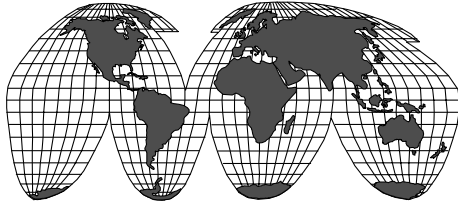


# THE HAZLE JOURNAL

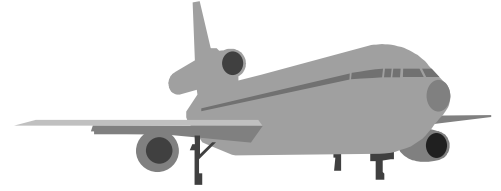
1994 Edition

Special 2001 Reprint

Issue 3



## World Traveler



Hello there friend! Welcome to the 1994 edition of the HAZLE JOURNAL. This is my third issue and like fine wine, my life gets better with age. (I hope...) Anyhow, for you new readers, this newsletter is my way of updating all my friends about what is going on in my life. I still try to personalize things a little by leaving space on the page for an individual handwritten message. While I don't expect such massive writing efforts from most people, *don't even think* that a simple phone call will even the score. Hint: If nothing else, postcards with pretty pictures are nice.

Anyhow, 1994 has been an interesting year with plenty of ups and downs. As always, my life is a non-stop rollercoaster. The summer of 1994 began with a family loss that cast me into an emotionally heavy period of reflection and self-analysis. It's funny how in the twinkling of an eye, a phone call can change the way you look at life. So after being somber for most of June and July, a flash of light hit me while sitting in my office one day in mid August. (Insert lightning flash here.) I needed to do two things that I had been dreaming of for quite some time: 1) go to Europe and 2) buy a house. Just to make it interesting, I decided to do them both *within a month!* But of course this wasn't enough of a challenge, so I decided to start *and finish* a brand new screenplay that was in my head. After some finagling, my trip date was set for October 3rd - 20th. Needless to say September was an unbelievable month as I looked at houses, planned for Europe, found a house, started writing the screenplay, did paperwork for the house, hassled with travel VISAs, etc. But suffice it to say that by the time the last week in September rolled around, I had finished the first draft of CHAOS, completed the paperwork on my dream house & was all packed for Europe. WHEW!

This edition of The Journal is mostly a day by day account of my trip (scattered with lots of heavy emotional stuff and trite nonsense). Hopefully it will entertain you. (and more importantly make you extremely jealous!) As we say in Italy, Ciao!

Wayne A. Hazle III

**This is a special reprint of the “legendary” Hazle Journal 1994. (OK, it’s only “legendary” in my mind.) By special request, I am reprinting it, and making as few revisions as possible, so even the spelling errors are 7 years old!**

**This was after my first overseas trip. It was one of those massive “3 week see everything in Europe” tours. It was a whirlwind, but it was worth it. As you shall see my life is always an adventure. Enjoy!**

## The Month of Living Dangerously

So about the third week in August, I started looking at books for various tours of Europe. At the time I was also considering a safari in Africa. I soon decided against it. Europe was cheaper & there were more things that I could see with less money. The big question was, *Did I want to do a tour or should I do the research and just fend for myself?* The tour would be a little more rushed, because they had a specific schedule and you would have limited amount of time in each place. But at least you know you will get to see the major sites. Going on my own might actually be cheaper, but I didn't have the time to do research and I didn't know any languages. So I decided on an 18 day tour which would take me through London, France, Switzerland & major parts of Italy. I was set to leave on September 18th, about **1 month** away.

I also called a mortgage broker. And over the phone we went through my finances to see

### Day 1 (Monday Oct. 3rd)

Monday at approximately noon, I boarded a plane from Sea-Tac airport to San Francisco. There I would wait for about 5 hours, go through customs and then board a plane and fly directly to Heathrow Airport in London. I couldn't help wondering if a plane really had enough fuel to fly from the West Coast of the US, across the US, and across the Atlantic. They told me to rest assured, the plane takes a shortcut over the Arctic. Naturally, this made me feel much better (NOT!). I now wished I had read the Time-Life: How To Build An Igloo In Case Your Plane Crashes In the Arctic series!

The flight to San Fran was short & boring, I didn't have to do any INTL check-in. Check-in in through customs at San Fran was quite exciting. Until then, my passport was collecting dust with that application for the Iraqi army, so every step was filled with excitement. I tried not to look

what I could qualify for. What a difference a year makes! Last year, I had MUCH more debt, 3 - 8% to put down & I was closer to some credit problems. This time my car was paid for, ALL credit cards cleared, four years of clean credit, and I had a whopping 20% to put down. I could hear the broker salivating over the phone! She said we could close on a place *before I left for Europe!* Well, we started looking at places, I fell in love with the first house I saw. I did look at about 10 others, but my heart was set. Life was great. Then came **Black Friday!** (*actually why does it have to be Black?*) How about Orange Friday?

Anyway, I come into work one Friday & the walls of Jericho come crashing down. I get a call from my travel agent, she says that France needs (LOTS) more time to process my VISA because I am a Jamaican citizen. I needed to catch the next tour on October 3rd! I get my credit report back and there is a period of about 8 months that reads like the Iran-Contra hearings. On top of that, I found out that I had

too dangerous or demented as the guard looked me over and looked at my passport. Rumour has it that if they see something they don't like, they just shoot you and drag you to some shallow unmarked grave. But everything checked out. Not only did they let me on the plane, but because I was alone and coach was filled, I got bumped up into business class! Yup, things were looking good. ("Wait a minute, don't people up front die first?")

Business class has extra wide and soft seats, a TV for each chair, free booze, better meals, real china & utensils & lots of personal attention from the flight attendants. The only thing missing is a separate engine, so that if the plane is going down we can say 'Adios!' to the losers in coach. The flight was going to be about 10 hours!! In 10 hours I could read a book, drink, watch a couple of movies, sleep, recover from a hangover and still have time to kill. I knew that God was with me, not

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overestimated the value of my Microsoft Stock (& thus my down payment) by **25%**! All this before I even got my morning coffee. Needless to say I left work sick, early in the afternoon.

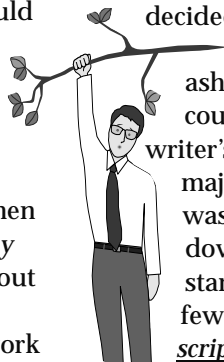
I was feeling like a disgruntled postal worker, but my Uzi was in the shop, so I decided to go home & relax. But lo and behold, out of the ashes, life springs forth. For a couple days I had had major writer's block. My script needed a major conspiracy and it just wasn't coming to me. I sat down by the water and started jotting some notes. A few hours later I had the entire script written. I think some of my best creative moments have come from depression. Hemingway was like that. (Of course he blew his brains out, so he might not be the best person to follow.)

So the following week, I was back on the ball. I kept pushing on the house. And worked on getting my VISA for France. But a few days later my travel agent told me that France would need 2 months to process my VISA & decide **IF** they would let me in. At that point I decided to bag France & stay longer in London.

The seller accepted my offer & my paperwork went through like a breeze. They wanted me to close before I left, but I decided to wait till I got back. So I set things up to close by Tues. October 24. Four days after I returned.

I devoted my last few days to packing (for Europe & for the new house), practising with my camera, and reading up on the various cities I would be attending.

On Monday October 3rd. I headed to Sea-Tac airport for my European adventure.



## Day 1 (Monday Oct. 3rd) Cont'd

(Continued from page 2)

because the flight was smooth, but because I didn't get stuck next to some weird smelling person who wanted to talk to me for the whole flight! But 'the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away', as you shall see later. I ended up watching a movie with O.J. Simpson in it! I did make sure that he wasn't on the plane before I went to sleep.

A few hours later, light was shining through the windows of the plane. We were closing in on the British Isles! They turned on this British Tour video, lots of Castles, and other British scenery with pompous Royal music in the background. I was psyched! The flight attendants served tea and little cakes.

In a few more minutes we touched down at London Heathrow International Airport. Tally Ho! The adventure begins!

## Day 2 Tues. 4th - London

So I get off the plane into the crowded airport. Once again I make my way to the customs desk. This time I am more relaxed. When the agent asks for the purpose of my visit. I blurt out "To assassinate the Royal family of course! You got a problem with that?" (OK, I chickened out at the last minute.)

After getting through customs I switched my American dollars to the monopoly money that the Brits use. I got directions for my hotel and jumped on The Tube (pronounced 'tyyyuuuuuube'), which is simply a subway. In about 45 minutes I was at the Euston Station stop. I got off and started walking to the Kennedy Hotel. My first brush with danger was crossing the street. I would look carefully to the right, see no cars and then start to step off the curb.



## Day 3 Wed. 5th. - London

I woke up bright and early the next morning, ready to attack London. By the way, I should mention how this tour works. They give you a bargain basement price on the package, because most of the things to do over there are optional "excursions", which you pay for separately. (Yes I did know this!) The tour package price includes hotel, transportation between cities, some food, and a few tours. Being resourceful (*and cheap*) I decided to blow off the Cosmos excursions in London and just fend for myself. So I asked the concierge how to take the Tube to Buckingham Palace, and off I went.

Buckingham Palace was not nearly as impressive as I expected. I guess I could keep it as a *summer* home. They weren't offering tours and I didn't feel like standing around for two hours waiting for the Changing of the Guard. So I walked over to Big Ben, Parliament and

An angry honking sound would come from **the left!** "*Oh yeah, the do everything in reverse here!*" I could see the headlines: **Stupid American Tourist Dies During First Five Minutes in London!**

In less than five minutes, I was at the Kennedy. I go to the special Cosmos Tours desk (I was feeling like a VIP). I got to the desk and gave my name to the nervous, acne covered teen behind the desk. He went down the list & then gave me that **Uh-Oh** look. He ran to another teeny bopper in a bright red

Cosmos uniform and whispered something. She got the **Uh-Oh** look too. I did keep my cool however and in about five minutes they came to me with a set of keys and some gibberish explanation. I just said, "Yea, yea" and went up to my room.

In case you didn't know, Tourist Class rooms means that you open the door and your bed is right

the Thames, all of which was very impressive.

Then I walked to Westminster Abbey and took the tour. This was probably one of the most enjoyable things I did on the whole vacation. In case you don't know, it's one of the oldest churches in England, the site of the Royal Coronations, and burial place of royalty and other famous Brits. There was something eerie, yet electric about walking around in this building with people tombs all over the place and some people buried right in the floors and walls. Buried in one section called Poet's Corner, there is Geoffrey Chaucer, Jane Austin, Charles Dickens, (& several other great English authors), a monument to Shakespeare, and the very last person buried in the Abbey, Sir Laurence Olivier!

After the Abbey, I hopped on a Double-Decker bus, which I could have sworn was going to tip over and got off at the British Museum. The British Museum  
(Continued on page 4)

there. Bathroom & sink are optional. In this case there was both, and even a TV. I turned it on and there was some fuddy-duddy being very pompous & then it hit me, I really was in England! The time was about 1PM and London was at my finger tips! I was going to take the town by storm. But first, I had to sit down and collect my thoughts...

The next thing I knew, I woke up and my room was dark. It was 5PM! Oops! If I didn't move quickly, the whole day would be down the drain. I contacted a Jehovah's Witness that I had been communicating with over EMAIL. I met him and his wife for dinner and we saw each other face to face for the first time. I told him about all my plans & he highly advised bagging Stonehenge. ("*It's a bunch of rocks! What's the point?*") Due to my tight schedule, I would be unable to see them again, so we said goodnight afterwards.

I walked in the cold London air for a minutes and then went back to the hotel and crashed.

## Day 3 (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 3)

is world renown for having great Ancient works, including those of Greece, Rome, Egypt and Assyria.

Several pieces Parthenon in one feel like a Greek also have a rare and ornate walking around and I someone say "Jehovah". I the voice and out it was a San Fran! world...

As continued to around the a strange was overtaking PAIN. I had miles and miles in one day & my feet were cramped beyond belief. Travel Hint: Boat shoes (Dock Siders) do not provide arch support!



There are from the room set up to temple. They selection of Bibles. I was in this area overheard the word tracked I found JW from Small

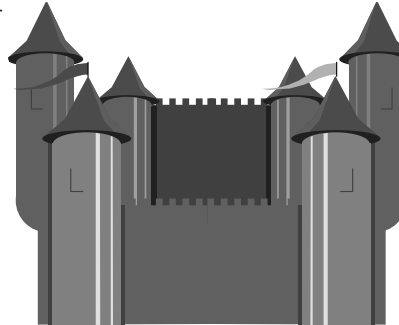
I walk museum, sensation

me: walked

I hobbled back to my hotel,

watched the latest on Princess Di, and fell asleep for the night.

(By the way, at this point, according to the tour schedule, I should be leaving London in the morning for France, with the rest of the tour. But because \*^&% France wouldn't let me in, I had to fend for myself for 2 days while the rest of the group left for Paris in the morning. I also had to check out of the hotel I was staying in because they would have charged me a ton of money to stay there an extra two nights. While walking around London, I saw a hotel that had rooms for approximately \$20 a night. I knew that the rooms couldn't be great at that price, but so long as there weren't severed heads in the lobby, I would manage.)



civilization, culture, blah, blah. Those medievals were some of the most bloodthirsty, grotesque, death obsessed people ever to live! HUGE ravens still live all around the Tower, waiting for a the head

of someone executed to be placed on a stake so they can snack away. The crown jewels were beautiful. (In a gaudy, Las Vegas sort've way.)

I walked across the Tower Bridge and London Bridge and then along the Thames for a while. Then I went back

to the Rat Trap and changed to go to a Kingdom Hall in downtown London. As I stood in the train station in my suit & tie, I looked out of the corner of my eye & saw little gray objects scurrying around: **MICE, Eeeeeeyy!** Anyhow, the Brothers & Sisters at the Kingdom Hall in London were nice, but not very warm. When the meeting was over, I prepped myself for going to back to the Rat Trap for the night.

I got back and barricaded myself in. The lock looked pretty flimsy, and I could've sworn I saw Yassir Arafat in the hallway. My feet were absolutely **never** going to touch the floor! And I would **never** use the tub. I had bought a huge bottle of mineral water at a supermarket. I used the water to

brush my teeth & wash and clean all sorts of things you don't need to worry about. I then tucked myself in, without letting the

"comforter" (a moth eaten rag) touch me. The bed was actually pretty comfy.

I heard some story of a woman who found a dead body under the bed in her hotel. I didn't bother checking. If he was dead, then he could keep till morning.

## Day 4 Thurs 6th - London

At 6:30 AM, there was a loud knock at my door! "Sir we are ready to take your bags downstairs!" Groan. I told them (again) that I wouldn't be leaving with the rest of the tour. Back to sleep I went.

At 9:30ish, I woke up, packed, checked out and walked to the Royal Hotel just a few blocks away. I paid for a room for the night. The elevator was broken (**bad omen**) and so I walked up the stairs. I opened the door

**UGH!** To say the room was grungy would be an understatement. It consisted of a bed, a sink (the water from which I would never ingest), and a chewed up, half-broken dresser.

Maybe they should call this place **The Rat Trap Arms**. Toilet and showers were (way) down the dimly lit hall. Perhaps that park bench wasn't so bad after all. But I will say this, the sheets were as clean and fresh smelling as can be. So I just looked at this as part of the adventure and brought my luggage in.

I caught the Tube to the Tower of London. The Tower holds the castles that were the original home of the Royal family. The Crown Jewels are kept here now. The Tower was also the sight of the weekly executions that the people would gather around to see. It's funny, you think of England as being the birthplace of all this

## Day 5 Friday 7th - London

The next morning I got up early to catch the Tube to the Watchtower House (Bethel) on the outskirts of London. For those not in the know, this is the British Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. A lot of our literature for Europe and some smaller African languages is printed here.

I was proud of my abilities to navigate the subway system and feeling really confident. Murphy's Law kicked right in at this point and I found out that the railway drivers were going on strike! Trains would still run, but they would be extremely *sllloooooowww!* Undaunted, I made my way to the Bethel Home.

It was naturally much smaller than the main headquarters in Brooklyn, but it was still very exciting. There was lots of historical information on Jehovah's Witnesses in the earlier part of the century, especially during the World Wars. I was amazed at how many different languages are produced in their small facilities. Jehovah is definitely guiding his work!

After the Bethel Tour, I went to Harrod's, which is to London, what Macy's is to NYC. I picked up a few gifts for friends. (*Your's is in the mail!*) Someday, if I ever sell a screenplay, I am going to get an **Armani** suit! There is no feel like it!

Finally, I hobbled over to the **Hard Rock Cafe of London**. By now my feet were *throbbing*, but I promised a friend of mine I would get her a teddy bear from the Hard Rocks of London & Rome. She collects them. (Go figure.) By the way, this was my first time at a Hard Rock Cafe, *it's just an*

*over-glorified, overpriced, TGI Friday's!*  
**How stupid!**

I puttered around London a little while longer, enjoying my last view of her.

Tomorrow, first thing in the morning I would be flying to Switzerland. (*And the first things I would do upon checking in to a real hotel would be to shower & burn my pajamas!*) I made my way back to the Rat-Trap and climbed into bed. For one brief terrifying moment, it almost felt like home.

## Day 6 Sat. 8th London-Switzerland

Hours before the sun rose, I bid adieu to the Rat-Trap, & caught a double decker shuttle to Heathrow Airport. I hopped a shuttle flight to Zurich. At least I was able to *fly* over Paris. It looked pretty nice from 10,000 ft up.

My hotel was in Fluefen & the city we would be touring was Lucerne. This is all on the German side of Switzerland and German ain't my specialty. It must be the world's harshest sounding language! Walking through the airport, everything sounded like "Ich blein gwiurtz und staag sig heil Deutschland!". I had to catch a train out of Zurich, switch to another train and ride for 1 1/2 hours to Fluefen. An English speaking attendant at the airport told me which trains to catch. I had to sit at one station in the middle of nowhere for an hour waiting for my second train. Meanwhile German was being shrieked across the loudspeaker. I felt like I had just stepped into the middle of Schindler's List. I wonder how you say, "There is a Black Man in this station!" in German?

I did manage to make it to my hotel in one piece. I was pretty anxious to meet the rest of my tour group. I blurted out to the woman at the desk that I was with Cosmos Tours & I needed my room. The gist of our conversation was:

Woman: "Ich FLuugg blik aaaggg?"

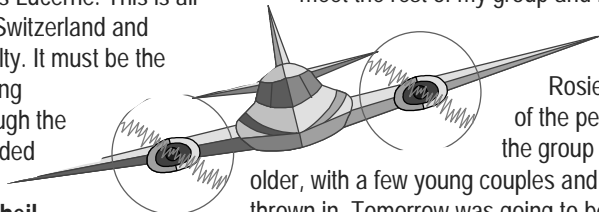
Me: (*at top of my lungs*)  
**COSMOS!** (*making key motion with hand*)  
**Room!**

FYI, *don't bother* yelling at people who don't speak English.

After some adieu, I did get my room. The rest of the group wouldn't be in

for three more hours. I could shower, appreciate the scenery & then sleep. The view was beautiful. The hotel was a little chalet nestled between mountains and a crystal clear lake. It was all so *typically Swiss*.

Later on in the evening, I got to meet the rest of my group and my tour



guide

Rosie. Most of the people in the group were

older, with a few young couples and kids thrown in. Tomorrow was going to be a full day. We would take the bus to Lucerne and sight-see. I decided to do the optional Ski-Lift excursion up Mount Tittlis. It was supposed to be gorgeous.

I went back up to my room, stepped on the balcony and watched the moon shimmy off the lake, with snow capped mountains in the background. This and a disinfected room was about all I could ask for in life...

## Day 7 Sun. 10/9 Lucerne

Bright and early in the morning we herded ourselves onto the bus. (This would be the routine for the next two weeks.) The drive through the Swiss countryside was marvellous, rolling hills, mountains and lots of beautiful homes.

Lucerne is an exquisite city. (and of course a tourist trap). I walked around for hours looking at the quaint architecture. Our tour guide told us to be sure to eat before we went to Mt. Tittlis, because the food was ridiculously expensive on top.

We went to the most famous watch shop in all of Switzerland. Ornate cuckoo clocks were all over. (I would go nuts working their!) The cheap watches were \$500! They actually spit on you if you ask them if they carry Timexes! Can you imagine buying someone a \$30,000 Rolex and then finding out they "must have lost it somewhere"? It isn't a question of *do* you kill them, the question is *where do you hide the body?*

We then took the bus up the



STEEP STEEP path to where we would catch the chair lift to Mt. Tittlis. Please bear in mind that I despise chair lifts and do them about once per decade. Roller coasters with multiple flips I can handle, but *don't people get that there is only one wire holding you on a chair lift?* I quaked in fear as we slowly made our ascent. Meanwhile, there was a group of kids bungee jumping out of the lifts further up!

At the top of the mountain, was the four story building that held an observatory, restaurant, gift, shop, etc. We got out and I started walking up the steps. In a few seconds I felt dizzy and my chest felt as if someone was standing on it. Then it dawned on me that I wasn't getting any oxygen! You have to force deep breaths up there in the thin mountain air. Then it dawned on me that I was starving! (No I didn't eat before as I was told!) The prices of the restaurant were beyond astronomical. You were 10,000 ft. up, they knew they had you. The cheapest thing I could find was a tiny plate of fries for \$9.00!!!!!! "Gee are you sure that's enough \*^%\$ money for you guys to make a profit? *Why not take my pancreas too!*" I ate every last fry

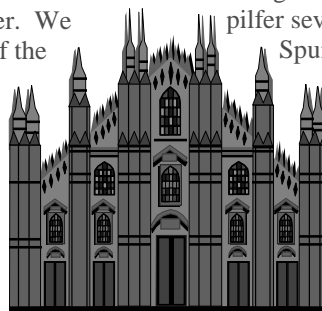
and licked the salt off the plate.

Then I stepped outside, onto the mountain top & into the snow. WOW! Just one view made it all worth while. When you're at the top of the world, all you can think about is being close to the Creator and how powerful he must be to put this all here. Now if he can just keep me from slipping and cracking my head open, the day would be perfect.

There must have been a million Japanese tourists on the mountain top, all clicking away with their cameras. Every third person wanted to take a picture with me. I guess anytime you get a Black man running around like an idiot in snow, it's a historic event!

When we got back to the Hotel, we dined on Chicken Cordon Bleu. I could still feel the motion of the ski lift, sort've like a hangover without the alcohol. We would be leaving for Italy in the morning so I packed my suitcase.

On the way back, one of the older gentlemen on the tour began singing. We were about to throw tomatoes, when we realised something: He was amazing! It turns out he was an Opera singer when he was younger. He was a native Italian who left when he was in his twenties and hadn't been back in forty years. So this trip was a celebration/homecoming for him. Nat managed to pilfer several extra bottles of Spumanti. We passed them around and he serenaded us as we sailed back to the hotel. This is living...



## Day 8 Mon. 10/10 Lugano-Venice

We said good-bye to our Swiss Chalet early in the morning. We were going to ITALY! By the end of the day we would be in romantic Venice. But first we would drive across Switzerland, through the mountains, to the Italian side & stop for a few hours in the city of Lugano. We could see the architecture change as we drove along.

It was amazing how the people changed as we went from German to Italian. Much warmer & friendlier. But they were still Swiss, so there was an air of aloofness. (Not to stereotype or anything.) Finally we crossed the border for Italy. Immediately we began screaming for pasta & wine. We stopped at a restaurant along the highway and changed our Swiss Francs into Lira. (1500 Lira = \$1) By this time I had changed money so much, I was so clueless, I could have paid a billion dollars for a pack of gum! An irritating thing throughout most of Italy is almost all public toilets are pay toilets! 500

Lira. Anyway the wine & spaghetti was great.

A few hours later we pulled up to a building, in the middle of nowhere and stopped. Our tour guide said, "Here's our hotel." I looked around, "*Um, excuse me, but I don't be seein' no water!*" It turns out that Venice is more than just the area on water. We were staying on the outskirts of the town. The Luxury Tour stays on the water. But it was only a ten minute drive to the boat which would take us to old Venice.

So I unpacked, showered & slept. Tonight we were going to see a show in Venice (the part with the water). It was traditional Italian songs, violins, pianos, the works, all performed live. Spumanti was free. (Uh, oh.)

Later in the evening, we caught the boat into old Venice. Even at night it was breathtaking! Just like what you see in the movies. The show was spectacular. Afterwards we walked around St. Mark's square. We would be coming back in the morning.

## Day 9 Tues. 10/11 Venice

As we got up the next morning, we were really psyched for spending the day in Venice. There was an optional gondola excursion, which I decided to pass on. A single guy riding on a gondola alone might as well have a neon **LOSER** sign above his head. The group gathered together in St. Mark's Square & we got a history of the incredibly ornate St. Mark's Cathedral.

There were hundreds of pigeons in the square. People would walk out with seeds and let the pigeons land all over them, like it was this great honor. Back in the States, the only way you let pigeons land all over you is if you're homeless, a corpse or both!

We walked over to a world famous glass blowing shop and watched them make beautiful glass vases, cups, etc. from fiery hot molten glass. The workers in the store were terrified that we would break (or steal) something. They followed us all over the store. (*No not just me!*)

After this, the tour guide said that for the next six hours we were on our own to Eat, stroll, tour, sit and otherwise enjoy the timeless beauty of Venice. We could get maps, but why bother? Just point your-self in a direction and start walking, allow yourself to get lost. So this is what I did. I walked down strange alleyways, through people's courtyards, private small squares, taking pictures and soaking up the beauty all the way.

All I can say is that when I direct my first blockbuster film, **I am buying a home in Venice!** Except for those annoying tourists, it seems untouched by time. I got some coffee in a little shop and sat on a bench and watched the gondolas go by &

listened to the people get serenaded.

Towards the end of the day, I walked back to St. Mark's and sat. Quite a few strangers came up to me and wanted to have pictures taken with me. (Hmm) I tried asking the natives if there was a local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, but I couldn't remember how to say it in Italian, so I gave up.

As we rode back I thought each day of the tour seemed to top the one before. Today I hadn't "done" anything except walked



around, yet it was one of the most wonderful days in my life. *I needed a week in Venice!* I packed my bag again, in the morning we would leave for

Pisa & Florence. On a last minute whim I decided to ask one of the desk workers if he knew about Jehovah's Witnesses & he said "*Hey, I'm one! you should have asked me yesterday, I would have taken you to a Hall!*" Ooops. Luca & I exchanged

addresses. At least I now have someplace to go when I return.

## Day 10 Wed. 10/12 Pisa-Florence

On this morning, we were going to make a 4 hour drive from Venice to Florence. Also we would make a pit-stop at the Square of Miracles and see the Leaning Tower of Pisa. On this day we were to see some of the most exquisite architecture in the world. Little did I know it would turn into **HELL DAY!**

The drive started out well. We were winding our way through the Apennine Mountains of Northern Italy, when suddenly we hit a **HUGE** fog. I was just thinking to myself, "**Gee I hope these #\*%^ Italians slow down their crazy driving or else...**", when the bus came to a complete stop. Traffic was stopped. We sat there for about an hour & we found out that there was a 14 car pile-up ahead. We moved in stop-and-go traffic for another hour until we passed the masses of wreckage.

At last we were on our way to Pisa. We got into town & dined at a little out of the way place. Afterward, we followed, Rosie, our guide down a side street and around a corner... **BEHOLD!** There it was, three breathtaking white marble buildings! The Leaning Tower looked like it could drop any minute. We ran around like madmen snapping

pictures.

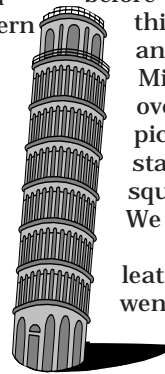
There was so much to see & so little time. We had to be back in the bus in a little over an hour. I needed to sit in the Square for a week! With a heavy heart I climbed back on the bus.

As we made our way to Florence, we found that the fumes from the exhaust were leaking into the bus! Headaches and extreme nausea was turning a nice bus of tourists into prison rioters. But before we could start torching things, we arrived in Florence and drove to the Piazza de Michaelangelo, a Square that overlooks Italy's most picturesque city. A gigantic statue of David stands in the square and overlooks the city. We took a group photo here.

Florence is know for it's fine leather goods and jewellery. We went down the Piazza de Santa Croce & toured some shops and then saw the church of Santa Croce. Tomorrow we would come back and see the inside. Unfortunately, Florence is also know for pickpockets & bands of youths on mopeds who snag items from unsuspecting tourists. Rosie, warned us to be careful and no one was robbed.

So now it was time to head

(Continued on page 8)



## Day 10 (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 7)

to our hotel for the evening. Rosie said it was 'just a few minutes' away from downtown Florence. To make a long story short, we drove so long that we were expecting to see the **pyramids of Egypt** along the way. We were a wreck when we finally got to our hotel. I didn't even bother to unpack, because we would be checking out in the morning.

We downed more wine & pasta and took our carbon monoxide filled lungs to bed.

## Day 11 Thurs 10/13 Florence-Rome

First thing the next morning we were back in downtown Florence in the Piazza de Santa Croce. We had about four hours on our own to do what we wanted, then we had to be back on the bus for the drive to Rome.

I went inside the Church of Santa Croce. It is called the Pantheon of Florence because inside are the tombs of Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci, Gallileo, Gioacchino Antoni Rossini, Niccolo Machiavelli, Conte Vittorio Alferi, Dante & others. *If only the walls could talk!* Florence was the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. & it shows. The Duomo (cathedral) of Florence was designed & begun in the 1200s. White, red and green marble buildings decorate the city. The Ponte Vecchio (Old Bridge) was built in 1350 & is lined with goldsmiths & jewellers shops.

There are museums all over Florence many containing the works of perhaps the greatest sculpture of ever, Donatello. Also, the original David statue by



Michelangelo is here. (Believe it or not, I blew off the opportunity to see this. The museum was far, I didn't have time, it costed \$15 to get in, & on top of that, there are so many copies of David around the city, I was sick of seeing it!)

Florence also contains the greatest libraries in Italy, esp. the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. And of course being Italy there are fountains and statues in every square. I got some really amazing pictures of me in front of David, Zeus and other statues. (Naturally, they were not NEARLY as buffed as I was!!)

Of course when you go to Florence you are expected to purchase some of their fine leather goods & jewellery. And the stuff was incredible, but an important note: Just because you're in Italy doesn't mean that you're getting the stuff for free! In fact some things were just RIDICULOUSLY expensive! I think I'll just get a JC Penney leather Jacket thank you. As I headed back to the bus, I knew that there was so much more to see & I had only gotten a glimpse but it was time to go to ROME!

On the bus to Rome, we sang Italian songs we learned in Venice, chatted & showed off the trinkets we bought, not to mention sleeping. I also took some time to works on CHAOS. Just because I was on vacation doesn't mean I can't get something done! (*Spoken like a work-a-holic!*) Seriously though all the culture was great for my creativity.

We arrived in Rome at a nice hotel. (once again on the "outskirts" of town.) But standing on my balcony I could see St. Peter's Basilica. We had time to rest, because we were going to do "Rome

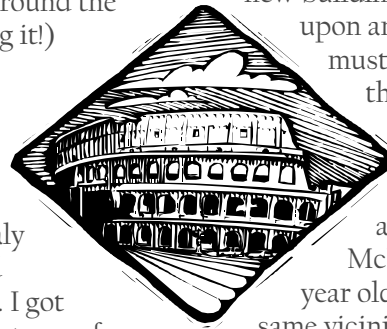
By Night". This would include a tour of the city and a four star dinner.

Seeing ruins at night was indescribable. It seems in Rome that whenever they start to construct new buildings, they stumble upon an old ruin which must be preserved, so they have to build around it. There is something foul & even sacrilegious about have a McDonald's and a 1000 year old marble ruin in the same vicinity!

We drove through the Vatican, past the Coliseum, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier & eventually stopped at the Trevi Fountain. (See [Roman Holiday](#) w/ Audrey Hepburn.) In ancient Rome, the fountains were where people got their drinking water, but the Romans didn't simply build something that shot out water. They sculpted marvellous pieces of art that were functional. My favourite fountain was one that had four HUGE, life-like human figures representing the four great rivers of the earth that were know at the time: the Nile, the Euphrates, the Tigris and the Ganges. But at the time, they didn't know the source of the Nile & so the figure representing the Nile has his head covered.

Our dinner was sumptuous! LOTS & LOTS more wine, pasta, and garlic bread. We were serenaded while we ate. The only downside was the lack of air & too much heat in the restaurant. I was sweating profusely and sneezing at the same time. My last memory of the evening was staggering around in my room looking for IBUPROFEN. Headache city!

And I was supposed to see the Vatican in the morning! Hopefully I wouldn't end up projectile vomiting on the Pope...



## Day 12 Fri. 10/14 Rome

(I forgot one interesting little tidbit about Rome. As we were driving there, Rosie told us that there were some reports of people going to sleep in their hotels & then waking up in the morning to find all of their stuff gone! It turns out the vogue new way to rob people was to spray sleeping gas underneath their door while they sleep. Then they can simply pick the lock & take their time emptying your room.

In order to thwart this, Rosie said we needed to place lots of wet towels at the bottom of our door to block the gas. And then maybe a chair wedged underneath the doorknob. We were all horrified. So that night before everyone went to bed, they built Fort Knox by their door. I set up a weird contraption of wet towels, the dresser & desk combined with a standing mirror which would fall over and break if the door was pushed open. MacGyver would have been proud!)

**Ah Roma!** As soon as the sun came up we toured the ruins of Ancient Rome. It truly deserves to be called the Eternal City. We went to the Forum & then we stopped at the Coliseum. Unfortunately Rome was on "general strike" that day & so we couldn't enter. *I couldn't believe that I hit another strike again!* These "general strikes" in Rome are pretty bogus. No one pickets for any type of cause. People just sit around on their butts & eat pizza. (Hmm maybe that *is* a good idea.)

Anyhow, even from just the outside, it is a marvel! For some reason, the area is overrun with stray cats who run around hissing at each other loudly. I closed my eyes & imagined myself as an ancient Christian being brought to this building to be fed to the lions, thousands of Romans inside cheering



Bridgeman Art Library

& the roar of hungry lions waiting to devour my flesh! It was very sobering. (Something to keep in mind when the Great Tribulation starts!)

Then we drove to a restaurant right outside Vatican City. (I know, more eating!) I really found it interesting that the Italians don't put the **HEAVY HEAVY** amount of seasoning on their dishes that we do. I was expecting all of Italy to just reek of garlic & other spices, but everything was lightly seasoned, but **GOOD!**

Rosie told us not to send mail from anywhere in Italy because it would never get there. She said wait till we get to the Vatican their postal system is run by the Swiss & they understand the concept of mail actually *getting* to it's destination. So I sat in the shadow of St. Peter's filling out postcards & nursing my headache from the night before.

A special Italian guide would be conducting our tour of the Vatican. She spoke English, but with a **HEAVY** Italian accent which seemed to require an "A" at the end of virtually every single word. Therefore a sentence would sound like this: "*Hello-a. First-a we go-a to the Sistine-a Chapel-a. Then-a we go-a in St. Peter-a Basilica. Now-a follow me-a!*" Nevertheless, we were able to make it into the Vatican Museums without a hitch.

Before you even get anywhere near the Sistine Chapel, there are incredible works that alone could take days to look at. One of the highlights was 400 year old tapestries of by Raphael. These contained scenes of Jesus with his Apostles. There were marvelous paintings all over & we probably didn't give any of them the time they deserved because we were so anxious to get to the Sistine Chapel. We kept seeing signs for it & our guide kept telling we were getting closer but it seemed to be taking forever!

"*Now-a, when-a we go*

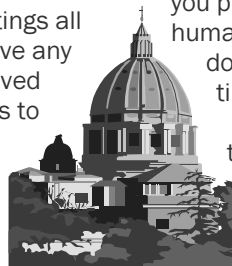
*through-a here-a, we will-a be-a at the Sistine Chapel-a.*" We would then proceed to walk for 15 minutes, up stairs, down stairs & still not be there! "*Before-a we go-a to Sistine-a Chapel-a I wanna show-a you-a something-a.*" Groan! "*Can we see the ^%\$# Chapel already?!!"*

But finally, we entered the door... All I can say it is one of the most powerful experiences I've ever had! It is everything you're heard and more. You aren't allowed to take pictures in there, but a few people snuck them anyway. *Naturally I would never skirt the law however.* The big down side is that we only had fifteen &^%\$ minutes to stay inside! I needed to lay on my back for days and just stare up at the ceiling. But I didn't even bother to get angry, I will be back!

From there walked into St. Peter's Cathedral, the largest church in the world. By this time, I had been to so many huge, ornate churches, that I nothing would ever impress me again. Wrong! At first I couldn't get a handle on the size. But then we looked at the floor and saw names of other large churches of the world. From the spot where the name was, to the front was where that church **could fit inside of St. Peter's!** You could drop Westminster Abbey inside of it and still have room for a football game!

By the time it was over, I really didn't know what to think. On the one hand, I was awestruck at some of the most amazing works ever done by human hands. On the other hand, I couldn't help be somewhat repulsed by the unbelievable show of wealth & opulence. Think of the many people who died so that this could be here! Could this really be what Jesus had in mind? Moments like this make you ponder the very foundation of human existence. What is truth? What does God want from us? What time do we eat?

The farewell dinner was going to be tonight. Most of the people were heading home the next day. I had added a 4 day extension through Southern Italy. About 7 other people



(Continued on page 10)

## Day 12 (Cont'd)

(Continued from page 9)

were going. So we went back to the hotel, rested for while & then got ready for dinner.

Before dinner we went to the Spanish Steps. They actually have *nothing* to do with Spain except that the Spanish embassy is down the street. We mingled among the Romans, poking our heads into shops we knew we couldn't afford. And then, another sumptuous 4 course meal! We were serenaded, but this time there was a tinge of sadness. I would never see some of these people again. The singer played "Arrivederci Roma" & we sang and ate & drank. We also did the "good-bye, trading addresses & swearing we would write" thing too.

Once again we went to our hotel & packed. As I lay in my bead with the moonlight shining in a smile of complete & total satisfaction beamed across my face.



Louis Colman, Photo Researcher, Inc.

## Day 13 Sat. 10/15 Rome-Sorrento

As I drove away from the hotel, was still singing "Arrivederci Roma". Things felt so much more relaxed as we made our way down to Sorrento. We would be at one hotel for four nights. I wouldn't need the wet towels by my door in Southern Italy. There were just a few of us on the bus, so there was plenty of room for all.

The drive along the coast of Southern Italy was simply splendid. As we made our way through small towns I felt like I was rediscovering Italy. While the Northern sections were historical & beautiful. The small Southern towns were relaxed, like the Italy that you see on Spaghetti cans. People wandering casually on tiny cobblestone streets, old men sitting and playing cards, women working on their gardens and children playing songs. (I felt like sitting at an outdoor restaurant, eating some pasta & making someone an offer they couldn't refuse.)

I checked in at the Hotel Majestic & unpacked. My room was on the top floor with an amazing balcony. I handwashed a bunch of my clothes & hung them out to dry. Two women from England, Shirley & Katy, were staying in the rooms next to mine. We shared the big balcony.

I went with the seven remaining members of my group for a relaxing walk through downtown Sorrento. It was a walk just for walking's sake, no tours, no sites to see & nothing to accomplish. Yet there was something so satisfying. I was tempted to call home & tell my sister to sell all my stuff because I wasn't coming back. Don't ask me why I didn't!

Back at the hotel & I found out where the "Sala de Reino de Testimoni de Geova" was. (Kingdom Hall of JW's) The Hotel Clerk called an Italian Brother who would come and pick me up for Sunday meeting. I asked the guy if this was an English Hall. He waved me off "English, Si, Si". The meeting would be at 6PM tomorrow.

I went out on the terrace and thought about the rest of the week. Tomorrow lounging, Monday a day excursions to the Isle of Capri, Tuesday Pompeii & Vessuvius, Wednesday back to Rome & Thursday back to Seattle.

Viva Italia!

## Day 14 Sun. 16th Sorrento

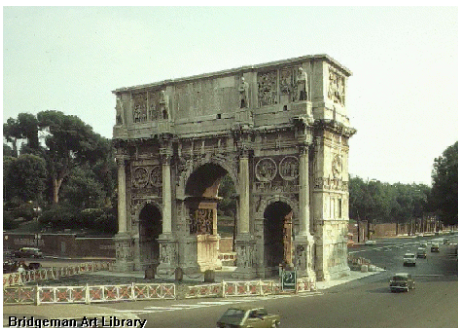
My body was still used to rising at the first sign of sunlight, but at least there was no place to go. I lay in bed for another hour, just trying to digest the many things that I had seen in the past two weeks. I rubbed the "pasta gut" that I was developing. Eventually I went out onto the balcony and watched women in the houses down the road hanging their clothes out to dry.

Shirley & Katy came out onto the balcony & we chatted for a while. They had breakfast sent up. Now what was a good breakfast without champagne? We decided to do the unspeakable: **have something from the mini-bar**. You know the incredibly well stocked mini-bar that exists in some hotel rooms where you pay \$100,000 for a bag of potato chips! Each of us had a tiny bottle of champagne the size of a Dixie cup. (I won't tell you how much it cost.)

The rest of the morning & afternoon consisted of lounging, and more lounging. Then we walked around Sorrento got some spaghetti bolognese & lounged some more.

By 5PM I was dressed to

(Continued on page 11)



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## Day 14 (cont'd)

(Continued from page 10)

go to the Kingdom Hall. I stood in the hotel lobby at 5:30 waiting for Angelo to pick me up. When Angelo & his family arrived, I found out that they spoke virtually no English at all. So I wasn't going to an English speaking congregation.

When I got to the Hall, everyone was excited to see me. Fortunately there were a few young people there who were taking English in school to serve as translators. The whole process was exhilarating. I would slowly say some English words combined with pantomime to some teenager, they would take a second to "digest" it all, then they would turn to the other person & converse with them in Italian. The answer would come back to me in English & more gestures. I felt like I was in Dances with Wolves!

I sat through the whole meeting not understanding a word, but happy to be there nevertheless. It is amazing to be a part of something so international & united! Next time I will make sure I learn some Italian first.

I went to bed with my faith feeling strengthened.

## Day 16 Tues. 18 Pompeii-Vesuvius

For my last "historical day" of the tour I was going to see the ruins of Pompeii & then I would scale Mt. Vesuvius.

When we got to Pompeii, we met our tour guide, an older German woman named: Nina. She spoke in a thick accent, chain smoked, and carried an umbrella. (Just imagine Hitler's version of Mary Poppins.) Whenever she wanted to summon the people with her

## Day 15 Mon. 17 Capri

For my day trip out to the isle of Capri I had the option of taking an all day tour where I would learn about the history of the island & see many important sites. Or I could just decide to completely wing it, just get off at the harbour and walk around. I opted for the latter. I had learned so much already.

{In short, I learned later on that Capri, an island in the Bay of Naples off the Southern tip of Italy, was a get-away place for Emperor Tiberius. }

When the boat docked at Capri I just started walking. I walked up a steep narrow path that led past people's backyards. I mingled with the natives as they worked on their gardens, walked to work or just sat around. As I got higher and higher I

tour, she would yell out "**NINA!!!**" and we would scurry over to her like rats. Believe it or not, I really liked her, but then again, I was always a masochist.

Anyhow, Pompeii was fascinating. We walked around for 3 hours and yet only saw a tiny portion of the 3 square miles of excavated ruins. The moral of the tour was, "*Hey idiots, don't build a town next to an active volcano!*"

{It reminded me of the bit done by this comedian who said we shouldn't send food to starving people who live in a desert. Send them luggage. Of course they're starving! **IT'S A DESERT!** Nothing grows there. **Move where the food is!!**}

looked out towards the water and saw one of the most awesome views I've seen.

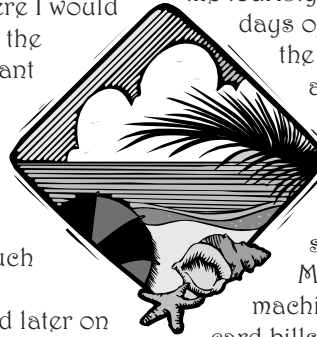
Gradually, I made it away from the areas where natives lived, to the touristy & resort areas. Of all the days of the entire trip, this was the one where I felt the pure and unadulterated sensation of being in another dimension. As I stood on the edge of cliffs, overlooking the shores of Capri, Microsoft, computers, fax machines, traffic jams, (& credit card bills) were simply a distant surreal memory from 1000 years ago.

When I direct my *second* Oscar winning film, I'll get a villa here.

To make a long story short, my day on Capri was a day in which I accomplished nothing & learned nothing. Yet felt *everything*.

Then we scaled Mt. Vesuvius & looked down into the crater. We could also see where lava had flowed down the side. By the way, Vesuvius is well overdue to erupt again. Yet people are building homes *right next to it!* Of course these will be the same people crying on the news when everything they own gets destroyed. (If they are lucky enough to live.) Don't send them money, send them maps & advice. **Move where the volcanoes aren't!!**

I went back to the hotel & packed once again for my return to Rome. Shirley, Katy & I wandered around Sorrento for a few hours, then I called it an early evening.

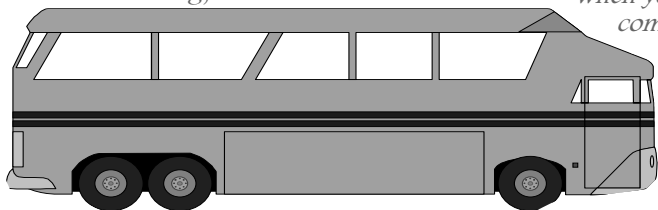


## Day 17 Wed. 19 - Rome

The drive back to Rome seemed shorter than it's four hours. Once we got there, around 1PM, I had the day to myself. My plane would leave at 6AM the next morning, which would mean I would have to leave the hotel at 4:30AM the latest.

A cab to the airport would cost approximately \$50 US. As cheap as I am, I considered that if I actually started walking *at that moment*, I could get there in time for my flight the next morning, for free, but I (wisely) decided against that.

I decided I would take my life into my own hands & try to take a bus into downtown Rome. I had no idea how much a bus costed, but I stood at a bus stop and waited with everyone else. (All non-English speaking people who couldn't tell me squat.) So I jumped on the bus, when it came, I held out money in my hands trying to ask the bus driver, "How Much?". The bus driver was behind a huge glass barrier that seemed to be nuclear warhead proof & he completely ignored me. I



looked around the bus waving my money saying "How Much?" in a fake Italian accent. I was ignored. It dawned on me that this is probably why they kidnap and torture stupid Americans in some countries. I looked like a moron.

Then, a revelation hit me: *Just slip in the back and stay quiet. Keep your money in your hand. Get off*

*when your stop comes up. If*

*someone says something, just act like a stupid American tourist (no stretch!) and hand them the money.* Well, the last stop at the Vatican came & I jumped off with everyone else. Viola! Free bus ride.

I wandered in the Vatican courtyards & in and out of stores. Eventually, it was time to head back. This time I simply walked on the bus, like I knew what I was doing and sat right in the back. When We got to my hotel, I walked off carelessly. YES!! Livin' on the edge!

Later I found out that you are supposed to buy a ticket before getting on the bus & that there are surprise inspections on the city buses where they check passengers for tickets. You

can be in "a lot of trouble" if you don't have your ticket. Hopefully I wouldn't wake up with a horse's head in my bed! By the way, since I was back in Rome, I put the wet towel back under my door before going to sleep.

I also did the "final pack". All my gifts, clothes, souvenirs, etc. were wrapped & packed away neatly. The trip of a lifetime had come to an end.

## Day 18 Thurs. 20 - Rome->USA

My taxi came right on time to take me to the airport. I flew from Rome to London & then boarded the "real plane" for my ten hour flight back to Seattle.

I was looking forward to using the 10 hours, to sleep, read, relax and savour the many fine experiences of the last 18 days.

Wouldn't you know it, I got stuck next to some religious nut who wanted to talk to me the whole way? (*Don't you hate when that happens?*) Nevertheless, I did



catch some shut-eye. As I slept, a thousand images flashed through my head of the many things I had seen. From bloodthirsty ravens, to gondolas, to the Alps, to DaVinci's grave, the trip was over, but the memory could **never** be taken away!

When the plane touched down at Sea-Tac airport in Washington State, I let out a breath that I felt I had been holding for an eternity. Back in one piece!

*'And he looked at all that was around him, and he saw that it was good...'*

# Homebound

## Epilogue

By now, you must be tired of hearing about my life. I could babble on for more & more pages, but no doubt you are anxious to get to work on the letter or card you are sending to me, so I don't wish to distract you.

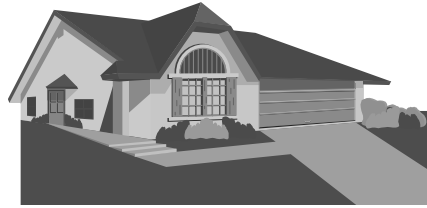
In short, I came back from Europe & signed closing papers on my house *the next day*. I received the keys the following Wednesday & started moving in. However, doing things my usual way hustle & bustle way, I took no time off from work & tried to do it in the evenings.

On top of this, I had **HUGE** responsibilities at the Kingdom Hall for the next two weeks. That weekend there was a two-day (all day) convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. The week after that, we had the Circuit & District Overseer visiting our Kingdom Hall. This required lots of time from me, due to my being a Ministerial Servant (what some call a deacon). Also, I had the Ministerial Servants Training School on "Thanksgiving Weekend".

Of course during all this I had to maintain a job also.

But somehow, through all this, Elaine and I managed to get moved into my new place. It's a 4 bedroom split level, in a nice family neighbourhood. (So far no men in white sheets have shown up to greet me.) Elaine & I will slowly unpack over the next couple of months. **Hazle Manor** will be the premiere showplace of the Northwest!

## Hazle Manor



# CHAOS

During a meeting of the Black MBA Association, a mad gunman goes on a rampage and kills 14 people, before being killed himself. Immediately accusations of a racist plot are hurled around; tensions build. But based on an anonymous tip, a student finds out that the gunman might be connected to the FBI. Working with an ambulance chasing lawyer and a renegade female police detective, he seeks to uncover *the truth* behind the massacre... before the city explodes...

## Writing

Since the last version of *The Journal*. I have continued trying to improve my screenwriting skills. I have yet to sell a screenplay, but I keep chugging away.

About a year and a half ago, I watched what would become one of my all time favorite movies, 12 Angry Men. This is a fifties movie, starring Henry Fonda. The entire movie takes place in a room where jurors are deliberating on a trial. Eleven jurors are ready to convict the defendant, while Henry Fonda's character wants to acquit. One by one he is able to convince them to acquit. Anyhow, I thought that this would be an interesting movie to remake. This time with men & women of various backgrounds, ages, etc. on the jury. So one day, I just started to write. My end goal was to contact Ted Turner, owner of the original, and see if I could get him to purchase my 12 Angry People script. To make a long story short, Turner was scratched as an option & my script was too similar to the original to be marketed. So I was in limbo.

In the midst of being a little downhearted, I began piecing together the outline for my best work yet: CHAOS. It's a mystery-thriller that combines the setup & pace of a John Grisham novel/movie, with the intrigue & complexity of a Tom Clancy novel/movie.

I think '95 could be my year.



## Life, Death & Other Stuff

Nineteen Hundred and Ninety Four has probably been my toughest year emotionally since leaving college. After working on a very tough, stressful project at Microsoft for 2.5 years, we finally completed things on a sunny Friday in June. We popped champagne & celebrated. For once I wouldn't have to work on a weekend. I was going to lounge around all day Saturday.

Saturday morning, I got a call from my Mom in NJ. (Some of you may know the story from here.) My cousin John, **20 years old**, had taken his life. It's funny how in the twinkling of an eye things change. I threw some things in a suitcase and caught the first plane home. As I sat that there on the plane, I felt a whirlwind of emotion, and yet complete nothingness at the same time. In the last 10 years, I could count on one hand the number of times I've had to deal with death.

I remembered that last fall (1993) a friend of mine, Lisa, early thirties, had a stroke and died. I hadn't seen her for a few weeks & decided to give her, and another friend Lori a call. I happened to call Lori first & she told me that Lisa had just "died" the day before. Life support was just keeping her heart beating. We all went to the hospital and sat with her mother as she made the decision to pull the plug. Lisa had been sick for years, yet she fought valiantly to hold onto her life. *How could John decide to give it away?*

I got home and hugged my parents. It was unnerving to see my Dad, a man who has seen so much, and is always the rock in times of trouble, be knocked speechless. There were no answers or explanations. Without their even saying a word, I could see my parents comfort each other with just a casual glance from across the room. We went to my Aunt's

house, John's home, and we all comforted each other. At this time, I remembered that memorials aren't for the dead, they're for the **living**, who must continue.

So many things still bug me about it all. Most of all is just that we'll never know what was on his mind that final morning.

When I returned to Washington, Elain and I sat and talked for a while. I did one of those Big Brother "*If You're Ever Depressed Come and Talk To Me (tm)*" things. And we moved on. Or so I thought. One night, weeks later, Elain & I watched this movie that dealt with the grief that survivors of a plane crash were feeling. as we watched the end credits roll in the dark, I could hear Elain crying. We stayed up half the night talking about birth, death and everything in-between. I knew for sure at that moment, we would never be quite the same again.

As I shared my feelings with people, I realized that so many people had faced this with a friend or a family member. These last few months, have been times of deep reflection, taking stock, examining faith and cleaning out emotional closets.

All my life I've believed that Jehovah God has something much better in mind for man than this life here. A world where "death will be no more, neither will be mourning nor outcry nor pain anymore." {*Revelation 21:4*} Yet, if we are to make it to that world we must make ourselves stronger **now**, or their won't be a tomorrow.

In the last year I've seen a lot of pain in people that I care about. Now more than every before I am acutely aware of it. Marriages of some have fallen apart. Chronic depression has driven some over the edge.

Before you strap on the violins, good things happened too. One of the foremost is a friend

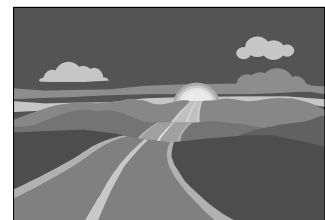
fighting off alcoholism & being sober for over a year and a half! Friends my age are married, some on the road to parenthood. And all along the way through 1994, good friends have provided fun & support.

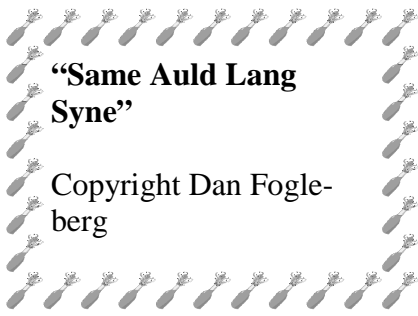
This year has been tough on a few of my friendships/relationships (*or whatever annoying words we have for things!*). There have been some real roller coasters. Feelings are so gentle. When they are injured, they can heal & maybe even get stronger, but they aren't as they were before. Then of course when you throw romantic interests into the Potion of Life, you get something that can be sweet and life-sustaining if done right, painful & crippling if done wrong. It's frustrating to find yourself going down a road & realizing that there isn't an easy U-turn to take you back. I've seen tears & been reduced to them myself.

Perhaps 1995 will be a better year in that regard. Something that feels right will be there. But until then, I am committed to living my life to the fullest, honoring my Creator & fitting everything else in around that.

1994 will be remembered forever by me as a year of triumphs and tragedies. ***But then again isn't every year?***

Most of you will be receiving **The Journal** around late December, early January. Try not to get to depressed around the holidays. It's just the "*Same Auld Lang Syne*". For each of you out there, please find *something* or *someone* you love, and hold on to it!





“Same Auld Lang Syne”

Copyright Dan Fogleberg

Met my old lover in a grocery store  
 Snow was falling Christmas Eve  
 Stole behind her in the ????  
 And I touched her on her sleeve.

She didn't recognize my face at first  
 But then her eyes flew open wide  
 She went to hug me and she spilled her purse  
 And we laughed until we cried.

We took our groceries to the checkout stand  
 The food was totalled up and bagged  
 We stood their lost in our embarassment  
 And the conversation dragged

We went to have ourselves a drink or two  
 Couldn't find an open bar  
 We bought a six pack at the liquor store  
 And we drank it in her car.

She said she'd married her an architect  
 Who kept her warm and safe and dry  
 She would have liked to say she loved the man  
 But she didn't like to lie.

I said the years had been a friend to her  
 And that her eyes were still as blue  
 But in those eyes I wasn't sure  
 If I saw doubt or gratitude

She said she saw me in the record store  
 And that I must be doing well  
 I said the audience was ?????? to me  
 But the traveling was hell

=====Chorus=====

We drank our toast to innocence  
 We drank our toast to now  
 Tried to reach beyond the emptiness  
 But neither one knew how

We drank our toast to innocence  
 We drank our toast to time  
 ?????? in our eloquence  
 Another Auld Lang Syne  
 =====Chorus=====

The beer was empty and our tongues were tired  
 Running out of things to say  
 She gave a kiss to me as I got out  
 And I watched her drive away  
 Just for a moment I was back in school  
 And felt that old familiar pain  
 As I turned to make my way back home  
 The snow turned into rain...