

November 16, 1999 – Day one, to the London Connection.

Although I have not thoroughly recovered from the revels of Baltimore brewpubs, and the lewd and absurd facades of Las Vegas, I am wearily embarked on a huge journey. To the Arabian Peninsula, via Seattle and London, to the unknown mysteries, histories, tribes, customs of a place known as the United Arab Emirates.

Windy with deep chill factors during the night at our home in Fairbanks, the departure was good: brief conversations about Paula, illnesses, frailties, the whole family flu-oppressed, save for me. A mention of my hope to visit Timothy Garton Ash, encouraged by his timely article in the latest New York Review of Books. And then at the airport, a glorious, I daresay passionate kiss, and a rare, winsome, slightly foreboding look from Patty in parting. Love survives, and erupts from the oppressions of mundane life at these all-too-rare occasions. There was worry in her look.

I reassured with a mention of calling, and added that it shouldn't be a problem since they would be paying. It's all a magic haze. The fury of departure. A destination halfway around the world, an academic conference on Sustainability in Desert Regions, in the core of the Middle East, Muslim realm, the Arabian Peninsula, Frankincense, gold, heat, a thousand names for wind.

How did all this come about? What set me on this adventure, this path unfolding? Twelve years ago I met an Egyptian-born fellow professor and building scientist at a conference in Moscow, then the Soviet Union. He had brought his wife with him, a great opportunity, afforded by a babysitting mother-in-law. We spent much time together, and since he was at that time living in Montreal, heart of French Canada, we had much to talk about. He was also very fluent in English, which in its unfortunately ethnocentric fashion, isolates me to English-speakers, particularly in countries where Slavic or oriental languages are required. But more than this, both he and his wife were unique, being some of the first Arabs I'd encountered, fully Moslem, but at the same time, parents of two daughters, trying to live in French Canada as new emigrants. They had an ineffable aura of genuine humanity about them. And Ramy, the husband and my main contact had a great smile and laugh. He also married a very bright, equally enjoyable woman, a daughter of some Egyptian diplomat, it turned out. They had escaped to Moscow for a week's outing alone, without the kids, something I'd desperately loved to have done too, but grandma (ours) was not so accommodating. Perhaps this envy entered our conversations. I can't recall now. But a whole array of connections, a friendship emerged from these shared days in the last years of the eroding, dying Soviet Union. They lasted years.

At various intervals, most notably a year later, Ramy El Diasty, then an associate professor in the building science department of Concordia University, Montreal, used his connections and influence to invite me to be a guest speaker, some expenses paid at a Canadian National Building Science meeting in November 1988. A great generous gesture, which I regrettably was never able to reciprocate.

Before I could repay this favor Ramy El Diasty moved on to a position at Arizona State University, in the Architectural Engineering department. I caught up with his academic ascent during the national meeting of the American Solar Energy Society in 1991 in Denver. He spotted me during a session, came over to me broadly beaming his powerfully attractive smile, and we chatted about the most recent changes in our lives.

Then it was quiet for 8 years. I suspect he was doing his duties in Arizona, and since this caused a divergence in our professional work, owing to his warm climate location and focus, we didn't cross paths. This past June, I got a modest e-mail message from Ramy, telling me of his recent move and life changes. He was now Dean of the College of Architectural Engineering at United Arab Emirates University, and he added a few personal updates and notes. All very pleasant, but then a week or two later I get a message about a conference he's chairing, and he attaches an explanatory message and solicits a professional paper and participation. All very well, but the topic is "Sustainability in Desert Regions, the Second International Conference". Being in Alaska, I first dismissed it as a courtesy on Ramy's part. What did I know or have to contribute to such a conference? I've lived my entire adult life in the subarctic.

But he had planted a seed, in a non-coercive way, which festered in me. Hmm. I did a little research on just what sort of nation, place, and culture U.A.E. was. A population of a million, formerly the "Trucial States" of British Imperial days, the "truce" of "trucial" coming from the fact that six tribal "emirates" agreed to a truce with the British Empire and eventually came together to form a confederation/nation/state now known as the United Arab Emirates. A dry place, few trees, nowhere does more than 5 inches of rain fall. Water must be serious business.

In the seventies, oil wealth gave these unlikely tribes-come-national citizens one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. They can, for the time being, afford most anything, including buying good academics from North America. It's possible Ramy has been heading for this position all his life, either intentionally or through the fated turns of the well-lived life. I don't know.

But suddenly I am seeing useful comparisons between U.A.E. and Alaska. Populations are comparable, oil is the source of short-term wealth,

sustainability must be faced inevitably, and neither country nor state seems to know how to make the transition. And the entire concept, the question of how to build and sustain a “right livelihood” in this world is perhaps the human question. If we don’t solve this, it is not clear how we will survive.

So I write a paper, using comparisons, but applying all sorts of local environmental and materials constraints on the question of sustainability. I have a sense that water availability is absolutely the highest priority for these folks. We shall see, because the paper was accepted, and money is apparently not an issue, because they offered to pay all my expenses for attending the conference. I was stunned. I had already gotten an airline ticket, round trip to Abu Dhabi on Alaska and British Airways, using mileage I’d accumulated through my work. At the time of booking I was curious as to how much a first class (that’s what I booked) ticket round trip from Fairbanks to Abu Dhabi was. The agent for British Airways told me: One way fare to Abu Dhabi from Seattle was \$5,500. So the round trip was \$11,000. Add \$1,800 for first class round trip to Seattle from Fairbanks, and the numbers yield \$12,800. No small fortune for some. As the Alaska agent at the counter said this morning, you could buy a fairly nice car for that.

So here I am enroute, thanks mostly to a chance meeting of two fairly interesting human beings twelve years ago, whose paths keep intersecting in most marvelous ways! And I get to do this adventure mostly at no expense. Who can live up to such opportunity? I am not one, as in Mark Twain’s “Roughing It”, who will regret not seizing the treasure for pursuit of a silly distraction. All my treasures are in personal experience, with and without others. My life is grounded, and yet soars on the foundation of good memories. Proust I’m not, but memories make me who I am and memories of my life fill me with joy and gratitude.

And more, would I have ever done this journey, were it not for risks taken, people met, known, and loved? If it were not for knowing Ramy, knowing he will be there in Al Ain at the University when I arrive and begin my usual exploratory orientation. I could not have conceived of this huge twentieth century journey. Indeed, I could not have imagined it. Meeting marvelous people, sharing your best humor, loves, intellect, spirit, it is the essence of becoming fully human, worldwise, coming home to all your people. Through people like Ramy and his family, I find my fullest potential self. I’m enabling my life to see itself better, to see all the world more clearly, as a whole, human.

May the next 15 days go as well.

There are smaller perturbations in this journey. I undertook it with an orthotic device on my right foot and lower calf, to support my healing ruptured Achilles tendon. Just nine weeks from the surgery, which

reconnected the tendon, there was the possibility I could have to forego all this in order to recover fully. But even at 51 years, I heal rather well, and although I must use utmost care, I can walk and help myself amply. Just as I boarded the plane this morning in Fairbanks however, I noticed one of the sheet metal screws in my orthotic is missing. I tried to replace it in Anchorage, and the Alaska Airlines staff was very helpful, but they had no match for the screw. I will try again in Seattle. Maintenance mechanics would be a great resource in this matter, if I could just get to them in a timely way.

4 p.m. Seattle Airport, British Airways F.C. lounge.

I called for Kathy just now, and she wasn't home, so I had a most enjoyable chat with Julie. Now 15, she is of course tired of school, tired of males who are all pigs, and wants to go to London with me. We had a great conversation as only a remote male "uncle" figure can have with a young lady. She is very bright, hopeful, has seen a lot of pain as a victim of scoliosis, and now is discovering herself, building her expectations, walking cautiously onto the eggs of early adulthood. Her sense of humor will help a lot. Always does.

I am ebbing and flowing, submerging and emerging from the Buddhist insights within Stephen Batchelor's text "Buddhism without Beliefs". Here is something right at the heart of my experience of today: "One of the most difficult things to remember, is to remember to remember. Awareness begins with remembering what we tend to forget". This entire day I have spent building my anticipation by remembering how I got to this moment. Most uplifting.

November 17, 1999 – 1:30 p.m. (although ~ 5 a.m.)

Arrived London uneventfully and am now at Ruddiman's Hotel, a very modest little room on the first floor. I cannot say enough about the lavish wonder of British Airways first class service. The wine list had eight options; there were three appetizer options, three main course options and three desserts. This was followed six hours later by a full English breakfast, (my choice) but there were a half dozen cold choices as well, three juices, tea or coffee. The first class options are nearly all windows, and I could have had a seat right at the nose-apex of the 747, but chose one farther back. The plane wasn't half full either, so we were each served in the most classic British fashion. The British Airways claim that if you fly them once, you'll come back, is doubtless true. My only concern is that if I had to pay, I couldn't do this!

Now how to spend this stopover day. I am not sleepy, but think I would do well to lie down for a bit, then perhaps walk and look into a better hotel

for next week. Also want to visit the embassy of the U.A.E. and see if I can get a bit of information about the country of my destination.

Nov. 18, 1999 – Ruddiman's Hotel, London, 6 a.m.

Not a bad night's sleep, considering the time change. I stayed awake to watch a very politically charged rivalry European 2000 soccer match between England and Scotland, which to my surprise and delight, Scotland won 1-0. Late yesterday afternoon while looking for evidence of Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street irregulars, I found instead streets around the Baker Street tube station filled with singing soccer fans, mostly dressed in kilts. Not knowing what the occasion was, I simply had to ask. It all went down at Wembley Stadium and was a great game, and kept me awake until 10 p.m.

My major discovery though was a much clearer image of what the United Arab Emirates are today. From an old Norwegian map of London, which I used the last time I was here (1986), I found the location of the embassy of the U.A.E. So I decided to pay it a visit and get some information about this, to me, obscure and remote place. What I learned utterly changed my whole attitude toward this trip. The Emirates are hugely rich, emergent as a major economic force, and Abu Dhabi holds 85 percent of the oil reserves of the country, some 90 billion barrels. The average per capita income was 60,800 dirhans (\$1 U.S. = 3.67) so the per capita income is close to that of Alaska (which I believe is about \$24,000 – I could be wrong about this, and \$24,000 may be the average household income). But this is one very rich place, with the ability to expand its industrial base and diversify, and is about to create its own stock market.

This information all came from a statistical yearbook, and was crucial to my expectations about this place I'm visiting as a guest. Suddenly my head is turned around, and I have a sense of being already too late. This emergent power/economic engine is already industrializing into the path of heavy industry: cement, aluminum, petrochemicals, fertilizer, rubber tires, banking. A photo of the oceanfront of Abu Dhabi is a huge awakening reminiscent of Hong Kong. It is a boomtown in the Arabian Desert, and I'm having visions of Las Vegas surge through, and distort my perceptions.

This will be no simple trip. Yes, the theme of this conference is Sustainability in Desert Regions, and they are at least asking crucially correct questions. But the politics of momentum, perhaps the momentum of politics may be pushing in all the wrong directions for the U.A.E. I am forewarned to tread light, ask probing and clear questions, and respect the power and aspirations this nation of two million has for itself. Itself, because there are really seven tribes, tribal "Emirates", which came together to form the country, still only 28 years old! But the history of the place is at least five millennia. This is going to be very interesting.

Meanwhile, as I approach a quick breakfast before the final flight leg to Abu Dhabi from London today, it is raining and cold outside. It will be like a visit to Hawaii, or perhaps Baja!

Now it is nearly 5/6th into the flight, and I've slept again, had a rack of lamb worthy of Henry the VIII, champagne, and an after dinner chocolate with coriander spice in it. I've been given all manner of cosmetics, aromatherapies, sleep enhancers, foot bath sprays; I have a first class seat which submerges to a bed; it is the close of the Millennium, and I don't comprehend the disparities of me, American, and a ruddy Caucasian I saw sitting outside Paddington station last night with a sign which read: "I'm hungry and I'm homeless". Is it only luck that separates us? Birthplace? Choices we've made? Raw intelligence? Or did he just get a worse dose of cruelty from an indifferent universe? We're both going to die, and we'll never know whether we've lived the dharma path. Has either of us awakened? What is dharma about this huge 777 Boeing aircraft? Why have I no fear of it? I don't even though I just read the latest of Egyptair 990: seems a substitute pilot may have committed suicide by setting the plane into a dive, and all for despondency of debt and an ill daughter. Fear, debt, money. All of these things hover around religion and how I feel about Arabs, as a foreign culture. So I confront it, embrace this opportunity even. I offered what I know, an Arab friend offered what he knew, and now I get a chance to be an emissary of my culture, my country, Alaska, my family, my life. Gifts abound, when you offer, risk, your life and personality. I believe I am more awake each day, but it could be arrogance or worse, wishful thinking. This can be a good test, because the things I need to know about Arab culture, I doubt I know well enough. I will likely make mistakes. Humility and a willingness to understand, trust and befriend these most different but very human beings will doubtless aid me. The game is afoot!!

I am carrying a letter that Ramy sent me via e-mail, and is my permission to enter, and my visa request. I have no idea how all this will transpire, but I soon will. We are less than an hour from landing in Abu Dhabi, where it is 81°F and already evening and dark. I am cautiously excited. I love this anticipation of travel, and I am awakening.

ABU DHABI AIRPORT TO AL AIN, INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL

Well, after huge frustrations with the phone calling, I can now reflect on what was a curious, slightly tedious passage through customs at Abu Dhabi airport. A woman customs inspector had to go through my luggage, an old woman who waved me to her as a suspect. I passed.

But on the furious ride from Abu Dhabi airport to Al Ain, (four of us arrived tonight) and one Arab speaker living in Ireland chose to ride with me. What a trip. First it was an entirely streetlit, six-lane superhighway which

had no more than two feet of elevation change in 100 kilometers. The car driver drove at 140 k's per hour, about 90 miles an hour the whole time!

The Iraqi-born Irish resident, a geological design engineer, was named Dr. Munim M. Al-Rawi and he has the connections and skills to live in two worlds, British and Iraqi (Baghdad) educated, speaks Arabic and English. We spoke of water for the Emirates, Egyptair flight 990, the renewable energy push he'd like to make (here), his friend Peter Cabe, an Irishman who invented a wave generator for ocean energy, and his main point was that the U.A.E. needs simply: the right advice. I hope to hear his paper, and I believe I will enjoy this experience immensely.

FRIDAY NOV. 19, 1999. My seventh floor terrace at the Hotel Intercontinental, Al Ain.

The sun is just rising. It is 6:46 a.m. The birds squawk and chirp in the early cool. The smell is clean and warm and glorious. To the east I can see the hills and face of the Oman Mountains and the palm trees around the hotel, fade to sparser trees (not palms), then to brown grassland and desert. The wonder I feel at having this moment, most sensuous and alive, and at one of the hot dry testing grounds of human civilization, is ineffable. My life has been outrageously interesting, to bring me to this! To have just been in Las Vegas turns out to be most interesting. It is a begged contrast, blatantly asking for a comparison of the situations. Both are crucially dependent on water, and both use it with profligacy. In Las Vegas, it is Colorado River water and groundwater. Here in U.A.E., 70% of the water is obtained by desalination of seawater, and not by using solar evaporation. It is done by burning natural gas to evaporate the seawater. But of course, they have huge reserves of natural gas. U.A.E. supplies 7% of world natural gas. But desalination of sea water? When the sun is so hot and reliable? The Las Vegas/UAE comparison is only valid at a discretionary level. By this, I mean they should only be compared as profligate in the expression of poor choices made when discretion to choose was possible. These terms make Las Vegas hugely profligate, because its nearness to the Colorado makes almost all its choices, and its raison d'être is discretionary. Las Vegas after all doesn't have to exist at all! It does, mostly for hugely banal human reasons, marvelous and bizarre though it may be.

Abu Dhabi is really the source of UAE's wealth and controls 80% of the existing cash, corporate investment, banking, and has 85% of the petroleum reserves. But all the emirates existed in a hardscrabble nomadic existence before oil. These Bedouins always had a myth that their time would come, and it has. But it is largely going the route of Las Vegas. It is unsustainable without the huge wealth of oil and gas. Thus the hope, the purpose, the compelling lure of this conference. Is it possible to build a sustainable nation state in this severe desert, to outlast oil, and to continue a high quality of life? This has always been the question in my mind for Alaska as well. (It is why

my paper and presence here is not so outrageous as they might first seem!). U.A.E. is the same question being asked at the other climatic extreme. Can it outlast the boom and bust? Las Vegas doesn't ask the question, and I daresay doesn't need or want to. It is all about money and disposable wealth. Sheik Zayed, the leader of Abu Dhabi, and a patron of plantations of palms, greening the desert, agriculture, and a political leader of the nation, was quoted to me by Munim Al-Rawi last night on our ride from the airport: "My grandfather survived by using trees, by having trees supply him with foods and shade and shelter, and I want my grandchildren to live with and through trees when I'm gone." Palms and other trees line the entire length of the highway between Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. But here at least is a direct and profoundly simple expression of the importance of restoring the land. Al-Rawi made the radical but perhaps quite true observation/suggestion, that the best thing to do to restore the Arabian Peninsula to biological health would be to simply remove all the nomadic shepherding and goatherding from it. Ban it, he said. The Emirates can actually afford this, as can Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

But I don't know where this would lead for sustainability. Along the main highway from Abu Dhabi, there are several turn-offs which provide access to "farms", irrigated lands to provide fodder, food, and livelihood for people to enable them a stake in the land without nomadic life. This sounds full of risk and trepidation in the cultural context. It has the same problem as in Alaska trying to get natives to farm fish or furs instead of using traditional practices. May work, but fraught with uncertainty. Along with the government support and endorsement of agriculture here in UAE, is the explicit goal to become as self-sufficient as possible in food. Again, fraught with problems and questionable from a sustainability basis. Can you maintain two million people, (when the population doubled in the past ten years) with irrigation from desalinated water?

~4 a.m. November 20th. Intercontinental Hotel.

I made an unavoidable error, by coming back to the hotel room at 4 p.m. and thinking I was going to nap. I woke at 11:30 p.m. Watched some movies, "Romancing the Stone" and a Bruce Willis movie, but I still have reversed my sleeping and am concerned about the adaptation problems. Although my paper isn't until Sunday. Bad sign.

I woke up just in time to call Patty, only to find she is sick and so is Sarah. Bad situation, but I think some of it is nutritional. Patty blames installing the stove; perhaps. But I think she is just really unhealthy. No exercise.

I used the daylight yesterday to walk around and exercise my leg in a therapy try (there is a good weight room here). Walked along the road to see what I could see. Arab families cooking lamb for an outing, a sort of picnic

everywhere along the grassy Palm tree parks which line the highway. Very domestic, with kids and grandmas too. Without a car though, it is hard to get an idea of what usual living conditions are. Things must have changed a lot in the last two decades, but the locals don't care much about litter. Saw a lot of it. I am going to try to get some more sleep. I just heard a rooster crow. It's 4:05 a.m.

Now nearly 8 a.m., I woke at 7, sleeping from 4 on, and survived a very ominous insect fogging of the grounds of the hotel this morning. Granted the insects are bad, the harvest of irrigating a tropical desert. But this looked like they were being teargassed. Hopefully it was just Malathion.

Yesterday I heard the calls to prayer, at both noon and 3 p.m., but I must say I saw absolutely no one heed them. This town at least, Al Ain (the "eye", also means the "spring"), is very secular. I saw a few Bedouin women in the full black burke, I believe they are called. They were eating (although I never saw how exactly, without moving the lower face veil). One was by the pool and had a child in a stroller.

The men are dressed variously, and I like especially the swashbuckling look of the white robe with a red and white headsash and black headband. There are gray, plain vanilla white, and brown with a white yarmulke-type cap. I have not had a means to discern the difference as yet.

At the breakfast today, there was a white melon, which I really liked. And the Abu Dhabi brand yogurt is rich and I'm sure quite fattening.

Nov. 21, 1999 – 5 a.m.

I awake early this morning but had about eight hours sleep, so I am encouraged and feeling quite good about my recovery from the mindwarping 13 hour time change. In some oddly remarkable coincidence, I opened my lovely little glass door to the terrace just in time this morning to hear the 5 a.m. call to prayer from a local mosque. For minutes I just stood at the end of the terrace in the cool early morning darkness and listened to this haunting chant. At times there were three or four voices, some oddly dissonant barbershop quartet. But nothing seems more distinctive about these humans than this pervasive Arab and Muslim focus and dress. Still, I have not seen anyone running to prayers, and most seem to ignore them.

Yesterday was the opening of the conference, my reason for being here. And a promising and informative reason it turns out to be. The keynotes were excellent, especially the first by a black African, now professor at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. His presentation tried to deal with all the efforts and complexities in defining sustainable development and measuring progress toward sustainability. Another was an

Arab Canadian's presentation on water issues, which focussed on the Arab World, the primary dry region of the earth. It was very clear in this presentation that with population growth and water limitations colliding in the next 10 – 20 years, this is going to be a hugely problematic difficulty which oil wealth cannot solve.

My role in this conference is stunning. I am a conference moderator today for two sessions, from 9 – 11 a.m., and from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. Already we have changed the schedule a bit and the afternoon session will be postponed until 6:30 because of the unscheduled arrival of some very renowned Arab architect, who we'll hear in a special guest lecture.

And last evening, Yasser Mansur, who is the conference coordinator for theme A presentations, and with whom I was communicating by e-mail preparing for the conference, has asked me to stay here through Wednesday if possible to chat with the locals, go to Abu Dhabi island and the obligations they mentioned previously. So I will try to postpone my flight back to London one more day, to the 25 Nov. at 2:30 a.m. I've found the number and will see how it goes.

I realized, pondering now, how impossible it is to capture the huge series of marvels, which was yesterday. The food is far too spectacular, the singing of verses from the Quran to open the conferences. Roosters crow us awake each morning. A bus trip to the spring of Al Ain; a flowering tree which fills the air with jasmine-honeysuckle sweetness that expresses all the exotic sensuousness of the warm dry evenings in Araby. It is the stuff of Kismet and Ali Baba. And there is more of the Arab cultural zeal that I love to listen to from this fellow Munim Al-Rawi. He is a history of science buff and a credit to his culture. The etymologies of Arabic root ~~world~~ words (interesting slip of the pen there!) are very revealing and powerful to me. Some examples: At'la, a verb meaning to "view from above", in Arabic, is the root for all sorts of English words. Atlas, for instance, a map viewed from above. The Atlas Mountains of North Africa are so named because they allow a view from above of the Mediterranean and Spain. And the same verb is the source of Atlantic and Atlantis, the myth. Munim says, and I find it credible, that Atlantis may not have originated from the Mycenaean experience and the volcanic disappearance of an island, but may have resulted from a cultural source in the Persian Gulf, Bahrain, which due to sea level rise, or its subsidence geologically, forced Iraqis northward to the Tigris and Euphrates. Early in its history, Iraq would entomb and enshrine its kings, in Bahrain, owing to its early roots in the holy places of Mesopotamian emergence. This he maintains was the original lost "Atla'ntis".

Another word which originated in Arabic is language, from a verb in Arabic, and I am not quite sure of it exactly, but something like "langua" or log wa, which simply is the verb, to speak. The name "Europe", which I had

always wondered about as a place name, is actually from the Arabic word for “west” Ur’a. Makes great sense. Munim also claims the word Asia, although more distorted from its original Arabic comes from the Arabic word for “the east”. Insightful stuff, which in an important way, underpins my ever enlarging holistic view of human culture.

That is the great treat I feel here. Ramy El Diasty said very well that the reason I am here, is he thought of me immediately because, “I was so interested in other cultures and their views of the world.” And he fits here so well, in the contentment of the warm Arabic context. Remarkable how our story has unfolded. Civil – the word – is it possibly derived from Seville, the seat of a great university of Moorish Spain, where you were “Sevillized”, later to become “civilized”?

Nov. 22, 1999 – 6:33 a.m.

Just spoke to Patty who is clearing snow from the driveway.

Last night and yesterday were intense with the conference. Especially good were my walks, conversations, and visits with Ramy El Diasty, my old friend, the new Dean, and my cause for being here. He spent lunch with me; a glorious catered affair sponsored by the University with a huge array of Arab foods, three desserts and four meats, with marvelous conversation. Then after a lecture by a leading Egyptian architect who is virtually under the patronage of the Sheik here in Abu Dhabi, and who has a vast base of built structures in Egypt and the Middle East. Ramy invited us to meet at his home, meet Maha and his daughter, and have coffee and more desserts. He is a marvelous relaxed host, and we spoke of many things: experiences with recent death of Maha’s father, the university experiences, shared experiences in Poland, Ramy’s path of a sabbatical which lead to U.A.E. University. All very engaging and set in his luxury house with collections of his and his sister’s art, antique silver jewelry, Omani daggers, and Moorish curved scabbards. The floors are marble and doors are a lavish dark wood. Ceilings are 12 feet high – a concession to the climate, which Ramy says just is countervailed by a high mounting of air conditioners such that now cool air sinks to the bottom, but an air conditioner mounted one foot from the ceiling tries to cool the entire room volume. One more misapplication of technology.

I know I will be slightly frustrated by not having thought of everything I wish to say, but I really am motivated to give a good paper today. Not only do I feel I owe all the attendees and Ramy, but I have sensed that many attendees are really curious about this eccentric fellow from Alaska who’s been brought here to advise them of how to move toward sustainability. So I have gone over the presentation and intensely annotated it to try to give myself clues of what I want to accentuate or elaborate.

Tomorrow has been quite rearranged, so that now even though I thought I'd need to change my reservation to stay a day or two, it is working out that I can return on my scheduled flight and still participate in a special meeting with the patronage center, and tour Abu Dhabi Island, and then go to the Abu Dhabi airport and await the flight.

Oh-oh – here comes the morning insect fogger. I despise it. Smoky poison, a chain saw motor to drive the fogging fan – hideous, death. And some poor Indian immigrant laborer to do the duty. A parable of what's wrong in this system.

I gave as good as I got. It has been as good a conference as I've ever contributed to. My paper was the best attended of the day, and still I couldn't finish all I wanted to say. But many thanks and congratulations followed the paper, and I believe it is one of the best papers I've ever written. The plenary followed with intense discussions of the meaning of sustainability, the need for research and good information transfer (extension at my urging), and demonstrations of sustainable development. The concept that we must be able to imagine a sustainable life in order to seek and aim for it, struck a chord with everybody. No one has a good idea what a sustainable world looks like, and therefore we can't move toward it, set goals, take action. It is confusing and frustrating, but we are also clear that it must be brought to the household level.

The banquet celebration to finish the conference last night was compelling, exotic and honored me again. The seat I got was the seat of honor next to Ramy, the Dean and the conference chair, my long time friend, who I now feel hugely indebted to. But more than that, to have met him the way I did, twelve years ago in Moscow, now seems like an enormous gift and opportunity I was offered, unwittingly and honestly took. And now I have been rewarded in all sorts of humane ways, educated, broadened by exposure to Arab views, friends, life, food, and culture. All that happened outdoors. The banquet was set up in the huge courtyard, in the warm fragrant evening air, a banquet, and in the light of the full moon. Surrounded by Arab friends, the two Americans from Arizona State, we were lavishly showered with foods, lentil soup, three desserts, the vast spread of salads, three liquids and five types of bread. My life again is charmed, and I merely had to think, organize and construct a message in my own life to receive these wondrous gifts. It is sometimes difficult to live up to.

Nov. 23 I arose early, and wrote this, I want to sit for a few moments on the terrace to watch the sunrise, and hear the call to prayer once more, experience the place.

The plan for today is to visit the Zayed Center for Heritage and History, the sponsor of the conference. Then we are to take a boat to visit Abu Dhabi

Island, a mystery tour of sorts for now. And then I get on the flight to London at 2 a.m. tomorrow evening.

NOVEMBER 23, 1999 ABU DHABI INTERNAT. AIRPORT 9P.M.

Today will forever be recalled as participating in the highest speed international car transport ever. In the morning all the guests of the conference went to the Zayed Center for Heritage and History for an obligatory session with them. It was designed to have them advised by us as to how best to preserve the cultural heritage of old vernacular style buildings. It was fine. Afterward I was to return to the hotel with anyone else who was checking out and then proceed on by car-with-driver to the specially arranged visit to Abu Dhabi Island, a private island and site where environmental restoration and an education and sports center are planned. As it turned out, I was the only one who ended up going to the Island, which meant I rode alone in a large, full-sized air conditioned, 1999 Ford Fairmont by myself with an Arabic driver who spoke very little English. The drivers are renowned for their high typical speeds, and this guy was certainly no different. But shortly after starting out, before we left Al Ain, he noticed it was 12:30. Oops, time for Muslim mid-day prayer. So he waves at a small mosque, signals in various ways with his hands that he will be going to the mosque, and swerves off the road in that general direction. He pulls up to the mosque, signals me again, this time to stay in the car. Of course I do. I couldn't do much else. He courteously leaves the engine running, and I wait in the car, watching a dozen or so men go into the mosque. First they remove their shoes, then they bathe briefly in the hammam, and then go into the prayer.

He comes out about 15 minutes later with all the others. I haven't mentioned that he is wearing the classic Arab white silk gown, and sandals without socks. He gets back into the car, drives across the street and says hello to a friend of his, nearly running down two chickens. Finally we are off, and he is roaring toward the Al Ain Airport, a circuitous route, and it takes me a while to figure out he is searching for the least traffic. Between Al Ain City and its airport are the start of the large red sand dunes, a powerful indicator of what this entire 1000 square kilometers of Al Ain would be, indeed was for millennia, before and without the flagrant application of desalinated water. It is the Rub-al-Khali, the empty quarter. Savagely dry desert. And here we are speeding across it on pavement at 120 M.P.H. The driver was going as fast as the car would go. Much of 130 kilometers or so of the trip to the island were completed with the speedometer pegged at 200 K.P.H. The Ford ran roughly, hesitated and balked, but he was undaunted. Camels grazed in a blur during this exercise in centering and self-control. Mostly my hands were warm and I knew it would be a struggle to get him to slow down. At one point the dash-mounted cell phone rang, and of course he answered it loudly at 120 mph, and I'm in my worst nightmare. I must send this tale to the "CAR TALK" brothers to add to their campaign against car phones. This Arab was definitely

a high end case, at 120 miles an hour. There are few places in the USA where you could do that!

He got me to the Abu Dhabi Island in one hour and 15 minutes, a distance of 140 kilometers. Of course he had to slow for intersections, most of which are traffic circles in Abu Dhabi, but instead of anticipating, he just brakes emphatically a hundred yards or so from the intersection. It is really good that I have been reading Stephen Batcheler's "Buddhism without Beliefs", as I was able to calm myself rather well, I thought. I did arrive more the worse for wear, and the driver was very helpful. He used his cell phone to call for a boat to come over from the island and pick us up and drop us on the island. All this was another round of singular treatment I've received this entire journey to the U.A.E. Ramy pointed me out particularly as coming the farthest to share my learning about sustainable housing during his farewell address at the banquet, and everyone wanted to learn more about Alaska and Alaskans. It was never more obvious to me that Alaska is a great card to play. It always gives me something to talk about, and I love to talk about it. It has always been an advantage for me to have an Alaskan home wherever I go.

And I now realize that most of the reasons I have had these travel experiences and these friends is the love it brings out in me. The love of place, love for my life in Alaska, and the intimacy I give to these international friends; it is simple, heartfelt love I give to it all. I love everything about it. Even the thrill rides.

And another remarkable connection was made this last evening. A fabulous red full moon rose over Abu Dhabi City as we explored the U.A.E. Heritage Center. Afterward we walked down to a restaurant and coffee house. On the way I recalled that Frederick Steiner the architecture professor from Arizona State University mentioned to me that he had studied, gotten at least two degrees, at the University of Pennsylvania. I asked if he knew Ian McHarg. Did he ever! He has written a book with him, and co-wrote his biography. I knew McHarg, whose work and book, "Design with Nature" was a grand stride forward in environmentally aware design, and was something of a phenomenon in the early 70s. I had a copy of the book then, but I haven't unearthed it for some time. Steiner also helped with McHarg's autobiography, which he said was 2/3 great, but he tried to write three books in one, and so made it difficult to read. Another few books for the list.

We sat at that restaurant, looking across a bay at the waterfront city edge of Abu Dhabi, accented luminously by a sharp full moon in a perfectly clear sky. Patrons smoked water pipes full of a marvelous apple-laced tobacco which smelled better than any tobacco smoke I've ever smelled. All around us these pipes were burbling, under the night sky, on a deck, warm, yet cooled just enough by a slight breeze. It was the perfection of an evening. I ordered, along with Frederick and one of the Egyptians in our group, a Turkish coffee. I'd

had Turkish coffee before, but never a GOOD Turkish coffee. Previous tries were in Russia. It would be unlikely to expect them to have made anything really good in 1987.

Abu Dhabi City is the paradigm of profligate growth and unsustainability. It is yet another huge irony: the conference was in a country where some of the most unsustainable elements have been made the basis of development: oil wealth and desalinated water. In a place with huge amounts of unproductive, non-productive land, to use natural gas instead of some of the highest incident solar radiation to desalinate/distill water is well, pretty dumb. Especially since the gas can be sold. And the Abu Dhabi government subsidizes native born citizens, for almost all types of consumption. The Sheik has decreed that there is now a "Marriage Fund" to loan \$70,000 DH to young U.A.E. couples to help try to discourage the increasing problem of U.A.E. men marrying foreign brides. Now there's a concept. There is irony here too. One of the reasons is the old practice of paying dowries for brides. As U.A.E. became wealthy, the dowries paid skyrocketed, and it simply became much cheaper to marry outside the country. So the Sheik is trying to buy back intra-U.A.E. marriages. U.A.E. citizens, born there are a tiny minority of the country's population, less than 10%. A serious issue, when 90 percent of your population is emigrant. A country with no natives, a culture which is diluted, declining marriages, and all that competition and opportunity to marry outside the Emirates. It's a no-win situation.

It is now half past midnight, now the 24th. It is a huge struggle to stay awake. My plan is to stay in the first class lounge at Abu Dhabi International, and then leave about 45 minutes before boarding to make the rounds at the Duty Free shops. Actually, the whole country is duty free, and this has led to some revealing and strange developments. Ramy told me the Russian story. After 1991, Russians started moving into jobs in U.A.E. by offering to work for less than any other foreigners. This distinction had previously been held Baluchis, Indians, and Bangladeshis. Russians however, usually were fairly well educated, at least bi-lingual and got lots of hotel and clerking jobs. But they soon found out they could make more money simply buying and taking back duty free goods, and stopped working at regular jobs. Then the Russian Mafia moved in and got into buying and shipping used cars. Ramy says they're absolutely amazing. They don't ship them through any normal tariff ports. How do they do this? Well, first they drive them back, and through Iran. How do they do this without visas?

Well, they do! They hire a large boat to load up with autos and then drop them at some remote, uncontrolled shore point in Iran. They then drive openly through Iran and cross into Russia at some equally uncontrolled point at the Russian-Iranian border. Fairly bold and radical smuggling. It's all done by driving in a caravan, too.

Here's some help I just found within "Buddhism without Beliefs": I am confused.

"I am confused by the sheer irrationality, ambiguity, and abundance of things coming into being at all. I am confused by having been born into a world from which I will be ejected at death. I am confused as to who or why I am. I am confused by the labyrinth of choices I face."

November 25, 1999 London, 6 A.M. Raining finally.

I must say it is refreshing to finally have it rain. Somewhere on earth we must have it, or the precarious development of the United Arab Emirates happens. This is the day after my first day in London, and full it was.

I began by taking advantage of the glorious services, which are available to me through British Airways First Class. It is without exception the best flying travel I could ever imagine. I slept on the way from Abu Dhabi, but it seems I only needed about 3 hours sleep after struggling for hours to stay awake at the Abu Dhabi airport. Weird indeed. I decided after waking at about 6 A.M. Abu Dhabi time, that I'd try the movie "Pulp Fiction". I have to say it is a strangely clever series of entertainments but I just don't need the violence.

On arriving at Heathrow, 6 A.M., I knew it would be a good idea to take my time and relax my way into London. The solution was to again rely on British Airways. They have a service open to Concorde, First, and at least one other privileged class, called the British Airways arrival lounge. Just the sort of posh idealism the Brits have always provided for the privileged few. And it is so helpful, refreshing, restorative, humane. If only we could make these kinds of experiences more available to everyone who flies!

They give you the pass before you arrive at Heathrow, and it has a map. The area is just off the baggage and customs checkout. First you get free baggage check, then I signed up for a recovery shower! I only needed to wait 15 minutes. At 7 A.M. this service is heavily used, with a lot of overnight flights from the U.S. and Middle East arriving in the early morning. Beautiful little shower stalls, and I was able to change clothes, a much-needed action after our sandy desert island outing in Abu Dhabi. (I had also used the pajamas supplied by British Airways for the first class sleeping, a needed and welcome option too). They also offer both a breakfast service and a massage (complimentary!!) service. Well I of course tried for the massage, but it was already completely booked, big surprise, through ten A.M. By then I wouldn't need one. So I indulged myself with a bit more yogurt and fruit at breakfast, along with two very decent cappuccinos and made off to validate my London rail pass, good for all the busses and underground, then headed into Paddington on the Heathrow Express Train. The first hotel I tried had no rooms Friday, so I came to the Abbey Court, and a room the size of my kid's

rooms (too small,) and one of the worst rooms I've ever had. Since I hardly spend any time here though, my real complaint is there is no writing surface. No desk, no table. So I am writing on my thigh, with consequent results. Too boot, they wouldn't have a room available until noon, so I just unloaded my baggage and set off for the Globe Theater on the Bankside. Other than a glacial paced subway ride, (next time I'll take a bus – more scenic) this was the highlight of the day. The tour is very worthwhile, and you get to go into the theater and see every angle. All timber framed in English oak, and NO POWER TOOLS!! The creators of this fabulous effort had to almost completely re-invent the skill base of the 1580s or 1600s. What a majestic effort, with what is now the only thatched roof in London. They got through the fire code by lining the inside of the thatch with fireproof board (exterior sheetrock) and by placing a sprinkler system on top of the thatch ridge. Superb really, and if only I were closer to London, it would be a plum to join the support effort and see a play or two here. A gate, wrought with 130 odd pieces of steel sculpture (I bought a postcard image of this) each contributed by blacksmiths and metal sculptors from around the world, and each reflecting a line or phrase from one of Shakespeare's works. Fabulous British-American collaboration, and a credit to human beings.

Next it was lunch, and my usual loose style of laissez-faire travel, again led to hunger and desperation. Either it was the vinopolis and a huge bill with wine tasting, or a pizza yuppie hub, with a half-hour wait, so I decided to pub it. This option was O.K., but incredibly expensive for a moderately good chicken sandwich, salad and pint of Grolsch. About £16.50, or \$25. This is one expensive town!

Next I went to the rowdy bombastic carnival effort called "Winston Churchill's" Britain at War experience. A museum of WWII and the blitz really, it is like a Disney portrayal of what it's like to be in a bomb shelter. One of the more pathetic messages I carried from this experience was the awareness I now have of the psychological and physical importance of cigarettes in the British War effort. Like the USGIs, the British soldier was also the recipient of free cigarettes. So powerful were cigarettes and their use, that they were a sort of propaganda medium. A method called "cigarette cards" completely analogous to bubblegum's placement of baseball cards in a pack, was commonplace in Britain. These cards had messages for all sorts of propaganda and patriotic "buck up mate" moments. Even how to protect yourself from a gas attack, saving tires and rubber, "free the world, it's depending on us." A whole group of young public school children were touring this place with me. It seemed they were slack-jawed and dazzled by it all. Definitely difficult for them to understand the horror, reality, fires, fear of it all. But they are still seeing much that American children never are exposed to.

Next was an intermediate stop at a Brahmah Tea and Coffee Museum, my doff of the hat to mocha passions. Nice but not worth the effort, and more about tea than coffee. But this was only a diversion really, from my visit to the design museum. This was exciting particularly the display of the results of a Sustainable Design competition. Not only does this competition have a winner which exemplifies a seawater distillation solar greenhouse in Tenerife, the Canary Islands, but it also has Hope house and a P.V. Millennium Center in the U.K., all aimed at sustainability. I need to tell the Architectural engineers at U.A.E. University about this Tenerife project.

November 25, 1999 – A grand day of exploring the sights and greatness of London. Began with mist and overnight rain, but cleared mid-morning during my visit to the Royal Naval Museum at Greenwich. I'd taken the new Docklands light rail to get there, which is elevated and covers an area of the old wharves and docks, which I had never seen before. The real core of the morning though was the long slow walk through the old observatory at Greenwich, and seeing John Harrison's actual works: his H1, H2 and H3 chronometers, which ultimately led to solving the problem of finding longitude in marine navigation. This is the story, a long and exhausting one, of class prejudice and scientific stubbornness in the 16th – 18th centuries, mostly between a brilliant dogged clockmaker (who was right), and the Astronomers Royal, who couldn't accept the idea that the problem wasn't solved practically by astronomy. I'd forgotten so much of this when I first visited in 1981. Mostly I didn't recall that Christopher Wren had designed the old octagonal observatory, and that the view from the observatory hill to the North at most of Thames-side East London is fabulous: all the more so because of the weather clearing to a marvelous crisp, windy, sunny day. (The book is by Dava Sobel, "Longitude").

I'd also forgotten the utter craziness of the attempts at solving the longitude puzzle: the dog yelp at noon for instance. This incredibly bizarre idea involved something called "Powder of Sympathy". When this powder was sprinkled on a knife that had inflicted a wound on someone, or some creature, that action would (purportedly) cause that victim to feel and experience the original pain. This concept then went to the expanded idea of wounding a whole fleet-number of poor dogs, all with the same knife, and then placing a dog on each of the royal fleet's ships. At noon each day the knife would be plunged into the powder again, and all the dogs on all the ships would simultaneously yelp in pain, giving the "noon indicator". Fortunately the astronomers were unsuperstitious enough to reject this appallingly ridiculous idea, saving the injury of many innocent dogs.

Also in Greenwich are the Cutty Sark and Sir Francis Chichester's "Gypsy Moth IV" which he used to circumnavigate solo in 1966-67, a book I read long ago. From the docks at Greenwich I was tempted to take a river cruise, but it was a twenty-five minute wait for a twenty-five minute trip, and £6, so since

it was noon, instead I searched Greenwich for lunch. It was found, a classic worker's lunch shop, and I had my first steak and kidney pie, with mashed potatoes and peas, for less than £3. Solid, adequate.

From Greenwich I took a train and decided, since both options were enroute to the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon, to see how much the trains through the tunnel (chunnel, sorry...) to Paris were, an alternative I still could do if the theater tickets for half price didn't work out. The best I could do for that option, which departs from Waterloo Station, is about £70. Not promising, but a truly interesting experience, and I still had a French railpass to use, albeit for only 2 or 3 days.

The alternative was to buy a theater ticket at the half-price booth in Leicester Square. So that's where I went, and was in good time, although my wait seasoned by a long but agreeable "hit upon", by a loud dyslexic, but fun street person who was bemoaning the fate of the author Jeffrey Archer in his attempt to be "Lord Mayor" of London. Finally, I got to the cashier and asked for tickets to "Les Miserable". Voila, done. A 7:30 P.M. show at the Palace Theater an 1891 marvel, which is a museum of splendors itself.

Quite pleased, I went to the fabulous aircraft collection (with all sorts of bombs as well, including nuclear, in the collection). Of course I prefer the WW1 bi- and tri-planes, and the Messerschmitt BF109, and the British Spitfires, some of the more classic aircraft. Jets are fine, but less a flying machine than a manned bullet. Spent nearly three worthy hours there.

Got back to the hotel area, had deep-dish pizza, picked up my laundry, which I'd had done at a local laundromat, and back to the hotel to put on a suit for the evening.

"Les Mis.." was all I'd hoped for. All excellent singers, great scene changes, and I had a front row seat, of all things. Just absolutely fabulous. £19 75p. A good choice. To bed at 11:30 P.M. A grand, a worthy day, Thanksgiving day, as it was. Haven't called home since London due to several factors. Time difference is even more awkward than 13 hours, and my room has no outside line, cheap hotel that it is. Hope all is well. In 36 hours I'll be enroute home.

NOV. 26, 1999 – A very pleasant day, variegated blustery, and my education and techniques of exploring are expanding in all directions. Up early, heard the weather threats: up to 80 mile per hour winds on the West Coast of Scotland and Western Ireland. Good day to have a windbreaker. Possible rain later in the day too. But after choosing the continental breakfast option, I first decided I would try for another show in the evening, which meant I had to call Ticketron and see how that went. On the wake of a lecture Dr. Rudolf Krejci gave at the UAF Geophysical Institute on the Copenhagen meeting in 1941 between Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, I chose the play

“Copenhagen”. It is by Michael Frayn. Well it worked, albeit cost me £29, a solid 50 dollars. But a play rather than a musical.

After the booking I jumped on the circle line underground to Victoria Station. Here I took the #11 bus, which, I had learned from my “Rough Guide to London”, is better and cheaper than the open bus tour. Indeed, it was exceedingly pleasant. And it allowed me inadvertently to discover where the location of the Duchess Theater was. This is where the “Copenhagen” performance would be. I got off soon after passing the theater, because among all the major sights upon which one feasts on this bus route, I was aiming for the Old Bailey Courthouse, where Rumpole waged his wit and gruffness. Sure enough it’s still quite an impressive old stone criminal court. From this area I caught another bus headed to Kings Cross Station. A special offer was made through my four day London Transport system card that gave me £3 off a day return trip on the West Anglia/Great Northern railway to Cambridge, and a city tour was included. This seemed promising, and since I’d never been to Cambridge before, and its reputation of so many science and math contributions is so great, well I was very intrigued. Although downright unpleasant a day, with cold wind and clouds, this excursion was fabulous. Cambridge has a cloistered medieval appeal and ambiance that exceeds any other British city I’ve been to. The complexity of the University is confusing, but its history is more than 700 years, and the city wears it well. Cambridge has a 5000-year history, including a Roman main street and old Roman Fortress/garrison site. They arrived some time around 70 AD, and stayed nearly 400 years. It is important I think, to reflect on this. The tourguide was an older gentleman, yes even older than me, and he was a graduate of Cambridge, and thoroughly enchanting in that wonderfully engaging, informative and personal British way. A British education in one of the major universities must be an exceptional experience. John Harvard, founder and namesake of Harvard, was a Cambridge graduate. So were two instrumental figures of British origin who figured into our own history in the U.S. The tax advisor to Charles VI in the 1760s, who instituted the taxes and tax revolt, which led to the Boston Tea Party, was a Cambridge man, as was General Cornwallis, who surrendered at Yorktown. Well, someone had to do it, and the Brits don’t seem to mind pointing this out.

I had a nice pub lunch with a local ale, but the weather was so bad, I decided to rejoin the tour and head back to the train station and London.

About 3:20 I arrived at the British Museum, my last chance to get another glimpse at this most overwhelmingly great and unsurpassed archive of British Imperial Power, collection obsession, and reverence for the past. Every room, every treatment of every era, is so full of rich detail and potential insight that the experience wilts you, me at least, in a few hours. By 4:30 everything hurt, but also because I was wearing my orthotic brace. It served me well, but eventually it just hurts. So I headed back to the hotel.

Since I had to pick up my ticket for the "Copenhagen" performance less than an hour before the 7:30 curtain time, I wanted to eat a light dinner and leave about 6:00 P.M. from the hotel room. I caved in to time pressure, and regrettably ate a BLT at McDonalds and got on the Underground at Paddington. Paddington and Lancaster Gate Underground Stations were my bases of access, and they are superb. Paddington, and for that matter many sites in London are under construction for some sort of millennium city madness. It's not as bad as Berlin, but it is very apparent the city is being fixed substantially.

I took the Bakerloo line direct to Charing Cross, then the number 11 bus to the Duchess Theater. All was copacetic and I had my ticket at 6:40 P.M. Off to a local Starbucks for a mocha/caffeine jolt, which I thought would help me stay alert. This happened to be one of the worst, weakest Starbucks I ever had. I complained, and just had them add another short of espresso. The first tasted like there was no coffee in it, just hot chocolate.

Turned out I needed the coffee, and even it didn't help, as I hit a wall of incredible sleepiness about 9 P.M., and had a terrible time staying alert. The play only has three characters: Bohr, his wife Margareta, and Heisenberg. Superbly cast, it is very intense and my physics education served me very well. But I needed the intermission to remove my sweater, which I wore due to the weather, but which overheated me in the theater, with the crowd. After that I made it without dozing.

The play points out an aspect of Nazi expulsion of Jews from universities, which I hadn't thought of before, and which ironically cost Germany its best theoretical physics minds. Since German academic tradition always encouraged and rewarded experimental physics over theoretical, Jews were able to get university chairs in theoretical physics, and so concentrated on this area. When Jews began to be persecuted the departing faculty was the bulk of German theoretical physics. The hole they left behind has probably not yet been filled. The play also shows the humanity and tragedy of these brilliant intellectuals, and also the strong character and ruthless honesty of Margareta Bohr. Hopefully she was as strong a person as she is portrayed to be. Good play. Glad I saw it. Not worth fifty dollars, sorry.

It was raining when I came out of the theater, so I immediately sealed up my windbreaker and hunted for the bus stop. The first bus, which came along, was not the #11, but #13, which was heading toward Marble Arch and Baker Street. Since it was raining, and this bus would go down Regent and Oxford Streets, it would be a grand comfortable tour in the rain. Not only a tour, a colorful light show and all enhanced by the rain. A fitting and glorious last evening in London.

Walking back on the final leg to the hotel, a black prostitute propositioned me. First time in a long while. "Wanna do some business?"

BA First Class Lounge, Heathrow –
NOV. 27, 1999. Awoke refreshed, about 6:30 AM in the Abbey Court Hotel, which I will not cherish in memory. Showered and splashed, added some skin softeners and had an uneventful continental breakfast. Decided the ideal way to softly bid farewell on this cool sunny after-rain morning, would be to pay a sentimental visit to the Peter Pan statue in Hyde Park. We'd had a family photo taken in the first week of January 1986 when we visited here from Norway. I held little 7 month old Sarah in my arms. She was such a cheerful little wonder. Always will be a most special person to me. My only daughter, my girl. It was a fine moment to depart on and ponder.

I spent a fine hour and a half walking around the Horsechestnuts, lakes, watching young equestrians, passing the Sunday soapbox area so fabulously English, so richly free-spirited an idea.

Finally I needed to check out by 10:30, so back to the hotel one final time, got the bags, and to Paddington Station. I had both time, about three hours and options on how to spend the hours. I could actually check my bags at the Paddington Station check-in, which I did. I would take the fast and boring Heathrow Express train, 20 minutes, or the slow and boring underground, which I did. I now know why the Heathrow express trains were created. The subway ride is an hour from Paddington and oppressively dull.

At the airport I used my rare but treasured first class privileges to use the First Class lounge to write and spent quiet cloistered luxuriant time, and also bought a few duty-free Christmas gifts. While paying for one, I noticed a crumpled piece of colorful paper at my right foot. Sure enough, I found a five pound note, and used it to buy a French champagne for seeing in the millennium this New Year's Eve. This can not possibly be a bad omen.

Now I am looking out my three view portal windows at snow-covered southern Iceland. The most fabulously moist and tender steak and dinner of the trip was just served me, along with a claret, treacle pudding and custard, and now Grand Marnier. I can see lights of towns in Iceland across the southern coast but it is darkening quickly. Beautiful, Iceland in snow. No active volcanism, and now a roadway, partially frozen lakes.

It is hard for me to express the awe, the joy, the gratitude, the enormous scope, the wonder of this trip. It has been a miracle of self education, broadened perspective, and gracious, good food and people. Undoubtedly one of my best journeys. I try to look at it all, now, in perspective, and I must ask myself: "How did this come to pass?" How did I manage to afford myself this experience, a second one this year after the enormity of the German Fulbright

experience? Perhaps a third with the bizarre interlude of Baltimore and Las Vegas. What have I learned? Huge things. Perhaps crucial insights. Why do I have to go to Abu Dhabi to be fully appreciated as to the value of my insights regarding sustainability? The importance coupled with the absurdity of this revelation, motivates me to invest myself all the more in local Alaska politics, schemes, perhaps even developments such as a sustainable house, a Sustainable Alaska Housing Research center, natural gas development.

Alaska is much more vulnerable to a future difficult transition than are the United Arab Emirates. Abu Dhabi has 90 billion barrels of reserves. Alaska has perhaps 5-8 billion, much of it uneconomic to recover. In ten years there may be no economically recoverable Alaskan Oil. What a concept. Yet does anyone seem to be credibly attending to a transition? I certainly don't see it. Alaska has no vision, no visionaries. Abu Dhabi's Sheik Zayad has been its saviour. Remarkably, he was just a simple uneducated leader of a group of Bedouins, who came to control 100 billion barrels of oil. In 1960, there was nothing but a few hundred thousand people in a few scattered towns in the Emirates. Now both Abu Dhabi City and Dubai resemble Hong Kong. The sheik got rich, but he also oversaw a huge and exemplary social security system for his people, and mostly he brought water to the desert, so that now, two million people live in the U.A.E., and at a standard that's the envy of the Arab world and much of Asia. There are serious reasons to be concerned about some aspects of the Emirates, but greed and equity are not the problems. Sustainability is. The house of cards built on desalinating seawater will ultimately collapse.

But my point here is this. In lieu of the immaturity and shortsightedness I see reflected in the Permanent Fund vote, and general Alaskan political shallowness, sometimes a Sheik looks like a pretty good idea. It all depends on the attitude, the leadership, the ability to apply the Iroquois seventh generation rule: Sustainability would ideally mean we use no resources which are going to limit the resource choices of our posterity to the seventh generation. What a different world we'd be making were this our framework of action. It is all a quagmire of values and political will, and Alaska seems to place no value whatever on the lives of its grandchildren.

I cannot yet see a means to make this point, to be a trailblazer to a future we can collectively imagine. But it is imagination, which must be kindled, which must flourish. Our imaginations, our ability to imagine a future not dependent on oil is the crucial failure of Alaska, and the west in general. A lucid example came to me at a conference in Anchorage, in July 1999. About 150 people were in the audience. I posed two questions to them all. The first: "How many of you believe that in 30 years you will be driving an automobile with an internal combustion engine, you'll be heating and lighting your homes, all with the same fuels and utilities you are now using?" About five people raised their hands. Good.

That is probably honest and it played well into my second question: "How many of you believe that in 30 years you will get more than half your energy from renewable resources, primarily solar energy and wind, perhaps substantial hydroelectricity?" Again, only about 5 people, not the same people either, raised their hands. Clearly it is a dilemma due to failure of imagination. We all know what we're doing. The energy we're consuming can't last. 145 people out of 150 strongly implied they knew this. Yet 145 out of 150 people also cannot imagine what such a future will be like. If not renewable energy, then what? What else can these be? Nuclear energy? Doubt it. Already in huge decline in the west, and even the Russians will probably begin to phase out nuclear power. The recent nuclear accident at a processing facility near Tokyo shook the Japanese faith in monolithic bureaucracy and energy systems, in a country, which is about as unilateral and bureaucratically oppressed as any which supports nuclear power.

So there is much to be done. Much credibility to accrue and raise. Imagination to fertilize. Exemplary lives to lead. I'm on it.

- British Airways Flt. 49
London to Seattle 11/27/99
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The American postscript

No longer does Seattle cancel passport on entry. It's all electromagnetic now. Once "inside", experiences not feasible or remotely similar start to occur. I visit a bookstore and buy Sherman Alexie's book "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven", the book upon which the movie "Smoke Signals" was based. The guy behind the counter says, very offhandedly, "Yeah Sherman stopped by today and I wanted to commend him on his latest book, "Indian Killers". (Alexie, a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian, lives in Seattle.) It's being made into a movie too, and Sherman is the director. He stops by here when he's flying out." This obviously could never happen to me anywhere else. Just outside the entrance to the bookstore a young man is reading Hindu myths quite aloud from a book entitled "Krishna". I head for the outdoors, but have to run the lung gauntlet, a toxic cloud of cigarette smoke from the hoard of smokers who are forced outside here. In England, pubs are just about intolerable to me, as at least half the patrons smoke, and only a few pubs even consider a non-smoking section. I found one in Cambridge. Here America is much better, and thank you California for pushing this. It is raining, quietly pleasantly, and I love the rain! I just experience it for a brief time. The humidity is welcome. It's time to go home.