

06/24/03, 06:15 MDT, Ft. Collins, CO

Good morning, Colorado! Except that it's overcast and I can't see any of those big rock piles that are supposedly out here. Oh well, I'll be driving through 'em tomorrow.

We're driving up I-25 with the cruise set at 85 – aren't 75mph speed limits wonderful? About every two miles, there's a bridge over some rinky-dink rail line, and apparently they all belong to this one company. Neat.

Lou, on a particular roadside industry: "I can't imagine that a Budweiser brewery is very useful in a place where Coors is *the* beer."

So, we've been driving. A lot. Terre Haute to 30 miles outside Denver in about 13 hours. If you've ever wondered, the eastern half of Kansas is quite hilly. The western half is quite flat. The eastern half of Colorado is very flat. All of those places are extremely windy.

Somewhere in the middle of Missouri, we got passed by some punk in a red Dodge Avenger with a radar detector on his dash. Barely had he passed us when his detector went crazy and he jacked on the brakes. I looked back and watched as he wildly looked over his shoulder for the cop... who had just pulled over someone on an adjacent county road!

We're now about 10 miles from the Wyoming border, alongside BNSF's Front Range Sub, and passing a coal-fired power plant a couple miles to the west. The clouds are starting to break up, which is good news because we're going to spend the next few hours on the east slope of UP's Sherman Hill, on the "Overland Route." This is some beautiful country, and it's going to be very exciting spending time out here.

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06/24/03, 17:45 MDT, Ft. Collins, CO

Any earlier optimism about better weather evaporated as soon as we ascended into the Sherman Mountains west of Cheyenne, WY. We found a great spot at Dale among a field of k-feldspar rocks, but it was socked in by fog for a few hours, which wasn't too thrilling. After shooting a few trains there, Lou practiced his rally-driving skills on dirt roads for a while before we found another spot at Tie Siding, WY (yes, they have a post office). After catching a train there, and discovering there was no way to publicly access the tunnel portals, we wandered down to Laramie and check out UP's yard. They have a welded-rail plant there, which looked really neat. After getting gas, we heard an eastbound go by, so we jumped on I-80 and chased it back to Dale and got a decent shot. On the way down the hill to Cheyenne, we saw *five* more westbounds struggling up the grade!

We're spending the night at Lou's friend Kelly's apartment here in Ft. Collins. Lou & I are teaching her some Duck Hunt playing tips, but other than that we're just going to hang out for the evening and relax. Tomorrow, we're off to do the old D&RGW across western Colorado and into Utah.

I'll be writing updates during the day on my craptop, and when able I'll post 'em all to my journal. Thank Kelly for this evening's post!

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06/25/03, 00:45 MDT, Ft. Collins, CO

I'd finally gone to sleep at a decent hour (about quarter after 11), and was blissfully sound asleep... And then Lou, Kelly, Darcy, Marissa, and possibly a fifth person barged in totally wasted, put down a shot each in the kitchen, and then charged into Marissa's room to listen to music LOUDLY. And, of course, perform the requisite inebriated karaoke. Not that I blame them in the least for having a good time, but I'm just a little ticked that I can't get a good night's sleep, which I really, really need after the last two nights of entirely insufficient sleep. (And apparently Lou can't comprehend that my body requires a good chunk of sleep, because he keeps bitching about how I'm complaining about my being tired when he's done 3/4 of the driving to date... if I've had insufficient sleep, I can't force myself to stay awake!)

Hooray: Lou just walked past me twice, on the way to/from the bathroom. It couldn't be any more obvious that I'm awake after having been asleep (sitting on the couch, wrapped in a blanket, staring at the craptop screen in the dark), yet he didn't even say hi. But I suppose that if I'd gone drinking with 'em, I wouldn't have these problems right now. Three-halves of a cheer for being an antisocial dick. I'm just glad it isn't Lou's car about which a female voice uttered a few minutes ago, "Ohmigod, I hope my car doesn't get towed!" (Three cheers for the DD!)

As depressingly wonderful as it might continue to be to describe their capricious taste in music, silly antics, and various other verbal utterances, exultations, and babbling, I'm going to end this and play TD3 until sleep totally overwhelms me. Oh, and based on Lou's description, I can expect a similar (if not worse) night in LA in a few days. Right now, I am soooo looking forward to seeing Patty and having a couple days of relative peace!

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06/25/03, 11:20 MDT, Ft. Collins, CO

Thankfully, the partiers only went at it for an hour and a half last night before staggering off to bed. Lou had a touch much to drink, as the small carpet stain

will attest, and he's still sleeping it off. I ended up getting a solid eight hours of sleep and feel fine.

It occurs that keeping this journal is the only way I'm going to remember what day it is!

Kelly informs me that, "I spent the night at La Rhonda." It turns out that for whatever reason, they've named the apartment. Quirkily cool!

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06/25/03, 16:49 MDT, Rollinsville, CO

We're on CO-119 approaching Rollinsville, and all I can say is **WOW**. Absolutely stunning mountains in front of us. Bonus: We found a train sitting at the west end of the siding in town, and the clouds thinned out enough for a nice view. Mommy, you should have moved [here](#)!

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06/25/03, 19:35 MDT, Fraser, CO

The sun came out on the way over Berthoud Pass, and I've taken some outstanding landscapes from off the side of the road. It's amazing to see the glacial origins of the valleys, and be able to apply the stuff I learned in Geology. And, there's still snow in the mountains. Anyways, time to play frisbee while we wait for a train.

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06/25/03, 20:10 MDT, Fraser, CO

After a half-hour of frisbee, an eastbound BNSF trackage-rights train rolled through, just moments before the sun was obscured by a large cloud. Exercise and a great photo: What more could a guy want? We're off to Winter Park to camp for the night.

### **Winter Park, Elevation 9,110 Feet**

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06/26/03, 06:52 MDT, Winter Park, CO

My first night camping was fun! We set up camp as daylight was waning, then I went down to Winter Park to get some firewood at the 7-11... until I noticed a sign by the caretaker's camper that they were selling "Firewood: All you can carry \$4.00" – can't pass up a time-saving deal like that! The gentleman who sold me the wood was very nice, reminded me of a polar opposite of George Carlin with a big beard.

Lou fried onions and the last two (mostly) un-rotted potatoes on the propane stove, and fried up some Spam over the open fire... and much to my surprise, it was all rather tasty! Unfortunately, the food isn't settling too well upon this morning, but Lou believes this is because "all I eat is beef."

The campground was a Rafael Belliard fly ball from the Moffat Tunnel Sub, the UP (former D&RGW) line that goes through Moffat Tunnel (duh, I suppose). Eastward trains battle a 2% (or steeper, I'll have to look it up) upward grade towards the tunnel, and loaded coal trains make all sorts of wonderful bass reverberations among the valley as they get down on their knees to drag the hundred-plus car trains up the mountain. These trains all have two engines on the head end, a two- or three-unit swing helper about 2/3 of the way back, and lastly a two-unit helper shoving on the rear. All of the helper engines are controlled remotely from the head end, so only one crew is needed to move the train. Technology!

We're currently sitting on the south side of Fraser, waiting for a westbound to roll by so we can shoot it amongst a backdrop of cloud-enshrouded mountain peaks; after that passes, we'll shoot an eastbound coal train with a beautiful snowy peak in the distance. Now I must cease my writing, for Lou wants to turn the car off and my battery is dead. Until later!

... It's later: The westbound never showed up, and we need to continue westward, so we're abandoning the spot and heading on to... belay that, scanner traffic just picked up a train calling a signal at Winter Park, so we're going back!

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06/26/03, 08:46 MDT, Fraser, CO

Wowee! The westbound finally showed up and turned out to be an empty coal train with six or seven units on the point! The leader was SP 378, which has yet to be patched (or repainted) into UP's roster. Even neater, the third or fourth unit was SP 115.

So, the westbound ducked into the siding at Tabernash for UP 6677 East, which then got a clear signal on the main to proceed east and make a charge for the mountain. Even with three miles of relatively level track from which to get started, the train was barely doing 15mph when it got to our spot on the south side of Fraser, and had slowed to 10 by the time the swing helper reached us. More pleasant surprises: SP 100 was the second unit on the point, and SP 157 was one of the two units on the swing helper!

The scenery out here is so amazingly spectacular... I wish we had time to spend another day in the area and find some nice elevated spots from which to shoot,

but there's so much else to do on the trip that just wouldn't be practicable. Oh well, 'tis better to have had a taste than nothing at all: Our original plan had us entirely bypassing this part of Colorado and not picking up the D&RGW until Dotsero.

Welcome to Granby, CO, Elevation 7395 feet, where there is to be a rodeo held this weekend at the [Flying Hills Arena](#). It's really neat that we're on US 40... the same road that runs through Terre Haute. We might even come across the road again when we reach Northern CA or Oregon later in the week. We're also now paralleling the famous Colorado River, and are in the watershed for its headwaters, so with any luck we'll catch an eastbound between here and Kremmling so we can shoot the river.

Our overall intent now is to just head west for Utah. Although we aren't aiming for any spots in particular, we will of course shoot any trains that present themselves.

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06/26/03, 09:24 MDT, Parshall, CO

Yeah, that intent didn't last too long. A few miles outside of Granby we overtook SP 378 West, and we're now chasing him westward. We got some outstanding photos in Byers Canyon, and are now pacing him past "Flat" siding. We're basically going to do this until he gets through Kremmling, then get ahead and find some shots in Gore Canyon. O, the adventures we shall seek!

"SP 378 West, highball, Troublesome, out."

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06/26/03, 11:22 MDT, CO-131, north of Wolcott, CO

Lou and I chased SP 378 West into Gore Canyon along the Colorado River... simply some of the most stunning scenery I have ever seen a rail line wind through. Forget 8x10s – I'm making posters from some of these shots! It was a series of majestic vistas that truly defy words. We found a beautiful shot at Mc Phee Gulch, but the train disappeared, and we waited about an hour without seeing anything. Very disappointing, but what can you do? I'll have to do a bit of research and see if there's a coal mine spur we missed that the train could have ducked on to.

I've been gawking at scenic wonders while writing this, and we're now I-70 heading west alongside the old D&RGW Tennessee Pass line. Ahead: Dotsero, where we rejoin the D&RGW main that's still in use, and then the famous Glenwood Canyon, where there's only the D&RGW, the Colorado River, and the late-arriving I-70. However, we're in desperate need of gas, where it's my turn to

buy gas... last time we saw gas (this morning), the cheap stuff was about \$1.70. Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore!

(We aren't even in the northeast anymore! \$1.859/gal for 87 octane, which is "plus" in this part of the world! Straight-up "unleaded" is 85 octane (which you *might* be able to find as "economy" in the northeast and Midwest) and, here in Eagle, CO, was \$1.759.)

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06/26/03, 12:17 MDT, Glenwood Springs, CO

We just passed through Glenwood Canyon. If you could make an aircraft carrier fly, you still wouldn't be able to navigate it through that twisting wonder of nature. Just as amazing as the forces that were necessary for the Colorado River to carve such a cleft are the engineering feats that brought the D&RGW and, decades later, I-70 through. I took a bunch of photos out of the windshield; I don't expect outstanding results, but it'll be nice to have a photographic record of my first passage through there. I need to find a book on this place and learn more.

So anyways, we're heading towards Vegas. From Dotsero, it was 600 miles and 10 hours according to Street Atlas, so we expect to arrive around 20:30 PDT. After gambling away some money (it's Vegas, ya gotta), we'll get some sleep and head towards Tehachapi in the morning. Because we're running a day behind our anticipated itinerary due to camping in Winter Park last night, we may skip the night at Denise's (Lou's friend in LA) and head directly up to San Fran from Tehachapi. Unknown at this time whether we'll be spending one or two days there.

Enough of this for a while...

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06/26/03, 16:34 MDT, near Monroe, UT

Another state I can check off, and two more before the night is out!

I drove from Parachute, CO to Salina, UT, past and through some of the most amazing geological formations I've ever seen. I know this sounds redundant, but as we continue to progress west, my standards continue to change! The hallmark of Utah's flats, buttes, and mesas is the vivid colors of the rocks and soils. Mesas were beige at the top, an iron-red in the middle, and a different shade towards the bottom. All kinds of shades of yellow and pink were readily present. And the landforms themselves! Almost unearthly in the shapes they took. At one point, we saw a natural cone rising hundreds of feet above a flat. The patterns formed by fluvial and eolian erosion processes are simply breathtaking.

However, most impressive was the amount of work that had to be done to construct I-70 across this horribly inhospitable terrain. Just west of Green River, there's a sign that reads, **No services on I-70 for next 100 miles**. And they weren't kidding! Lou and I had to turn the AC off for the last 75 miles to Salina to ensure we'd actually get there... it was pretty nerve-wracking for a while.

I haven't taken many photos out here... obviously, I was driving for most of the ride, and now that Lou's at the wheel, I'm on the wrong side of the car to get properly sun-lit views. However, I did take a few photos at the "view area" just west of Green River that are exemplar of some of the terrain out here.

We just passed a little canyon off the side of the highway that had a really neat cliff face: The top third was formed of a sandy rock, and fluvial erosion had worn away the surface relatively smoothly. Just below that, beginning precisely at the strata line, the same fluvial processes had formed column-like spires. Quite wondrous!

On a different note... Passing through Glenwood Canyon is like going through a warp zone. On the east side are towering snow-capped peaks that are heavily coated with conifers on the lower slopes. Shortly after exiting out the west side you enter a sandy wasteland where mesas are the prevalent massive landform. Through it all flows the Colorado River, which I-70 and the D&RGW both faithfully follow until Fruita, CO. From there, I-70 heads overland, while the rails follow the river through a series of canyons before finally parting at Westwater, UT.

We're now descending out of Fishlake National Forest, and the end of I-70 is in sight: The junction with I-15. (For anyone curious, milepole 0 lies a quarter of a mile west of the I-70 overhead bridge.) We'll hang a left in two miles and head southwestward for Las Vegas, 243 miles distant, passing through the extreme northwest corner of Arizona along the way.

Lou: "Three hours from Vegas... Right on!"

I'm out of words for the time being. I'd apologize for writing so much, but this is as much to help me remember the trip as it is to let those of you who couldn't come along experience it through my words, so I won't.

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06/26/03, 21:55 PDT, Las Vegas, NV

*Viva Las Vegas!*

Actually, before I asked Lou what that meant, I thought that was funny. Considering what I think of this place (a horrible exploitation of human greed, at the expense of the masses and the enrichment of the few, not to mention the

effects of urban sprawl on the desert region and water supplies), I'm not exactly thrilled to have uttered such a phrase, but what the heck, I don't plan on coming back here again.

So, we're spending the night at **Circus Circus**, a Vegas icon and, as Lou says, "a really trashy place." After being grumpy for a while, and unfairly lashing out at Lou, I took a nice long cold shower and am feeling much better. After he showers, we're going to go down to the restaurant and have dinner (my dime, since he's picking up the hotel room), then walk around for a while. After not sleeping too well last night on the ground, it'll be very nice to have a queen-sized bed to crash upon.

More amazing scenery: Southern Utah features an amazing series of mesas just before St. George. However, immediately after crossing into Arizona, I-15 plunges into the winding Virgin River Gorge for fifteen miles, an amazing maze of deep, colorful canyons. I was even able to identify a geologic discontinuity at one point!

Exiting the gorge is just as dramatic as the passage: The highway ascends a curve, and suddenly you're in the desert; turn around, and all you see is a towering line of cliffs.

Future plans: Leave here in the morning and make a direct run for the Tehachapi Loop area. Spend all day there, find a campground in the area for the night, and then spend more time Saturday morning in the area. Not too long after noon, we'll get back on the road and make the trek up to the Bay Area to spend the remainder of the weekend with Patty. Tentative plans have us departing Pittsburg Monday morning and working over Donner Pass and the Feather River Canyon, before following the "Inside Gateway" north towards Klamath Falls, OR, and eventually the Columbia River Gorge.

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06/27/03, 10:44 PDT, somewhere in I-15 in eastern California

After sleeping in at **Circus Circus**, we got on the road for Tehachapi. However, just after climbing the mountain pass just on the south side of the NV-CA border, we ran into a traffic jam that stretched for miles and miles... one of those traffic jams where nobody moves and people start getting out of their vehicles to see what's going on. So Lou shut down the car, and I picked up Terry Pindell's *Making Tracks* to pass the time.

After a few minutes, it occurred to me that we were sitting right next to a gravel area between the highway lanes, and the potential existed to turn around and go north on I-15 if there was an alternate route available. Sure enough, the first exit inside CA, Nipton Road, went over towards Ivanpah Road, which led towards

Cima... which UP's main from Salt Lake City passes through! So I said to Lou, "Ya know, if you swing through the connection lot there and go back north, we can take a detour around all this crap." And away we went! With the generous aid of CDOT's construction zone providing us an acceleration lane, Lou slalomed perfectly through the cones into traffic, and away we went! We're currently on Morning Star Mine Road bound for Cima, where we'll wait for one train to crest the hill before moving on towards I-40 and Barstow.

One thing I forgot to mention from yesterday: When we arrived in Las Vegas at 7:30 in the evening, the temperature was 102 F. "Dry heat" or not, that's still fucking **HOT!!**

We're on the tail of a UP train, so I'm shutting down... More later, I'm sure.

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06/27/03, 22:28 PDT, Tehachapi, CA

Later it sure is! Since we knew where we were going after shooting two UP trains near Cima, I turned the computer off during for remainder of the day.

We eventually made it to Tehachapi, and Lou gave me the nickel tour of the west (or north, depending on whether you're looking at the timetable or the compass) slope of the mountain grade from CA-58. We parked at a spot Lou found on the upslope side of Caliente, where we waited a very short time to catch a southbound. I had a great shot set up... until the train disappeared into a tunnel I wasn't aware of! I settled for a broadside shot of the six-unit lashup exiting the tunnel amidst a cloud of exhaust.

We then moved to a great spot east of Caliente, where the Mojave Sub ducks through a tunnel in a sharp curve to change geographic directions from westward to eastward (while running timetable southward). It happens that this is just a few miles up the hill where the rails make another sharp curve to go from eastward to westward, forming the famous Caliente Loops. Look at a map, it's neat. Anyways, we didn't have to wait too long to catch a baretable train coming up the hill with a pair of pristine BNSF C44-9Ws on point, in typical perfect California sunlight. We then got behind Lou's 237 horses and whipped our way up to the famous National Landmark, Tehachapi Loop.

There, we met three guys descending from the hill overlooking the loop. They'd been there for over an hour without seeing a train and welcomed the news be brought that there was one ascending the hill. As it turned out, one of the three hailed from Burlington, VT, while another was from Kashmir! Soon afterward, two guys from Germany showed up! Scanner traffic seemed to indicate that a northbound was coming, but as things would turn out, a southbound went first, and the northbound we were waiting for arrived about 10 minutes after shadows obscured the good shot off the overlook (and a half-hour after the perfect view

was shadowed out). However, we were able to use what little light remained to get a neat shot of the sun highlighting the reflective striping on the engines. We chased the train back to the spot west of Caliente, but the sun sank below the hills before either that or an approaching southbound could arrived. We did what we could, and hopefully will obtain decent results.

The hills in the area are covered with a type of burr-bearing plant that I've never seen before. Instead of your typical round, seed-bearing burrs that I'm familiar with, these plants have harmless-looking leaves that are actually seed-bearing sleeves covered in micro-barbs, which hook onto your socks and do a wonderful job ruining them as they work their way in. Think of a cylindrical porcupine: Pet it in one direction, and it's nice and soft. Pet it in the other direction, and we'll page the doc to the emergency room. Annoying and painful those things are.

Tomorrow, we'll head back to the loop for some morning photography, and likely hit a few other spots in the area. After returning to the Village Restaurant in Tehachapi for lunch (I had a turkey sandwich for supper, but Lou's burg looked so good that I demanded we return), we'll head north for the Bay Area and a highly-anticipated reunion with my big sis!

JC, I found a little souvenir for ya, hopefully it won't be a duplicate. Not that I had a choice of which one to get...

Oh yes, one more thing: It is **HOT** out here!!! I slathered on the sunscreen today and didn't get burned, but I drank so much that it was a wonder I didn't drown (I sweated off so much today that I went from Vegas to the second trip to Caliente - - some 12 hours -- without having to pump bilges). I can't wait to get up to the PacNW, where there are trees, green grass, and waterways with flowing water! It'll be nice to see something reminding me of home, not these "rivers" out here that are nothing more than sandy ravines.

Well, time for me to shower away today's collection of dust, dirt, sunscreen, and whatever other substances have gathered.

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06/28/03, 23:39 PDT, Pittsburg, CA

It is soooo wonderful to see Patty and Craig again, and to get to know Harrison and Mackenzie. (I do hope that's correctly spelled.) Harrison really amazes me with his intelligence and comprehension; I showed him a bunch of photos on my computer (both trains and landscapes), and not only did he figure out how to use the laptop within moments, he was completely enthralled while viewing the photos. One photo of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains caused him to say, "Hold on, let me get out my atlas and find where that is." He also asked if I was the guy who gave him "the train photo and the train calendar," and when I

said yes, he thanked me. Patty says he's very much like me, and I couldn't disagree at all.

Mackenzie is the cutest little girl. Wonderfully ebullient, she's always chattering on about something, and is never far from a writing (or rather, drawing) instrument. Patty constantly compares her to Liz, and again the likeness is quite evident.

Tomorrow, Patty and Craig are going to tour me around the area, and Lou will tag along (he's seen most of this stuff already). After an afternoon barbeque, Lou & I will head down to Oakland to catch the A's hosting the Mariners. Unfortunately, due to a long list of reasons, we'll be leaving around dawn on Monday for points north... a shame that I've come so far only to spend so little time with my family, but it's wonderful that I've had the opportunity to do so!

Other stuff from the day... Lou and I woke up to a 7:30 alarm, but Lou was still pretty tired after yesterday's driving and suggested I go to K-Mart to buy film while he caught a few minutes more sleep. After returning from there (and getting gas), we headed back down to the Loop. After a short wait, a northbound came down the hill and traversed the loop, and two more quickly followed.

With nothing apparently coming for a while, Lou and I laid back in a shady spot and rested. After a while, I sat up to gaze down the valley to search for any approaching trains, and happened to glance down at my feet, such action being immediately followed by the utterance, "Hello, snake." Although not frightened of its presence, I wasn't sure what to do. Obviously, I kept as still as possible, and sought identification. The little pits on the sides of the snake's head weren't promising, so I called out, "Hey Lou, what do I do if there's a snake about a foot from my boot?" He thought that I was kidding around at first, but when he stood up and walked over, he declared that I shouldn't do anything quickly. I slowly handed him my water bottle, scanner, and timetable, then snapped a quick photo of the intruder (whether that was the snake or myself depends wholly upon your point of view) before handing up my camera. I slowly slid backwards up the hill a couple yards, then stood up and backed off a little more. Deciding that I was no longer a threat, the snake turned around and slithered off down the hill, displaying a diamond-shaped head, and chillingly accompanied by a faint rattling from its tail. Lou surmised that it was a baby rattler that was more puzzled than frightened by my presence, and had merely been looking for an opportunity to escape.

We caught two more trains traversing the loop, then headed back to Tehachapi for lunch at the same place we'd had supper last night (correcting yesterday's misidentification, it's the Village Grille Family Restaurant). Afterwards, Lou gave me the keys and we embarked upon the journey towards the Bay Area, arriving about five hours later.

It's late, I'm tired, and we have a long day ahead of us... well, it's today now, isn't it? After checking my mail, it'll be off to bed...

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06/29/03, 22:43 PDT, Pittsburg, CA

All good things must come to an end, and such is my brief stay with Patty and family. It's been wonderful to see everyone again, but Lou and I need to progress onward, and we're leaving a little before 5am.

Today, after sleeping in, Patty and Craig took Lou and me on a tour of the Bay Area. Lou has been here before, so he wasn't quite as enthralled as I was. We drove through Jack London Square, where UP's mainline to the Oakland ports runs down the middle of the street, and luckily caught an Amtrak California train passing through. We drove around Oakland and Emeryville for a bit before crossing the Bay Bridge to San Francisco. We drove along the waterfront, slithered down Lombard Street, and photographed the Golden Gate Bridge. We made an abortive attempt to find lunch, before realizing that we'd soon be lighting the grill here, so we headed back for Pittsburg.

After a curious meal of bbq'd burgers and rice, Lou and I took off for Oakland, since the schedule I'd found on the MLB website said the A's would be playing a home game. Apparently there was some miscommunication somewhere, because the home series starts tomorrow. However, another fan said that "there's a game today at Pac Bell against the Giants," so Lou and I headed back across the bay to go to that game. We arrived at the ballpark to discover the game had long since ended, and realized that the fan had meant to say "there was a game today." Oh well... We then beat feet and made it from Pac Bell back to Patty's place in 35 minutes, even after encountering heavy traffic on the Bay Bridge. You do the math.

I'm quite tired, so as soon as I make one last check of my email, I'm going to bed. Over 600 miles to drive tomorrow before we even get to the Columbia River Gorge...

One last thing: We've been lucky the past week, being able to stay three nights at homes of friends and family, and two nights in a motel. After tonight, we anticipate camping for the remainder of the journey, so updates may not appear frequently. Feel free to call the cell if you need to get in touch, I'll try to have it on most of the time.

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06/30/03, 22:37 PDT, Rufus, OR

Lou and I are camping alongside the Columbia River tonight. We discovered that the US Army Corps of Engineers owns the land along the river and allows people to camp for free! We're going to take advantage of that and camp here tomorrow night also, before heading for Spokane on Wednesday morning.

This morning, Patty gave us a 4am wakeup call. Lou went back to sleep while I had breakfast, and we rolled out of Pittsburg shortly before 5am. (Lou wanted to avoid any and all rush hours that we could have encountered, thus the early hour.) We drove up I-5, and reached Portland sometime around 3pm. Highlights of the drive were twisting through the mountains around Mount Shasta, stopping for a rest at the "Weed Rest Area," and stopping at some truck stop in the middle of nowhere, Oregon, to eat and buy postcards (and I bet you all thought I'd forgotten!).

We bypassed Portland as best we could on I-205, crossed the Columbia into Washington, and turned east on WA-14. We followed the tracks for about 40 miles before finding a nice photo spot where we decided to wait for a train to arrive. True to the luck we've been experiencing this trip, one arrived within 15 minutes! We headed further east along the BNSF tracks, and found a rest area that overlooked a majestic view of the river, including both the BNSF main on the north bank and the UP main on the south bank. Of all the crazy things that could have happened, we captured a pair of westbounds approaching, one on each side of the river! We then chased the BNSF coal train westward and shot it at a neat spot near Cook, WA. We then worked our way back west to catch Amtrak #28, and chased it to Wishram. Finally, we headed off in search of a campground.

My craptop battery is such junk... Five minutes ago, it was at 76% and estimated to run another two hours... now, it's at 20% and about to crap out on me. Time to turn on the juice in the car so the battery doesn't die.

On the other hand, the campground is wonderful: We pitched the tent practically on the river's edge, so the BNSF main is quite close. Even closer, on our side of the river, is UP's main! I wonder if we'll be able to sleep tonight...

Speaking of sleeping up in this area, my online friend Casey had offered to let Lou and I crash at her place one night. Unfortunately, we won't be up in her neighborhood, so once again I'll just miss out on meeting her. On the other hand, when I called her with the bad news, she explained why there's an abrupt change from forested mountains to desert ridges in the vicinity of The Dalles: Rainstorms off the Pacific just *stop* at the Cascades, so everything west of there is lush, while everything to the east is desert. Kinda screwy, but very neat nonetheless.

Well, it's been a long day, so I'm going to shut down and go to sleep.

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07/01/03, 20:41 PDT, Lyons Ferry State Park, Joso, WA

Lou and I ended up chasing an eastbound BNSF train for quite a distance this morning, so we aren't going to spend two nights at John Jay Dam as intended. Tonight, we're at Lyons Ferry State Park, which lies in the evening shadow of UP's Joso Bridge, spanning the Snake River. In fact, as soon as I finish this, I'm going to take some spectacular sunset photos of the the structure.

The most exciting thing that's happened today have been the EA-6 flyovers: One on the road between WA-124 and here, and three times while we've been sitting around the campsite. We've been here since 4pm, eagerly awaiting a UP train to cross the bridge, but haven't seen anything! However, the Camas Prairie Railroad ran an eastbound from Ayer Jct. that passed under the bridge, so we've at least seen something here. Our plan for the morning is to get up early and sit here until we've seen at least one train, then we'll move onward towards Spokane.

Short entry, but a short day and not too much to say.

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07/02/03, 10:52 PDT, Spokane, WA

Lou and I dropped off I-90 in Spokane to get an oil change (brand-new car, he's sticking to the 3000-mile interval as best as he can). All the guys at Jiffy Lube were drooling over the WRX – it's the first '04 they'd seen. And it has 6200 miles on it!

For some reason, the inverter stopped working while I was typing this, and I just spent the last three minutes frantically trying to get at the inverter (buried under my seat) to see why things were wrong... while Lou was moving into traffic on I-90. Whatever scrabbling I did worked. And now we've got a dude riding a Suzuki crotch rocket popping wheelies behind us; the guy passed us doing about 110, then slowed down so we could pass him, and I flipped a thumbs-up. Now he's showing off, and we're loving it.

Anyways, back to the stories: The US Navy gave the folks at Lyons Ferry State Park a 7:30 wakeup call when they buzzed the campsite with another EA-6 flight, cruising at around 500 feet. I heard the plane coming, so I was able to snap off a shot that'll probably look like crap, but hey, how often do you see an EA-6? Also, I forgot to mention yesterday that while heading east after the garbage train chase, yet another EA-6 flew by us westward just a couple hundred feet above the Columbia River.

We're now in Coeur d'Alene, ID (another new state!), where I-90 parallels the old NP coming into town, and there's a beautiful abandoned concrete arch bridge

just visible off the highway. Disappointing to not be able to get a shot, but as I just said to Lou, "We're going to see plenty of great old GN trestles up in Montana."

Jumping back to Lyons Ferry: Two trains rolled across the high bridge while we were there, both in the darkness. Frustrating, but what can you do? As promised, I took some great sunset shots, and I'm hoping the night shots of the bridge I took will come out well.

We just passed under a concrete-beam bridge in Coeur d'Alene that had a HUGE chunk missing from one of the beams... In excess of 14'6" that truck obviously was!

Dad, ever hear of the golf course with a par 3 which has a floating, movable green? We juts drove past it. Lake Coeur d'Alene is a stunningly deep blue, with a beautiful backdrop of conifer-coated mountains. If anyone reading is so inclined, this place would make for a wonderful vacation.

This morning has us driving again, from Lyons Ferry to Marias Pass in northwest Montana. We'll spend tonight camping there, railfan the pass again tomorrow, and then head up into Canada. Now is when we get into the most-anticipated part of the journey... never mind Colorado and SoCal, we've spent the whole trip impatiently waiting for the next week or so. We'll probably spend three full days in Alberta and eastern British Columbia, and it'll be a blast.

Time to do some more studying for Montana...

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07/02/03, 21:29 MDT, Marias Pass, MT

Greetings from the Continental Divide! We're camping at the lowest crossing of the Continental Divide north of New Mexico, at a pass located by John Stevens in 1893, who was surveying the route for the mountain crossing of James Hill's Great Northern. The pass received its name from Meriwether Lewis (of the Lewis and Clark expedition), naming the river whose headwaters lie here after his sister. (The expedition made the fateful mistake of choosing the wrong fork in their westward trek, and was unable to locate the Northwest Passage.)

We followed the Flathead River up from I-90, and stopped near Perma, MT, to take some photos of the amazingly turquoise water. After a long journey around the west side of Flathead Lake, we reached US-2 and followed it eastward, up the valley carved by the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. US-2 joins with the old GN (now BNSF) near Columbia Falls, and together the two climb into the mountains. We stopped about thirty miles up near West Glacier to shoot a wonderful spot I'd located online. We nabbed an eastbound with six engines on the point and two more pushing at the rear, and proceeded to chase the train all

the way up to the summit. Here we set up camp for the night at a campsite in the Lewis & Clark National Forest, a stone's throw from the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial that marks the Continental Divide.

Two nights ago Lou had me try black beans and rice, which was far too spicy for me (not to mention it scalded my mouth). Last night I tried kooskoos, which was mildly unpleasant and barely tolerable. Tonight, I tried red beans and rice, which didn't taste too great and was just, in a word, nasty. I ended up cooking ramen, which I really don't mind at all.

A couple days ago, on the ride up here from CA, we stopped at a truck stop in the middle of Oregon, and I ordered a BBQ Beef sandwich. Quite good!

The westbound *Empire Builder* just rolled by with an ex-Oakway Leasing SD60 leading Amtrak #123 – very curious power indeed! The train also accidentally left two passengers at Glacier Park (they'd gotten off to look around without telling anyone), but I haven't heard what the resolution of that incident will be.

I called Liz, Dad, and Dess tonight. It's nice to talk to people other than Lou for once! It'll be nice to get back to Terre Haute and hang out with Dess, and I'm considering heading for home shortly thereafter. James had said he'd be interested in coming back out to Terrible Hole with me for a few days and then flying back east, so it'll be interesting to see how that plays out. I'm not really sure how I'll entertain him, since there's really nothing to do in the Hole, but I'm sure we'll think of something.

Time to head towards bed; we're going to get up early and take advantage of every minute of morning sunlight we can get to shoot trains climbing the pass!

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07/03/03, 19:19 MDT, Bow Valley Wilderness, Alberta, Canada

What an amazingly outstandingly wonderful day this has been. Lou and I got up with the sun and spent a great morning chasing trains up and down Marias Pass, catching about a half-dozen freights and the eastbound *Empire Builder*... all in absolutely perfect light. I've been hesitant to say anything about it to avoid a jinx, but we haven't had a cloudy day of railfanning since we got to Colorado!

Around 11, with the sun approaching its apogee (and the resultant crummy light for railfan photography), we decided to make the trek to the northland: Canada!

The border crossing was interesting: The pickup ahead of us was waved right on through the customs post, but we were asked to "pull ahead into the shed, go in through the glass door, and up the stairs." A customs official interviewed each of us (separately, of course), and then searched the car for drugs. I guess two guys in their early 20s driving a brand-new car fit the profile for drug runners.

Adjusting to Canada was a little difficult: Obviously, they use the metric system, so speed limit signs reading **Maximum 110** aren't as appealing once you realize that's about 67mph. Making the transition even more annoying was that we'd just come from Montana, where two-lane state roads are rated for a 70mph limit!

Southern Alberta alternates between rolling country and plains, kind of similar to western NY. It's very beautiful pastureland, and readily visible on the western horizon are the Rockies, stretching from Montana into Alberta.

We took AB-40 through Highwood Pass, which is (once again) the absolutely most amazing terrain I've ever been through. Towering rocks crags, shorter pine-coated hills, and lively rivers flowing through conifer-forested valleys. Simply beautiful. Every so often there were signs warning of "Stock Roaming" or "Open Range." Sure enough, we came around a bend to find seven or eight cows standing in the middle of the road like they owned the place. A few kilometers later we encountered another cow sauntering along the right shoulder – at least it knew to walk facing traffic!

Random note: One of the more interesting things about the west is that almost all of the bulk-commodity trucks (cement, grain, fuel, etc) have two trailers in tow. Even a lot of the dry vans are in tandem, more than one sees back east.

Random note: Canadian law-enforcement officials wear their bullet-proof vests outside of their uniform shirts, opposite American practice.

Well, we're on the outskirts of Banff now, and in search of a campground. The next few days are going to be fun beyond words, and I'm eagerly looking forward to the experience!

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07/04/03, 15:58 MDT, Canmore, Alberta, Canada

Well, it was fun while it lasted.

Lou and I got up a little late today (7:30) and headed out in search of trains. We meandered west of Banff on the Bow Valley Parkway, and finally found a train... going the other way! Mind you, the speed limit on that road is 50km/h, not quite ideal for chasing a train moving at 50mph. But since the RCMP was everywhere else in force (we have yet to see a cop today), we made like Americans and paid no heed to that sign (anyone remember my "Failure to obey a traffic control device"?). We caught the train at a couple spots (barely) before giving up the chase and heading further west to Lake Louise.

We pulled up to the east end of the double track (the north main is much newer than the south, and climbs the east slope of Kicking Horse Pass at a substantially gentler grade) and checked the signals. The "15-minute rule" that we've

experienced throughout the rest of the trip (arrive at a spot, and a train shows up within 15 minutes) held true, as the signals showed a Medium Clear aspect for an eastbound off the south main. We shot it crossing the Pipestone River, then headed up the pass to see what else we could find.

Not seeing any trains before the crest, we descended the “Golden Stairs” (as the west slope is dubbed) along the original railroad grade to the overlook at the Spiral Tunnels. The two tunnels were built in the early 1900s to alleviate the original construction’s “temporary” 4.5% grade, and the westward ruling grade is now 2.2%. It would have been wonderful to hang around and wait for a train to pass through the Lower Spiral Tunnel, but the place stank to high hell of raw sewage (the latrines must not have been emptied recently), and anyways there was a train snaking through the Upper Spiral Tunnel, so we had to give chase. The first open spot we found was at the summit of the pass, where there’s a wonderful view of the tracks from across Wapta Lake. We chased the train all the way back to Lake Louise, where we would have been able to duplicate the earlier creek shot had there not been a ton of tourist traffic.

We went back to the Spiral Tunnels overlook to wait for a train, but again the stench was just too overpowering, so we decided to leave. Fortuitously, just then an eastbound grain train exited the upper tunnel, so we chased it back up to the lake and shot it there. And just so I don’t forget, B.C. can be added to the checklist.

Realizing that we’d had an excellent day thus far, and with one other consideration in mind (to be expanded upon shortly), we decided to return to the grand ol’ US of A.

We stopped in Canmore to spend as much of our remaining Canadian currency as possible, stopping at DQ for lunch, and then on to FasGas on the other side of town for fuel. It turns out that this was a full-service place, and the nicest and funniest lady came out to pump our gas. She told us of the loony who lives in town who refuses to let anyone touch his car (“And it’s an old beater, too!”), who “came in this morning and got one dollar and forty-seven cents in gas. I don’t know why he doesn’t go to one of the self-serve places down the street... I think it’s the mountains, they make people a little strange.” After she’d finished, she told us that it was going to be C\$33.27, and she joked about how I was “playing with the Monopoly money!” Lou and I both cracked up at that comment, since that had been one of our running jokes the last few days.

For the uninitiated, gas in Canada is sold by the liter. I paid C\$0.715 at FasGas (or, as the sign proclaimed, “71.5”). To save all of you from crunching the numbers yourselves, that’s \$3.543/gal in real dollars. Rape me some more, eh?

Which leads me to the story of why we’re leaving Canada early: It is so incredibly fucking expensive up here. We’ve discussed gas. Food at places like

Wendy's and DQ is a little more expensive than American counterparts, but then they tax you *twice* on top of that. Then, there's the parks: It's C\$7/day *per person* to get into "Park national Banff" (that's French), and then they charged C\$22 for the campground! At least the showers were free, although it was really annoying to repeatedly keep hitting the plunger every eight seconds. So, yeah, having gotten the photography we wanted and to save ourselves incredible financial headache, we're heading back to our homeland.

We've just arrived on the western boundary of Calgary, and across the valley all we can see is suburbia... and every house is identical. Exclaimed Lou, "That's creepy as hell!" We also just passed the '88 Olympic Park, which is dominated by the tower from which the ski-jumping event was launched. Kind of weird that I saw where Calgary held their Olympics before I've seen Lake Placid, which is my home state!

Plan for the day is to get out of Calgary (what an unpleasant surprise: it's rush hour, the first time this trip we've hit a city at that inopportune time), then roll southeast on the Trans-Canada Highway (bonus: alongside CP most of the way) to Medicine Hat, where we'll pick up AB-41 and head for the border. We return to Montana northwest of Havre; from there, we'll head east on US-2 until it comes time to find a campsite for the night. It might turn out that we get as close to Glendive, MT, as we can, and just sleep in the car. Who knows what'll happen with us!

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07/04/03, 20:04, Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada

Lou and I were approaching Medicine Hat when he calls out, ***Train!!*** Sure enough, a westbound CP train was exiting Redcliff, so I (driving at the time) managed to zoom ahead and pull off onto a road that crossed the tracks just before the train arrived. Grab shot and go! We chased the train about 10 miles back west before realizing that any further shots we took would quickly become redundant.

I'm typing this from a small park on the east shore of the South Saskatchewan River, underneath the westbound lanes of Canada Route 1. Kind of a trashy place, lots of graffiti, and Lou "wonder[s] how much weird teen sex goes on down here at night." Lou's scribbling postcards, I'm going to go take a stroll, and we'll continue on towards the border.

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07/05/03, 13:27 MDT, Wibaux, MT

My my my, how quickly things go from solidly planned to completely clusterfucked.

Yesterday evening, as we were exiting Medicine Hat and entering Dunmore (both in Alberta), I caught a glimpse of an eastbound CP coal train. Although the train beat us to the highway bridge over the tracks, I spotted a turnoff to the left that I thought would take us to the interlocking where the converging line joined the main we'd been following. Unfortunately, the road instead went under the main short of the interlocking... however, just past the bridge was a gravel road with a hand-painted sign that read, **Rough road, use at your own risk**. Lou: "Sounds like an invitation to me!" So we went bombing down this dirt road, through a couple gravel quarries, and finally caught up to the train just as it was entering the west end of the yard at Dunmore, with a shot in perfect light. Score!

Then, east of Dunmore, we came across an outlawed westbound CP train sitting at Pashley Siding, with CEFX 100 (a maroon SD9043MAC) and CEFX 1011 (a blue-and-white C44AC) as the power. We turned around, walked across the tracks at a farmer's grade crossing, and found ourselves in a breeding ground of the most voracious mosquitoes I've ever encountered. I shit you not: I had to rub down my arms every five seconds, and each time I'd kill three or four of the fuckers. I'll never again complain about mosquitoes.

In all the excitement over that experience, I entirely missed the turn we needed to head south to the border, so we pressed onward into Saskatchewan, aiming for Provincial Route 21. Upon reaching the road, we decided to get a few metric dollars' worth of gas to tide us over until the border. However, the kind attendant informed us that the crossing we were aiming for had closed an hour previously! The only 24-hour one he knew of was south of Regina.

So, onward we drove. Just southwest of Moose Jaw, after getting on P.R. 39, Lou handed the wheel to me and passed out. The road runs alongside a CP branch, and sure enough, at Wilcox we met CP 9058 West. I dimmed the headlights as I approached the train, and the engineer gave me a toot of thanks.

It was really weird driving down 39, because the sky was still light at 11pm. We finally realized at the changeover that we were witnessing the *aurora borealis* phenomenon. Very ultra super cool to an amazing degree. Wish I'd had a chance to take a time-lapse shot, but there was traffic and we wanted to get home.

Eventually we reached P.R. 6, which runs from Regina to the border crossing at Regway. For some reason, only every other curve was marked with a sign, and most commonly it was the second of the pair in the elongated S-curve that was marked. But that wasn't all: About 20 miles north of the border, the road just about ceased to exist. It turned into this huge, ugly, poorly-marked, dirt-road construction zone. This thing put the dirt roads in Wyoming to shame, and as tired as the two of us were, it was a nightmare to drive upon. There were a couple detour signs that pointed out into fields! It was only by creeping up at 20mph that we were able to discern that we merely had to go around a blocked-

off section of road. At least we didn't encounter any northward traffic, since the pathway through construction zone was about a lane and a half wide. Simply disgraceful that this is a road leading to the border crossing.

So we finally reached the border at 2:30 in the morning...

*We interrupt this broadcast for some breaking news. We're going live to our reporter in the field:*

Passing the Painted Canyon, ND exit, Lou spotted an eastbound train, so we got off at Fryburg to shoot it. Whaddya know, but right off the highway is a siding, and just squealing to a stop on the siding was a westbound with a BNSF "cream" engine on the point! Props to the dispatcher for setting up a perfect meet. (For those on celebrity watch, "JLO" is the female dispatcher currently working the Dickinson Sub desk.) We shot both trains there (the eastbound having a matched set of three EMD Leasing SD60s), then kicked up dust clouds out to Sully Springs to shoot the train coming through a sweeping curve. Unfortunately, to get up to the vantage point required running up a steep hard-sand hillside, for which my car-ride footwear (flip-flops) were not up to the task, and I ended up barefoot... and promptly stepped on a number of small cacti plants. Never ever again will I do that! The chase ended with a just-in-the-nick-of-time grab shot at Medora, and we escaped town about 30 seconds before getting trapped by a parade.

*Gentlemen, thank you for that update. Now, back to the program:*

...and the border guards seemed thoroughly confused to see two young guys in a dirty '04 WRX rolling up to their post. They were obviously trying to unnerve us into giving them an excuse to make a search (the skinny one was nice and conversational, the giant was making a poor effort to look like a big bad angry guy), but Lou and I were simply nice and conversational, and after poking around for a couple minutes, Slim said, "well guys, you're on your way, have a safe drive." Home free at last!!!

One hundred fifty miles to Glendive; Lou drove the first sixty or so miles, then we switched and he passed out again. Sure enough, 20 miles later, we entered another construction zone almost identical to the one we went through in Canada, although thankfully the edges of the road were clearly defined. Bombed as I was, I got us into Glendive safely around 5am, and we parked under a tree in a picnic area to sleep away the dawn hours.

After catching a few hours of sleep, Lou oriented himself in town, and we drove down to the yard... just in time to find an arriving eastbound that we wanted to catch at a great photo spot 10 miles out of town! Major bummer. So, we headed southwest from Glendive and did some more fun driving on dirt-and-gravel roads, and eventually reached this spot on a bluff overlooking the Yellowstone River

valley, and the BNSF Forsyth Sub winding around an outcropping and along the river. Absolutely beautiful scene. After a little bit, we heard a westbound train getting put in the hole 60 miles out for an eastbound even further to the west, so we knew we had plenty of time to go back to Glendive for breakfast. I tried hash rounds at Hardee's, quite good. About a half-hour after we returned to the photo spot, the eastbound arrived, and we captured a wonderful photo. We tried to chase a westbound coming out of Glendive, but missed it at Fallon by about five minutes. Oh well!

We made the decision to return home for a number of reasons. One, we've both getting homesick. Two, we're running out of money (two tanks of gas daily will do that). Three, we realized that after the Glendive shot, in Lou's words, "every shot we take the rest of Montana and Wyoming will merely be a variation of this, and likely not as good." So, we headed east on I-94, stopped at a Flying J to have lunch and fuel up, and got on the road again. Reread the update above for what happened next.

Plan is to work our way across North Dakota, shoot any westbounds we can find, and just drive and drive until we eventually get back to Terrible Hole.

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07/06/03, 10:39 CDT, Minonk, IL

We're on the home stretch, about two and a half hours out of Terrible Hole, somewhere north of Bloomington-Normal on I-39.

Yesterday was a LOT of driving; we went until about 2:30 in the morning, where Lou finally pulled into a rest area in the middle of Wisconsin (one last check mark, thank you).

Alberta mosquitoes may be the worst I've ever experienced, but the densest concentration I've ever run into was in Minnesota, between Fargo, ND and Albany, MN. The windshield literally turned into one big smear of dead bugs, of all varieties. We even popped a couple lightning bugs, whose remains phosphoresced for about 10 seconds, providing the only humorous moment of that part of the drive. Well, that and the entire state of Minnesota was celebrating Independence Day a night late.

I woke up about 6:30 this morning, and my stirring woke Lou up. He was still pretty wasted from all the driving he'd been doing over the past two days (i.e., most everything from Banff to Bismarck), so I volunteered to drive for a while so he could get more sleep. When I went to use the bathroom, I discovered that the little climb up the hill yesterday also resulted in my entire right leg getting scratched up from the knee to the top of the foot. At least now I have something to offset the collection of scabs that are a reminder of when I bashed my knee on a rock at Tehachapi.

A little after 8, entering Madison, WI, we drove into the first rainstorm we'd experienced the entire trip, and it was a doozy: A typical Midwestern thunderboomer, complete with 36-hour-late aerial pyrotechnics in the form of St. Elmo's Fire. Cleaned off the car pretty well though, and traffic wasn't too horrible, so no complaints.

After four hours at the wheel, I stopped at Toluca, IL, for refueling and breakfast at BK. Lou's driving now (obviously, since I'm typing), and I'll take the wheel back on the east side of Urbana so he can get some more rest before pressing on to Indy after dropping me off in the Hole.

Some lists, statistics, etc:

- Duration of trip: 13 days
- total miles: nearly 8,000
- States traversed: 17 (Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin)
- Provinces traversed: 3 (Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan)
- rolls of film shot: 17
- nights camping: 5
- Ballparks seen: 4 (Kauffman Stadium, Oakland Coliseum, Pac Bell Park, and the H.H.H. Metrodome)
- Interstate highways traversed: 21 (I-70, I-270/St. Louis, I-270/Denver, I-25, I-15, I-40, I-580/Oakland, I-680/Oakland, I-980/Oakland, I-880/Oakland, I-80, I-505/Sacramento, I-5, I-205/Portland, I-82, I-84, I-90, I-94, I-39, I-55, and I-74)
- amount of fun experienced: incalculable

The trip will conclude with me driving the last hour and a half down I-74 and IN-63 to home, where Lou will grab a refreshing shower while I unpack all my crap out of the car. He'll continue on to Indy to meet up with Kyle, while I'll clean up, check my email, and drag all those rolls of film down to Galloway for one last big credit-card charge.

This has been one of the most exhilarating two-week periods of my life. I traveled throughout the western expanses of the country, witnessed spectacular scenery, visited numerous famous and historically-important railroading spots, visited my third foreign country, and learned something nearly everywhere I went. The photos I took, the web pages I'll put together, and this 23-page journal will be the physical souvenirs of the trip, but the memories will reside in my mind forever.

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