

TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



And then there were none?

I am a space-age pioneer. I have packed a passport in England, I have sideswiped giant turtles with a rowboat on the China Sea, and I have slogged through the wilderness with natives to Pierres in Cheyogan on a Saturday night.

My footprints have been left on the world partly because of itchy feet and partly because of fate. Father used to say on a Friday night, "Be ready in half an hour, we're going to the cottage for the weekend." The Ford Motor Co. transferred my engineer husband to jobs, and homes, in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore.

And businessmen like Elliot Elkin, who understand wanderlust, developed the charter flight.

Earlier this month, however, the Southfield-based firm of Elkin Tours folded. That may be the beginning of a story that ends up keeping us all at home.

Elkin Tours was one of the three largest tour wholesalers in the U.S. It sold low-priced charter flight seats through travel agents.

Elkin also was the paternal company of World Wide Sportsmen Club, which offered even lower-priced tours to members. Ten years ago, World Wide offered luxury meals and frills, but when the frills disappeared, the low fare satisfied travelers who would rather fly all night than pay the higher fares of scheduled airlines.

Regular airlines could not compete because their prices were controlled by the Civil Aeronautics Board. That changed this year when Freddy Laker got permission to offer no-frill, first-class, first-served flights on Skytrain. The CAB removed its restrictions on scheduled airlines and paved the way for discounted air fares.

Ironically, the company that pioneered low fares was hoisted on its own petard, put out of business by the reduced fares offered on the regular lines. People in the travel industry are wondering whether the airline business might end up like the supermarket business, however. Supermarkets put mom-and-pop stores out of business with low-priced food and then promptly raised their prices.

If that happens in the travel industry, you and I may have to blaze our trails another way.

When supersaving—

IF YOU ARE planning a low-cost domestic trip and are confused by the discount fares, let your travel agent do the figuring. He or she is just as confused, but has the time to coordinate information.

(A travel agent's commission is paid by the airlines. It costs you nothing to use her or his services.)

A Supersaver fare can save you up

to 50 per cent if you fly after 9 p.m., with greater savings midweek. A limited number of seats are available on all U.S. airlines, and reservations must be confirmed and tickets purchased at least 30 days before your flight. Reservations cannot later be changed without rewriting the ticket. Here the traveler may be charged a \$20 penalty fee. The number of stops also is limited.

Don't feed the bears

IN CASE YOU think half the world is up in the air, focus your eyes on the ground and you will see thousands of campers like Dennis and Shirley Rueger of Livonia, who saw more of the wilderness than they bargained for on a recent trip through Michigan.

A skunk, a bear and an alligator were all part of the story they brought home to their neighbors.

The Ruegers, with 14-year-olds Tina and Carol and 10-year-old Mike, were in an Indian River campground when Shirley told the kids to "stop making all that noise" in the middle of the night. This made sense, except the kids were all asleep.

When Dennis unzipped the tent and peered into the adjoining screened

area, the white tail of a skunk wagged against the early morning sky. He hastily closed the zipper and went back to bed.

In a campground further north, Mike learned not to feed the bears at a local dump. One frisky young fellow of several hundred pounds was annoyed because the tidbits offered by tourists had run out. He sniffed Mike's hand.

Finding it empty, he then fixed his large mouth around Mike's thigh.

Mike found he could run faster than he ever imagined.

If you have an interesting travel story, send a note with your phone number to Iris Sanderson Jones, 22170 W. Nine Mile, Southfield 48064. Allow time for a reply.

Planning helps both in developing and touring Oz

From his hilltop house above Figueroa Terrace, Farmington Hills artist Eric Jones looks at scrub trees and country grass. When Jones, who now attends Art Center College of Design, turns his head to the south, there a ½ mile away, is the skyline of downtown Los Angeles.

At the NBC studios in Burbank, Bruce Rubinstein, of Farmington Hills and a University of Michigan graduate, waits for his chance to break into the production end of TV. For now, he is a page who monitors long lines of patient tourists waiting their chance to get into the "Tonight" show.

Gary Serlin, formerly of Livonia, has made it up another rung of the ladder into the diversity and illusion of Los Angeles. The U-M graduate in film and television is an assistant producer of the "Tomorrow" show.

All of them learned that greater L.A. is a different travel experience than that found in most American cities. It didn't grow out from the core, but jigsaw-puzzled in patches of independent cities from downtown west 20 miles to the sea.

It has been called suburbs in search of a city. It has something for everyone, but if you don't plan ahead, you'll just keep going around in circles on the Hollywood, Palmdale, Golden State, Pasadena, Glendale, Long Beach and Ventura freeways under the 365-day, smog-filtered sun.

Tourists need to plan ahead, and it doesn't hurt to have friend with a car or a friend like Chris Hills, director of the Greater Los Angeles Visitor and Convention Bureau.

Hills advises travelers to tour by minibus, to take a bus or car straight out Wilshire Boulevard past Hollywood and Beverly Hills to the beaches running south to San Diego and north to San Francisco, and to schedule family amusements like Disneyland or tours of the studios and wineries.

THE FIRST THING people from Michigan notice about downtown Los Angeles is a glass building, rising halfway up the skyline, a Renaissance Center twin. It's the Bonaventure Hotel, built with the same atrium-and-pool design as the Plaza Hotel, and run by the Host International hotel chain.

A minibus directly across Flower Street tours the downtown area for 15 cents. The minibus drives past the World Trade Center, the various city halls and office buildings, Little Tokyo, down Alvera Street to Chinatown and back.

According to Hills, new building in the heart of the city is not so much a renaissance as it is a birthing of a real downtown for L.A.

The reasons you can't tour L.A. like you tour other cities is because dozens of little independent towns grew together into one big city, with no real downtown. Now we are build-



ing a real center city for the first time.

L.A. doesn't pick up a beat until one drives or travels by bus the 17 miles west along Wilshire to the Pacific. Hollywood is there, although the movie stars have been replaced by rock stars. It still is worth a trip to Grauman's Chinese Theater and to nightclubs like the Comedy Store, where old hands like Richard Pryor join new talent trying it out on the stage.

If you're looking for Jean Harlow's Hollywood of the 1930s, you'll probably be disappointed. The streets are literally star-studded, with famous names of stars on the sidewalk, but it looks more like Times Square with palm trees.

The fantasy and illusion is more elegant and expensive but just as real in Beverly Hills, where streets follow uphill courses past homes of celebrities and downhill past the now-famous house of the sheik's son who painted the whole thing green and put plastic flowers in the urns. (Artists like Jones call it a social comment, but residents like Zsa Zsa Gabor call it a disaster.)

As the sun shines on the high-rises, the sand cliffs and the six lanes of cars along the Pacific Coast Highway at the beach strip, one can gaze past parking lots and people beaches to white sails roaming the sea to the horizon.

There is a beach for every taste. Venice Beach is what every Midwesterner pictures when he or she thinks

of that wild and crazed California.

People from 10 to 80 mob the asphalt strip beside the pure sand beach, skateboarding, rollerskating, strutting and strutting. There is a boy barking north with a parrot on his handlebars and a boy barking south with a snake around his naked chest.

The local Swami rules this part of the beach with his booze, his long gray hair and his candor.

Also on the beach was a gang of young men which had a shootout that sent several of them to the hospital and left the crowd running for cover.

There was blood, but it was hard not to look for the movie cameras.

THEY SHOOT PEOPLE at Universal Studios in Burbank, too, but the cowboys always get up and walk away. The \$5 tour there begins at 8 a.m. Get there early if you don't want a one-to-two-hour wait in line. You are hauled by train to movie sets designed to show you behind the scenes, and to streets where you suddenly will see the familiar houses from your favorite television programs.

The train gives you a few little thrills for your money. You watch the Red Sea part, cross a collapsing bridge and are attacked by the shark from "Jaws," all in the name of fun. The final stage is an exhibition area where you can visit a variety of free shows. If you only can see one, Los Angeliens recommend the stunt show, where they shoot cowboys off the roof on a regular basis.

You can see another kind of illusion in Burbank, where Rubinstein mans the door to Studio One. "I've been star-struck since I was a little kid," he said. "Here, I've met every celebrity I ever dreamed of meeting." His next dream is to get a job where he can use his degree as a producer or director.

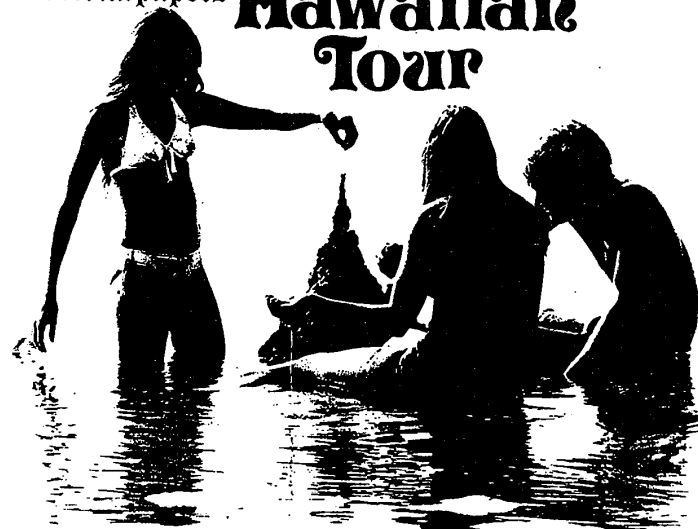
How does one get into the "Tonight" show without standing in line? You don't. But, by writing ahead (at least two months), they'll send a card which can be redeemed for tickets; and then you stand in line.

If you like a little culture and a little horticulture with your hype, you may wish to end it all, as so many others, at Forest Lawn. Only in L.A. could a cemetery be turned into a tourist attraction, complete with guidebooks.

There's the simple little garden of the Little Chapel of the Flowers, which might fool you into thinking that it is all really very tasteful.

Around the corner, in the high stone church building, amid copies of most of Michelangelo's sculpture, a beautiful stained-glass window copy of Da Vinci's Last Supper waits for you behind drawn curtains. A hushed voice, a voice from heaven(?), commands you to take your seat while the masterpiece is unveiled to the sound of music and commercials.

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