

Whither Are You Going?

The Literary Club

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Southwestern Idaho is a desert, the Owyhee Desert to be precise. Unlike the Sahara, the Owyhee is not the sort of desert with shifting sand dunes, populated by roving bands of camel riding nomads. Rather, it is a flat, rocky terrain devoid of much in the way of flora, fauna, and most importantly to me, someone to give me a ride.

I had determined a little more than a week earlier that the quickest path for me southeastward was to venture into the no man's land I now occupied. Being young and naive is one thing, but being young, naive, long haired, bearded, and in the wrong place at any time equals one thing when hitch hiking: very few rides. This is where I found myself in September of 1980 sitting on my backpack underneath an overpass on Interstate 84 between Mountain Home and Twin Falls, Idaho. It had been more than a day since my last ride.

The previous day, I sat shaded by an overpass where I had slept the night, calm about my circumstances since finding rides had been relatively easy most of the way from Seattle. I decided to do some walking, seeing another overpass in the distance. I figured that the worst case would be a good hour or so of steady walking to the next shaded sanctuary. In addition, I thought that the sight of a walking hitchhiker, as opposed to the more common sedentary sort, would give the impression of a go-getter, a self starter, a person who deserved the beneficence of all passersby, someone who would be so intriguing to the general driving populace as to render them powerless to ignore my beckoning thumb. That fantasy remained unfulfilled. The walk to the next underpass proved to be no mere midday jaunt. It took me most of the afternoon. I decided to stay there for the evening as the sun dropped quickly behind me. Many interstate bridges have a slope of concrete from the lower roadway up to the point where the bridge connects to the upper roadway. At the uppermost point, there is usually a flat area about 3-4 feet in width. I slept uneasily and intermittently, eyes and ears at the ready to discern the sound or outline of mice or snakes. The next morning I awoke, ate a small breakfast and began another day's trek eastward. Upon reaching the next overpass, some four hours later, I sat, ate again and wondered if I would be in for another night under yet another bridge. The afternoon passed uneventfully, every driver gazing past my implorations. It had been a good fifteen or twenty minutes since the last car had passed when the diving sun silhouetted a large car in the distance.

The kinetic energy of a raging Impala, a 1972 four door maroon Chevrolet Impala that is, quickly translates into fear within the soul of the intended victim, which happened to be me. Normally one wouldn't think of an Impala as an aggressive beast. Leave it to humans to re-purpose the graceful bounding image of the Impala in nature into a two ton steel spined warhorse, eighteen feet long, with eight cylinders of carbon combustion spinning wildly when coaxed by a leaden foot. There it came at me, wheels locked into skidding

immobility, dust and sand billowing as it lurched from the pavement of the interstate onto the shoulder where I sat as immobile as the non-rotation of my attacker's wheels. I winced in anticipation of the soon to be felt instantaneous transference of energy from the body of steel to my witheringly outstretched arms. The expected did not happen. No energy was transferred to me. The good earth had absorbed just enough of the beast's fury to save my frightened, and at that point, fragile psyche.

The massive passenger door lay open. "Hurry up. We got 30 miles to go and 30 minutes to get there," growled the beast concealed within the cloud of dust. I gathered my backpack and my composure and headed into the maelstrom. I placed my backpack in the spacious rear seat and entered the passenger door to see a tightly stretched cheap blue polyester motel blanket covering the front bench seats. Between the driver and me were two small mottled dogs. The closest dog looked like an Australian dingo combined with a toy poodle. It cowered and twitched, nervous and hyper, obviously a prior victim of the maroon land beast. Next to it was a dirt and feces caked animal resembling a Jack Russell mix, surprisingly more serene than the dingo-poodle, perhaps resigned to his captivity. The driver punched the accelerator full stop and we peeled out from the shoulder onto the interstate. The dogs jerked about and were met by the driver's multiple swats to each of them. "Settle down you little shits," he said as he smiled and stretched out his hand towards me. "I'm Joe," he said. "Tom," I said as I shook his hand. "Where are we headed?" I asked. "We gotta get to the liquor store in Wendell. It closes in half an hour," he replied.

This was the only time in all of my rides that the driver told me where I was going. Usually every ride begins with the driver asking, "Where are you going?" Often follows the question "where are you from?" These are the foundational questions that most drivers use to create a reassuring commonality between driver and hitchhiker.

At this point, I should back up a bit to explain what led me to this place at this moment.

During the last weeks of the preceding spring, I arrived at the decision that I would be better off not returning to college in the fall for my sophomore year. This amicable divorce was the result of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, colloquially known as LSD or acid.

Dr. Albert Hofmann, a Swiss chemist working for the pharmaceutical firm Sandoz in Basel, first synthesized LSD in late 1938. It was not until five years later, in 1943, that the psychedelic effects of LSD were discovered. While synthesizing a sample of the drug, Dr. Hofmann unintentionally exposed himself to a small amount of the compound through his fingertips. The result was a slight disorientation accompanied by moving visual patterns when he closed his eyes. Three days later on April 19, Hofmann intentionally ingested LSD to more thoroughly explore the effects of the drug. Hofmann's dosage was 250 micrograms, or 250 millionths of a gram, roughly equivalent to one-tenth the mass of a grain of sand. Within an hour, Hofmann experienced a significant change in perception, enough for him to ask a lab assistant to escort him home. Because of wartime prohibitions on automobile use, the two headed out on bicycles. During the ride,

Hofmann experienced a rapid and anxious deterioration of cognitive perception, resulting in Hofmann believing that his next-door neighbor was a sinister witch. Upon arrival, Hofmann's fear, anxiety and paranoia gradually gave way to a flood of positive emotional and mental states. As described by Hofmann:

“... little by little I could begin to enjoy the unprecedented colors and plays of shapes that persisted behind my closed eyes. Kaleidoscopic, fantastic images surged in on me, alternating, variegated, opening and then closing themselves in circles and spirals, exploding in colored fountains, rearranging and hybridizing themselves in constant flux ...”

In spite of the visual hallucinatory attributes of an LSD trip, Hoffman thought that the initial disorientation and the intense introspection of the drug would limit its recreational appeal. He did, however, believe that it could be successfully employed as a clinical drug for use in Psychiatry. Clinical experiments into the drug's usefulness began in the late 1940's and continued into the 1960's. During this period, LSD was employed as an augmentation of psychotherapy. However, over time, the drug's efficacy in clinical applications became questionable.

The CIA had ideas of its own for LSD. On April 13, 1953 CIA Director Allen Dulles initiated project MKUltra, a top secret program designed to develop mind control drugs to be used against communist agents. The hope for LSD was that the intense disorienting initial effects would lead subjects to alter their loyalties or loosen their lips when interrogated or tortured. To this end, the CIA spent over \$80 million, inflation adjusted, during the course of the program that officially ended in 1973. Most subjects of the experimentation were unaware of their participation. The primary subjects of the experiments were mental patients, prostitutes, drug addicts, and prisoners. Those subjects who were restricted in their movements, mental patients and prisoners, were given LSD and then held in interrogation-like settings with bright lights focused on them. In one extreme case, a mental patient was given LSD for 174 days in a row.

In the mid 1950's through the early 1960's, MKUltra director Sidney Gottlieb established a sub project code-named “Operation Midnight Climax”. The program operated brothels in San Francisco, Marin, and New York in which female CIA operatives would entice clients into the safe-house brothel where they would be surreptitiously dosed with LSD. Using one-way mirrors, CIA doctors observed the subjects and later aggressively interrogated them to determine if LSD would be a useful agent in sexual blackmail.

Curious about reactions to LSD in non-controlled environments, the CIA clandestinely dosed its own employees, military personnel and the general populace to observe their reaction to the drug in everyday settings. In addition to the secret experiments, dozens of U.S. and Canadian universities, along with a number of pharmaceutical companies, participated in MKUltra. These programs involved soliciting paid volunteers to ingest various hallucinatory substances such as LSD, mescaline, and psilocybin. At Stanford University, Ken Kesey, author of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and Robert Hunter, a guitarist with the psychedelic rock group The Grateful Dead were introduced to LSD.

Kesey began holding parties at his farm near San Francisco in which he would provide LSD to attendees who experienced a setting of psychedelic music and lighting. He referred to these gatherings as "acid tests." In 1963 Kesey and his cohorts, the self named Merry Pranksters, traveled across the country to New York in a converted school bus christened "Further", preaching the benefits of the psychedelic lifestyle. The driver on this initial voyage was beat generation writer and inspiration for the character Dean Moriarty in Jack Kerouac's "On The Road" Neal Cassady.

My first LSD trip took place during the summer prior to my senior year in high school. A friend of mine and I took the drug in the early evening in a woods near his house. After about forty minutes, I began to feel a slight confusion that quickly grew more pronounced. The intensity of the effect increased dramatically like a jet or rocket engine revving up to full throttle. Even though we were in a quiet, serene glade, the noise was deafening. I heard every sound of every breeze, insect, and rustling of the forest floor. We walked along a creek that appeared simultaneously to be swift and static. I crouched down to inspect an eddy where a leaf was trapped by the current. The visual definition of the boundary between the water and the connecting soil was like infinitely zooming into a Mandelbrot fractal image. I turned to my friend hoping he might explain what I was seeing. I wanted to speak, but no words came forth. I was literally speechless. A few guttural emanations ensued to which my friend replied, "I know." Night had fallen and we headed back to his house to play our guitars. As we stumbled through the woods, we came upon a break in the canopy of trees. I looked up. We were far enough away from the light pollution of downtown and the suburbs to be given a clear view. The revealed quantity of stars overwhelmed me. Not since I was a five year old, walking with my father on a remote beach when he pointed out how many stars there were to see, had I been so profoundly moved by the sight of the night sky. I sat down in awe. The universe exposed itself unabashedly. Sitting on the smallest of islands in a boundless sea, I saw an unencumbered perception of the infinite. I had been introduced to *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

Many people report this perception as being a religious experience. In my case, as I was not religious, I used the drug to explore the nature of my mind when liberated from the encumbrance of linguistic constraint. LSD breaks down the ego to the point of selflessness. It estranges one from the familiar. It allows one to see the quintessential sameness of all things. At one point in time, the acronym LSD was jokingly used as shorthand for "legalize spiritual discovery." Dr. Hoffman, before he died at the age of 102 referred to LSD as "medicine for the soul."

The intense initial effects of the drug, however, can be very frightening. All of one's assumptions begin to unravel, replaced by a chaotic soup of existential uncertainties. If one is in an ill humour at the beginning of a trip, it can be a long and challenging experience. LSD has the ability to expose hypocrisy, both internal and external, to the extent that one questions the assumptions of one's life. When starting a trip with serious doubts about any given subject, that doubt will surface and become the primary focus of one's thoughts. The challenge in this situation is to navigate oneself through the rapids of

fear, anxiety and paranoia towards a positive mental state. If unsuccessful, one experiences what is referred to as a bad trip. Surroundings, initial mental state, other participants, or a combination of those factors usually determines the cause of such an experience. I have had a number of bad trips and can attest to their intensity. Bad trips aside, the benefit of the experience is significant. Apple founder Steve Jobs said of LSD "Taking LSD was a profound experience, one of the most important things in my life. LSD shows you that there's another side to the coin..."

LSD had fostered a desire in me to discover what lay outside of the comfortable existence I had enjoyed. I decided to go on the road. I wanted to travel alone, to find what the world was like on a one to one basis, to open endedly travel with no specific goal or destination.

As I had limited experience in hiking and camping, I thought it advisable to gain additional training through NOLS, the National Outdoor Leadership School, an organization founded in 1965 by Paul Petzoldt, a noted mountaineer and member of the U.S Army's 10th Mountain Division. NOLS had a rigorous curriculum including backpacking, foraging, cooking, navigational skills, and mountaineering.

To finance my travels I sold my 1967 Volkswagen bus for \$800. Of that amount I separated an escape fund of \$120 as that amount in 1980 could buy a one way plane ticket almost anywhere in the country. With cash in hand, I headed to Seattle where a NOLS van transported me to their facility in Conway, Washington. After I signed multiple release forms and received a quick examination by medical staff, I headed to the outfitting area. The other students had arrived and we geared up. In my thirty-day expedition were two instructors and six students. Each of our packs weighed in at over 70 lbs, a substantial weight for me, as I only weighed 125 pounds at the time. We traveled into the North Cascades where we trekked through old growth forests while learning some basic foraging skills. After a few days we emerged above the alpine tree line and headed toward the summit of Mt. Baker, a 10,780 ft. glaciated volcano peak. Even though I learned a great deal on the expedition, it felt more like a death march than a school. Fortunately, after 30 days in the mountains, it came to a less than fatal end.

After buying a few pieces of gear needed for hitch hiking, I headed toward the only motel in the village of Conway, a 1950's vintage roadside motel that was more than a little reminiscent of Norman Bates' motel in the movie "Psycho" save the Victorian mansion on the hill. Although I had a limited amount of cash, the luxury of a bed for a night seemed reasonable. I paid the clerk and then walked the short distance to my room. The door gave way to a musty assemblage of worn furniture, a bolted down television set and carpet that was quickly earning the right to be called threadbare. Having planted the reference to the movie "Psycho" in my own mind, I cautiously searched my room and verified that the door connecting my room to the next was securely locked. After reassuring myself that I was safe from a lurking serial killer, I enthusiastically attempted to use all of the hot water that the motel possessed.

The obvious follow up to a refreshing and reenergizing shower was a good meal. I made my way to the restaurant next to the motel. The matronly waitress offered me a seat by

the window. Although I was self-conscious of my hippie-ness in the midst of the family style setting of rural Washington, I was not to be daunted in my happiness to have a decent meal after weeks of less than satisfying fare in the mountains. It was not that the expedition's food was bad, but rather that the only things we ate were grains, dried fruits and beans augmented not by bits of animal protein, but by dried spices. Regardless of what tasty offerings might be on the menu, I knew before I entered the establishment that I would order a steak. I settled on a New York strip steak with mashed potatoes and green beans. My question of whether the mashed potatoes were homemade or instant was met with an indignation that could only be the result of being insulted by a longhaired transient. The waitress derisively retorted that everything was made by hand. My medium rare steak soon arrived surrounded by steaming beans and potatoes. The steak was perfectly prepared and draped in a white wine butter sauce. The plate survived my quick cutlery attack. My food did not.

Suddenly, the error of my ways became painfully obvious. After weeks of eating a vegetarian diet, I unwittingly set in motion a digestive war that would very soon necessitate a visit to the lavatory. I quickly paid the bill and trotted back to my room where the war in my stomach ended less than valiantly. At the conclusion of my digestive tract conflagration, I fell into a comfortable and welcomed sleep, filled with anticipation of the adventure beginning the next morning.

I was anxious as I walked to the road to begin my journey. I was also a little afraid. Although my itinerary was open, I planned to make my way to Boulder, Colorado, the hippie Mecca, to visit a close friend of mine who was attending the University of Colorado. I set my backpack on the ground and waited. It took a few minutes before a car appeared. My anxiety subsided as soon as I stuck my thumb out for the first time. Although the first car did not stop to give me a ride, the warm morning sun was refreshingly calming

After a few more cars passed, one stopped. This was it: my first ride! I could see that the driver of the Type 3 VW Squareback wagon was a very attractive woman in her twenties. I would be remiss if I did not mention that the thought of my first ride, being from a beautiful woman, taking a turn towards the romantic side did in fact enter my mind. The sight of a toddler in the back seat broke my reverie. The possibility, that she would take me back to her cabin where we would live off of the land as mutually perfect mates, evaporated.

"Where are you headed?" she asked. "Seattle," I responded. I placed my backpack in the rear seat next to the drooling and gurgling child. After traveling no more than a mile, she popped the question, but not THE question that could end in a blissful fantasy cabin entanglement. "Do you have any weed?" she asked. "No I don't." I answered, disappointed that she had stereotyped me as a drug-carrying hippie AND that she was looking for drugs while she had a child to care for. The worst part about it was that the ride lasted about sixty seconds after I admitted I had no drugs. This was my first lesson of the road: people want something when they pick you up.

After spending a few days in Seattle taking in the sights including a 54-year-old Chuck Berry hopping across a stage, I obtained a ride from a man in his thirties. We discovered that we both played guitar and had similar musical tastes. After an hour of pleasant conversation, he asked if I had a place to stay. I replied that I did not. He offered me the opportunity to stay at his house with his wife and child. He assured me that it was a legitimate offer with no ulterior motives, adding that a guitar-playing friend planned to come to his house after dinner for a short jam session. Trusting my instincts, I accepted his offer.

We arrived at his unremarkable two story house in a suburb of the small city of Longview, WA near the border with Oregon. We entered the kitchen where his wife, a short plump figure topped by ruddy cheeks and a bun of brown hair, greeted him with a semi-surprised look when she spotted me. She wore a long patterned dress like one might see in an Amish community. We sat down to dinner where their 6-year-old son said an unfamiliar version of grace. As we ate, the husband discussed their church and then asked me about my religious affiliation. My discomfort was clear to his wife who meekly suggested that the subject be changed.

When the friend arrived, the two men began to play. They did not invite me to join them, except in their devotion to Jesus. After each religiously oriented song, they would once again attempt to proselytize me. The evening ended with sore feelings on both sides of the non-conversion.

The next morning, the proselytizer deposited me at the nearest on ramp of the highway.

Outside of Portland, Oregon, I realized that I had caught the flu. The idea of coping with a day or two of vomiting that was sure to come, filled me with dread. As I sat by the side of the road waiting for the first wave of insurmountable nausea, a car pulled over. Picking my pack and myself from the ground was almost too strenuous for my now drained energy. The salesman who picked me up began the expected verbal dance. "Where ya' headed?" he asked. "East." was all I could muster. He then asked me if I had heard about the recent killings of hitchhikers in the Portland area. Immediately I felt a rush of adrenaline in response to the possibility that I had just fallen into the clutches of a maniac. I told him that I had not and braced myself for an attack. Catching a glimpse of my nauseated demeanor, he asked if I was feeling ok. I told him that I had the flu. He offered a quick apology as he promptly dropped me back onto the roadside.

I sat down. Nausea continued its march against me. I rolled onto the ground and heaved. After an hour or so of periodic vomiting and lapses into uneasy sleep, a van pulled over. Two hippies got out of the van. "Are you ok?" asked the woman. "No.", I belched. They helped me into the back of the van where I was able to lie down. They asked if they could take me somewhere. I said that I was headed to Boulder and had no local connections. They offered to let me stay at their apple orchard commune while I recovered. I gratefully accepted and fell asleep.

For the next two days, they gave me a room and a bed, fed me, and checked in on me at regular intervals to nurse my ills. When I recovered, they asked if I would be willing to help them pick apples for a day or two as it was harvesting season. For two additional days, I stayed at the commune, picked apples, regained my strength, and enjoyed the company of a group both generous and kind.

It was after my commune respite that I headed into the Idaho desert where I met the Impala driven by Joe referred to at the beginning of this paper. He looked to be in his sixties with a hemispherical thorax and abdomen that were a constant curve from his neck to his hips. He wore a plaid shirt and jeans. He had a sad sparse mustache and facial hair, far too sparse to be called a beard. His head was plump and leathery. He spoke with a smoke and alcohol induced staccato voice. Every few minutes he would slap the dogs and chastise them for imagined violations that I could not discern. The dogs trembled and winced every time he spoke.

During our conversation, I told him that I was eventually making my way to Boulder. He revealed that he had once lived in Denver when he was married.

We arrived in Wendell in time to load up on cheap whiskey and smokes. The proprietor knew Joe and asked about his dogs. Before getting back in the car, Joe insisted that we visit the bar next door for a quick drink. We entered the smoke filled, dimly lit roadhouse. Immediately recognized, Joe gave hugs to a number of the disheveled patrons. Pointing at me, one of the men said, "I see you've got a new friend." "Yep", said Joe, "We're headed for Colorado."

Joe finished a shot of whiskey, said goodbye to his friends and walked to the car. Upon seeing their owner, the dogs moved away from the windows where they had been watching passing traffic. After a few calming smacks to the dogs, Joe guided the car back to the highway. "You know, it's really not necessary to drive me to Boulder," I said. "It's not a problem at all," said Joe. "I need to see my ex-husband who is still in Denver. Plus, I wouldn't mind getting to know you better."

It turned out that Josephine was a hardscrabble woman who had been jilted by her husband in favor of a less rotund version of the female form. We drove southeastward as the sun set. Joe told me her life's story while intermittently striking the dogs. She reminded me of the head of my Catholic elementary boarding school in Philadelphia, Sister Mary Esther, a fearful woman who possessed a habit, in addition to the one she wore, of striking children. The night wore on with Joe periodically swigging the whiskey bottle and smoking. As she became more intoxicated, it became clear that Josephine had an interest in me that exceeded on-the-road camaraderie.

Finally, after hours of drinking and driving, Joe moored the boat-impala at a rest stop. While rubbing her sleepy eyes, slapping the dogs, and gulping a few more mouthfuls of booze, she detailed our itinerary with lusty exuberance. I looked out the window wincing at the prospects being offered. We left the car to sleep in the grass behind the rest stop. Josephine gathered her dogs around her underneath the blue blanket. "Tomorrow we'll

make good time sweetie," she slurred. I shuffled through my things while she descended the scale of her snoring's pitch into drunken slumber. "Yes I will," I said. Backpack on back, I made for the interstate, thumb outstretched.

When I finally arrived in Boulder, I headed for the University of Colorado where my longtime friend Robin would be meeting me after her class. I found the designated meeting spot, a grassy area where students lounged in the afternoon sun. With weariness of the road's tedium and discomfort, I laid down next to my backpack. I awoke to Robin's nudging. I gave her a bear hug. My spirits were lifted by seeing a familiar and beautiful face. "Where's your backpack?" she asked. I turned toward where I had placed it to discover I had been robbed of everything except what I had on my back and in my pockets.

We went to the campus police station and filed a report. The officer held out very little hope of recovering my belongings. From the dismissive look on his face, I discerned that longhaired transients were not his favorite sort of people. On the way to her house, we stopped to get basic toiletries. The next morning we would shop for clothes. In spite of my loss, we enjoyed a wonderful dinner together.

The next morning, after a shower and quick breakfast, we headed into town. We had a couple of hours to get what I needed before Robin had to attend soccer practice. Half way there, I spotted a young man wearing a very distinctive shirt, exactly like one I had purchased in Oaxaca, Mexico the prior year. Since there were no police officers in sight, Robin suggested that we confront him. I was somewhat hesitant, but agreed with her as he didn't look too formidable. We chatted as we drew closer. Unfortunately, he did not have my backpack with him. We split apart in a close-quarter flanking move. I was on the verge of accusing him when Robin angrily demanded that he give back my possessions. He pushed her and ran. We took off after him. The chase had covered a couple of blocks when he took a quick turn onto the tennis courts of a hotel. I had fallen off the pace wheezing with the oxygen deprived air of the Rockies. Robin, the soccer player, had closed the gap with our thief and clipped his feet with a soccer move. He crashed onto the sandy surface of the court. Robin pounced on top of him, pinning his arms to his sides. She loudly and aggressively demanded he return my belongings. He cursed before he spat on her. Robin responded with a focused series of punches to the trapped man's face. He relented and agreed to give me my belongings. Luckily, he had hidden the goods no more than 100 yards away along the banks of Boulder Creek. We gathered my things and headed back to her house. Not only had I no need to go shopping, I had gained a few articles of clothing formerly the property of the bruised thief.

I spent the next day wandering around Boulder. Uneasy with the possibility of running into my adversary, I stuck to the well-populated Pearl Street, a pedestrian-only green space then known for street performers, restaurants, and hippies. I came across a middle-aged bearded man playing what I would later learn was a Shakuhachi, a Japanese bamboo flute tuned to a minor pentatonic scale. After listening to him for a while, I asked where I could get one. He replied that he made his own. For \$20, he would have one ready for me the following noon. I returned the next day and waited. As time passed, I began to

suspect that he had forgotten our meeting. Looking around the area, I spotted two familiar faces. My fraternity brothers and band mates from college, John and Matthew, were walking toward me.

They had been in Boulder for a little more than a week after traveling across the country with Matthew's two brothers. The four of them were living in a cave up Boulder Canyon towards the town of Nederland. I suggested that they join Robin and me for an evening of party hopping, which they did. After hours of going from one frat party to another helping ourselves to free beer, music and dancing, we headed back to Robin's house. The four of us continued to drink into the late hours much to the consternation of Robin's roommates. The senior roommate, a senior, informed us that the three non-roommates were no longer welcomed in the house. In the morning, I packed my belongings and joined Matthew, his brothers, and John in the cave where I stayed for two weeks.

One day, while Matthew and I were sitting together talking in a campus park, a young dread locked woman approached us and sat down. She introduced herself as Star. She wondered if she could bum a smoke from Matthew. He obliged. In our conversation, Star allowed as how she was on her way north to a hot spring where she hoped to take in the waters while drinking chaparral tea in order to cure her gonorrhoea. Matthew asked her why she would not simply go to a local clinic and get a shot of penicillin. "It's not natural," she said earnestly. "Dying is." I said. While we tried to convince her to see a doctor, an enraged young man descended upon us. "Who the hell are they?" shouted the man, gesturing towards Matthew and me. A lover's quarrel ensued. The tenor of the argument darkened. Star's boyfriend, named Jupiter or something equally absurd, took a menacing stance towards Star. In her fright, she lunged in my direction and grabbed onto me for protection. The mad planet "Jupiter" screamed, "Are these the guys you've been screwing?" I rolled away from Star's burning embrace. Jupiter finally directed his ire away from us after a few minutes of invective.

This straw broke the camel's back. I was weary of sleeping on the ground, traveling at the mercy of sketchy characters, and interacting with nearly psychotic transients. It had been almost three months since I had been home.

The time had come for me to push the eject button. After spending ninety-seven dollars for a flight from Denver to Cincinnati, I phoned my parents to let them know I was returning. They were pleased. Backpack checked and sitting in my window seat, I took a quick inventory of my trip. At the outset, I had hoped to increase my understanding of the world as revealed to me in my many LSD induced vision quests. Unfortunately, those esoteric answers and insights eluded me. I did however answer a question that every driver, except one, had asked me, but I had not asked of myself. My answer to that question was "homeward."