

TO SKATEBOARD AROUND THE WORLD

Although we set out to do just that, and actually did most of the way, these would be the last, screwy pieces of my youth before I got so sidetracked I couldn't skate at all. The journey began in the shallows. Looking back, I now think of Japan, New Zealand, and Australia as mere postcards in a rack turning slowly. Behind it, an announcement, "All ashore that's goin' ashore," blinked above a destination list that held my name. It wasn't an actual place I was bound for at all...more a state of mind.

Zander and I arrived in Tokyo some weeks before the Games, and spent ten days as guests of the Honda Motor Company, representing their Racing Team from Hawaii. A chauffeur and translator took us through automated factories and past Mr. Honda's private shop, where we could hear his latest twelve-cylinder engine screaming at eighteen-thousand rpm. It disturbed me considerably to see human beings in orderly rows...endless assembly lines churning out one of everything for each man, woman, and child on earth.

Driven south in a limousine to the Suzuka Circuit, we met Honda's International Team. I was surprised to find riders from all over the world. English being a common bond we got on quite well. One of the best was from Rhodesia and I followed him through chicanes and down straight-aways at two-hundred miles an hour on a six-cylinder prototype. We stayed a few days, riding all sorts of experimental units, and then were chauffeured back. It was at once both inspiring and disturbing--as severe an introduction to all Japan's power represented as the Olympiad itself.

Before the spectacle began, we explored the northern part of the main island, and met a wild bunch of Aussie athletes. We pooled our money and bought an old Ford station wagon on which we painted Olympic rings and flags of our nations. We caused a great stir, huge crowds gathered, and girls pressed for autographs...heroes simply by appearance and the color of our skin.

Zan and I took to dressing in official garb from the Village, eating in the free cafeteria, and getting to know everyone. The intense emotions of the Games, the beauty of its pageantry, and the thrill of competition were not lost on us, even as we furiously drank our way through the many events. Our rambling house in Shibuya became the official rest and recuperation center for all nations, and after each sport's grueling match, we'd have a celebration that kept us wrecked the entire time.

When the spectacle was over, we gathered for a farewell party. There wasn't room, so we overflowed into the cemetery alongside. Gazing around that teary-eyed night, I couldn't

believe the accumulated talent assembled between those gravestones. There were champion athletes from every country, drunker than skunks, arm in arm, singing with some intense joi de vivre we felt coursing through us.

In the morning, a motorcade unheralded in Japanese history worked its way to the docks. There we jumped up and down on the Ford until the roof caved in, and as the ship departed to the strains of the Olympic Anthem, we wandered off in clumps and bittersweet sorrow at the passing of the best times humanity can present itself. I took a look back at our crumpled and abandoned car, once so full of life, savoring one last moment in memory of the brotherhood we'd been part of.

We sailed for Hong Kong the next day on the Iberia, finding little time to reminisce on what we'd just experienced, as each day overwhelmed us with new and intriguing possibilities. I met a very attractive Danish girl by the name of Birte. Although she was five years older, we were great together, especially in bed where I learned a lot about the art of love. She was making a movie in China and we were invited to stay at her girlfriend's house in Hong Kong.

This turned out to be British Ambassador Black's residence on the summit of Victoria Peak, overlooking the crown colony and its glorious harbor bespeckled with ships and glittering islands. I couldn't believe it--we'd been in the center of the Olympic world and now we were on top of Hong Kong in an empty mansion! Birte would keep me in bed as much as she could, or play the grand piano in the main salon while I watched ships come and go in the straits below.

It was an idyllic existence, too much for Zander and me, so we spent our time skateboarding down the Peak's curving road, where we'd jump the Tram, riding almost straight up its creaking cablecar to skate down once more. We bodysurfed at Sheko Beach on the far side of the island, while Birte bathed topless, getting a tan for the movie. Her presence insulated me and made this wider world safe and fun.

Then I stumbled upon Aberdeen Harbor's floating human cargo, its million inhabitants crawling precariously on planks from junk to junk like ants in the flotsam of a storm's wake. The sheer drama of so many people in such a cramped space both oppressed and lifted me beyond my own reality. We drifted through an ocean of souls, mesmerized in a plethora of light, sound, and smells that began to open doors sealed all my life.

The array never ceased. The central market spewed forth every animal, bird, plant and fish imaginable. Any food or drink was at one's beckoning, any lust ready to be fulfilled. With it all came a proportionate dole of man's capability for destruction, depravity, and despair. The poor and homeless, crippled and diseased, and the mutilated and dying were everywhere. My senses went into overload, but through a

growing worldly awareness, Birte held my hand and made it OK.

The Macao Grande Prix was on, and she and I booked passage on the hydrofoil, cruising in luxury down the coast of China a hundred miles to that old Portuguese trading post for one of the classiest races on the International Formula Circuit. Although we traveled light and camped on a grassy knoll in the middle of the track, we were able to dress well enough to get into the brilliant casinos of that Asian Las Vegas.

There I found she knew all the right people and was quite in demand for her favors. Feeling like her kid brother, I tagged along, only comfortable drinking ten-cent wine at our camp, making love under the stars. The race started early, screaming around us, and after our heads cleared we made it to the pits, where she introduced me to famous people, flaunting her sexuality on James Garner and others while smiling sisterly encouragement at me in the same heartbeat. Women are such incredible creatures!

I learned a lot from my Danish delight--being one of the "in crowd" was simply an attitude. As much as I cherished my time with her, typhoon season was coming and we had to take the next P. & O. liner to Australia. My parting with her was as wrenching as any I'd felt before. It was difficult to let one's girls go, to drop their protective shroud and enter the cold strife ahead shorn of such warmth, even for the call of duty. A man would take shelter in the haven of many feminine ports through the voyage of his life.

The huge ship, Canberra, shook in the surge, tables tilting and glasses breaking. Seasick passengers hugged the rails as I headed up to view my first typhoon's fury. There was an unfamiliar roar, a compactness on the ocean that revealed we were only on the edge. Off to starboard I could sense its menacing power. Great swells buffeted the ship for twenty-four hours, but the malice swept North toward Shanghai and we drank our way through it with fellow refugees from the Village.

Australia was a brief refresher. The girls on the beaches were unreal, and when they found we were hot surfers from Hawaii it was our ticket to ride. Ride we did--women, surfboards, skateboards, cars, boats and trains--all across that untamed country in a virtual blur of action. New Year's Eve found us in Queensland partying with women comparable to "Playboy's" and surf as fine as we'd ever known. I preferred this new image of international ass man to past roles. I was self-confident after Birte and guess it showed, as women seemed drawn to me for a brief period.

In New Zealand, we did some heavy drinking and surfing. Touring both islands, I was enthralled with this rich and varied country--from the steam vents and bubbling mud pits of Rotorua to the incredulous clarity of Milford Sound across the white Franz Josef glacier. Giant trout, edible sea-going lizards, fresh clams and periwinkles topped with eight-cent

butter and cream were standard fare.

Oceans of sheep blocked traffic for hours as we hitchhiked, watching in amazement while shepherds' dogs coursed waves of flowing animals across the landscape. The place was bulging with raw resources and natural beauty. An odd sense of discovery came over me, and I felt a second home existed if Hawaii ever failed me.

The snow of New Zealand's mountains was all I could see from the airplane's window, my sadness at parting with its beauty slowly becoming a deep anxiety with the looming prospect of entering Asia. The crossing of Australia stood before us...then an unveiled mystery would confront me.

Thousands of kangaroos pounced around in the red dust across a dry riverbed, while the sun beat down mercilessly for the fourth day. The locals had been right advising us not to try hitching across the Nullabor. "Lotsa death in that two-thousand mile hell," they'd said. Already some evil birds were circling in determined orbs above us. We were about four-hundred miles from Melbourne at the only junction I'd seen when the drunken miners unloaded us with, "Cheerio, chaps!" disappearing into the dust and heat waves from whence they'd come like some hallucination. We were alone in the absolute middle of nowhere.

Not a single vehicle passed either way, and even water was becoming a problem. When the dust bowl produced a huge truck that looked like it had been buried for a century, we begged the driver for mercy, admitting defeat, and headed with him back to civilization. This fellow took us hunting near his homestead before dropping us at the train station. We caught some big fish called Murray River cod, and shot prehistoric birds. We camped, drinking, and carousing with his outback buddies, learning a little more about alcohol and its effects on the imagination.

We drank our way through that two-day train ride, watching amazed as the shimmering desert stretched away forever, more astounded when small groups of aborigines appeared, their glazed eyes staring as the great engine surged past. I sat glued to the window, drinking some powerful brew called Swan Lager, while the abo's and roo's danced with each other in a surreal portrait just beyond my glass insulation. Truly the world had one of everything.

At the end of the ride on the western shores, we surfed for a week in the Margaret River area south of Perth, waiting for the next ship to Singapore. It was still amusing to go to a dance in a country town and wait as word got 'round the local girls that two Hawaiian surfers were available. The Beatles were singing "Eight Days a Week" and "I'll Follow the Sun," while we lay in the dunes with a new lass each night...young, indestructable, and absorbing all that was offered. It wouldn't be like this much longer.