

My First Trip to Canada

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(a diary)

by MANUEL RAMIREZ ARVIZU

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**Translated from Spanish by
María del Rocío Martínez
Recorded by Francesco Chilelli**

With love and respect to my father Luis Ramirez Alvarado†

To my Canadian friends Allen, Frances, and Lydia. I am grateful for their support during my first trip to that country, in which I could learn about their traditions, customs and the way people live. All that new knowledge helped me to have a better appreciation of my culture and values.

To Alana Mary, Kurk, Jeremy, Sandra, and Doug. On living with them I could experience a Canadian and American way of life.

To Markus Ruths, a friend I met during this trip.

To my family and friends.

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I am grateful to God for giving me the opportunity to travel to Canada, a beautiful country, where I could learn more about the English language and the Canadian culture. Also for the possibility to get to know different ways of thinking and emotions, and share them with people who live in a context that was new to me.

I would like to thank my family for their unconditional support and company in every stage of my life.

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To my friends for their unconditional help.

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A TRIP TO CANADA

PROLOGUE

MEXICO CITY, 2004

Hi! How Are You Doing?

I would like to share with you some anecdotes of my first trip to Canada. I will also explain what made that trip possible and describe the experience I acquired out of those incredible moments. The purpose of this book is to describe the situations I went through during my first trip to Canada, including all the extraordinary circumstances connected with it.

First of all, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Manuel Ramírez Arvizu and I am a high school teacher of English at the Colegio de Ciencias y Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. I have worked there for seven years.

This book is a tribute to my Canadian friends who encouraged me to visit them without knowing if this was possible given my tight financial situation back in 1988.



I would like to begin this diary by introducing my friends Allen -pronounced like [Alan]-, his wife Frances [Francis], and Lydia, Allen's mother. I met them in the Museo Nacional de Antropología (the National Museum of Anthropology) in Mexico City in 1984. At that time, I was studying English at the English World Institute. I

had a scholarship that granted a coverage of 50% by CREA (Bureau of Programs for the Youth), an organization committed to provide financial support to low-income students with scholarships to pursue studies as technical assistant, secretarial assistant and foreign languages.

This was the only way for me to study English. The tuition in small English institutes could reach up to \$8,000 pesos per month, which was difficult for me to pay at that time. But things were different with the scholarship since I only had to pay \$1,750. Thanks to that, I could study English as a foreign language thoroughly and at the same time, I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the thinking and living of many native speakers.

I MET MY CANADIAN FRIENDS IN 1984

In this section I would like to describe the way I met my friends and how difficult it was for me to try to speak in English when I had only studied as far as the low intermediate level. What put me face to face with this language was an unexpected incident.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND HISTORY

I started taking English courses in 1983. By the time I met my friends I was in a low intermediate level; I did not speak English that fluently and I needed to learn more vocabulary. I believed that my chances of listening to people speak in English or talking with foreigners were high if I visited places such as the National Museum of Anthropology, the pyramids of Teotihuacan, or went for a walk to Zona Rosa or downtown in Mexico City, places where you can always meet some tourists.

So, I decided to go to the National Museum of Anthropology on October 31st, 1984 in the morning. I was convinced that a guided tour in English could help me improve my listening comprehension. When I went into the museum, I bought a ticket for a one-hour guided tour in English. People started gathering, most of them foreigners. All of a sudden a woman came close to me and asked what my name was and if we were at the starting point of the tour. Right after that, her son and daughter-in-law arrived, we said hello to each other and waited for the tour to begin.

As soon as the group was complete with fifteen persons, the tour started. We went through several rooms. At the beginning it was very difficult for me to understand not only the tourist guide but also the questions posed by tourists. But slowly, I could make up some general ideas based on some words I could understand here and there. I thought that if I could not confront English in that moment, then there was no point in studying a foreign language.

The guided tour ended an hour later. My new friends invited me to go for a coffee. I accepted for obvious reasons; it was a one-time opportunity for me to speak in English a little bit longer! It was difficult for me to find the right words to express what I wanted to say. However, they were always eager to help since they knew some words in Spanish. I think they had been studying arts in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato.

During the conversation in the restaurant of the museum, my friends suggested that I should order a salad or a snack. I just had some coffee; I did not want to cause any financial problem. On the other hand, I was thinking of going back home, which was twenty minutes away from the museum. I had a Halloween

party that night; however, after a while, they invited me to go to their hotel because they wanted to give me a calendar they brought from Canada. I accepted the invitation and we left the museum.

We walked towards the bus stop across from the museum. As soon as we arrived, a man told my friends in English that the bus to the Zócalo was coming soon. My friends did not pay much attention to his comment. Shortly after that, we got on the bus.

In a matter of two bus stops from the museum of Anthropology to Chapultepec, my new friends were mugged. I heard Frances shouting. They had taken her camera! By then the bus had stopped and several persons were rushing off the bus. Allen was after one of them but he came back soon - everybody was gone. Suddenly, I heard Frances shouting again. This time one of Lydia's legs was bleeding.

A crowd began to gather around us. My friends and I were screaming in desperation because we did not know what to do. People were shaken by our reaction. Police stopped the traffic right away. Lydia was taken to the nearest hospital and Frances accompanied her.

We stayed there because police wanted to know what had happened. An officer got on the bus to inspect it and found Frances' camera wrapped in a very dirty plastic bag. They gave it to Allen and asked him to identify some men who had been caught in a nearby parking lot. Police allowed the traffic to flow again. I had never been in a situation like that. I could only see people running, volunteering to interpret if necessary and police officers coming from everywhere.

At the beginning, Allen accepted the help offered by some people who spoke English, but later he told the officers that I was with them and that he preferred me to interpret for him. I wonder what kind of interpretation I did when I was just a student of that language and a good knowledge of vocabulary was required. I can only recall that I did not use many words, although I tried to put into practice all I had learned in my classes. Perhaps I did not do an excellent job, but it was good enough for the communication to take place.

Frances came back to let Allen know that his mother was okay. The doctor said that Lydia was wounded with a knife; the thieves must have thought she had money in her pocket. But they never thought that the driver was going to pull out so quickly. Also, he added, the wound was just superficial.

We saw the police taking the thieves into a police car. Then, a young man, Luis, came close to us. He asked if he could stay with us. He had identified the thieves and when he tried to leave the place someone threatened him with a gun for having informed the police about his accomplices. At that point, I was not sure whether or not I could trust strangers, so I told Allen about it and he said there was no problem.

Later, Allen, Frances and I picked up Lydia who was in one of the doctor's offices of the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social. She was feeling better and thanked me for staying with them. She wrote down her address in Vancouver for me. I gave them my address too. Then, Allen called the Canadian Embassy in Mexico, but he never got any answer, only their voice mail.

When we went downstairs, the thieves were waiting for their "destiny" in a police car. A police officer asked my friends if they wanted to launch a lawsuit

against those individuals. They answered affirmatively and the officer walked to his car, talked to another officer and came back a few minutes later. My friends would have to go to *Ministerio Público*¹ for three days so they could be protected in case some of the accomplices of the crime would intimidate them.

My friends were going to leave for San Miguel de Allende the next day. Allen told the officer to do the appropriate proceedings. It was sad to see that the Safety and Security Program did not operate the way people expected. What can victims of robbery do then? A taxi drove us straight to the hotel. We were five passengers: Allen, Frances, Lydia, Luis and I.

It was six o'clock by the time we arrived, so I did not have enough time to go home before the Halloween party. My friends encouraged me to order a sandwich and later on they gave me a calendar with beautiful pictures of Canada. As soon as we finished eating, I said good-bye to them. They paid for Luis' taxi, which took him home, and also mine, which took me to Eugenia subway station, where I was going to meet my sister. Once there, I told her what had happened. She said that it was much better to go home instead of the Halloween party.

MANY YEARS LATER

Perhaps you may wonder why it took me so long to write this story. Well, the reason is that now I would like to share all those beautiful memories I have of my first trip to Canada. Besides, I found the notes I made during that trip, so I decided that it was time to share this experience.

¹ Translator's note: The Ministerio Público is a legal institution that pertains to the civil law designed to investigate crimes, enforce the law, and take legal action. Taken from Fix-Zamudio, Héctor. *Función Constitucional del Ministerio Público*.

Perhaps this book may fall into the hands of people like you, my kindly reader whom I may never have the pleasure to meet. To all of you I want to say that I never thought of writing a book like this one, since I am not a writer. However, this was the only way to share with you all those unforgettable moments I had with very nice people. These lines show my perception of the Canadian way of life and my feelings for it. I hope you will enjoy it.

1

MEXICO CITY – LOS ÁNGELES, CA

Tuesday, July 12th, 1988

Mexico City

Clara, my friend and neighbour, kindly took my two sisters, a friend and me to the Aeropuerto Internacional de la Ciudad de México. By 6:00 am I was in line with my ticket and passport in my hand to check in.

The flight to Los Angeles California DI1741 was announced at 7:00 a.m. In that moment, I said good bye to my sisters and friend. I felt sad at that point because I was going to be far from my family and country. It was the first time I was travelling abroad. It was a one-month trip, but still I felt nervous. Besides, it was the first time I travelled by plane for six hours: three hours from Mexico City to LA and three more from LA to Vancouver.

I felt like crying when I walked to the boarding area. I had mixed feelings: I was excited but also sad because I did not know what to expect. Then I went through customs and showed my documents; after that, I waited for the plane to

depart. Once on the plane, I felt that it was the beginning of a beautiful dream, a trip that not only me, but many poor people longed for.

I had a little problem on the plane. I had a window seat and a man asked if his son could sit there. I was willing to let him take my seat, but then I said to myself, "I paid so much for this trip. How could I give it to somebody else? I want to enjoy the view too." In my opinion, I was being selfish rather than reasonable. Fortunately, somebody else at the back gave his seat to the kid. It was a three-hour trip and I had breakfast during this time.

The kid fell asleep very quickly. He never looked out the window as he was supposed to. He was not even awake for breakfast. It was too early. Anyway, things like that happen.

I felt melancholic at that moment. I think I was excited but also afraid of the unknown. I was discovering an entire new world. It was quite an achievement for me, and I thanked God for that.

LOS ÁNGELES, CA

Before we landed at Los Angeles Airport, we were given a declaration form to complete. Something peculiar happened: I had to borrow the pen of the man who had asked to give my seat to his son. He was very kind; he even explained to me how to fill out the form. What a shame!

We landed at 9:50 am local time. On getting off the plane, I was nervous, especially because we were taken straight to a bus. We were treated like prisoners: there were two lines of police officers and we had to walk in between. It was obvious that they did not want anybody to take a different way or run away. The bus was driven by a woman, something unusual for Mexicans in those years.

But also, the bus had a steering wheel on both ends, so the driver did not have to turn around, just walk to the other end.

We were directed to customs where people were lined up according to the country they were coming from. There were people from Japan, Europe, and Mexico. I took the respective line and soon after that, I was in front of the customs officer, who in a very rude way asked for my travel documents, went through them and made several questions. From where I was, I could see several video cameras and many officers around us. This place looked rather like a prison. I do not think many people would like to stay there for long. Then I asked where I could claim my baggage and they told me where to go. Once I collected it, I went to the second metal detector. This time, they inspected my luggage. The officers there were fairly rude, but I was cleared at the end. I followed other passengers and soon afterwards I was out of that area.

I was out of the terminal by 10:15 a.m. I was in the United States. I could not believe it! It was warm, perhaps 35°C. I noticed some yellow arrows on the pavement and signs at the parking lot. Soon I found an information desk with a glass window and a microphone at the front, so people could not have any physical contact with the person on the other side. I asked where Delta Airlines was in order to check in for a trip to Vancouver, Canada. The employee gave me directions.

Once there, I checked in. Then I met an American couple with whom I engaged in a conversation. Later on, a senior whom I helped with her baggage before, joined us.

I wanted to know when I was going to take the plane. According to my watch, it was almost noon, so I decided to hurry up. When I asked the service

agent if it was time to board the plane, I realized I had a different time! It was eleven o'clock local time. I had not switched my watch two hours behind. I had enough time to take a look at the stores in the airport.

When I returned, I conversed with the same lady I met before. She asked me if I would like to live in the United States. I told her that I was not interested for the time being. Then she made me understand that she needed someone to look after her.

Around 12:20 the flight to Vancouver was announced. The first people to get on board were seniors and persons on wheelchair; then, first class passengers, and finally, the rest of us.

2

VANCOUVER CITY, CANADA

The plane took off from LA Airport around 12:49. The fact that I had to take two three-hour flights made me aware of how far I was flying. Time went by very fast. I had lunch during the flight. Before landing, we were given a customs form, this time for Canadian customs. The pilot announced our arrival at Vancouver. I took a peek at the window, but it was very cloudy; it looked like a storm was coming. It was almost 3:20 p.m. The first thing I perceived upon getting off the plane was how fresh the air was.

We walked through several rooms to get to Canadian Customs. When the customs officer knew I was Mexican, he was very kind with me. Then, I collected my baggage. On my way to the carousel I came across the lady I met in LA Airport and asked me to help her with her baggage again. I did it willingly. After collecting my baggage, I walked towards international arrivals. I felt nervous at this point

because I was afraid of not recognizing my friends after four years. Besides, I did not know who was going to be waiting for me. It was almost 4:00 pm.

The doors opened automatically. Lydia was the first person I saw. She looked at me and said out loud, "Hello, Manuel!"

LYDIA'S PLACE IN WHITE ROCK, CANADA

I said hi to her, gave her a hug and a kiss on her cheek. This is the way I was welcomed to Canada. She took one of my suitcases and we walked to the parking lot. That is the first memory I have of Canada. I saw many limousines working as taxis. I could feel a very relaxing environment. We got on a shuttle van which took us to Lydia's car. It was a nice, big and yellow vehicle. Lydia drove back home. I felt as if I was a child on my way to her place; I wanted to see everything. I was amazed. Everything seemed so different from Mexico: streets, cars, people, and buildings.

I had no doubt that this was the beginning of a month full of wonderful experiences and spectacular views. Nature, of course, looked majestic. Along the road I could see an area of very tall and amazing trees. We took the highway. We could see the City of Vancouver from there. Lydia lived in an area called White Rock, out of the city. It took us almost forty minutes to get there and during this time we talked about my trip and my first impressions of Canada.

PLANNING MY TRIP

Lydia wanted to know what plans I had for my trip. I told her I was eager to visit many places and most importantly, I wanted to improve my competence in the English language. I said that I wanted to buy one of those tickets she told me about in one of her letters to tour the country or at least to visit some cities. She was

referring to the Greyhound ticket. With \$125 CAN I could visit any place for a certain number of days.

It seemed easy to me. However, she explained how things were there and the amount of money I was going to need for an excursion like that. Gradually, I realized I did not have enough money on me. After having heard how expensive life was, I decided to visit the City of Vancouver and some places nearby. At that moment, I had no idea how big this country was. It is so big that it takes four or five days to go from coast to coast by bus. On arriving at her place, I noticed that we were close to the USA border.

I felt strange, excited but unsure at the same time. Once we arrived, she said, "This is my place". Then she showed me a room and told me I could sleep there. On comparing her apartment to the ones I had been in Mexico so far, I could tell that I was in a luxurious and comfortable place. We sat on the carpet to check some maps of Vancouver. A few minutes later, she came close to an organ and played a beautiful song. She said that she played this instrument whenever she had some free time. Since I was very tired, I decided to go to bed around 7:00 p.m., not without calling my family in Mexico to let them know I was already in Canada. In that moment, I learned a very important word in English, "collect call". Then I went to bed. I was so tired that I slept soundly until next morning.

A TRIP TO NORTHERN VANCOUVER

I woke up around 7:30 a.m. Lydia said good morning and told me I was a good sleeper. I slept for many hours.

Later, her son arrived and we were introduced to each other. He was a very kind person. Lydia told me that we were going to see Allen and Frances, so I took

the presents I had for them with me. I gave Lydia what I had for her. Then, she said we were leaving and we got on her car.

Allen and Frances were waiting for us at the front door of their house. They gave me a very nice welcome; they gave me a hug and after exchanging a few words, we went inside.



It was then when I met Alana Maria, my friends' daughter, a cute eight-month baby with blue eyes. They asked me about my trip and my first impressions of their country. Also, they told me they found it amazing I could converse in English given that I was studying this language when we met in Mexico. Certainly, I needed to learn more vocabulary and become more fluent, but I could express myself much better.



Stanley Park

Later, we went for a walk to Stanley Park, which is like Bosque de Chapultepec in Mexico. It has an area of 400 hectares. People say it is as big as Central Park in New York. We walked along the beach. We took some pictures, talked, and then we went back to Allen's house.

Allen and Frances had attended a party the night before and that is why they were a little bit tired. Actually, that is why they did not meet me at the airport. Lydia and I went back to her place. I was tired too; it was a long day full of excitement. When we were about to arrive, I realized I could feel the sun's rays over me; it looked as if it was just six o'clock in the evening. However, on looking at my watch I realized to my surprise it was 8:30 p.m. and the sun was still up. Lydia said that it usually gets dark at 11:00 p.m. in Canada.

Once in her place, she prepared some veggie salad for dinner. Then, we went for a walk to the beach five minutes from there. The air was fresh and it

seemed to be clean to me. We walked for a while, enjoyed the view, and then went back. We talked about my family and my job. After reading for a while, I went to bed. It was 11:00 p.m. It had been a very exciting day. Also I had learned two new phrases: “play it by ear”, which means to act without preparation according to the demands of a situation and play music by remembering how it sounds; and, “bomb around”, which means to destroy or to come and go quickly.

3

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO USE A COMPUTER?

Thursday, July 14th, 1988

I woke up around 7:30 a.m. During breakfast, I asked Lydia about the most important landmarks of White Rock. I wanted to check the stores, go to the local library and visit every place I could. There was a library just three blocks from her residence. Once there, the first thing I looked for was the catalogue, but soon I realized there was none. So I asked the librarian how I could search some books. I had to check on the computers at the front. Unfortunately, public libraries in Mexico did not count on these kinds of resources back then.

Since I did not know how to use a computer, I asked if they had the book entitled *Og Mandino*. The librarian told me where to find it. I was surprised to see two well-known books, *The Greatest Salesman in the World* and *The Christ Commission*. I went to a small reading room, where I checked and read some of the books they had for almost three hours. Actually, as I was glancing through one of them, I saw another one called *Homesick*, which was about how nostalgic people feel when they are far from their country of origin. I think it referred to

people who worked or moved to places far from their family. Perhaps, I was going to experience something alike during the month I was going to stay in Canada. Or Maybe not. No one could tell. I left the library after a while.

SAFEWAY

I went to Safeway, which is part of a national supermarket chain. I checked all their products. Some of them were similar to the ones we have in Mexico. I was surprised to see avocados and tomatoes with a label indicating the country where they were produced. All the products in the store were from abroad. I think it is important to say that their products were not bruised or in bad condition like they were usually in Mexico.

I walked along the beach again; I visited a small museum which held information about the city, for instance the meaning of "White Rock". I saw a huge white rock on the shore. The romantic legend says that the rock was hurled over the water by the son of the Sea God, who fell in love with a Cowichan princess; when their parents opposed to their union, because mortals and gods should not get married, the young lover, who was furious, hurled the rock to the sea and taking his bride in his arms, he dived into the sea and rose out of the water on the shores of the bay, where they made their new home and the Semiahmoo Tribe grew. In the museum, they have information about the first settlers of this place and pictures as well. Later, I continued my tour.

I went back very happy to Lydia's house because I had been in the museum and library. That day I bought a regular size postal card album with a replica of the same post card in miniature. I would give the big ones as a gift, and keep the miniature ones for myself as souvenirs. Also, I bought a birthday card for my friend

who accompanied me to the airport in Mexico. I was very happy because I was going to mail some post cards showing the places where I had been to my relatives. When I was about to pay for it at the store, I had some difficulty in recognizing a ten cent coin, but the cashier just took it from my hand. I felt embarrassed. I said thanks to her and left the store.

It is important to clarify that a tax must be added to all the amounts of money mentioned in this book. In most of the provinces in Canada, they charge a 14% tax. So at the store I had to mentally add the tax, pay in a currency I was not familiar with yet, and do it quickly because there were several people waiting in line. No wonder it was difficult for me to know exactly how much I had to pay.

PAM AND ROY, LYDIA´S FRIENDS

That evening Lydia's brother called and we talked for a while. She decorated her house with mats and candles which gave the house a formal look. Also, she put a very heavy clock she had bought in Europe where it could be seen easily. She told me about the places she had visited in Europe and the United States. It was easier for me to understand her as days went by.

I decided to write some post cards. I had a long list of recipients. As I was writing, Lydia's friends arrived. They were there to see her new house. She used to live in a place called Langley before.

I was sitting down in the living room when they came inside. We introduced to each other: they were Pam and Roy Adams. We had some coffee and Lydia gave them some coconut candy I had brought from Mexico. Later, Lydia took us to the upper level of her residence to show them the view of the sea. Roy and I talked about Mexico. He had been in Mazatlán, Acapulco, and Mexico City many times.

He said Mexico was beautiful but also that many people were poor. I agreed with some of his comments, gave my opinion of my own country, and told him that the situation was basically the same.

What got my attention was how different their accents were. Pam is English and Lydia's background is Dutch. I think that is why their accents were so different. I enjoyed listening to both native speakers talking because this experience improved my listening comprehension.

We also spoke about the 1985 earthquake in Mexico. It was a tragedy known worldwide due to its 7.5 magnitude on the Richter scale. As a result, many people died and some others were left homeless or unemployed. It was one of the most devastating tragedies in the history of Mexico.

I enjoyed the fact that we could converse about many subjects. Before leaving, Pam and Roy invited us to come over to their place. They wanted to give me some books. We said good bye. Then, Lydia and I watched TV for a while. At the beginning, it is difficult to understand every single word they say, but little by little it is possible to understand more and better.

RUTH ANN

Lydia told me that one of her nieces, Ruth Ann, would come over soon. She was going to give a summer course to a group of Japanese students in Seattle, United States, which is two hours away from Vancouver.

As soon as Ruth Ann arrived, Lydia went out to welcome her. She was a blond, medium-height woman. We had some coffee together and discussed about our plans for next day. I went to my room around 11:00 p.m. and read before falling sleep.

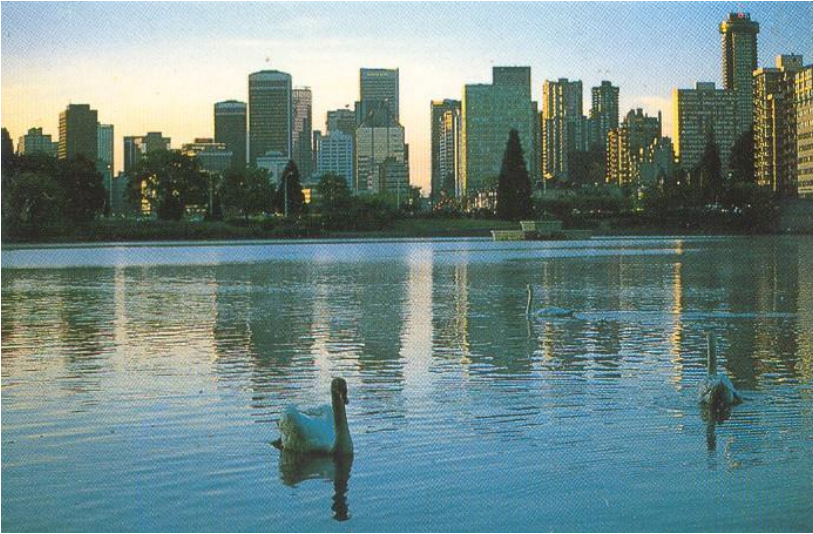


4

Vancouver City

Friday, July 15th, 1988

We had breakfast early in the morning. Lydia and her niece prepared some sandwiches, juice and fruit. We were going to tour Vancouver City. I enjoyed listening to them talking. Ruth is American and therefore her accent and vocabulary were different from Lydia, Pam or Frances', which was new for me. We left at 11:00.



Ruth's car was parked in front of the building. It was a new and very luxurious vehicle. I observed all the surroundings on our way to downtown. I told them that some of my students were going to be granted a degree in Tourism Management in a graduation ceremony that was going to be held that evening in the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza Hotel in Mexico City.

We arrived at New Westminster at noon. We walked to the craft and clothing market. There I took a look at some books and post cards. I did not have much money on me, so I decided not to buy anything, just to look.

THE SKY TRAIN

Then we took the SkyTrain. In general, it is a transit system similar to the subway in Mexico. However, it is automated, meaning that it is operated by a computer, moving passengers very quickly, and the vehicles have less coaches.

Lydia bought her ticket and told me where to buy mine. In some stations, you can purchase your ticket from the operator; but in some others they have ticket vending machines embedded in the wall. Some of them accept exact change only. Fares vary depending on the zone. The city is divided in three zones. I bought a

“day pass”. You can travel by bus, SeaBus, and SkyTrain all day with it. I paid \$3.50 Can, which was around \$7,000 pesos at that time.

We travelled some stations. Compared to the Metro in Mexico, they have fewer stations – maybe thirteen. We got off the SkyTrain and went for a walk. I was very excited about the tour. We walked towards a place that looked like Palacio de los Deportes: a bright white, sphere-like planetarium theatre that looked like a soccer ball at the top. At the entrance, we noticed that they had an exhibition of dinosaur models. Lydia said that this was the Museum of Science, where they exhibited the wonders of science and technology. This museum is one of the major attractions for families in the city. It participated in the “Expo 86”, a world’s fair on technology that took place in Vancouver.



We took the SkyTrain again and travelled to the last station, this time to go to the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre, which is a huge facility located on the waterfront where the world-wide biggest ships arrive from any part of the

world. It took us forty minutes to go from one side to the other. They even have a hotel at the heart of the waterfront.

We rested for a while. Ruth Ann asked about my impressions of the place. I am sure she could tell by my reaction how excited I was in this wonderful city. I answered with pleasure.

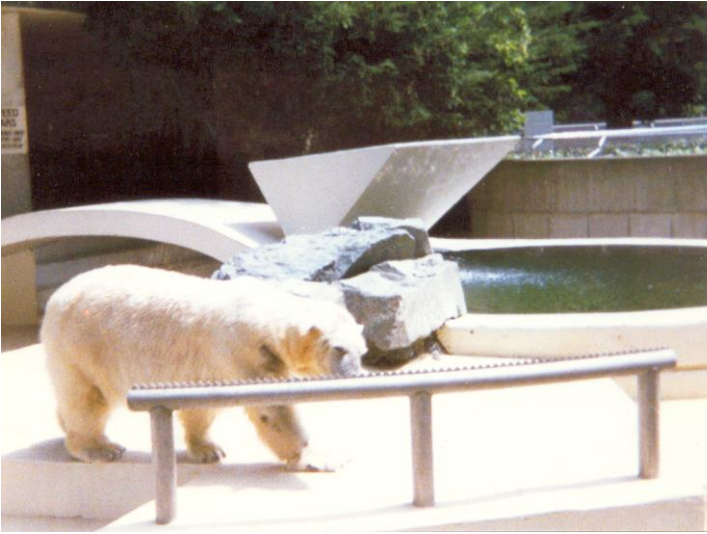
THE FAIRMONT HOTEL VANCOUVER

Then we went to downtown. I learned two words; *remind me*, which means to cause someone to remember something, and *a lot*, which is a synonym for many. On our way we passed by The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, which is at least one hundred years old. Its façade resembles that of a small castle with a green roof, which is characteristic of many Canadian buildings. We walked through many clothing and craft stores. Then we rested for a few minutes and had lunch next to a small fountain. Once we finished, we continued the tour. The architecture of the buildings, restaurants with their patio, the stores and the people were very interesting for me. I felt that I had been to many places in just the first three days of my trip.

A REVOLVING RESTAURANT

Our next stop was in one of the tallest buildings in the city. There is a revolving restaurant at the top. We went up there and ordered some coffee. The waiter gave us a map of the city. Ruth Ann and Lydia gave me their maps as a gift.

We took some pictures and talked about the classes Ruth Ann was going to give in Seattle. She said she would take her Japanese students throughout the city in a van. We also discussed some group activities and tips for teaching a foreign language.



Later, we went to Stanley Park. We visited the zoo, which has various species of animals such as penguins, grizzly bears, black bears, some seals and different classes of fish. After spending some time there, we took the SkyTrain again.

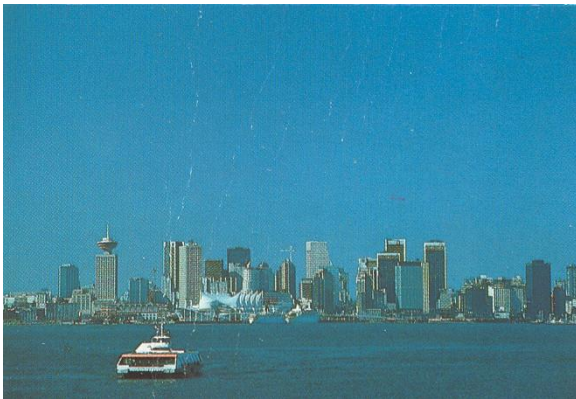
A SEA BUS?



We took the SeaBus, one of the services offered by the public transit that operates from the Convention Centre to Northern Vancouver. It is a huge ferry with

windows all around from which people can enjoy a stunning view of the city. It can seat up to 400 passengers and the trip takes around 25 minutes.

I checked every angle of the city from there. Even though I could hear people conversing, I could hardly understand what they were saying. Perhaps they were talking too fast and I was not familiar with the context of their conversation. I was very happy to be among Canadians and a mix of Asian and European foreigners.



Upon arrival, I walked towards the Lonsdale Quay Market and Shops. It is a three-storey market where you can buy all kinds of things, from food to any product you need. I remember having seen a fur store on one of the floors. It was quite an elegant and expensive place. I availed myself of the opportunity to touch some fur coats. Then, I took a look at the rest of the stores. After leaving the market, we took a seat on the shore and looked at some ferries arriving and departing. Ruth Ann took a picture of me and after resting for a little while, we got on the SeaBus to go back to Lydia's place. Once there, we had some wine.

A CHINESE RESTAURANT

It was six o'clock, the time Canadians usually have dinner -their main meal- so we went to a Chinese restaurant near Lydia's apartment. Of course, the menu

was very strange to me. We ordered some rice with breaded fish. Ruth showed me how to use the well-known Chinese sticks. After trying for thirty minutes, I gave up and decided to use a regular fork. Once we finished, the waiter gave us a couple of sticks wrapped in plastic to take home. There was a message inside. Mine read "Luck is on your side this month" and I agreed with that.

After that, we walked to the beach and stayed there for almost an hour. Ruth Ann asked if I was thinking in English or Spanish in that moment. I said that I was thinking in my mother tongue, but I was aware of talking with them in English. All of us laughed and then she and Lydia started talking in Dutch.

We went back to Lydia's place, watched TV and went to bed at 11 p.m.

5

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Saturday, July 16th, 1988

I got up early and prepared a package with 27 postcards I wanted to mail to Mexico. Some of the recipients of those postcards were: Marcela Aymes, principal of English World A.C., Clara, the Ramírez', Rubén, the Torres', Elba, Ángeles Cerdeño, Leonor, Instituto Henry Maudsley, Elizabeth, Erika, Susana, Héctor, Zully, Carlos Hernández, Elisa, Ana Bertha, Lily, Raquel, Lupe, José, Milton, Juan Castillo, Rebeca, a birthday card to my friend Ignacio Rosas, and a letter to my family.

CITIES OF LYNDEN AND BLANE

Soon we arrived at the border with USA. It was just five kilometres away from Lydia's place. There was a long line of cars and each one was inspected. All I

needed was my passport. The officer only requested Lydia to show a Canadian Id card. We were on the other side of the border soon afterwards and we drove to the cities of Lynden and Blaine.

We arrived at Sandra's place, Lydia's daughter, where I met Kurk and Jeremy, Lydia's grandchildren. We had breakfast all together. Kurk was 10 years old and Jeremy 15, but he was taller than I. Both of them were very kind with me. Kurk treated her granny with love, which showed how much affection he had for her.

Later on our way to the post office, we stopped in a store to buy quite a few stamps I needed. Surprisingly, the storekeeper told me he could not sell so many so I went back to the car very disappointed. Lydia told me not to worry and Ruth Ann and Kurk went to the store to talk to the storekeeper so that I could buy the amount I needed. After that, we continued our trip.

I was surprised to know that I had to leave my postcards in a mailbox, instead of the post office. For a moment I was not sure whether my friends were going to receive them or not, but I had to take the risk.

We drove back to Canada. We had no problems to cross the border. Lydia told the officer she was travelling with her grandsons and the officer did not doubt it at all. I expected him to check my passport, but he just told us to continue our way. Everybody was surprised because they were sure he was going to ask me why I was crossing the border. Probably the officer thought I was one of Lydia's grandsons.

Lydia said we were going to visit her son Allen. Unfortunately, I did not understand that I was going to sleep over in his place. Since it was embarrassing

for me to ask them to repeat something I did not understand, Lydia believed I could understand everything, which put me in an awkward position many times. That is what happened in this case. Since I did not have my suitcase with me, we had to change plans. I rushed to pack only the essentials and left immediately. I was taken aback by the unexpected news and also because I was going to travel by myself. Lydia gave me precise directions to get there. I was nervous but I knew I could make it.

WHAT IS A TRANSFER?

When the bus stopped, I said good bye to Lydia. She told the driver to let me know when we arrived at the Convention Centre and also that I was a foreigner. I paid \$1.25 CAD, that is \$2, 500 MXN. The bus had just moved when a woman sat next to me and told me she was Salvadorian. We started conversing in Spanish. Her name was Ury Cosio. She gave me some recommendations to travel in the city, which were very helpful. For example, she told me about the transfer. I had no idea what it was. She said that a passenger can get one at the time of boarding. It is valid for taking a second bus, as long as it is in the same region, so that passengers do not have to pay a second fare. Its expiry time is two hours. Transfers are only valid for one way. I requested mine to the operator of the bus.

It was approximately a one-hour trip. I took a look at the city during this time. I still found their stores, restaurants, buildings, people, etc. surprising. On arriving at the SeaBus station, I got off and walked towards the entrance where I showed my transfer. This was the second time I took the ferry, and it seemed to move faster. After that, I took the bus to Northern Vancouver. On boarding the bus, I showed my transfer again and the operator told me it was still valid; I took a seat.

When the bus started riding up the mountains, I counted the streets and got off on the bus stop Lydia told me. I looked for the number. The house was very close to the mountains. The air was cool and fresh; the weather was completely different from Lydia's neighborhood as she lived close to the sea. I rang the bell and Allen and Frances came to the door. We conversed for a while and then we had dinner. The food they prepared was a real feast for me. We talked about the places I had been in so far.

Later in the evening, I called home for the second time. We talked for about 20 minutes, which was enough time to make me feel that I was not far from my family. Then Allen, Frances and I talked about religion. They were not Catholics, but Baptists, I believe. We made some comments on the religious cults and each of us gave our point of view. They asked if I wanted to go to their Church and I said that I had no problem with that. So, we decided to go the next day. Then we went to bed.

They arranged a room for me in the basement. They said good night and I settled in the room. There was a tape recorder on the lamp table so I decided to play some music in Spanish first, and then to listen to the local radio. I learned some more phrases such as, *have a good sleep* and *sleep well*; also *to figure out*, which means to understand, conclude, resolve, make out; and *bottleneck*, a narrow stretch of road that causes traffic to move slow or stop.

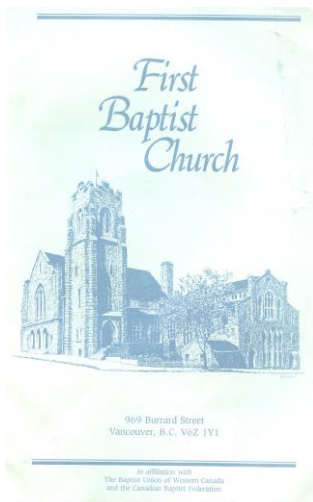
A VISIT TO CHURCH

Sunday, July 17th, 1988

I got up early as usual. Allen and Frances were getting ready to go to Church. As I was waiting for them, I played with Alana Maria in the patio, from where I could see the mountains.

Allen and Frances prepared breakfast: some coffee, bread and juice. As we ate, we played a word game which consisted of guessing words in both languages. They asked in English what something was called in Spanish, and then I had to ask in Spanish what something was called in English. We made some other plans for the day and left home at 11:30 am.

We went to Burrard Street where the Church was located. It was a huge and beautiful temple. On entering, I registered since I was a visitor. I wrote down my name and address. Right after that, we went to the upper level of the temple where I met many people. It was incredible for me to be in such a place. During mass, babies were kept in a special place assigned for them; Alana Maria was with them.



Some people went to the front and spoke about some biblical passages. They sang many times, and I could follow them thanks to some hymnbooks left at the benches. On one hand, I was very impressed by the amount of people attending mass; on the other, I tried to understand as much as possible their interpretations of the readings. However, it was hard for me given the amount of new words and how fast they spoke.

Once it was over, some of us went to a room where we had some coffee and cookies. People were able to converse with their acquaintances there. Frances picked up Alana and then all of us left.

A MEXICAN GROUP AND LATIN AMERICAN MUSIC

Then we visited a friend of Allen; according to them, she had prepared all the food for her wedding by herself. There, we had some coffee and a piece of chocolate cake. We stayed there for a little while and then we left for the city.

We went to Granville Island. It is a very crowded place due to the great amount of weekend activities they have and the big picnic areas. You can see small boats and yachts from there. Further down the market, there was a small garden where a group of people was playing jazz. We went there and listened to their music for half an hour. As soon as they finished, a group of Mexicans started playing Latin-American music. Some of them came close to us and Frances told them I was from Mexico.

Later, we went to the market where I had been with Lydia and Ruth Ann the day before. There was a stand of Mexican food there, and I talked to the lady in charge of it. Her name was Magdalena. She told me that in case I needed something, I could talk to her.

Shortly after that, we went to HI Vancouver Jericho Beach Hostel to request information about hostels in the nearby provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Then we went to the Greyhound Bus Terminal, and finally we went back to their place where Allen himself prepared dinner. As we ate, we talked about the plan for my trip. Lydia and Allen had already split up the number of days I was going to stay with each of them, that is to say, one week with her, another one with him and Frances and the third one travelling, so I could do different things each day. The thirty days of my trip were organized like that.

I stayed in Allen's house for a week which gave me the opportunity to get to know the city much better. I went sightseeing every morning and tried to be back around six o'clock for dinner, so I could save some money. Gradually, I got used to having the main meal at that time. Before eating, we prayed and thanked God for the food and the people who gathered at the table. I could not get out of saying a few words. I was not used to that and it was difficult for me. Nevertheless, I did my best.

7

LANDMARKS OF VANCOUVER CITY

Monday, July 18th, 1988

This time, I left early to go to downtown Vancouver. I took some money with me. I was going to travel by myself, which was a good opportunity to experience things at first hand. I had to practice how to ask for directions and request information, which was a very good learning experience for me.

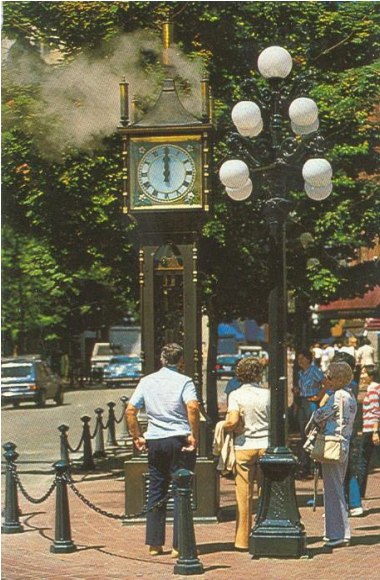
I decided to walk down the distance from Allen's house to the Sea Bus terminal. It was a good opportunity to do some exercise and converse with people

who were going in the same direction. This time, I met a woman who was very happy because her children had got a trip to Europe for her to celebrate her birthday. Since the trip on the ferry took around 20 minutes, we had enough time to talk about her plans for her trip. Once in downtown, we said good bye and I headed for Lonsdale Quay Market. I strolled all over the market, checking all the goods they had.

As soon as I came out, I got on the SeaBus again. I was surprised to see many people boarding the ferry to go to work; some of them were wearing a suit or a business attire. They were Canadians and people of Asian origin. Since I had the entire day to travel around the city, I decided to start my tour at the first street I saw when I got off the ferry. I passed by the Convention Centre.

GASTOWN

I started my tour on a street where most of the houses were made of red, fairly faded bricks, which gave the place the appearance of an old city. I was in Gastown. There is an old clock on a corner which steams out and whistles every quarter-hour; I could hear some music as the steam came out. According to history, this place was named after Gassy Jack, a resident, in 1867. I took some pictures and continued my tour. In this place, people can visit many different kinds of stores, such as clothing stores, gift stores or small carpet companies. There are restaurants with their patio, exchange places, a tourist information center, galleries and guided bus tours.



CHINA TOWN

I walked to Chinatown. The first thing I noticed was that everything was in red or in a different color plus red. I was willing to visit this place since I knew about it. I had a special interest in its culture. The red color represents good luck and also has a religious meaning. As I walked, I could see some restaurants, business, fruit stands and grocery stores. The only problem was a nasty smell I perceived in the area. When Chinatown was declared an historic district in 1971, Chinese-style street lamps and phone booths were added.



I also visited a bookstore and a small supermarket. They had Chinese products such as magazines, food, tea, candies, fruit and products originally from that country. Everything was written only in Chinese.

I went to a Ming Dynasty garden called Sun Yat-Sen, where I could appreciate their lookout platforms and bridges. In general, it was a nice quiet place, so quiet that people could lose their track of time. It was not quite colorful. I think it was like a garden of Eden, a place to relax and think over. Its waterfalls and big plants with round-like leaves were fascinating. After taking a few pictures, I continued my tour.

I walked by many stores where they sold traditional Chinese products. People's features -the shape of their face and eyes-, their costumes, and above all the way they spoke were very fascinating to me.

LONSDALE QUAY MARKET

I took the SeaBus to Northern Vancouver where the Lonsdale Quay Market is. There are some benches outside the market facing an open air area for events besides the sea. I rested for a while on one of them. It was two o'clock. I was hungry so I decided to go to the food court. They had Chinese, Italian, Japanese, American meals and vegetables, so it was hard for me to make up my mind. Finally, I picked Chinese food because it was cheap, \$2.95 CAD, which was almost \$6,000 MXN.

Given the food habits of my country, it was time for me to have the main meal. Some people seemed to be surprised by the fact that I was eating so much at that time. But before I was halfway, I was completely full. I guess the new Canadian schedule had something to do with it. Usually, Canadians have a small

portion of vegetables or some blueberry ice cream at this time. Blueberries are similar to the capulin cherry: a green, light or deep red fruit with seeds, native to Mexico.

MEXICAN PRODUCTS

Later, I went to the section of Mexican products to visit Magdalena, the lady I had met a few days before. She welcomed me warmly and since she had some free time, we went for a coffee. We took a seat at a table facing the sea. We talked about Mexico and her experience in Canada. Later on, we said good bye.

I walked all the way back to my friends' place. I arrived at six o'clock! It was a long walk but I had the chance to take a look at many stores. Once there, I told them what I had done during the day. Jeremy, Allen's nephew, was packing because he and Allen were leaving for the mountains next day. Later, Frances, Alana, and I went to Stanley Park and then to Gustavo's place, a friend of theirs, who we conversed with in English and Spanish. We went back home around 10:00 pm.

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Tuesday, July 19th, 1988

This was a special day because I went to many new places. I got up at six o'clock. I wanted to be awake to say good-bye to Allen and Jeremy, who were heading to the mountains. Frances and I would take them to the base of the mountain where they were going to start their adventure.

They went downstairs to the basement to get a few things they needed for their trip and then Allen showed me the place they were going to on a map. During

breakfast, I realized Jeremy was excited about the trip. It took about half an hour to get there. We stopped in some areas to enjoy the wonderful view.

From the highway we took, we could see the mountains on one side and the sea on the other. When we arrived at the spot where Allen and Jeremy would start their three-day trip, we said good-bye and decided to go for a coffee. Then we went to the University of British Columbia, which is the main university of the province. First, we went to the Museum of Anthropology to check their hours. They told us that adults had to pay \$3.00 CAD., that is \$6,000 MXN, but also that they had a free admission day once a week. We were lucky because it happened to be precisely that day.

It was a small museum compared to the National Museum of Anthropology and History in Mexico. Fortunately, we took a guided tour, which gave the opportunity to learn more about the Canadian culture. They displayed several weapons and utensils used by the peoples who lived in those territories in glass boxes. They also had documentaries on TV showing material related to the exhibition. After the museum, we went to a botanic garden.

Alana was feeling uncomfortable, so Frances had to go back home. I stayed there to continue my tour. Later on, I went downtown and strolled around different streets. I was getting more familiar with the area now, and I could even understand many things people were talking about. I went back around 7:00 p.m. We had dinner and watched TV. Then I went to bed. It was almost 11:00 o'clock.

QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK

Wednesday, July 20th, 1998

I went for another tour around the city that day in the morning. I preferred to stroll down the street rather than taking the bus to go to the SeaBus terminal. In this way, I could while away some time since it was impossible to take the SeaBus before nine o'clock. Office workers and workers in general packed it from seven to nine.

Once on the SeaBus, I had the chance to enjoy the view once more. I decided to travel all the subway stations. Once I arrived at New Westminster, the last station, I took the bus to go to Queen Elizabeth Park. In this place I could see a beautiful waterfall and a great variety of flowers, as well as a huge pavilion or conservatory dedicated to birds, which invited people to take their time to observe and enjoy its wonders. Many people were taking pictures; others were sitting down, enjoying the view. They had an amazing, huge, rose garden which caught my attention due to the big size of the flowers. Next to the garden, there was a group of people in white playing cricket, the British game.

When I went back to Northern Vancouver, I found out that Lydia was there and had taken Alana to the park. When she came back, she told me that we were going back to her place so I could spend some more days over there. I just had time to pack up my things. I said good-bye to Alana and Frances.

GOING BACK TO WHITE ROCK

The trip did not seem to be so long this time. One of the things Lydia asked me on our way back was if I was getting used to the language, which I answered

positively. As soon as we arrived, we made plans for the next day. After dinner, we went for a walk along the beach where I could have some fresh air. We took a seat for a moment to look at the sea and hear the waves breaking on the rocks.

I enjoyed going for a walk because I found the sea very relaxing. It seemed that the time stopped and you could think of anything. I remember having seen a young man meditating; perhaps he had some problems because he did not look good. We went back and after watching TV for a while, I went to bed.

8

AMERICAN CUSTOMS

Thursday, July 21st, 1988

Today, we travelled to the United States to visit Lydia's daughters and mail some letters. It was fun to travel like this, especially when you have to cross the border. Once in the United States, we stopped in a little store where I bought sixty stamps; they were 15 cents each.

We spent some hours with her relatives and then we drove back. Before crossing the border, Lydia filled up the gas tank and bought some food. When the car was inspected, the officer told us to go to their office. Even though I had all my papers with me, I was nervous. I showed my passport and we told the officer we had met four years ago. Lydia said that I was living with her at the time as well as one of her children. She also mentioned that we travelled to the United States frequently because she had a daughter living in Blaine, a border city.

TRIP PLANNING

Without any serious hitches, we could go back to the road and once at her place in White Rock, we watched TV for a while. Later on, we bought some traveler's cheques because I was going to travel to Jasper, a city located on the mountains. I could make this trip with the money I had and I was informed that I was going to receive a discount when showing my student ID card.

Then we went to the bank. There I could see that the way their banks were organized was similar to the banks in Mexico. The teller was very kind and we had no problems to buy the cheques since Lydia had an account with them. We drove around the area and went back home around 11:30 because her favorite soap opera, *All My Children*, started at noon. By then, I liked that program too. Lydia told me it had been on air for over ten years. Then we had a light lunch: some carrots, broccoli, pears and zucchini, all chopped, boiled, and served with some dressing.

We went to a travel agency called All-Port-Travel, located in a nearby small shopping mall. We checked prices and times. Jean, the travel agent, told us that the trip was \$80.00 CAD, that is \$160, 000 MXN, but I could get a 50% discount for the train ticket thanks to my student ID card. The trip was from Vancouver to Jasper leaving at 16:30 on July 25th, 1988. When I had to give my name, they could not understand me, so they asked me to spell it for them. Believe it or not, I had difficulties in doing so, perhaps because I was nervous. Once I calmed down, I could provide the information. They printed the ticket and we left. I was very excited, even though there were many days in between.

That same day in the evening, we went to a mall, pronounced /mæl/. It is possible to buy anything in those places. We wanted to buy some clothes for my

trip. I bought a yellow t-shirt with some blue and red strips, a pair of blue bermuda shorts with strips of different colors. Originally, I wanted to buy some navy blue or beige bermuda shorts, but Lydia suggested something more appropriate for a young person given my age. I was twenty-four years old then. I tried everything on. We left the store and went for a coffee.

We took a seat at the patio, where I could perceive the Canadian environment. We came across with one of Lydia's children who had some coffee with us as well. We talked about my experience in Canada and my trip to Jasper. Once he left, we went back to Lydia's place. We still had to pay one more visit.

A VISIT TO PAM AND ROY

We visited Roy and Pam, Lydia's friends, who lived in the municipality of Delta, British Columbia. It took around one hour to get there. They were not home when we arrived, so we decided to go to their backyard, take a chair and rest for a while. They arrived later and it was very nice to see them again. We talked a lot and Roy took me to his study room to show me the books he wanted to give me. He had a huge collection. Two of the books he gave me were *The Bermuda Triangle* and *Taipan*. I appreciated his gift very much, not so much for the books themselves, but for his kindness.



As Lydia and Pam prepared some food, Roy showed me their house. He also showed me his mountain bike and told me I could borrow it any time, but unfortunately I did not know how to ride a bike. I realized that Roy and Pam's friendship was real. It was a beautiful gift for me. Also, he gave me a shirt and a coat. We talked about my experience in Canada, and the places I had been in. Then, he asked me to take him around the area on his wheelchair. We went away for almost ten blocks from his place; we went into a fast food place where we bought some ice cream and took a seat to converse more.



He showed me the area. We went to the supermarket where I could see fruits and things that were new to me. Roy explained what I could not understand. That was a very good opportunity for me to learn words about grocery goods.

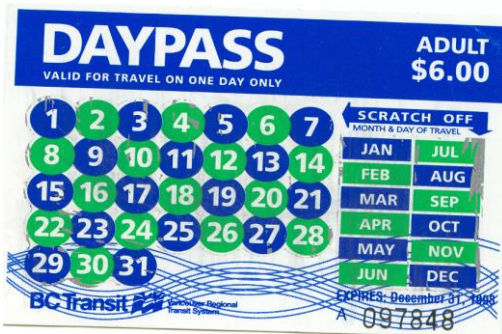
We went back just in time to eat. They had prepared some fried fish with potatoes. It was almost eight o'clock in the evening; however, the sun was still up. Then we watched TV for a while and later, we said good bye. Pam gave me a gift too: it was a video on the mountainous regions of Alberta.

9

ONE MORE DAY IN THE CITY

Friday, July 22nd, 1988

Lydia and I had breakfast together that morning. As soon as I finished, I went downtown and as usual, I bought a "Day Pass" to travel around the city.



It took me one hour to get to the city by bus. Something embarrassing happened to me when I got on it. The front seats were empty, so I decided to take a seat. Right after that, I noticed that people were looking at me. At first, I thought they did that because I was a foreigner, but then I read a sign saying “Seats reserved for the disabled, seniors and pregnant women”. I felt uncomfortable and sat down somewhere else. No other passenger took a seat in that area. They really follow their rules.

When we arrived, I took the SeaBus and then the SkyTrain. Since I had taken this route before, I was familiar with it. I was not going to any place in particular; I just wanted to visit some new places. I got off near the train station to know exactly where I was going to take the train to go to Jasper. There I took a walk around the platforms and ticket office, and I took some brochures for tourists. Then I went back to the subway again. As I was going upstairs to take the SkyTrain, I felt some fresh air all over my body coming from somewhere nearby. Also I noticed that the sun was at its strongest. I took the subway and got off at New Westminister. I walked around the area and then I got on a bus in a small terminal.

PLAYLAND, AN AMUSEMENT PARK

The bus route went through an area where there were many beautiful houses. It was not a touristic area; however, I was not treated as a tourist. I got off at a stop from which I could see many rides. It was similar to Six Flags in Mexico. The fee was \$3.50 CAD, that is \$7,000 MXN. They sealed one of my hands with some indelible ink. I walked around the park and took a look at all their attractions. I was really trying to find one I could ride. It was crowded. I noticed that young people went for the same ride many times. For a moment I thought they were kind of masochistic because those rides were not easy at all. However, I confirmed once more that teenagers love to have big thrills. I saw many excited young people riding on the same attraction over and over, especially the roller coaster.

The fare was from 10 to 15 tickets per ride. I made up my mind and bought some to ride a mermaid-shape attraction called "The Rainbow". People sat down on a horizontal platform, the mermaid's hand, which accommodated approximately 50 persons and moved from left to right. I had an unpleasant feeling riding on it.

Also, I visited the Space Port and enjoyed their models and special effects. After a few hours, I decided to leave the park and continued my tour. I took the bus to Chinatown, where I spent some time window shopping. On a second look, the construction of the area was so similar to an actual Chinese town, that I felt as if I was in a country other than Canada.

I strolled to the SeaBus terminal. As I was waiting, I could hear a man playing his flute. His performance was very professional compared to the music people play sometimes on public transit in Mexico. It was worthwhile listening to

these melodious tunes. I took the SeaBus to Northern Vancouver, and once there I had a light meal.

Then I went to the market located on the wharf. I sat down on the sea shore and sunbathed for a while. There was a hotel on the upper level of the market. I went up there to take a look at their reception, lobby and restaurant. After that, I got on the SeaBus again and then the subway to New Westminister station. Once there, I waited for the bus to White Rock to go to Lydia's place. I arrived at six o'clock in the evening. As usual, it was dinner time and I was starving since I had walked a lot. The food was so good that I had seconds. We watched TV for a while and then we took a walk along the sea. It was our regular two-hour walk. We usually talked and exchanged opinions during this time.

When we came back home, Allen called and asked me if I had changed my plans on spending the weekend in his place. I had no problems at all, but Lydia wanted to go to the United States to see her grandchildren. I think Lydia convinced her son to wait for me after our visit to the United States.

It was late that night, so I read for a while and then went to bed.

10

BACK IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Saturday, July 23rd, 1988

During breakfast, Lydia and I made plans for the day and then we got ready to travel to the United States. I had no problems to cross the border again. The beautiful home models I could see during our trip caught my attention, especially because most of them were made of wood. I could perceive that the material used

to build the Canadian and American homes and the models they have are different in both countries.

We arrived at Lydia's daughter's house. Her grandchildren were having breakfast and watching TV. Jeremy invited us to watch a film made and produced by himself. It was a story with heroes and bandits. The actors were Sandra -Lydia's daughter-, Kurk, Jeremy and some of his friends. With a light heart, he showed me some of the devices he used to film and also said that he had made some others with a camera he had received as a gift time ago.

ON THE CANADIAN BORDER

After spending some time with Lydia's family, we went back to Canada. Kurk and Jeremy came with us this time. On the border, Lydia told the immigration officer that she had been in the United States to pick up her grandchildren who were going to spend the weekend with her.

Once we were home, she prepared dinner: chicken with potatoes and cauliflower salad. As we ate, we conversed and exchanged some ideas. It was interesting to hear Lydia's grandchildren's American accent as opposed to Lydia's Canadian one. As usual, we went for a walk to the beach. I learned something new everyday; for instance, upon conversing with people who only spoke English, I could get to know their way of thinking, feeling and what they believed in, as well as about their culture and people.

When I went to bed at midnight, I had the feeling that it had been a very productive day for me in the sense that I could practice English with people who have different accents.

A PICNIC ON THE BEACH

Sunday, July 24th, 1988

We went to a department store next day in the morning. We checked a few things and bought some others. Then we looked for a place to make a photocopy. Since we could not find any one open at the mall, we checked for some other places, but they were closed as well because it was Sunday. Finally, we found one open. They photocopied a \$100 USD bill showing the picture of one of Lydia's son and added their family name, Klatt, to make it look more real. That was going to be Doug's birthday gift.

At four o'clock we went to an area in the city where I had never been before. It was a beach area where many people could spend their free time. It was a place where people could swim because the weather was very warm. Everything was handy, even the parking lot was close to the seashore. Fortune smiled upon us. We were going to have a great time. Kurk had a dinghy with him, which everybody helped to inflate, of course.



Once it was ready, Kurk took it to the lake and began to row. I was not sure whether to go into the water or not; but when I saw some clouds attempting to block the sun, I decided to go before it was too late.

I spent over forty minutes in the lake, but the longer I stayed, the colder it was for me. There were many people swimming and enjoying the water. The temperature of the water did not seem to bother them, as opposed to me, who was used to the warmer waters of the Mexican sea.

Jeremy put himself under the water to scare us. He and Kurk played for a while. The water got so cold for me that I had to come out. As Lydia enjoyed her grandchildren's company and the weather, I took several pictures. In that moment I thought that I was living something I could hardly forget. After resting on the sand, Lydia prepared some food. We were there for many hours, but I did not try to get into the water again; instead, I stayed with Lydia as her grandchildren kept on swimming.



At seven o'clock in the evening, we went back home and watched TV. Her grandchildren were going to stay with us next day, so we had nothing to worry about. I wrote thirty postcards to my family, friends, and students. Approximately at ten o'clock, Sandra arrived. She was a very young woman. She was very kind with me and asked me about the time I had spent in Canada so far and also about my plans for the following days. We talked for a while and then I started conversing with her children.

HOW DO YOU WRITTE THE SOUND A DOG MAKES?

As Lydia conversed with her daughter, her grandchildren and I started talking about the sounds made by animals. At the beginning, I thought it was an easy topic, but when we tried to write down the sound a dog makes, we could not come to an agreement; so, we decided to make a list and here is the result:

I said the cat makes *miau*

They said the cat makes *meow*

I said the dog makes *guau guau*

They said he dog makes *bow wow*

I said the bird makes *pío pío*

They said the bird makes *chirp-chirp*

I said the rooster makes *kikiriki*

They said the rooster makes *cock-a-doodle-doo*

Anyway, these onomatopoeic differences in each language were part of our conversation. It was interesting to all of us because they are linguistic features we rarely pay attention to.

Since Sandra and her children were going back to the United States, I asked them to mail my postcards on their way home. It was late, so I said good night to Lydia and told her that I was going to read before I went to bed. She said that reading was a good habit and showed me some audiobooks on self-help produced by the well-known writer Norman Vincent Peale. In that moment, I became aware of all the new things I was learning every day in different ways.

12

MY TRIP TO JASPER

Monday, July 25th, 1998

This day was the first time I travelled out of the City of Vancouver. The departure was at 4:30 local time and the arrival was at 17:00 hrs. local time in Jasper. I woke up at eight o'clock and had breakfast with Lydia who gave me all

the instructions I needed. Right after that, I packed and left her place at one o'clock. In order to get to the train station, I had to take a bus and the SkyTrain. On my way to the city I made sure I had not forgotten anything. I had packed a pair of shorts, three pairs of very warm socks, two t-shirts, some books, some traveller's cheques and some salmon sandwiches Lydia had prepared for me.

I arrived at downtown approximately at 2:30 pm. With no rush at all, I took the SkyTrain. I had two more hours to get to the train station. I got off on Broadway metro station, where the train station is and went straight to the ticket office to check in and make sure everything was in order. It was three o'clock then, so I had plenty of time to spare. I payed attention to the announcements of some departures which were interesting because they were in English and French. All of a sudden I became nervous because I was afraid of not being able to understand what they were saying to me; however, I remembered that all I had to do was to pay attention and try to find my seat number. I took a look at some stores and then I went to the ticket office to get my boarding pass. The employee at the office was very kind with me, perhaps because I was a foreigner or she could see I was nervous. I noticed that tourists receive special treatment.

My train was announced approximately at 4:20 pm. Since I had the car and seat number with me, I went straight to get on board. I felt my heart pounding very fast. I was very excited. I had no idea where I was going but this was the long-awaited departure. There were many people with different destinations. The final stop was in Edmonton, a city in the province of Alberta. Finally, I found my seat. It was a window seat, so I was going to be able to enjoy the landscape.

The train departed. The view was breathtaking. During the first hours of my trip, I could not stop looking out; I wanted to store all these images in my mind, remote lakes and forests that were only accessible by train. We even went through a tunnel. With a view like this one, travelling by train was quite a delight.

This kind of environment invited people to meditate, especially because they had lots of time to do it.

I took some pictures with a small pocket camera that broke down days later. I had a better camera, but Lydia advised not to take it with me in case it got lost. I regretted not having it with me; all I could do was to store everything in my mind. However, I hoped to be back there again and take pictures of all those beautiful places. I stayed awake until midnight or later. I was tired and the seat was very uncomfortable.

STARTING THE DAY ON A TRAIN

Tuesday, July 26th. 1988

I dozed off until two o'clock in the morning, so I did not sleep for long. The moonlight woke me up. It was a full moon that colored the lakes with unique dark tones. I was enjoying the trip indeed, but I was very cold. I did not think of the weather when I packed, so all I had with me was a towel that I put around my shoulders. I tried to take a nap.

The train stopped and even though it was early in the morning, many people got on board. The person who sat down next to me was going to Edmonton, the final stop of the train. It is a city farther than Jasper, in northern Alberta. We conversed for a while.

Given that I still had a long way to go, I tried to sleep for a few hours, maybe until four o'clock. I could see the sun breaking the sky; days were much longer in Canada. It was six o'clock as quick as a wink. I was still sleepy. Later, I decided to stand up and walk along the traincars to have a better look of the landscape. There was a very safe area between the traincars enabling the passengers to move along the train. It had a window so people could get some fresh air and a good view of the area.

THE TALLEST MOUNTAIN IN CANADA

What an awesome summit! Covered with snow, the beautiful Mount Robson is the highest in the Canadian Rockies, towering 12, 972 feet. Unfortunately, I did not have my camera with me, so I was content myself with the superb scenery.

After some minutes of amazement, I had the sandwiches Lydia prepared the day before. They were delicious. I had been travelling for many hours and even though there was a restaurant on the train, I did not want to take the risk of spending money which probably I was going to need later in my trip.

ARRIVING AT JASPER

We arrived at Jasper at eight o'clock in the morning. Jasper's local time is an hour ahead of Vancouver's, so I had to change the time on my watch. I had arrived at my destination. I walked around the area to get familiar with the small town; it was so small, smaller than Vancouver for sure, that I could tour the entire town on foot. The train station was the bus terminal too.

I was shocked for the first time when I asked where I could take the local bus. There was no public transit. I could either take a taxi or a shuttle bus to travel.

I had no idea where the hostel was. When I asked, they told me it was not in the town, but far from it!

I took some time finding out the rates some hotels had. They went from \$29 CAD to \$300 CAD per night. I found them quite expensive. The rate in the hostel was \$14 CAD. Definitely, it was much more sensible to try to get there.

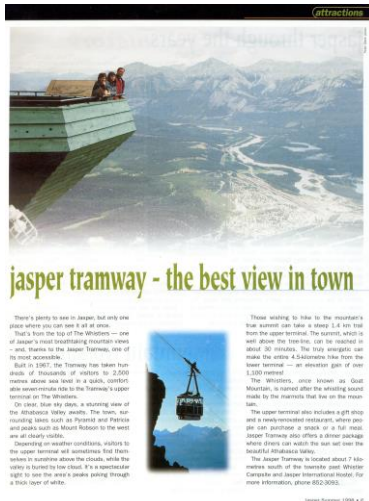
I passed by a travel agency where they had information about hotels and local tours. I was getting concerned about the money situation. I had only \$150 CAD, that is \$300,000 MXN and after paying the hostel and some tours, I was not going to have much left. As I walked, I tried to figure out what I could do. I went back to the terminal and called a taxi.

I asked the taxi driver how much they charged to the hostel. It was \$8.00 CAD (\$16,000 MXN). I did not think it twice. I took it and in fifteen minutes we were on the top of a mount where there was a big cabin. We conversed all the way there and he told me it was a beautiful day, but also added that the weather was unpredictable on the mountains.

I thanked God for all the good things that were happening to me. There was always someone who gave me a hand.

Once there, I walked to the front door and read a sign saying that it was closed from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. At first, I thought I had payed the taxi for nothing. It was just 11:00 am, so I had to wait for a long time. I talked to two Germans about my plans to stay in the hostel, but they said they were not sure if I could find something there and suggested that I should be back by 4:00 or some time earlier. They added that it was usually full and that most of the beds were taken. However, someone could check out that day. In that moment, a bus arrived

and many people took it. I sat down on a bench and tried to enjoy the place. After all, I was on the mountain. The cars' roar died away; then complete silence. The air was very fresh and pleasant.



I was on Whistler Mountain; the name means to whistle – a sound you could perceive there indeed. There were many squirrels near me. After resting for a little while, I decided to go back to the town, but this time on foot. I remembered that the taxi took the main avenue and then turned at a sign reading “Whistler Mountain”, so it was not difficult to get there. Later on, I read on some maps that the hostel was seven kilometers away from the town. I saw no one on the road, so I had lots of time to meditate.

past and present

jasper through the years



history

Jasper's former beauty has different colors, adornments and textures to meet 200 years - but the town and its values were more much different than the living town of 200 years ago.

After the discovery of the mountain peaks, the mountain peaks were used as a natural playground for the "Living Mountains" for some 10,000 years before the first Europeans. However, the first European to visit the area was James W. Fraser.

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But until before the first visit, the park's landscape was largely unexplored. The park's history was written in the rocks. The first European to visit the area was James W. Fraser.

It took me an hour to get there. Through streets I was familiar with, I walked to a tourist information center - open by then - to obtain some brochures and information about the area. Then I went to a small park to look through them. There were many people sunbathing; they were wearing a bathing suit as if they were on the beach. I do not think they have many sunny days during the year and that is why they make the most of the warm weather. Once I finished taking a look at the brochures I went to a store to cash my first traveller's check and buy some postcards. Soon I found a mail box and sent two of them.

I started heading back to the hostel at three o'clock; I knew it was going to take me an hour to get there. It was not an easy walk this time because I had to go uphill. I got more tired than I expected. When I arrived at the hostel, I was very hot and my feet were sore; but I was at the door of the hostel, exactly what I wanted. My only concern then was to find a place to sleep.

There was a line of people checking-in at the reception. I did not know what exactly I was going to say; I was nervous. When my turn came, I told them I was Mexican and I was travelling around. I asked if I could stay there. They said I could, but they did not have any available beds, so I would have to sleep on the floor. I

did not mind sleeping like that at all. What I wanted was to have a place where I could rest and take a shower, since the whole trip had been very tiresome for me.

The fee included a pillow and a blanket. Also, I was given a visitor's badge. They told me that every time I stayed in a hostel I was going to get a visitor's stamp. If I collected certain amount of them, I could become a member for free.

The hostel was a two-storey cabin. The reception, lobby and kitchen were on the upper level. The rooms for men and women were on the lower level. When I went into the room, I received unexpectedly a sleeping pad, which was comfortable enough to sleep on. In the other side of the room, there were some bunk beds, all of them taken already.

I left my things there and went upstairs to the reception. I wanted to know If I could get a safe box for my passport and money. They told me I could leave them with them at the reception. So I did and then I went to the dining room to have some food I had bought in the town. They had a micro-wave oven, a big refrigerator and some kitchen utensils.

I could enjoy the view of the mountain through the large windows of the dining room. I talked about that with two women, one from Ontario and the other from Scotland. Most of the people who stay in hostels are not Canadians, but foreigners and it was very easy to make friends.

THE SKY TRAM OR CABLE CAR IN JASPER



It was seven o'clock and still we had lots of light. The hostel closed at nine, so I had enough time –two hours- to go up the mountain and check out a cable car I had heard of. The air was very nice and fresh. After a five or ten-minute walk, I arrived at the cable car station, the Sky-Tram. I inquired how long it took to travel both ways and decided to get on it. The fare was \$7.00 CAD, that is \$14,000 MXN. It was the first time I got on a cable car, so it was an unforgettable experience, especially because I travelled up there in the mountains at 2,265 ft. height if I am not mistaken.

I could see the mountains around the area covered with snow; the air at that height was so pure. I did not stay long out of the cabin because the wind was very cold and strong; however, I could perceive a whistling sound indeed. I kept

observing the view for several minutes and then I went back to the terminal where there was a restaurant and a gift store.

During all the trip, a tourist guide told us the name of the most famous mountains as well as the location of the most important lakes; we could see some of them. The lakes had an emerald green tone which, according to the guide, was caused as a result of the dust produced by the corrosion of a rock located at the bottom. Also, he said that the temperature of the water was very low, even in the summer when it was at zero degrees.

From there I could see Mount Robson, the highest mountain in the area. I could see the town of Jasper; it was amazing to notice how small and lonely it looked. The closest town to Jasper was 200 km away from there.

I started heading back to the hostel approximately at 8:40 p.m. I arrived at nine o'clock and at that time the hostel was packed with people. I went to the common room where I could chat with some people. Then I read for a little while; they turned the lights off at ten o'clock. Apparently, this was the only rule they had so people could sleep and not be disturbed. Once my bed was ready, I tried to sleep.

13

A TOUR IN THE TOWN OF JASPER

Wednesday, July 27th, 1988

This time I woke up because people in the room were getting ready to leave the hostel. Maybe they were going on a tour or just somewhere in the area. Some people were assigned to do some cleaning, others collected the garbage and some

others put the pads and blankets away. When I got up, I was told that everyone had to do some chore. In this way they did not have to hire someone to do it and the place could be kept clean. In general, the chores were simple and they did not take long since everybody was involved. I had to do the washroom. There was a row of 8 or 10 toilets divided by a strong kind of plastic. It took me no more than 15 minutes. I think it was a good idea to keep it clean with everybody's help.

There was no public transportation so I had to walk down to the town. It was very quiet and the air was fresh. The road looked so nice, full of trees providing some shade. The weather was nice too. After a few minutes, about half way of the road, I felt that someone was walking close to me. I saw a man on the corner of my eye. He was walking on the opposite side. I do not think he was going somewhere specifically; he had a stick or something like that in his hand. I felt uncomfortable because I did not expect to meet someone on the road for there were no homes in the area. As he was getting closer to me, I had a stronger sense that he was observing me. I got scared, but kept on walking. Many things came to my mind, but I was determined to continue walking. Most likely he had some task to do around there. However, I did not like the way he was looking at me at all.

When he was a few steps away from him, I felt my heart pounding. It was an odd feeling. All of a sudden, I heard a horn and then a woman calling me, which got my attention. They were Helen Boucher and Rachel Boyd, two ladies I met in the hostel the day before. Rachel was the owner of the car and was driving to another hostel close by called Beauty Creek Hostel. They offered me a ride and I accepted, naturally. As we passed by in front of the man, I noticed that he was still

gazing at me. It is hard to explain this kind of experience given a series of unexpected feelings and thoughts.

Anyway, once on the car, I told them about this person. They told me they found that strange because they had seen no one and in general there are no people in the area. Then we talked about our plans for the day. Certainly, I was going to arrive at the town sooner than I expected. In a few minutes we were at the bus terminal where Hellen and I stayed. I bought a ticket to Banff for next day. This was the second city I was planning to visit. Brewster was the bus line to that area. I invited Helen to have breakfast together, but before we left the terminal, I called the hostel in Banff to make a reservation; I was advised to do it in order to make sure I had a place to stay.

Helen and I walked along the main avenues and after a while we walked into a restaurant. She accepted my invitation to have breakfast together, but only if we went dutch. At first, I found that strange since I could pay for both meals; however, little by little, I learned about that and other customs they had in Canada.

Once we finished, we went back again to the main avenue. She liked to walk too, so we had no problems in walking around the town. She took pictures of several places such as gardens, monuments, etc. The temperature dropped around eleven o'clock. We went into a travel agency and inquired about the tours they had.

THE MALIGNE LAKE TOUR

It was the "Jasper Traveller Agency". They provided information about their trips and given we had enough time, we bought tickets for one of them. They told us it was a three-hour tour and it started at two o'clock. If we were back by five

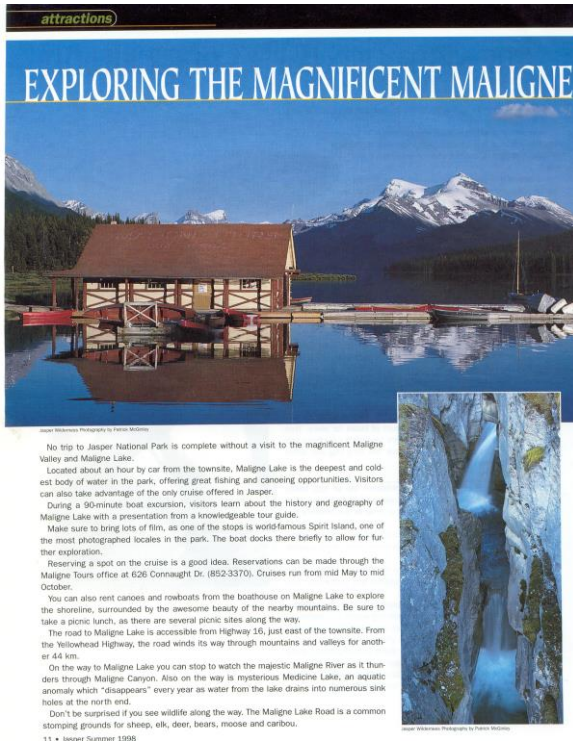
o'clock, Helen would have enough time to follow her own itinerary. We paid \$20.00 CAD each, \$40,000 MXN. Something funny happened to us. When they asked for our last names, Helen answered it was Boucher. I was expecting them to ask for mine after that, but then they said, "Here are your tickets, Mr. and Mrs. Boucher". We did not say anything, since it was just a pair of tickets. We left and kept on walking, not without laughing about that incident.



We walked to a park and rested for a while. Later on, it started to rain and we had to go somewhere else. It is important to say that there is a touristic information center in every Canadian city, so we went there. When it was a few minutes to two, we went back to the agency for the tour. The weather was changing constantly. It was sunny then.

At first, I thought a bus from the Brewster Transportation and Tours Company was going to pick us up; however, a van that could sit up to fifteen persons arrived. The seats were very comfortable and there were speakers located at different places. The driver told us we were going to "Maligne Lake". It was not

the place we had paid for. He said that the tour for which we had originally paid had been cancelled because of bad weather conditions; they did not want to put the tourists at risk.



Taken from Jasper Summer 1998

I had originally paid to go to Edith Mountain, but since I had no idea what it was like, I did not know whether or not I was missing something I wanted to see. For me, any place was good enough for a visit. Once on the road, we enjoyed the view of some mountains covered with snow. The driver said the names of some of them and also of some lakes and gave a brief description of the place. He asked where we were from. We were from Germany, England, Quebec and I, from Mexico. We were very few, which gave us the chance to converse and get to know each other better.

Later, the driver said we had to stop as he had spotted a group of people ahead. As soon as we got closer, we saw a black bear walking in the area. We

could not miss the opportunity to see such an animal so close; I am sure it was a meter away from us. People in front of us were taking pictures; I remembered once more that I had no camera with me...I wished I had taken it. Well, maybe some other time, if I ever get the chance to go back. We could observe the bear for several minutes.

We went back to the van and continued our trip. Later on, we arrived at our destination. Maligne Lake is part of a magnificent landscape. The driver who was a tourist guide himself told us that it is one of the most beautiful places in the entire country. The lake is surrounded by mountains covered with snow which enhances its beauty. It looked surreal. It is approximately 21 km long and it turns into an ice rink in the winter.

Before we started exploring the area on our own, he gave us some advice. On a map of the area, he pointed the paths to follow; also, he suggested that we should move in small groups; he added that if we were lucky enough, we could come across with some of the animals who lived there. We had to be back there in forty minutes.

It was cold that day with some drizzle. I was wearing a pair of bermuda shorts, so I was cold. We could spot some deer. They let us come really close to them. Some of the people I was with could take pictures of them at the distance of a meter or a meter and a half; actually, one of the deer stayed still and we could take a picture of it and Helen. After a while, we continued our trip.

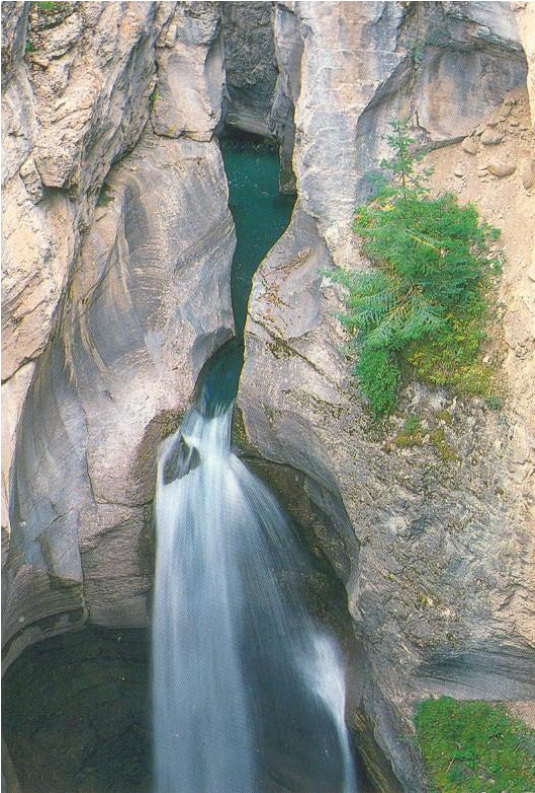
It was difficult to decide where to go because the road split in many paths. I think we were lost for a while. However, later on we came across a German man who was in a different group and told us how to get to the restaurant. I think it

would have taken us longer if he had not helped us. Finally, we arrived at the restaurant, where we had some pop as we waited for the shuttle.

We started talking about last names. Some of them had only one last name. I told them I had two, which was strange for them who asked why in Mexico and in some other countries people had two last names. I said that one was the father's family name and the other one the mother's family name and when a woman gets married, she keeps her father's family name but also has to add her husband's.

We were called to get on the shuttle. We had enough time to enjoy the lake and the landscape. The driver made another stop so that we could enjoy the view of the lake from a different area; it was a good place to take pictures, according to him. All I could do was to store what I was watching in my mind: a series of mountains as the background, a small island with huge evergreens at the center of the lake and very clear skies.

We started heading back because it was late. I was very pleased with the trip for I had seen more than I expected. Also, I had had the chance to see some animals in their natural habitat. I think that neither the pictures nor the brochures could really convey the beauty of the place; I mean; these are so magnificent places that it is impossible to capture their beauty on a picture. We stopped again, this time in Maligne Canyon, characterized by some cracks on the ground. In this area the soft rock has eroded and as a result there is a huge waterfall. The view was amazing and the noise made by the water falling was loud given how far it was from the ground. We stayed there enjoying the place for quite a while. We noticed an inscription on a rock with some information about a fossil.



I am not sure if this place was part of the tour, which, according to me, had already finished. However, having the opportunity to visit more places for the same price was very good. The weather changed once more; it was very cold. Once in the town, some tourists were taken to the entrance to the city and the others to the travel agency. It was okay for us to get off at the agency because it was right across from the bus terminal where Helen was going to take her bus at six o'clock. When we got off the shuttle bus, I said good bye to her and wished her a good trip. She promised to send me by mail the negatives of the pictures she took -which she never did-. I thanked her and left the bus terminal.

It was late, so I went back to the hostel. It was not dark yet, but I preferred to go back at that time. This was my second evening in the town, or to put it in better words, in the mountains. It was very cloudy, which reminded me of the taxi driver's

comment on my way to the hostel, "Here, the weather can change at any time". It was true indeed.

By then, I was familiar with the road, so it was not difficult to get to the hostel. Once there, I prepared some food and took a seat on one of the benches outside the hostel. I had bought a slice of pizza and something to drink in the town. I paid \$10.00 CAD (\$20,000 MEX) for that. Later, I went inside because I was very cold. I stayed in the common room where I had a conversation with a German. Since I was travelling on my own, he invited me to go to the closest mountains. Naturally, I wanted to go, but I was going to leave right the next day.

Between 9:00 and 9:30, I went downstairs; I picked up my book where I had my money and passport at the reception and then went to the dormitory where a group of youth was having fun with a book on jokes. They invited me to listen to them. Even though I could make out some words, it was difficult to fully understand them: I was not familiar with the context and they spoke too fast. Soon afterwards, the lights went off, so we went to sleep. There was a Japanese next to me and we talked about the places we had visited. His name was Sakamoto Hoichi. I think I was tired for having walked several kilometers in one day, perhaps 15 or more. I know it sounds impossible, but I did. As a tourist, a person has to walk and walk and walk.

I had a very exciting day and thanked God for giving me the chance to meet very kind people. All I could do was just to thank him for another day full of excitement and beautiful memories, but above all, for the friendship of all these people.

CITY OF BANFF

Thursday, July 28th, 1988

At seven o'clock, I asked what my chore was at the reception. Since most of the people were sleeping, they told me I had to do something very simple: to collect the garbage from every room. It took me ten minutes and as soon as I finished, I went to the reception again to thank them for their services.

I felt nervous and anxious about an uncertain future again. Some questions I had were: What is next? What kind of problems will I have to sort out? What is the future going to bring?

I had mixed feelings. On one hand, I wanted to arrive at the next city soon; but on the other, I did not want to stay with strangers in an unknown city on the mountains. On my way down to the town of Jasper, I crossed a bridge where one of the many rivers of the area flowed into. I remembered having heard some people saying that the water was very cold, so I went close to the shore and put my hand in to check myself the temperature. Amazing, I could not feel my hand! When I took it out, I could hardly feel it. That is the way life is, we do not believe something until we see for ourselves.

I kept on walking towards the city. Once there, I looked for a restaurant to have breakfast. I found one where they had breakfast for \$7.00 CAD, that is 14,000 MEX. The menu said: milk, bread, eggs, and potatoes. I waited for someone to take my order. It was pretty easy for me to order milk and bread but when I said eggs the waiter asked what kind of eggs I wanted. I was about to say scrambled eggs, but he provided a very long list of different ways to have them. I was taken aback.

On one hand, I had never heard those words; I am sure he said more than ten different ways to have eggs such as scrambled eggs, soft boiled-eggs, hard boiled-eggs, and boiled-eggs. He must have noticed I was perplexed because he went through the list again, but slowly this time. When I heard the word *scrambled*, I told him right away that that was what I wanted. When I finished breakfast, I left the restaurant and walked to a park where there were some people sunbathing.

I saw a sign reading “The Dean Wild Life Museum”. It was a place located at the basement of the Whistler Motor Hotel, a small but elegant hotel. The entrance fee was \$1.00 CAD, that is \$2,000 MEX. Even though it was a small place, there were over a hundred species of stuffed animals placed in a very real setting; you could hear some information about them whenever you came close to the glass-boxes where they were. Besides deer, they had Grizzly bears, the most dangerous animals in the area; they can kill an elk just with a swipe.

The information and the models they showed were very interesting. I was glad that I did not have to walk all the way back to the hostel that day, because it would have been very scary after having found out in this museum what kind of animals lived in the region.

After a few hours, I left the museum and went window-shopping. I was looking for a book that contained pictures of the places where I had been. I bought one entitled *The Canadian Rockies* for \$3.95 CAD (\$8,000 MEX). At that moment, I cashed my second traveller’s cheque. I was excited because I had with me a sample of all the places I had visited. I left the store and kept on walking. I passed by a Catholic Church, but it was closed. I wished I could have stepped in to see the interior and also to pray for a while.

Later, I went back to the bus terminal where the bus departed exactly at the time it was scheduled: 1:30. Punctuality is not characteristic of the Mexican transportation, which probably has to do with the upbringing most of us have.

The bus was elegant and comfortable. The windows were so big that I could enjoy the view with no problems at all. The ticket to Banff, the next city in my tour, was \$24 CAD (\$48,000 MEX) and it was a five-hour trip. I think it was expensive for such a short trip. It was like going from Mexico City to Guanajuato.

The bus belonged to the Brewster Gray Lines. At first, I tried to sleep; I was tired because of all the things I had done that morning, but still, I had a long way to go. I think I managed to sleep only for ten minutes. The driver's voice woke me up. There was a speaker close to me and the driver gave some information about the areas we were going through. Perhaps, that is why the ticket was so expensive.

COLUMBIA ICEFIELD

Little by little we came closer to a huge range of mountains; it was the first time I could see the snow. Actually, I had always wanted to visit Alaska, but I had never had the chance to do it. I knew that Canada was the right place to see the snow, and this was the first time I was so close to it. We were getting closer and closer to the mountains. In a wink, we were travelling through them. The view of the area all in white was gorgeous. Naturally, it was cold. Amazing layers of snow covered the mountains and made them look beautiful; it was that kind of bright white that bothers your eyes. I always dreamed of being close to the snow, and now it was coming true. We arrived at Columbia Icefields, a flat area covered by

ice, where the bus stopped and we could get off to have a better appreciation of the place. It is an area of 389 sq. km.

There was a restaurant and a store where they had objects related to the Columbia Icefield, such as key rings, videos, and paintings. Also, they offered a tour to the icefields on a snowmobile, a vehicle for driving on snow. It was a five or ten kilometer tour on the mountains. The tour guide said that we could see onto ice 400 years old and 300 meters thick. I wish I could have taken the tour. It was very expensive for me and I had to watch my spending since I was going to be travelling on my own for a few more days before going back to my friends' place in Vancouver.

On the other hand, it was already a great experience for me to be so close to the snow. I had a spectacular view from the restaurant. They said that the icefield is 2,600 meters above sea level and it is known to be one of the most beautiful places in Canada.

A few minutes later, we were called to get on the bus and continue our trip. The weather was changing little by little; it was fairly cloudy and cold.

LAKE LOUISE

The scenery was spectacular. I tried to rest for a few minutes before arriving at the city of Banff. All of a sudden, we stopped in Lake Louise, a place that was constantly advertised by the various tours of the area, since it was considered one of the best areas on the mountains.

The bus stopped and we could enjoy the view from the shore. There were stores and hotels in the area. We did not stay there for long, but I thanked God, once again, for giving me the chance to enjoy such a beautiful view.

UPON ARRIVING AT THE CITY OF BANFF, ALBERTA, CANADA

We continued our trip. Before arriving at Banff, and even before the driver announced our arrival, I took a look at the booklets because I had to find out where I was exactly. I had a map of the area with me and the address of the hostel. Later, the driver notified us that we had arrived. It was a small city located on the mountains.

The bus took the main avenue, and a huge mountain covered by snow could be seen at the end of it. The city is located at the base of the mountain. The bus terminal was right at the entrance to the city, which meant that people had to walk to get to the downtown area. At the distance I could see a castle. A castle? Later, I found out that it was a hotel. It was amazing to see such a huge construction on the mountains. I was very interested in taking a look at it. I had seen a very elegant hotel before, but smaller, in the mountains, three hours and a half away from Denver on a movie called "The Shining". I was planning to stay there for two days, so I was going to have enough time to visit it.

I was not concerned about finding a place to stay at all. I had previously called the hostel in the area to make a reservation. All I had to do was just to check in. We arrived at 6:30 p.m. As I was getting off the bus, I heard someone saying, "Those who are going to the hostel can take that van". Several persons got on it, and so did I. I thought we all had to pay. I was quite sure they were going to charge at least \$10 CAD (\$20,000 MEX). However, when we asked the driver what the fee was, he said that it was a free service given by the hostel. So, all of us could save some money.

Upon arrival, I noticed that it was much bigger than the one in Jasper. So, I felt at ease since the probabilities to be offered a comfortable place were higher.

At the reception I had to fill out a form with my name, address and number of days I wanted to stay there. I paid and then I went to my room. I could tell how different this hostel was compared to the one in Jasper. This place was much bigger: there were several rooms with four bunks each. There was a section for women and for men. They had a big kitchen, a TV room, a common room, lockers, phones, etc. This hostel was in better condition and could accommodate a lot more people. There was a window in the room through which I could see some mountains near the hostel. After unpacking, I went to the dining room because I was a little bit hungry.

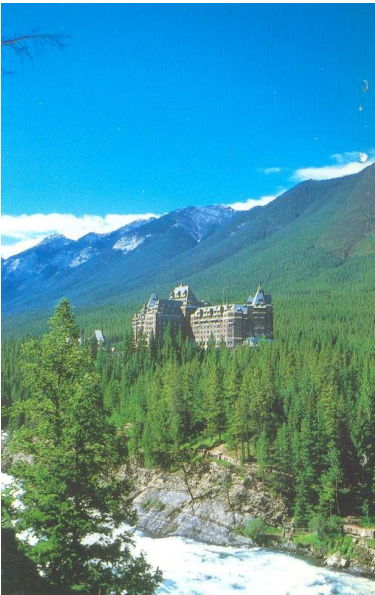
A tourist who got on the van as well came close to me. Like me, he had his own food. We sat down together and conversed for a while. He looked sad. He told me he was there to work. His parents had sent him there. He seemed to be very lonely. During the conversation, I inferred he had just had an argument with them. I listened to him with patience; I think he needed to talk with someone about the way he felt. I felt very moved and lucky because he trusted me. As soon as we finished eating, I said good-bye to this new friend, and went for a walk. I conversed with two Englishmen outside the hostel. I had met them before in Jasper.

Fortunately, the hostel closed at midnight; that is why I thought that I still had enough time to get to know the city. On one hand, it got dark at 11:00 p.m.; on the other, I had enough time to walk around. Besides, the hostel was in the city, which made it easier for me to visit some places.

A HUGE HOTEL ON THE MOUNTAINS



I started walking on the main streets; I noticed that some streets were named after certain animals. Some of them were: Grizzly, Deer, Rabbit, Fox, Squirrel, Lynx, etc. The more I walked, the closer I was to the hotel I had seen at the distance when I arrived at the city.



The design of the houses, the people and everything around me made my walk a very pleasant one. I kept on walking on Spray Avenue towards the Banff Springs Hotel. Once there I could read a plaque saying that the hotel opened in

1888; at that time, they charged \$3.50 per night and it was full of people from Europe, United States, and Canada. Naturally, it was a very luxurious and comfortable hotel. Presently, they charged from \$180 to \$1500 CAD per night, according to the information I got on internet. Some of the services included were stores, swimming pools, big areas to play golf, facilities to ride a horse, sauna, a theatre, conference rooms, a modern spa with thermal waters, and a restaurant.

Since it was crowded, I inferred that all of them were tourists. I went up to the first floor where there was a huge reception, so big that I could tell it was the biggest one I had ever seen.

Of course, the number of people who worked there was amazing, but I could also spot people who were staying in the hotel because they looked very elegant. When I was close to the elevators, one of them opened and several people rushed into it. I followed them. I managed to get off on a floor that was not so crowded. Once out, I started walking down the hall and since some rooms had the door open I could see their interior. They were furnished with elegant pieces of wood, carpets that enhanced the decoration of the rooms, and all of them had a beautiful view of the mountains.

I went back to the lobby where I saw a picture in black and white reading, “a million dollars’ view”; the picture showed a room located at the back part of the hotel from which people could see the mountains and lakes. That is why it was called the million-dollar picture. However, there are many places where the views are worth that much.

It was late, so I decided to go back. I walked fast and tried to take the streets I was familiar with; despite that, I got lost. I was not sure if I had taken the right

streets because it was very dark. I seemed to be walking towards the end of the city. I checked the map, and yes, I had taken the wrong way. I checked my map and went back five blocks, and despite the lack of light, I could find the street that led me straight to the hostel. On my way, I met some young people who were heading there as well, so we engaged in a conversation. They said they were from Montreal and were planning to stay in the hostel. As soon as we walked into the hostel, I said good bye to them and went to my room.

By then, there were some persons lying on their bunk. I walked towards mine and said hi to my roommates. It was hard for me to sleep because the mattress was wrapped in plastic and the room was very warm. I think somebody else had the same problem. I could fall sleep around midnight.

A TOUR IN BANFF

Friday, July 29th, 1988

That day in the morning, I talked with my roommates. Some of them were getting ready to go to another city or to tour around the nearby areas. I had breakfast in the hostel. I paid \$3.00 dollars for it, \$6,000 pesos. It was very cheap and delicious.

I was going back to Vancouver that day in the evening, so I went back to my room to pack. A Japanese, Kenji Watanabe, was in there. We talked about the nearby places to visit. Upon leaving the reception, I was given another coupon which was attached to the card I had got in the previous hostel.

I went to the train station where I bought a ticket to Vancouver with 50% off, so I only had to pay \$40 dollars, that is \$80,000 pesos. The train was leaving in the

evening, so I decided to go for a walk. I cashed my third traveller's check. In a bookstore, I bought *The Greatest Salesman in the World* for \$4.50 dollars, that is \$9,000 pesos.

As I was walking around the city, I could observe some brands of cars. To kill some time, I decided to write them down: Toyota, Cutlas, Impala, Subaru, Celebrity, Crown Victoria, Royale, Chevelle, Firenza, Pear, Cult, Mercury, Firefly, Royal Bulk, etc. It was a nice activity because I could compare them and even admire the elegance of some of them.

I saw some carriages to transport tourists pulled by some very tall and strong horses. Someone said that their life expectancy was a hundred years. Then, I passed by a Catholic church; I walked in and took a rest. I was going to travel that evening and by staying there for a few minutes I felt the comfort I needed for my trip.

On the map, I could locate some places I needed to visit. First of all, I went to the local museum where I could see pictures of the most common animals in Banff as well as the way the first settlers lived and frightened away dangerous animals. Then, after reading the information for several minutes, I left the museum and right at the exit I saw a man inviting people to take a tour. Most of them accepted the invitation, and so did I.

They took us to an old house near there. It was one of the few houses that remained exactly the same as its first inhabitants had it. There was a room at the entrance with the original furniture. Its structure and most of the objects were original; for example, trophies and deer and elk heads. There were some utensils, books, appliances, and pictures of the family members who had lived there. One of

the most interesting rooms was the kitchen. It was very small, with a small oven and some very rudimentary utensils that were in good condition. It looked like one of those 19th century kitchens that appeared in the movies.

Once the tour was over, I went to a nearby park because I wanted to write some postcards. The post office was closeby too. As I was walking, I heard someone calling my name, which was very strange to me. It was a person I had met in the hostel of Jasper. She had just arrived. We greeted each other and walked together to the post office and conversed for a while. She was going to the hostel where I had stayed. Then we said good-bye.

I wanted to see the biggest hotel in the city again. So, I went back there and enjoyed the visit. I could see some other rooms they had and above all, I could see the “Million-dollar view”, which was really beautiful. I hope I will be back there some day.

Back in downtown, I took a break in a park. I prepared some sandwiches to have them on the go. There were so many mosquitos, that I could not stay there for long. It is advisable to have a mosquito repellent with you. At this point of my trip, I felt easier and more relaxed since I was familiar with this part of the city.

BACK TO VANCOUVER

At the train station, I went to the ticket office, showed my ticket, and received my boarding pass. Then I bought some pop to have on the go and took a seat to wait for the train. As I was reading, a delay for one hour was announced. For that reason, they gave cookies and pop to passengers for free and it was until seven o'clock in the evening when the departure of the train was finally announced. It was

delayed for two hours and a half! I never thought I was going to be waiting for so long.

Because of that, passengers were assigned a different seat and not the one we had originally been given at the station. I was given a first-class seat. These seats could be pushed back as if they were beds and they were very comfortable. The space between the seats was so big that people could have a good rest. At that moment, I knew it was going to be a very nice and comfortable trip.

15

AT LYDIA'S HOUSE

Saturday, July 30th, 1988

Saturday caught me sleeping. There was no full moon this time. Since the seat was very comfortable, I had a very good rest. As soon as the day broke out, I had some fresh air and watched the mountains. The places the train was going through were gorgeous; both the lakes and the landscape were magnificent. However, I wanted to be back in Vancouver. People say, "travelling is exciting, but going back home is always much better".

We arrived at five o'clock in the evening, as they had announced. I went straight to Lydia's place. I was familiar with the road, so I arrived at six. We talked about the places I had been in and the people I had met. Canada was wonderful! I told her that it was a great experience and besides enjoying the trip, I had the chance to meet very nice people.

Lydia prepared a delicious dinner. After eating, we walked to the beach. Back at her place, we watched TV for a while and I called to Mexico to talk to my father, Mary, my sister Consuelo, Emma, Lucila, Nacho, Lety and Justina.

I was happy and thankful for being back from the mountains safe and sound. It was the second last day of July and I had only eleven more days left in Canada. I wanted the time to pass by quickly so that I could be back to Mexico. However, I did not want to leave the new style of life I had and was already used to.

A SUMMER FESTIVAL

Sunday, July 31st, 1988

I got up at 7:00 a.m. As soon as we had breakfast, Lydia and I went to the Christian Life Assembly Church located on 56th Avenue, Langley, British Columbia. It was very big and beautiful. The choir was in the middle and was made up of several people. On the upper level, there was a screen where people could read the lyrics of the hymns and prayers. If people did not have the hymnbook with them, they could take a look at the screen. It was a one-hour mass.

The structure of the mass was very similar to the one we have in Mexico, so I had no problems to follow it. When it was over, we went to a big room where I was requested to write down my name and address. Lydia came across with one of her friends, who had just married. She and her husband invited us to have lunch in a very fancy Italian restaurant. Everybody ordered lasagna, which was delicious. We conversed for a while and then they invited us to take a look at their new place.

It was a two-story house with a big backyard. They told us they were growing carrots, lettuce, onion, pears, peas, etc. We took some pictures of the place and we left later.



We went back to Lydia's house. Once there, we changed our clothes to go to the park. The weather was very extreme: very cold and very hot. It was difficult to stay in one place for long. A few minutes later, she went back home to invite one of her children to the summer festival.



Later, she came back with her son Don and her two granddaughters Karen and Andrea. All of us enjoyed the festival. When it got dark, I thought it was over, but to my surprise, I was wrong. Lydia suggested that we should go to the main avenue where they were going to hold a float parade.

The floats that went down the street were castles, children, gardens, and musical groups whose music turned people on as they passed by. Also, they played music with pipes, which was one of the main attractions of the parade and nothing could be compared to it.

I enjoyed the parade a lot, and when it finished, the fireworks started. Minutes later, it started to rain, so we had to go back to Lydia's place. Her son had a big van showing the logo of the company he worked for. We arrived at 11:30 pm. After having some milk and cookies, I went to bed. I had many things to thank God for on that day.

AFRICAN AND HAWAIIAN DANCES

Monday, August 1st, 1988

I watched TV for a while that morning. Later on, Lydia and I went for a walk and we came back at noon so that she could watch her favorite soap opera. She said that there was another festival scheduled for that day; during the summer, they usually had a function in the park nearby the sea everyday.

We went to see the African and Hawaiian dances. The music they played and the display of colors of their costumes made the show very enjoyable. Lydia liked it as well, and she took a picture of the place. Another amazing show was a demo on parachuting. As soon as it finished, we walked around the area.

SOME POINTS RELATED TO RELIGION

We stopped by a Catholic church and I stepped in for a few minutes. I heard some people saying a prayer that was familiar to me. They said:

Holy Mary mother of God
Pray for us, sinners, now and in the
Hour of death, Amen.

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Our Father, Who are in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy Will be done, in earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

They said many other prayers but I could understand only some of them. I stayed there shortly and then left to go back with Lydia to her place. Once there, we had dinner and watched TV. She had a picture on the wall that caught my attention. It was the Ten Commandments and I asked her if I could write them down. She told me I could find them on any Bible, but naturally, I did not want to check any other source if I had them right in front of me. So I grabbed my notebook and started writing:

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

3. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

NEW WORDS

In general, it was an important day. The walk we took in the morning had been therapeutic. Before going to bed, I read for a while and wrote on my notebook the new words I had learned recently.

Further down

Why pay more?

It's further

Park all day

Leave by rear doors

Watch your step

Clearance

Coffee shop

Are you insured?

Car sale

Discount price

Food store

Standeers must be behind red line

Don't stand on step when bus is in motion

Wait for light

Then push door

Handle to open

Come along

Dishwasher

Stove

Sink

Pantry

Deep freezer

Microwave

Dryer

Washing machine

Back a lap

Grill

What's on tube?

Pardon me

Sibling

Gorgeous

We cannot keep lying to each other

Granite

Basalt

Limestone

Marble

No way

Also, here is a list of some common Canadian first and last names:

FIRST NAMES

Arthur, Don, David, Robin, Allen, Abe, Alfred, Hill, Bert, Benjamin, Bruce, Charles, Chuck, Chad, Dick, Drew, Daniel, Darren, Doug, Edward, Andrea, Alice, Astrid, Arabella, Ann, Richard, Tim, Ted, Kam, Raymond, William, Berth, Norman, James, Peter, Rene, Terry, Tom, Paul, Harry, John, Frank, Larry, Carl, Ken, Ernest, Tony, Ron, Ricky.

LAST NAMES

Abramson, Adamoski, Adams, Aeichela, Appleton, Baker, Barclay, Bingham, Boronowski, Byrne, Cheung, Clement, Cummings, Davidson, Dixon, Fredorak, Guilford, Haley, Heck, Hebert, Henderson, Jackson, Katona, Klatt, Klawikowski, L'Heurex, Lex, Lewry, Robson, Longmuir, Lotey, Lowry, Lucarnio, Mc Cuish, Mc Cusky, Mc Donnell, Martini, Nilson, Oswald, Ovzounian, Platt, Pollard, Polderman, Pointer, Rabang, Reynol's, Rodes, Rimington, Ringwald, Ross, Sell, Segal, Shirley, Shipman, Shoesmith, Smith, Snider, Speight, Tylor, Tessier, Unger, Urry, Vackery, Walkey, Wallace, Xiao, Xylinas, Xie, Yields, etc.

This is a sample of the ethnic and cultural richness of this country.

16

A PICNIC IN WHISTLER

Tuesday, August 2nd, 1988

Lydia and I went out together because we were going to spend the day with one of her cousins. We picked him up and drove to Whistler, a little town located

on the mountains, two hours north from Vancouver. Once there, we went to some stores and the supermarket to buy some food for the picnic.



There was a mime artist performing in an open area. We stopped to see his show and a few minutes later, we walked away. On the road, we saw a young man asking for a ride. He was from South America. Lydia asked us to speak in Spanish, which was a good idea for me since I had been speaking only English recently. He told us that he had been living in Canada for many years; he was working in a restaurant and was doing fine. Later, we took a ramp so that he could get off and we continued driving to the right place to have a picnic.

There, they had some benches and grills, like in *La Marquesa* in Mexico. We decided to stay exactly in front of the lake. It was big enough, so we took the things out of the car. We watched the lake, talked, and prepared some sandwiches.

I was stuffed, so I decided to take a nap. In the meantime, Lydia and her cousin went for a walk around the lake. I slept for 40 minutes, I knew that when I checked the time. When they came back, they asked me how I could fall sleep. “It is common to take a nap in Mexico”, I said, “in some states of my country people take naps at different times; naturally, not everybody does it because it depends on

each person's daily activities". They said that it was not common for people to take a nap in many other countries. They seemed to be very surprised.

We took some pictures and enjoyed the place. The view was gorgeous: the mountains covered by snow looked magnificent. I did not want to miss that beautiful view. When we were about to arrive at Vancouver, Lydia's cousin suggested that we should go to the Symour mountain, the highest in the city, to see the sunset. It was almost eight o'clock, so the sun was going to go down soon.

The sunset was picturesque. Unfortunately, there were so many mosquitos that it was impossible to stay there for long. When we arrived at Lydia's house, we conversed for a while; she suggested that I should start my trip to Vancouver Island the next day. It was the second trip we had planned during my stay in Canada. I packed what I needed for the trip: first of all, my camera -I was not going to leave it this time-, my papers such as my passport and ID card, and money.

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A TRIP TO VANCOUVER ISLAND

Wednesday, August 3rd, 1988

First, we went to the post office and then to the bank to change \$250 US into Canadian currency I received \$300 CAD. They requested the account number I had in that branch, but fortunately, Lydia was one of their clients, so I had no problems to change the money. Back at Lydia's place, I grabbed my luggage and started my trip. I waited for the 351 bus. I requested my transfer and asked the driver to let me know when we arrived at Mathew Exchange stop, where I would

have to take the 640 bus going to Tsawwassen. A few minutes later, the driver announced the stop; I got off and waited for the next bus.

There were no people at that bus stop. Actually, it was a stop in the middle of nowhere. A few minutes later, the bus arrived, and I showed my transfer so I did not have to pay again. We passed by Delta, a place where there are several residential areas. Once at the terminal, I went straight to the ticket office.



I bought a single ticket, known as foot passenger, and paid \$4.50 CAD, that is \$9,000 MEX. The ferries departed every two hours. They announced my departure soon. People got on board quickly and took a seat. It was a huge ferry with big windows to enjoy the view, several seats and a restaurant in the middle.

Through a loudspeaker, they welcomed everybody, gave instructions about the facilities, and told us how long it was going to get to our destination. The estimated time was one hour and thirty-five minutes, so I decided to take a look at the ferry.



There were many doors! Some of them led to the deck and some others to the lower level. I went downstairs to take a look. Workers were very busy. They were doing the type of work is required to run a ferry. I kept on walking and I was very surprised when I opened a door and saw many cars, trucks and even buses! That floor accommodated various types of vehicles. I walked a little between them. It was amazing to be aware of how much weight this ferry could carry. After a while, I went upstairs, to a floor in between, where there was a fast food place.

It was announced that soon we were going to come close to a group of islands. Most of the passengers went out to the deck, and we could say hello to the people who were on the other side. The view of the small islands and the sea was spectacular. There were people everywhere in the ferry, so I could converse with some of them. Even though, I had very short conversations, it was a good opportunity to speak in English. I took a couple of pictures. As I watched the landscape, I could enjoy the fresh air and the sunlight. All of a sudden, the arrival at Vancouver Island was announced.

Most of the people started going downstairs; about 80% of the passengers were travelling by car or by bus. During this time, I took a seat at the front of the ferry and waited for it to stop, but before getting off, I took some booklets from a shelf about some landmarks of the city of Victoria. I looked through them and picked out some I liked. Later, I was going to read carefully the information they provided. Once the ferry docked, I followed the people, which made it easier for me to get to the bus stop.

ARRIVAL AT THE CITY OF VICTORIA IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

After many minutes, the bus arrived. I asked if the bus passed by the hostel Victoria located on Yates street. The driver said it did, so I took a seat and enjoyed the view that consisted mainly of very clean areas and elegant residences. The fare was \$2.00 CAD, that is \$4,000 MEX, more expensive than in Vancouver. The total amount of money I spent to travel to Victoria was \$7.50 CAD and not \$11 CAD as planned, which meant that I could save \$3.25 CAD (\$7,000 MEX). Good, wasn't it? On arriving at the small city, the driver announced Yates [jeits] Street. That was my stop. It was 3:00 p.m. and I walked to number 516, the hostel, as indicated.

A MEXICAN RESTAURANT

The hostel was closed. I checked their hours and they opened at 4:00 p.m., so I decided to eat something. I happened to find a Mexican restaurant near there; I walked in and ordered some food. The prices were very high. I paid \$15 CAD, that is \$30,000 MEX. The owner of the place came close to me and asked where I

was from. I said from Mexico City. He was originally from Guadalajara and added that he missed it very much. I enjoyed the food and the conversation.

When I finished, I went to the hostel. I showed the card I was given in Jasper. I had no problems to check-in and I paid \$28 CAD (\$56,000 MEX) for three nights. They had rooms for women and men as well. Also, they had a kitchen, TV room, and a reception. There was a locker for each visitor next to the bunk beds.

Some of my roommates suggested that I should buy a lock. It just happened that there was a locksmith on the same street, so I bought one that cost \$5.50 CAD (\$11,000 MEX). almost half the amount of money I paid in the restaurant!!! Well, I did it just to make sure my belongings were safe at the hostel. I went back and rested for a while and then I went for a walk.

It was a very small city. I walked along several streets where there were stores selling souvenirs, restaurants, and museums. I just looked at everything this time. Once again, I went back to the hostel approximately at 10:00 p.m. I read a little before falling asleep.

A TOUR IN THE CITY OF VICTORIA

Thursday, August 4th, 1988

I went downtown: a big, square-shaped area surrounded by many buildings. There was a harbor right in the center and a square-shaped sidewalk where people sang and sold paintings, caricatures, and self-portraits. In the inner harbor there were two museums: The Royal London Wax Museum with its dramatic dioramas and the Maritime Museum of BC. In this area there were some restaurants and a very famous ivy-covered and tall building, The Empress Hotel.



I heard that the hotel was known for serving tea to the hotel guests or visitors at five o'clock. Apparently, the service was open to the public in general, but it was very expensive. The British Columbia Parliament Buildings were across from the museums.

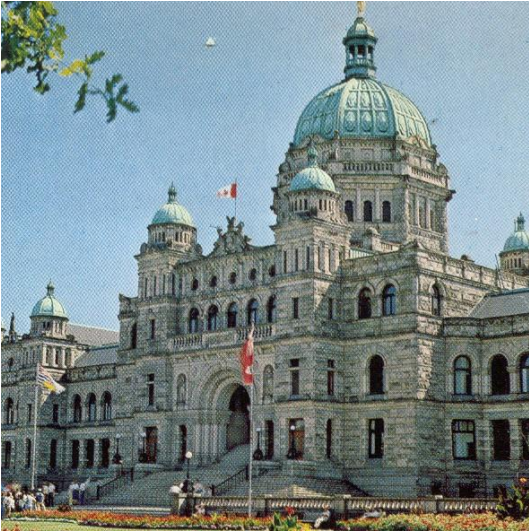




These buildings are a symbol of the city. They were built by Francis Mawson Rattenbury. I took a tour along with other tourists in these buildings. I learned about their history, the origin of their stained-glass windows and pieces that furnished all the rooms. They also talked about the main attractions in the area. At night, 3,000 small light-bulbs lit up these beautiful buildings and music with bagpipes was played outside.

The tour lasted for almost an hour. They took us through many rooms, showed the room where the Canadian authorities had their meetings, and also those special places reserved for important characters such as Queen Elizabeth from England and her son, Prince Charles. They had pictures of many Canadian government representatives throughout its history.

The tour guide said that the architect and designer of the British Columbia Parliament Buildings was also responsible for the construction of The Empress Hotel located on Belleville Street.



After saying that, the tour guide concluded the tour. This time, I ate in a fast food place, which was very cheap, \$2.99 CAD, that is \$5,800 MEX. I had some chicken with potatoes and a pop. There, I met a young person who worked in a mall. He told me he was from a city to the north of Canada, in the province of Saskatchewan, and asked me if I was working in the area. Of course, I said I was a tourist from Mexico, which was surprising for him since not many Mexicans lived there and those who did were working, not touring. We said good-bye and I continued onward with my trip.

I stopped by a bookstore and asked if they had Og Mandino's books. They pointed to the shelf where they were. I bought two more, *The Christ Commission* and *The Greatest Secret in the World*. I paid \$3.00 CAD, that is \$8,000 MEX each. I walked out of the store and then along the main streets.

There was a tourist information center on the corner of a street. They had the same booklets I saw on the ferry; I took the ones I did not have. I talked to one of the agents who recommended some places such as, The Butchart Gardens and the Museum of Civilization. Later, as I was near the hostel, I went back there. On

my way there, I walked into a store to buy some bread, ham, and pop. It was \$7 CAD in total, that is \$14,000 MEX.

In the room of the hostel I met a man from Taiwan. We conversed about our trip in Canada. After resting, he said he was going to go for a walk and see the British Columbia Parliament Buildings all lit up; he asked me if I wanted to go with him and I accepted. Then, he introduced me to his sister, a very pretty and small lady. The three of us went downtown. We saw the buildings fully lit up; there was so much light that the buildings looked even more elegant. The Empress Hotel was lit up as well. All this area looked completely different at night.



After that, we had dinner. We conversed about Mexico and Taiwan. We were interested in getting to know about each other's country. Then they told me they were in Canada to learn English. We exchanged addresses and went back to the hostel. I said good-bye to his sister since they were going to leave the city the next day.

I was going to stay there two more nights, so I had to plan my days.

THE ROYAL LONDON WAX MUSEUM

Friday, August 5th, 1988

I went to the public library. I checked the books they had, read for a while, and then took a look at some books that showed pictures of Canada and of general interest. There were a lot of people. I left the building at 1:00 p.m.

It was cloudy and rainy and I was very cold. I had to go to a place where I could be indoors: The Museum of Civilization. Someone told me about it. The admission was \$3.00 CAD, that is \$6,000 MEX. It took me almost three hours to go through all the rooms; I learned more about the history of Canada, especially about the Inuit people who settled down before the colonizers arrived.

In the museum, there was a restaurant, an auditorium for 536 persons, and a room where they had a special exhibition on Charles Chaplin. Also, they had several screens showing the most famous movies produced by this famous actor.

In some other rooms, they displayed objects, clothing, and utensils that belonged to the Indigenous Peoples. They used drawings, clothing, and statues made of wax to describe their culture. They also had a replica of the 19th century hotel showing several interesting objects such as lamps, braziers, pieces of furniture, etc. There was another room displaying stuffed birds.

I left the museum and after a short walk, I came across another museum, but smaller. It was The Miniature World Museum. I paid \$2.75 CAD, almost \$6,000 MEX for admission. They had models showing the way Charles Darwin's world was, the City of London in 1670, the wonderful world of the circus, a scale model of

a 1885 train, some passages of *Guilliver's Travels*, *The Fantasy Land* and *The Frontier Land*.



I did not want to miss the opportunity to visit the Royal London Wax Museum. So I bought a ticket. A person told me that wax figures were already sculptured during the period of the Pharaohs for religious purposes and later, in 1833, Marie Tussaud opened her first wax museum.

At the entrance, you can see the figures of the Canadian police wearing their well-known hat. I remember quite well the figure of Queen Elizabeth of England, Prince Charles, and Lady Diana, who was his wife.

Some other figures of famous people were: King George III, Sir James Douglas, George Washington, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Benjamin Disraeli, Martin Luther King, Lincoln, Charles de Gaulle, Napoleon Bonaparte, John F. Kennedy, Jeanne D'Arch, Christopher Reeve, Leonardo Da Vinci, Bach, Einstein, Christopher Columbus, Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, George Vancouver, Margaret Thatcher, Snow White and the Seven Swarfs, The Magic of Ox, Mr. Disney, a scene of Star Wars, Elvis Presley,

Elizabeth Taylor, Sophia Loren, Clark Gable, the first astronauts to walk on the moon, Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, Edwing Aldrin, and the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.

They had also some figures of religious characters such as Moses, Buda, Gandhi, Pope John Paul II, Pope Paul VI, and the last supper which was in a room far from the others and magnified through audio with the apostles and Jesus' voices at the time the last supper took place. It seemed very real. I watched the faces of the figures and they seemed to be talking. It was one of the displays that impressed me the most.

On the other hand, there was a figure of Terrance Stanley Fox, a sportsman who was born in Winnipeg in 1958. He was a very enthusiastic student and an athlete. At the age of nineteen, he was diagnosed with cancer in one of the bones of his right leg. In order to save his life, doctors amputated his leg and he had to learn how to wear a prosthetic one. He created the Marathon of Hope, a marathon he started in St John's, Newfoundland and was forced to stop in Thunder Bay, Ontario. It was amazing that he could run 3,300 miles that is 5,373 km through some provinces. He said that the marathon was to help others so that they could keep their hope. He died in 1981.

I left the museum and headed towards the hostel where I had some food and rested for a while. Since it was early, I decided to do the laundry. Each hostel has a laundry room which is cheap. I had to insert 75 cents in either washing machine or dryer. There, I met a woman from Israel who showed me how to use those machines. She was very tall and pretty and we talked while the clothes were being washed. We had a very nice and interesting conversation since I could ask

her about some places such as Nazareth and Bethlehem, and also we talked about religious matters.

As soon as we finished, I went back to my room, put my clothes away and went to bed since lights were turned off at ten o'clock, just like in the other hostels.

The next day, I bought a book entitled *The Greatest Miracle in the World*. I paid \$3.95 CAD, that is \$8,000 MEX, for it.



The BUTCHARD GARDENS

Saturday, August 6th, 1988

After walking around downtown, I bought a ticket for the Butchart Garden tour because I had heard it was worthwhile visiting. I paid \$21 CAD, that is \$42,000 MEX, and the bus departed at 5:00 p.m. I had some food, for which I paid \$3.00 CAD, that is \$6,000 MEX, then I went window shopping, and later I went back to the hostel to inquire if I was permitted to arrive late. They said there was no problem. I went to the stop for double-deckers, which was the bus I was going to

take for the tour. I handed in my ticket and they told me I could sit on the first or second deck. I was lucky to find a seat on the second one. It was announced that the tour would take five hours. They took us to downtown and gave some information about their landmarks, which was addressed, I believed, to people who had never been in that city before.



Once the tour that covered the city was over, they took us to the gardens, which was 21 kilometers north to the city. There was a sign showing the hours in the summer: open from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. We arrived at 6:30 p.m., so we still had some sun light for a few hours and also four hours and a half to enjoy the place.



The garden was organized as follows: the visitor information center located at the entrance, where I could see some brochures with information about the gardens in several languages; they also had a store where they sold books and items for gardening; the rest of the lot was divided in sections where they grew many types of flowers. We walked through the Italian garden, the Japanese garden, the rose garden, the tulip garden, etc.



We were told that the Butcharts travelled to many places around the world collecting different types of flowers. At the beginning, they planted some flowers in their garden and invited relatives and friends to see them. This was the origin of the gardens. Since the amount of flowers they grew increased, they looked for a bigger place which later on became a landmark. Originally the place was named Benvenuto, then Welcome, and finally The Butchart Gardens.



There was a fountain spraying water that changed pattern every five or ten minutes. I had not noticed that because I was watching the gardens, but some of the people I was travelling with told me that I had to observe how the pattern of the water changed. The patterns were the same as those of the fountains that are very popular nowadays.



It was a unique experience for me to see so many different colors and types of flowers together. It was the first time I was in a place like that. It was really worthwhile paying the admission fee to visit it. Any person could enjoy it, I am quite sure. We were told that this Garden of Eden had been visited since 1904 and that they added a new type of flower every year.



We went all over the gardens quickly so that we could see the fireworks. For a moment I thought that it would have been much better to arrive there in the morning so that we could have taken a break when necessary and followed the tour at our own pace. Anyway, we went to a lake where many people started gathering to see the fireworks. The show was great.



Before going back to the City of Victoria, I bought some postcards. I never thought that this tour could be one of the best experiences in my life. It is a place that I would like to visit again in the future. Many of the tourists knew each other by then, so we talked about our experience in the gardens among other things. As soon as we arrived at the city, the bus driver took the passengers as close as possible to their residence or hotel. I got off at the first stop that I was familiar with.



I arrived approximately at 11:30 p.m. The hostel was closed, so I rang the bell. The person in turn knew I was going to be late.

There were several people awake in the room. One of them asked where I was from, I answered, and we started a conversation. He spoke some English and sometimes he used German words, his mother tongue, which I could not understand at all. Our conversation was not very fluent, for when he did not know how to say something in English, he asked for help to his friends in German.

We talked for approximately half an hour. Then he gave me some coupons to buy pizza and some other things. Actually, that was the reason for him talking to me. He said he was going to leave the city so he was not going to need them. Finally, we exchanged our address and said good-bye. His name was Markus Ruths and I want to say that I am still in touch with this good friend of mine.

VICTORIA / VANCOUVER

Sunday, August 7th, 1988

This was the last day I spent on the island, so I strolled around the city for the last time. I left the hostel, stopped by the Mexican restaurant to say good-bye to the owner. Since I had to go back to Vancouver, he and his wife wished me a good trip. Then I went to Chinatown, where I had something light and then kept on walking.

I walked into a Catholic church where they happened to hold a mass. I prayed for a safe trip back to Vancouver first and then to Mexico. I had a few days left in Canada since I was going to fly back to my country on August 11th, to my beautiful and beloved Mexico.

Approximately at 3:00 p.m., I took the bus to the harbor, where I was going to get on the ferry at 4:00 so that I could arrive early at Lydia's home. The trip took less time, perhaps because they did not provide any tourist information this time. I stayed on the deck all the time. Once we docked on the other side of the coast, I took the bus and got off on the Matthew Exchange bus stop. I took a second bus, and shortly after that, I arrived at White Rock, where Lydia lived.

I was familiar with the area. Once at Lydia's place, we talked for a long time; I had so much to tell her about both the places I had been in and the people I had met. Once we finished, she asked if I wanted to go to a place called The Garden of Fantasy. I answered affirmatively and we left right away.

Once there, I went to the garden and she went to a store to buy a few things. There were several statues and replicas of landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, the Tower of Pisa, etc. A statue of Jesus captured my attention not only for the size, but also for the fine features of his face.

As I was watching the gardens, a bride and a groom arrived to have some pictures next to several flower arrangements. There were several people with them. It took me approximately 50 minutes to walk all over the gardens. After that, I met Lydia and we went to a coffee shop. Once we were back home, we noticed that there was still enough sunlight to walk along the beach, so we went there.

I had to thank Lydia for every thing she did for me during my stay in Canada. The only words I found to express this were as follows: I am very grateful for everything. THANK YOU. God bless you, Lydia!

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BACK TO MEXICO?

Monday, August 8th, 2007

Something curious happened to me that morning. When I woke up, I thought that I was in Mexico; I heard someone doing the dishes in the kitchen and I asked who it was in Spanish. Since I had no answer, I asked again. Suddenly, Lydia came out of the kitchen and asked me why I was speaking in Spanish to her. I could swear that it was my sister the one who was in the kitchen. The opposite happened to me during the first days I was back to Mexico; I spoke in English to my sister when there was no need to do so.

I made my luggage to go to Allen's house and watched TV for a while. Lydia's mother and some other relatives arrived; I greeted them and left for Northern Vancouver. I arrived at Allen's place approximately at 2:00 p.m. They welcomed me very warmly! I had not seen them for many days; we had just had the opportunity to talk over the phone.

We talked about the places I had been in and later, they gave me a gift: a t-shirt reading Vancouver, Canada. Also, they gave me some post cards and a bag with small bottles of perfume. I was very happy. The dinner they prepared was delicious; I could tell they had taken a lot of time in preparing it. They even cooked some Mexican food. I could not feel any happier. I went downstairs to my room, listened to some music and read for a while before I fell asleep.

I had only three more days left in Canada and at that point of my trip, I used to think of my home back in Mexico more and more often as time passed by for I missed my family and friends. I think that happens as the date to go back home after a long trip is approaching. I do not know if everybody has the same feelings after any trip. But something was for sure; the time to go back was coming closer and closer. On one hand, I wanted to see my family again, but on the other, I wanted to stay in Canada longer.

GOING SHOPPING IN VANCOUVER

Tuesday, August 9th, 1988

My friends prepared a Mexican breakfast that day in the morning. We had some Mexican-style eggs, coffee, bread, and tortillas. I would like to clarify that the tortillas were made of corn. They bought them at Lonsdale Quay Market, in a

store where they sold a variety of international products at very high prices. I told them that I wanted to go shopping, so they drove me to downtown. I spent \$150 CAD that morning, that is \$300,000 MEX. I had to buy some things my relatives and friends wanted me to get for them. I bought a suitcase for \$60 CAD, a pair of running shoes for my nephew Francisco Torres Ramírez, and a jacket for myself.

Later on, we went to a picture-gallery and then had some coffee. In Canada, people drink a lot of coffee; they usually have four or five cups a day. Children are not allowed to drink a lot because they can become addicted to it.

We went back home and had some food: veggie soup, meat, and Canadian beer. Allen suggested that we should again play that game where we could use both languages, English and Spanish: they described an appliance in English and I had to provide the name in Spanish, and then we had to do the same from Spanish into English. Some of the words we came up with were vacuum cleaner, microwave oven, refrigerator, beater, etc. We played for a while. After eating, Frances and I went to a store to have my rolls developed, for which I paid \$24.50 CAD, that is \$49,000 MEX. Then, she took me to a suspension bridge close by home. I took some pictures there.



I went downstairs to my room to rest for a while. It was just 6:30 p.m. and I had two more days left: one more day to stay and another day to fly back, which does not count as part of the trip. I was getting very excited.

I could not believe I took various types of transportation during my trip: plane, ferry, train, bus, double deck, local bus, car, and seabus. I did not have the slightest idea that something like the seabus existed.

That evening, Bob Speight, Frances' brother, his wife and two daughters arrived. We talked about my stay in Canada. As we were having coffee, Frances showed me a postcard from Luis, the man we had met when Allen, Frances, and Lydia were in Mexico in 1984. At that moment, he was living in the City of Anchorage, Alaska.

Also they showed some slides from that trip, when they were in San Miguel de Allende, and played some traditional Mexican music as a background. I remember one of them perfectly well: they were with Verónica Castro, a Mexican actress who happened to be in the lobby of the hotel where they were staying. She

was talking with somebody else, and I approached her to ask her if we could take a picture of her with my friends. She was very kind and accepted. We spent three hours watching slides and chatting. They also showed me some pictures of their trips to England and some other places they had been in.

The emotions I had that day were unforgettable. I felt nervous for my trip back to Mexico; it was an emotion I find hard to explain. I was happy but scared at the same time. All I could think of was, "Thanks God, thanks."

LESS THAN 48 HOURS: THE COUNTDOWN

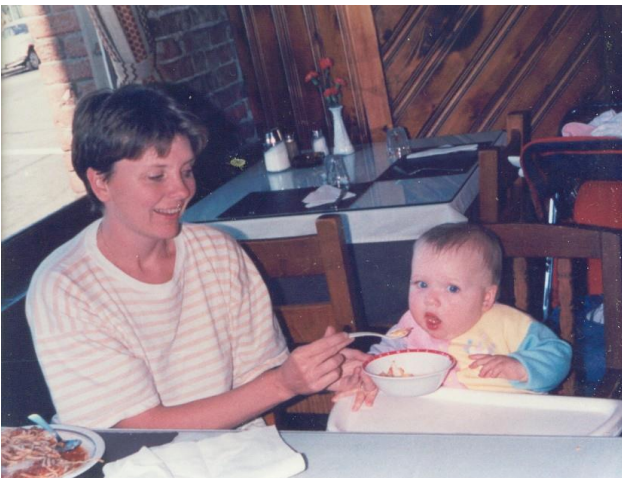
Wednesday, August 10th, 1988

Amazing!!! I was going to be with my family in less than 48 hours. The trip was coming to an end. I could not make any plans; all I had to do was to get ready for my flight back. I only talked about that. I got up at 6:30 a.m. I went for a walk with Allen and Alana. We talked about the Mexican economy, particularly mine and my family's financial situation. Then we went back to have breakfast with Frances.

I called my family to let them know the flight number and the time of my arrival. I could not believe that I would be back in Mexico the next day. Later on, we went to Stanley Park, we rested on the grass, took some pictures, and played with Alana.



Then we went to a planetarium where we enjoyed a presentation they gave on the area it was located. Right after that, Allen and Frances told me they had a gift for me: they invited me to an Italian restaurant. I had a delicious Italian meal which was a terrific experience for me.



We went back home. I only had to prepare my luggage and Frances helped in doing so. It took a while, but we could pack everything, except what I was going to wear the next day in the morning. It was just 7:00 p.m. when we finished, so I spent the evening resting and meditating on various things. I talked with Allen and

Frances for a little while before going to bed. I decided to go to bed at 10:00 o'clock. It was hard to go to sleep. I could not stop thanking God for all the great time I had.

THE LAST DAY IN CANADA

Thursday, August 11th, 1988

Even though the plane departed at 1:00 p.m., I had no time to do anything in the morning because time passed by very quickly. It is hard to do something on the last day of a trip. I woke up early, I went for a walk with Allen and Alana, and then we had breakfast. I put my luggage in the van at 10:00 a.m., for they were going to take me to the airport. We left their place early; I think it usually takes an hour or more to go from their house to the airport. On our way there, we stopped at the supermarket where Frances bought more gifts for me. I was excited, but also sad because I was going to leave Canada soon, but most importantly because those were the last minutes I was going to spend with my friends.

I took some pictures of the city from the van because I knew that was the view I was going to keep in my mind. We arrived at the airport, Allen parked his car, and we walked to the terminal where Delta Airlines was. It was not difficult to check-in because my friends were with me. Allen took a picture of us as they were printing out my ticket.



Allen asked why I was going to arrive at Mexico at 10:00 p.m. and the service agent said that the plane was going to stop twice: first in San Francisco and then in Los Angeles. We had some coffee as we waited for the flight to be announced. I called Lydia; it was very important to say good bye to her and thank her for letting me stay in her place.

Soon, they announced my flight and I said good bye to my friends. Some tears rolled down my eyes. I remember hearing them say, "Adiós amigo". Those were unforgettable minutes. As I was walking I felt happy, but above all thankful for my trip. Soon I was at customs where I showed my passports and tickets for San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Mexico City.

I would like to mention that there is an Airport Improvement Fee for departing passengers, which is \$20 dollars or \$40,000 MEX. Once that amount of money is paid, people can go to their gate. I did not know about it, but fortunately I had some money on me.

A few minutes later, we had to get on the plane. The flight number DL 1400M to San Francisco was announced. When we arrived there, we had a meal as we waited for some passengers to board the plane. Later, we flew to Los

Angeles. I asked someone to take a picture of me on the plane. I just enjoyed the flight.

We arrived at Los Angeles at 4:52 p.m. I was familiar with that airport because I had stopped there when flying from Mexico to Canada. Everything seemed easier there, especially because everybody or most of the people spoke Spanish. I walked to the gate where I was going to take the last plane to Mexico City.

MOMENTS OF INTENSE –HAPPINESS AND EXCITEMENT

The flight number DL 1746 was going to take off at 5:55 p.m. It was a three-hour flight and many kilometers to cover, but I felt that I was home already. When I got on the plane, I was disconcerted by the language: everybody was speaking in Spanish instead of English. Some kids were skate boarding on the plane and also cursing a lot. I do not think it was possible for these people to behave properly. Besides, various persons had many large baggages and did not know where to place them. The only thing that came to my mind was, “this is a typical behavior of a Mexican”.

The arrival was going to be at 10:25 p.m. Mexico time. We did not have any mishap during the flight. In my case, I just listened to music and rested. I had no idea who was going to be waiting for me at the airport.

Three hours later, the captain announced our arrival. He told us what the weather was like. I was very happy and those last minutes seemed to go on forever...I wanted to be home.

All of a sudden, the lights went off. The captain said we were in Mexico City. The light was coming from the street lamps and I could see the most famous buildings. Many people took pictures; all I could see was some people's cameras flashing. The plane made some turns. It was very exciting. They played some Mexican folkloric music very loudly. Right after that, the captain announced we were landing on Mexican territory.

It was an atmosphere full of happiness, euphoria, and excitement and everybody was caught up by it. I never thought that the arrival to my country was going to be like that! I enjoyed the welcome prepared by the airline a lot. I did not know if they did the same every time a plane landed, but I was sure that I was having a terrific time even in the last minutes of my trip. It was about to conclude and I had many good memories of the entire month.

As soon as the plane landed, I walked towards customs where I showed my papers. Then, I went to the exit of International arrivals, where I was sure someone was going to be waiting for me. Everything at the terminal was very slow. First of all, I had to wait long for my baggage; then, it took a while to go through customs. I left around 11:00 p.m. because there were so many people.

BACK WITH MY FAMILY IN MEXICO

I went through the main exit and there I heard my sister calling me. She was with her boyfriend Aurelio Pérez, who eventually became my brother-in-law, next to the main exit. I gave them my baggage and walked to meet the others.

There were many people waiting for their relatives. Suddenly, Ignacio Rosas, one of my friends, came out of the crowd and said, "Welcome" and then gave me a hug. My sister Lucila was behind him and gave me a tight hug. Another person who went to the airport was my sister Consuelo's friend, Elena, who had stayed in my sister's house during my trip. Before leaving the airport, we took some pictures of us and then went to the subway.

My friend took a taxi to go to work. My sister's boyfriend got off at Guerrero subway station to go home to the north of the city, and we changed lines to go to Observatorio station.

We arrived home at midnight. I let my father know I was there and shortly after that I went to bed. I could talk in detail about my trip the next day; I was tired because it was a long trip...I took off and landed three times the same day... all that plus the time I had to wait just tired me out.

Before going to bed I called my friends in Canada to let them know I was home and to thank them once more for their hospitality. As soon as I hung up, I went to bed. I was very excited yet.

All I could think of at that moment was, "Thank God, I believe in you".



A FINAL COMMENT

I have been in touch with my friends since the year 2004, not only by phone but also by mail. I think we are going to be friends forever.

Also, I keep in touch with my friend Markus who is planning to come to Mexico in the near future.

By telling the story of my trip, I do not mean to be arrogant, nor to make people believe things are too easy. Rather, my message is that if they want to achieve a goal, despite a tight financial situation or lack of resources, they can get it if they are willing to do it; they just have to pay the price for it. Many people are afraid of that price, however, when they get what they want, that price becomes meaningless.

Finally, I would like to quote a line from the Bible, “Faith that moves mountains”. When this teaching is applied to people’s lives, it increases our faith in that supreme power that is with us in those unforgettable moments.

I want to give thanks to all those persons who have read my book for sharing this wonderful experience with me. My Email is: manuelra80@hotmail.com