

Gregger

Loveland Pass, CO

DENVER, SAN DIEGO & DALLAS



San Diego Wild Animal Park



Rogère



"X"



Flower Mound, TX



Worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness.



Denver (8/21 ~ 8/25)

I took a trip when I had no money. It irked my Mom and left me depressed.



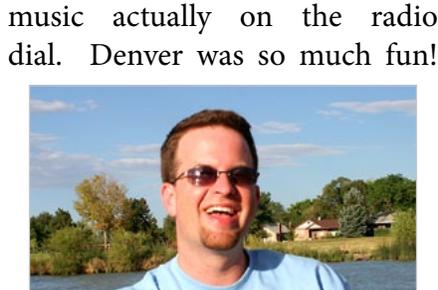
I thought Denver would be the worst part of my trip, but it was the best. In a foreign land with an unknown phone number, one of Greg's female friends called me and we went for a night on the town while he worked. I met a woman I got along with so well, I asked to see her again. She seemed interested too, but did not follow through. The second day there, we went waterskiing on a lake with some of Greg's friends. Bashir, Greg's Libyan housemate, was most adventurous with those waterskis. Paul drove us around in his boat. This man was amazing: he gave all his time and his boat so the rest of us could have fun waterskiing. I found out he runs a ministry for the homeless too, and after 4 years of hard work, was able to guide the leader

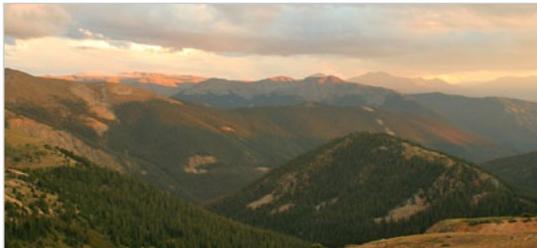
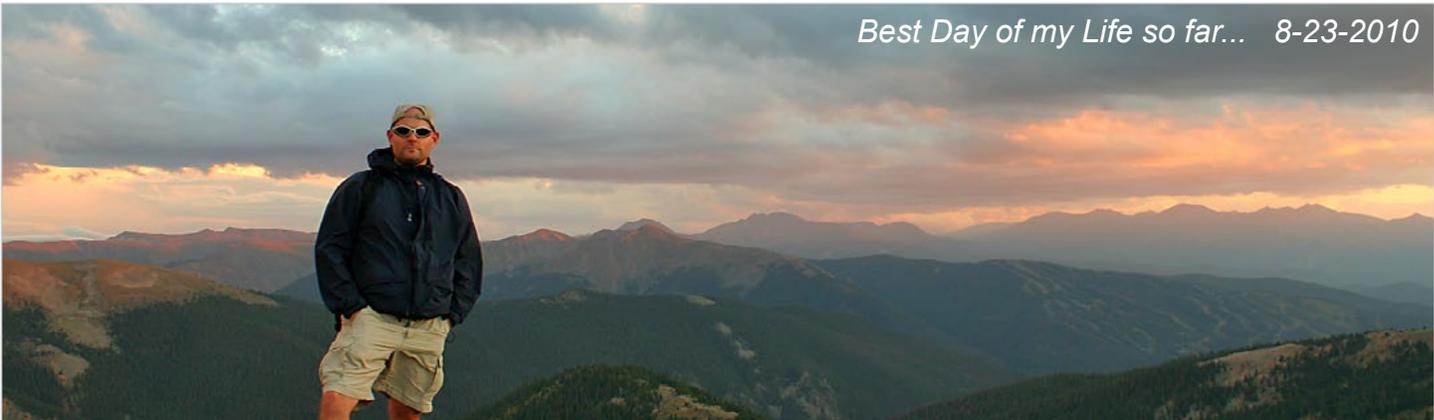


of a homeless gang to Christ and into his own Church. After waterskiing, some of us went to dinner. There a woman told me of her personal involvement with the family of Rachel Scott, a Christian teenager, who had been killed in the Columbine shootings of 1999. This teen was encouraging a friend and was the first to be shot. Wounded, on the ground, the killer pulled

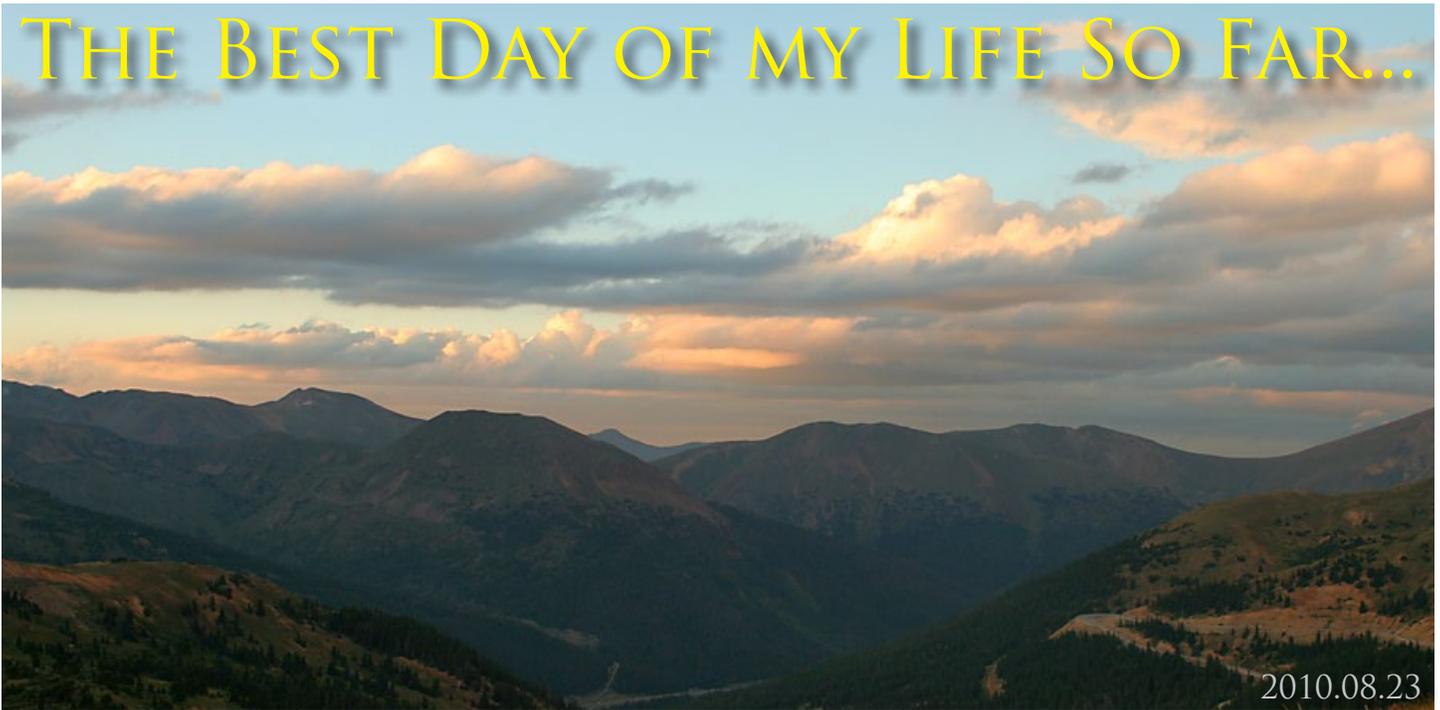


her head up by her hair and said, "Do you still believe in God now?" And when she said she did, she was shot dead. Rachel's Challenge was formed in her name to raise awareness about bullying. Greg's friends were friendly and accommodating. Duct Man Doug gave me a ride back to the airport when I left. We listened to K-Love every day: Contemporary Christian





THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE SO FAR..



As I have mentioned, Denver was the best part of my trip. I didn't expect it to be, because Greg was working almost every day I was in town. But getting a cell call from a friend of his inviting me out on the town started things off just right. Greg's friends were just wonderful to me, really welcoming me into their group. After the weekend, they did their thing and went to work. And I took up the duties of doing whatever Greg desired. I fixed his TV remote, mowed his lawn, fixed his washing machine, and fixed his GPS just out of thankfulness that he had paid my way to get there. These things were fun, but I did not know what was in store the Monday Greg drove Bashir and I to Loveland Pass, CO. At elevation 12,000' it was hard for me, an obese man, to catch my breath, but they insisted I hike up just a little bit higher. The sun was setting fast, or so I thought, so I told them to go ahead and enjoy the sunset from a higher location.

I looked around me, soaking it all in. Then I started praising God, worshiping His Name. How He could take a poor man and put him on a mountain like that just amazed me. Days before I was depressed, I had just moved, I didn't even want to go to Denver anymore. I praised His Name. I worshiped out loud. I actually thanked Jesus, personally, for His hard work on the cross dying for me, just so I could see those mountains and that sunset and enjoy it, free though a broken man.

After a while, I grew interested in following Greg up that peak. I got started, step after step, breath howling as I tried to catch my air. It wasn't the steepest hike but

I made it. And I was amply rewarded. I could see so much better just that little bit higher. I looked over all these huge mountains, poking into the sun-drenched orange and red clouds. I just worshiped and worshiped God, my Creator. It was so wonderful seeing those sights and knowing the same God who gets me through life got me up there to see them. I kneeled down. I wanted to build an altar, like Abraham did. Abraham built an altar and worshiped God wherever he went. I worshipped God with a whisper, but my words were so loud. I felt like it was the first time for me: the first time I've ever really worshiped God.

After a while I noticed the cold wind reminding me of the days of my salvation. I enjoy the cold, cold, wind that made my hands feel numb. I climbed back down.

We drove home and another rewarding aspect of the day took place. Bashir, a Muslim who was fasting for the month of Ramadan, told us about his faith. This was another eye opening experience as I learned, first hand, just how closely Islam and Christianity are related. It confirmed my thoughts that this world is God's, and He uses different faiths to lead the world in ways He likes.

My first day in Denver was the best day of my life: I almost got a date in a foreign city. The second day was better than the first. And then the third day was even better than the second. I worshiped God up on the mountains in the sunset, served Greg in enjoyable ways, and learned more to tolerate other faiths. Excellent.



I took photos of Greg and the rich mall he works at until I found out they almost called security on me.



On Tuesday, after my best day, Greg drove us to Red Rocks (left) and Lookout Mountain, a 7,500' peak. Cyclists gathered to make the long decent down windy roads at sunset. Driving up to Lookout Mountain, we listened to K-Love (Christian Radio). One song made me cry out loud at God's goodness. We praised God together at sunset.



Tuesday was the first day, after three best days in a row, that didn't outdo the previous. I prayed Greg and I would worship God, and we did! We worshiped as the sun went down. Yet I felt self-conscious, not God-focused: a let down. Wednesday we ate at the Village Inn, as I did in Alaska.



San Diego (8/25 ~ 8/29) - After seeing Greg, I visited his best friend, Roger. Roger is a very gentle person. On Thursday, he took me to Mount Soledad in La Jolla, a high point in San Diego. Besides taking pictures, we ventured down a little washed out path down the mountain. It was moderately dangerous, but we had fun



anyway. Roger took me to Old San Diego for lunch. It was there that I proposed and he accepted to be my financial coach, since he is good with money. Later, he showed me this miniature helicopter he'd bought. I also met Jack, his misbehaved cat. Jack is so adorable, I'd take him home. During my trip, I demonstrated how to train their cat by firmly saying, "No" when he begs, and spraying him with a spritzer bottle if he doesn't obey. I really enjoyed Roger's landlord, Rokai, a kind-hearted man from Afghanistan.





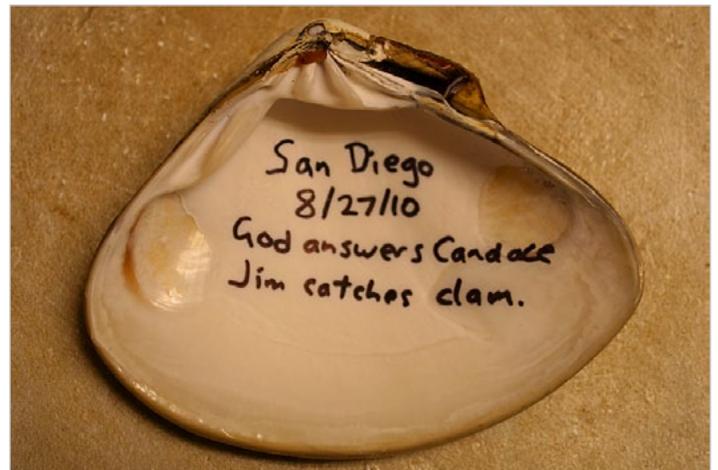
So, even though this trip was not about them, I want to plug the Mormons because I love them. Above is a photo of the San Diego Mormon Temple. Most Mormon Temples employ the same style throughout America with a gold statue of the angel Moroni on top of the steeple. To the right is a photo of a Mormon Ward, which would be called a Church. The Mormon Wards, the Catholic Churches, in fact almost everything in San Deigo was built with red tile roofs. This uniformity left San Diego landscape one big sea of red. This Mormon Ward is right around the corner from where Roger lives. Anyway, I love me some Mormons. These photos are included mainly for Steve & Ginger, who hosted me in Alaska. I visited their Ward and came out of that experience with a more open mind.



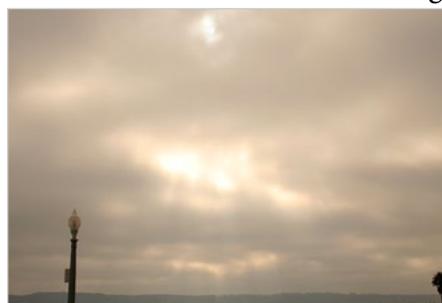
After a day of touring, I went to Roger's Bible Study at Horizon Christian Fellowship. I had read a book on their Pastor, Mike MacIntosh, that Roger gave me. It was something else to actually be standing on their Church property! I took photos while Roger practiced his guitar and caught this guy walking through the property with a tattoo of hell on his arm. And then he was in our Bible Study! He was very kind and gentle too. I took photos of Roger leading worship: his own personal paparazzi. I took over 50 photos and only a few turned out good. I met all Roger's friends, who are mainly women, including Candace (below) who has both donated to Etoonin' and forgiven me sins before I even met her. Most of my time, Roger and I hung out with Candace and Audrey, another guitarist.

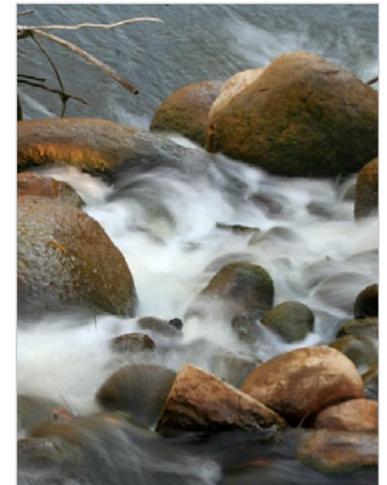


Roger, Jim & Candace



Friday, we went to Coronado beach. It was amazing: military jets and helicopters kept flying overhead to land at the nearby military base. First order of business was to go swimming. Only Candace was willing. The water was 60°: much warmer than Salisbury Beach, MA temps of 55°. After swimming a while, Candace asked me to dig for clams. She was adamant about me catching a big clam. She prayed over and over that God would let me catch a big clam. I dug and dug, but got nothing. To be honest, I didn't even want a clam! We moved on to boogie boarding, playing frisbee and other things. I really enjoyed teaching Candace how to throw a frisbee. I felt I learned a lot about how to encourage, with patience, a woman. After the last throw, we swam again to clean off. Candace complained about something and it seemed we might go back in. But for some reason, we stayed put. After a wave I stepped on something and picked it up: it was the biggest clam we'd caught all day! Prayer answered. So we took it back to Roger's, cut out the guts, cleaned it up, and now each one of us holds one half of the best souvenir God has ever given me. Each bears the inscription above. I have many problems relating to women, but on this day I felt just like a kid again, innocent and clean: no emotional attachment, no baggage, just good clean fun with Candace.





Saturday we did something Roger wanted to do: the Wild Animal Park. Candace continued to pray about things. I noticed she asked for a lot in her prayers, but her success rate was at least 50%. We took a tour of the Wild Animal Park (see photos next page) to see all kinds of African animals. Afterward, we met with Audrey at the Cheesecake Factory for dinner. The girls treated the guys because Roger had BBQ'ed for them yesterday. I posted this on Facebook, the good treatment the ladies were giving me. In my hometown, women ignore me. It felt good having two women vouch for me and post encouraging things on my statuses. The women in Boston deserted me as I continued to go bankrupt. No woman contacts me on a weekly, or even monthly basis. However, we had a good dinner and then toured the nearby mall. I felt like I was on a double date in high school, trolling around the mall. I snuck into Bing Crosby's ultra fancy jazz bar, ordered two glasses of water, used the bathroom, enjoyed the music, and then left without paying a dime. The next day we went to Horizon Christian Fellowship for Church. And finally we went to Denny's with the ladies. Driving me to the airport, Roger took me to Mission Beach and we talked about our favorite subject: women. I really enjoyed the smooth flow of San Diego. Denver had the worship of God; San Diego had the women. Everywhere we went, Roger, Candace and I sang along to worship tunes.

Parrot



Ostrich



King of the Jungle
The Lion



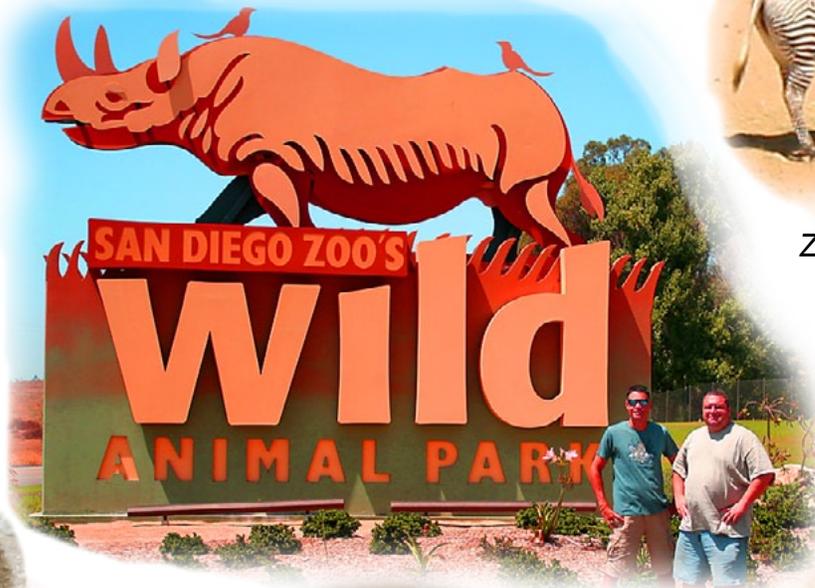
Cheetah



Zebra



Antelope



Humans



Giraffe



Meerkat



Gorilla



Rhino

Elephants





FOR HE IS THE LIVING GOD...





AND HE ENDURES FOREVER.

DANIEL 6:26

God is good and worthy of praise. He is faithful, and true. He lifts up my soul. I am declaring bankruptcy yet went on this trip. I borrowed money from friends at each stop to get through. I left Boston horribly depressed that I had done such a thing: planned a trip with no spending money. But two days later I had the best day of my life: ever, period. There is none more magnificent than the Lord. The Lord reigns forever.

The Lord shows me tremendous kindness. My friends pay for me to fly all over the country. They don't begrudge me either, but we enjoy our presence together, worshipping the same Lord. We climb atop the mountains and praise His Name. We sing to Him in our cars. We share and serve each other. My friends don't shame me because I am poor, but rejoice in my presence. All this is made possible through the beautiful love of our Savior, Jesus Christ, from whom all good things flow.

I praise His mighty Name forever. The wisdom of the Lord is foolishness to those who are perishing, but I am not among their count. I have the power of the God of the universe working for me for no other reason than the fact that He loves me. On that mountain I knew for sure, that God, Jesus Christ, died for me so I could have the blessing of knowing Him, of being brought from despair to worship in two days. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, died for our sins and gives us eternal life, abundant life, a wonderful life that starts here right on this planet. Nothing can destroy what God is doing for us, and He is doing amazing things. Drop your fears, pick up the cross! This God I know is dying to work for you too: anything you ask He will give in faith. He gave his aching, tired, beaten body for you, why not all else too?

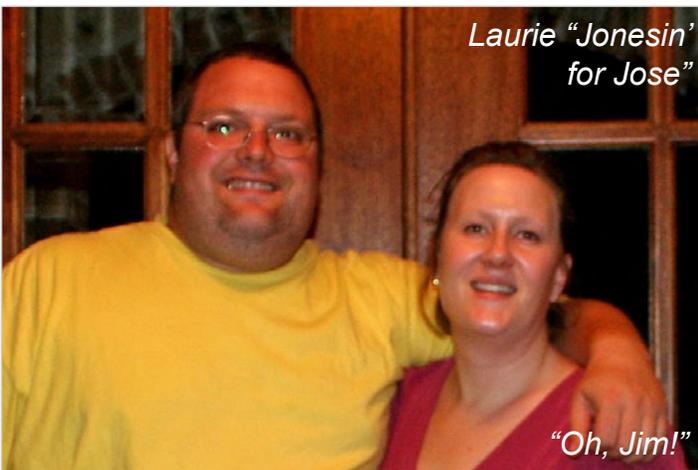
This world is the Lord's, and all that is in it. Why do you observe the things that happen in it and not see the one who created it? No matter where in your walk of faith, God is always beckoning you to something greater. He is more powerful than your petty differences with others. How many times did you have to be the bigger person? God rewards your efforts to live a holy life. Keep on loving one another. You will not lose your prize.

We grow stagnant in our Bible Studies and seeing the same people over and over. But absence makes the heart grow fonder. Let us not tire of loving those in our sphere of influence. Let us hold others in higher esteem than ourselves, and overlook all types of sin. Love is the thing that conquers all, and it must be applied over a long period of time. God is long suffering for us. Let us be patient with our brothers and sisters who struggle. Let us reach out a hand to help one more time. Please.

I see the good, mighty works of God and return to normal life and it makes me cry. Who is happy to leave these mountain top experiences to walk back down into the valley. But from the mountain we see the next peak, we chart our course. In this walk of life, we are God to each other in how we love. God doesn't hand a person a million bucks, He brings them a dinner from a friend on their first day in their new apartment. It is a struggle, but we can't give up. God is there. He does care. Wait for the reinforcements. God will not let you down no matter how you suffer, from the psychological twists of a friend's betrayal to a physical disease. God is with you, drawing you out of this prison that is a life without Christ. And I can tell you: there is no better thing than God. Who compares to the Lord? There is none.



Dallas (8/29 ~ 9/5) - After all this high speed, intense travel, I spent a week in Dallas, visiting the “X”, my friend from college. This was the “working” part of my vacation, as I crafted Etoonin’ during the day and hung out with X at night. He is nicknamed the “X” because he was an ex-math major, and ex-engineering major. X and I went to visit Laurie one night, another college friend. This was a fun evening and I really like her husband, Manny, whom I have only met twice. Laurie lived in my suite in college and was always aghast at my antics (I was crazy back then too). I remember how I had chocolate chips and corn muffin mix, so I made chocolate chip corn muffins and handed them out to all my suitemates. Laurie could not believe it and the words “Oh Jim!” became her mantra. Monday, X and I climbed “The Flower Mound” after which his town is named. It was a whole 50 vertical feet of raw power that we conquered. Jeremy, who called me atop the Rockies, also called the same day I summited Flower Mound. I thought it only befitting. We watched New Orleans folk catchin’ gators on TV. One guy said, “Shoo’ im, shoo’ im,” each time they shot an alligator. On Tuesday, X took me to Razzoo’s Cajun Cafe where we ate Alligator Tail.



Laurie “Jonesin’ for Jose”

“Oh, Jim!”



Dinner at Laurie’s



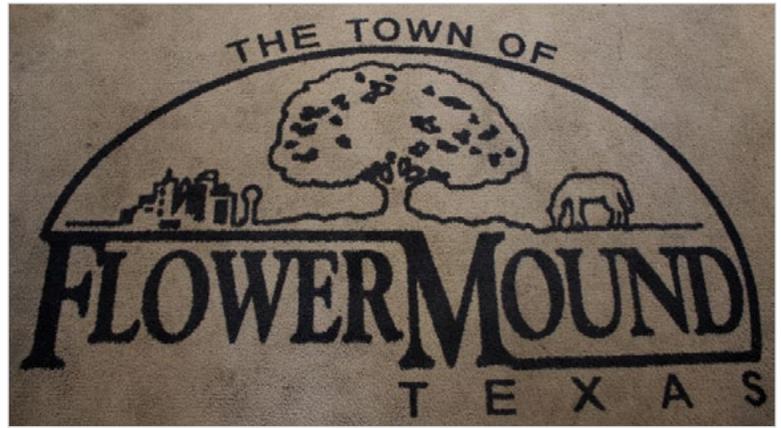
“X”



Manny



Etoonin’ Field Office



X treated me to dinners and movies and all the things I could not afford because I had no money. However, on Friday, my check came in. Friday was an eventful day because X's toilet broke (pictured above). The bolts connecting the tank to the toilet broke. So X and I did some investigative research and determined what to buy from the hardware store. It was a fun team work type project. We screwed the new parts together and flushed the toilet. Water went everywhere! But thank God, after we tightened everything tighter and reassembled the toilet, it worked fine. We performed the flush test. "Floosh it, floosh it," I said. "Shoo' im, shoo' im!" It became our joke the rest of our time together. We finished with plenty of time to watch the last fireworks display of the year on Lake Grapevine. And finally, I treated X to IHOP. Now I have been to Village Inn in Denver, Denny's in San Diego, and IHOP in Dallas. I always ordered chocolate chip pancakes; IHOP had the best. Most of my time with X, I talked about God a lot. God is my favorite person. X said he would only believe in God if Jesus was in his eggs. So I asked the waitress to put some Jesus in his eggs. IHOP could not comply. X really liked the eggs though. Saturday I really started to feel nervous about being plunged back into life at home. Life is good at home, but very painful too. In the afternoon we went to the community pool. X barely even wanted to go. We had underwater swimming contests. I made X go down both water slides. I did huge leaping jumps off the diving board. X really enjoyed it. In the evening, X paid \$10 to get us into a Blues Festival, featuring Robert Cray. At first it was loud, crowded and noisy. I really enjoyed the sunset, and the way the field and vendors looked as light was still in the sky. But then I had a meltdown. I had to go back to my chaotic, psychotic, bankrupt, unaccompanied, hard life back home the next day. X was very gentle and patient, talking me through it. We spoke deeply for what seemed like an hour, then it was back to business. Robert Cray started playing. X loves his guitar style, and was treated to many guitar solos. Robert mentioned that he wanted a fajita in the beginning, and then continued to joke about fajitas throughout the show. He would replace words in his songs with the word "fajita". So I, looking for an opportunity for X to believe, prayed that we could deliver Robert Cray a fajita. The concert ended with a splendid array of songs, all with two guitar solos each. We walked over to the fajita stand, but they were sold out of fajitas. So I sang to X, "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you can get what you need." Later, at home, I invited myself back to TeXas next year. I sang, "What a friend we have in TeeeeeXas, all the freaks that we can bare." The week was tough, but during the weekend I felt connected to X and enjoyed his company. What a friend I have in X.

TEXAS



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Etoonin' thanks: God, Dad (for \$100 towards Denver), Mom (for reluctantly loaning me \$250), Gregger (paid \$100 towards flight, loaned me \$100, drove, bought meals, a good bed, worked hard but provided a good time), Denver singles (hosted me in town, took me waterskiing), Duct Man Doug (ride to Denver airport), Roger (paid \$75 towards flight, loaned me \$100, drove, bought meals, cooked for us, listened and loved), Candace and Audrey (provided true sisterly love & a meal), Candace (prayed I'd catch a clam, my best souvenir ever), X (paid \$75 towards flight, paid for all necessities, drove, bought meals, bought groceries, listened and loved), Laurie (hosted dinner despite flying next day 8am), Peter Shanian (rides to/from airport), Janine Gauntt (who watched my cat), Ryan Landon (sold me camera on credit for \$200) and everyone else. May God repay you your kindness to me.

Below is the artwork of the brother of the man who sent me to Alaska, Joe from the Library (as he is known). Joe wanted me to pass along David's art and plug his blog. Joe's brother is a very talented artist. I hope you will take the time to look at his art, and if you feel interested, and since he's a really good artist, maybe you'll consider contacting David and perhaps buying a piece. Click on any area of the artwork to be directed to his blog.

www.davidmagdalenski.blogspot.com

