

On the Road Again: CampusActivism.Org Road Trip 2002
(compiled Oct 15 from notes, Dec. 17, and Jan. 13 (oops kind of late))
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Why do I stay in one place for so long, whether it is my house or my neighborhood, without leaving for anywhere – and then all of a sudden up and go? Who knows! At least it makes for good stories. Hot off the press, the latest accounts of trespassing, dumpster diving, hitch-hiking, heat and cold, sex, drugs, strangers and friends, anarchists and marijuana smoking born-again Christians, blackberries and black bears, 101 Greyhound sleeping positions, bus drivers, and much much more (more is less) - as I traveled a couple thousand miles across a couple dozen states and most of the provinces.

(Interested readers should refer to previous summer hitch-hiking trips in 1999 and 2001 –available online at <http://www.nd.edu/~akreider> under the “my writings” section.)

I had been killing myself volunteering around the clock either for the Student Environmental Action Coalition (www.seac.org) or working on the website that I’m creating for student activists (www.campusactivism.org) which will be ported to activists of all ages and all countries in the next several years and radically alter how activists use the Internet and help bring about the Revolution. Or it could fail... As it was summer, there were a bunch of places in North America that had not yet been graced with my presence, and as I wanted to go to a wedding, two student conferences, and one student activist meeting anyway – I decided that I might as well get a Greyhound bus pass.

Of course if I had different opinions on the merits of engaging in illegal anti-corporate behavior (commonly known as stealing) and known what I knew now, I probably could have done the entire trip without paying for the Greyhound pass by forging one. Their security measures appear pathetic on the surface level and ought to be easy to bypass, as I am sure that friends of friends have done. I leave the merits of forgery for you to decide on your own, buying the pass is a pretty good deal too.

As in my previous years, I had traveled primarily in the US, I decided to get a bus pass that would cover both the US and Canada (It cost \$460, or will if I can arrange to get the \$50 discount that is owed to me – they had a 10% off sale, and I got another 10% for showing a student ID – note you could fake being a student pretty easily if your age is right). The plan was to broadly hit the Midwest for a wedding and a couple conferences or meetings, swing down to the south-west via the Grand Canyon, out to hip California, up the west coast to Vancouver, a bit further north into BC, and then all the way across Canada and back to Philadelphia. After all with 45 days on the pass, anything is possible!

July 24

The SEAC office staff all went out to eat dimsum at Kingdom of Vegetarians as many of the crew had just been there for the summer. I stayed up all night trying to get my affairs in order. Nick spent an insane amount of time developing a CampusActivism.org logo, made difficult by the peanut gallery’s criticisms of his choice of colors, fonts, element sizes, and relative levels of chaos/order. Four hours later he produced a logo which I was to iron on to a T-shirt for the road trip, bringing the powerful message of the world’s up and coming greatest website to Greyhound bus riders across North America! Four pieces of T-shirt transfer paper later (at \$1.50-\$2 a pop), I printed it out correctly. Now if only I had a white T-shirt and an iron...

I spend most of the other time updating outreach materials for the website, wrote a proposal for the upcoming SEAC national council meeting, editing my student power essay/booklet, and working on plans for my bus trip. The SEAC office was abuzz with activity. Six people at 2am. Anne called earlier that night and I arrange to meet her in Pittsburgh. I clean my room to make it inhabitable for Ashley who will sublet it for the month I’m gone, quickly pack, grab a shower, and take the trolley to the downtown bus station at 8:30am.

July 25

I get a bit of hassle at the bus station, where they make me pay \$510 for the pass (ignoring the 10% discount). It takes three staff to figure out how to sell it to me. I buy it, and with the flimsy laminated piece of paper in pocket I board the 10am for Pittsburgh.

In my bag I'd packed the following: one-person tent (that you cannot sit up in), 20F mummy sleeping bag, pair of pants, shorts, 2 pairs underwear, 3 pairs socks, 1 T-shirt, sweatshirt, rain jacket and pants, suntan lotion, insect repellent, flashlight, road atlas, gps unit (with built-in map of highways, cities, rivers, etc.), no camera, books, food, water bottles (started off with three, peaked at seven), website outreach materials, vitamins, toothbrush, floss, toothpaste, and the thinnest of sheets. It was a close fit.

Fatigued, I easily slept the seven hours to Pittsburgh (arriving: 5:30pm). Hung out in the bus station for several hours, waiting for Anne. This gave me time to loan out a pen to a guy on parole, and to meet another man who was friendly from the start. He inquired as to what I was reading. Why I'm reading "Bela Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic, it's kind of like what happened with the Russian Revolution", I explained. My last bus trip someone had asked me what I was reading and what it was about. That time I was stumped as the book I was reading didn't seem to have a plot. It was either post-modern or existentialist, or possibly both. And its subject was rather obscene. His follow-up question was, "Do you smoke?" Now I take this phraseology to generally imply marijuana smoking, as for cigarettes you tend to ask for a smoke (if you want a cigarette) or a light (if you just need to borrow a lighter). So I answered that I didn't. He proceeded to ask me for \$22 to get to Indianapolis, explaining that he'd been kicked off the bus for being drunk. What made this even more interesting was that the station didn't have any busses arriving or departing and the station had emptied out by this time to a handful of people.

Anne, whom I knew from Goshen College, finally showed up at 9pm. We wandered around downtown looking for a place to eat. Got on the wrong bus, did more wandering, and eventually got advice from a local and found a place with sandwiches (humus, yum!). She'd been in Mennonite Volunteer Corps in Pittsburgh and was thinking of going into graduate school. Talked for a bit and then was off to the bus station for the midnight bus to Champaign, IL for the wedding of my cousin: Kara Kreider.

Most drivers have their own style. They have to present the rules on smoking, alcohol, smoking in the bathroom, approaching the driver (some drivers don't allow you to approach them while they're driving... probably due to security hysteria), headphone volume, conversation volume and other important bus affairs. This driver prayed for us as we started our trip. It didn't work.

Now on the bus you can be late, miss your bus, lose luggage, be too hot, too cold, have to sit next to someone who talks nonstop, have rowdy people in the back who chatter incessantly and insult the poor bus driver – but arguably the worst thing that can happen is to sit next to a baby who cries. So from Pittsburgh to Columbus, I sat in the row in front of a baby who projected very well throughout the entire bus and cried most of the way. The baby was inconsolable. As most people on the bus couldn't sleep, the driver did a special stop just to give the parents a chance to soothe the baby. It helped, but all in all I didn't get much sleep.

July 26

4:00-4:30am we stopped in Columbus to service the bus. I slept a little from Columbus to Indianapolis, but this was hindered by the air-conditioning blasting bus temperature which was around 60 and I didn't have my blanket with me on the bus. Greyhound busses are generally too cold or too warm. I got a new bus from Indianapolis and was able to sleep most of the way to Champaign. (Side note: ok, so it appears that I'm just sleeping on the bus for most of this trip. Of course this is what most people do. But later on it gets more exciting. Like instead of sleeping, I was....<drum roll>.... reading! Oh my.)

I arrived in Champaign on time and got picked up by my parents. Dropped my stuff off in a hotel room that I was sharing with my brother. Probably the biggest hotel room I'd ever been in. It was actually two rooms! We had one room with two large beds and then another living room with a couch, chairs, and a desk. It could have slept ten to fifteen student activists, maybe more.

Ate lunch at a distant relatives house, dinner with parents, grandparents, aunt, uncle, cousin at a fancy restaurant with a good vegetarian selection. Checked email using my brother's laptop, napped so I could talk to people later, got up at 11pm to find that everyone else had gone to bed so I watched a movie and then slept.

July 27

Ate overpriced pasta and salad for lunch with relatives. Proudly attended the wedding as the only person wearing a T-shirt. The wedding wasn't totally traditional, but it didn't venture too far from the ideal type. I think if I was ever

to get married that I'd want to have some mixture of radical politics and crazy antics that would make it very fun. Of course, my relatives (it seems like relatives make up most of the crowd at these affairs) might not appreciate singing songs like Solidarity Forever or hearing a liberation theology sermon (if we actually did a sermon/message). The most fun was that cousins were given bubble solutions so that we could blow bubbles on the couple (and everyone else) as they left the church. I blew bubbles across the country with that solution. After the wedding there was a reception with over a hundred people, and more importantly two vegan salads (!). The reception was generally boring as there were too many people I didn't know. I did run into Beth whom I hadn't seen for several years since we'd both been in Computer Science at Goshen College, so we got to talk computers.

Afterwards, the more immediate family gathered in a conference room that we'd reserved in our hotel – so I got to catch up with everyone and talked to the groom (Adam) whom I hadn't known before. He's a very nice guy and possibly the first spouse of any of my cousins to be significantly left of center on the political spectrum...

Sunday July 28

Got a ride with my parents to South Bend to see some Notre Dame friends and waste a couple days before the 180 conference in Lawrence. I was a little surprised to see a US flag in the front of the Catholic Worker house where I was to stay. I was met by Meg[an] Smith whom I'd seen before at the Ultimate House. She was somewhat of a liberal and one of the few people who shares my habit of doing math either in one's head or on paper (instead of using machines).

[Side note: it seems that people think I'm young. Generally in this trip most people estimate I'm 21, while I'm not.]

Paul, with whom I was staying, eventually showed up.

(this part written on Dec. 17 from notes)

I finally got to make / iron-on a campusactivism.org T-shirt the day I left for Lawrence. I bought a cheap one for a dollar at Goodwill, borrowed an iron from Wendell (who was working in Elkhart and came for a short visit). Unfortunately I don't think I applied enough heat to the transfer as parts of it started to peel off a week later (And then I left it at the SEAC National Council meeting – so the entire CampusActivism.org 2002 Road Tour was a no-show. I guess the people are going to have to use Google to find the site.).

I spent my South Bend time reading, sleeping, finalizing my student power booklet (printed 50 copies and gave 15 to the Notre Dame Progressive Student Alliance), and printing outreach materials for the campusactivism.org site.

(Jump. On the bus in New Mexico now, sign says "Visit Santa Rosa 50 mi." – nobody lives here!). Also I hung out at the CW house, watched a couple movies and played some games (like the riddle where someone dies and you have to ask questions to figure out the story behind it).

Late the night before I left, Paul and I got to talking about activism (PSA, South Bend, Notre Dame, etc) and got to thinking that we ought to give Fr. Poorman a visit to see where our free speech proposal was at. The new day, I tried to contact several folks who might be around to go in the afternoon, but most were unavailable or had other commitments. In the process, I met Stephanie Andre (!!!) who just chanced to have returned from a year of teaching ESL in Japan and had previously done some activism at Notre Dame. She was printing papers to submit as part of her application to graduate schools in English. Paul and I eventually visited the Office of Student Affairs. As Poorman was out of town, we left a note with a copy of our proposal, asking him to email Paul. To my knowledge, he still hasn't. Our idea had been to sit-in the office until he agreed to meet. We'd use our numbers and persistence to impress him into making it a priority.

I bought granola, raisins, and cashews at the health food store for the road. I hung out at the airport for several hours and then caught the 3:50am bus from the South Bend airport to Lawrence, KS – arriving at 8pm.

I was in Lawrence to attend a national conference for 180 – Movement for Democracy and Education (www.corporations.org/democracy). It's a national multi-issue progressive student organization with around 15 chapters, including the Notre Dame Progressive Student Alliance. I'd been involved in various 180-MDE shindigs ever since the organization started. I got picked up at the bus station and driven to the Ecumenical Ministries building (in a car that was constantly at risk of breaking down) where a bunch of us were staying. I hung out with

folks in 180 whom I knew from before. The night before the conference, it was funny as they were all concerned about not having enough housing. They expected 75 people, but unfortunately we got more like 40.

[Jump. I'm in East NM. Soil is turning red, sometimes very red. Small trees, only as tall as eight or ten feet. Lots of hills that have flat ridges on the top: /-----\. The creek beds are empty. We're gaining altitude. No wildlife to be seen, but likely cattle country. Bus is almost full (darn it!). 8:50am mountain time. Traffic is light. 5-10 vehicles/minute. Mile 293. Ahh... there are cows here! "Cuero: food-gas-1 mile" has more cars/vehicles (20-30 of them) than people and a cute ancient US Post Office. Wow some big trees by a dry, but large creek. Maybe 15-20 feet. Tree growth must depend on water. Or perhaps shade to as the creeks are nice V's. A little water in a puddle, must have rained recently.]

The 180 conference was good considering the lack of attendance. The people who came were doing impressive work. While 180 doesn't have many chapters, some of them are strong ones. The hosting group, Delta Force, was really impressive. Claims 35 people at their regular meetings. There were two folks from Iowa (one USASer and one vice-president of student government – both involved in the progressive "Giant Sloth Party"). Brian Marks from LSU PSA, Mike Ewall (whom I knew well from SEAC, Philadelphia), Rebecca from Buffalo, Jerome from UNM (moving to Denver to finish school), Ben Manski – were folks I knew. Good workshops and plenaries. I was tabling for campusactivism.org. It went ok, though no one volunteered to help with the site. People mostly ate up the student power booklets.

Ate a lunch at a good part-veggie Vietnamese restaurant in downtown Lawrence. 180 decision-making went ok. Elected eight people to the council and I think they'll do a good job. Three of the elected people weren't at the conference. One of them a woman from Manchester College Radical Student Union. Impressive, as I didn't know Manchester had a Radical Student Union (and as a former Indiana student activist I tried to keep track of my state). That's a fine sounding name for a small Brethren liberal arts school in Indiana.

There was some talk of getting faculty more involved in 180 – we'll see if it happens. I saw Brigitte there (a well-known fellow Notre Dame activist) promoting the anti-Taco Bell Coalition of Immokalee Worker campaign along with a CIW farmworker. 180 endorsed the campaign. We didn't talk about fundraising as much as we should have (180 doesn't have that much money), other than Ben Manski doing a fundraising appeal from the floor and urging that we get more individual members. Partied Saturday night. Talked to Ben Manski and a couple Campus Greens about what was going on with the Campus Greens organization. On Sunday morning we didn't have any organizational business left, so we slept-in, cleaned-up, and left.

[Jump. Speed limit 75. Saw two holes in the ground that look like they could be craters or sink-holes from a lack of water. Two men are riding bikes on the interstate shoulder (you can't do that on the east coast!).]

August 4

I left for Knoxville, TN in the early afternoon for the Student Environmental Action Coalition National Council Meeting (what a mouthload!) and arrived around noon of the next day (Aug 5).

August 5

I got a ride with two women from Indiana (interesting as Indiana folk besides me haven't been that active in SEAC at the national level in recent times) – who had been there only for the Summer Training Institute and left before the NC meeting started. The NC meeting was at a Quaker meeting house in a woodsy suburbs, a beautiful setting. The STI reportedly went very well, which was good because sometimes there can be controversy that causes several people to leave before it ends. The past two NC meetings were very small, so this might have been a little better – but still most of the people were from the SEAC office in Philadelphia.

One of the more controversial debates was over whether SEAC should create a working class (aka "poor kids" – the name has never been fully decided) caucus. I'd missed the morning session, and unfortunately during that time the group had decided to make all decisions using consensus unless the proposal was of timely-importance. So we had to vote that it was issue of timely-importance (which was perhaps a little sneaky, but fighting class-based oppression as soon as possible made sense to me), so that we could get the proposal through as it lacked consensus. It eventually passed. There was a lot of debate over who should be able to qualify for the caucus. SEAC favors self-identification. It gets really messy if you try to tell someone they're not working class when they think they are. The caucus's creation came partially out of the last SEAC Region 9 conference in Ohio that had a caucus. USAS is the

only other national student organization with a working class caucus. At the last NC meeting, during heated gender caucuses many people had decided that the women's caucus had the right to set SEAC organizational policy without the rest of the organization voting on it (this was in conflict with our organization's policy and guidelines which said nothing of the sort). At this NC meeting, almost everyone felt that giving caucuses that right was a bad idea and we returned to following the rules.

We had a productive discussion on the upcoming (Sept 2003, Chapel Hill, NC) alumni reunion and using it to fundraise. I hope we'll raise \$10,000 annually from automatic deductions, primarily from alumni. One SEAC alumni knocked on our door during the meeting. They'd followed the signs with arrows that said "SEAC →" until they found us!!! Decent food. I made vegan chocolate chip cookies for everyone. We had a long discussion on diversity, focussing on race that got totally bogged down in process. I got frustrated and eventually moved the discussion from the personal into talking about solutions. Like what usually happens, people volunteered to do all sorts of tasks. We played several group games, including one that involved crawling on the floor on all fours and trying to kiss someone on the cheek (Who here has ever... smashed a window?). I got a wound on my knee that lasted a long time, from the tackling and rug-burn. The meetings were generally long: 10-12 hours a day.

[Jump. Bowlin's Flying C Ranch had ten billboards in a row advertising food and tourist products. 4700 ft according to my GPS. Compare that to 1000 feet in Amarillo, TX. Lots of ranches. Occasional groves of trees in the 10-20 foot height.]

After the NC meeting, I took the bus back to Lawrence, KS. I spent three hours in Nashville on a layover, walking around with my heavy backpack. I saw the main street where all the country bars are, visited the state legislature on the top of a hill with its statues, and hit the library to do Internet.

Friday Aug 9.

Arrived in Lawrence at 8am and walked the 1.5+ miles to the University of Kansas for the Campus Greens conference in hot weather. I registered and setup a table for campusactivism.org. I generally didn't staff the table and again didn't get too much publicity for my site, but at least folks ate up all the student power booklets. I attended sessions including the over-hyped "super-rally" on Friday night. On Saturday and Sunday I attended the plenary where organizational decisions were made. There were two tracks: workshops and the plenary. I stayed at the Black Cat collective house near campus. I gave Carl Davidson (former Students for Democratic Society president) a copy of my student power booklet, hoping he'd comment on it (he'd written something similar in the Sixties). Tom Hayden (former SDS president and writer of the Port Huron Statement) was there too.

The plenaries centered around the conflict between part of the Campus Greens Steering Committee (SC) and the national staff. That Friday night / early Saturday morning, the SC had voted with four votes to fire both of the national staff, one person wanted to fire only the national director, one person was against any firing and two people abstained. According to the Campus Greens' process the abstentions effectively counted as no votes. So due to their chosen voting process, even though 2/3 of the people who voted, voted to fire both of the staff – the vote failed. The conflict was over whether the national staff were following the wishes of the SC. I think the SC lacked experience and the time to be able to do a good job supervising the staff and the national staff didn't help them – so it was both groups' fault. It was a good thing that they weren't fired, because abrupt turnover can really kill a student group (it caused problems at the Center for Campus Organizing and ultimately its demise). During the plenary, delegates decided to not fire anyone. They even opposed resolutions criticizing the national staff. The general consensus seemed to be that the organization should move on. However as later history shows (the newly elected SC later fired the national director in October with a 5-4 vote and the Campus Greens seem to have since descended into major difficulties), this didn't happen.

Lacking the boost of the 2000 Nader campaign, attendees related that this convention wasn't as big as the one in 2001. However the organization still was doing impressive things. Their database is possibly the best of any national student groups (at first I scoffed at this assertion, but after talking to the guy who designed it I was thoroughly impressed – they could access it over the Internet, for instance they directly entered data for registration. It was extremely cool meeting someone that was also working on putting a student activism database on the web). Campus Greens income was \$7000/month. They claim a large number of chapters (around 200), though if Notre Dame's one is typical then many of these groups might be in-information and not that active. In general, the convention was well organized. Attendance was much higher than SEAC or MDE-180. Perhaps a hundred to two hundred people.

After these three activist conferences, I entered the second phase of my trip: travelling to see places, not activists! (Not that there is anything wrong with activists.) On Sunday afternoon at 1pm (??? There is chance it might have been Monday... I really forget), I left Lawrence for the Grand Canyon! I traveled through really beautiful country, including four new states: Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. I spent an hour or so walking around Albuquerque in a layover. It was hot (note the temperature was generally in the high 80s or 90s ever since I left Philadelphia – the South was definitely 90s). The architecture was nice – southwestern (plaster – looks like dried mud) and lots of murals.

Aug 12

I arrived in Flagstaff at 4pm. Picked up a map and info on the Grand Canyon at the visitor's bureau. I bought a pint of Heineken (\$1.50) and walked to north part of town where there was meant to be a national forest. I found a trail that led up into forested hills. So though there was a "no trespassing" sign on the fence, I saw a family walking a dog on the trail and figured it was ok. It was likely private land, but I walked up the hill and camped on top of it in a clearing. There was a meteor shower, but I guess it was later at night as I only saw five or six meteors during the couple hours that I watched. I drank the beer and ate food (yum more granola!). By this time, I was carrying some Ghirardelli double chocolate chips (I'd picked them up at the health food store in Lawrence), but they'd melted big-time into a solid block of chocolate that I could only gnaw at. The ground was a little rocky. I had a fun-time getting my tent setup. It's a tricky one person tent, as you need to get everything taut for it to stay up and give you enough space to sleep in.

Aug 13

I woke up around 6am or 6:30 (note: this is highly unusual behavior – traditionally in Philadelphia or in South Bend while being a graduate student I would get up around noon or 2pm or 4pm). I walked to the main highway leading to the Grand Canyon. I was going to hitch-hike because Greyhound doesn't go anywhere near the Grand Canyon and taking the bus would cost about \$20 one-way! I made a sign and got a ride within three minutes. Life was golden! Driver Dave was taking a pickup from Texas to Oregon that he got from his dying brother, and figured that he might as well check out the Canyon while he was in the neighborhood. He was nice. We talked about nature and travel stuff. He was a Creationist, likely a recent convert to biblical fundamentalism. So he went off on a long spiel about how the Grand Canyon was not created over the course of thousands of years as traditional geologists would argue. I split the entrance fee with him.

Both the Grand Canyon and Flagstaff are at around 7000 feet altitude. So the weather is nice (80s), but in bottom of the Canyon it's more like 110. I walked along the edge of the canyon. Walked 1.5 miles down the Bright Angel trail carrying my backpack with all my gear (I should have found a place to put it, but I didn't) which made some people think I'd hiked all the way down. It was 11am, but sufficiently hot. The sun seems hotter at high altitudes. Going down was easy, but going up was miserable. Going up, I hiked with a wet T-shirt (ooh la la) to stay cooler. It took me 2 hr 13 minutes to hike the 3 miles down/up.

After that I rested and rested. Ate a raspberry sorbet cone (\$1.90), some food I had, and then tried to get a ride back to Flagstaff. I also watched ravens and several condors on the rim. It was a total tourist spot: a bit too many people. There was a hotel lodge where you could stay and have a view of the canyon. Probably pricey. Trying to leave, I walked the wrong way, eventually found the exit and tried hitching only to learn from a park ranger that hitch-hiking wasn't allowed in the park! Faced with the choice of walking 6-7 miles to the park exit on the side of the road that didn't have a shoulder (so I'd have to walk through the light bush) or facing the wrath of the rangers (who were all over the place), I alternated between walking and trying to hitch. Later on in the trip, after getting more in shape, I could have walked 6-7 miles – though maybe not that easily after having hiked part of the Canyon. Fortunately, I eventually got offered a ride while I was walking. I got left off at the nearest town, where I hitched for a hour or two before getting a ride to Flagstaff with a German couple and their daughter. I had fun talking to the husband who knew English very well (I'm not sure if the others did) about travelling and politics. He was on the left and critical of the German social democrats for betraying their principles! He was also very critical of Bush, and mentioned something about being involved in fundraising for a caravan to Chiapas... Matching the German stereotype, he drove fast. Up to 92mph. He dropped me off in downtown Flagstaff where I ate a vegan Thai meal (10.85 with the tip): a massive portion of peanut curry with deep fried tofu triangles, spinach, potatoes and oodles of rice. I finished it all except for the rice. A good break from eating granola! I walked north to camp for the night. In all, I walked about eight miles that day. My shoulders are red from the straps.

Aug. 14

Woke at 6:30am to avoid getting seen trespassing and to make sure I'd catch my bus. I went looking for the library, but as it didn't open until 10 I hung out in the park. There I met Joe – a former oil rig worker who was on disability and subject to seizures. He didn't have any teeth. There were also two women in the park. One was depressed and didn't say anything. The other woman was looking for a job and gave Joe advice on getting governmental and religious aid to fill his prescription. I shared some raisins (breakfast) with Joe.

I went to yet another health food store to get some food. Bought a postcard that I later sent to the SEAC office, along with a dot marking where I'd camped. I took the bus from here to Las Vegas going through *hot desert*. The desert was lovely with little cactuses (less than a foot high), sparse vegetation, and nice rock formations/hills. Unfortunately the poor bus couldn't take driving up hills and the heat. The AC couldn't cope. So we sweated it out with an internal bus temperature in the nineties. (Note on an earlier Greyhound going from Lawrence to St. Louis, the AC didn't work so we drove with an open trapdoor on the bus roof to get a decent breeze.) I had to transfer buses once, which wasn't nice as the bus station was so small it could only fit five or so people and it was around noon so the shady shadows were small.

I arrived in Las Vegas when it was 111-113F. I waited until sunset, hoping it would cool down. It didn't. Because I was too cheap to rent a locker (\$2 for 2 hours, \$4 for the next 22 hours – so it'd have cost me \$4 which I figured was extravagant), I walked around with my backpack. Of course it was good practice. I found the library and checked my email there. The library had a new policy about needing to see your ID before you could use the Internet – due to reasons of national security, post Sept 11. I'm amazed that anyone would have such a policy – like people cannot access the Internet on their own... After the Library closed I went to see a movie to kill time and be cold (a very bad movie about crop circles – yeah, there wasn't anything good playing) and then walked around The Strip. I was amazed and the amount of “scandalous” activity promoted in Vegas. It's interesting to compare the Mormon Utah to the permissive Nevada. There were magazine boxes, the kind that normally carry free newspapers, but in Vegas they had ones that were for sexually explicit and only for adults (probably advertising strip clubs)! However anyone could pick it up. The Strip was amazing. Non-stop activity. I just hung out and watched people. I drank a dollar beer (casinos want to get you drunk on cheap beer so you gamble more, they also have cheap food). I went into one huge casino to watch folks playing the slots and the tables. The slots were sad. I was surprised that you could gamble for as little as five cents. The sad thing was how folks just kept hitting the button every five or ten seconds to try and win. It was very impersonal and looked addicting. The tables were more fun as you could watch the roulette wheel or a group play cards or craps. I didn't gamble.

Aug. 15

Left Las Vegas around 2am, heading for San Francisco. What's another fourteen hours? I timed the trip somewhat intentionally so I'd get to see what I hoped would be very deserty desert at around 5 or 6am when the sun rose, however the desert wasn't that impressive (no dunes!) and I mostly just slept. Passed through central California which would be very dry if it weren't for the irrigation. Saw lots of fruit trees and a couple trucks with oranges, but no farm workers. We passed through the garlic capital of North America and it sure smelled it!

Arriving in the late afternoon in San Francisco, I found a spot at a hostel. The weather was a shock. I swear it must have been in the upper sixties, a drastic shift from 110 in Las Vegas and the 90s I'd been witnessing everywhere else. Met one of my roommates who was an Italian somewhat of a punk (played in a band, though he didn't look punk) going to Berkeley for a study year abroad, and staying in the hostel while looking for housing. We ate some Thai food, I did a little internet at the hostel, and then I must have gone to bed early – worn out from the bus.

Aug. 16

I woke up relatively early and headed down via bus to the Fisherman's Wharf. I wanted to visit Alcatraz, because I'd recently read a book on the American Indian occupation. Unfortunately the tour boats were booked several days in advance for it, so I contended myself in viewing the island through one of those telescopes that you pay for. For sustenance, I ate a fine loaf of sourdough – I really devoured it. Wandering around the wharf I saw a couple military ships and visited a maritime museum. Afterwards, I took in the Ghirardelli Square – former location of the Ghirardelli chocolate factory, makers of the greatest affordable vegan chocolate (I speak of their dark chocolate chocolate chips) in the world. The factory had originally been designed as a square with an open courtyard in the

middle. Some funky European style trying to be cool. Unfortunately the factory had moved out of town in the sixties. I bought two bags of chocolate chips – the rest of their product line is overpriced and often not vegan.

I took a second bus to Golden Gate Bridge. I walked around visiting the beach, which had a very nice nature-preserve part of it showing beach vegetation (lots of plants that had really long arms or sprouts – creepy-crawly types). Also, I visited a fort that dated back to the civil war (the area had originally been used as a military base by the Spanish). It was extremely windy by the bridge.

Next I took the bus down to Haight-Ashbury. In my brief time there, I visited the leftist bookstore and got several good ones and I listened in to an on-the-bus conversation between two people who just met each other. Good old socializing based on appearance. They were punks. The conversation included the all-important tip of the location of a squat in Berkeley. I almost checked it out, as I would have liked to stay another day and to visit Berkeley (seeing the locations made famous by the Free Speech Movement would be one highlight) but it was getting late and I decided to stick to my schedule. So I went back to the hostel, grabbed my bag, and headed on to the over-night bus to northern California.

Aug. 17

Winding up highway 101 is a great way to travel. Our driver saw a bear. It's that kind of country. The driver dropped me off right at the entrance to the Redwood National Park around 8am. This was not a bus stop. He was just being very kind. This was an excellent way to start the day and it only got better. The weather was mild. It was cloudy and the sun was also blotted out by the smoke from the raging forest fires in southern Oregon. As I was hiking, I was quite happy to not have the sun.

I hiked about 4.5 miles through beautiful tall redwoods to the coast. I saw my first banana slugs. The two men I met while hiking said that the tradition is to kiss the first one you see. Fortunately, we weren't traditionalists... I got to the beach and then hiked a couple miles up it, and then went on another trail back into the forest. I ate a couple pints of blackberries (mushing some of them into blackberry juice by shaking them up in my water bottle) and some wild blueberries as well. All in all, I figured I hiked 12 miles that day, always carrying my cumbersome pack. I was finally in shape and the weather was good for hiking.

That night I camped on the beach on an actual campsite. There were about thirty or forty people there, so it was nicely not crowded. Most of them had taken the road in, not hiked. I put my tent in a dip in the beach, as it was super windy. I had food in my tent, but I figured if the bears were going to make a go for it, they'd wake someone else up first. It was at about this point, through to the Rockies in Banff where I should have done a better job not having food near my tent. I never did see any bears though. As the sun was setting, it peaked out from behind the clouds leaving a nice sunset. This was the first time I'd ever camped directly on a beach.

Aug. 18

Woke up early and walked out. Unfortunately the 4.5 miles out wasn't the end of the story. I had to get to the darn closest bus stop, which happened to be like five miles away in Orick. It wasn't just in Orick, but on the furthest site of Orick. I probably should have hitchhiked, but I had time to kill, so walking wasn't that bad. Except for the highway shoulder being narrow and the road a little too curvy limiting the visibility of incoming traffic. There were blackberries, so I could eat to my heart's content of those. I made it to Orick and then spent a ton of time (five hours?) hanging out at the gas station waiting for the late evening bus.

Aug. 19

I took the overnight bus, except that it was a short-haul so I got dropped off around 3am at what I thought would be Lakeside city. However I should have realized that it was Lakeside Junction! So there was a gas station and motel and that was about it. They were both closed of course and no-one else got off. Dark and gloomy. I wandered around for a mile or two in the dark along the highway as semis blinded me while swooshing by (highway walking at night is just plain stupid). Fortunately I quickly found the state park and camped there (in my bag, I think without the tent). I walked out in the morning without paying (people with incomes below the poverty line shouldn't have to pay for this kind of thing).

That day was a bit frustrating. I walked like five miles or perhaps a fair bit more, trying to find a good place to view and walk around the dunes. I ended up finding a lighthouse and some dunes, but the dunes were overrun with evil

dune buggies. I guess I ended up at a different spot than which I'd planned. By the time I got there I was tired, so I just relaxed on the beach reading a Crimethinc.org book: Evasion. Very inspiring. Some of my friends criticize Crimethinc because some of their materials are only relevant for white middle-class males, but I think that the enthusiasm (or joie de vivre) behind their ideas can affect all classes, genders, and races (albeit it will obviously be harder for people of color to get away with stuff like shoplifting, but still there are other ways to break free of the system). Lying on the beach reading a book about kids who quit their job and never turned back eating ghirardelli chocolate chips wrapped warmly in a sleeping bag – this is life!

Even though there wasn't any campsite, I figured no one would mind, so I camped on the beach in my bag.

Aug. 20

Around 3am in the morning I woke up thinking "my that's a lot of fog". A couple hours later, I figured out how I could curl up in the bag so the now large droplets of fog wouldn't get me wet. By 6am, I realized that it was raining and I reluctantly got up, packed my wet stuck with sand sleeping bag, and headed for the road. Fortunately it didn't rain much that day. I was lucky with weather during the entire trip.

Hitchhiking highway 101 is the best hitching I've done. Firstly I quickly got rides, and secondly, I totally gouged myself on the abundant blackberries while I was waiting. I was going to Eugene Oregon and had decided to hitch because the bus went the long-way and it would have taken like eight hours. Instead I got rides in about five minutes and probably made it in 2 hours. I rode to Florence and from Florence to Eugene. It's telling of the area that on the way to Florence I got a ride with a born-again Christian. However it wasn't just any born-again Christian. Firstly he was into radio tower antenna construction and offered me work (I'm a radio hobbyist, so I thought this was cool.), but more tellingly he focussed conversation on the need to legalize marijuana, a substance that he undoubtedly used. Not your traditional conversation with the born-again driver!

In Eugene, I resupplied myself at the downtown health food store – including buying some very cheap awesome vegan salsa tortilla chips in bulk! I met up with friends of my roommate and stayed in the house where he used to live.

Aug. 21

I wandered around Eugene. Actually it was a bit disappointing. There weren't raging radicals all over the place. I did get to read an (entire) Douglas Adams book in the library (funny stuff), use the Internet, and eat a great meal at a place called pizza experiment (or something like that) which did vegan pizza (and non-vegan as well). It looked like one of those young punk-anarchist hangouts. The pizza was out of control (had part of a corn of cob on the large slice for instance). The pizza wasn't actually the greatest, but worth trying. I've never had really good vegan pizza. But the rest of the food that came with the meal was good.

Aug. 22

I took the bus to Seattle. I passed through Portland. I'd heard that there was an anti-Bush rally in Portland, though I didn't expect it to be that big so I didn't plan my trip so I could attend it. Anyways, in my short stay in Portland I dropped by the rally and there were thirty people there an hour before it was even meant to start. I learned later that there'd been several thousand people, and the police had declared a state of emergency and gassed folks.

I arrived in Seattle a little after 5pm. I called my older brother to let him know I was in town. It was a bit of a surprise, as he wasn't expecting me. Aug 22 was his birthday and I figured it'd be fun to show up then. As I was talking to him on the phone, he pulled up on his bike! Turns out he was just off work and he lived very near the bus station. I walked to his place and hung out. Unfortunately, he'd already had his party the previous weekend so I missed that.

Aug. 23

I left Seattle for Vancouver where I returned how to see my parents and relax for a couple days. Went out to eat at least once. I spent a lot of my time at the Greyhound website planning out the rest of my trip.

Aug. 26

Left Vancouver around 7:30am for Prince Rupert, BC with the goal of seeing much of BC and getting as far north as possible. The ride along the winding Fraser river was beautiful, especially after Hope. We were on the edge of

mountains where there was generally not enough flat ground to build houses, let alone a cities. After we crossed the mountains, it was the dry interior and it was less appealing. I finished reading David Copperfield. We pulled into Prince Rupert around 8pm. I wandered off to get a sense of the city and hoping to see a fort that was in a park. Along the way I went to London Drugs where I bought the cheapest Lindt 70% dark chocolate bars that I'd ever bought. A mere 50 cents canadian (aka 33 cents US) for a 35g bar on sale. Forty percent cheaper than in the states!

I've never really seen a fort and I guess the reason for this is that they are made of wood and don't last. So the fort wasn't there in the park, it was too dark to see stuff well even if it had been there. I wandered back to the station to take the overnight bus to Jasper, Alberta. I'd hoped to see the Northern lights for the first time, now being at the 55th parallel. But I didn't.

Aug 27

I caught a bit of sleep and arrived in Jasper a little past 5am. When planning the trip I didn't realize that this would be 5am Alberta time (Eg. 4am in BC). It was cold (the temperature in this area could be cold enough to snow, but that didn't happen) and the bus and train station didn't open for an hour or so. I warmed up in the station and then wandered around Jasper (hiked for a couple miles on local trails) and reserved a bus to Banff (not Greyhound but a partnering company which was included in my pass deal – note Greyhound has deals with pretty much every bus company in existence for their ameripass).

On that ride we passed through some of the most beautiful country. We were high up, almost at the snow-level. The Rockies are jagged rocks, with trees and clear streams flowing down as the snow melts. Our driver did a little tour-guiding. We stopped at the Columbia ice fields glacier which is the largest glacier south of the arctic circle. I made a run for it, but as our bus was parked a good distance from the actual glacier (and due to global warming) I didn't make it to the snow/ice and had to traipse back to the bus without sticking my fingers in snow. We also stopped at Lake Louise which is a total tourist resort, albeit a nice one.

Getting off the bus in Banff, I met up with two young people (a man from Saskatchewan who wasn't political and a woman from Quebec who was a bit of an anarchist – she'd been at the FTAA protests and thrown something at the cops – her dad was policing the event) who were also going to the campsite outside of Banff. The nice bus company paid for our taxi taking us to the camp.

That evening we took the bus into town and ate Thai food and then drank a little beer down by the river where we met a good deal of elk who were just passing through town. That night we hung out at the camp, talking to some other campers.

Finally figured out that the head part of my sleeping bag allowed you to put a light cloth over your head and still breathe. Useful when it gets cold, as it did in Banff. Brrr!

Aug. 28

Awoke at 7:30am. Took the morning bus to Calgary for a three-hour layover. Highlight: "big bike" with eighteen people on it in a downtown park. Who knows what they were doing! Second highlight: walking back to the greyhound station with a 40 oz (hopefully vegan?) slurpee (side note: if a 12 oz pop has up to 150 calories, then a 40 oz slurpee would have around 450! Minus some of the air in the ice... Perhaps that's why I could only stomach half of it.) when I saw a freight train slowly passing by. SO I watched it go slower and slower until... the long-awaited dream of every hobo, I'm speaking of course of the greatest train car ever, the open-door empty box car! The train stopped a couple minutes later. It made for a tempting proposition as the train was, at least for the moment, headed east. However I didn't have my bag with me, as it was still on the bus so I continued on by bus to Winnipeg. I figured the prairies wouldn't be as interesting as Quebec and the Maritimes and I had distance to travel before the pass would run out.

Aug 29

Arrived a bit past 9am in Winnipeg after the lousiest hard-to-sleep bus ride I can recall. My atlas said the ride in much of Saskatchewan (200km) was scenic. It lied. Prairies are not scenic (unlike Montana to the south which can be extremely scenic). I only had two seats for a very short time. I developed a grudge when I saw a man in Calgary budge from the end of the line to the fourth place or so. I almost asked him why he did it (think: direct action, on my

part – he deserved to be challenged). The lousy bus showed two movies, the last ending around 11pm making sleep difficult due to the movie audio. The movies were bad. The seats only reclined slightly. I hadn't slept much the night before, so sleep should have been easy. The bus was almost full. We used two busses from Calgary to Regina. I developed/harbored a greyhound crush on a young woman in dreadlocks wearing a long skirt who looked somewhat hippyish. I actually talked to her twice. Once she borrowed my pen (suspicious as I'd seen her using a pen earlier), and secondly she asked what I was reading (Anarchism by Daniel Guérin) and actually took a look at it. I gave the book a good recommendation (a good introduction on the topic, though not the most enjoyable or easiest read).

At this time, I estimated that I would travel 11600 miles on my trip and did some statistical calculations on paper for Axis and Allies (a board game I'm obsessed with – to be more specific, the MIT rules variant of Axis and Allies) to keep myself active. We stopped at 2:30am for a coffee break and at 6am (5am Alberta time) for breakfast. Ha! Busses are seriously messed up when it comes to meals. They'll have a meal scheduled in when everyone is trying to sleep and wake everyone up to do it.

I've never seen US Greyhounds show movies – only on Peter Pans in the US.

I talked part of the time to a young man who'd been in Vancouver but was originally from Montreal, mostly in English.

So I pulled into Winnipeg at 9am, things weren't looking superb. But Winnipeg was great! I visited a bookstore and traded in David Copperfield for \$2.65 credit! Got Jane Eyre and a novel by Margaret Atwood. I highly recommend David Copperfield and Jane Eyre.

At the public library, I got my thirty minute Internet fix and while doing so I inquired as to what one ought to do in a twelve hour visit in Winnipeg? In a short list of things to do (say four things), the librarian recommended visiting the Old District and that I should definitely go to Mondragon restaurant and bookstore. Of course, I'd been definitely planning on going to that anarchist-vegan-collective endroit! Next she asked me if I was an anarchist! I was a little puzzled at all this as I wasn't wearing anything more incriminating than a t-shirt (perhaps a campus greens one), no buttons or anything of that sort.

I walked to the St. Boniface Cathedral in the French District. I was hoping to find a good French bakery to get a baguette, but didn't. The French district was cool. At the cathedral I saw a play in French on Louis Riel that was staged in the cemetery where he was buried. It was very funny and personable, as the small acting troupe interacted well with the small group of twenty spectators. We walked around the cemetery for different scenes and even sang several French (or metis) folk songs (like Un Canadien Errant). Afterwards I visited a museum. Walked around. Ate a felafel sandwich (\$5 canadian). Went to the Mondragon and got an ethnographic book on the Chinese Cultural Revolution and its impact upon one village (written by a western academic, it showed how Mao did some very good things, whereas with Deng Xiaoping the return of capitalism has led to drastic increases in economic inequality), "CIA on Campus", and one on the ties between universities and the military (the latter two by South End Press, both published in the eighties). At the Mondragon I ate the special: salad, rice, a strange/good sunflower roast with gravy for \$8. Smacking!

In Winnipeg it was up to 81, cloudy, tiny amount of rain. Stored backpack at the station to walk around the town.

Left Winnipeg at 10pm for Ottawa.

Aug 30

On the bus. It's a long way to Ottawa. Thirty-three hours. Ontario is huge. This was one of the longest times I spent on the bus. Of course I read a lot. We also gathered a small contingent of rowdies. Normally the rowdies sit at the back of the bus (and that's where I typically sit – partially because I believe you have a better chance at two seats because people should realize that all of the two-seat combinations are taken and settle next to someone at the front of the bus instead of walking to the back of the bus. Of course in practice this doesn't work. Partially because people cannot tell that there aren't any free double seats at the back due to short and sleeping people. The best method is just to sleep or pretend to sleep, or perhaps plain looking mean – but I find those methods to be unethical.), but this time they were in the front-middle section. A group of young people were talking a lot and sometimes I joined in.

The bus driver wasn't always happy with us. Driving around Lake Superior and Lake Huron was scenic. Got off at Sault Ste. Marie for long enough to eat a bite on the lakeshore where you could look over into the US.

Aug 31

Arrived in Ottawa at 7am. Decided to go to Montreal instead, because Ottawa looked boring from the city map and I could use a couple hours of sleep. I wanted to see the House of Commons in session, but it was summer. Spent day in Montreal, attending church (I think on Sunday) at Notre Dame. I wandered around the old part of the city, saw an old wall that was built for defense and still remained, and spent a lot of time watching street entertainers doing funny stunts (I recall bike stunts and magic tricks). I watched a movie in French on migrating birds – spectacular scenery. I spent the night in a hostel that was very near an inactive squat. By the hostel there was a nice public art display of pictures on the city sidewalks.

Sept. 1

I left for Quebec City hoping to see the heart of Quebecois culture. Montreal has a good deal of English influence, whereas I figured Quebec City would be more authentically Quebecois. I really enjoyed it. I stayed in the Old City, on a hill looking over the St. Laurent. It is almost entirely enclosed in an impressive defensive wall that still stands. Quebec was used as a munitions dump by the British when they weren't getting along with the Americans – it was seen as being far enough away from the US so as to be safe (whereas Montreal was not). I walked around St. Jean Baptiste area. The city was very French and European, something that Montreal had given me a preliminary taste of. Narrow streets. I found a shop that sold excellent dark chocolate and bought a bar of Lindt 70% with cocoa nibs (the cocoa nibs were new) and a bar of 1848 that was 86% and superb (though on double-inspection of the ingredients I realized that it had a tiny bit of egg in it, oops!). 1848 is meant to be one of the better affordable dark chocolate bars (according to one website that reviews around a hundred bars).

I saw some impressive radical graffiti in the highway overpass area at the bottom of the hill where protesters were tear-gassed during the FTAA protests.

I saw a Russian film with French subtitles on life in the North. The plot would be hard to explain.

That night I took the bus to Halifax.

Sept 2.

I spent most of the day on the bus going through the forested New Brunswick, and then on to Nova Scotia. We had a funny Quebecois bus driver for part of the trip who was always making jokes. I arrived in Halifax. I almost didn't get a spot in the hostel. I think about now I was really realizing that you should reserve spots in hostels in advance, especially in the summer. If I didn't get the spot in the hostel, I was going to stay overnight or something in a park. It would have been trouble. The hostel was nice and friendly.

Sept 3.

I got up early to see the city and visited the Citadel (a big fort on a hill dating way back) and also a lovely English Victorian garden. I thought that I'd have to leave at 11am, but learnt when I returned to pick up my gear that someone had cancelled so I had a spot for the night at the hostel! I then went down to the wharf, walking around. I wanted to go on a boat to try and see the whales, but the boat I tried to go on didn't have enough customers to make it worth their while. I don't think I've yet seen whales in the wild. Instead I hit up the maritime museum, seeing a lot of boats and learning about the 1917 explosion where a ship carrying explosives for the war collided and destroyed much of Halifax and killed 2000 people. By this time I was getting sorely tired of museums. A lot of towns in Canada are pretty funny when compared to megalopolises like Philadelphia or Vancouver. Halifax is a major city for the area, but it's actually quite small and I walked around it easily.

I bought a book or two at the hostel to keep up on the reading.

(Note there is a day missing somewhere here – ie I only spent a day and a half in Halifax.)

Sept 5.

Left early for Montreal. I was heading back home and ideally would have taken the more direct route through Maine. That would have allowed me to add a couple states to the list of those I'd visited (Maine and NH) and saved

time. But the bus only goes from New Brunswick to Maine once or twice a week! So I went to Montreal. On the way back I got to spend several hours in Moncton where I saw a small demonstration by CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) who were on strike and I got to witness the powerful Bay of Fundy tide. It's about 45 feet. I didn't get to see the rush of water when the tide comes in, but I did get to see a channel of water drop perhaps eight feet each hour.

On the bus I met a young man who was heading back to Ontario. I was writing notes on paper and he asked me what I was doing. I told him that I was working on a strategic plan for my website: campusactivism.org. "Is that like IMC?" he asked. I said yes. (Independent Media Center for those not in the know.) Turns out that he was involved in OCAP (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty – a pretty radical group), and had been involved in the Pope Squat in Toronto. So we talked activism which is always fun. I always wonder what everyone else who has to listen-in because there isn't anything else to do on the bus thinks when I talk radical politics. I hope they learn something from it.

Sept 6

More bus travelling. This is what happens if you are running out of time on your 45 day bus pass and decide to travel as far as possible. It's a pity that I didn't get the chance to see Prince Edward Island as the bus did go there. Of course, besides Anne of Green Gables (of whom I knew little), I don't imagine PEI would be that exciting. I'd considered it, but it would have meant spending next to zero time in Halifax or losing a day in Quebec. So I guess I'll have to see it some other trip.

I arrived in the morning in Montreal and transferred to bus going to Albany, NY. Northern New York is forest and kind of nice. From Albany I took a local to Newburgh, NY. From there I walked five miles to surprise visit a friend from Notre Dame. I was a little impressed at myself when I was able to walk the distance in relatively hot weather (80s), with my sack now laden with books, without stopping to rest!

I surprised the heck out of Rachel, an activist friend from Notre Dame, who had just returned home from work. I hung out that evening.

Sept 7

I got a ride to the bus station around noon and left for Philadelphia.

All in all I'd traveled around 11,500 miles in forty-four days. I've now visited all of the provinces except for Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, none of the Canadian territories, and all of the states except Alaska, Hawaii, Florida, South Dakota, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

So maybe hitchhiking is more exciting. As I imagine would be train hopping. But I don't think I could have traveled these kind of distances without collapsing if it hadn't been for the Greyhound. So long as you have chocolate chips or something else to keep you awake (too many riders just sleep or try to sleep), a good book, don't tire of eating dried foods (eating out all the time would be atrociously expensive) and have a knack for enjoying wacky conversations: it's an experience worth living.

"Dream On"

Dream on through the mountains, the eerie night's glow
the shift of the engine
the clanging of the coach
the whistle of the wind through the window
snores and rustling resting passengers
the buzz of the conversation
feel the love
the wonder
embrace the emptiness of the landscape and the eternity of the trip
transcend the monotony of towns, strip malls, the time convenient travel centers
stopping, starting, resting, eating, sleeping, drinking, transferring
the cycle is

Live.

-summer 2002, on the greyhound, US/Canada 10000+ mile road trip-