signature.

Each time I signed into a place, I condensed the information a bit in order to speed up the process. Upon entering Thailand, I immediately shortened my full name to Dave and just threw down ditto marks for things like port of entry and next destination.

As I traveled through Thailand, I incrementally used more and more ditto marks, assuming more and more closely the travel itinerary of the guest who had checked in just before me. This time, did I not only have identical travel plans to the person before me, but we were the same nationality, had the same occupation, were born together, and even had the same passport and visa numbers. The line was entirely ditto marks with Dave at the beginning and my signature at the end.

SEXALATION STATION
CROOKED LETTER, CROOKED LETTER
CROOKED LETTER EYE
HUMPBACK, HUMPBACK
AND I DON'T KNOW WHY
GREEN SKY, GREEN SKY
AND BLUE SKY TOO
INSPIRATIONS
COMING AT YOU

I hopped on an 8:00am minibus out to the airport, where I discovered that my flight was actually 11:00pm, not 11:00am, so I had breakfast and settled in for an exciting day at the Bangkok airport. I wandered around the airport several times, made some phone calls, wrote in my journal, and worked on my new bag.

I decided to leave my Lonely Planet guidebook in Thailand. Since I hadn't opened it once during my last two weeks, I figured I wouldn't use it too much back in the states. I left a note on the inside of the front cover, which read "Dear traveler, I have decided to leave this in Thailand where others may continue to use it. Please send me a postcard telling me how your trip is going if you get a chance. Also, when you leave Thailand, please give this book to someone else."

I then headed downstairs to arrivals to find just the right person to give it to. After a short time, I had delivered the book to an extremely thankful single woman traveler, and was on my way back upstairs. I was the first person to show up at the gate where I sat with the plane's crew watching a Thai action film.

"You seem so calm, so collected and in control, how do you do it?" asked Round Brown Bear.

"It's all easy if you want it to be," answered the Frog, "if one chooses to be a Master of the Universe."

"Please, go on."

"Four easy steps."

"First, relax. Go to a place of stillness. Different beings use different methods to relax. For some, meditation may be the key, for others it may be reading or dancing, or taking a few deep breaths."

"Second, look at things from perspectives other than your own. See the other side."

"Third, communicate with confidence, and those about you will as well. Communication involves both giving and receiving. Listening and understanding information is as important as expressing it."

"The fourth step is to consciously do each of these three steps in sequence, shorting the amount of time that you are doing each, until you are doing all three at the same time."

On too many a flight in the past, I have fidgeted around in a seat trying to get comfortable as I watch a person totally sprawled out over five seats snoring away and I decided that it was time I was that person. I planted myself in the middle of a row of seats towards the back of the plane and waited patiently as everyone boarded the plane. The tension grew as almost every seat around me filled up, except the others in my row. I wondered if for some strange reason this row had been overlooked by the agent at the counter, or had I taken someone's seat who was too embarrassed to ask me to move and had found seating elsewhere. Whatever the case, I had this entire row to myself and began to make my bed as we pulled from the gate. I began my pushing all the seat belts down into the cracks beneath the seats and flipping the arms up and I still had five pillows and five blankets to work with.

Upon my return into Boston, there was a welcome home party for me at the Palace. At one point, I was in the kitchen telling a group of people about my experiences while off in the far corners of the world. A couple more friends walked in carrying bags of food and wine, and I suddenly felt as though I was Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz, waking from her dream.

"And you were there, and you were there..."

Cirque de la Luna

HERE COMES THE CIRCUS TO TOWN

IT'S A WHIRLWIND OF COLOR
JUST A SPINNING AROUND

LATCH THE WINDOWS
AND BAR THE DOORS
HIDE THE FOOD
LAY DOWN ON THE FLOOR

OR COME RIGHT OUT
AND JOIN RIGHT IN
THERE'S A LOT OF FUN
JUST A HAPPENING

HERE COMES THE CIRCUS TO TOWN
IT'S A WHIRLWIND OF COLOR
JUST A SPINNING AROUND

ONLY THE MOON KNOWS
WHERE WE'RE GOING
WE'RE SURE TO GET THERE
BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW

THE ONLY THING
THAT'S FOR CERTAIN
IS THIS IS HOME
FOR NOW

HERE COMES THE CIRCUS TO TOWN
IT'S A WHIRLWIND OF COLOR
JUST A SPINNING AROUND

I am the troubadour for Cirque de la Luna, a travelling circus headed for a total eclipse of the sun. It is the road trip of all time. A dozen or so of us are driving a thirty year old school bus to Baja, Mexico from Columbus, Mississippi, by way of Canada. Twelve thousand miles, twenty four breakdowns. By the end of the trip, everyone is a master mechanic.

9 JUNE 1991 – COLUMBUS MISSISSIPPI

The trip starts off innocently enough as Paul, Steve and I leave Columbus, headed east on Highway 45. The bus is a 1963 Superior Chevrolet church bus from Koala Springs Baptist Church. Its name is EGY, not because of its eggshell color, but because it's license plate is EGY463.

When Paul first suggested that we should go to the eclipse, we thought we should track down our original school bus, which was a 1961 Chevrolet Bluebird. Its name was Da Blu Buh, a name given to it by the elderly black gentleman we purchased it from in Starkville, Mississippi.

We had originally acquired Da Blu Buh to take Steve out to Stanford University from Columbus. Five of us road tripped to San Francisco where we dropped off Steve and then picked up two of my fraternity brothers, Chris and Chris. We drove back through Columbus to drop off Paul, Tim and Kay, and then Chris, Chris and I drove it on up to MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

After convincing the fraternity that we could actually park more vehicles in the rear parking lot with the bus there than we could without it, I made 403 Memorial Drive the home base for Da Blu Buh for the balance of my years at MIT.

Da Blu Buh served us well through college for the myriad of activities one needs a large vehicle for, such as ski trips, Grateful Dead concerts, Winter Carnival at Dartmouth University, and of course picking up girls from Simmons and Wellesley for parties at the Deke house. (It was not, however, available to take them back.)

The summer after my senior year, I drove it back out to California, so that Steve could have a chance to enjoy it for a while. This was quite the adventure in itself, but we will save that for another time. That summer, Steve, Kay (who was pregnant with Jeremy at the time), and I lived on the bus at a commune in Palo Alto named Synergy. Synergy had many classifications of residents, all of whom contributed to the commune in different ways, both financially and otherwise, based on their classification. There were residents, guests, floaters, ghosts and roofers. We created a new classification known as bussers. I was the house social chairman, but I digress...back to the story at hand (which in itself is an eddie from the original story at hand).

So, after that summer, I left Da Blu Buh with Steve and headed back to the East Coast. Some months later, I called Steve to ask how the bus was doing.

“Hey man, how’s the bus?”

“Well, I don’t know.”

“What do you mean, you don’t know?”

“I came home one day, and it was gone.”

“What do you mean, gone? Was it stolen or towed?”

“I’m not sure. I meant to call and find out, but I never got around to it.”

Fast forward eight years. We have an eclipse to get to, and it is now time to find out what happened to Da Blu Buh. Steve makes a call to the Palo Alto Police Department, and low and behold, they still have the records, and it was in fact towed to their impoundment yard. Great, we think. The problem is that it was just sent to the steel mill.

Enter Egy.

Tentative Bus Itinerary

June 5 – Fly to Columbus

June 9 – Columbus to Charleston

June 10 – Charleston to Washington

June 11 – Washington to Boston

June 14 – Montreal to Sault St. Marie

June 15, 16 – Sault St. Marie to Nipigon

June 17 – Nipigon to Winnipeg

June 18 – Winnipeg to Regina

June 19 – Regina to Calgary

June 21 – Calgary to Vancouver

June 24 – Vancouver to Seattle

June 26 – Seattle to San Francisco

June 29 – San Francisco

July 1 – San Fran to San Diego

July 3– San Diego to La Paz

July 6 – La Paz

July 12 – La Paz to Southwest US, Colorado, Whatever

July 25 – Back to Columbus

July 27 – Fly to Boston

We depart Columbus, Mississippi, on June 9, 1991 for the voyage of all time, and we're not twenty miles out of town before we have our first breakdown, and it is a good one too. I don't even think we make it to the Alabama border. The engine, which is an inline 290 six cylinder that Chevrolet only made for two years, decides to throw a rod. We tow the bus back to Paul's front yard, where we get our first lesson in bus mechanics, rebuilding an engine. I call my seventh grade Industrial Arts Mr. Reynolds teacher for a few pointers.

While we are hanging out learning how to rebuild an engine, I figure we might as well have some cubbies, you know, like on airplanes, so as to keep our stuff organized. In a couple of days, we are back on the road again. We drive up the east coast of the United States to Boston, where we pick up half a dozen more people.

I suggest to the group that we create a circus theme for our Trans Canadian jaunt. I ask everyone to pick out a circus name and a role in the circus. I hypothesize that people will subconsciously choose a role that represents a part of themselves that they would like to explore and develop.

The circus consists of eight, Barkus as the strong man, Dylan as the gymnast, Hector the Jester as the Circus juggler, Leo as the Mystic, Zorra as the snake charmer, aka Svetlana as the psychic, Zillion as the circus master. I am bambam, the troubadour.

WE'RE BASICALLY JUST GOING AROUND THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, THAT'S ALL WE'RE DOING. - BARKUS

As the circus rolls into town, we file out one at a time and perform. I am first out strumming a red wooden mandolin and singing the Circus Song. Hector the Jester follows me with his bedazzling juggling performance. Dylan is next with a bit of gymnastics (back flips being his specialty), followed by Barkus and the others. At the end of the show, we invite select members of the audience back onto the bus for delectable dinner and a tantalizing tarot reading.

On the bus, we share a common journal known as the Bus Book. It is a large white canvas covered book with thick white unlined pages, just waiting to be filled with stories, drawings, things to remember, things to forget, photographs, autographs and found objects, such as eagle feathers and the like. Portions of the book are personal entries, sometimes pouring out the powerful emotions of the trip, both the glorious and the heart wrenching. Sometimes the entries are signed, and sometimes not, leaving the reader to decide. One cannot always depend on the handwriting to decipher the author, as often the entries would exhibit a squiggly font, a result of what came to be known as bus writing, the art of writing while the bus is bouncing along the road.

This Book is dedicated to Dave, Paul and Steve.

We should also like to thank God, Christendom, the Koala Springs Baptist Church and Chevrolet for the Bus.

Special thanks to the Moon and the Sun for their cooperation.

The Bus Book Dedication Committee

Lake Superior Provincial Park, Ontario

June 15th 1991

After leaving Boston, we make one more planned stop before crossing the border, at Hector's mother's house for a few of his belongings.

"Everyone looks like Jesus," exclaims Hector's mother as we mill around outside the bus in the driveway. Yes, indeed, an interesting looking crew we are, five men and three women, all looking like Jesus, piled into a thirty year old school bus, on our way to Mexico, by way of Canada.

And, it was because of this (and other things) that we were apprehensive about border crossings. We knew for certain that we were prime targets for any Border Patrol officers, especially young rookie officers looking to cut their teeth on naive motley American hippies.

The trip would consist of four border crossings, so we created a few rules, ones that would get modified and added to as our journey progressed. So it was with apprehension and anticipation that we approached our first border crossing, from the United States into Canada, at the Canadian border at Niagara Falls, New York.

Rules of the road...

1. No drugs

2. No sex, includes French kissing

3. No hitch-hikers

4. NO FISHING
5. No bus painting
6. No driver drinking
7. No ~~at (f) (a) (k) (o)~~
8. No farting
9. FREELANCE WORK OR OTHER WORK CAN ONLY BE DONE IF THE BUS HAS NO ENGINE
10. Smoking in the front, sex in the back
11. No secrets
12. No nudity in elementary schoolyards on weekdays
13. NO BREAKDOWNS UNDER \$1,000

Amendment A. No loud sex next to light sleepers unless you pass out earplugs.

Amendment B. Question authority
 ...remember, rules are meant to be broken.

14 JUNE 1991 – US/CANADA BORDER NIAGRA FALLS

As we approach the gate, a customs officer walks towards the bus and holds out his hand for us to stop. We are all sitting in our seats, attempting to look as conservative as possible. We have tidied up the inside of the bus as well, further adding to our air of responsibility. I have even removed our otherwise mandatory driver's hat, a gold paper mache roman soldier's helmet with a forwardly curved horn growing from its top.

As I pull to a stop, I swing open the door. Unbeknownst to any of us, but as if on perfect cue, Hector the Jester walks off of the bus, in a red and black batik sarong, brown leather sandals, and a white sleeveless muscle shirt and without muttering a single word, walks right up to the customs official, looks him straight in the eye, and begins juggling. The official's reaction is as unexpected and delightful, as he (also silent) reaches over, takes the balls, and begins juggling as well. He hands Hector back the balls and waves us through. Our first border crossing – success. Egy rolls into Canada.

SPIRITUAL MARKINGS OF AN ANCIENT CIVILIZATION - MISSHEPEHIEU, THE GREAT HORNED LYNX DEMI-GOD OF LAKE SUPERIOR, PROTECTS THE INDIANS DURING THEIR DANGEROUS CROSSINGS OF LAKE SUPERIOR. THE BUS SWINGS BACK AND FORTH AS WE BOUNCE ALONG THE GRAVEL PATH TO THE INDIAN PICTOGRAPHS ON THE CLIFFS DROPPING INTO THE LAKE, FROTHING, LAPPING AT ITS BASE. WE STRETCH AND BEGIN OUR HIKE, ALONG MOSS COVERED ROCKS STREWN ABOUT WITH SCRUBBY PINES CLINGING TO THEIR SURFACE AND INTO CHASMS WAFTING WITH SERPENTINE MIST. AS WE HIKE ALONG, THE ROAR OF THE LAKE GROWS LOUDER, THE SOUND OF THUNDER ECHOING ALONG ITS STEEP SIDES. WE LOOK TO THE RIGHT, A PATH LEADS DOWN A RAVINE TO A LOOKOUT. FAR BELOW, WE SEE THE SOURCE OF THE THUNDER, THE MIGHTY WAVES OF THE LAKE CRASHING INTO HUGE ROCKS FALLEN FROM THE MOUNTAIN'S EDGE. OUT INTO THE DISTANCE A BOULDER SITS, DELICATELY BALANCED ACROSS THE RAVINE, AS IF AWAITING A SEAGULL TO LIGHT ON IT AND TUMBLE IT INTO THE LAKE. WE CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY TO THE INDIAN PAINTINGS, CLIMB OUT ALONG THE LEDGE, GRASPING TO A CHAIN, AND LEAN BACK TO VIEW THEM. THE IMAGES OF CANOES, ANIMALS, SERPENTS, AND MISSHEPEHIEU ARE STILL CLEAR ON THE ROCK'S SURFACE, HAVING WITHSTOOD HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF THE POUNDING STORMS OF LAKE SUPERIOR. WE LOOK OUT OVER THE LAKE, WHERE THE THICK FOG BLURS THE BOUNDARIES OF SEA AND AIR. ONE CAN IMAGE THE ENDLESSNESS OF THE LAKE. GRADUALLY FROM THE MIST, AN

IMAGE APPEARS, THAT OF AN ISLAND. LIKE A GHOST SHIP FLOATING ALONG THE LAKES SURFACE, IT IS JOINED BY CANOES FILLED WITH INDIANS. THEN, JUST AS MYSTICALLY AS IT HAS APPEARED, IT DISAPPEARS INTO THE MIST, ENGULFED BY THE LAKE, GONE OFF TO JOIN ATLANTIS INTO ANOTHER WORLD. WE BEGIN THE HIKE BACK TO THE BUS AND I DECIDE TO TAKE ANOTHER PATH. I CLIMB TO THE TOP OF THE RIDGE, WHICH SEPARATES THE CHASM FROM THE LAKE. THE SKIES ARE CLEAR, UP ABOVE THE RIVERS OF MIST, WHICH FILL THE CHASM TO THE RIGHT AND THE LAKE TO THE LEFT. I CLIMB AND HIKE OVER AND AROUND THE ROCKS, UNDER AND THROUGH THE BUSH, AND ALONG THE FALLEN TREES. I AGAIN HEAR THAT FAMILIAR THUNDEROUS SOUND AND REALIZE THAT I HAVE COME TO THE EDGE OF THE RAVINE WHICH WE HAVE EARLIER SEEN. I CAN GO NO FURTHER. IN FRONT OF ME LIES A STRAIGHT DROP DOWN TO THE ROCKS AND WAVES BELOW. TO MY RIGHT IS THE CHASM AND TO MY LEFT IS THE LAKE FAR BELOW. I PAUSE AND PONDER THE IDEA OF RETURNING ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE PICTOGRAPHS. THEN I REMEMBER THE BOULDER, THE BOULDER THAT WE HAD SEEN FROM THE MOUTH OF THE RAVINE, THE BALANCED BOULDER OF POSSIBILITY. I DRAW CLOSER TO THE EDGE AND LOOK OFF TO MY LEFT. THERE IT IS IN THE DISTANCE, RESTING LIKE A GIANT EGG WAITING TO BE HATCHED. IT APPEARS LARGER THAN IT HAD BEFORE. I HIKE OVER TO IT; A SMALLER BOULDER IS WEDGED BETWEEN IT AND THE SIDE OF THE RAVINE, THE PLUG WHICH KEEPS IT IN. I FEEL ITS SMOOTH DAMP SURFACE AS I CONTEMPLATE AND FORMULATE MY PATH. SAVE FOR A SMALL CRACK JUST ABOVE MY REACH, IT IS A SMOOTH EGG WITH ITS SIDES ROLLING OFF TO THE RAVINE BELOW. I TAKE A DEEP BREATH AS THE THUNDER CRACKS AND MY LIMBS TAKE CHARGE. I FIND MYSELF ATOP THE EGG, A SPLIT SECOND AS MY MIND CATCHES UP AND AGAIN MY LIMBS LEAD AND I AM ACROSS. MY MOVEMENT DOESN'T STOP, MY ARMS AND LEGS, NOW HAVEN PROVED THEMSELVES, STEER THE WAY ON THROUGH THE WOODS WHILE THE REST OF ME IS JUST ALONG FOR THE RIDE. THE WOODS OPEN TO THE CLEARING WHERE THE BUS WAITS PATIENTLY, SERVING AS A PLATFORM FOR HECTOR THE JUGGLER. WE CLIMB ABOARD AND ROLL ALONG, SWINGING BACK AND FORTH AS WE BOUNCE ALONG BACK TO THE HIGHWAY, MISSEGYPAZ, THE GREAT HORNED LYNX DEMI-GOD OF THE BUS EGY, LOOKS OVER THE CIRCUS DWELLERS AS THEY CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEY WESTWARD - SPIRITUAL MARKINGS OF A MODERN CIVILIZATION. - bambam

As we approach Winnipeg, I notice that the steering is becoming markedly looser and looser. We pull into a service station and the attendant explains that the bus is too tall to fit into the garage bay, so there is nothing he can do. The second place we go to doesn't do buses and the third can't handle a vehicle as old as ours. The fourth is booked for the next week. We decide to try a different strategy. All of the guys lay down flat on the floor in the back of the bus. The three women gather around the front of the bus. Svetlana is driving, with Zillion and Zorra at her side. We pull up and Zillion steps off to ask if there might be any possibility of someone taking a quick look at our front end.

Without hesitation, the mechanic shouts over to a couple of guys over in the shop. "Hey, guys, can you back that semi out, so we can take a look at this bus?" Slowly, but surely, we're figuring it out. Later that day, we're sharing a beer with the mechanics in the parking lot, celebrating our new front end.

Here we sit in a sunny and hot parking lot waiting to hear how long we will have to bake in Winnipeg while the bus has some preventative medicine administered. Zil is juggling in her 'bra' and Hector and Leo are kidding her that the mechanics who are eating lunch outside are really there to ogle her. It seems that all of the mechanics are taking lunch at once, including...all of them. While Hector makes a pun on juggler's balls or balling jugglers, Leo juggles. Svetlana is spreading rumors that Zil balls crabs, she actually boils them, but being from 'Nawlens' she says 'balls', almost. Leo, the beautiful blond from Holland, becomes more and more bronze as he juggles - nearly everyone is learning to juggle, including me. I started last night and now want to buy my own balls. Leo has been traveling steadily for the last five years - he teaches meditations, sells imported goods occasionally and plans to plant trees in British

Columbia to earn some money. I would like to do what he has done...I would like to trust enough to....I would like to trust myself and good luck or fate well enough to venture out and wander freely. We shall see. At this moment I think I have plenty of time to ponder this matter and simultaneously I think that no matter how much time I think I have I always ponder too long...I'll end up in corporate America before long, trying to buy more pondering time. Barkus took a picture of me 'doing duck calls in down town Winnipeg.' Montreal was gorgeous. I hope that my love for that city never fades. My desire to learn French and move there was renewed once again. I watched the river flow by the dock tower, and saw a fish almost jump clean out of the water. There were others there too, watching the river flow, and I was momentarily dismayed that I am not the only one who loves that spot - but that passed. Before that I went up into the tower of Notre Dame de Bonsecour. This was not a spiritual spot for me when I lived here - in fact, I never even went inside the church until my last visit to Montreal, but it holds the same power for me even when the view consists, in large part, of trucks carrying dirt from one part of torn up river front to another. They fit perfectly somehow with the wind and the seagulls wheeling about 20ft below me, and the cars and bicycles and people all moving gracefully in a perfectly un-choreographed dance. Before the church, I had ham and cheese on a croissant at the café on the corner of St. Paul and Bonsecour...the one that used to be the beautiful little French grocery, with dark wood and glass and brass cases in the front offering deli sandwiches, Montreal style, and fantastic pastries and café au lait. There was one old rough wooden table in front of the fireplace, and if one was lucky it would be vacant and two or three mismatched chairs or stools could be gathered around for mandarin chocolate pastry and cappuccino. Now the grocery has been closed off and the pastry cases rearranged so that the fireplace is inaccessible and there are three tables instead of one. Even with all of these changes it has lost only some of its charm; it remains, I think, the most charming French café I know of in Montreal. The pretty boy with the big blue eyes and the intimate smile who waited on me was nice too. After I had visited all of my favorite places within walking distance, I walked to St. Denis to rejoin the group at Carrie St. Louis. Bambam and Dylan were playing paddleball in the fountain. Svetlana was talking to a cute boy and Hector to a cute girl, and Zil was giving Leo a head massage. I dangled my feet in the water and watched...a steady stream of poco locos passed by and through the fountain. You feel at home here, eh, said Martin. Yes more at home than anywhere else in the world. - Zorra

The voyage across Canada was right out of a National Park movie. Except for a breakdown every couple of days or so, most of the trip involved visiting national parks, climbing along the edges of stone cliffs to see pictographs, hiking through canyons, climbing into ice caves with cute local girls, or standing face to face with moose in the morning.

For the most part, everyone on the bus knew each other before the trip, or least a few other people on the bus. The exception was Leo, who was a friend of Goldy's. Goldy had originally intended to partake in the entire trip, but due to other perceived obligations, changed his itinerary to meet up with us in San Francisco. Leo was making his way to Alaska, and using the cross country trip across Canada to get him one step closer. He was a handsome Scandinavian with long blond wavy hair, and was very popular with the girls on the bus. He was a modern day shaman, who travelled the world teaching spirituality and meditation at retreats. Frequently, Leo and I would have engaging philosophical debates of perception and reality.

As Round Brown Bear and the Frog spent more time together, their discussions morphed from that of a teaching to that of a game. One of their favorite games was a game called Phrase Off. In Phrase Off, each member stated a phrase that was intended to stand on its own as a philosophical statement while simultaneously responding to the previous phrase. In the tradition of the game, dice were tossed to see who would go first. The Frog opened.

"If everyone's a student, then everyone's a teacher."

"You're born knowing everything, and then you begin forgetting it."

"Laugh at the human element."

"I eat fun."

"We brake for drums."

"That's what we're looking for, soft with support."

"When you find it, you know it. If you don't know it, you haven't found it."

"If you find something that you like, get a bunch of them."

"As soon as you throw it out, you'll need it."

"I want to do less, so that I can do more."

"Get shorts with better pockets."

"Time and money, mere mortal restraints."

"The future is full of time."

"An hour tonight is better than an hour in the morning."

"I don't know where I'm going, but I'm making good time."

"I like to hang out in the fork in the road."

"Life's greatest moments are caught on pause."

"Is life the edge or the condition?"

"Life, it's a work in progress."

"It's all just all one big moment."

"It's funny and cosmic, but not for the same reason."

"If someone is having more fun than you, then it's your fault."

"Always hear everything with its best possible meaning."

"It's all good if you want it to be."

"When you trade expectation for anticipation, you're golden."

"Experiment by default."

"Go to the edge to darkness and pee into the light."

"If you activate your common sense as often as possible, you can learn to depend on it."

"Challenge the decision that the responsible choice is the right choice."

"Given the choice, choose both."

"Start at the top and go up."

"Be in charge of everything, while being in charge of nothing."

"No lights, no brakes."

"You can do whatever you want, so long as you act like you know what you're doing."

"Sometimes you gotta grab the catfish by the whiskers."

"You can always squeeze a little more toothpaste out of the tube."

"It's your pie, you can eat it wherever you want to."

"Remember to remember that you will not remember it."

"Perfection is impractical."

"Don't overdo it, but don't under do it."

"Just the right amount of wrong."

"Let intuition be your guide between feeling and thinking."

"Everything leads to something."

"I'm more myself when I'm more myself."

"I only need what I need."

"New patience welcome."

"Be there then."

"Understand the mind of a leaf."

"There's a picture inside of how it all works."

"You can't see the bottom until after you've finished it."

"And that's where I saw Daniel Boone playing electric guitar high above the sea with his g-string on."

"Bear left."

"Right Frog."

This entry was prompted by observation of a direct violation of bus protocol. Although duty bound to report the incident, I must do so with what secrecy can be obtained on a vessel of this sort, and, of course, anonymously.

After the tire event near Thunder Bay, the Group of Eight (G8) was eager to press on through the night as is often their want. Slumber betook a simple majority of them quickly, while a more complex minority dug in up front, digging the unbroken celestial mosaic. The interior lights up front remained on, the mosaic continued at a spirited volume, to no one's apparent dismay. Such was the scene when this reporter essayed in earnest to sleep. Slight cold, the pledge to drive around 4 am, and the duress consequent of utilitarian suppression of flatulence (quite draining to the physical and mental humors, should free spirits of the 50% who would most likely peruse this journal, be unfamiliar with the effort) caused their interloper to sit up and look about. Surprise was registered when was seen a sole member of the entourage up behind the wheel, sans copilot. All bus rules exist for a reason, typically involved in personal safety. For example, French Kissing was prohibited to avoid the inevitable collision of teeth and lips, and even the mood dampening situation of severed tongues. So too, this realist can only assume, did the framers of the bus come up with the Driver Assistance Code.

The lone driver, who owing to certain unpleasantries of international immigration laws, and because he was driving barefoot, must be referred to simply as Leo, was earlier assisted by another of the G8, who shall go here unnamed, but who's name, nonetheless, is contained, albeit backwards, in the word "Zillion", and who also held that the mosquito life cycle lasted 24 hours, with each irritating mite experiencing its bittersweet passage into the unknown shortly after dark. At the helm of this dilettante's rising, the aforementioned copilot still slept.

Even at this early hour, the star's intensity fades above the horizon's pale blue and nascent orange. As we are on the western extreme of the Eastern Time Zone, and closing in on the Summer Solstice, the sun's absence cannot realistically be acknowledged until after 11PM. Somewhere southward, no doubt, penguins honk at the setting sun and prepare to waddle through another long, winter night. Leo's driving is flawless, his speed and direction is steady as his chi. Canada seems to be doing well, it's pristine expanse cut through and scarred by only this narrow bumpy strip for the sake of its infrastructure, unlike its unsavory neighbor. The six behind us slumber soundly through dawn, arranged peacefully on the terra firma like recumbent, happily drained wine bottles on a dinner table, evoking images of post-prandial satiation and warmth.

This juggler (for that moniker certainly will not betray identity with this bunch) managed a first piss out the bus' front door, and was relieved.

I sat. Watched a bird surface and dive over and over near the jetty - head black with white sides - listened to the water croon against the rocks, watched the grey on grey clouds. They were gorgeous. A lady bug visited, and a dragonfly appeared, contemplated, disappeared. A white pelican with black tipped wings came from the silhouetted nothingness, sailed searching overhead, and returned to it. We cooked stir-fry on the grass near the beach, followed by a variation of strip paddleball which left Dylan and Bambam necked. We packed to go up to a campground with showers for the night. Nature's Hideaway was the destination, and after many difficulties, including being stopped by the police and having to ski the bus through sand as deep as snow, we found it. Unlike any other campground I've ever been to there were signs saying "Private" at the entrance; there was no one to greet us at the office. We pushed on, hoping to find signs of life. There were some, but only enough to make the place feel really spooky. There were darkened campers lurching forward in brightly lit and completely deserted campsites. Dylan went to investigate a light through the trees and found what looked like a very permanent campsite, but no one was there. Leo went further down the muddy road we'd stopped on to find it dead-ended. After much debate, we decided it was too spooky - free though it may have been, we did not want to stay there. As we passed the dark office on the way out, I noticed there was a note taped to the window. It was late and no

one wanted to continue searching for a place, least of all Barkus, who had been driving all night (including the police encounter) so I mentioned the note and Dylan went to check it out. When he came back, he said that he saw signs that read "Bathroom" and "Lice Department". He began to have visions of someone coming after him with an ax. We cleared out and slept on the side of the road. People dreamed of ax murderers and chain saw killers. - Zorra

May you never have to stay at Nature's Hideaway - Anon

Ended up in a provincial park in Bragg Creek, Alberta. Went for a hike - saw two deer. We were up high and passed a steep grassy path straight down through the trees. There was a big deer, a buck some said. For a second, maybe two, he looked straight at us. I fumbled with my camera, looked up, he turned tail and ran. Now I know what that saying really means. I did not see him turn, I just saw him become a tail end and then he was gone. Another smaller one ran across the path behind him. We continued to the halfway point and then decided to go off the main trail onto a smaller one. It ended a short distance away and we were left at the bottom of a steep grassy slope topped with more trees. Up we went, almost to the next tree line. We sat, and watched the smoke from the small fires rise, watched the fog roll in across the hills, obscuring the valleys. There was a lot of banter - for a few moments, we were as quiet as eight people not trying to be quiet could be - it was nice. I would have liked to have been there alone, to hear better and absorb more. Hector was a big blue bear climbing a tree. It began to rain harder and we went down through the tall wet grass which left us with lakes in our shoes. At the bottom, we ask about a pizza place where we can celebrate our week anniversary on the road. Mountain Pizza, we are told. On the road again, but not far, and suddenly the bus stops running. It must be out of gas, we'll have to push it to the gas station which is miraculously just around the corner. Everyone out to push except Denis, who says he should steer because he's the lightest, and Bambam, who has to videotape it (Someone buy me a video camera, so I don't have to push, says Barkus). We push it almost as far as it has to go before it starts rolling backwards - far enough, though, and we buy gas. - Zorra

After we left Winnipeg, I chauffeured a bunch of Thumper playing shouting drunkards across the Trans Canadian highway while Leo spoke to me about the notorious weakness of the flesh - food and sex. I described my attempts at celibacy and the empowerment I feel when I succeed at personal restraint, but when I finished my shift, I chugged a beer and ended up upsetting Frolicing by frolicking in the back of the bus with Bambam. This gap between intention and behavior is puzzling. - Svetlana

LACK OF WRITING

MASTERING BUS WRITING

SWEET SIXTEEN

ICE CAVES

ROCKS

WIND TUNNELS

CLIMBING ON THE RAIN THROUGH THE

JEST OF A MANE

GLACIAL ICE WE NEED MORE

WE DON'T NEED MORE

IT MELTS SO SLOW

GO TO THE CITY

WE CAN'T HIKE IN THIS SHIT

SHOOTING BULLETS OUT OF HIS

PENIS

A COMMOTION OVER YOU
FIGHT OF THE CUBBYS
BANANA TUBBY
WHERE ARE THE HOTSPRINGS
AND ARE THEY?
JUST GO INTO TOWN
WE'RE NOT OVERSIZED
ARE WE?

Bambam

22 JUNE 1991 – JUST BEFORE THE COAL MINE

It's June 22, the day after the solstice, and we are climbing a steep road up the side of a mountain, just before the coal mine. I am nursing our way along in third gear, as we had already ground ourselves through first and second. Suddenly, a violent shaking begins, accompanied by a sound as if someone is tossing gears into a cusinart. Then, everything stops, the sounds, the shaking, the bus.

I don't even have a chance to pull the bus to the side of the road. Like clockwork, everyone files off the bus and begins their customary breakdown activities. Hector starts juggling, while Barkus and I take a look under the hood. Leo and Dylan toss a Frisbee back and forth while Zorra strolls off to take pictures.

Svetlana and I hitchhike into town and return with Eddie and his gargantuan tow truck. We all pile back in and are towed into town. Town is Princeton, British Columbia, a quaint village setting with a population of about 2000 people, located just west of Calgary. We are taken to Steve's shop. It is a well organized shop, with about half a dozen bays. Upon further inspection, it appears that we have simultaneously thrown four rods. Four out of six, not bad. Basically, the inside of the engine ate itself.

*Well we started out in Boston, a daring crew of eight,
Pushing her to the limit, cause we didn't want to be late
For an event of a lifetime, a total eclipse of the sun,
On the very tip of Baja and man that sounded fun!*

*The bus was chuggin' up a hill and I was readin' a book,
When we heard a terrible grinding noise and got out to take a look.
It was a '62 Chevz and the engine, it was fried.
We just stood in silence and then sat down and cried.*

*Oh Mama, can this really be the end, to be stuck inside of Princeton
With the La Paz Blues again?*

- Dylan

FIRST SUCCESSFUL ENCOUNTER WITH THE POLICE, CALGARY, JUNE 19, 11:00PM - BARKUS

"Fine" - Zorra, on her first use of the enroute female urinator (a one gallon plastic milk jug, with the top cut off, used by women to pee in while the bus was moving, the contents of which were then poured out of the door. Men, on the other hand, were able to direct theirs straight out of the door, without its need.)

Wait a minute? Isn't that jug that she pees in the same one that we ate frosted flakes out of this morning? - Dylan, on the same

Although our original engine rebuilding skills in Columbus were successful enough to get us three thousand miles, the engine repair this time is even beyond the skill set of actual mechanics. It is time for a new engine. Unfortunately for us, as our engine was only produced for a year or so (approximately thirty years ago), it would not be a simple matter of dropping in a new engine. All of the connections to other important components and the engine's mounting brackets are completely different. Fortunately for us as busma would have it), Steve's shop has just completed the process of an engine swap in the exact same model and year bus as ours. The good dentist who owns that bus is performing a few additional modifications to his bus (most notably converting it to run on liquid propane), so his bus is still in the shop, three bays down. This makes it convenient for the mechanics to walk down to his bus, take a few measurements, and come back to our bus and repeat what they have already figured out on his.

While several of us are hanging out at the shop, Liz wanders off to take care of something even more important, find a bar. One by one, we do the same, and join Liz at Frank's Pub, where we meet Denis and Peggy, a middle aged hippie couple who own a good sized chunk of land just outside of town. They invite us to stay with them on their property while we make our repairs.

Denis's yard is an automotive museum. Numerous cars, many as old as our bus, are thoughtfully positioned around his property. Most have tall grass and bushes accentuated their perimeters, displaying their tenure on the property. There is even an old dump truck off in the trees. We set up our tents at Camp Denis and I commence to break one of our bus rules. A small creek runs through the property next to our tents, and I decide to fish it. Not only do I catch a fish, but I clean it, cook it and eat it. Actually, I didn't really clean it, but it was pretty small so I didn't think it would be necessary.

Under a wood and tin shelter adjoining Peggy and Denis' vegetable garden. The firepit smokes throughout the passing storm and the Doors serenade this damp and chilled bunch. Physical activity has been today's theme - a 7 mile bike ride from the bus past friendly horses and a skittish cold; an adventurous hike to the roaring falls with Hector, Pippin, and Zillion; another ride into town for groceries. Now that I'm here and inactive, I again feel a bit edgy - the feeling of waiting for something to happen and others to show up and chores to perform. I guess this feeling, not a bad one certainly, but one that needs thoughtful balance, is the antithesis of driving a busload of partiers merrily along at sunset, sporting a golden helmet. The breakdown is serious, but affords us the opportunity to relax, enjoy, play and regroup. Princeton is as beautiful a place as any we've encountered and the chance to explore individual interests is welcome. - Svetlana

We've been on the road for ten or eleven or more days now, and our disparately founded and quite randomly accoutered group has managed to gambol almost as far west as the big pond of the Pacific. The two major breakdowns since Boston, one of which now affords us the stillness with which to write without the bus' characteristic squiggles, and the one pull-over by the heat haven't even been openly punctuated by any serious personality clashes. It's a good bunch that's been camped by Denis LeConte and Peggy Smith for the past two days. The chirping birds and the mysterious, invisible buzzing insects offset bucolically and melodically the incessant roar of the nearby creek. A rustling plastic bag here in the lean-to provides the only unnatural sound sans the scratching of this pen on paper. While the others are either lingering about the bus as it's introduced to its new engine or

involved in some maniacal bike ride to Vancouver, the thrust of our daily deluge looms gray and ominous above Zillion's drying laundry and me.

I'm contemplating the indulgence of another page here. If I go on, I run the risk of broaching subjects inappropriate to the bus book. What is appropriate to the bus book? I don't see anywhere on the rule page about bus book content, although I could suggest levity. Also, my position here in the lean-to, with the cool breeze and those sounds I described, leaning into the amassed pillows, blankets and sleeping bags with my feet up on a log, is not amenable to anything other than napping.

So I sit up now, bored, to bore you, to bore into the matter of the bus. Simultaneously, the sun breaks through, offering temporary reprieve from my duty as Zillion's clothes fetcher. I'm one of "Les Irresponsibles" who quit their job expressly to hop on Dave, Paul and Steve's bus. Briefly, I opted for the career-free life after college, but quickly questioned the value of bedraggled transience (after two or three years of resort hopping and stuff). Seeking the semblance of stability and such niceties as seeing a doctor (under the aegis of a genuine health play as opposed to the more desperate measure of going to the ER and throwing away the collection notices for a lifetime), I got a job in Boston. My impression was that people only worked because they were shackled to mortgages and the onus of sending children to criminally expensive schools. So, when the bus trip began to gel and the minions of the almighty dollar refused to grant me three weeks off to help the bus get across Canada, I quit. I hope that this paragraph wasn't too self-indulgent. I just had to burden the bus book with a bit of my milquetoast antiestablishment rhetoric.

Having quit my job, and decided to ride the bus, I soon realized that I had a great deal of time on my hands, and very little money. As I write this, another \$800 is tacked onto the running bus tally, to keep the bus running. Now, the bus trip is great. I think I can speak for everyone in that regard. I was deeply moved by the intense focus on juggling. Sadly, two of our juggling balls plummeted into Fiera Johnson Canyon in Banff National Park; so the juggling craze has been temporarily curtailed. With the intent of doing something fun while earning money, I decided to come along on the bus as a jester, in the hope that I could marshal the requisite tricks and rhymes, and a costume, in time to turn a buck before my cash ran out. Unfortunately, I haven't started the difficult task of sewing a nice jester hat, or any of the costume. Also, the unicycle I pieced together in Boston has a design problem or two. Also, thanks to the grace of incredible Canadian beer, my cash is in fact about to run out.

The prospect of riding the bus all the way back to Columbus is appealing. The thought was amplified by Bambam's mandolin accompaniment to my juggling as we walked to the S&S at Inman Square the day of our departure for our first power brunch. I would have to eat dry granola for the next month, though. The bus' cool mystic Leo is mustering out in Vancouver, to do a two month stint as a tree planter. He hopes to earn enough to take two or three years off. I thought that to sequester eight grand or so into my account would greatly facilitate my proper outfitting as a jester. This plan would coordinate well with people getting on the bus in California who understandably view me with suspicion because we haven't had the benefit of befriending each other properly. The broiling Baja bus venture probably isn't the best setting for such an endeavor, anyway.

I just wanted to indite my motivation for coming on the bus trip and for jumping off early. If I do not split with Rama Martin, please excuse my indecisiveness and grossly excessive use of bus book space. Lighten up. – Hector the Jester Manque

After a couple of days, the modifications to the engine compartment are complete. The mechanics have everything ready for our new engine, having modified a set of Ford Pinto engine mounts to receive a small block Chevy engine (our budget was not quite the same as the good dentist's, so we were not able to afford the from scratch mounts that he had fabricated). All we need is the engine. Well, it just so happens that Denis has a couple of small block Chevy engines kicking around and being the good soul that he was, he offers to sell us one from his inventory for \$200, which we graciously accept. Getting the engine out of the car is another matter.

I certainly would never have guessed that the dump truck worked, much less that the bed actually moved up and down. Turns out that the dump truck actually runs, and he pulls it over to one of the cars in the yard and uses the lifting action of the bed to hoist a small block 308 V8 out of a 1973 Impala. We lower the engine it into the bed of Denis's Datsun pickup truck, and transport it down to Steve's shop.

Gone are the days we stop to decide, where we should go, we just ride. – Anon.

While we are in Princeton, Leo and I continue our philosophical discussions and debates we have been engaged in for the trip thus far. Peggy tells us of an eagle's nest nearby, and we decide to go to see it. The eagle is away from her nest, so we decide to meditate at the tree's base.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE THOSE SUCKERS HAS BEEN, I DON'T KNOW WHERE THOSE SUCKERS HAS BEEN, UP ATOP A MOUNTAINTOP, A LOOKIN' FOR AN EAGLE, I DON'T KNOW WHERE THOSE SUCKERS HAS BEEN. THE RED LOTUS SPINS QUIETLY IN THE BASE OF MY BACK AS IT SPINS FASTER, THE PETAL DANCE UPON THE BUBBLING, BUBBLING, RED LAVAISTIC ENERGY, THE CREEK FROTHILATES, PERPLEXED INSIDE ITS BEAUTY, PULLING ITS STEAMING ENERGY FROM STEMMED PILSNERING STUFF. THE ORANGE PULSATES, ITS JUICES SPILLING ROUND, ROUND UPON THE BEND, WHERE THE PICKLETTES FEED. THE WARMTH ROSE, A YELLOW ROSE, WARM INSIDE MY BODY, LAPPING SPLASHY DOWN THROUGHOUT MY BODY WHERE THE PUMP PULLED THROUGH AND FILTERED OUT THE SHODDY TRANSLUCENT EXPANDED DIAPHRAGM OF PINKNESS. I CONCENTRATED ON MY BREATHING IN UNTIL I HAD EXPANDED TO ITS LIMITS AND PUSHING JUST BEYOND THE BOTTOM, IN AND AGAIN OUT, THROUGHOUT MY BODY. ABOVE A SURFACE LIED REFLECTED LIGHT SPLATTERED FROM THE SKY, I ROSE INTO ITS TOP AND DID BOB WITHIN THE AIR, WHILE TASSLES RATHERED FROM BENEAST ITS TOE AND ECHOES OF A CAVE SURROUNDING, REMINDING ME TO GO, DID REASSURE ME THAT I WAS INSIDE THAT INSIDE WAS I, WHILE ALL WAS WATCHED BY MY MIND'S THIRD EYE. INDIGO, INDIGO, WITH A DASH OF BLUE, LOOKS TO ME LIKE I'M BEING A HUMOR TO YOU. OCCASIONALLY THE EYE WOULD BLINK, IT WOULD LOOK TOWARDS ME, BLINK, AND LOOK AWAY, IT WAS THE ULTIMATE IN PURE EXPRESSION OF PORTRAYING WISDOM BY BLENDING OF EMOTION. A LOW RUMBLING, WHIRLING SOUND ABOVE MY HEAD PULLED MY HAIR AND CAPTURED MY ATTENTION, BRIGHT LIGHT WHITE SHONE DOWN UPON MY HEAD, A WHIRLING, TWIRLING, I FELT LIGHTENED BY ITS PRESENCE, A REASSURING THAT ONWARDNESS WAS ON, A ROARING OF NEW WATER, EVERY FLOWING ALONG ITS BODY. I DON'T KNOW WHERE THOSE SUCKERS HAS BEEN, I DON'T KNOW WHERE THOSE SUCKERS HAS BEEN - DOWN ALONG THE WATER'S EDGE, AT MONK ROCK, A ROCK HAVE YOU, THAT LOOKS JUST LIKE A ROCK WHEN VIEWED FROM THE PROPER ANGLE. MY FEET AWAKE, AND LEGS ALSO, I CONTINUE NOW, WITH MY TALE OF JOE. JOE FOUND HIMSELF ABOVE HIS BODY, STREAMING THROUGH THE FLOWERED WINDOW SKYLIGHT SITUATED IN HIS CROWN ABOVE THE POND, AND FLOATING LIKE A CLOUD DANCING SLOWLY IN THE BREEZE. JOE ENCOUNTERED AN EAGLE, FLYING THROUGH HIM, AND HE

AND THE EAGLE BECAME ONE SINGLE WHITE EAGLE. AT TIMES HE AND THE EAGLE WERE ONE AND AT TIMES HE SAILED ALONG, PERCHED UPON ITS WINGS. WE FOUND ANOTHER, A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN EAGLE AND SHE AND I DID TUMBLE DOWN, ENTANGLED MAKING LOVE WHILE ROLLING THROUGH THE SKY. - bambam

Meanwhile, back at Steve's shop, the mechanics install our "new" engine, attach the multitude of accessory components, give it a test run, and we are back on the road.

In Georgetown, while we are filling up (and adjusting our carburetor), a couple of hunters come over and give us a gift for the bus, a deer's skull. The skull is still a little fresh, so it still has a tad bit of flesh and fur attached. We thank them profusely for their kind gift, and choose to tie it to the back bumper of the bus, so as to "air" it out.

And we're on the road again, thank you Hal and John and Denis and Peggy and Bambam and Barkus... and we're going up hill in 4th, which, judging from the reactions of initiated drivers, is something of a miracle.

The earth and moon dangle and dance in the back of the bus as the teeth of our newly acquired hood ornament rattle in their bony gums. Dylan sits down to write the final triumphant verse to "Stuck Inside of Princeton with the La Paz Blues Again."

Bambam has already seen the full moon, of course, and we have just hit 60 M.P.H. – now that is a miracle! We can no longer use the engine as an indicator of whether we are going up or downhill as we plunge headlong toward the Pacific at speeds we never thought possible. May our busma remain this sweet for many moons to come. – Zorra

Except for a couple of repairs along the way (most notably Dylan rebuilding the starter in a Pizza Hut parking lot with a screwdriver and a hammer while the rest of us ate pizza), we made the rest of the way across Canada with minimal mechanical difficulty.

Discoveries:

1. Canadian gas is expensive
2. Canadian Customs Officials can juggle
3. Denis' mom sees Christ in everyone
4. Mosquitoes, all of them, die at night (No silly, they just fly around the globe, following the sun.)
5. Marshmallows, jello and that you must wear shoes in restaurants
6. There is no moon the night before an eclipse
7. 1962 school buses require significant "maintenance" in 1991

Zillion and Svetlana had decided to hitchhike on into Vancouver to go bungee jumping while we were getting the new engine, so we picked them up on the way. Also, while we were in Vancouver, we picked up Jasmine, the girl I had met in Thae Ton, Thailand last year.

Hector the Jester Manqu, having most pressing business to the North, betook himself thither this first day of July. He promises to be a fool busser for the next eclipse.

Our second border crossing went smoothly. Our new engine seemed to be running smoothly as well. In fact, it appeared that we even had a bit more power than the old one.

As we motor down I-5 towards Seattle, I contemplate the completion of this first phase of the journey. Our mystic has departed, but leaves a legacy of good meditation, peace, and a renewed fondness for Led Zeppelin. We'll undoubtedly rejoin.

Pippin has been a member of the troupe for four days now and today Jasmine adds her unique energy. Now that we're finally all on the bus headed for San Francisco, I can't imagine having been off the bus for days... (hours pass)... The mood is less joyous now that the majority of the bussers sit on the pavement in front of the bus while the Portland rains drizzle on the broken starter. Mediocre pizza satisfied appetites, but dejection looms close as we realize we'll be lucky to take I-5 straight through and still make the welcoming party. The bus breakdown occurred this a.m. I think our plan at this point is to break every part on the bus before SF, so that new equipment will carry us safely through Baja. I think everyone's come to love this bus and the recently added decorations symbolize the foci of the journey. Inflatable earth and paddleball moon remind us of our "ultimate" goal; a coffee calendar from Princeton recalls both the coffee house we missed and the fluid of choice next to beer; photographs of Monk's Rock, Lake Superior pictographs, the production of PB supreme sandwiches reassure us that indeed we've been having fun throughout. I'm sure individuals' fondness for the bus is rooted in their initial intentions of finding adventure and the realization of those. Hector has already documented his anti-establishment reasons for leaving his job and Zorra has addressed the adventurous soul-searching that surely compels us all in some way. Regardless of our reasons, we all find ourselves surrounded by kind / witty adventures. – Svetlana

4 JULY 1991 - MOTOR NÚMERO TRES

July fourth arrives, and we are (no surprise) a little behind schedule. It is seven days until the eclipse, and we are still three thousand miles and another country away. We are scheduled to be in San Francisco for a soirée extraordinaire, honoring our passing through town, but instead we have still not made it to Sacramento. It is a hot summer day, we're in the north California desert, and our new engine decides to bite the dust. It's a weekend to boot, which combined with the July 4th holiday, means that no one is even going to take a look at it for several days, much less begin to think about fix it.

We call Chris and Jason, who are hosting the party and ask them if someone can come to pick us up. Although, the specific reason for the party is to celebrate Egy's arrival, they explain that everyone is too busy preparing for the party, and that no one is available. Go figure.

Svetlana hops on the phone, and arranges for a van for some of the bussers. Goldy and I decide to stay with the bus, with the hopes of moving the work along. For the celebration of the fourth, we suck down a couple of beers and watch some bottle rockets off in the distance. I draw up a design for an eclipse T-shirt.

THANK GOD FOR BREAKDOWNS, IT'S THE ONLY TIME YOU CAN GET ANYTHING DONE. - bambam

By the seventh, the bus is sporting a new engine, engine number three. This time we decide to invest in a factor rebuilt 327 with a 30,000 mile warranty for \$3,217.50. We head on into San Fran, and pull up to 428 43rd Avenue, the site of the raging bus welcome party, just three days earlier.

It's Sunday afternoon, and we all gather in the Living Room for "The Meeting", the meeting to figure out just what the fuck we're doing. Are we driving this bus to the tip of Baja for the eclipse, a mere four days away? If so, who is on the bus, and who's off the bus? The meeting lasts all afternoon. We go from one end of the spectrum to the other, from no one is going to everyone is going. Todd gets sick of all of the whining and goes outside to make curtains for the windows, and assure the attachment of our new hood ornament, the deer's skull from our friends in Canada. He glues a small silver Buddha to the tip of its nose for extra good busma. It makes a dandy hood ornament indeed.

STORY PROBLEM #1:

IF LISSY WON'T GO UNLESS JIGMA GOES, UNLESS MAYBE ROSEANNE GOES, AND IF LISSY DOESN'T GO AND WE CAN'T TAKE HETZ CARZ, AND DYLAN'S CARZ HAS A PLASTIC BUMPER AND THAT MEANS WE CAN'T TOW IT, AND DYLAN WON'T GO UNLESS JANA GOES AND JANA WON'T GO UNLESS WE HAVE A CARZ... THEN HOW MUCH WILL THE BUS TRIP COST????

Meanwhile, back inside at the meeting, we appear to be making some progress. It seems, in fact, that the bus will be making the trip to Mexico. All we have to do now is figure out exactly who is going to be on it. I feel this is an excellent time to review a few of the bus rules for our new travelers, beginning with the most important one, no drugs on the bus. I can't help but notice that two of the people about to join in on the trip, Sophia and Theo, are conveying a particularly bewildered look when I mentioned Rule Number One.

"So guys, were you planning on bringing anything with you on the bus?"

"Well, we have some liquid A, and some ecstasy and of course some pot, too."

"Hmm, let's scratch the pot, and discuss the others."

After a bit of debate, we decide that we would modify the rule from "no drugs on the bus" to "the only drugs that are allowed on the bus are those that a police officer can hold in his hand, and not know what they are." The liquid A is poured into a bottle of orange Koala Springs juice. Fitting that the bus is from the Koala Springs Baptist Church.

QUOTA DEL DIA... "IF SOPHIA AND THEO GO, THEY'LL BE 17...IF THEY DON'T GO, THERE'LL BE 20..."

By the end of the meeting, there are fourteen of us on the bus and four in a car behind. Seven men and seven women; loosely organized into seven couples. All of the couples are either new to the bus, or are reconfigurations of previous couples.

Todd's projects are complete and we are on the road again.

FAIR (FARE) INSURANCE NOTE:

THIS IS A REVERSE DEDUCTABLE POLICY. CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS DO APPLY, PLEASE REVIEW THEM CAREFULLY.

RESTRICTION NUMBER ONE: POLICY IS NULL AND VOID IF SOMETHING REEEAAALY BAD HAPPENS TO THE BUS.

RESTRICTION NUMBER TWO: LET'S FACE IT... THIS POLICY IS JUST A PREPAYMENT ANYWAY.

RESTRICTION NUMBER THREE: NEW RESTRICTIONS CAN BE INSTITUTED AT ANY TIME BY EITHER PARTY PROVIDED THAT THAT PARTY WASHES HIS/HER GENITALS WITH TEQUILA AT DAWN.

LEGAL DEFINITION OF REVERSE DEDUCTABLE: A REVERSE DEDUCTABLE OR ADDUCTABLE AS IT IS KNOWN IN THE INDUSTRY IS A BENEFIT CEILING, NOT A FLOOR. IN THIS CASE, THE FIRST \$1000 IS COVERED. ANY PER PERSON BUS FARE THAT EXCEEDS THIS AMOUNT WILL BE PAID BY THE POLICY HOLDER, LESS ADDUCTABLE.

RESTRICTION NUMBER FOUR: OFFER GOOD ONLY IN THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES, INCLUDING BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO.

TO WIT. PRECEDING PARAGRAPH(S) NOT NECESSARILY PENNED BY A PERSON OF SOUND MIND AND BODY, THUS NULLING THIS POLICY IN 47 OF THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES, EXCLUDING BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO.

RESTRICTION NUMBER FIVE: CONTRACT VALID AS OF TIME OF ORIGINAL JOKE CONCEPTION, NOT TIME THAT CONTRACT IS ACTUALLY SIGNED.

TERMS: \$500 CASH INSURES POLICY HOLDER TO \$1000 P.P. EXPENSES, REGARDLESS OF THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE THAT DROP OUT AT THE LAST MINUTE.

RESTRICTION NUMBER SIX: RESTRICTIONS ARE FOR LOSERS.

RESTRICTION NUMBER SEVEN: POLICY DOES NOT WARRANT THAT SIGNED(S) WILL ACTUALLY HAVE FUN ON SAID BUS TRIP - THAT IS SOLELY SIGNED(S) RESPONSIBILITY - HOWEVER, IF YOU DON'T YOU SHOULD REALLY CONSIDER PROFESSIONAL HELP (I.E. THERAPY).

AGREED ON THIS 5TH DAY OF JULY, IN THE YEAR 1991.

INSURER: BAMBAM

INSUREE: CHRISTOPHER HALL

The trip to Los Angeles was a fiesta sobre ruedas. We sucked down a twenty pound tank of nitrous in less than four hours.

FOR RELIEVING STRESS THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN A SIX PERSON MASSAGE WHILE DOING BALLOONS OF NITROUS IN THE MIDDLE OF A BUS BARRELING DOWN THE HIGHWAY HEADED FOR A TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE SUN. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND IT. - bambam

6 JULY 1991 - USA/MEXICO BORDER
TIJUANA

Solar eclipses bring on strange reactions, frequently paradoxical combinations of fear and entrepreneurship, and this eclipse is no different. The government of Mexico, in its infinite wisdom, has determined that the country is going to be overrun with eclipse chasers to see the eclipse, and that this will be more than their fragile little country can handle. The news is full of reports that Mexico has closed its borders in anticipation of the certain onslaught of eclipse chasing madness. Subsequently, the government made an official proclamation that they are not going to let anyone into their country without proof of a reservation in an authorized government sanctioned hotel covering the number of people in the vehicle and the length of time of the stay. Fortunately, my years of training in high school in forgery prove invaluable, as we have in our possession official documentation of reservations for everyone on the bus.

As we are approaching the border, we prepare ourselves, resurrecting the air of conservatism that we had prior to entering Canada. I have the hotel reservations in the compartment to my left, ready to pull them out for the Border Patrol. The Koala Springs juice rests comfortably in the cooler. Everyone on the bus is prepared, exuding a sense of calmness, coolness and collectedness.

I am approaching the gate at about 35 miles an hour, and begin to slow down. The border official steps out and waves me right through. I don't even think I had a chance to slow down below 30 miles an hour.

We are in Mexico. We have passed our final hurdle, or at least, we think we have. We crack open fourteen Tecates as we roll into Tijuana. Sure enough, as soon as we get a half mile into Mexico, we break down. We pull out of four lanes of fast moving traffic and operate in our magic bubble by the side of the highway, in which open Tecates and tools move fluidly back and forth from the cab and the engine compartment. By this

point in the trip, we spend so much time under the hood that we have drink holders installed on the inside of the grille.

When we aren't busy repairing the bus, or working our way into and out of interesting situations, we have to create other ways to pass the time. One of our favorites is an activity we call "body shots".

THE DUSTY ROADS OF BAJA

Svetlana is lying on her back in the middle of the bed; her dust coated white silk blouse is pulled down from her shoulders, exposing her clavicle and the tops of her breasts. Her breasts are a milky white, an appetizing contrast to her golden shoulders. Jason is on one side of her, I am on the other, and Jasmine is at her feet. Jason fills her clavicle with Tequila, which begins to dribble down her chest as the bus jiggles down the road. He traces the side of her neck with the tip of his tongue and dips it into the Tequila, twirling it around. A bit of it runs down onto her chest, which I catch with my tongue. Svetlana arches her back as the Tequila begins to run between her breasts. It does not seem that she is doing this to keep the Tequila from running too far, but instead to offer herself more readily to our tongues. Jasmine leans up from the base of the bed to undo the buttons on Svetlana's shirt and pulls it aside, so as not to soak it with Tequila. As she unbuttons it slowly from the top, Svetlana spreads her legs and Jasmine moves up further between her legs. Both of their skirts slide up to their waist as the front of Jasmine's thighs press against the back of Svetlana's. Svetlana leans her head to the side, both to offer her now empty clavicle for more Tequila and to nuzzle her face into my sarong. Jason pours more Tequila into her clavicle, which begins to follow the same path. This time, Jasmine leans down and catches it, using her tongue to draw it up onto the tip of Svetlana's nipple. Svetlana raises her back even further, as she pushes her face deeper into my lap, nibbling through the thin sarong that is draped between my legs. Jason pours more Tequila onto Svetlana, this time it runs down between her breasts towards her belly button. Her stomach quivers as it passes her belly button and beneath the folds of her skirt. Her blouse is now completely parted, as is Jasmine's. Svetlana runs the tip of her fingers through the Tequila that has pooled in her belly button, pulls back my sarong with her teeth, and delicately traces her moistened fingertips along the tip of my shaft, and then licks it off like a Tequila dipped lollipop. She then wraps her lips around my swollen head and slides me deep into her throat. Jason pours even more Tequila onto Svetlana's stomach, which Jasmine slides her hand through, running the palm of hand over her breasts, across the top of her shoulder, and then beneath Jason's sarong, wrapping him with the wetness of the Tequila. She then leans down on top of Svetlana, pressing her breasts against hers, moistening her own body from Svetlana's Tequila soaked breasts, and buries her head into Jason's lap. Both of their heads are swaying back and forth to the rocking of the bus. Jasmine's back is arched as she slides her breasts up and down over Svetlana's. Her skirt is pulled up over her waist. We continue to pour Tequila on each other and lick our ways over each other's bodies. Our sweat mixes with the Tequila; the bus rocks our rhythmic movements into undulating synchronicity. Svetlana tilts her head over to join Jasmine and they use their tongues to spread Tequila up and down along the inside of Jason's thighs and in unison along each side of his member, alternating wrapping their lips over his pulsating head and flickering along, all the while wiping sweat and Tequila from their own bodies and rubbing it up and down his shaft. I slide my hand across the small of Jasmine's back and then through the down the crack of her ass, as I move around behind her. She arches her back even more, and pushes her hips even higher into the air, as I slide myself deep inside of her, grabbing her slippery waist with my hands. Svetlana's legs are spread wide, wrapped around Jasmine's waist. She pushes her crotch into Svetlana's and slowly grinds it back and forth as the bus sways from side to side. I reach down and cup my hands around Svetlana's ass and pull them together as I plunge myself deeper into Jasmine. The road is getting bumpier and the bus is bouncing up and down and swinging back and forth as all of us slide in and out of each other. All four of our bodies are one writhing mass of sweat, Tequila and flesh. Ted is next to us reading a book. Sophie is on the other side of us taking a nap. Zorra is writing in the bus journal, and Goldie and Zillion are keeping Todd company, as he navigates Ege along the dusty roads of Mexico.

Half the bus has had sex with everyone in that half, while the other half has watched. - Ted

WE WERE TRYING OUT THE SOUND AND SOPHIE SAID TO TURN THE BASS ALL THE WAY DOWN - THEN YOU GUYS SAID THE SOUND WAS STILL A LITTLE FUZZY AND TO TRY PLAYING WITH THE

TREBLE. I WAS WONDERING IF IT WAS DOING ANYTHING AND STARTED PLAYING WITH THE BASS. - AT ONE POINT, THE BASS WAS ALL THE WAY DOWN AND SOPHIE SAID TO BRING DOWN THE TREBLE A BIT - I TURNED THE BASS ALL THE WAY UP AND NO ONE SAID ANYTHING - IT SEEMS IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER. - bambam's interpretation of what svetlana said while adjusting the rear speakers for the velvet underground

7 JULY 1991 – BREAKDOWN AT THE OASIS

If you believe something strongly enough, and combine it with a bit of busma, you can make it through most anything. We have been continually confronted with seemingly impossible situations, yet made our way through them. Sunday afternoon was no exception. We had been driving hundreds of miles through scorching heat in the desert, surrounded by rocks, snakes, cactus, and scorpions, with a generous sprinkling of the rusted shells of old vehicles, vehicles that evidently were not able to survive their perilous journey into the depths of Baja.

The bus is sputtering, and our top speed is rapidly declining. I visualize EGY joining the ranks of the many vehicles that we pass that are dissolving into the sand. We are travelling barely fifteen miles an hour. At the rate that our speed is declining, I calculate that we will be completely stopped in a couple of miles. Just at that moment, off in the distance, just like in the movies, twinkling through the shimmering heat waves rippling off of the pothole filled asphalt, I see what appears to be a grouping of palm trees. Am I tunneling into a state of disillusion, simple hallucinations triggered by the nervous anxiety of yet another breakdown in the scorching sun? Or is this in fact a respite of civilization? As we approach, the image begins to crystal into focus. My thoughts are confirmed. This is a bona fide oasis, complete with people, animals, houses, and of course, palm trees swaying in the winds.

I wonder to myself, could there possibly also be a service station as well? Open on a Sunday afternoon? Well, yes there is, by golly, and the mechanics are drinking cervesas and grilling oysters in the back on an old truck tire rim. The smell of oil and steel mixes with the smoke from the coals. I hang out with a couple of the guys in the rear yard, kicking back grilled oysters and cervesas, while another mechanic works his magic to our engine. Chris, amazed at the entire situation, that there was an oasis in the middle of the desert that we made it to it, that there was a service station that they were open on a Sunday afternoon, that they had the parts that we needed, walks around to the front of the bus, and falls into the pit.

THE HEAT SWELTERS LIKE A TOAD JUMPING IN A BOTTLE. WE PULL INTO A ROADSIDE RESTAURANT WITH THE GREEN ANGELS CLOSE BEHIND - LOOKS LIKE WE CAN'T ADJUST THOSE POINTS FOREVER, TIME FOR SOMETHING NEW. THE GROUP MEANDERS, THE BIRDS SING IN THEIR CAGES, EGY WAITS, WE WAIT, THE ANGELS DRINK. ARE YOU ON THE BUS? YOU'RE ON EVEN WHEN YOU'RE OFF. WE PASS A COW SLEEPING FOREVER BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD, THE IMPRINT OF A RADIATOR EMBLAZONED ON ITS CHEST. WE CONTINUE CHUGGING, CHUGGING, ALONG - THROUGH THE RIPPLES WE SEE ANOTHER BUS BESIDE THE ROAD, AN INTERNATIONAL MID-SEVENTIES I BELIEVE. WHEN YOU'RE ON THE BUS, YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN OTHER BUSES AND WISH TO SHARE YOUR BUSMA WITH OTHER BUSSERS. WE PULL OVER - A COUPLE OF DENTISTS AND THEIR KIDS, FIVE TOTAL, ON THEIR WAY TO THE ECLIPSE. THEY ARE PREPARED - A RACK ON THE TOP, AN AWNING TO THE SIDE, THEY ARE PREPARED - FIVE GAS TANKS CONTROLLED FROM THE DASH, WATER IN AMONGST THE ASH - PREPARED FOR MOST ANYTHING, THEY'VE TUNED THAT THINK, MADE IT SING - READY FOR THE ANGST OF NIGHT AND PLIGHT OF AUTHORITY, THEY'VE PREPARED FOR MOST ANYTHING ONE MIGHT ABSOLUTELY IMAGINE TO ENCOUNTER ON THE ROADS TO BAJA, EXCEPT FOR ONE THING, THE COW WHO WALKED OUT IN FRONT OF THEM. - bambam

8 JULY 1991 – THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

We had several more breakdowns as we rolled through the desert. Frequently, after some amount of time sitting by the side of the road, local assistance, known as the Green Angels would appear. Jana was the only

member of our crew who spoke any Spanish. Additionally, she seemed to have only brought with her a single outfit for the trip, a fuchsia red string bikini. On occasion, she would wrap a short pink sarong around her waist.

Whenever we needed assistance, or found ourselves into a difficult situation, Jana would stroll off of the bus and take care of it. I'm not sure if it was her command of the spoken language, or her command of body language that worked, but whatever it was, it worked.

One morning, while we are stopped at a roadside cantina for a bite to eat, Sophie wanders off and finds a fountain in the middle of a square, where she decides to completely strip down and bathe herself. Just how long does it take for the police to show up when a tall long-haired blonde large-bosomed American hippie is standing upright in the middle of a fountain, butt nekkid, while rubbing her hands up and down over the voluptuous curves of her wet body, you may ask? Not long, when it is in the middle of an elementary school while class is in session.

This would be Jana's ultimate test, and, yes, she did get us out of it. I seem to recall that there was some amount of money involved, and I also imagine that she may have added the sarong to her outfit.

10 JULY 1991 – RANCHO EGY

While Jana was our ambassador and negotiator extraordinaire, Dylan was our resident scientist. Utilizing a blow-up globe and a bright pink rubber ball, he carefully calculated the exact location where the centerline of the eclipse would cross from land into sea on the east coast of the Baja peninsula. This would be the location that Egy would call home for the event. A small beach called Los Frailes, twenty five miles north of Cabo San Lucas. In order to get to it, we would need to drive the bus over dunes, as there appeared no road on the map.

"This is the spot," proclaims Dylan, as the odometer reaches 145,557.87. "We are on the centerline." Off to our left, a sandy road meanders out over the dunes.

"Should we walk out and check it out?"

"No, let's just go for it."

I turn hard to the left and the bus heads towards the beach. Egy magically transforms herself into a four-wheel drive monster Land Rover as she hurls herself over dune after dune, each valley filled with sand softer and deeper than the one before. I keep the peddle to the floor, for fear that any decrease in speed will surely plant the bus sinking into the sand, blocking what appears to be the only path to the beach. I wonder how we will get back out, and realize that this is not important, it is crucial only that we get to the beach, to the centerline. We crest the final dune and a sandy beach stretching out to the sea lies ahead of us. I continue to hold the gas peddle to the floor as Egy lurches forward with one final leap and we are home, home for now.

It is a wide flat beach, forming a crescent shape facing the Sea of Cortez. It is approximately a mile from one end to the other. We are positioned roughly in the middle. Off to our right, to the South, there is a rock outcropping jutting out into the ocean, with waves repeatedly crashing into it, sending a salty mist into the air. Off to our left, to the North, a mountain rises from the sea, with the sandy beach bookending into it. The mountain is composed of jagged rock, cactus and brushy shelters for reptilian creatures scurrying about. In the center of the beach, a single structure exists. Here, Senor Valentino has converted his home into a special eclipse cantina. He is ready for the onslaught of tourists that are certain to swarm down onto his beach for the spectacle. Fortunately, he is man of relaxed flexibility, as the only other eclipse chasers who have made Los Frailes their choice of venue consist of two engineers, who have driven down from the bay area in a Nissan Pathfinder. The hundreds of thousands of others that the government was certain would swarm like ants over the fragile lands must be somewhere else.

“Fifteen dollars,” I answer to Art, one of the inhabitants of the Pathfinder, when he asks me the price of the eclipse shirts I have had printed in San Francisco. We are sitting in Senor Valentino’s cantina, sipping a Tecate and awaiting a grilled burrito. We are the only ones in the cantina. It is decorated with strings of Christmas tree lights, posters and other colorful items in celebratory expression of this historic event. Beautifully painted shells with “Eclipse Solare 1991” adorn the shelves. Senor Cantina has clearly invested quite a bit of energy (and probably money as well) in anticipation of the entrepreneurial opportunities that the eclipse brings.

“Twenty dollars, and that’s my final offer,” responds Art. I sell him a shirt. He explains that he doesn’t have the money with him. That’s ok; I know where to find him. Impressed by his skills in the art of negotiation, I decide that he should become our bus attorney. Not sure that we necessarily need a bus attorney, but it seems like the right thing at the time.

AS OUR NEW BUS ATTORNEY, YOU WILL HAVE TO FIRST FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE BASIC GEOLOGICAL FEATURES OF THE PLACES WE HAVE BEEN. IT WAS IN WINNIPEG THAT WE PICKED UP THE BLOCKS OF WOOD, PIECES OF 2X4'S, FROM BOXES IN THE PARK. SO, HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE YOU SLEPT WITH HERE AT THE TABLE? SLEPT WITH ON THE BUS OR ON THE BUS YOU HAVE SLEPT WITH? WE COULD FIGURE IT OUT YOU KNOW FROM EVERYONE ELSE'S NUMBERS. GOLDY AND I FINALLY GOT TO DO OUR SWEEP. WHAT SHOULD WE TAKE? LOTION, PADDLEBALL, A CAMERA, THE SPREAD TO SIT ON. WHAT THIS TRIP IS IS BASICALLY JUST DRIVING AROUND THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, THAT'S ALL WE'RE DOING. LETTING GO OF THE WOMEN I LOVE. ZIL STRUMS THE MANDOLIN WHILE ZORRA'S HEAD DISAPPEARS INTO TODD'S LAP. THE CACTUS'S FLY ON BY, LEANING TO THE SOUTH, I BELIEVE, PRICKLY, PRICKLY. YOU KNOW, IF WE DID LIVE IN A WORLD OF REVERSE ENTROPY, THE DESERTS WOULD BE FILLED WITH HUGE STACKS OF ROCKS AS EVERYTHING AROUND US WOULD HAVE THIS NATURAL TENDENCY TO STACK UP. THE GREEN FLAMES, THE PURPLE FLAMES, THE FLAMES FLOAT. LET'S PULL OVER AT THE BORDER AND DIVVY UP THE DOSES AS WE ADJUST THE MIRROR. FIVE, FOUR, TWO, ONE THREE. FIVE MILES HIGH, JUST A BIT OF GLOW AS WE CRUISE ALONG THE HIGHWAY. GOLDY PASSES ME AN OLIVE; I SUCK ITS MEAT AND TOSS THE SEED. JASMINE REACHES FOR A GREEN BONE SUCKER FROM LAST NIGHT'S EXTRAVAGANZA. AS ARTIST OF THE SHIRTS, I FELT IT IS MY OBLIGATION TO DO A RIGOROUS TEST ON THE QUALITY OF THE SCREENING AND THAT IS REALLY WHY I HAVE WORN THE SAME SHIRT FOR TWO WEEKS STRAIGHT. ANYHOW, DO YOU NOW FEEL CAPABLE TO REPRESENT US AND ACT AS OUR LIAISON TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD? AND WHAT'S ALL THIS FUCKING PEPSI DOING IN THE COOLER? - bambam

There was something that felt strange about the bus sitting in the middle of the beach of Los Frailes. For one, this was the only time on the trip that we parked the bus intentionally, without it being the result of a breakdown. Additionally, we made it. We made it to the centerline of the eclipse. It wasn’t the week before the eclipse as we had originally planned, but it was nonetheless before the eclipse, the day before to be more precise. I felt a paradoxical combination of relief and loss. Relief that we made it and a loss of the adrenaline induced anticipation of whether or not we would make it. Deep inside, I knew that we would, but I rather enjoyed the experience of the seemingly impossible situations we navigated to get here. Well, we still have to get back, and I am sure we will have more breakdowns on the return. At a minimum, we still have to figure out how we will get the bus out of the foot of sand it has sunk into, and it is facing the ocean as well.

Upon our landing, the bus’s inhabitants spread out to explore our new home. Many return with shells, bones and other beach artifacts that are added to our now sun bleached hood ornament skull. A long stick is hoisted, with sarongs and colorful shirts are attached, lashed to the mirror on the bus, clearly claiming this territory as our own. Camping pads, blankets and pillows are artfully strewn across the hood of the bus and against its windshield, creating an elegant lounge space looking out towards the sea. An awning fashioned from a blue tarp stretches out from the passenger’s side of the bus, and a kitchen, complete with chairs and a table for dining instantly find their way beneath it. Several bussers set up tents around our camp, Rancho Egy. Others choose to sleep on top of the bus, away from the creepy crawly creatures of the desert’s night.

Save for my spirited business negotiations at Senor Valentino's with our new bus attorney, the evening before the eclipse is one of one of collective pensive reflection.

Tonatiuh is the Nahuatl name for the sun. It means "he who is giving birth" or "the ascending eagle". Most commonly, it is represented as a solar disk found at the center of the Aztec calendar. Mythology states that Huitzilopochtli, god of the sun, must fight daily against the moon and stars in order to be reborn. Coyolxauhqui, goddess of the moon, is Huitzilopochtli's sister and enemy. The two fight on the summit of Coatepec Hill. The sun beheads its sister and hurls her lifeless body down the hill. Everyday at dawn, the same battle was fought. And every day, the Aztecs watched the sun win..." Excerpt from Mexican Office Tourism Office Eclipse 1991 Picture Tour Guide

Took a walk on the beach today and felt a river of energy flowing through my arms, eclipse approaching in a powerful place. But, it could also be the food. I'm excited. - Goldy

11 JULY 1991 – BAJA MEXICO

It's the day of the eclipse. We gather our eclipse needs and hike to the base of the mountain to the North.

It is with bared feet that I decide to climb the mountain. The video camera is back on the bus, as there is only room for it or the mandolin. I split up from the rest of the party and choose a route I feel is more suited to my foot apparel, more rock, less cactus. My Canadian training proves useful as I glide over the rocks' surfaces. Occasionally, I stop and look at the sun. Indonesia, same but different. I readjust my straps, wipe the sweat from my glasses, and continue.

I find that for some reason, I am able to more easily navigate the surfaces of the rocks if I don't look at them. It's as if my peripheral vision most aptly connects into my motor skills by bypassing my conscious mind and connecting directly to my subconscious. I focus on the ground that is twenty or so feet ahead of me, not the ground that lies just before me.

The bussers have spilt into two factions; half of the group (including those who drove down in the car) has opted to go to the highest point of the mountain, while the other half has chosen an outcropping slightly below them. It is on the side of the mountain that overlooks the sea and beach far below, jutting out into space in such a way that it feels it is floating in the sky. In some ways, it reminds me of the outcropping I sat on in Indonesia, where I sat on my "walk" during the Lunar Eclipse. I choose to join the Outcropping Troop, consisting of Todd, Zorra, Svetlana, Jason, Jasmine, Chris and me.

As the sun's shadow approaches, we occasionally peer at the disappearing sun through our official eclipse glasses we picked up in La Paz. My heart is pounding harder and harder as the edge of the sun stretches back like the back of a cat preparing to pounce. Although there is no perceivable darkening of the day while the moon is sliding across the sun, the color of the light shifts to that of an underwater blue. A cool breeze flows in from the west, akin to the change in temperature and wind direction that precedes a coming storm.

Ripples of light and dark appear on the ground and begin swimming around like schools of fish. It is as if there is there is a foot of iridescent plasma covering the earth's surface viewed through a moiré filter. The schools of fish swim rapidly in one direction and then shift to another in unison. Starting slowly, their motions gain speed with each change in direction, until they flee en mass off towards the sea, until their speed is so fast that their distinctions disappear, much like an image on a record label blends into a single color as the record ramps up to full speed.

I look up from the ground and out to the west. Off in the infinite distance, I see a black wall, more ominous than the most powerful thunderstorm I have ever experienced. It stretches as far as I can see to the South and to the North and up into the reaches of the heavens. This wall of darkness is coming at me at a thousand miles an hour. The ground beneath disappears as quickly, as if a giant paintbrush splashing black paint has extinguished everything below it. It grows larger and larger. Its silence is deafening, its energy is overwhelming. Everyone is quiet.

Suddenly, but not without warning, everything before us to the west is black. In an instant, the light is extinguished, we are in total darkness. I quickly look to the east and see all of the light of the day sucked into a little hole as the shadow speeds out to sea. In an instant, the day is gone. A 360 degree sunset wraps the earth. Its fiery orange blends into red and then into total blackness.

Above, a ring of fire undulates around a hole in the sky where our sun once existed. Streams of stars blanket the sky. Jupiter, Mars and Venus align in a slight arch, seeming to honor the undulating necklace of flame. A meteor draws across the sky, as if it has spun off from the sun. At first we are silent, but then find ourselves compelled to howl at the top of our lungs, both releasing the energy and joy within us that has built up over the past several weeks and sucking in the powerful energy from the eclipse. We can hear an orchestra of animals off in the distance who appear to be doing the same. Jerry Garcia flumes right by me down the mountainside, laughing along the way.

It is the big one. The eclipse lasts six minutes and 53 seconds, just 25 seconds short of the theoretical maximum. We have time to dance about beneath the shadow of the moon, pull together for a seven way smooch, and write and perform a song for the occasion of the same title.

Off to west, a spot of light appears on the horizon. At the speed of sound, it grows to spread across the horizon. As fast as the shadow has consumed us, it leaves us. The back wall of the shadow approaches at a thousand miles an hour and the veil of darkness is lifted. The lights are turned back on, and as I quickly look to the east, I see the heaven's blackness suck into the same hole that the day did just seven minutes before, as the shadow races off to the mainland of Mexico.

There is a post group gathering at Rancho EGY, accentuated by the consumption of a particular Koala Juice. A pile of us of are gathered on the hood of the bus. The flapping of the flags above us is punctuated by the clacking of the bones artfully interjected into our hood ornament. Goldy is at the base of the pile, with everyone else's arms, legs and torsos, twined together in such a way that any movement by Goldy ripples through the rest of us.

WITH THE HEAVENS FLAPPING ABOVE MY HEAD, THE SHIFTING SANDS OF GOLDY, BONES BENEATH MY FEET, THROUGH THE TIMES OF YOUNG AND OLDY, COME TO ME MY MIND THROUGH THE LIGHTS AND WINE, TO THE SHORES OF RANCHO EGY, AND SEE THE SKY TURN BLACK, AND ALL FOR YOU BEHOLDY. - bambam

Later that evening, in the pitch black darkness, we attempt a celebratory jam session. After some time, we decide that our efforts to tune our instruments are both fruitless and probably unnecessary. My sunglasses probably don't help much either.

So, the eclipse faded into orange Koala Juice and an amazing rhythm of sound, light, color and sea, going by on winds of electric steel, more potent than life on a beach. By the end of an hour, I was covered in sand, painted by Jason's transitional osteoporaneous colors, and listening to the metal musical wind.

Snorkeling was a bust - lungs full of water and not a thing to see - watching Todd leap gleefully in the waves with colorful fins, to merely tease the motion out, and pick up his mandolin and play the waves, mountains, the sand.

Spent some time on the hood, spent some time on a bench, and spent some time on a blanket. Chris is wandering the beach with a Tecate in hand. Most everyone else is asleep, Senor Valentino glows by the campfire, Zillion is looking like Albuquerque. - Goldy

It occurs to me at this moment, that a large part of the eclipse magic is manifested in the meetings of minds and souls it induces down here on this little living water planet - the sun meets the moon in a moment of harmony - the vibes spread down to the ground, we feel the motions, the turning, it all lines up, divisions melt, we are one. - Anon.

The sun has set and darkness has settled on the pastel colored geometrically patterned cities and roads and lizards that have been moving incessantly, uncontrollably, in the sand as far as I can see, becoming infinitely more intricate with each second of gazing. In the daylight I tried to touch them, to disturb them, but the sand that ran through my fingers integrated itself without interruption into the pattern. I can still see them faintly through the dark. I have left the bus proper trying to escape from Art. I have managed to find some relatively clean, dry, sandless clothing after many hours of sandy dampness saturated discomfort. It has taken what seems like years to reach a point where such an undertaking is feasible, and has made an enormous difference in my outlook on life for the next few hours. As I said, I am trying to escape from Art, who laid down next to me in the sand as I tried to listen to the jam and feel human again. He laid down beside me spewing the most ridiculously contrived lines about finding space for a few more stars in the sky just...there and...there. I have gone into the darkness away from the bus to join Svetlana under the impossibly bright and numerous stars. I look up at the enormous black dome of the sky, bounded only by the horizon in all directions and see thousands, perhaps millions, of stars. Many of them are white and intensely bright - some are blue or green or purple or pink. The light in the sky is always changing - rays of brightness shoot out across the sky from invisible sources at random intervals. I should know by now that I will not see the source, but still I find myself turning to see if there are headlights near the cantina. For hours, I have been looking through a tightly stretched veil of black lace; every single thing I look at is through this veil. I have tried to look right at it and capture the detail, so that I can draw it later. If I really want to look at it, its gentle shifting movement slows nearly to stillness, but still I cannot grasp it. Through and among the threads of this veil, if I look for a few moments, I can see colors pumping and racing along the paths and patterns created by the threads. The bits of color and the way they move remind me of films I saw in elementary school of blood cells rushing through capillaries. Perhaps I am seeing my own blood cells rushing around in my eyeballs. Gazing up with my eyes relaxed, the sky is a huge black dome sparkling with white and pink and purple and blue, sheathed in veils of lace and racing colors, and off to the right is the ghostly presence of a merry-go-round horse of god-like proportions, visible only as vague graduations of light and darkness. When I am trying to look directly at it, it is as elusive as the veil of lace, though completely motionless in the cavernous dome - like trying to follow the flittings of a butterfly with your eyes so you can get a glimpse of its glorious wings, only the butterfly is motionless and never lands. I have been there gazing skyward silently with Svetlana for only a few minutes before Art arrives. My heart sinks. "You guys throw a hell of a cocktail party," he says loudly. Looking at the sky, framing with his hands, he says, "Do you think we can find room for a few more stars? How about...there? And a bus...room for a bus right...there maybe? Beautiful place for an eclipse. You guys throw a hell of a cocktail party." I say nothing. His loud repetitive remarks are shattering my much needed warmth and sandless dryness and I wish he would go away. Svetlana, unperturbed, makes a couple of remarks which seem to me to be attempts to jog the skipping needle. No dice. I am gritting my teeth; Svetlana tells me quietly that she misses Hector sometimes. Art says something which opens the door for Svetlana to tell him in an amused and uncritical tone that he's being repetitive. Again, no dice. She tells me a story, speaking simply and quietly alongside Art's loud repetitions, not excluding him, of how she searched for Jason that morning after some bad feelings the night before. - Zorra

as the earth spins
I'm on the border
of blinding truth
and disorder
like waves splashing
on hot sand

They might not be aligned
with the electromagnetic force
lines, but they still feel pretty good.

Art

I'm on a rock listening to the waves before they trickle slowly through the sandy crevices below. Powerful waves creep halfway up my perch and a drop of water occasionally splashes the page. My shoulders burn as the high noon sun hits them regardless of the direction I face. This magical peninsula of Baja is comprised of secluded white beaches bounded by jagged ranges and sparse cactus flats. Its beauty soothes frayed nerves and the waters of the Sea of Cortez cool hot bodies. Evenings boast a ceiling of stars, planets, the clearest Milky Way I've ever seen, and a refreshing breeze that caresses me as I sleep on the beach or on Egy's roof.

The eclipse... we hiked about an hour to a prime viewing spot where we could look down into the azure and turquoise waters of our crescent cove and out to the farthest ranges that darkened before the sky overhead did. With our viewing glasses, we were able to watch the moon gradually diminish the crescent of the sun, but the lighting didn't change perceptibly until only a sliver of the sun remained. Then, the 7 of us who perched on a just-big-enough rock (Todd, Zorra, Bambam, Jasmine, Chris, Jason and me) began to question whether the others noticed the changes we did. "These mountains are getting darker, aren't they?" "Do you hear the trills of the evening birds?" "Was that a cow mooing?" "The mountains are definitely getting darker, aren't they?" "What about the horizon over the ocean, it's like sunset, but not quite!" "The clouds on the horizon are glowing yellow, orange and pink." "The sky is definitely darkening." "Oooh --- I have tears in my eyes." Todd asks whether we mind that he take his clothes off. "Take your clothes off?!?! Good idea!!" Naked, we shiver in awe as the light goes out and we can look directly at the moon blocking all but the peripheral rays. The breeze is soft; the waves are still, the valley silent. Jupiter pops out, then Mars and Venus. Binoculars provide us each with a glimpse of red solar flares and cameras snap every which way. Moments of silence alternate with whoops of shared awe as totality continues and then ends with a strangely bright dawn. We grounded ourselves with delicate face painting enhanced by the Glitter Effect, WAD jamming, and a seven way smooching in which we discovered the impossibility of mass oral contact, then headed back to Egy, where most of the group imbibed Margaritas and a special sort of Koala Juice that kept them awake throughout the night. I declined with hopes of catching up on my reasoning and communication abilities and enjoyed an evening of long conversations, star gazing, gymnastics, and the feeling that I was dosed, too. – Svetlana

"Well it's time to write or jam, whatever Sam, jam and write, that's what's right,
inside of you and me."

"I think I see," said Round Brown Bear, "Inside of me, that's what you see, an apple sitting in a tree,
a tree of blue and pink, that's what I think, write and jam, that's where I am."

"Very good", said the Frog, sitting snugly upon a log, "that's what you see, that's what's right,
right for you, but not for me, for this is what I see, round and round, across her shoulders, a million
tons of rocks and boulders, she sits patiently, there and wondering, 'what's inside of me?'"

Round Bear laughed, that's what he did, "Seems to me, you've been with acid, for that is what he'd say
as well, sparkling through his wavy tail, 'come to me my mind, come to me my mind, come fly with me
and you will find, cooperation, reinforcement, power steering if you will, an easier way of bringing
thrill, to your own life, as you see it, not as others wished you see it, and to be there to help you to
remember.'"

Cast your dreams out in front of you, and live your way towards them. Allow them to change along the way,
and they will become more powerful than you imagined.

And an ice cold Budweiser doesn't hurt.