

Brushstrokes and Backpacks, a brief autobiography

By Dave Olson

My life and myself are defined by the exceptional moments, the flashes of clarity that may last a second or a day. A pleasant day of contentment or perilous adventure, overcoming fear or doing nothing but sitting/thinking/breathing in a place of beauty. Could even be a place of turmoil or even somewhere where I'm not quite sure where I am but are enjoying the ride nonetheless. Moments when the conscious, subconscious, the universe, the tangible surroundings and even any humans entering the scene (or not) seem to be washed into a harmonious watercolor.

These events, sounds, nonevents, glances, coincidences and snapshots of sorts that stick in the mind, sometimes recalling a story, or more often just a thought when you remember the best of someone or something that seems to make the wind stop for a second.

Was it a lesson? A badge earned? Just a happy memory with no long-term importance beyond an anecdotal tale saved to tell youngsters in later years? Did I see that in a movie? Was that really my life? How long ago was that now? Was that after the fall of the Soviet Union? Where was I then? What else was I

doing and how did it happen? Where did the time go and how come I still feel as though I've hardly started?

I know the creative process drives me, I'm happiest making projects, but what else makes me the hazy creature I catch glimpses of in the feng shui small mirror? Reverence for the written word to start, enthusiastic acceptance of anything that breaks the grip of caution and complacency, thirst for travel and new experience, perseverance and indifference to naysayers, inquisitiveness, rebellion, love of cultures and art. I appreciate the value of life and knowing that me and everything I see can, and will indeed at some point, change. I learned in the islands that when the wave comes, you paddle. If you paddle well, but not necessarily hard, but well, you ride the wave. That's often a moment of clarity.

Often I am disappointed in my era of history feeling like I should have been a Samurai poet penning haiku with Ishii and Basho or a Greek philosopher like Socrates on a hilltop extolling, "All human virtues increase and strengthen themselves by the practice and experience of them." Perhaps a Viking settler on Iceland going back to Norway telling folks it's lousy recommending they go to Greenland instead. Or a delegate to International symposiums on unknown topics and diplomatic missions to just discovered lands or a Couer du bois, man of the woods canoeing a patch work of rivers from Quebec to the Rockies.

The Pacific rim is my familiar home, the vast treescapes of Cascadia, the intricate, varied cultures of the near west (or far, far east if you prefer) and the stunning surprise of the thousands of Micronesian islands dotting the expanse of the equatorial ocean. I'll go anywhere once, though I prefer less guns and available toilet paper and clean water (though I have a filter).

I wonder, does the mind have a sense of depth perception of when things happened or do we just remember based on association of age and happenstance at the time? Like a birthday or world event. How much of memory compresses with time, mixed in stew with a lyric from a song, a phrase from a book, a chance meeting with a noteworthy person, whether known at the time or not?

My perception of my own life is akin to strolling through a museum, taking in each work, paintings, perhaps a few vases, wood carvings, an artifact from the past or a brand-new relic. I digest each piece, crunching and contemplating, look again, imaging the way it feels, perceive it from different angles, where did it come from and why did the artist make it? Imagine the artists face and hands and what they were thinking, feeling. What is the artist doing now? Having a beverage in a café somewhere? Working in a Chinese restaurant? Schmoozing with turtle-necked art critics? I can't help but wonder a question, imagine a story.

The perfect moments, shiny incidents, dazzling occurrences when your spine tingles, or pulse quickens, smile broadens and you thirst for more but not until you've savored the present moment of honest perception. At that moment when the stream of conscious has stopped and you are only conscious and of the world spinning around you. Not always perfect, sometimes feeling sad and alone, frustrated and upset, insignificant and insecure, arrogant and self-indulgent, sometimes melancholy is part of the game like rainy days and Mondays.

If I think about experiences too much, it is too easy to trivialize or underemphasize the significance, but as Popeye would say, "I yam what I yam." I try to trust my memory library, the shelf of the books each recounting a chunk of me, like Henry Miller's quasi-autobiography, "The Books in my Life."

I remember this feeling of chills in my spine as I eagerly, albeit timidly, walked into a darkened room and saw Tutankhmen's brilliantly golden and bejeweled burial mask. Or felt the same breathless contentment when kissing a new soon-to-be-you-think lover for the first time.

Like the final brushstrokes of a Van Gogh painting or the thick defining lines of a Matisse, these moments are the ones that form the image we remember as our life. The artist covers the stretched canvas with gesso, sketches in pencil, layers

paint, covers up, more layers, changes ideas, layers more until the final image evolves from the mind onto the very face of the canvas.

The bulk of life is occupied of the spaces in between the moments of clarity. The doldrums filled with toil, mundane repetition, routine, cautious optimism, regrettable events and indifferent errands. These everyday occurrences are the canvas that holds the paint which make create the perfect moments. Well maybe not *perfect* but moments of crystal clarity that never leave you. These moments are what define my life. Here are moments I recall, each a brushstroke making me.

Sitting in a machine operated 10th grade educational assembly line reading Henry David Thoreau say, "My aim simply is to live life deliberately." Wow and what is this civil disobedience of which he speaks? Must be interesting if the teacher won't answer my question. I mentally soaked in Walden, barely resisting shouldering my pack and axe and heading to a pond of my own.

Discovering *Catcher in the Rye*, only allowed to read it in class after getting a note from Mom. Stunned at the honesty and clarity with which it spoke to me.

Learning that Salinger lives his life as a recluse in New England, bursting his bubble only for lawsuits and one interview with a high school newspaper. I remembered these lawsuits when year later, I found a rare edition featuring his

picture at a bookstore created out of an old brick house. No I don't plan to sell it (though it *is* mint condition).

As a kid, staying up late helping Mom make sparkly, decorated candles she'd created, making as many as we could on work tables made from old doors and covered with shelf paper. Loaded up the station wagon early the next day to sell at the public markets and fairs next to quilts, lamb chops and tea kettle cozies. Mom was born in Belfast Ireland, as a wee baby getting on the last ship to America before the Nazi blitzkrieg rained down. I am more like my mom in personality than my Dad, we both love to travel and create projects. She's entrepreneurial and hard working. She is often brutally honest and most people are telling her their life story within 10 minutes of meeting her. But that's "all the David Copperfield crap I feel like going into" to paraphrase old Holden Caulfield.

I remember traipsing through Western Europe in free form exploration, trying to imagine finding the lands unexplored, all new and unique. Trying to keep my mind blank, before I headed out on my cheapest one-way flight I could find, I only read the 1972 hitchhikers guide to Europe. Sure, borders and politics were different then. In my backpack: crappy boots and 2 passports, wok, butane stove, journals, watercolors, pencils, brushes and no camera.

Waiting all morning along a autobahn entrance somewhere in amongst cornfields around Stuttgart, I finally get a ride in a brand-spanking new 6 speed Porsche 911

all the way to Oktoberfest in Munchen (Munich). Drink large steins served by strong-wristed women in large barns filled with wasted Australians singing rugby chants while the um-pah band plays drunken Rolling Stones on tuba.

Different from the fermented coconut tuba I drank in the “man’s lodge” in the village of Bechyl on the island of Yap. This lodge survived typhoons, fires and civilization for at least a few hundred years. The last two centuries haven’t really happened there yet but the new one is about to. All land is divided amongst family tribes and you are obliged to show respect and ask permission to be there. Speaking Japanese came in handy on account of the pre-WW2 occupation, I spoke with chief at length, he told me about navigating canoes thousands of miles by stars and currents, while eating plantains and parrotfish and chewing betelnut. Another new friend gave me a leatherback turtle shell as gift, I tried to explain why I must refuse. He doesn’t know endangered, he caught it for breakfast in front of his hut.

A little further south, Palau, finds a balance between maintaining traditional ways while absorbing select pieces of outside cultural and social influences from various countries. Standing strong to their belief by standing up to US, Taiwan, Russia in regards of over fishing and nuclear testing. I had a most excellent day with a new friend who was delivering mail to a live aboard dive boat, I hopped aboard his skiff and we headed out surfing, diving with sharks and vertigo from the visibility, spearfishing and eating giant clams on a private island. Flying

through German channel with coral poling out above the low tide. Danger and serenity.

Bouncing around Germany, I found out a friend's band "the Bad Yodelers" was touring round these parts. I track them down in Hanover or was it Frankfurt? Hook up with them and travel as a roadie doing really nothing but riding shotgun and seeing strange old churches, castles and bars. Hopping off one day like it never happened.

Bounding through the dark hills after the partying in a "disco" club in the basement of an olden building made from microwave oven sized stones, curving around in staircases and terraces, in a Citroen 2CV (to translate the French term of endearment "the ugly duckling"), 8 people, canvas top rolled back, windows folded over, dirt road, bottles of wine. Chatter in German and bits of English and Spanish, I smile and soak it in. Cold night atop an old castle, stumbling down old corridors, into dungeons, thinking of tongues being pulled out and hot oil being poured on terrified minions. Stones cut and moved in manners I cannot guess, likely done by unwilling labor though. Thought about this a lot in Europe, who built all this grand architecture? Certainly not the princes who lived in the castles or the priests who pontificated from the grand churches' pulpits. The bread, cheese and wine are fine so I get by and enjoy looking at houses where every 50 years or so they do a major improvement, plumbing, electricity, telephone. The charm remains in the countryside.

Feeling sick and alone but still hitching to nowhere while it was getting cold in October. Sleeping in haylofts and tents, gathering nuts and fruits and grains to eat. Bells ringing from old churches, likely uninterrupted for years. Winemakers' compounds, dark tasting rooms with rich cheeses and fragrant wines. Working in grape fields not knowing if I would get paid at the end of the season or would the shiny shoed officials arrive and send me to the gulag. Giant mash tubs and smiling Yugoslavian twins handing out cigarettes after cutting each row of grapes. Boss hands around schnapps when it is cold, sparkling reisling when the weather is just wet, but you can't pick when it is raining (dilutes the grapes).

Wandering the streets of modern NYC, somewhere between a less cynical Holden Caulfield with bongos and a misplaced Jack London, my Pacific spirit wide eyed and accepting of the chaos around me as I wandered midtown, downtown, up and down into strange nooks and alcoves, streets with famous names and roads where bourgeois apartments bordered by cardboards tenements. Surprisingly with less tension than I may have expected. Though when you enter with no preconceived notions, you are both more and less likely to be surprised.

Eating falafels at 3am at 23 hour restaurants. Running into David Letterman waiting for his ride to pull up, chatting a bit about baseball with the doorman. He liked the Dodgers, that year anyway. Participating in a Jewish Passover seder

with the guest list including a lesbian couple and their sperm donor with his boyfriend in tow. I was the “gentile” and conga drummed Elijah into the room, a rather inspired twist to the traditional Jewish folk songs I thought. Forgot to send a thank you note. Driving to Albany and Long Island and not getting into the Grateful Dead shows but having a good time with old friends and rolling up to Vermont, under covered bridges. Fall colors in the Berkshires, quaint towns instead of endless sprawl. Rock fences going on for miles.

Meeting the writer Edward Abbey after a reading in a Salt Lake City high school auditorium, where he recounted the days of Glen Canyon before the dam that made Lake Powell. Learning that this legendary defender of the red rock world of the four corners area, old-timey ranger of Arches, red-neck curmudgeon, dirty boot and flannel shirt wearing fly in the ointment, spent half the year in the plight-filled boroughs of NYC toiling as a social worker. “Resist much, obey little,” he says but practical enough to know that you have to work to make things better. He taught university writing in Tucson until his death, married to like his 5th wife, he was grizzled and smoking pipe, raising trouble with words as his tool. Spending a year in Arches with Abbey in his book *Desert Solitaire* taught me to look down, crawl, examine and savor the harshness and importance of the natural world which exists for it’s own sake, not ours.

Lining up to meet beat-poet and scholar of eastern ways, Gary Snyder and he knowing who I am, having seen my film *Hempden Road* I had taken the liberty to

mail him. Pulling out a copy of his "Passage to India," a rather unlikely volume. He enjoyed the gesture and signed a picture of him cross-legged in front of an entrance of a temple carved into a cliff wall. Looks a bit like me I thought.

The aforementioned film, *HempenRoad*, is a documentary road-trip about commercial cannabis industry in the NW. I had just arrived in Olympia from Guam, knew what hemp could do and was eager to do a big creative something. Met up with a filmmaking 'greener' from Japan who was nervous of hemp but liked experimental film. He knew how to digitally edit and had a grip of cameras and played along with my ramshackle road trip. I learned what producing meant, you arrange, organize and legitimize everything. Tended to releases, rights, contracts, finding crew, duplication, selling stuff. I set up a little tour at theaters, festivals and whatnot, did a little Q & A, met some nice folks, met international friends, sold some to librarians in Thailand, people in Norway, Arkansas and points between. The selling, marketing, distribution part is the hardest, making the foldout cover was maybe the funnest. Someone in Tennessee hated it so much they sent it back, another from Illinois wrote to me saying he watched it 30+ times and it gets better each time. Not bad. I want to make Part 2 in Europe. Part 3 in Japan.

Speaking of hemp in Japan, when I realized no information was published on the topic, I started digging through my notes, scrapbooks and noggin and wrote a ten thousand word research article with a new theory and supporting evidence,

yadda yadda yadda. Anyhow, a book called Hemp Horizons excerpted the article, Cannabis Culture magazine published a long version in gleaming color, and the scientific journal of the International Hemp Association from the Netherlands. About as smiling as I get is when the first issue arrives in the mailbox. I really like that feeling - hard creative work paying off, art and commerce melding into a lovely helix for a moment. Led to a web site and a whole groundswell of activist awareness in Japan.

I had learned most of what I knew on the topic from staying up in the hills of Nagano inadvertently with a broken van. Ended up learning about rice harvesting, mushroom picking and the old ways of Japan with big city refugees squatting in patched up farm houses, making drums, wine and miso with Japanese zeal.

Protesting and bearing witness to clearcutting of old growth forests at Clayoquot sound got me to thinking of alternatives which benefit everybody loggers, consumers, environment, paper users, this led me to hemp.

Living in Japan the first tour found me toiling as an indentured servant of sorts doing the grunt work at a enoki (tall, thin, white mushroom) factory. Each day, all day, following the endless racks of fungi through insulated rooms rangin in temperature from unbearably hot and humid to almost unbearable cold, rolling racks, lifting trays, driving frontloader, lifting rocks and sawdust, learning strange,

specialized machine. Listening to the a\$\$hole boss yell at me constantly. Tried to put it aside and notice everything new; beer machines, emphasis on restraint, refined aesthetics, hot springs, decadent and debaucherous while shy and conservative. Stores all closed around New year's holiday (I forgot to stock up on food and fuel before hand), snowy. About that job, as Bruce Cockburn sings, "Sometimes you have to kick through the darkness til it bleeds daylight." I borrowed a bike, threw it the back of my miniature work truck and drove into the hills to tell the boss my grievances. He freaked out and I headed off the long road down, alone in a foreign country but as free as I could be at that moment.

Living in Japan was something like camping with kerosene heaters, sleeping on the floor, rolling up sleeping mat, heating hot water, toilet rather primitive. Public baths are excellent and thrill me with endless hot water and "barbershop" social atmosphere. Shinto temples curious, explored some of the pilgrim's path, 88 sacred sites around the island of Shikoku. Pilgrims where white robes and bells on their sticks. Drinking cloudy sake under cherry blossom tree with gold toothed neighbor. Gas man comes to collect and doesn't acknowledge my not understanding him at all. Takes money and leaves me bewildered.

Living in my '74 VW bus out back a bicycle and lawnmower shop in Vancouver's bedroom, Burnaby where I worked in the morning tuning mountain bikes, returning to my familiar confines at the end of the day. I'll never forget the smell of making tea and reading while the rain beat down on the fiberglass dome.

Saving money for studies at the University while I listened to the working waters of the Burrard inlet bang drift timbers into the industrialized shore.

Heading back down to University of Utah for another few quarters of standing in lines, filling out forms, checking boxes and listening to failed writers drone on sarcastically about creative writing and me teaching word processing classes which I had no idea about. Enjoyed pre-celebrity Sundance film festival and writing workshops though not my favorite time, wishing I could just enjoy school.

But I knew when to leave and I did, headed out on a lost summer of concerts, camping, roadside breakdowns and cycling an assortment of characters through the back of the van through hot summer stretches across Nevada en route to northern California. Being run out of fields, beaches and forests by rangers, police and other gun wielding wingnuts. Reading Hesse's Siddhartha in a small town park with statues and plaques, cooking noodles and eating fish from a coal fire.

I preferred a community college I did some time at, lots of variety and learned bits of lots of "olgy"s; Geology class walked across the Grand Canyon where there is a bar at the bottom, Astronomy, Archeology, Geography, loved all that stuff, bits and pieces of enjoyable knowledge. Learned about creative writing as an art and skill. Stirred up trouble by starting a student club "the Long Hairs club" collecting money to party with school funds.

Working at horrible Telephone survey jobs bothering decent folks with inane questions for corrupt politicians gauging fall-out for a scandal or plotting public opinion strategy. My dislike of telephones persists. As does my disdain of temporary labor jobs, I've had an unfortunate variety of lame ones. The one as a surveyor's assistant was cool, filling boxes with tea bags and mislabeling them as some magic health crap was really bad.

In those days, my brother Bob (18 months older and a bit more handsome) and I climbed many of the local Wasatch mountains, went to the Great basin and summited mighty Wheeler Peak, standing in the cold sun above the clouds nothing but the snowy peak and sky and us. One of those moments, I think I could see the earth stop spinning from the vantage point.

These were also the mountain biking days, adventures into remote corners of red rock country, four corners, seeing the small towns, ghost towns, hot springs, stars spread like sand in dark canyons, learning the politics of water and federal land designation, guns and hunting - red necks, miners, polygamists and learning to drive stick shift in Ron's truck. Falling asleep in the sand in a tucked away in a arroyo in Capitol Reef under a canopy of stars looking like a spaghetti colander, after a long, lovely day of riding hard along the Burr Trail (now paved), thinking about old settlers running cows and wagons along the same steps and switchbacks. The world was still and so was my mind.

Exploring this same general region with my former traveling salesman, globe trotting, slightly scheming maternal Grandpa. Rolling through the four corners area and down into Mexico, entering with school ID and his 10 year old letter from a likely disposed federal minister he golfed with once. He sleeps in the backseat, smokes with the windows up and speaks bad Spanish, flirts with waitresses. I buy a shell necklace for a girl back home. More Mexico trips followed in later days; in the VW bus with friends, drinking and whooping it up in Baja or Christmas with my mom in Puerto Vallarta watching the folks heading to mass, children with new toys.

Watching so much thunder and lightening in Miami that I thought the ocean would catch fire while reading about old nutty Zorba the Greek, living and loving in the moment - hard for me to do caught in this violent and sketchy city, I wanted to leave. Left in a drive-away car, encountering dangerous passage through the southern states, cops, mosquitos, stolen cars, angry owners, the beaches of Alabama were crunchy. Reminded me a bit of the dunes of South Carolina without the dune grasses and crabs, well really nothing much the same except for collard greens and grits at the restaurants. South Carolina was on a hitch hike back and forth from Providence R.I. the long way, crashing at expensive artsy colleges and writing research papers for a fee for partying rich kids who had no idea how good they had it. Ethical? Borderline for sure, but a guy need a sandwich now and then.

Driving home from the old Pacific Coliseum after a Canucks' game with my Dad, windshield wipers sweeping poorly, he telling me about cold winters growing up in Regina, Saskatchewan. The vast Canadian prairie that I don't remember though I was born in Saskatoon in 1970 and have a natural affinity which Japanese may call furosato or longing for hometown, plus I just like spelling it. His dad died while he was young, car crash on a winter night. I imagine Grandpa Olson and his friends bouncing down a rutty road in a borrowed farm jalopy, then, screeches and blood. He had stowed away on a ship bound from Norway to Nova Scotia or somewhere, leaving behind his rather well-to-do family who went years not knowing what had become of him. My Dad raised himself much in poolhalls of the town. Made his way to university and onto a doctorate in Eugene in Recreation and Leisure, don't think they offer those anymore. Grandpa Olson is buried there in Regina, my brother finally found his grave last summer, James is 5 years younger than me, hardworking to the point of manic, thoughtful and nutty.

A brief stint in Lansing Michigan is where I remember my first thoughts, hunkered in the basement easting macaroni and cheese during a tornado, sitting in a big screened-in porch eating birthday cake with my glasses on.

Yeah since I can remember, I've had a crush on the city of Vancouver, taking buses to nowhere and long wanders through districts and neighborhoods day

dreaming and wondering. Escaping my strip mall, subdivision junior high suburb home, heading downtown to see concerts, record shops, book stores, running errands for bus money and trying to get lost. Vancouver always surprises me. My suburb was little India and I imagine taught me tolerance on account of all the turbans and dumptrucks.

Driving back and forth between Mom in Utah and Dad in BC for holidays in snowstorms, bus catching fire at 3am in Prosser Washington, Snoqualmie pass closed, camping in church parking lot in Ellensburg. Always seemed to be a challenge that made me more durable. The worst though was crashing a Blazer truck with 3 brothers aboard, sleeping through the Idaho dawn, black ice, bleary-eyed me haven driven through a mountain snowstorm, rolled 4+ times across the freeway. 'Twas the day before Christmas. The last memories left are of a hospital with nice nuns and nurses and nightmares for months. Life can end quickly, try not to blink.

I suppose most of my heroes never made a lot of money, well some did I suppose, the timeless troubadour Gordon Lightfoot. But Mozart, Van Gogh, didn't, too busy making art. Those guys had the punk rock sensibility, not that blue mohawk haircut, spiky dog collar punk, but the making what we want, how we want and not selling out, sometimes making a social statement, sometimes just having fun but doing it with all the skill you got. The Ramones didn't have Mozart skills but they laid it all out, bubblegum pop under thick layers of loud

three chords. Vancouverites, DOA been playing since I was sneaking into their shows at 13 years old or thereabouts. When they were through Olympia, I sang Taking Care of Business on stage and they stayed at my house, tidied up after themselves even. Heck they are 40-ish, have families and loving what they are doing. This makes me smile, not just about what they do, but how they do it.

The night when the two Taos Pueblo men interrupted my enchanted New Mexico night, pistols drawn. Coaxed by cold steel, I steered my hi-jacked bus into the dark grove of piyon pine and gnarly desert juniper. Down a long river wash, running over sage and likely groundhogs, up a steep bank which I had to smash and grind gears to climb. Arriving at their house for mayhem with large automatic weapons, it was the first time I had a bayonet in my mouth or been shot at.

When I suppose, I retrospect he was intentionally shooting *past* me but it is hard to gauge as the thick rounds fired rapidly in my direction, pelting well-dented roadsigns and the sandy cliff. Rocks slid down in small rivers and the dull ring of the signs seemed to take minutes to quiet. After bringing blue enameled plate with four fresh raw trout to the table, apparently to examine for a spell, and turning native chants on the loud, modern hi-fi, they took us back to the van and left us be. Should I run for it? Risk being hunted down like a slow elk stumbling and jolting across the dark, unknown landscape? Was this a trap, a trick, a tease? In this moment I had nothing to think about aside from being calm and aware and alive.

Elementary school at Prince Charles in Surrey BC, spending lunch hour imagining myself as a long haul trucker, criss-crossing the US, Kentucky, Maine, to the Redwood forests with one of those camper attachments on my Kenworth. Probably wearing a puffy vest and cap. Hours in the library (I got extra credit for serving as a library aide, don't know what that extra credit ever counted towards though), poring over maps of Europe, reading the illustrated exploits of Belgian reporter Tin Tin, Asterix and Obelix resisting the Romans, Curious George, the Hobbit and anything with piglets. Books were to be cared for and prized like secrets for the world. Made science fair projects with little scientific value but very good presentations and props. Ran and ran cross country for school because running is a good sport for wee fellas with good lungs, I enjoyed it and no one much else was on the team.

Summers building outdoor habitats for a family of guinea pigs I had named for the Flintstones and Sex Pistols, Family vacations, the smell of air-conditioning, Barry Manilow singing Copacabana and seeing Star Wars on my seventh birthday after which the usher announced that Elvis Presley had died.

Daydreaming in a musty canvas backyard tent, reading books about Nepal and Tibet, climbing Mt. Everest or the more dangerous K2, imagining trekking through villages smelling like goat milk tea. Bringing little bars of hotel soap to the people, bringing the gift of hygiene like the man bringing ice to the hardscrabble Mexican village in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "One Hundred Years of Solitude." A

book so artfully crafted, spanning so many lives in such vivid dusty sparceness that I can still taste it. Stomping through the woods, building tree houses and exploring old burnt houses in the fields, walking home from school kicking pop cans and catching snakes.

In the junior high days I played in a drum corps, escaping for a summer tour for 2 months on a haggard double-decker coach with dozens of youngsters bound for amusement and water parks and competitions we didn't care much if we won. Most of us cared more about cute girls. Aside from the drumming and coming together as a line, I recollect buying skateboards and records in San Francisco and Santa Cruz, Milwaukee liberalism (of my goodness, gay fellas), horseflies in Montana and a freak Wyoming windstorm while we were on the field inspiring the summer's best performance. You gotta play through it.

Sitting on a well-worn and shaky dock on Caye Caulker with the Belize breeze and a panty ripper (pineapple juice and local coconut rum), escaping imperialist policy from new corporation. Grinning, while immersing my toes in the clear Caribbean water and soaking my soul in the resilient island culture, rebuilding after a hurricane, a community that didn't necessarily like each other but survived together. On the dock and in my shanty cabin with ceiling fan and lock, I pored through Tolstoy's "War and Peace," learning to use patience and time as my allies. Upon my return my ruse against the "boss" man had worked as he capitulated his demand for me to submit to a non-policy urinalysis (the only

sample he was getting was on his shoe) due to accusations from an unnamed accuser. A well-placed letter from an attorney, a bit of rule bending and a carefully orchestrated exit and my patience had succeeded in protecting my employment and personal ethics from unwarranted search.

Driving across Iowa working through plastic crates of beer en route to reconnaissance fancy east coast colleges with some hyper guy selling t-shirts. Soured at the myth and the stench of inequality of New Haven, corruptness of exclusive higher education tormented my thoughts of fairness and opportunity. Just as well, I wouldn't want to live there anyway. Reading Kerouac's Dharma Bums as we rolled towards Connecticut or Memphis, feeling like I was rolling with Neal Cassidy across some expanse of dark country, not much concerned about where I was bound. Realized I already was riding along. Pass a beer Jack. Cheers.

Narrated marine life tours on Guam aboard the SS Neptune, like Disneyland only the tour is real and over and over again. Co-workers were either reckless locals looking to score while they can or salty old sailor types using their credentials and cashing in. Learned to scuba dive and played for the tourists a time or two, hopping underwater and bringing starfish and sea cucumbers to the portholes to see. Got to feeling like a free agent and negotiating for more cash to put up with the hassle, no go so I gave the boss 2 weeks notice the morning he headed out to Australia for 2 weeks.

After a high school teaching job and another aborted university venture broke my heart when I become a department of education budget cut, I landed at a private beach club. Sort of a club host, entertainer, tour guide, conversationalist, making sure the guests were comfy and having fun. Mostly tried to survive in a tumultuous work environment, chaotically managed by a consortium of extended families all out to get advantage over each other. This extended family also owned the liquor and cigarette distributor for all the outside islands, which made me feel like part of the problem of corrupting indigenous folk with “civilized” poisons. Left one morning and never returned. Sometimes I miss running around on the beach and goofing off late at night on 4 wheelers and surfboards though.

Made a business selling juggling sticks, hemp wallets and bags and did some radio and TV interviews and appearances to promote products and hemp in general. Just to try starting a business.

Jerry Garcia died, I learned about the Internet, decided time to finish degree so set course for Olympia.

School was back-burned when I started Internet Adventures, a training and design firm. Flaky partner leaving required re-structuring and helped me realize the importance of contracts and binding agreements. Spent the days managing

and motivating interns, employees and contractors with almost no budget and difficult tasks, long nights -- oh my goodness it is 11:30, better walk home 2 blocks to crappy, dark duplex. Hard life starting a business without a safety net. Constantly changing business focus to adapt to rapidly growing industry and available human resources, teaching and development. Started doing more consulting and custom group classes to build relationships and gain experience at dealing with nerves and presenting "on foreign turf". Became adept at facilitating and planning once I realized success on challenging projects. Also learned organizational skills are key, as is forming relationships with experts (accountants, corporation divisions, EDC), but don't waste time with cheesy handshaking like Chamber of Commerce and Rotary unless you need to.

Merged Internet Adventures with OlyWa.net. I had met OlyWa's (hi Jay) founders on my first day in Olympia at Super Saturday and made friends.

I don't feel like dwelling on the next couple years, still too recent. Short version: rode the Internet roller coaster better than most, learned plenty about marketing, negotiations, contracts and strategic planning through the wild days of the industry. Merged with bigger company run by fools best explained by watching the movie Office Space. I prefer to think about a few other things I love.

Love friends from foreign lands coming to stay, (perhaps karmic repayment for couch surfing on past trips).

Loved a most perfect day, arriving by train in Jasper, driving the Columbia parkway like to Banff with Lisa, smooching and hiking, driving and smiling for photos. The company was sold, she had just graduated, the trip was paid for and just beginning. The weather perfect, the drive stunning, the company exquisite.

Loved seeing a muscular cougar sitting in our campfire circle while backpacking as a boy scout, heart stopped, nothing to do but be.

Love believing in Sasquatch since I have no proof otherwise.

Love the Canucks (hockey team), the constant in my world, always there and allows me to escape whatever realities could my world, the furious gracefulness and dazzling coordination of individual skills and team anticipation of hockey please me greatly.

Love seeing things for the first time, the ambiguity of going to another country, the anxiety of packing, traveling by train, people being excited to meet you.

Love new words, books arranged on a heavy shelf, blank journals and water color pencils.

Love that my brother Andy (#5/5, 8 years younger) is bound for China to teach English for a stretch. Makes me feel like I had a bit of influence on him.

Loved spending a summer in Toronto doing a window cleaning business and selling furnace cleaning packages by phone when it was 100 damn degrees out. I didn't love that part, just loved finding out that Toronto is not as cool as Vancouver.

Love being snowed-in in a solid cabin complete with firewood and fresh food and drink. Wood fired hot tub even better.

Love the feeling when a plan comes together better than expected like walking out on stage at a club in Salt Lake City, playing with a new band called Spot, and seeing a large crowd cheering though I reckoned there would be only a dozen folks there when I hung up flyers last week. Playing, feeding from their energy and soaking in the moment.

Loved hearing Jerry Garcia lilt and weep his way through Louis Armstrong's What Wonderful World in Hampton Virginia after a long day of hopping rides with a scraggly haired amigo of convenience, arriving soaked, hungry and happy. Scoring a kicked down ticket in a minute having no idea where I was bound afterwards, just enjoying Jerry reinventing "I Shall be Released" knowing the night didn't matter just yet.

Loved finally seeing Dylan play a decent show after seeing too many un-spirited, indifferent performances after being so much anticipation and disappointment.

Loved an incredible day at the Olympics in SLC with my brother Dan (3 years younger and twice my size), starting in an impossibly cold predawn hiking up to see ski jumping. Thin men in strange puffy suits doing a sort of controlled aerodynamic fall down the face of a mountain and finishing with a artistic landing and momentum-thwarting stop. Following it up with two world class hockey games with decent local brew and the feeling of being in the center of world, surrounded by excellence, smiling folks getting along and finding something in common despite differences in language, culture, politics and other inconsequential excuses.

Love creating a new project, the whole creative process from idea to implementation.

Love thinking about what next, maybe law school at UBC, doing something about international business, mediation, contract law, entertainment law, read, write, travel, create. Another film or six, several more countries and a book(s) that encourages someone think more about doing nothing but thinking.