

A LONG DAY TO SAN DIEGO FROM LA

There I was, only a couple of hours into it,
On a chilly, Southern California winter morning, on the thumb,
not knowing where I was or where I was going
just thrilled to be out of that last ride,
a cramped VW delivery van,
Carlos, per his oval patch, at the wheel;
me, in the middle; and a Road Scholar on my right:
open sores on his face and hands, pungent stench of urine
simmering in the radiator-heat of the closed-windowed cab.

I'll get out here, I suddenly said, wanting to vomit, a pounding in my head ...
physically sickened by the closeness of the poor fellow next to me ...
followed by an hour spent God-knows-where watching God-knows-who
pass me by ...

Where you headed ... ? called a deep male voice from within the dark interior of a sleek,
low, flashy new sports car which pulled up next to me.

San Diego? Cool. Hop in. I'll take you to the harbor ... and off we flew,
the smell of new leather on a warming day – such a pleasant change.

I wondered about the relationship of San Diego to the 'harbor',
but the rate of speed was such ...80 or 90 MPH through suburban streets ...
that I forgot to ask anything other than, 'What's the rush?'

Gotta go ... Get on my boat, sail away ... Can't take any more ... Leaving today.
Where to ... ? Aw ... naw? Really?

Scary - the speed, his crazy eyes, tensed face ... and Tahiti? Alone? On a whim?

Before I could ask, he thankfully stopped. Here's the highway. San Diego's that way ...
DEO GRACIAS! Having been an altar boy, I knew when to pray and what to say.

Hours ensued. Lonely. No food.
The next ride, my last, with darkness falling fast - a VW bus full of stoned-out
hippies, good rock 'n roll and veggies for the road ...
San Diego? Cool, man. Yeah, cool. Hop in ... and I was off again.

By midnight, I alit, no worse for wear ... a scraggly beard, dirty hair –
finally there, in the promised land.

The end of a long day to San Diego from LA.