

Adventures Of Jim Hill

Shipwreck, Earthquake And Weirdos

By CHARLES VARKOLY REDFORD

What do you do when you're young, single, restless, and have a few bucks to spare?

Why, bum half way around the world, of course.

Take it from Jim Hill of 8861 Virgil, Redford Township. He did just that for seven months beginning last November.

From Redford to Australia and back again, the 1970 Thurston grad hitchhiked, scrounged, survived a shipwreck, slept in a Fijian village, and met a lot of weirdos along the way.

And that's not even the half of it.

Sparked by a boyhood desire to visit Australia and dissatisfaction with life at Michigan State University, Hill, 20, dropped out last year. He then started planning to make his dream come true.

"Being so restless, I just wanted to travel," said the 6'1, 180 pounder, who wears his hair moderately long.

"Australia has always been sort of an obsession with me."

"When I was going to the university," he related, "I could see I wasn't really interested in anything there, so I figured I'd go earn some money and travel."

And travel he did. Working on a tugboat in the Detroit River last year, Hill scraped up enough coins to launch his lengthy sojourn.

The entire trip cost \$1,500, he estimated - about \$1,000 for travel and \$500 for living expenses.

Though the money he'd saved was not enough, he found he could work overseas and make do with basics.

With a backpack and about 46 pounds of gear, Hill made his move last November, leaving Redford's icy winter behind for the pleasures and dangers of the South Pacific.

Striking up a deal with a new car dealer, he drove a late model auto cross country to Los Angeles, taking US 66 through the deep South.

"I was just lucky," he commented. "The dealer had a lot of cars he wanted driven out in the winter, so I grabbed at the chance."

The trip across the country, however, was by no means a snap, he said. There were dust, blizzards, and "an awful lot of snow" before he arrived in sunny southern California.

After delivering the car, Hill set about traversing the Pacific in style. "I had all my hopes on taking a freighter," he said, but that idea fell through after he spent two weeks hitchhiking north to San Francisco and south to San Diego, searching in vain.

"There was a dock strike at the time," he said, "and I just couldn't find anything going out."

Finally, he boarded an Air New Zealand jetliner in Los Angeles and headed for the Pacific, 17 degrees south of the equator.

Why Tahiti? "Well, I was allowed so many stops," he commented, and I'd heard a lot about it, so there I went."

There he spent about a week, before departing by cruiser for Tahiti's sister island, Moorea, which is rugged, mountainous, and sparsely inhabited.

Hill said he preferred the outlying areas best during his trip, and generally avoided cities.

"I just bummed around meeting people and tried to stay out of trouble," he laughed. "I went to a few bars in Tahiti and they were really rough."

Hill was somewhat disappointed by Tahiti, because it has become a tourist center and is quite commercialized.

"It seems like the culture has really dropped," he commented.

The rugged Moorea was more to his liking, though he found the natives a "bit arrogant."

"As I was hiking around the island, some would swear at me and others would be really friendly. Some will invite you in and offer you food."

Seeking the ultimate, he journeyed to the top of an ancient Moorean volcano where he slept for two days.

"It was a perfect view of the island," he said. "You could see the whole reef and it was sure better than any hotel."

Determined to probe further westward, however, he set out for New Zealand, where he spent 2 1/2 months.

He hitchhiked up and down the north and south islands conversing with drivers along the way.

"The first thing that struck me when I got there," he said, "was that I was on the wrong side of the road."

That discovery brought another. Styles of hitchhiking vary all over.

Jerking his arm in all different directions, he demonstrated that while hitchhiking is universal, the signs aren't.

In fact, in some places, the American style can be insulting, he said.

"Well, I wanted to save money and meet the people," he said. And that brought new insights.

"Talking with the people who pick you up, you really learn a lot about your own country, too," he remarked.

"They ask you a lot of things about your country, such as racism and Vietnam."

"I really learned a lot about the U.S."

He also said New Zealanders are probably the friendliest people he met.

Of the predominantly rural areas, he said, "Even people like old ladies will stop and pick you up. They think it's really great you've come to see their country. Most of them will even invite you in for tea."

Shunning the cities and their hotels, Hill chose to sleep out during most of his stay, using his sleeping bag.

"On my budget, you have to sleep out," he said. "That's where you save your money."

He found the rustic atmosphere pleasant, noting that many housewives still bake fresh bread each morning.

Thieves finally caught up with him, however, and he found himself with only 12 pounds of gear. Thieves got some of it, he sent some home, and then his tent fell apart.

"From then on I just slept under the stars," he added. "But I was lucky because it was pretty dry."

"You've got to be careful, though," he pointed out. "In the islands, the authorities are pretty rough. If you want to sleep out, it's best to find a place to hide."

The police in Australia and New Zealand, however, are very friendly, he said. "In fact, they say if you need a place to sleep, you can come to the jail. They picked me up quite a few times hitchhiking," he said.

Then there was the night the big earthquake hit New Zealand while he was sleeping out.

"I just happened to wake up and all of a sudden I heard a rumbling. I was miles away from anywhere."

"I jumped up and the ground started rolling," he recalled, learning later that the quake scored 6 1/4 in the Richter scale.

"But I just figured there was nothing I could do about it," he said casually, "so I went right back to sleep. You just accept it."

"Actually, it's better than getting killed on a freeway," he laughed.

Though he toured Wellington, New Zealand's capital city, Hill was unimpressed.

"Cities are about the same all over the world," he said unenthusiastically.

Still more adventures were in store for the already seasoned traveler as he made his way to Australia. There he found a job and lived in old convict barracks built without any regrets, he left for Tasmania, an island off the southeastern corner of Australia. There he spent a couple nights in a 160-year-old building once used to house convicts when Australia was a giant penal colony.



JIM HILL of Redford Township ponders his next hitchhiking journey after a seven-month tour of the South Pacific. (Observer photo)

160-year-old building once used to house convicts when Australia was a giant penal colony.

"You've got to be creative," he laughed, "even though some of the locals said it was haunted."

"Then it was getting cold and I was ready for some nice warm weather," he said, so he left for Queensland, further north. Stopping in the city of Brisbane, he found himself broke again.

"Fortunately, I met some kids who taught me leatherwork and I did that for two weeks," he said, "making leather belts, watchbands, and so on."

"With more pocket money and a desire to explore further north, he was off to Cairnes, where the country's main highway ends."

It was a long, rugged haul, he remembered. "A lot of days you just ache from being jostled around in those old trucks. And the roads are really bumpy."

But he enjoyed the area's tropical rain forest climate and rested about two weeks.

Swimming at area beaches took up a portion of his time, as Hill recalled sharks and underwater adventures off the reef surrounding the island.

Teaming up with several fellows who were snorkeling, he explored the underwaters. "You just lose yourself," he said, "but you really have to keep an eye out for the sharks. You can see them about 80 feet away."

He said it wasn't unusual to see two or three pass by each afternoon. Shark calls—or sirens—announce their presence to the unaware, he said.

While moseying around, he met a fellow with a yacht at Cairnes, and together they sailed south.

It was the vessel's first ocean voyage, he added, and after they sailed about 200 miles from the Barrier Reef and the coast, the ship ran aground, leaving them stranded.

The heavy tide gave them problems trying to correct the situation, and finally the two parted company. Hill hitched his way back to Brisbane.

There he spent two days, hitched his way to Sydney, and decided it was time to head back home.

It wasn't without regrets, however. Recalling the Australian girls, Hill remarked, "Well, actually, I think they're better than American girls. For one thing, they're not as marriage conscious, and they're really independent."

"They travel quite a bit—and they're lots of fun. How do the Australians like their beer?"

"Boy, I thought Americans drank a lot of beer," he replied, "but their beer is 10 to 12 per cent alcohol."

"It's really powerful stuff and takes a while to get used to it."

In fact, in New Zealand he added, "They come with great big gasoline trucks and dump the beer into large tanks with hoses."

The trek home was no less unrewarding. Stopping over at Fiji, he spent two days in a village but was really different from Australia," he said. "Just another cultural shock."

"But it was a lot of fun. The natives eat a lot of plain kava and drink quite a bit of kava, a kind of alcohol."

"At times when they drink that, they get out their guitars, and it really turns into a wild situation!"

The only disappointment was the crass commercialism, he said, "in Fiji," he warned, "you've got to keep asking what their motives are."

Pushing eastward, he flew to Pago Pago in American Samoa, spent one day, and was off to Hawaii.

He stayed two weeks in a youth hostel in Honolulu, and sadly recalled the commercialism, the cold he caught, and the fact "my money was getting pretty low."

Hill then headed for San Francisco by jet where he renewed his relationship with the California "weirdos."

"There are a lot of really wild people there," he said. While hitchhiking to Seattle on the way home, he told one fellow who picked him up.

"He told me about subterranean underneath a mountain and he was going up there to see them," Hill recalled. "He said they were flying saucer men - and he was kind of serious."

Edging along US-101, he arrived in Seattle six days later. It was already June 4, he began hitchhiking non-stop across US-90 through the Rockies.

Sharing the driving with others, he ate at truck stops and made the trip home in 45 hours.

"That's just the way it turned out," he said. "No mishaps, just straight through. Seated in his carpeted bedroom with a giant map of the world posted on a wall, the seasoned traveler looked philosophically on the trip."

Recalling his "university" days, Hill said the trip meant more to him than staying in school.

"As far as education goes, all they ever did at MSU was assign books and I'd read them. Well, I can do that on my own," he said.

"I read plenty of books while I was travelling—besides learning about people, culture, even foreign politics."

"You learn the U.S. isn't the only one that has a lot of problems," he said.

Still proud of his own country, Hill remarked that the U.S. has the best roads anywhere.

But he was upset about the fast pace of life here compared to other countries.

"What I'd really like to see here is a slower pace and more enjoyment," he said.

"Like other countries, we could still learn to live cheap, live well, have fun, and still get things done."

With a sensitivity for others, he recalled seeing many arrogant Americans overseas.

"Americans have a bad reputation as travelers," he said. "Like in Tahiti, I saw Americans demanding ham and eggs for breakfast."

"When you're in a foreign country," he added, "you just want to observe things—not disturb them. That's what I tried to do."

He'd seen crime, he said, but nowhere as bad as here. He'd also seen poverty, but none as bad as America's city slums.

Despite our own eyesores, he lauded the U.S. for its efforts to stem pollution. Other countries eventually must follow suit, he warned.

And what now? What do you do for an encore after all that?

"I'm going to earn a few dollars trying to paint some houses around here," he said. "Then I'll probably head down to Mexico in September and spend the winter there."

"These Michigan winters are murder!"

Hamilton's Net Up For Quarter

Both revenues and net income are up for the second quarter of 1973, announced Hamilton International Corp. of Farmington. Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Company is the principal subsidiary of the corporation. Net income for the first half of the year, which ended June 30, was \$1,327,300 compared to \$887,400 for the same period in 1972. Net income realized in investment losses was \$1,315,700, and dividends on preferred stock were 18 cents per share compared to 14 cents in 1972. For the second quarter alone (the three months preceding June 30), net income was \$759,300, compared to \$498,300 for the comparable period last year.

Belleville Lake Restocking Topic

An informal meeting will be held, probably late this month, to provide an opportunity for public review and comment on a state Department of Natural Resources' proposal for temporary draining of Wayne County's Belleville Lake for game fish restocking. The restocking process, slated for sometime in September, would include a gradual lowering of Belleville Lake by opening a Detroit Edison Co. dam near the intersection of 194 and Haggerty Road. Edison has agreed to cooperate with DNR and local governments in the project. Many carp and other rough fish would pass over the dam and into the Huron River with the receding lake water, with those few fish remaining killed by chemical treat-

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W.J. HAYES STATE PARK

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NESTLED IN THE HEART OF SOUTHERN MICHIGAN'S ROLLING IRISH HILLS, W.J. HAYES STATE PARK IS NINE MILES WEST OF CLINTON ON US-12 AND M-124. THE VARIED TOURIST AND HISTORICAL ATTRACTIONS THROUGHOUT THIS AREA ADD TO THE PARK'S POPULARITY. THE PARK HAS 654

A SMALL TO MEDIUM-SIZE FIRE EXTINGUISHER HAS MANY USES. THE DRY EXTINGUISHER, RECOMMENDED FOR MARINE USE IS BEST. PRESSURE CONTAINERS WILL BEAT THE MURDERER. ESPECIALLY IN SMALL CAMPER UNITS. THEY ALSO ARE USEFUL FOR DRYING IGNITION WIRES AND ELECTRICAL CONNECTIONS.

Bring 'em back ALIVE!

DOAN'S FOR (1973) BY S.L. DOAN

Irish Hills Area Offers Scenery And History

The picturesque Irish Hills, one of the beauty spots of Michigan, and a variety of tourist and historical attractions, form a backdrop for campers at W. J. Hayes State Park, according to Automobile Club of Michigan. The 654-acre park, nine miles west of Clinton on US-12 and M-124, is spread over rolling scenic hills and includes all of Round Lake and a half mile of sandy beach on Wampers Lake. The park has 210 campsites, 157 with electricity. Last year's attendance was 482,250, which places Hayes sixth among 32 parks across southern and central Michigan. Boats are available at a concession on Wampers Lake. A modern outdoor center for small groups is located in a wooded section of the park's interior. Other features include an extensive picnic area, bathhouse, library, boat livery and store. There also is a sanitary disposal station. The area's attractions contribute greatly to the park's popularity. Twin observation towers, on US-12 east of Cambridge Junction offer a panoramic view of the hills. There is an admission charge to the towers. Cambridge State Historic Park is at the intersection of US-12 and M-24. In the park is historic Walker Tavern, an oldtime stagecoach tavern built in 1832 and associated with several prominent per-

sons in American history. The tavern is undergoing restoration, and at present is not open to the public. St. Joseph's Shrine, a stone church on US-12 east of Cambridge Junction, is an enlargement of a stone chapel built by Irish settlers in 1654. The shrine has drawn uncounted multitudes of worshippers to its outdoor stations of the cross along a small lake. The Hidden Lake Gardens at Tipton, is comprised of 620 acres of rolling Irish Hills. The gardens were a gift to Michigan State University in 1945. Strung out in other areas are a score of other attractions, ranging from a "Pre-historic Forest" to gravely-defying "Mystery Hill," where water runs up and people can't fall down. Not far away is the Michigan International Speedway and recently-opened Greenwood Acres, a sort of country club for camping families.

Most extensive of all the attractions is "Stagecoach Stop," an 1890-vintage Wild West town now in its ninth season. It's also on US-12, three miles east of the M-50 and US-12 intersection. Other attractions in the nearby area include the Irish Hills Playhouse; Stylon Arboretum at Hillside; Bauer Manor, a roadside dating to 1834, located seven miles west of Clinton on US-40 and a restaurant; Springville Inn, six miles west of Tipton on M-50, another old roadside house now an antique shop; and Monroe Historical Museum, on the site of the first settler's home in the Monroe area.

DNR Films Available

LANSING The Department of Natural Resources' revised movie catalog for late 1973 and early 1974 is now available to film-borrowing clubs, schools and other resource-oriented organizations in Michigan and out-of-state.

Many of the 35 films in the new folder are prize-winning movies on fishing, hunting, wildlife management, along with water and other Michigan resource-related subjects. New listings include: "A Drop of Water" and "The Kirtland's Warbler." Films can now be booked from two locations. Most titles are offered, on a cash and carry basis, at the Detroit Information Office, 17800 Woodward.

Available titles, film descriptions, loan service fees and how-to-order details are in the new free folder. Copies can be obtained by writing to the Detroit office.