

LeeH - 28 Nov 66

THE AVERAGE MAN DOES NOT APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF FUNGI DEPT.

I am a Travelling Jant. If you've been paying attention, you probably already know this. In the past year I have travelled to such far-off, exotic places as San Diego, San Francisco, Cleveland, Savannah, Poughkeepsie, and now Aylmer East. That last was by far the most complicated of my travels this year. I had to change busses.

I left home around 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 23 November, armed with proof of citizenship, a suitcase full of miscellaneous, and forty cents in Canadian money. After a complex journey involving three different trains, I arrived at the bus station. I understand that there are other ways to get from NYC to Ottawa, but the only one I could locate was the Greyhound Bus line. Clutching my suitcase tightly to my breast, I boarded the Montreal-bound coach around 10:00 p.m., took a seasick pill and shortly was asleep.

I awoke briefly at the border where a customs man with a French accent asked for my identification, gazed at my birth certificate suspiciously, asked where I live now, why I was going to Canada and whether I intended to leave anything there. I answered no to all his questions and he let me go back to sleep.

In Montreal I woke long enough to change to a Colonial line bus, still clutching my luggage. I slept some more and when the bus stopped, and I got my eyes open again, what should I see but Norm Clarke. He snatched my suitcase, and I followed as he dashed away.

He stopped at a Volkswagon wearing a Georgia license plate and tossed my suitcase inside. I plunged in after it and discovered Lee Jacobs, who had happened to motor out from California for the weekend. Before I could get my suitcase back, the car was in motion and suddenly I found myself in Aylmer East, which is on the other side of the river.

Since I didn't know how to get back to the bus station from there, I had no alternative but to spend the weekend.

The Clarkes have a swinging house which is roomy and comfortable, and they have two of the most civilized children I've ever met. They also have a fuzzy cat. And not long after I met the cat, Boyd Raeburn arrived. This completed the invasion, the other two proposed attendees having escaped Stateside of the border.

Now, what went on during those four days in Aylmer East, I would hesitate to recount, lest the casual Reader Misunderstand. Or maybe the postal authorities would.

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That Sunday morning, or rather afternoon, during my third cup of coffee, I learned that Boyd intended motoring away, so I smuggled my suitcase into his Mercedes and jumped ship back in Ottawa. I hid myself in the bus station to await transportation further.

While waiting and contemplating what the customs inspector might say about the bagful of rocks I intended taking across the border, I was approached by a gentleman with a Canadian accent who kindly offered me a cigaret and asked if I would join him for a drink. I politely but firmly refused, although I did appreciate this friendly exhibit of true Canadian hospitality toward a foreigner in a strange land. When he finally left, I hid my face in the book I'd brought for emergency use. It was then that I discovered the average man does not appreciate the importance of fungi in everyday life. But before I could delve much further into the subject, the bus began loading.

I had time to notice that the Canadian bus drivers were more polite than the Greyhound drivers and that the seats in the Colonial coaches offered more hip and shoulder room, before I fell asleep.

In Montreal, much to my amazement, I made connections and got onto the express bus to New York City--still clutching my suitcase against the vagrities of Greyhound.

I managed to stay awake til we got to the border. At this bleak point in the night, I was warned, along with the rest of the folk on board, not to get off the bus without permission. Furtively, I glanced out the window, but could not spot the machine gun emplacements. Fearful, I slumped into my seat, hoping no casual gesture would give the impression that I meant to leave the bus.

Soon a uniformed officer of U.S. Immigration came aboard and outlined the various procedures one should take if one were (a) a native-born Amurrican citizen returning home, (b) a naturalized citizen returning to the U.S., (c) a Canadian visiting the U.S., and maybe more, I forget. I held out my birth certificate and he studied it carefully. Handing it back, he asked how long I'd been in Canada. Well, I knew the answer to that one. "Four days," I snapped back confidently. Then he asked if I'd purchased anything in Canada. Wittily, I replied, "No." He gazed at me suspiciously, then shrugged and walked away.

I was one of the lucky ones. Several others were ordered off the bus. Through the window, I watched them race across the open and barren pavement toward the shelter of the customs building. They all made it. I didn't even hear a shot fired. Anxiously, I sat back waiting, wondering if I would ever see my jolly travelling companions again.

One of them had left the door open.

In time another vehicle pulled up next to us: A semi loaded with Christmas trees. The sight of it, along with the flashing of red and green lamps on the bus dash, the red STOP! lights at the border and the amber blinkers, put me in a merry Christmas spirit. I studied the trees, wondering if they were U.S. Citizens returning or Canadians off for a visit.

I began to feel that my worst fears were realized. All those people had disappeared into the customs building and none had come out again. Was that all of it, or would more Be Called? What would happen to those merry green Christmas trees? What had already happened to our bus driver?

Then, finally, the passengers began to straggle back one by one, their faces grimset, their shoulders slumped. Haggard with their ordeal, they returned to the bus. And even the driver came back. With a deft hand, he killed the Christmas colored lights on the dash and threw the heaving hulk of a GM coach into motion.

Satisfied that I was safely back on U.S. soil, I fell asleep. I awoke suddenly in the Port Authority Bus Terminal and, clutching my suitcase full of rocks to my breast, staggered out to the street where I found a taxi.

Five-thirty in the morning is a Good Hour to get into N.Y.C. You can get a taxi at a bus station, and it's a clean, quick trip across town. By six o'clock I was cozied into my own bed again.

This afternoon, I took out the rocks I'd brought back from Aylmer East and examined them. I found that several had what seems to be a calcium carbonate encrustation on them which fluoresces a pale yellowish green under broad spectrum and long wave. There is a good hunk of potash feldspar with veins of something that looks greenish and a piece of red granite with nice mica crusts inside it. There was some fairly pure quartz, and some stuff that looks like black sedimentary sandstone. All in all not rare stuff, but quite nice examples, and those encrustations are lovely, being much like cave stone. I look forward to getting back to Aylmer for another suitcase full of rocks someday. I'd like to hear Norm honque and scree again, too.

Another nice thing about Aylmer East was the pizza Gina fixed. It was unlike any pizza I've ever had before, and absolutely delicious.

Today I have been wandering around in a complete haze. I dragged myself out of the sack around 1:00, which is a little

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earlier than I usually got up in Aylmer. The last shock of seasick pills I took is evidently still on me. I have a vague and discoordinated feeling. At least, I hope it is from the seasick pills...

Not feeling bright enough to do anything constructive like reading or even writing books, I've been keeping myself awake all afternoon by physical activity. Yes, I have finally done some housecleaning. I got two cartons of discards ready for the Salvation Army and managed to squeeze 200 lbs of rare and valuable fanzines into the closet. These were in four cartons and had been sent to my from Savannah by my folks, who are planning to move out of the old house. The cartons had been sitting in the bone room since I was working on SFFY, and all sorts of debris had accumulated atop them. The debris is now on the floor, and the place doesn't look much like I did housecleaning, but down under all that dirt it really is clean.

I have also looked out the door three times to see if it has stopped raining (no, it hasn't) and have eaten my long-hoarded can of seal meat. It tasted like fish-flavored canned roast beef.

Tomorrow I may unpack. But then again I may not. Why ruin a long-standing custom? I haven't yet unpacked from Poughkeepsie, and only finished unpacking from the Tricon because I needed the suitcase for the Queebcon trip.

I got a phone call from my agent today. He told me that the presentation Ted White and I collaborated on, which started me onto my writing career(!) almost two years ago, has been rejected again. Boy, am I ever glad I didn't wait for that to sell before I launched into writing on my own.

I found some pretty interesting rocks in Poughkeepsie--in Lupoff's back yard. They were quartz; coarse crystalline intergrowths all full of cracks and crevices and holes. While I was gathering them, Dick asked me what the holes were. I explained in simple phrases for the layman that they were worm-holes. When I got home, I cracked one open, and found a worm in it. I am looking forward to rock-collecting in the Poughkeepsie area again, too.

Fungi are divided into four main classes, according to the way they form spores. There are Basidiomycetes, Phycomycetes, Ascomycetes and Deuteromycetes (or Fungi Imperfecti). However, it is quite possible that the Deuteromycetes are actually members of the other classes. It is sometimes difficult to tell much about the sex life of a fungus, even under a microscope.

Hoping you are the same,

LeeH