

My first journeys

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Me coming down after climbing a rock on Jebel Uhud near Medina above a cave where a wounded Prophet Mohammed rested during the Battle of Uhud in 625 CE (3 AH). Photo late January 1973.

As a youth in the 1960s in my hometown, Esch-sur-Alzette, I was always very insecure and confused about what I wanted to do with my life. As the eldest of six children, I was so confused that I could never be an example to my younger brothers and sisters.

My father, who was born in 1911 and who worked as a welder and mechanic in the iron mines and steel mills on both sides of the French-Luxembourg border, was very authoritarian in his younger years but mellowed very much with age. He had been hardened by experiences during and after the last war, when he had joined the German air force as an enthusiastic volunteer (he was crazy about airplanes and flying) after the Nazis invaded and occupied Luxembourg in 1940.

He worked for the Luftwaffe as a mechanic (he was past the age limit of 28 for fighter pilot training in the Luftwaffe, so his dream of flying Messerschmitt 109s and Focke-Wulf 190s could not be fulfilled) in occupied France and Germany, was captured by the Americans in Bavaria at the end of the war, and escaped from a POW camp. On his return to Luxembourg he was promptly thrown in jail and sentenced to eighteen years at hard labor for collaborating with the enemy. After spending more than 3 years in Luxembourg City's Grund prison and several months cutting up disabled tanks on the battlefields of the Bulge in the north of the country he was freed in early 1949 when the government reduced the sentences of those collaborators who had not betrayed other citizens to the Germans. He never regained full civil and political rights in Luxembourg.

Well, I guess, hearing my father talk about his experiences I realized that I was a real wimp. I read adventure books about faraway places and felt the urge to travel. In 1972, at the age of 21, for the first time, I was allowed to make major decisions about my life and to manage my own money.

Up to that time I had always given everything I earned to my parents, and I got pocket money (I earned my first small salary as an apprentice at my hometown's Arbed Belval ironworks in 1966-67, then switched to the "lycée" [junior high school] but left after passing a mid-level examination ["examen de passage"] a little over 2 years later and went to work in a bank from October 1969). All of my brothers and sisters, incidentally, became independent at a younger age.

From the beginning of 1970 I worked for Luxair airlines as a reservations clerk and had limited free travel. With my parents' permission I flew to Vienna and Paris in 1970 and to London and Ivalo, Finland in 1971. On that last trip I hitch-hiked for a few days in September around the northern tip of Finland and Norway, covering about 670 kilometers and sleeping outside in a cheap sleeping bag, with a large sheet of plastic as my only protection against rain. One sleepless night out in the middle of nowhere near the

northern end of Norway (at Ifjord near the Laksefjord, and east of the Prosangerfjord in the Finnmark) I was totally soaked and frozen in driving rain and strong wind -- it was to be the first of many similar experiences.

So, in 1972 my real traveling began. In March of that year I flew to Tehran, Iran, which was the maximum distance I could fly for free based on the length of time I had worked for the airline. I knew practically nothing about Iran.

At the Asia Hotel downtown I met a young man from Kenya, of Indian Muslim ancestry, who invited me to go with him to Lahore, Pakistan, in his car, a huge Ford Galaxie 500 that he had bought in Missouri and shipped across the Atlantic to England, where his family lived, and then driven to Saudi Arabia on a pilgrimage to Mecca before coming to Iran. Taffy, as he was called, wanted to split expenses on the trip. I accepted, though I didn't think I could make it all the way to Lahore because I had only two weeks' leave from work. The two of us ran into an American ex-soldier, a giant of a guy named Bob Barrett, who was on his way overland to Australia, and he agreed to join us for the trip to Lahore. We drove north across the Alburz Mountains to the Caspian Sea and then east.

In the mountains west of the town of Bojnurd we got stuck in a heavy blizzard that raged for some 18 hours. We were almost out of gasoline and ill-equipped for the cold, so we huddled together and shivered through the night in the car. Late the next morning Iranian soldiers came on skis and brought bread, dates and cheese to us and the many other travelers who were stuck in the snow, which was at least a meter (3 feet) deep in most places.

An avalanche had blocked the road ahead for several hundred meters, but the soldiers managed to clear a path that people could walk to get to the other side of the blocked area. Some 30 hours after we got stuck in this place, with the road likely to be blocked for another day or two, we decided to try driving down that dangerous path -- and by sheer miracle we made it to Bojnurd in one piece, though the Galaxie's steering gear was damaged and had to be welded back together. This was to be only the first though perhaps the most dramatic of a series of adventures on this trip. We lost Bob in Herat, Afghanistan, and continued to Kandahar in the south without him. Taffy and I stayed 2 days in Kandahar, then he drove on towards Kabul and I had to take a bus back to Iran.

At Tayebad on the Iranian side of the border I was quarantined for 24 hours because I didn't have cholera vaccination. In Mashad I slept with several other men on the floor of a small room in a poor area of town. I'd met one of the men in the street late at night when I arrived and he had invited me because there were no hotels around.

I had just barely enough money left to fly Iran Air back to Tehran's Mehrabad Airport, where I could catch the once-weekly Lufthansa flight back to Germany the next day, and since I was worried that I might miss the flight if I went the long way back by road or rail, I decided to take the plane. I wound up spending a full day and night at Mehrabad, shaken by severe diarrhea and stomach cramps, and unable to sleep, with no money left to go anywhere else or buy food or medicine. I was still lucky to get a seat on the plane out the next day (with a free ticket you cannot reserve seats and depend on there being some left vacant).

When I got back to Europe I felt that the little adventure had somehow changed me in a fundamental way. I found it extremely hard to re-adjust to the workaday routines in Luxembourg, even though I had been away only 2 weeks.

In September 1972, a month after smashing my first car in an accident on the French side of the border, I left my job at Luxair and flew to Cayenne, the capital of French Guiana, with my last free ticket from the company. I thought I might stay in Cayenne but found on my arrival that it would be very hard to get a job or a place to stay other than in one of the rather expensive hotels in town.

In my pocket I had a letter from Taffy inviting me to Munich, where he thought the two of us could do some business together and make a lot of money in the wake of the Olympic Games. I felt I needed more money anyway in order to get started in South America, so, after only three days in Cayenne I flew back to Paris and hitch-hiked to Munich.

I did work in Munich but also spent a lot of money at the Oktoberfest while I was waiting for Taffy to show up, and less than 2 months later I was broke. I hitch-hiked back to Luxembourg in November, spending at least one night out in the cold next to a German Autobahn highway where nobody was willing to give me a ride until the following day.

Within a week or two after I got back to Luxembourg I got a letter from Taffy inviting me on a trip by car to Lahore, Pakistan (again), to visit some of his sisters and other relatives there. He wrote that he and his brother Fakhar and Fakhar's wife and their three small boys were coming from England in two cars, and they needed me as a backup driver because they were pressed for time and would have to drive through

the nights.

It turned out that they had to pick up their old and arthritis-plagued mother at the airport in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on a certain day in early January 1973 and to take her to Mecca and Medina for her first, and probably last, Haj -- the full Islamic pilgrimage.

According to their tentative plan, we would drive as quickly as we could to Kuwait, where I would stay with their eldest brother Hamid, then they would race across Saudi Arabia, pick up their mother and perform the Haj with her, see her off at Jeddah on the flight back to London about a month later and come back to pick me up in Kuwait for the final leg of the trip to Lahore. I was gung-ho, of course.

The two cars were a Volkswagen van with a big mattress and a gas cooker in the back, and a powerful Ford Capri 3000 GT sports car. We left Luxembourg on 19 December 1972. Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey. We stopped at the famous "hippie trail" Pudding Shop (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pudding_Shop) near Sultan Ahmed mosque in Istanbul and crossed the Bosphorus by ferryboat (there was no bridge as yet).

Somewhere in the mountains south of Ankara, at night, with Fakhar and his family sleeping in the back of the VW and Taffy far ahead downhill in the Capri, I lost control of the van in a nasty curve and skidded off the road to the edge of a deep, black precipice. I managed to stop at the very last moment, and I think one of the front wheels no longer touched firm ground. It was really a close call. I found Taffy waiting just around the bend. He must have realized how dangerous the curve was, but he hadn't seen the near-miss. Fakhar and his family didn't wake up, and I didn't tell them about it.

After that we kept going through the night, to Aleppo in Syria, where we arrived in the wee hours of 24 December 1972, and then east towards the Iraqi border. It was a harrowing drive in the night to Raqqa, some 200 kilometers east on the Euphrates River, with dozens of trucks coming towards me on the narrow road, one after another, blinding me with their high-beam headlights that they apparently could not dim. At dawn just past Raqqa the sun came up right in front and blinded me completely. I had to give up and let Fakhar take over.

When I woke up a few hours later, the windshield was gone: a stone that fell from a truck had smashed it. We had to improvise, making a new windshield with sheets of plastic that quickly became covered with scratches. At Abu Kamal (or Al-Bukamal) on the border with Iraq our journey ended for the time being. The Iraqis refused to let us enter their country, insisting we had to get visas (this was apparently because of a diplomatic dispute with Britain at the time -- my friends were British subjects).

Fakhar and his family stayed behind with the VW while Taffy and I raced the nearly 500 kilometers of mostly miserable road back to Aleppo in the Capri. At Aleppo we found out that we had to go to the Iraqi Embassy in Damascus, another 400-odd kilometers away to the south. In Damascus we learned that it would take about 2 weeks to get the visas. Impossible. No way we could get to Kuwait and then Jeddah in time.

There was only one way to go: directly south through Jordan to Medina and then Mecca and Jeddah. But that meant I could not go with them, since I was not a Muslim and would not get permission to travel with them to the holy places in Saudi Arabia. Taffy said I could go back to Europe on my own, or, if I agreed, I could officially become a Muslim and go with them. I chose to become a Muslim.

We raced back to Aleppo and from there all the way back to Abu Kamal, because we couldn't reach Fakhar by telephone and the Capri with its low ground clearance would never have made the shortcut across the desert via Palmyra. And again we drove the two cars to Aleppo and then to Damascus (the Capri had thus covered close to 3,000 km in Syria alone). Taffy and Fakhar became my witnesses at the Saudi Embassy, and I was given an official pilgrim's visa for Saudi Arabia under the name Omar Hussein. This is how I became a Muslim.

We drove to Jordan. At the border, before leaving Syria, we had to pay a special tax that we were told was levied on all pilgrims who had received their Haj visas in Damascus. In Amman, the Jordanian capital, we met a friend of Taffy's whose name I don't remember.

We drove on to Ma'an and then Aqaba but found out that we wouldn't be able (or allowed) to cross into Saudi Arabia from that Red Sea port. We had to backtrack the 100-odd kilometers to Ma'an and then head for the border at Al Mudawara.

My personal impression was that the people I met in Jordan were more suspicious of me than the Syrians had been, sometimes hinting that I might be an Israeli spy. This is exactly what Saudi officials opposite Al Mudawara did, too. We spent the night of 29-30 December 1972 at the Saudi border post.

The officials found a radio-electronics kit that I had bought in Luxembourg for a friend of Taffy's in

Kuwait. When they realized that it was possible to build a tiny radio transmitter with it they refused to let me take it into Saudi Arabia, saying I might use it to transmit information to the Israelis. They didn't even let me send it by mail, so we had to leave it at the post, where Taffy's friend in Amman could later pick it up. (..... to be continued

A little more about my trip to Mecca ... -Excerpt from a message to a friend Jan. 2004 [there is more information about my pilgrimage in the interview below about my journeys to Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan]: ...

Talking about the Middle East, I wonder if I ever sent you my little story of how I went on the Haj. I haven't written the whole experience down yet but I have the beginning of the tale in some autobio notes I wrote a few years ago and may continue someday.

I got only as far as late December 1972, on the border between Jordan and Saudi Arabia. You can read it in the attached text file. I spent over a month in Saudi Arabia after that. My friends wanted me to marry a 16-year-old Pakistani girl by the name of Razia in Jeddah and then try to get a scholarship to study at the Islamic University in Medina, etc... But I was not ready for that and wanted to continue traveling with them.

We then spent 9 days with their eldest brother Hamid and his friends in Kuwait (in the villa of the Al Balool family – former postmaster general of Kuwait), then Taffy dropped me off in Abadan, Iran, to fend for myself, saying I could not come with them to Lahore because I was not serious enough about being a Muslim and their family there would not like that.

So I "celebrated" my 22nd birthday alone (and nearly broke) in Abadan, then tried unsuccessfully to get a job working on a ship in nearby Khorramshahr, and finally somehow made my way back to Europe by train and hitch-hiking via Tehran and Istanbul, etc. at the end of February 1973. This was a little over 2 years before I met the UC in New York.

In the summer of 1973 I went to England and worked at Heathrow Airport, then later as a bus conductor in Rochdale, Lancashire, where I rented a room in a house that belonged to Taffy and his family -- and spent a lot of time with them. They were not mad at me for not being a good Muslim -- they actually didn't take it all that seriously themselves. I still keep in touch with them, and Taffy still lives in Rochdale but travels a lot on business. He has visited me in Luxembourg twice in recent years. -- MORE BELOW THE PICTURE:



Mecca Saudi Arabia sometime in January 1973

MORE: Here is an excerpt from a chronology I wrote elsewhere, with a bit more info on my Haj and the time in England, and the beginning of my first journey to the United States.

"... 1972 Dec 30 to 1973 Feb 1: Saudi Arabia; Haj, Medina, Mecca, Mina tent city, Jeddah; then across

via Riyadh to Dammam and then Kuwait City. -- We drove to Medina, where we met Taff's Filipino friend Abdullah Mahdi (original name Leonardo Villar), who studied at the Islamic University there. Abdullah was to be our guide. The only two photos I have from my time in Saudi Arabia were taken by him. In Medina we had to prepare for our first visit to the Kaaba in Mecca, over 400 km to the south, by taking a bath and putting on our Ihram clothing, the two simple white sheets wrapped around the body that must be worn during the pilgrimage.

We arrived at the holy mosque in Mecca late in the evening of 31 December 1972, and I slept part of that night on some steps in the colonnade surrounding the big central courtyard where crowds of people were making the rounds of the Kaaba in a counter-clockwise direction – what is called the tawaf.

The next day we performed the same rite and the prescribed walks between the small rocks of Safa and Marwa, and drank the water of the Zamzam well, etc. Later we set up a big tent a few kilometers outside the city in Mina among thousands of other tents. We lived there for the next two weeks or so, and returned to Mecca a few times for further rites in the great mosque. A few days after arriving in Mina we went to Jeddah to pick up Taff and Fakhar's mother, Ummi, from the airport. She stayed with us in the tent in Mina, and for the tawaf in Mecca we paid two men to carry her around the Kaaba on a sort of stretcher with a basket in the middle.

Near the end of our stay in Mina we spent a day at the foot of a hillock called Jebel Arafat, a few kilometers away, and then picked up pebbles in a place on the way back to Mina called Mustalifa. The pebbles were used the following day to throw at the shaytan (devils -petrified in this case) in Mina, three stone pillars with low walls around them. Also, an animal had to be sacrificed for every pilgrim. I gave some money to my friends who arranged for sheep to be slaughtered for us. I saw huge herds of sheep, goats and other animals near Mina, and large piles of bones of animals killed in earlier years. As a white European I seemed to be a curiosity in Mina and was invited by many people into their tents for a cup of tea and a chat.

After the main part of the pilgrimage in Mecca and Mina was over we returned to Medina and rented a ground floor apartment in the old quarter behind the great mosque. We stayed there for more than a week together with Ummi, mainly to say the 40 prayers during 8 consecutive days prescribed in a hadith (=an account of the sayings and actions of Prophet Mohammed), and to visit the prophet's tomb and the Jennet Al Baqi cemetery, where many of his relatives and companions are interred. We also visited Jebel (Mount) Uhud and various other important sites from the early history of Islam. I could not resist climbing to the top of a rock on the 1,077-meter Mount Uhud above a famous cave that played a role in the Battle of Uhud – the second battle in Islamic history, and Abdullah took a picture of me coming back down, which I still have. The quarter where we stayed seemed like a town from the Middle Ages. I learned from Abdullah much later that it was torn down a few months after our stay to make room for an expansion of the mosque.

After we saw Ummi off at Jeddah airport on a flight back to London we stayed a few days in the house of a Pakistani family living in Jeddah. My friends suggested that I could perhaps marry one of the daughters of this family, a 16-year-old girl named Razia. They said I might be able to stay in Saudi Arabia and get a scholarship to study at the Islamic University in Medina – just like Abdullah. I told them I was not at all ready to get married and settle down. They were concerned that I was not serious enough about studying and practicing Islam, and they felt their relatives in Pakistan, with whom we were going to stay, would not appreciate that. Taff and Fakhar themselves did not worry so much about me not trying hard to be a good Muslim but they believed their family would not accept me as I was, and this is why they no longer wanted to take me to Pakistan with them. Their family in Lahore would have been informed by Ummi that I had been on the pilgrimage with them.

So I decided to try to find a job on a ship. We first went to the port of Jeddah but were not allowed to enter for this purpose.

1973 Feb 1 to Feb 27: drove from Jeddah to Riyadh via Taif and then on to Kuwait City (arriving 1 February), where we spent 9 days in a villa of the Al Balool family with whom Hamid lived, then via Basra/Iraq (ferryboat across the Shatt Al Arab waterway) to Abadan/Iran, where I stayed behind alone to try to find a job on a ship, there and in nearby Khorramshahr. No chance. I took a train to Teheran (on my 22nd birthday, 11 February), stayed a few days, then took another train to Istanbul/Turkey, stayed 2-3 days, then went again by train via Belgrade to Ljubljana/Yugoslavia (now Slovenia) and on by bus to Kranj, which cost me my very last penny. From Kranj I hitch-hiked back to Luxembourg over 2-3 days, spending nights outside in the cold (February).

1973 Mar to July: worked short-term jobs in Luxembourg, then about 2 months at Avis car rental agency, Luxembourg Airport.

1973 July 8-15: Flew Luxair Caravelle to Monastir, Tunisia, together with my father (his one and only trip outside Europe), using free tickets provided by my brother, who still worked for the airline (he was

going to make the trip with my father but then something came up that prevented him, so I used the ticket issued in his name). We had a good one-week vacation in Sousse and Tunis together, and also visited the ruins of Carthage.

1973 July 20 to 1974 Feb 14: England and Ireland; went by train and ferryboat to England, lived in Hayes/Middlesex until end-August (6 weeks) and worked for Trust House Forte at Heathrow Airport Terminal 2 duty-free store; then moved to Rochdale/Lancashire at the invitation of my friend Taffy, lived in a house owned by his family and worked as a bus conductor for SELNEC Northern bus company based in Manchester; left the job and the town abruptly early November when confronted by Muslim co-workers who knew I was a Haji (one of them had come to my favorite pub one evening to buy cigarettes and saw me drinking beer there – which is haram – forbidden for Muslims); moved to Kensington/London and worked at Army and Navy Stores on Victoria Street in the Radio and TV Department; left the job in December and traveled by train and boat to Dundrum near Dublin/Ireland where my brother stayed with friends; spent ca. 3 weeks in the Dublin area, mostly drunk and high on hashish and opium (took LSD just once); together with my brother, his girlfriend and others returned to London via Liverpool, then stayed again in Kensington and worked short-term jobs for Industrial Overload at Tottenham Court, including a 2-day stint carrying large furniture eight floors up in the main BBC building.

1974 Feb 14 to early March: Left England for the continent, almost penniless again; hitch-hiked to Verden south of Bremen in Germany, spent one night out in the snow, then met some hippies whose address I got in London from 2 French professional thieves; the hippies gave me an address in Paris, so I hitch-hiked to southwest Paris, where other hippies at the given address let me stay in their well-stocked apartment near rue de Versailles while they were away on a vacation in the Savoie; stayed 10 days in Paris (the hippies had given me permission to eat the food in their refrigerator, and even let me have a plentiful supply of strong French Gauloises cigarettes -- I smoked heavily in those days, whenever I had money) and walked all over the city; the hippies from the apartment were members of Mouvement pour la libération de l'avortement et de la contraception (MLAC), and based on some evidence I found might have performed abortions in their apartment; finally I hitch-hiked from Paris to Longwy and walked from there during one night in a few cm of snow to Belvaux (about 20 km), where a driver gave me a ride home to Esch in the early morning.

1974 Mar to 1975 Mar: worked short-term jobs (for Manpower Lux. City), then was accepted by Dupont De Nemours to work in the Typar physical testing laboratory near Contern (a small town a few miles outside Luxembourg City), rented a room in Contern; worked at Dupont nearly 6 months then got bored by routine and quit; worked odd jobs again for Manpower, including one for 2 weeks at Eurotex (not sure of name? – we were doing quality control of freshly-assembled JB Lansing loudspeakers) near Bascharage where my boss was an American evangelical Christian (forgot his name) who told me a lot about the Last Days, the Apocalypse, as interpreted in the book *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey.

During this time I developed my ideas about a coming nuclear World War III that would wipe out modern civilization, probably around 1979; I made my plan to go live in the woods of British Columbia/Canada for at least one year as a survival test and then head for the southern hemisphere – Patagonia to wait out the expected nuclear war; my final job in Luxembourg was a 3-month stint as a van driver delivering washing machines and other large household appliances all over Luxembourg for Neckermann in Lux. City.

1975 Mar 6: USA, first journey: 4 years and 4 months until 1979 July 7: Flew to New York, intending to take a train to Montreal and hitch-hike to British Columbia; met Noriko Sawaura of Japan (and others) in front of Madison Square Garden, who invited me to a lecture on "Divine Principle", talking about the Last Days (right up my alley that time) and the need to unite religion and science, etc.; lecture by Irishman Aidan Barry was interesting; agreed to attend a 3-day workshop in the countryside upstate to learn more about this movement, Unification Church and its founder Sun Myung Moon of Korea; went to Barrytown 170 km north of NYC on the Hudson River with many other young people, and after much prodding from some of them stayed after the 3 days for 7-day, 21-day and 40-day workshops; decided the Moonies with their Divine Principle had a better idea that could save humankind without first destroying civilization as I believed necessary, and I joined them (later that spring in Barrytown I saw Moon for the first time; he did not make a good first impression: he looked like a rich westernized businessman and seemed extremely arrogant -- but I was sufficiently impressed with many of my new Moonie friends and the Divine Principle to overlook this; I was never able to shake off that first negative feeling, though); worked on the small farm (we grew corn, etc.) at Barrytown, then spent over a month in Boston restoring a basement apartment where we then invited people to try to bring them into the fold.

Later I worked in New York City and traveled a few times in a big truck to the Sophie Mae factory in Atlanta/Georgia to pick up loads of peanut brittle (candy), which we dropped off for mobile fundraising teams (=teams of young people who went door to door or approached people in shopping mall parking lots to sell candy, flowers, etc. at inflated prices allegedly for a good cause but in reality for the Moon

movement – usually without disclosing for whom they worked) in the Carolinas, the Virginias, Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio; finally I moved to Washington DC to work in a church printshop but felt constrained and bored, and decided to travel around on my own and to think about God and the world without having Moonies all over me; I told my friends I had to leave them because I needed a break but would be back within anywhere from three days to two years; I wanted to visit a friend with whom I had worked in New York and who had left the Moonies to return home to California; the others asked me to promise to visit a church center in California, which I did.

1975 Nov 11-27: 16 days' "vacation" from the Moonies: hitch-hiked from Washington DC to Durham/North Carolina (where I spent a night under a highway bridge), then along Interstate Highway 40 up to Asheville near the western end of North Carolina; was getting ready to sleep under another bridge there when a blue car stopped by the side below; amazingly the driver (whose name I don't remember, only his handle on CB radio: the Blue Blazer) was on his way from Miami/Florida to a place called North Highlands in California; he took me along; we drove along I-40 across Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas (Panhandle – Amarillo) and New Mexico to Arizona, where he dropped me off in Seligman west of Flagstaff (he wanted to go back to Ash Fork to visit relatives there who could tell him where North Highlands was, since none of the many truckers he contacted via CB radio had known the place -- much later I learned that it was a suburb of Sacramento).

I hitch-hiked to Kingman/Arizona and then in the night on to Yucca (the big burly guy in a pickup truck with a rifle inside who picked me up late evening in Kingman threatened to throw me out in the desert if I didn't give him a blowjob -- but I managed to get him interested in talking about God and the world's problems, and when he dropped me off near Yucca he said it was the most interesting conversation he'd had in years); slept under a bridge on I-40 near Yucca and got a ride next morning with a Mexican family on the bed of a pickup truck among sacks of potatoes and onions; they took me to Thousand Oaks west of Los Angeles, then I continued to Santa Barbara, and on Highway 101 to Arroyo Grande, San Luis Obispo and on to San Francisco, and across the Golden Gate Bridge to San Rafael, where I stayed a few days with my friend Brad.

Brad later took me to Sacramento. I wanted to travel north to British Columbia, going back to my original plan before I met the Moonies. I tried to hitch-hike north for 3 days (sleeping in some bushes near Interstate Highway 5 to Redding) -- no success. Then I met a hobo at the local soup kitchen and he talked me into going south with him to Indio, near Los Angeles, where he was sure we could get jobs during the winter (I could always go to BC later on). We rode freight trains but got only as far as Stockton. Later, not far from there, he got badly hurt on one train, breaking his hip bone, and I had to take him to a hospital in Tracy. I couldn't stay with him: I was an illegal alien (that's another part of the story).

Later the same day, Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 27), I was robbed of all my possessions except my passport and a few dollars near Livermore, then a fundamentalist Christian guy gave me \$ 60, and I was about ready to look up the church again. I couldn't find the church center in Berkeley, but in the evening I ran into two young guys who invited me to a free Thanksgiving Dinner at a place on Hearst Avenue near Berkeley campus. That turned out to be the Unification Church, under a different name (Creative Community Project)....