

The Storm Front

Way up North

I Survived "The Mall of America" by Eric Storm

Minnesota: Land of Enchantment. Ok, maybe not, but it's still a cool state. And I got to go there earlier this month.

I've been working for months on a project for a "major transportation firm" and we've been using a most wonderful program called StatPac that's made by a company (also called StatPac) in Minneapolis. Well, the original plan was to visit with them and then fly to Atlanta to meet with "the firm." But the people I was supposed to meet with got really busy so we canceled Atlanta.

So off I flew to a state that I knew darn little about except for the facts that they have great public radio and their baseball team was six games behind the A's at the time.

Even the flight was fun. For the first leg, the plane was almost empty, so I flipped up all the seat arms, stretched out, and slept all the way to Salt Lake City. But it started to look like the rest of my flight would be tough. When I got to the gate, there were a lot of other people there. Just imagine my joy and surprise when Delta moved me into



The chair John Corbett sat in

First Class. What fun. The food ain't that much better, but I do so enjoy the appetizer and dessert added to the meal. Besides, it's fun to pretend that I always fly First Class. It's a whole different world in front of that curtain. When they ask you if you want something to drink and you say "no," they act hurt and insist that they bring you SOMETHING.

Our First Female Correspondent

Dances with Mooses

by Kristine LiVecchi

C'mon Rog, I've driven across the country three times now and never once managed to strand myself in a desert (O.K. - so I've had to dig myself out of some dirt on Whiskey Mountain (just sounds rugged, doesn't it?) a couple of times - but the point is - I got out). (I like parenthesis). Though I didn't spend much time attracting vultures or dodging dobermans, my journey had its own charm.

I was originally supposed to track Timberwolves as a volunteer in

Please see "Eric" -- page 5

Please see "Kristine" -- page 5

From the Publisher:

Greetings,

Somehow, this turned into a Travel Issue. We have Kristine talking about most of the Western States, Roger talking about Las Vegas and The Grand Canyon, myself talking about Minnesota, Will talking about New York and Atlanta, and Chris talking about ants. Ok, it's *mostly* a Travel Issue.

I'd like to thank everyone who contributed. I'm trying to make this a monthly venture and your continued support is making that possible.

Now, for the rest of you: Christmas is coming soon. It's time to send me your story, poem, or picture about the season.

Go East, Young Man

The Big Apple

by Will Lewis

Did you know that the seat directly in front of the emergency exit--just the one directly in front, not the others in the same row--does not recline? Some safety reason, I suppose. Guess where I sat on my trip out to New York City? (Actually, just the first leg, to Chicago.) Yeah, that's it. Seat 7F, right in front of the emergency exit. Be sure the next time you fly, that the travel agent doesn't give you 7F or 7A on a 727. Five hours of trying to sleep upright just doesn't work.

I showed up at a Roger's house on time. He was surprised. Not because I'm perpetually tardy to everything (only 50 percent of the time), but because, for once in my life, all flights left on time, arrived on time, and connections were not missed, even at Chicago O'Hare, the pit from hell. I was stymied, and even a little happy. Roger was too. Now, if only I could have gotten a little sleep....

So, when I arrived, first things first, I took a little nap. I'm not a masochist. I believe in the many comforts of home. I believe in the safety net of friends. I believe in God, the country, the work ethic, and the pursuit of happiness. Sleep: it falls in there somewhere.

Met Wendy for lunch. I didn't have her number to call her at work, so I assumed that lunch was at 12:00 (isn't that when most people take lunch?). So I rushed down to the subway station, and being the ultimate realist that I am, I brought my umbrella. (Christy always told me that I was actually a pessimist, but I never believed her, and look what happened. Realist, that's what I am.) Now, anywhere else, when the sky is only slightly overcast, and when its a little warm, one would think that the chance of rain would be slight, and if it decided to rain, it would only be a light rain. But not at 11:50 on September 10 when I hopped off the subway at the 14th Street-Union Square Station. It was pouring! With a lot of wind and thunder and lightning (Donner and

Blitzen is what they say in German, should you want to know). So, being that the lunch hour was so close, and I did not want to miss Wendy, I rushed to her rehearsal studio as fast as I could (getting lost for a little bit, of course), and arrived at 12:05. I was drenched. Perhaps not as drenched as I could have been without the umbrella, but drenched nonetheless. Needless to say, I was not super happy to find out from the receptionist that lunch was at 1:00. In case you're wondering, the weather was nice the rest of the day.

You know, the interesting thing about New York City is that I like it. And I usually hate cities, especially big cities. There's nothing more I like than being on a camping or backpacking trip in the woods. Or in the middle of the desert surrounded by total silence. Or on a biking trip in the foothills. The criteria is always the same: the absence of people, traffic, and noise. So why would I like New York. I don't really know. In many ways its ugly. Its definitely big, actually huge. It also can be dangerous, and often times it is depressing. I definitely don't like it because of the rudeness of its taxi cab drivers. (Although I met one from Argentinia who was a great guy. I gave him a healthy tip for being so friendly.) Or the pace. Maybe its the diversity. I really like the amount there is to do, and how easy it is to get around to the various pursuits, without a car. There is always something to do. Also, I think a lot of it is the diversity of people. Everyone there is from somewhere else. Even if a person is born in the City, his culture is invariably preserved in some way, and often times the language too. And its generally accepted. I think that's it more than anything else.

Friday evening I caught the ferry over to Staten Island to see my GEnie friend, Kerry. Spent the night at her house that night, and we headed upstate the following day with her friend Theresa. We went for a nice, long walk around a lake called Miniwaska near a little town called Montgomery. What a day! The weather was fantastic, the best I had experienced for a long time. Kerry's fiance, Tom, met us a little later that day and we went over to Kerry's sister-in-law's house for dinner. They brought out the steak, of course, but Kerry and I saw the opportunity a little before dinner to head out and grab some fish. Kerry and I are both quasi-vegetarians, and

steak, well, was just not quite what we wanted. Its funny. Until recently, I would go ahead and eat some meats when at a friend's house, just to be polite. But, with my vegetarianism setting in more and more, I just can't do that anymore. Rudeness or no, I just won't eat any meat but fish.

Kerry's family has been beset by a number of tragedies in recent years. Her uncle, a police officer, was shot to death several years ago. Her sister died at the age of fourteen from a bug bite. Her brother, Al (Kim's husband), was a fireman who died when a floor collapsed in a burning building a year-and-a-half ago. But life goes on. Kerry, Tom, Kim and Kim's kids still revere Al and talk about him all the time: his jokes, puffaw's and good times. But there is a healthiness to the remembrances. There's no dwelling. There's no discomfort when his name is mentioned, or a story is retold about his life. There's no apparent sadness (I'm sure its there, but just not apparent). Life just goes on.

Sunday, Roger and I had decided was a good day to go up to the Cloisters up near Harlem. I had wanted to go there for some time, but had never made it. Well, just as we were leaving, his roommate Steve asked if he could come along, and offered to drive. Amazing how novel it is to drive in New York City. I haven't been in a car more than 4 times in all the times I've been in New York City, and of those 4, 2 were in transit out of or into the City.

The Cloisters were really neat. The preserved architecture and art from Medieval Europe was fascinating. The park around the Cloisters is really beautiful, too. It's almost impossible to believe while wandering through the Cloisters and walking through the park, that there is city all around you, and one of the more dangerous parts of the city so increibly close.

Please see "Will" -- page 6

Not Everyone's Traveling

A Fable for Our Times

by Chris Von Sonn

Once upon a time there was an ant colony of tremendous size and power. There was a time when this colony was envied by all the other ant colonies for miles and miles. Every ant that ever lived wanted to be part of this incredible colony. This great colony was happy for all the ants to come and be a part of their colony, because they knew that the vast ideas of all these different ants would only make their own colony better. They felt that the purpose of a good colony was to make all the ants work and live together in a environment that would stimulate their creativity and that in turn would promote the greatness of the colony. But one day, a very black day indeed, the great leader of the colony was killed while he was greeting the people. Since that day, it can be said, nothing has been the same.

The new leaders were not responsive to the worker ants. They wanted to make war with other colonies and only listened to the most elite of the ants. The worker ants didn't seem to understand what was happening to them because they were too exhausted after a long day of work to worry about what their leaders were doing. The leader ants kept telling people that times were great and they're some of the luckiest ants that ever lived. The worker ants believed them because it really seemed like times were wonderful and prosperous. But, what the leader ants did was to sacrifice the young ants so that the old ants could live like kings. The old ants would throw the young ants scraps that made it seem that they were also enjoying the prosperity. Then some of the young ants started to question the leaders ants.

They would yell and chant, they would decorate their antennae with color streamers and told the leaders that they weren't doing right by the colony.

Now, these young ants decided if the older ants were not going to listen to them, then they would form their own colony. This didn't sit well with the leader ants because they needed the young ants to do their work for them. You see, the leader ants had forgotten what it was like to work hard everyday and what it was to struggle just to feed your family. But, the young ants were determined to leave the colony. If there weren't any changes they would go to the eastern most part of the land and start their colony based on the views of the past great leaders of their colony. The old leader ants didn't change. They really didn't know how and the young worker ants were ready to move. They gathered their families and stuff and started on their long trip to the east. But, as they marched from their old homes, they realized that they couldn't leave their old colony. They missed their homes and friends who didn't make the trip. They even missed the leaders and the way that the debate between them stimulated them. So they decided that they would go back and try to work within the colony to make every ant have a say in what was to happen in the colony. They knew it was going to be hard, but they knew that, in time, they would be able to make it work. They turned their throngs of worker ants around and headed back to the colony.

TO BE CONTINUED . . .

Stuff and Fluff

Various Sundries

Aunt **Carolyn Fisher** is in Maine visiting with relatives and helping her niece **Barbara Mosher** prepare for an October wedding. **Bart and Steph** (listed alphabetically) will be joining their mother to witness what will, no doubt, prove to be THE wedding of the year. Everyone at StormCo Industries wishes Barbara and **Aaron Crocket** the best. Congratulations.

Of course, **Susan Goldfried** had better be well along planning the biggest wedding of NEXT YEAR. She becomes Mrs. **Randy Mandell** on January 10th. Start praying for another air-fare war. You don't want to miss out, there ain't nothing finer than New Jersey in January.

And what a great idea for a wedding gift, an original **Katera Forbes** painting. I finally got over to Eat Your Vegetables on Howe Avenue and saw her impressive display: too cool for words. A stunning installation covering a wide range of styles and themes. And a couple were even marked "Sold" which I'm sure Katera appreciates.

Scott and Lynnette Williams are learning to be Police Dispatchers. Be nice to them or they'll have that annoying helicopter circling your neighborhood all night.

General Francisco Franco is still in dead, but stable, condition.

Roger Hanna is teaching a class at New York University. I think it's "Stagecraft" (whatever that is). Hey, I was a business major. I can recite seven rules of data normalization (and as

Please see "Various" -- page 6

More travels with Roger

From Glitz to Gultch

by Roger Hanna

{We now continue Roger's account of his drive from Sacramento to New York}
ay Two:

DThe ranger dug us out. We drove to Las Vegas. At this point we were 400 miles off course, so of course we would forfeit our \$350 deposit if we got into an accident, since our contract both stipulated us getting a local police report in the event of accident AND required us to be on a highway half a state to the north. This knowledge produced the Fear. The Loathing would come later.

Our first stop was Circus, Circus (like New York, NY, it's so nice they named it twice). This is a casino designed for the whole family, and the sign in the parking garage lets parents know that "It is illegal to leave children or pets unattended in your car for ANY amount of time," Yep, it was practically midnight and the place was swarming with kids, who presumably were supposed to be on the second floor playing video games. Above the main floor was a huge net, and above that were all sorts of circus acts.

We stopped by the "buffet," which should have been called the "Glomfest," For \$3 it was all you can eat. As we loaded up on the salads, we noticed that the people behind us were skeptical of the salad bar, instructing their children to skip it or at least pace themselves for the meat-packed entrees coming up. Ahead of us was the single most enormous family I've ever seen, each of whom weighed at least 300 pounds. They each carried two plates (the plates, incidentally, were about the size of a large pizza), apparently worried

that they would have to get up off of their enormous asses after slopping down only a few pounds of food. The bovine wife was especially delightful. When the ham and roast beef slicing guy asked where she wanted her ham and roast beef (for both plates were stacked up nearly a foot), she snapped at him something about paying her money and insisted that a good two pounds of ham get placed on top of one plate, another two pounds of beef on the other.

We had about lost our appetites by this point, not just for the food but for the whole hellhole of a city. We swiftly took in the rest of the sights (which included a McDonald's with chaser lights) and headed back to the campground for some sleep.

Day Three:

Our path to the Grand Canyon took us through Zion National Park, which it turns out was actually named "Not Zion." Apparently some Mormons were out exploring down from Salt Lake City, and they thought that this place was so beautiful, that "this surely must be Zion." They invited a head Mormon Dude, Brigham Young, down to check it out. Said he: "Yea, it is beautiful, but tis not Zion." The name stuck until the National Parks Department took it over. They figured they could charge a more heavenly admission, I suppose, by shortening the name back to Zion.

At Zion you drive over, around, and through the lumpiest red rock formations in the world. It truly was breathtaking. I'll have to show you photos. We didn't have much time to explore, however, since our Holy Grail was not Not Zion, but the Grand Canyon.

Elissa was skeptical of my ability to find a sand dune-free camping spot on short notice, so we called ahead. There were no camp sites available in Arizona. We made plans to camp in Cedar City, Utah. This meant driving on two-lane roads through the rest of Utah, through a portion of Arizona, through

the sixty miles of Grand Canyon National Park which precedes the Grand Canyon, driving back out of the park, and heading west(!) on another two-lane highway through Arizona and part of Utah till we hit the interstate to Cedar City. Oh, and somewhere in there we had to get out and see the damn hole which we had detoured nearly a thousand miles to see.

While the visit had to be quick and dirty, we did have time to put on a little show for the other tourists.

"Look, there's no rail! You can walk right up the edge!"

"Roger, get away from the edge."

"Wow, sure is a long drop."

"Roger, get away from the edge."

"Relax, I hike all the time in my Birkenstocks."

"Roger, get away from the edge."

"Relax, I'm ten feet from the edge. I could trip over this rock and . . . whoa, WHOA . . . ha ha, just kidding."

"Roger, get away from the edge."

"Geez, it's the Grand Canyon! I'm not going to fall into the Grand Canyon."

"Roger, get away from the edge."

"What was that in the guide book? 'Every year several tourists take what locals morbidly refer to as "The Twelve-Second Tour"?"

"OKAY, FINE! FALL INTO THE DAMN GRAND CANYON! SEE IF I CARE, YOU BIG IDIOT!!!"

Eric -- from page 1

Anyway, I eventually found my way to Minneapolis. And Sunday I went looking for The Mall of America: the largest shopping mall in the United States. It's HUGE! Yikes! We'd better do something to stop this or Minnesota teenagers are going to develop better mall survival skills than anyone else, even Californians. This place has 14 movie screen on the fourth floor and a seven acre theme park in the center of the place. There are so many shops that the information kiosks identify them by longitude and latitude. And the escalators are slowed down so that your eardrums don't burst from the pressure change. We're talking a big retail colony here. Just like the Wall of China, I bet you can see The Mall of America from space.

But I did find my way back out eventually (thanks to a friendly native guide) and saw some very nice scenery. Minneapolis has totally nifty lakes right in the city. Imagine that. And they're all full of WATER and fish and stuff! It was so cool. But the countryside is even better.

I spent most of one day following the St. Croix River north. I visited a couple really "quaint" little towns full of friendly little people. And I found the Minnesota Wineries Tasting Room. Uh, let's just say that they were ok, and that Napa doesn't have a heck of a lot to be worried about. I did get a chance to stop at the Minnesota-Wisconsin Interstate National Park. That's right, it's the one with the world famous Potholes. I guess they

collect all the ones in both states and bring them here. No, just kidding. According to the friendly Park Rangeress who suggested I stop there, back when the world (and our parents) were young, the primordial St. Croix started to carve circular depressions in the rocks. By the time it was done, the river had made some holes up to 20 feet across and others nearly sixty feet deep. That must have been one bored river.

That evening, Minneapolis experienced a thunderstorm of Biblical proportions. The lightning flashes were coming so fast that I felt like I was in a disco. And as I was driving along (not a really good idea considering the torrential rains) the flashes were so bright the street lights kept shutting off. Now you would think that such an evening would cause David (the owner of StatPac) to cancel the BBQ he had planned. You'd be wrong. He grabbed an umbrella and BBQed away. What a scene.

Kristine -- from page 1

Wisconsin, but they were all booked. So I went to live with some Indians in Oklahoma instead (with a group led by an Anthropologist). Among the highlights was being invited into a sweatlodge, which is a highly personal-spiritual-religious-type-deal for Indians. Women aren't usually allowed at all. But we went in (ovaries and all). We sweat. No peyote unfortunately. But we did pass around a pipe (containing some unknown substance). I also met a guy (in Oklahoma) from New York

(Queens, no less) and I met a guy in Washington (from Sacramento). I've now had sex in six states. I've only had speeding tickets in three.

After Oklahoma, things got a little slow. Peaceful and introspective - but slow. (Although I did come uncomfortably close to a mean looking bolt of lightning somewhere in New Mexico). I hung out in Taos and Sante Fe for a while and then did Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Washington, and Oregon (I like to call this my "West Tour"). Anyway, after meeting Bubby (QB for the Pittsburgh Steelers) on my last trip, I decided I'd make it an annual thing. Why stop at one celebrity?

I chose John Corbett of Northern Exposure (which, in case you didn't know, is the greatest show to ever be on television. Ever, I said). The show films in Roslyn, Washington which has a population of about three. There were tourists and fans everywhere. But I just happened to be in room 308 of the Timberlodge, and John just happened to be in room 304. Wasn't hard. Sent him flowers and he shows up at my room to thank me. We talk about filming, my trip, the weather. He hugs me, leaves, and I spend the rest of my days wishing I'd had sex in seven states.

I'm back home now - back at A.R. (with no direction). Taking acting, business of music, weights and Taekwando (well-rounded, aren't I?). My sister and I are starting a business... The Crocodile Clothing Company - sizes 14 and up. Opening soon at Arden Fair Mall. I'm scared shitless. Anyone need a job?

Various -- from page 3

Katherine Fullerton Gerould once said "The only glory most of us have to hope for is the glory of being normal."), but all that stage stuff confuses me. I got really lost trying to understand how a blue gel makes blue light by eating all the other colors. Where do they go?

Chris Nielsen swears he's going to get a phone line run to his computer "soon." But right now, he's a little busy. **Pam and Chris** are celebrating their 5th Wedding Anniversary on September 30th. Congratulations. Is 5th the wood or plastic anniversary? I'm fairly sure that "Lawn Jockeys" is 6th. Someone needs to make a book that lists the anniversary themes, and tells you how to tie a toga, and maybe how to make all the important drinks.

Jud Fisher is Student Interning at Z.D. Winery. And is starting to realize that it takes a LOT of grapes to make wine. Do you know how long it takes to crush 60 tons of grapes? Many, many hours.

Tina Halstead is getting rich doing massage therapy for a chiropractor. She's got piles and piles of cash in her apartment. So much that she's starting to shape it into furniture. Ok, not really, but she is enjoying her work, which is so much more important than a fat paycheck (though, that can be nice too).

And I'm sure that the rest of you are leading terribly interesting lives. But do you call, or write? No. Or, at least, I don't remember. Anyway, drop me a postcard or letter once in a while.

Will -- from page 2

But life is not interesting unless there are adventures while traveling. On Tuesday, I headed over to La Guardia to head off to Atlanta to meet with UPS. I fully expected, of course, to be greeted with some travel catastrophe, so when I arrived at the airport and found out that one leg of the flight was cancelled, I barely blinked. But I was profoundly disturbed when the ticket agent suggested that I take a direct flight leaving thirty minutes later and arriving thirty minutes earlier. What is this? Early arrival! I was stunned, amazed, and overjoyed! My luck had to be changing after all this time. No more seven, eight, ten, or eighteen hour layovers for me. Life is too good to waste in airports or in transit!

Things were too good, of course. And the unwary soul that I am was not prepared for what was about to happen: The flight arrived on time. I picked up my car at the airport, delayed somewhat because someone had left their stuff in the trunk and forgot to fill up the tank. I drove out to where my hotel was, without problem. Found the hotel easily enough. Parked. Walked in. Went to the reception desk, and asked to check in. Wasn't it amazing that nothing happened so far? Ah-ha! Fate struck again! My room--it was no longer my room--had been given to another. Because I was late! Late! LATE! I arrived early, for heaven's sake! But that didn't change anything. My room, which was longer my room, was in the hands of some other lucky soul, and I was left roomless.

After two hours of waiting while the receptionist called around to other hotels looking for a room, I was beginning to eye the couch in the lobby. Fortunately for me a room was found. Not so close, though. A good twenty minutes away. But, still, a room.

It was nice to finally walk into my own room, and throw myself upon the bed, even if it was 10:00 at night, and I arrived at 5:30 at the Atlanta airport. The nightmare was over. Or so I thought. It wasn't until I opened up my overnight bag that I realized that the nightmare had just begun. My suit pants and one shirt were missing. The hangers were there. But they weren't. UPS is one of these companies, by the way, that just doesn't accept jeans and a shirt as

appropriate attire. Had I come all the way to Atlanta to not meet because I failed to have the appropriate attire? Never! I had determined that the store was the place to hit the next morning. But even still, I didn't sleep too well.

The meetings went well the next day, despite my being very late and not dressed quite appropriately (I had only slacks, a shirt, and a tie; UPS attire is typically suit and tie only). I met a lot of new contacts and re-affirmed old one's. It was a very productive trip.

Thursday afternoon, I took off from UPS early, and met my cousin Kyle, who lives in Atlanta. I hadn't met him before: only his mom and grandmother had I the pleasure of meeting previously. It was really neat to spend time with him though. He took me out to Stone Mountain, you know, the one commemorating the Civil War, with Lee, Davis, and a few others engraved on it. We also had lunch at the top of a hotel that has a restaraunt that revolves around, and subsequently, went and got rip-roaring drunk at his favorite local hang-out. I was disappointed to find out, though, that his law firm had seats right in front of the dug-out at the local stadium, but the Braves weren't playing while I was there!

By the time morning arrived on Friday, I was really biting my nails, and feeling that the world would soon come to an end. No, I wasn't upset about leaving; I genuinely wanted to come home. I expected that something had to go wrong considering that my trip, with the exception of the hotel and missing suit pants, had been so...normal.

You want to know what? The trip home was too. Amazing, isn't it. Do you think I should dread my next journey from Sacramento? Should I stay home, retire, or join the army? Travel just can't remain normal. I'm a realist, after all, and at some point, Will's adventures in travel will again take their merry little turn to the worst.

Pray for me.