

# A Real American Road Trip Experience:

## Vegas to Frisco

### A Massacre and Wildfires

October 2-18 2017





Boy, for our 84<sup>th</sup> trip together, did we ever pick a time....



We landed the same day as Ringo Starr—October 2<sup>nd</sup>—the day after the massacre that slaughtered 58 and wounded or injured 546.



The city was in shock at the horror of it all.



Yet, just a night later Fremont Street was packed as usual. If visitors were a bit somber.



We stayed only a day in Vegas, just time enough to pick up our rental. We spend more time there on the back nine of the trip. We cut across the center of Death Valley.





I've been through it before lengthwise, north to south, but the east to west drive is much more interesting. Evidence of ancient volcanic activity was frequent.



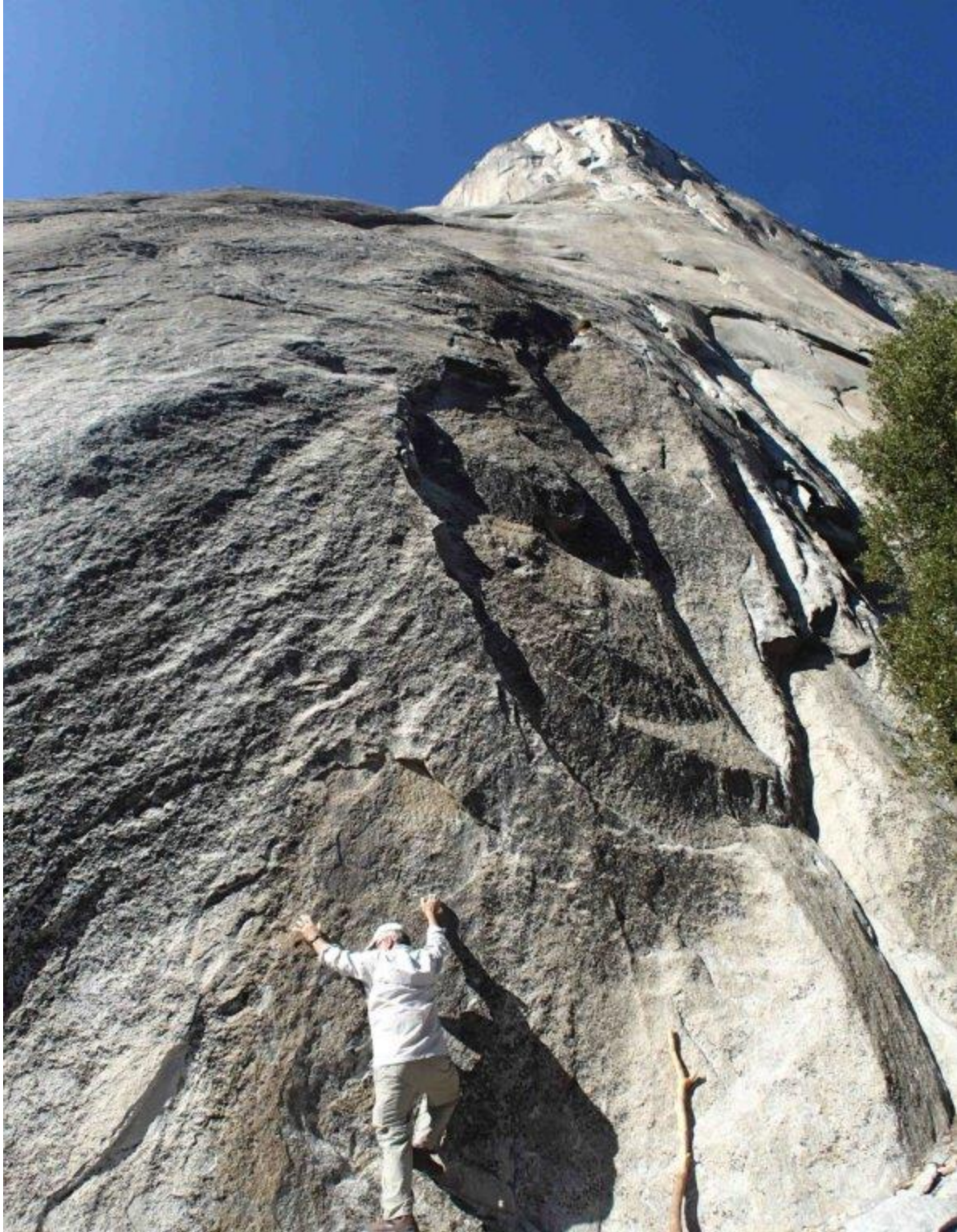


To Yosemite. Dollar rent-a-car generously upgraded us to a 2017 Camry with GPS and we were only paying \$27US a day. Damn nice vehicle to drive.

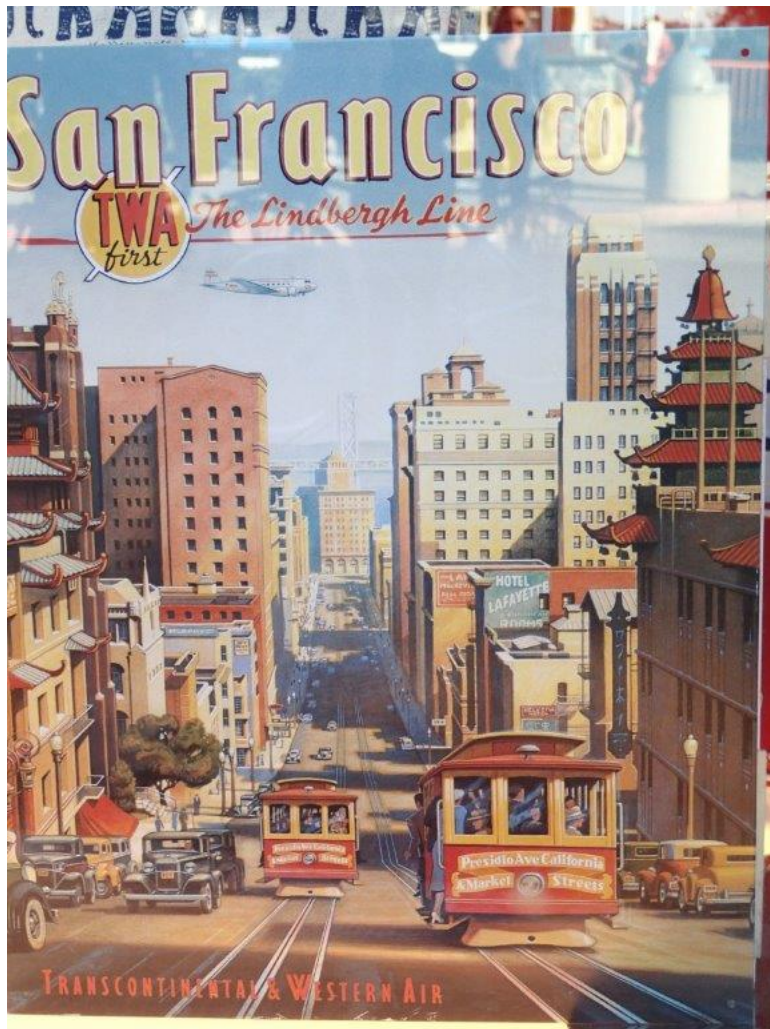


Yosemite, a 70X100 mile batholith—a big bubble of granite forming the Sierra Nevada—is gorgeous. Interestingly, the largest in the Pre-Cambrian Shield, the Wathaman, is in northern Saskatchewan.





I free climbed 3,000-foot-high El Capitan, though I didn't make it to the top. But I only had 2,999 feet to go.



Back to one of our favorite cities in the world.



After buying sushi in Sausalito we drove up to the lookout to eat it. I wondered why in hell there were so many cars and people and why the bay was filled with boats...? Then the Blue Angels roared in and put on one helluva show. Talk about serendipity.



This city is so damned beautiful, and has such a great vibe.



The beach off Sunset just south of Cliff House. Where, en route to Mexico in '69, I parked my old '62 VW hippie camper on my First Big Trip after finishing university. I've been in love with SF ever since.



A must stop is Lori's Diner a block off Union Square. The memorabilia features this 1959 Edsel.





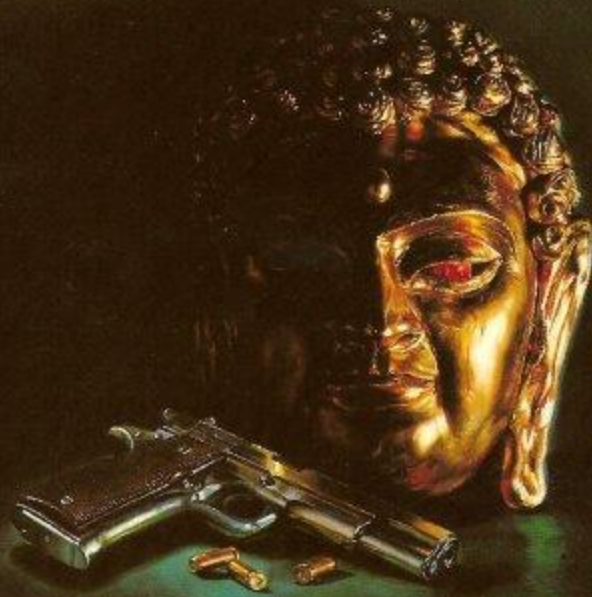
They grill up the most delicious damned hamburger on the planet.



Another must stop was visiting Hiromi Nomura, the model for lovely and popular Tysee in *The Bangkok Collection* a.k.a. *Thai Gold* a.k.a. *Nepal Gold*. And meeting her husband Gary, real neat guy. I was impressed that he's a Scout Master, and a one time Eagle Scout. Scouting was the best experience of my youth. I hope the family will join our regulars on a canoe trip.



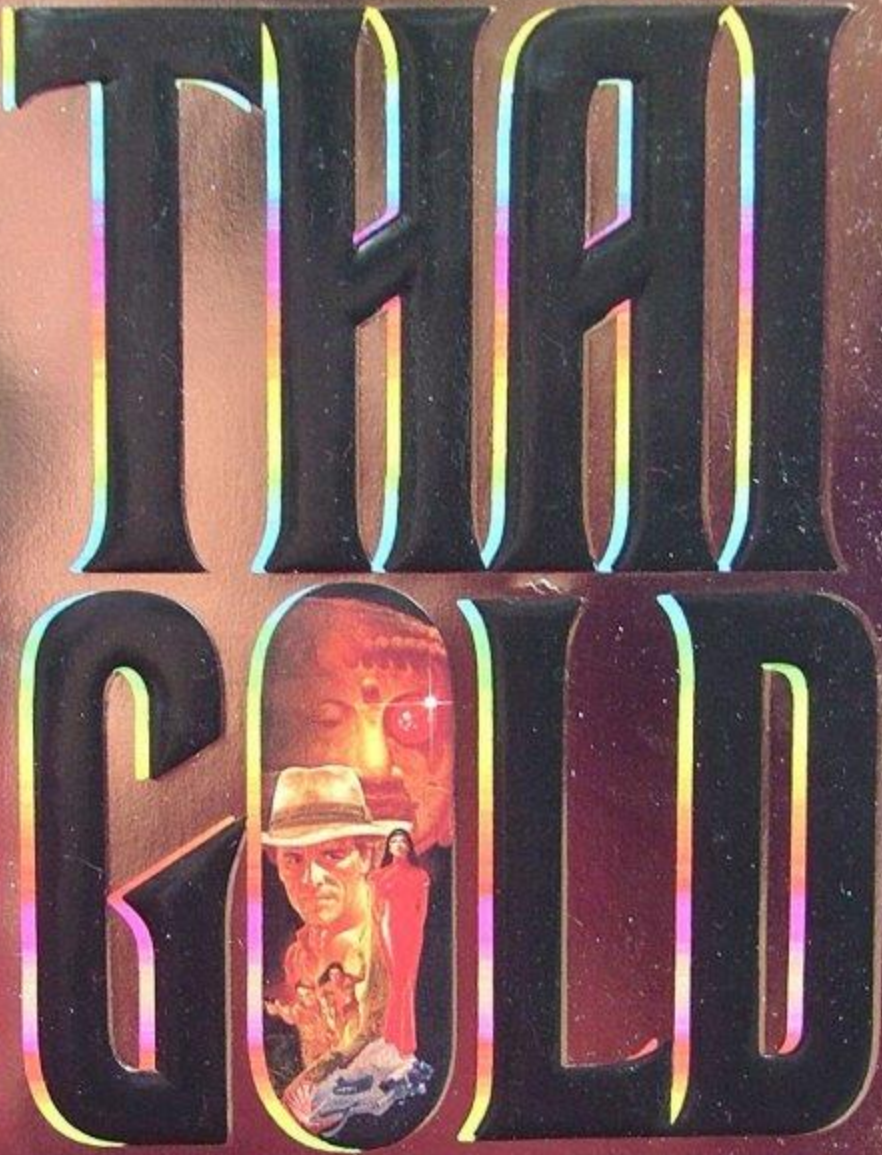
THE  
**BANGKOK**  
COLLECTION



JASON SCHOONOVER

A DASHING ADVENTURER, A SENSUOUS BEAUTY, AND  
A PERILOUS SEARCH FOR A PRICELESS TREASURE

# THAI GOLD



A NOVEL OF ADVENTURE BY

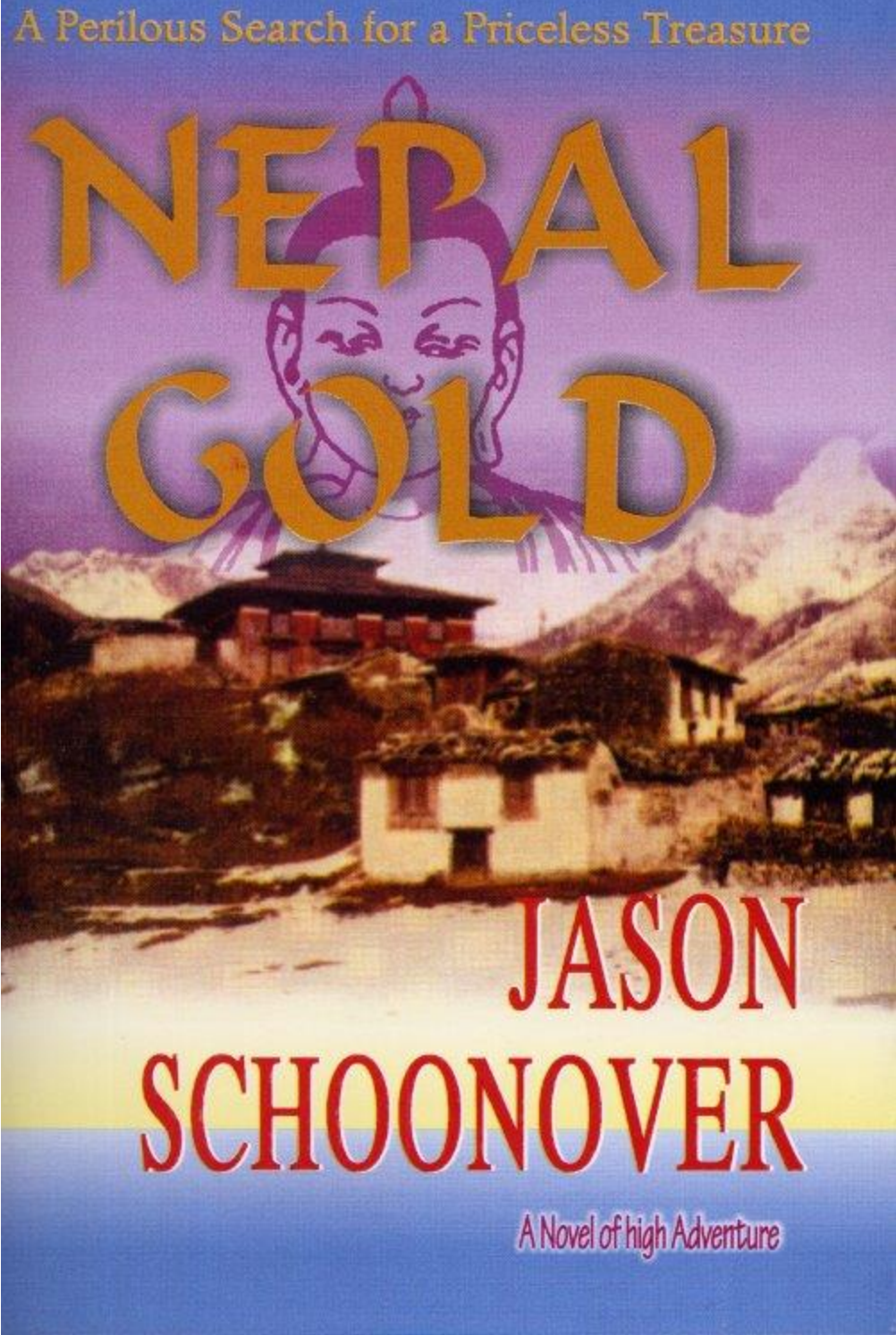
# JASON SCHOOVER

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A Perilous Search for a Priceless Treasure

# NEPAL GOLD



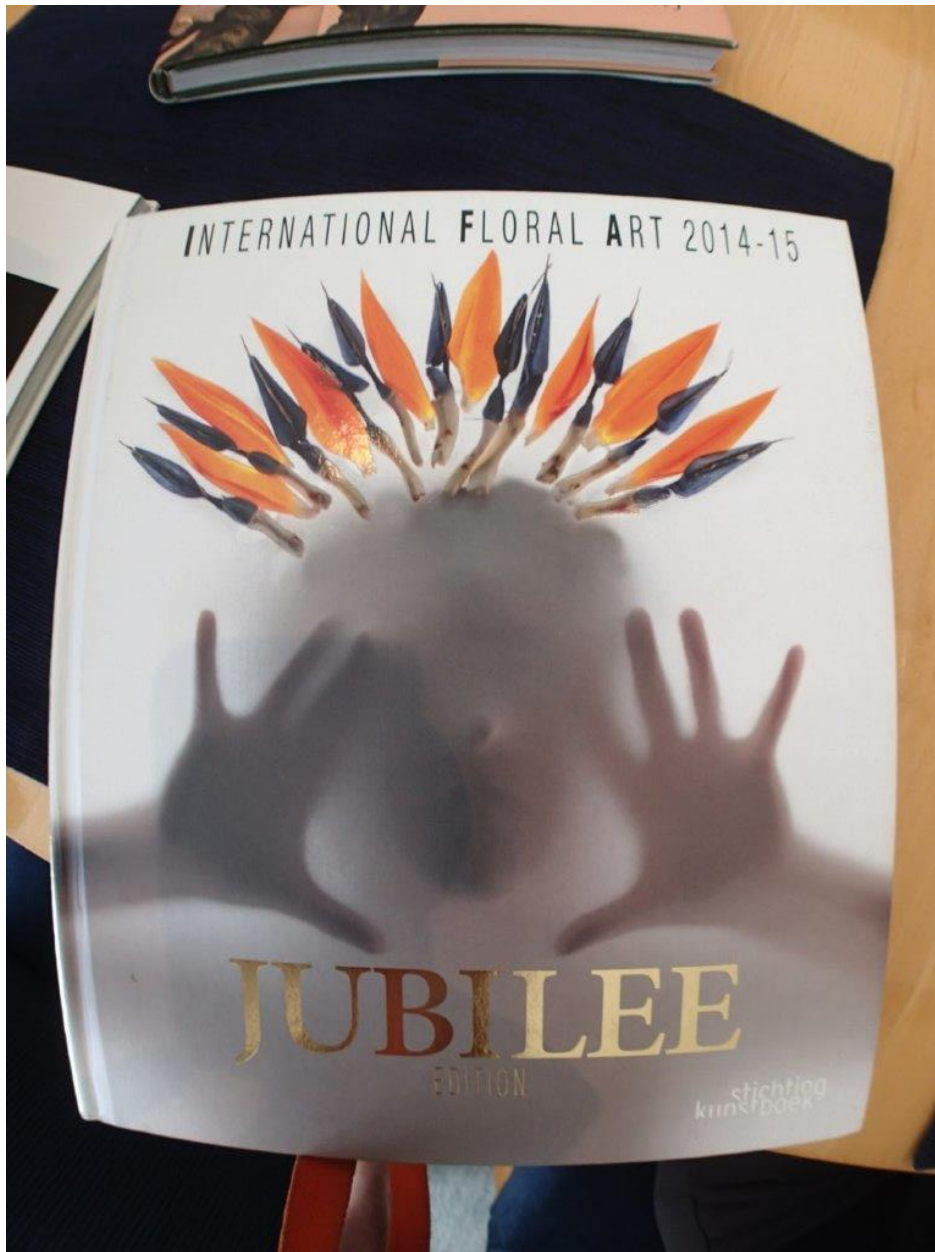
JASON  
SCHOONOVER

*A Novel of high Adventure*

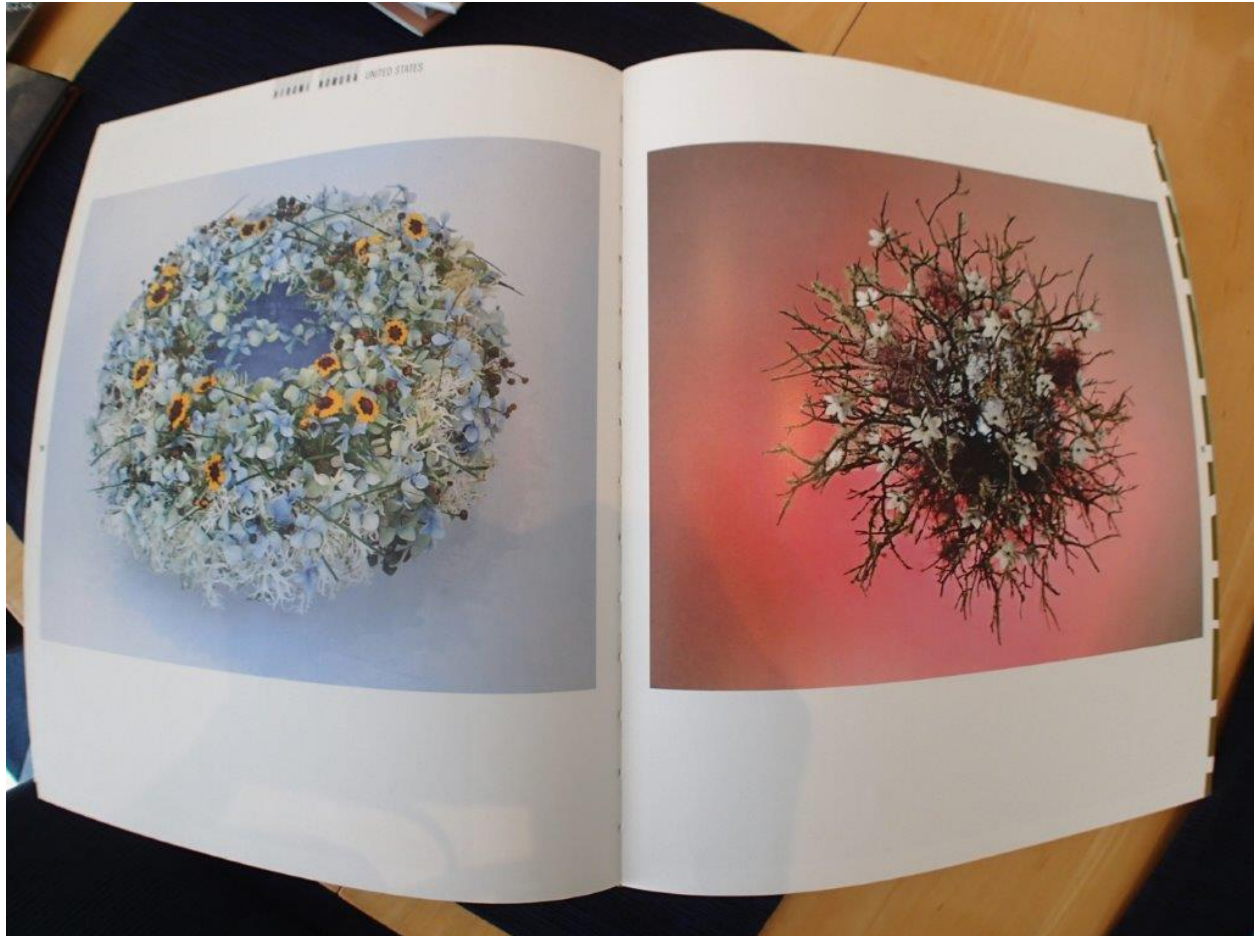
Three different names for the same book, and still on sale in paperback in India and Nepal, and on my Amazon page at \$3.99 for Kindle at [https://www.amazon.com/Jason-choonover/e/B005PO6CKI/ref=sr\\_tc\\_2\\_0?qid=1344955537&sr=1-2-ent](https://www.amazon.com/Jason-choonover/e/B005PO6CKI/ref=sr_tc_2_0?qid=1344955537&sr=1-2-ent) And that's my commercial for now.



Hiromi on our visit in 2013 (<http://www.jasonschoonover.com/2016/10/i-left-my-heart-in-san-francisco/>) ordained me an uncle to their twins Nolan and Nicole. Each Christmas I introduce them to something in the adventure field—dino bones, a Neolithic adz, and unusual geological formations, as I stimulate their dreams in an interesting direction. Naturally, I asked what their dreams are. Both have school marks so high that Trump sent them a congratulatory letter. (“We wish any other president would have signed it...”) Both are focused on medicine. Excellent. Though I suggested that following in the family business—Gary’s dad is a dentist too—is another good choice as they don’t have the lousy hours docs do.



Hiromi, originally from Tokyo, is one of America's top floral artists and brilliant. Her work is included in the annual international yearbooks.



She teaches floral design. Her website has numerous examples of her work. Beautiful stuff. <https://www.belleflorasf.com/about>



## Appendix C Company I & Company B

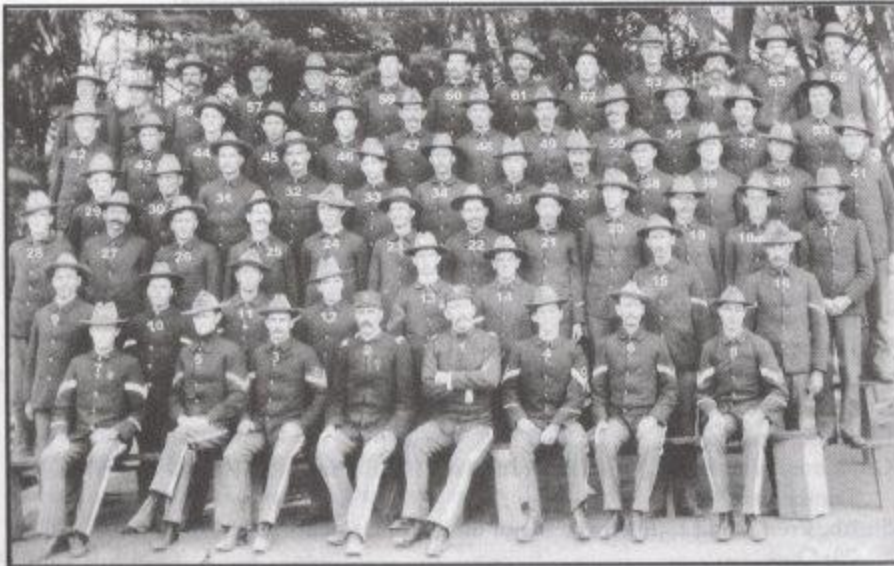


Figure 81 Home from the Philippines, Wahpeton's Company I posed for this photo at the Presidio. In a commemorative edition of the *Wahpeton Globe* published December 30, 1921, the soldiers were numbered and identified as follows:

1 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt John Russater; 2 Captain William R Purdon; 3 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt Arthur E McKean; 4 Sgt Mark J Forkner; 5 Sgt Charles W Lauder; 6 QM Sgt William D Purdon; 7 Sgt Walter O Lippet; 8 Sgt Orlin M Jones; 9 Corp Nels J Bothne; 10 Corp Harry R Kramer; 11 Corp William H Auman; 12 Corp Lorene Campbell; 13 Hosp Stwd Walter E Patton; 14 Corp Fred W Whitcomb; 15 Corp James E Griffen; 16 Corp Herbert J Brand; 17 Pvt Julius Schendel; 18 Pvt James E Carney; 19 Pvt Frank A Connolly; 20 Pvt Louis E Anderson; 21 Pvt James M Quinn; 22 Corp Fergus A Mullen; 23 Pvt Fred G Harbourn; 24 Pvt Henry P Musfeldt; 25 Pvt George J Seidlinger; 26 Pvt Jacob Anfinson; 27 Pvt Alpheus H Palmer; 28 Pvt Canute Brandrup; 29 Pvt George Gebro; 30 Pvt James Murphy; 31 Pvt John J Gabriel; 32 Pvt James D Murphy; 33 Pvt Thomas Mangan; 34 Pvt Olaf Leaf; 35 Pvt Charles H Anderson; 36 Pvt Alexander Scott; 37 NO NUMERAL 37; 38 Pvt Felix Blanchett; 39 Pvt Eddie St John; 40 Pvt William L Schoonover; 41 Pvt William J Mullen; 42 Pvt Fred H Schendel; 43 Pvt Gus Sweeney; 44 Pvt Bernard Klein; 45 Pvt Fred J Gebro; 46 Pvt Otto Paulson; 47 Pvt Fred J Debbert; 48 Pvt Charles Senkle; 49 Pvt Thomas Stafne; 50 Pvt James Pruitt; 51 Pvt Oscar J Olson; 52 Pvt Edward H McCullough; 53 Pvt Otto Boehler; 54 Pvt Benjamin Holter; 55 Pvt John P Olson; 56 Pvt Chesley T Talley; 57 Pvt Byron Woodbury; 58 Pvt Thomas Schott; 59 Pvt James Snodgrass; 60 Pvt William H Brose; 61 Pvt Charles J Adams; 62 Pvt Peter O Gunness; 63 Pvt Emil J Pepke; 64 Pvt Thomas Hudec; 65 Pvt Clarence A Mitchell; 66 Pvt Otto O Swank. **NOT PICTURED:** 1<sup>st</sup> Lt William B Aspinwall; 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Joseph A Slattery; Sgt John F Faytle; Pvt Berg Linderson; Pvt Edward C Littell. Pvt Lester R Waterman left Manila with the company, but he was left sick and died in Nagasaki

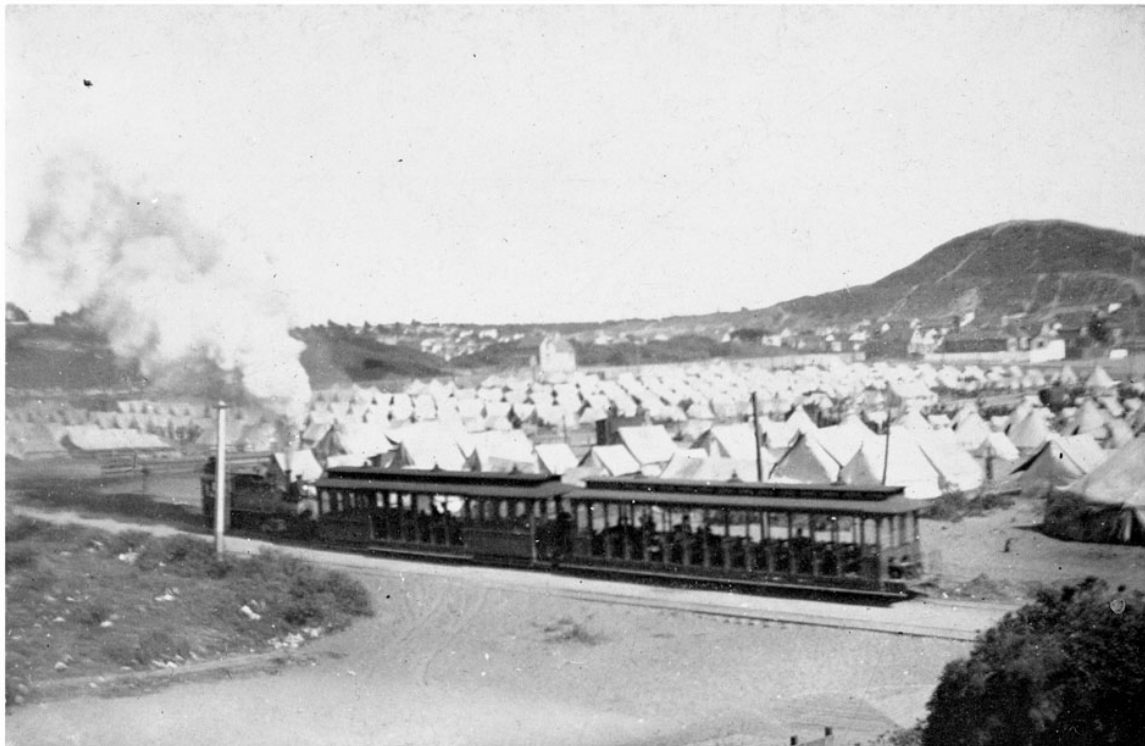
While here I researched my gggrand-dad Will(iam) L. Schoonover II (#40 above) who fought in the Spanish-American War in the Philippines. Born in 1860 and raised in Missouri, he mustered out of the 1<sup>st</sup> North Dakota Infantry, Wahpeton Co. 1, at the Presidio (military base dating to Spanish times, now a park) September 25, 1899, when this class picture was taken.



Like most volunteers, he was seriously choked when they weren't immediately sent home after winning the war against Spain and were forced to stay to fight in the Filipino insurrection. Like many volunteers, he was frequently up on charges of insubordination, drunkenness and fighting. He was released from the brig to fight in the Battle of Manila with the proviso that if he fought well, his latest charges would be dropped. They were.



His producer/actor/playwright/impresario son, Wm. Leonard III (my great-grand-dad), who ran a tent show up and down the Midwest from Missouri 1906-1932, looks very much like him.



Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, PAM Negatives Collection, GOGA 35256.0737

Will II trained at Camp Merritt, outside of the Presidio, with Lone Mountain in the background.



With help from generous staff at the Presidio's Visitor Center, I was able to nail down the locations.

Westward  
From  
New  
Amsterdam  
*The Schoonover Epic:*

**Thirteen Generations: One Branch,  
One Tree, One Forest**



**by Jason Schoonover with extended  
families by Mary Frances Schoonover**

And added it to the fat and continuously growing genealogical book I sell for \$28US (DVD or Dropbox) which traces the Schoonovers/Van Schoonhovens back to the Netherlands and our earliest ancestors who arrived in New York a.k.a. New Amsterdam in the early 1600s. Some 13 generations. Some damned interesting ancestors back there.



We stayed, like the last time in 2013, with Su's dear old friend Fumiyo Noguchi in Tiburon, a well off enclave on the north side of Golden Gate Bridge in Marin(ated) country. They became close in the early 1980s when Su, fresh from a year nursing in Saudi Arabia, took off a year to teach English in Osaka.



Fumiyo now lives just 2.5 miles from Robin William's old 6,500 sq-ft, \$5,000,000 place. The tunnel leading to the north side of Golden Gate Bridge is now named after him. The whole world misses him.



California is called The Golden State and here's why: it's blanketed in dead, yellow grass. Without the spin on the nickname, it would be accurately named The Parched, or Dry, State. It is beautiful—but it's also a tinderbox. On our third night I awoke to smoke.





Alarmed, I checked out Fumiyo's condo. Nothing. Then I opened the door—and the smoke was thick. Bordering Marin County on the north is Napa and Sonoma—and they were ablaze. At this writing (Oct 23) 42 have died and 8,400 buildings were torched—a record for wildfire-prone California—and they're still burning. We were having a real American experience on this road trip: A massacre. And now wildfires....



Heading towards Sacramento we skirted the blackened south end of the wine country fires. We were to Napa and Sonoma in 2013 and remember how beautiful the area was.



Naturally, The Dragon Lady dragged me against my will into an old gold rush era saloon in Nevada City, CA, that Paladin would have felt at home in (referencing *Have Gun, Will Travel* for you kiddies under 50.) Nevada, incidentally, means snow covered.



Donner Lake from Donner Pass, site of one of the most tragic chapters during covered wagon days. 87 tardy pioneers, many children, were halted by snow and the daunting wall of the pass, and forced to spend the brutal winter of 1846-7 at the far end of the lake. 48 survived. The Donner Party became the Dinner Party as they were forced to dine on their dead.



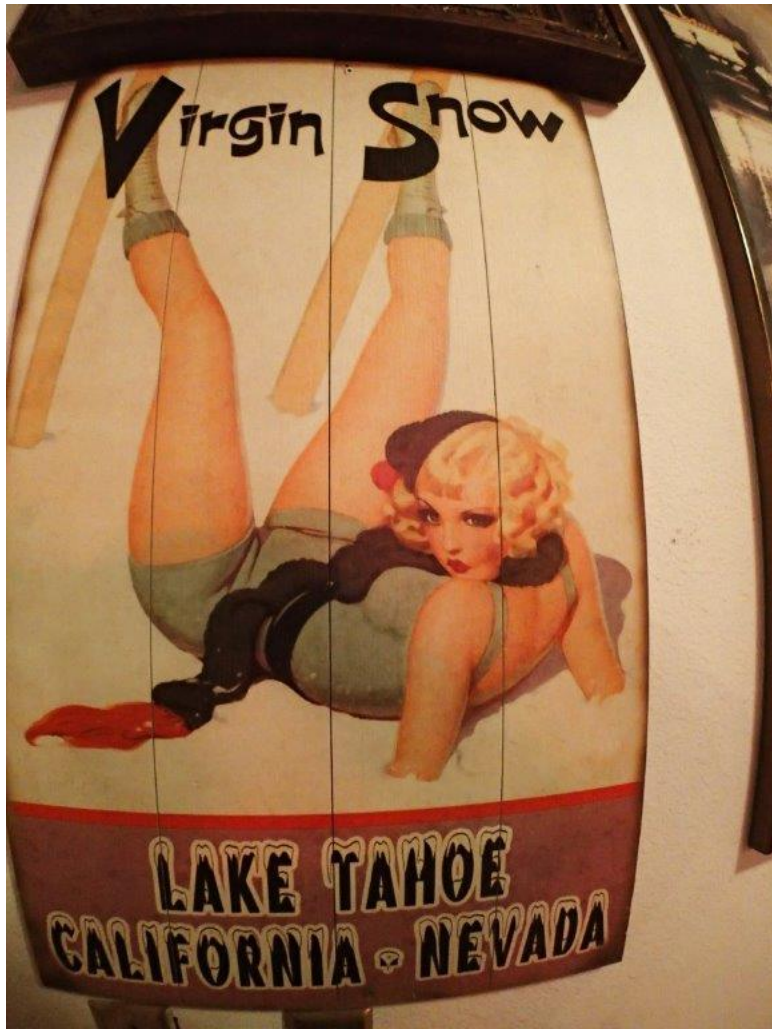
The pass, being solid granite and very steep, was a very tough nut to crack. I've been wanting to visit this site for decades, since I read a book about it.



Twenty-two feet—the height of this monument—marks the snow level that terrible winter. The site of one of the makeshift cabins was next to where I'm standing shooting this picture. There's an excellent Visitors Center.



A couple hundred feet away is the site of the Murphy cabin, this boulder forming a wall and the fireplace. The plaque lists the names of the perished and survivors. That spring a horrified relief party lobbed the dead into a big hole dug in the cabin floor, fired the structure, then covered the remains. Happily, women and children survived more often than the men.







We followed 395—one of the most scenic routes in the US—down the east side of the Sierra Nevada. Dormant volcanoes were common, especially at the south end.



No Yank road trip would be complete without cruisin' down Route 66! Right?



And back to Lost Vegas, locals still hurting from the massacre though you'd never know it from the crowds along Las Vegas Boulevard back in full party mode. Marijuana is legal in Nevada and you can smell it along the strip more often than not. The stuff here reeks like a fart from a gigantic dead skunk. I'd sooner not smell it, another form of air pollution to me.



We stayed several days more with Lenny and Briane. Their names are gender confusing. Lenny is the Bride of Scharfenstein. Briane is the doctor, and that is what he is, if very happily and laid back retired. The name is actually Scharfstein, but I have to have my fun. Interestingly enough, my grand-father Wm. Lenis Schoonover and his grand-parents farmed together in the Ridgedale area of Saskatchewan bordering on an Eastern European Jewish enclave called Eden Bridge. Being Jewish, they were too smart to stay farming and they're all zillionaire biz people or lawyers or doctors like Briane now.



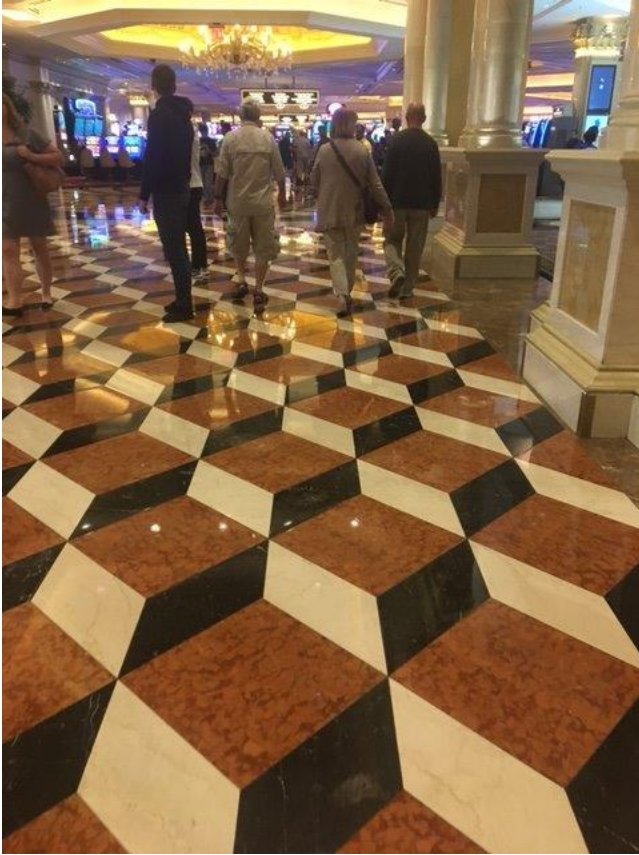
Interestingly enough, the male family resemblance carried down another generation. My grandparents circa 1950 when he was about that age, 50. Hilda was a teacher, from Huntsville, Ont.



We treated our hosts to Bellagio's weekend buffet, a luxurious smorgasbord of oysters Rockefeller, caviar, Dungeness and snow crab, quail, etc—and all you can eat. This is Su near the end of the feast, loading up on dessert. The plane flew lopsided on the way home.



Bellagios is my favorite complex, hands down. Classy joint. Though gambling we have absolutely no interest in, zilch.



Cool floor at the Venetian.



In her glory. Su must have \$40,000 worth of clothes, and more shoes than Imelda. She's the best dressed broad I know.





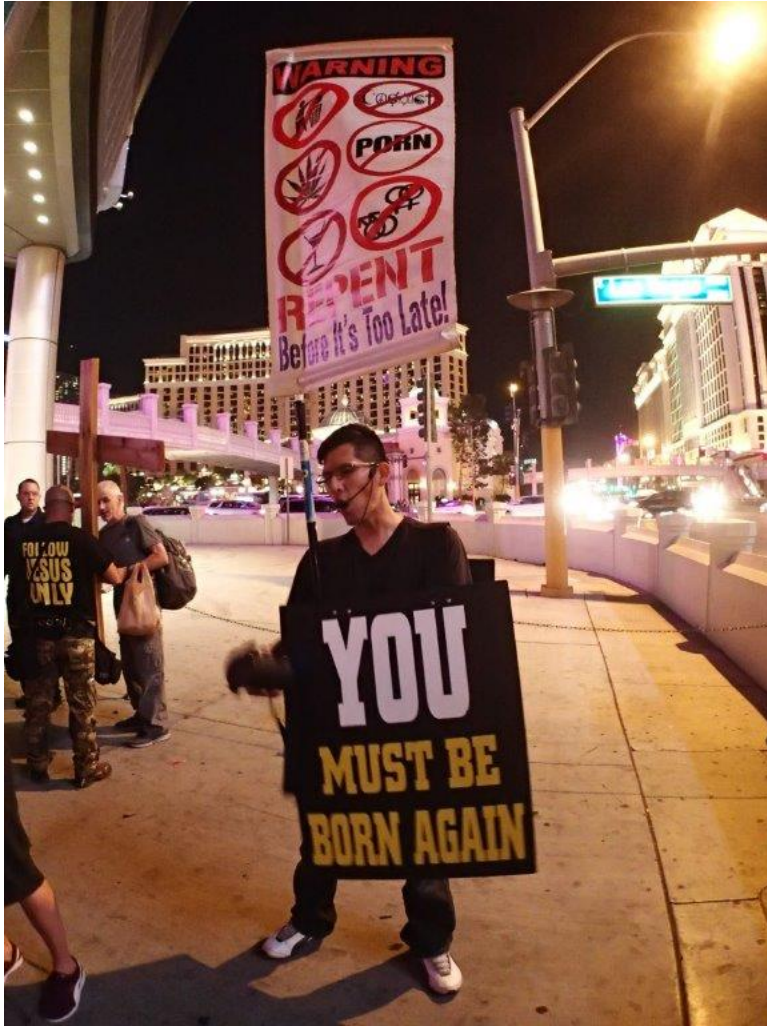
With Ringo in town, we had to go to Cirque du Soleil's *Love*. I'd never been to one before.



And it absolutely blew my mind. I never imagined a show could be so...incredible. Astonishing. We're both big Beatles fans.



I loathed the old grubby, sleazy Vegas but the latest reincarnation is an adult Disneyland, with a never ending parade of attractions, including venues like the Mob Museum. Reminds me that O.J. was released the day, appropriately, of the massacre, and he wasted no time banging a Nicole look-a-like hooker, to believe media. He headed straight back to Vegas. Creepy knowing we were in the same town as that murderer.



Still, people nudge and wink about, “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas,” and refer to it as Sin City but they’re fooling themselves. If you want blue ribbon sin, go to Thailand’s Pattaya or the Philippine’s Angeles City. Sin in Vegas today is vanilla, despite what this fruitcake fanatic believes. There’s mobile billboards driving along the Strip advertising hookers but there’s hookers everywhere in the world. And there was a “nun” with her boobs bouncing out of her habit on Fremont Street. Hallelujah. Big deal.



This is about as sinful as it gets. The lack of health care is a big issue in the US and so I was surprised to see a nurse set up on Fremont administering to the sick. The Dragon Lady is a nurse too, of course, but now that she's retired I miss seeing her dressed like this before heading to the ICU. At least that's where she always said she was going.



Vegas even has a chocolate factory. You don't get more wholesome than that.



There's also major outdoor activities. Nearby is Red Rock Canyon in the Mojave Desert.



I was surprised to learn that the geology of the area stretches back from the Cretaceous 65 million years ago to the Cambrian explosion of multi-cellular life half a billion years ago. Trilobites are even found in the desert east of the city and they were wiped out in the Permian extinction 252,000,000 years ago. There's an excellent outdoor Visitor's Center.



Close friends of the Scharfensteins, Bob and Kim Levin, generously guided us on a couple of great hikes. Both were right up there with Moab and Bryce Canyon. The lady in red is actually Toronto's Judy Grinton. Her husband Gary, a retired homicide detective, had great stories.





You can see Vegas on the horizon, just left of center.



There's even jazz—and at an incredible price. The cost of admission for Tuesday jazz night at Larry Flynt's Hustler Club is only \$5 and the ticket comps you a glass of champagne or a cocktail. Try and get out of a New York jazz joint for under fifty bucks. Ain't gonna happen. (You can see the Mandalay Bay out the big patio door on the left.)



The raunchiest thing at the Hustler nightclub is the symbol on the can door. (Downstairs are the strippers.)



More humor than raunch. Great jazz. A great end to a great road trip.



And talking about ends, this is...The End(s).

