

A Long Arduous Journey
or A Mundane Story
You Chose

Prologue

I have read some of the best authors. Steven King and Anne Rice to name a couple. One of the things that makes them so great is their ability to make the most mundane travel interesting. During their tales leading to the most dramatic mind boggling scenes, they describe the surroundings in such a poetic and creative way that just reading the prelude is almost as exciting as the main event.

I expect to never come close to that, but I try my best.

The Main Story:

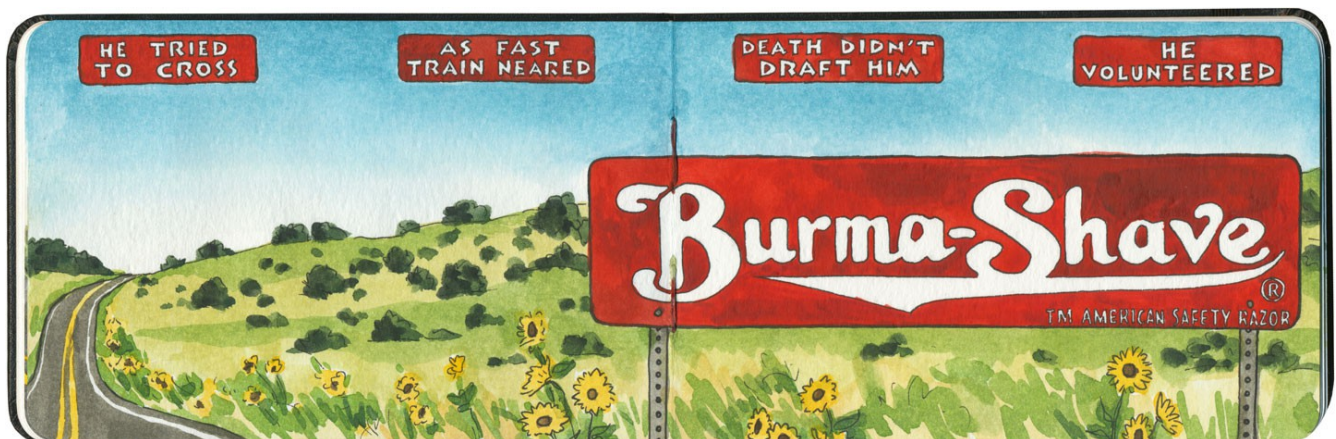
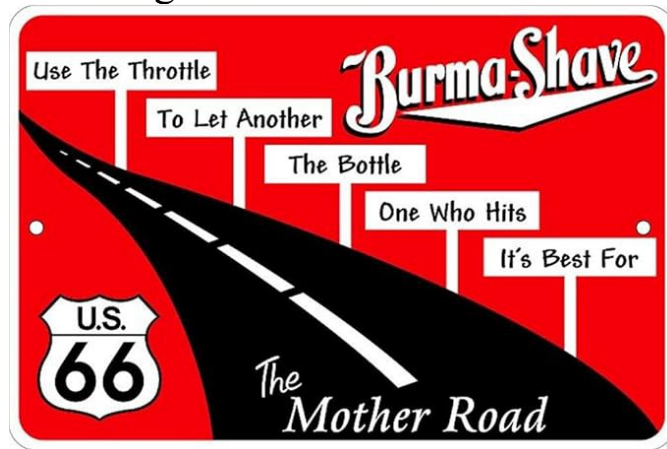
I am driving down a road with two lanes both ways. There is little traffic. Still I am switching lanes back and forth. Why? One lane has unfilled pot holes or rough surface. I just move over to avoid the rattle. I like a smooth ride. My life has not been a smooth ride. It is a long story, but why else would you be here if you didn't want to hear a long story.

I am listening to an eight track of the Allman Brothers “Rambling Man” playing. Yes, they really had those things back in my time. I guess that kind of dates me. I had already listened to Glen Campbell's “By the Time I Get to Phoenix”. This was appropriate music for me. I had just left my wife and was not sure if I would ever see her again.

Along the side of the road I see bottle caps among the weeds and trash sparkling in the sunlight. In the future, the government will require beer and soda companies to put pull tabs that remain on the cans. They will also make the cans valuable by charging fees for recycling that can be redeemed. This will be a boom for the homeless and the environmentally conscience.

Sometimes the government actually passes smart laws. Just like the seat belt

and child safety seats that have saved countless lives. There will be signs along the highways that are actually commercials. Charlie's liquor store has adopted this section of the highway to clean up the trash. For now, I just look for the next Burma Shave signs. Route 66 is famous for those.



My wife worried about everything. Me, I worried about nothing. We were not a good match. Still, we found ourselves together and tried to make the best of it.

I didn't like sitting around in a comfortable home. Let me rephrase that. I liked a comfortable home, but I seek adventure and I couldn't find it there.

My wife trusted me to not put her in danger. When we first got together, I took her camping. She had never done this sort of thing before. The places I took her did not have any dangerous animals. Coyotes, lizards, hawks, these kind of creatures. Yes, they did have rattlesnakes, scorpions, and Gila monsters, but they would not enter our safe tent. She asked me if the tent was safe from caterpillars. This was her big fear, not the critters that I mentioned.

I had taken her snorkeling in Hawaii and Cancun. This was way above her comfort level, but she did accompany me and felt safe as long as I was beside her. One time I took her to an aquarium where you donned oxygen breathing helmets and descended 20 feet below the surface to come face to face with aquatic creatures. On the decent down the ladder, she immediately fell down to the bottom floor. I thought our adventure was over, but she stood right up and we continued on for another 20 minutes. I was the one who felt in danger. The water pressure compressed my chest and I felt constricted. I was wondering how I would survive a heart attack 20 feet under water.

So when I told her that I wanted to take a plane trip to Alaska to fish for salmon and steel head trout, she agreed to go with me. She should have stayed home.

A Long Arduous Journey *(Chapter 2)*

We flew to Seattle where my wife had a cousin. We had been to Seattle several times. Once on a cruise to Alaska and another time to rent a car for a road trip to Canada. Her cousin and husband treated us to one of my favorite

restaurants. Din Tai Fung. They specialized in dim sum style Chinese food, one of my favorites. This type of food originated in Quanzhou, China next to Hong Kong. We ordered Shanghai soup dumplings along with several other delicacies. This place was not on the cheap side like some Chinese restaurants, but their food quality and preparation was top notch. The dumplings get their name due to use of a gelatin pork mix that melts when steamed. The best way to eat them is with a spoon and bite into them to release their savory juice.

The restaurant's name is derived from three parts. (Din) translates to Wok. They use woks to cook many of their dishes, including fried rice, fried noodles, and greens. (Tai) translates to peace. The restaurant has a peaceful setting for the guests to enjoy an authentic dining experience. (Fung) translates to abundance.



Seattle has an interesting history.

The city was first built at a low elevation. During storms and high tides ocean water would inundate the city. When flush toilets were first introduced

to prosperous patrons who lived up in the higher hills, they experienced unexpected horrible plumbing problems. The toilet drains were made of wood. When the ocean water rose up, it would cause the drains to back up and their toilets would explode in a shower of pee and poo.

Several times fires destroyed the down town area. The city officials decided to rebuild the city on higher ground. In fact, they just covered the old city buildings with dirt and built a new city on top. Later some entrepreneur decided to make a museum of sorts. He started a tour of what is now called, Seattle underground.



Picture of Seattle Underground.

You can see people walking on the street above you while looking through glass panes on the tour.

Picture of the street view from underground.

Author's note: My real wife Lili and I did that tour. Complete buildings, like banks and department stores are still standing 15 feet below street level. A



really interesting tour.

At this time, Seattle was nice. Besides being the location of the “Space Needle” they had an awesome market area called “Pike's Place”.



In the future, this area will almost be shut down due to the city government's failure to enforce their laws against crime and homelessness.

To continue:

I was kind of surprised when my wife agreed to accompany me on this fishing trip. She seemed as excited as I was. I think this can be attributed to her first experience with fishing. She had never fished before. Even though she was born in a city that had two rivers joined at the center. One of them, the third largest in the world. The fish caught in the rivers would not have passed the FDA certification. In fact, factories often dumped their industrial waste into the rivers. One year, hundreds of residents along the river bank died due to a toxic spill. It had caused an international incident because the poison had flowed across an adjoining country's border. (True story)

I had taken her camping and we were lucky to fish at a place that had just been stocked. There was a nice pool under a bridge. Every time I cast out I got a bite, but my fish always got loose. She caught four nice trout. I was the experienced fisherman, but she out did me. In fact, I told her we had to quit because it was getting dark. She was reluctant to leave with more “free” fish still left in the stream. Ha! free fish. She didn't realize that I had paid more than \$100 for both of our state fishing licenses. I could have bought lobster and saved some money.

Fishing isn't called catching. It is the fun of the outdoors and the trill of trying to hook something for a fresh dinner.

We took a flight to Anchorage Alaska. I had booked a bush pilot to take us to a remote lake where the fishing was supposed to be the best.

The weather report said a storm was brewing. I asked if this was going to be a problem? He said he had flown many times in weather worse than this so no worries. He was a seasoned veteran so I had confidence in his assessment. Unfortunately, seasoned also meant elderly. Two hours into the flight he had a heart attack. I was sitting in the co-pilots chair and I told my wife not to panic because I could fly the plane. She said, I didn't know you were a pilot. Actually I wasn't, but I had practiced many times with Microsoft flight simulator. I did not tell her that I could always take off fine but could never land without crashing. This time was no different. I spotted a likely place with a long meadow. It was lucky that it was not in the dead of winter. There

was snow on the ground, but it did not cover everything.

I crashed just like in the simulator, but neither of us were hurt. I couldn't say the same about the plane. The radio was destroyed in the crash and the landing gear was broke. No take off possible.

You lied to me. You said you could fly the plane. I didn't lie to you. I flew the plane didn't I? I just never told you I couldn't land it.

So now what to do? The pilot had been armed with a 357 magnum pistol. That was a good thing. I had only brought my hiking stick and my Rambo knife. The knife came with a compass in the handle and some fishing line and a lure. We had brought our own fishing tackle so starving was not going to be an issue. The knife also had a flint in the handle to aid in making a fire. Even though it was not winter, we were far enough north that the nighttime temperature was always below freezing. Water was abundant, but freezing water and snow will not sustain you unless you can boil it. There is not enough heat in your body to compensate for the ice and snow.

I removed the pilot's body from the plane. At least for now, the plane provided some protection from the elements. My wife was near panic mode. I said to her, when did I ever not protect you? Don't worry, this is just an adventure that we will talk about for years to come. I really felt that way. I reassured her that we were safe and that I had a plan. I said, don't worry, there are no caterpillars this far north. That brought a smile to her lips.

The truth was we really were in danger. Not knowing exactly where we were and no way to contact rescue, we might be stuck here for a while.

What should we do? Wait here for a rescue that might never arrive or try to move south.

I decided we should stay in the plane tonight and then try to travel down stream and find some civilization.

A Long Arduous Journey (Chapter 3)

The next morning we left the plane and started following the river down stream. Instead of taking our fishing poles, I just keep my hand line. This is a reel with fishing line wound around that you could throw out. I also kept some lures and some bait in a jar.



After half day's journey, we spotted a old style log cabin. Thinking our luck was changing for the better, we hurried down to the entrance. The cabin door had been ripped off of its hinges. As we entered the doorway we witnessed what looked like a hurricane had gone through the center of the dinning area. No indication of any human presence. Looking at the destruction, I surmised the former inhabitant had been killed by a Grizzly or Kodiak bear.

This reminded me of the true story of Treadwell. He had lived among the Grizzly bears for 13 years claiming that they were friendly to him. One summer, when he failed to respond to a radio call, a rescue team only found shredded garments from him and his girlfriend Amie. A video recording that had been set up only had his and her screams recorded as they were torn to shreds by his “friendly” bears.

There was no radio or other means of contact with outside authorities so we were still in about the same spot. At least we felt we had a safe shelter to stay out of the cold climate. A storm had been brewing and this was a lucky find for us. At least at the time it seemed so.

We scored a first aid kit and there were still some canned goods in the pantry.

I had caught some fish on our trek down river. We had a dinner of fried trout and peaches for dessert.

I re-positioned the door as best as I could and we took advantage of the bed that was still in tact. Our slumber was interrupted by a big crash. The front door had been knocked down again and now we were facing the same menace the former occupant had encountered. I was not at such a disadvantage as the former resident. I had the 357 mag pistol that I had taken from the pilot.

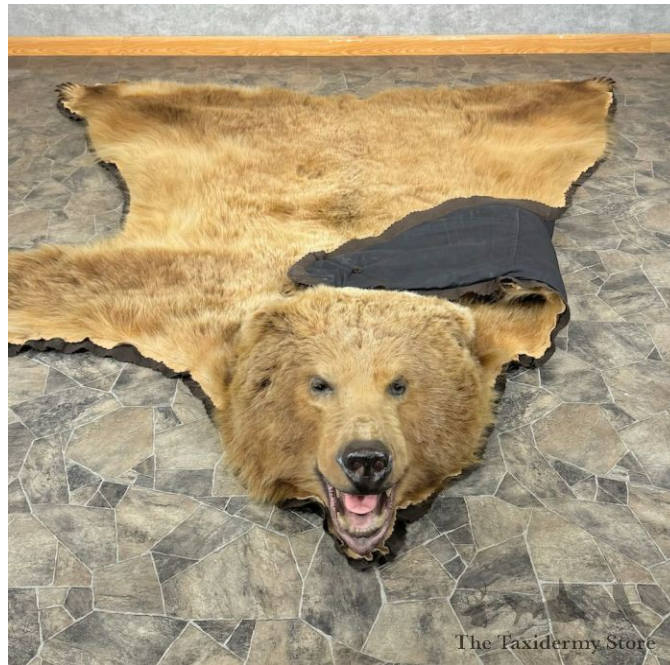


The bear roared through the living room and appeared in the bedroom doorway. Once these monsters taste human flesh, they crave it even more. It took all six rounds fired at point blank before the beast dropped dead in the doorway. Now my most lethal weapon had been spent.

My Rambo knife came in handy carving up as much meat as we could carry. I also skinned the bear. This heavy winter coat would come in handy for our next encounter. I smoked the bear meat and salted it. We could carry this with us and it would sustain us for weeks.

Author's note:

I have eaten bear, elk, deer, rattlesnake, and wild rabbit meat. Gamy, but not unpleasant.



I let my wife wear the coat, but of course I took the head off. She was scared enough at times without that. Ha!

I think our welcome at the abandoned cabin was worn out. It was time to venture out again. The next morning we left the cabin and continued our walk down river. Not far from the cabin we heard some howling. Not sure what we would find, I had fashioned my hiking pole to a long wooden branch. This made a crude spear. Now this was the only weapon I had.

As we approached the sound, I saw a wolf had been caught in a game trap. He looked undernourished, but still a substantial specimen. In fact, I didn't know too much about wild animals. If I had to guess, I would peg him as an Alpha male. He growled at us as we approached. I could see one of his legs was injured by the trap. The first thing I did was throw him some scraps from our bear meat. We stayed far enough away so that he felt safe enough to eat our treat. I didn't want to leave him in this trap. It probably belonged to the departed cabin resident.

After letting him devour our offering, I cautiously approached him and used the bear coat to throw on top of him. This allowed me to pounce on him. It was all I could do to contain him. I think he weighed almost as much as me.

I held him down long enough for my wife to bandage his injured leg. Then I released him from the trap. He quickly bound away and growled at us from a distance. Not sure if he would attack us, I had my spear ready in case.

He just sauntered away. I expected that would be the last we would see of him.

We continued our journey along the river bank. I was surprised to see our wolf survivor following us. Was he still thinking of attacking or did he remember us as a source of food? He was still limping on his injured leg and I expected soon he would chew off the bandages that my wife had applied.

These wild animals have their own methods of revival. Even their own saliva is a healing agent. On our next sighting, I noticed that the bandages were gone and that his limp was less evident. I started dropping small chunks of the salted bear meat. We had plenty to share. He would stop and devour each piece that we left. Maybe in his weakened state, his own ability to catch his own food was reduced. I decided to give him a name. I named him Fang.

Fang is a gender-neutral name with Chinese roots that has different meanings, depending on which characters are used to write it. While the name may remind you of sharp, pointed teeth, this name's meaning has a much softer bite to it. Maybe this name was a tribute to Jack London's novel, "The Call of the Wild"



The weather took a turn for the worse. A cold rain showered down on us. We needed to get some shelter and do it fast. Hypothermia was the most dangerous threat to us at the present. I found a large pine tree that shielded us from most of the rain and wind. Still our clothes were wet and we needed to

dry them. A fire was most needed at this point. I gathered as much dry wood as I could find and made a fire pit. Using my flint, I ignited some mossy grass. The fire built up and we started to warm up. We needed to take off most of our outside clothes and dry them on the fire. When we were stripped down to the bare minimum, a big pile of snow fell from the upper branches and doused out our fire. This would have been the end of us. This is what happened to Jack London in the “Call of the Wild”. But he didn't have a pint of airplane fuel in his backpack. I quickly brushed the snow away from our fire pit and dumped some fuel into the center. I almost burnt myself when I used the flint to start up the flames again. It exploded in a big ball of flame. We were back in business. No more snow fell from above and our clothes were drying nicely. Our fate took another turn for the worse. Our fire was warm enough, but a new menace nightmare presented itself. A pack of wolves had seen us and were waiting in the wings. I had gathered enough wood to keep us warm through the night, but not enough to keep a pack of wolves at bay. All night long we could see their menacing eyes reflected in our dying fire light.



When it looked like our luck had run out, a miracle occurred. Fang jumped in between the wolf pack and us. He was indeed an Alpha male. His injury had healed enough so that no others were willing to challenge his position.

They say “No good deed goes unpunished.” In this case, our good deed saved our lives.

By morning light, our clothes were dry and the wolf pack had dispersed.

A Long Arduous Journey
(Chapter 4)

We had survived the night. I left a generous chunk of bear meat to thank Fang for his help. I expected that he would return to his pack and resume the position as leader that he had shown he was.

The last I saw of him, he was watching us depart. My compass showed we were indeed heading south. Not that we needed a compass. All rivers flow north to south except for the Nile.

During this period my wife started to doubt my ability to keep her safe. I don't blame her for that. Although the plane crash was not directly my fault, it was my desire to experience wilderness fishing that had resulted in our current dangerous situation. If not for Fang, we would have perished early this morning when our fire went out.

We had been flying for about an hour when the pilot had a heart attack. I am just guessing, but when we crashed, we had been heading north east. The river we were following would eventually either lead back to the ocean or cross some state highway.

If we got that far, it would not be soon. I expected we had at least 50 miles of rough terrain to cross.

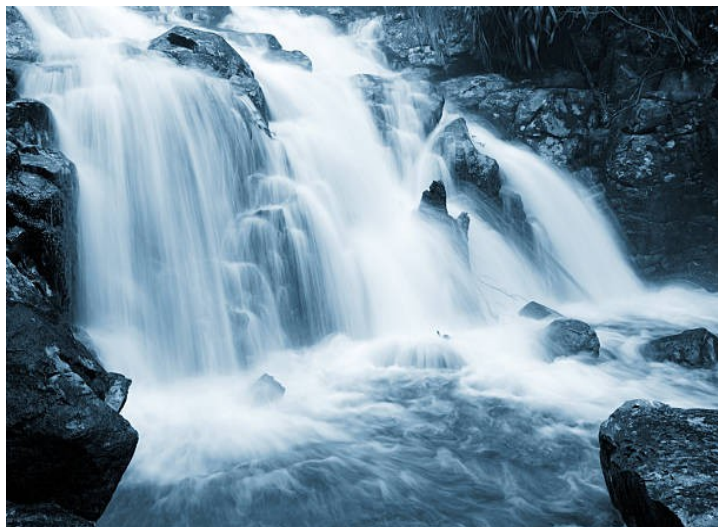
Why not use the river to transport us faster? All we needed was a canoe. Maybe providence was shining down on us. We did find a canoe of sorts.



Indigenous Indians had lived and survived in this wilderness long before we invaders took away their land. We found a carved out hollow log that someone had almost finished. It seemed intact enough to float. We didn't have any paddles, but low hanging tree limbs that I hacked away with my Rambo knife provided us with the remnants we needed to make some paddles. I left the end branches on. We tested our makeshift boat and we were able to maneuver using our crude paddles.

We spent most of the day making great progress. I was thinking my wife might reconsider her previous doubts about my abilities. I held that thought until we hit the rapids.

Communications between us had always been an issue. English was not her native language and in stressful situations, I had a tendency to raise my voice to compensate for lack of understanding. Some people used to raise their voices when talking to a blind man. "I'm blind not deaf was always the response." My fault entirely, but something I had never learned to change. This was indeed one of those situations. I spotted the rapids too late to avoid. Paddle left, now right! No, no, not like that! Wrong way! My voice rose with each missed command. Frustration finally got the best of her and she just threw her paddle away. Now I was trying to navigate alone. We arrived at a slower part of the rapids and I maneuvered the canoe over to the bank just in time to avoid going over a water fall that would surely have killed us or at least dumped us upside down in the freezing water.



We found a rocky enclave that gave us some shelter from the wind. Later, as we warmed ourselves over the fire, I apologized for my previous anger. I think it was too late to smooth things over. She said, "If we ever get out of here alive, I think we need to re-evaluate our relationship." Relationship? I thought we weren't in a relationship, I thought we were in a marriage. For richer or poorer, in health and sickness, etc. I should have included "in danger and safety". Now was not the time to have this discussion. We were lucky to not have lost our stuff. I still had some airplane fuel left, some bear meat, and my crude spear. I used my hand line to catch some fish. The BBQ'd fish helped improve our mood.

The next morning we hauled our canoe down the slope around the waterfall and continued our paddle. This time I asked her what is the translation of left and right in Chinese. Our coordination improved dramatically.

This reminded me of the time I had attempted to teach her to drive. She had never learned in her own country. Really not needed because they had cheap public transportation. Bus rides for 10c and taxi's for \$2 for 20 miles.

If you ever want a quick divorce, try to teach your wife how to drive. At first, she couldn't even navigate around empty streets. If you keep going, you are going to hit that curb. I can't tell you how many times I yelled, "Stop the car, got out and took over." It wasn't until her son visited us for a couple weeks and took her driving every day. Giving her instructions in Chinese. That was the key. The next time I rode with her, I saw a vast improvement and actually had hope that she would get her license. Eventually she did. A monumental achievement in my book.

It took us four more days before we ran into highway Route 1. We hitched a ride with a trucker and was back in Anchorage the next day. We hadn't encountered any more hazards. It had been 2 weeks since we had been lost in the wilderness. The relief on both of our faces when we got back to civilization was not faked.

Love on the Rocks
(A song by Neil Diamond)
A Long Arduous Journey
(Chapter 5)

Back home in our comfortable (safe) home, the former distance between us still persisted. Her position was that she didn't feel safe with me anymore. She didn't want to experience anymore adventurous tours like the last one. She said she had gone with me on numerous occasions because she wanted to be close to me. I have never been a close person. Some of my former wives would attest to that. I told her that it was true, I had taken her places that was not on her favorite's list, but I had also occupied her on some trips that were boring to me. Maybe she was right. We needed to re-visit our "relationship".

Since there was no reason to continue this discussion because it seemed like a stalemate, I thought I should leave for a while to give us both some space and time to think.

This whole thing left me despondent. I didn't even feel like continuing my job. I told my boss that I was quitting. He had heard my reasons and I guess he had experience with these kinds of feeling himself. He suggested that instead of quitting, why not take a trip back east to handle some technical problems related to my job and expertise.

That is how I ended up on Route 66 driving east. This did give me the opportunity to think. No relationship or marriage is perfect. There are always things that rub you the wrong way. But thinking about it, I realized that all these things were minor. Someone said, you always hurt the ones you love. That is because they are always the closest to you when you are sick, frustrated, and angry. Major problems are infidelity, in-law issues, and financial crisis. I have faced some of these and resolved them in one way or another. "So don't throw the baby out with the bath water"!

"Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater" is an idiomatic expression for an avoidable error in which something good or of value is eliminated when trying to get rid of something unwanted.

In other words, don't give up the good thing you have because of some small issues. There has to be a way to work this out in an agreeable manor.

Some mundane events:

(I told you this would happen.)

My job involved designing and testing electronic equipment. Our customers were the CIA, NASA, and Fort Meade on one side and TV stations on the other. One task my boss gave me made me extremely nervous. I had to give a class to a group of engineers and technicians on how to check out our equipment. I knew the subject well, but speaking in front of a group was more frightening than facing the Grisly bear. I had prepared a kind of service directory and had made enough copies to hand out. At the beginning of the class, I just let everyone read my notes. After about 15 minutes, I opened the discussion with a question and answer session. This approach worked for me and my class was a success. Several student told me this was the most comprehensive and clear description of how the equipment worked. It would be many years before I got over my fear of public speaking. I would later find out that it was my high blood pressure that was the root of my problem.

I also visited a TV station. *Frank Gifford was doing a commercial. They asked him to do several takes and I was impressed with his professionalism. While departing the facility, a pretty receptionists told me the company was having a party and asked if I wanted to attend. Her smiled implied more than just an invitation. Why do these things always happen when I am not really available? If I had accepted the invitation, I am sure it would have been a pleasurable experience, but I was still married and guilt would have followed me everywhere.

*Frank Gifford was an actor, football player and most notably a sports commentator.

This short period away from each other did have some beneficial effect. They say (Absence makes the heart grow fonder!) The corollary to that is (Out of sight, out of mind!). I am glad the former took precedence.

My wife agreed to meet me on my way back home. She flew to a midway city and we finished my trip back home together.

I was thinking of a way to make up for our previous near death trip. I suggested that we make a trip to her former country. She had not seen her family since she had arrived in the US years before.

My wife wanted to visit longer than I felt comfortable, so she left in advance of me. A week later, I boarded a plane to join her. The flight attendant at LAX said that my baggage would be transferred to the final destination. I thought this was unusual. Don't I have to go through customs? Sometimes yes, sometimes no depending on the receiving airline custom's procedures. I had to fly to Beijing before being transferred to Chongqing. After a sleepless 12 hour flight I arrived. I still had three hours before I needed to board my connecting flight. I approached the transfer desk and asked to get my boarding pass for Chongqueen. The female attendant didn't understand my request. She refused to give me a boarding pass. I didn't understand that I had pronounced my destination incorrectly. The correct pronunciation is "Chongching". Even though the word is Chongqing. She didn't understand what I was asking. In fact, she said something about my luggage. I was really confused at this point. I finally thought that maybe my luggage had not been transferred as promised. Sure enough, I found my luggage at the baggage carousel. It was the only one left. So now I thought everything was OK. I returned to the same desk. This time the attendant told me to go to the special desk. "No, please not the special desk! I had visions of torture and confinement. When I got there, another attendant, a guy this time, was looking through some books on his desk. I looked over and saw it was titled "No Fly List". Apparently my name had been on that list. What now? After 20 minutes of phone calls I was eventually cleared. Only now it was very close to my boarding time. I still had to go through customs. When I arrived there, they X-rayed my suitcase and all kinds of bells went off. I had to open it and they spent time searching through it. Finally I was cleared. I was sure my blood pressure was over the limit. I arrived at the boarding line and showed them my pass. They had given my boarding seat away to someone else because I was late. I thought I was screwed. Then they moved me to the

front of the line and gave me a seat in first class. As I sat down, they offered me Champaign and I dined on Peking duck. After my meal, I fell asleep for the rest of the flight.

Normally, I would not have even considered a trip like this, but Nixon had opened the doors to China and Chairman Mao had died in 1976. I figured it was safe enough.

How wrong I was.

A Long Arduous Journey (Chapter 6)

Author's note:

This chapter is dedicated to my wife who left her family and home country to take a chance on a virtual stranger with just the promise of a better life. A courage few possess. So far, so good! Some parts of this chapter are fiction and others I actually experienced. Knowing her, has enriched my life enormously and gave me a perspective on Chinese history few comprehend.

Beginning final chapter:

After my stressful air travel experience, I arrived in Chongqing tired but relieved. It took a couple days to shake off the jet lag and lower my stress level. The first couple weeks we did many of the touristy things. During WWII, an American general aided the Chinese in their war against Japan. Chongqing was also the headquarters of the “Flying Tigers” air combat group and became the provincial capital after Japan massacred nearly 300K civilians in the former capital know as the “Raping of Nanjing”. The Flying Tigers used to take off from sand bars on the Yangtze River to harass the Japanese bombers. They never could figure out where the airbase was. We visited the museum established in his name.

General Stillwell museum



Chongqing is known for their “Hot Pot” cuisine. A boiling cauldron of oil and peppers centered in the middle of the table allowed you to drop various vegetables and meats in to cook.



I tried it and after 10 minutes my tongue was numb and I was sweating profusely. I thought of calling 911. My favorite foods there were the street foods. In the morning, you could get a bowl of beef noodles for \$1. Many other foods were available like squid on a stick, or my wife's favorite, duck

tongue.

We took a taxi to Dazu. About an hour drive north.



Dazu rock art 1200 years old

One of the most interesting trips was to Xian.

The ancient city wall has a perimeter of 8 miles



This is where the Terracotta museum is located. The street food in Xian was among my favorite. The 4 star hotel we stayed in had both Chinese and American food at the breakfast buffet for only \$10. I had been missing something that Chinese food usually doesn't offer. Raw vegetables like lettuce and tomatoes were almost non-existent. I found a Subway and a McDonald's that was a welcome break from the usual.

Terracotta Warrior Solders



A farmer was digging a well and broke through the grassy cover that had been hiding this marvel for 2000 years.

Author's note. I bought a picture book in the Xian gift-store. The farmer who had discovered the pits was there and signed my book.

There were a total of 9 pits uncovered. The reason for these is still a mystery. Speculation is that these were placed at various locations to ward off invaders. Someone advancing would think these were sentries. I must have had a distant Chinese ancestors because this photo of a terracotta warrior archer looks suspiciously like me.



We visited Beijing and the Great Wall of China.



Back in Chongqing my wife wanted me to meet a few of her friends. She said that we would have lunch with them. I imagined a group of four or so. When she informed me that she had arraigned a lunch at a restaurant for 30 people, I was extremely concerned. How much would that cost me? I cashed in \$1000 worth of my American Express traveler's checks hoping that would be enough. As it turned out, I shouldn't have been so worried. Three tables of 10 guests with seafood, Chinese delicacies, and beer only cost me \$300. One of the guests gave me a silk tie from Hong Kong. I believe it was a Pierre Cardin. What I did not know at the time was that he was the Director of the Chinese CIA. That was one of my worries about visiting China at this time. Due to my job, I had a secret clearance. After the dinner, I was arrested and taken to a holding facility. Now my former worry after my visit to the "Special Desk" in Beijing came back to haunt me. I was interrogated and without giving up any secrets, confined to a Chongqing jail. The truth was, I didn't know any secrets. At least I was not tortured, not yet anyway. This guy was supposed to be one of my wife's friends.



Chongqing Jail

I found out later that this was the same jail that Chairman Mao's government

had imprisoned my wife's father for 6 months because he had a relative who had fled to Hong Kong. During Mao's reign as dictator, he had imprisoned many people and killed many who had been outed as dissenters. He began, what was called the "Cultural Revolution". He imprisoned scholars, doctors, and many influential persons. He sent many city people to the country side to work in the fields. My wife's sister was one who had to go at the age of 15. No money and having to provide for herself for food and shelter was traumatizing. The "Red Guard" accused many of dissent without proof.

This was around the time when students protested and many were gunned down and ran over in the 1989 Tienanmen Square protests and massacre.

I didn't have much hope for my fate. How was I going to get out of this mess? Where was Fang when I needed him? A week later, I was let out of jail. As it turned out, the CIA man really was my wife's friend. He had arraigned my release and my wife's relative, who spoke some English, told me I had to get out of China. How? They took my passport and money. We have arraigned a way for you to get to Hong Kong. My wife was told to return to the US and that things would be taken care of. She didn't know what that meant. Maybe, taken care of would give her the separation that she had thought she wanted.

There still was a way to smuggle people out of mainland China. Smuggle was the key word here. My wife's family friends employed a technique that was later used to help Tienanmen Square dissidents escape Chinese persecution.

It was called "The Yellow Bird Operation".

The operation obtained its name from the Chinese expression "The mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the yellow bird behind" (螳螂捕蟬，黃雀在後).

I first got to Guangzhou and someone contacted me. They took me to Chung Ying Street in Sha Tau Kok. One side belonged to Hong Kong, the other to mainland China. I was hidden there until it was arraigned for me to board a speed boat at night. They brought me to Hong Kong Island where I could get a new passport at the US Embassy.

I found out later that this operation cost \$25K US dollars. I never knew who paid this ransom. I assume it was my wife's CIA friend.

Finally back home in our safe comfortable home, the desire for adventure had been cured by these recent trips. Be careful what you wish for.

The End

A Long Arduous Journey *(Epilogue)*

In the interest of world peace, I put forth this notion. War has caused many young men and women to give up their lives for interests promoted by their governments. Brainwashed with patriotic notions and religious idealism, many enlist and go off to fight soldiers that they perceive as enemies, when in fact, they are just like them. Farmers, students, and family men and woman who are sent out to fight while the politicians sit back in their safe million dollar mansions and watch on TV. Unfortunately, this is a history that will repeat itself. It must be mankind's nature to war. Some other tribe or country has something that they lack, so they invade and try to steal their resources. How could a small country like Japan attack and invade such a large country like China? Japan had a formidable military and eyed China's rich natural resources and civilian population as a work force for the Imperial Empire. At that time, China was not united. Warlords ruled various territories. It wasn't until Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai Shek formed an alliance and stopped their civil war. They united to fight the invading foes. Later, they resumed their hostilities and Chiang Kai Shek fled to Taiwan. Taiwan is considered a democracy, but it's official status is as a Province of China.

Japan needed oil and the Philippines had surplus. After the US cut off their oil supply protesting their invasion of China, they bombed Pearl Harbor thinking it would keep America busy while they conquered that small island territory. How wrong they were.

Maybe John Lennon was really a prophet. Listen to the words of his song

“Imagine”.

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too
Imagine all the people
Livin' life in peace

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world

Great concept, but it's never going to happen in the near future.

Fact vs. fiction:

At one time in my life I was indeed traveling down Route 66 listening to the Allman Brothers Band “Rambling man” and Glen Campbell's “By the Time I get to Phoenix after leaving my wife. We did meet up again on the return trip.

My real job did involve dealing with products sold to the CIA, Fort Meade, and NASA. I really did teach a group of technicians about our products.

The Alaskan fishing trip was all fiction.

I really visited all the tourist places in China mentioned in the story. I even got the farmer who had discovered the terracotta warrior pit to autograph my copy of a documentary book I had bought in the gift shop about the discovery. I had dinner with 30 of my wife's friends and the bill was only \$300. The Chinese CIA guy was real, but I never got arrested. In fact, I was treated most cordially by all the people in China. I visited the CIA guy in his own home. He was just like me. Building stuff in his patio and cooking gourmet foods.

The part about Mao sending city dwellers to the countryside was true. My wife's sister got caught up in that and the trauma from that experience has greatly affected her mental health even today. My wife's father was jailed by Mao's government just because he had a relative flee to Hong Kong.

My wife's grandmother was part of a Japanese resistance group in Guangzhou called the Pearl River Column. She had gotten injured in some confrontation and her daughter made her quit.

I wrote a short story called “My China Doll” that is almost a documentary on the Japanese/Chinese war. If you are interested, it is an accurate account of what went on during that time.

The Final End