

## Vietnam



**Sent:** Saturday, March 15, 2003 5:49 AM

**Subject:** The Streets of Hanoi, or perhaps-Hanoi, kQ

those of you who are fans of 70s tv will remember carl maiden and michael douglas as cops in "the streets of san francisco." similarly, jack lord played the evercool Steve garrett in "hawaii 5-0," who each episode would somehow manage to say "book 'em dannoo." the point is that this city is a knockout: the streets are alive with people and motorcycles and motorcycles and

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motorcycles; the architecture is alive; and perhaps most importantly there's trees alive everywhere. so I figure its time to do a police show from here to put this place on the map: with a vietnamese-looking carl maiden and a chinese-looking michael douglas. of course, they'd have to be riding scooters and shouting to each other over the incessant honking that is the streets of hanoi. but that's something any good sound editor can fix. or perhaps the show should have a "hawaii 5-0" feel to it, with a french version of sieve garrett (after all this place was a french colony and the french influence goes everywhere from the outstanding buildings with their green shutters to the omnipresence of croissants): "croissants danno." I mean really, the french just sit around and talk about stuff, so that's about the most our french police captain could order.

the french influence also goes to the first place I visited here: hua lo prison. not to worry, I wasn't arrested or anything like that. its just that i'd always heard about the "hanoi hilton." that's where the viet cong kept u.s. airmen shot down during the war, hence the nickname given it by u.s. troops. but the prison was kicked into action by the french way back in the 1800s to warehouse political prisoners. then the japanese adopted it when they were in control. finally when the north vietnamese gave the french a final kick in the ass, they took it over. I had to give you some of this background so I could share with you a couple of insights I had while in a place no one really likes to go.

first of all, the escapes. in 1945, while the japanese ran the joint, 16 guys escaped by climbing through the sewers. perhaps we can include this as a flashback scene in one of our "streets of hanoi" episodes. similarly, when the french were back at the helm in 1951, 20 more guys did the climb-through-the-sewer-to-get-out-of-prison trick, the point is the insatiable spirit of these blokes. and they were just getting started. for example, they hadn't yet seen the need to create the ho chi mirth trail, that is a whole other story about the fortitude of many, quick aside here before I forget: one of the heros of the war is a lady who endlessly paddled troops across a river at one point along the supply routes in spite of constant "enemy" fire (don't worry folks, I am not forgetting that it is we of the west who are perceived as the one-time enemy of this place--which is largely forgotten in the push for intercontinental trade). that lady's paddle and hat are in a museum along with her picture. no matter what your politics, ya gotta admire someone like that.

so back to the prison, more important than the escapes is the almond tree. this one stopped me in my tracks, still there and full of leaves is a tree that has a small commemorative plaque beside it. it is a symbol of survival. the inmates ate its nuts to improve their health, they used its bark and young leaves to cure dysentery. and perhaps more importantly they met surreptitiously near it "to discuss measures on fighting against the enemy's severe confinement and barbarous repression." maybe one tree started a whole war.

what's a little scary and unlike this culture is that a good half of the former grounds were sold off to make room for a highrise "serviced apartment." thus, just behind the almond tree, you can see the lobby for a high-end apartment with its couches and trimmed trees. I take comfort, however, in hoping that the beliefs of these folks bear true: they say that in places where great emotion and anguish has occurred, the spirits continue to reside. I sure as hell wouldn't be renting no apartment there. so apparently you're still with me. thanks. I'm trying to capture a few thoughts, since this has just turned out to be a whirlwind trip through vietnam. I just accepted a

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job in bangkook as "manager, course administration" for a new school of business communications. the job starts april 1, so this trip has just become a whole lot shorter. tomorrow its the coast for a couple, then train downward to some place near the former "demilitarized zone" where some real viet cong tunnels still exist. by the way, DMZ has to be one of the great euphemisms that was bounced around this place, alright, what we have left are two cultural stories and one dog bite story. which will it be? hands up, okay, that's three for culture and one person in the back for the dog story, there's always one. inevitably, the culture slant gets back to the french. yesterday as I cruised the streets of hanoi enjoying the sense of grace that the vietnamese people have embraced for the way they have built this town, I saw the opera house. built in 1911 its consistent with a french colonial style: pillars, shutters and balance.

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just across from it is the new hanoi hilton (an actual hotel--although I dared not step into it), which reflects the style of the opera house. main point about hanoi: they've hired real architects and city planners and it shows, to my surprise the osaka symphony orchestra had a show last night and I got in for a mere five bucks. I had to rush back to my hotel to polish my tevas, put a pleat in my cargo pants and brush off my windbreaker. after all, this was a posh event in a class locale. for those of you who know repertoire, the feast was this: elgar's pomp and circumstance

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(a good choice when celebrating 30 years of vietnam-japanese trading relations); and concerto for cello in e minor; followed by dvorak's symphony no.9 "from the new world." I thought the "new world" theme also appropriate, since I was contemplating whether or not to take on a new job in a new world. worth noting is that the kettle drum player was a perfect japanese version of hugh grant. and the conductor bore a strong resemblance to jackie chan. I guess this is good casting.

the second cultural story is way, way better. I mean, it has to be. the other night I was walking through the dark back streets of hanoi when I suddenly stopped fixed in my tracks. I was before a place of immense color and beauty. I said "holy \_\_\_\_\_". that summed it up. before me was a small, well-lit store with two painters working hard at their art. their palates were smeared with the color and texture from which only a real painter can figure out how to draw any paint of purpose. yet they continued. if I had never been in any of the art galleries of europe I would have gnashed my teeth at the sheer brilliance of their work, the variety, the imagination, they continued painting! one on a massive work of black and gold, the other a primitive scene of great color. the first was copying the work of gustav klimp, the other Paul gauguin: they were perfect and in oil, it was like seeing the artists doing their work for the first time. and around them piled up were the works of Salvador dali, paul klee, edward munch, pissaro, picasso.... all in oil and to me impeccable. some people say that hanoi is the paris of the east; I say screw the french, lets call paris the hanoi of the west.

alright, last story. and indeed its my own version of the inspector clousseau "does your dog bite" sketch. once again the french have infiltrated the scene, the night before leaving bangkook I was having a beer with a friend of mine just outside my hotel. after we fed the local skinny cats some food the neighbour's dog popped by for some, as I was giving him a few pats onthe head I noticed that he had a strange look on his face. I said to stuart "is this dog growling?" and he said, "na, I think its just the way he is." so I gave the dog a few more pats. what I'm embarrassed about is that he got in two good bites before I countered. I guess the dog was growling, gave me a good bite on the left bicep and took a small chunk out of my right palm. unfortunately both are healing well. the hand I don't care about, but the bicep had a cool scar that showed all the teeth in a great u-shaped bite. even though I'm not an expert, i'd say that dog suffers from a fairly bad overbite. so its now time to go elsewhere.

**Sent:**

**Subject:** and a li ht rain falls to earth



Apparently this is a significant day in the history of things. I've only heard rumours of war, but the sky here in hue (the old capital of vietnam) was grey and perhaps reflective of events elsewhere. this is a place where much of the most vicious fighting of the vietnam war took place. the sky today kept everything wet, but it was a gentle kind of rain that seemed more to put life back than to mourn any kind of loss. just north of here is a place called quang tri province. it was the boundry between north and south vietnam, hence a battleground. up there in the mountains was battle camp khe sanh: where the americans were put to task in a siege that rained bullets and bombs from the jungle, things have changed since then and that's what I'm writing about, two days ago I decided to travel by map alone (there was no guide book information about my destination), I had heard that there were still some tunnels near the ocean, tunnels that had been dug in 1966 and 67 to shelter an entire village from american bombs. they survived. more than 300 people lived in a kilometre or two of tunnels that went as deep as 23 meters. even the drilling bombs didn't get them, 17 children were born underground and I naw a picture of them together some years later, all smiling in the sunshine. above the tunnels in the war years there were no trees, just craters. now there's green growth everywhere. and just as importantly, there's children everywhere, many wearing school uniforms, satchels, and washed faces on their way to school.

some years ago I was more concerned about the list of environmental problems than I am now. the world didn't change, I did, in one of those moments when insight supersedes remorse, I realized that "nature always wins."

I was not sure why I was bound and determined to walk through the tunnels of vin moc, but now I realize it was so that I could write to you on this propitious day to say that the children and the

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trees will always come through, a few days ago I happened to see part of a documentary called blue planet, what caught my attention was a computerized view of the world from a time long before computers. then too the world was a wasteland of craters from asteroids, slowly, but with the help of the encouraging rains, nature and all its helpers pulled through. aimilary, the wasteland that is quang tri province and the equally blasted wasteland that is eastern laos have erased most of the craters. nature is back.

I saw a new color the other day. in northern vietnam the new rice crop is about a foot high and being tended by swarms of gardeners (they are really more like gardeners than farmers, since they are right inside their work--waist deep in the paddy water). the color I saw is something I call rice-paddy green. it is brighter than emerald green and darker than lime green. it is the color of life itself.

instead of finding a tv set here to hear what cnn or bbc has to say, I thought I write a few words to you about what I saw in the place where america did before what its doing now, I'm not saying its good or bad; "could be good, could be bad, I don't know," what I do know is that there will be the usual litany of "pre-emptive strikes, emptive strikes, and post emptive strikes." in addition, there will be "collateral damage," and since this is in part an economic war, I suspect that there will be a new term added: "lack-of-collateral damage." you heard it here first.

I hope that the effects of war, like the other ostentatious Creations that ego have created will ultimately sink into the desert sands. many times while viewing the ruins of once-great places, usually built to show opulence and power, I have thought of percy bysshe shelley's poem ozymandias. for the record, it goes like this:

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;  
Look upon my works ye Mighty, and despair"  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

**Sent:**

**Subject:** Coconuts, Catfish and Charlie-Chaplin Turns

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somehow I've arrived back in thailand for the unknownth time. this last trip was particularly strange, so I thought I'd send you a few notes before memory and time fade to black and white. a few days ago, from a place called kratie, cambodia I wrote you a piece called "carry on up the mekong," which promptly disappeared into the ether when I tried to send it. I was able to traverse cambodia from north to south via its great waterway, the mekong.

the trip involved a series of boats starting in the mekong delta in vietnam. vibrant green is the only way to describe that place. you see the vietnamese are industrious when they're not busy. there is no wasted space (although I think I might have seen a square meter or two that was not in use). one writer, describing the difference between the various cultures here said: " the vietnamese plant rice, the cambodians watch them, and the laotians listen to it grow." thus, as soon as you pass into cambodia along the mekong there is a sudden decline in river traffic.

then there's phnom penh, a great cowboy town. if south east asia could be called the old west:, then saigon would be san francisco and phnom penh would be dodge city, or maybe even tombstone arizona. it has a certain lawlessness to it. I even met a real life wyatt earp there--although the guns are more modern, the game is still the same. as someone said (and it might have been me) "phnom penh is quite an evil place, but in a nice kind of way."

you know you've had a good travel day when at the end of it you just walk into the shower, sandals and all, the next three days up the mekong from phnom penh were like that. and from a good travel day you wake up the next day tired, sore and ready to do it all again, the mekong days were like that.

the first day by boat out of phnom penh got me to kratie, where I heard it was possible to view



dolphins just a few kilometres up the river, the best way there was by motorcycle, and a short distance on those roads told me why I was going by river. after engaging one of my favourite games (dodge the pothole) I snagged a boat to putz about on the mekong and listen to irrawaddy dolphins make that great sound they and whales do so well: the exhalation and breathing in that says they are alive. why they are called irrawaddy dolphins I don't know. I did a trip up the irrawaddy river in Burma and didn't see any mekong dolphins there. perhaps the totalitarian burmese government in its rush to sell everything off has sold its dolphins too. its just a theory, but you heard it here first.

on the way back to kratie I watched a chicken cross the road in front of me (no joke), but at the last second he decided to cross back. there was a flurry of feathers underneath my foot, but I missed him, I know we're all still working on the initial question of why he decided to cross in the first place, but the cross back adds a whole new puzzle into the problem, as the hot season gets hotter, the mekong gets more shallow, that's where the fun is in a trip up the river, because the boats have to bob and weave their way, somehow the captains know how to find the deeper channels. the boat to kratie and the next boat to stung treng were both narrow but 30 meters long. they cruised at about 40 kilometres an hour (I'm a landlubber, so knots are not part of my vocabulary) which seemed pretty damned fast to me. going up river means there's lots of current coming at you (the mekong is the 12th longest river in the world and the loth largest if you're main interest is water flow). so when the boats take some of their sharp turns into the current they "skid" around the corner just like charlie chaplin did: you know the way he would take a corner with one leg lifted up and the other hopping around until he rounded the curve.

the section from kratie to stung treng includes stunning views of thousands of little sand islands covered with grass and bamboo, in rainy season I imagine most of that is underwater. and the captain keeps up the high speed zigging his way around them, often hopping on one leg.

the fifth day got stranger, since the large boat shrank to 10 meters. eight of us crammed into what is called a longtail boat--they're used a lot on the shallow rivers of asia. quite ingeniously a car engine is stuck onto the boat and at the end of the drive shaft is a propeller. thus the propeller hits the water about 2 to 4 mters behind the boat, this system allows the driver to go like a maniac, which they do. this was the last leg of my trip through cambodia, since the longtail was destined for the laotian border. cambodian boat drivers only seem to know two speeds: full stop or full speed. as a result we had quite a white-knuckled trip to laos. the river was shallow and thus bubbling with whirlpools and standing waves, which we flew over at whatever was that boat's top speed, going the opposite direction at high speed was some of the most lush jungle I've ever seen, glad to finally get out of the clutches of the boat drivers, I had just passed through laotian passport control (a shack not much bigger than an outhouse) when the local public bus stopped for me. considering that this was not quite the boonies (but I could see them from there) I decided that i'd better get on, since the next transport was unknown, in all asian countries the rule of thumb for public transport is "there's always room for one more." I was that one more, just squeaking into the back of the bus. in reality it was really just an open truck with some seats pasted on each aide. on the back was the metal platform that all these vehicles have, either to stand on or to hold goods. on this trip it was holding "bads" in the form an one basket and three soggy bags of catfish, I should note that the temperature now in the hot/dry season is sizzling.

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as the catfish were slowly cooking on back of the truck my knees were jammed into my face by the massive sack of coconuts that sat in the middle of the truck. once we got moving I realized two things: the truck driver seemed to be related to the boat driver, because he drove the same way; and coconuts can be nasty, someone had knifed off the top smooth layer of the coconuts, leaving the fibrous second layer. at high speeds that layer throws off a fine dust that's much like sawdust, only pointier. all of us in the back of the truck looked like we were having a blinking contest. at least the smell of the catfish was left behind us as we sped to pakse, some three hours up the road.

this story is just about over, its finale is simple. upon making my leap out of the truck I had to step on one of the sacks of catfish: being a tad heavier than the average laotians who got on and off the truck at irregular intervals, when I stepped on the bag it gave way, giving me a sandal full of fish goop. I cannot remember ever arriving at a place having such an urgent need to wash my foot. I suppose it was appropriate that I ended my trip up the mekong smelling much like the river and with a couple of stray dogs following closely. I'll just end off by quoting a song I heard while in cambodia:

"home, home in campuchia  
where the rats and cockroaches play  
where seldom is heard and encouraging word and the roads are bumpy all day."

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 21, 20

**Subject:** The La 6e Night Penultimate Club



writing to you from the island of ko samet off the coast of thailand, these are some random and perhaps rambling last thoughts before heading back to canada. rather uncharacteristically, I

have let bureaucracy get the better of me, bottom line is that I have no more pages left in my passport and cur canadian government was going to make it time consuming to get a new passport. thus, rather than wait for govt in bangkok, i decided to pull the plug on this operation. so end my pirate days.

actually, I've been pretty much the tourist on this excursion, we're all really just tourists in this world of hyper information: guide books, guided tours, guided buses, guided guides,- next time I'm going to buy a guide book in german (which I don't read) so that I'm not tempted to read the drivel that the lonely planeters write. the maps are useful, however, the way I see it, organized tours, direct buses, and even guide books tend to kill the travelling soul. intuition is replaced by organization and predictability. not that I'm complaining, though, since there's still lots of opportunity to get off; the beaten track.

what follows are some random thoughts from my travel notes, mostly from times when I was off track. these are my travel out takes;

-when in rome, do as the romanians do.

-misquote from bones, the doctor in star trek: "dammit jim, I'm a lawyer, not a doctor."

-people carrying large backpacks, especially those with a pack on the back and one grabbed tightly on the front, send a bad message to people of other countries: that we're an avaricious, possessive lot. -the american carpet bombing in laos, cambodia and vietnam seems to have been effective, since I saw very few carpets while travelling in those countries. last night I was watching a movie in the local restaurant and noticed that the bamboo rafters were being used as a highway by several rats.

they weren't rat racing, but were having a few scuffles. at one point a rat dropped from the rafters and landed beside me, shook his little head and took off: there's rats in the ceiling, there's rats in the halls, they're singing hymns with lyrics I don't recall at all.

-our friend terzani describes a conversation he had: "'travel makes sense only if you come back with an answer in your baggage,' said leopold. 'you've travelled a lot; have you found it?' ... he spent the long empty hours reflecting on matters close to his heart, and I was like the sandbag at which a boxer practices punching. this time the fist hit me hard, because I knew I had not found the answer."

-more joke names: stip whitley, bob combover, smedly bucksbottom, chiff timple, smit von distappen.

-one of the most powerful exhibits I've seen is in Saigon. its now called the war remnants museum, but was previously called the museum of american war crimes (renamed by the industrious vietnamese to accommodate the great influx of american tourists). while the various bombs and weapons are striking and the pictures of war injuries even more so, what hit me was the gallery dedicated to photographers who died in the vietnam war (notably the vietnamese call it the american war). alongside photos of the photographers are samples of their war photography. in several instances the captions say that the photos are from the last roll shot by the photographer, found in his camera after he had stepped on a land mine, or been shot by a sniper. somehow that brought things very close.

-its amazing, really, what people and dogs can put up with when they have no choice,

-and believe it or not, I'm actually going to quote a lawyer, but its one from ally mcbeal: "the problem with being honest with people is that they may counter with the same."

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-have you ever noticed the snarl of a street dog? they survive by being able to get primitive fast. more than any house dog, the street dogs get their upper lip curled up to make a very vicious face. and they mean it.

-the future is always the future, so I'll worry about today tomorrow.

-apparently the painter jan vermeer said "you don't have to travel far to go deep." does that mean that if you travel far you go shallow?

-speaking of travel, I must quote my new theme song:

"trailer for sale or rent  
rooms to let fifty cents  
no phone, no pool, no pets  
ain't got no cigarettes.  
but two hours of pushing broom  
buys an eight by twelve four-fit room. I'm a man of means by no means  
king of the road,  
third box car, midnight train

destination Bangor, maine.  
old worn out suit and shoes  
don't pay no union dues.  
I smoke old stogies I have found  
short but not too big around\_  
I'm a man of means by no means  
king of the road."

perhaps I'll make it into your neighbourhood sometime soon, and humming this tune.

to be continued....

**BANGKOK**



A court in Laos sentenced two European journalists and their American interpreter to 15-year prison terms Monday after they were arrested while reporting on an ethnic insurgency, according to news service reports from Laos.

They were sentenced on charges of possessing weapons and obstructing justice after the authorities decided not to pursue murder charges in the death of a village militiaman, the reports said.

wire services quoted diplomats and officials as saying the three men might be deported. They are Vincent Roynaud, a French cameraman; Thierry Falise, a Belgian photographer, and the Reverend Naw Karl Mua, an ethnic Hmong-American pastor living in St. Paul, Minnesota,

All three denied that they had a role in the killing, which the government said occurred during a firefight involving Hmong insurgents the group had been visiting.

The Hrnong are the remnants and descendants of fighters recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency in its "secret war" against a Communist army that eventually took power in 1975.

Tons of thousands of Hmong fled into Thailand, but a number of fighters remained behind. The government denies that an insurgency continues today, describing the fighters simply as bandits,

Three Hmong rebels were also convicted Monday and sentenced to 15 years in prison, including one who had escaped and was sentenced in absentia, according to the reports.

All those convicted Monday were also ordered to pay \$1,000 each as compensation to the family of the victim, a government militiaman in the village of Ban Khai, near the northeastern city of Phonesavanh, where the trial was held.

The journalists and their interpreter were arrested June 4 as they emerged from mountains in northeastern Laos.

The Associated Press quoted family members as saying the men were tried, convicted and sentenced in two and a half hours. They said the basis for the weapons charge was a bag that the court was told was found in a shack the morning after the clash. The bag contained a bomb and a gun, the reports said.

After the sentencing, the family members said, the three foreigners were escorted to a white van, and taken to an undisclosed location.

In a statement, the U.S. Embassy said: "We deeply regret the circumstances that led to this trial."

"Having said this, we do not believe that this trial and its outcome have served the cause of justice."

**Subject:** Friendly Curiosity



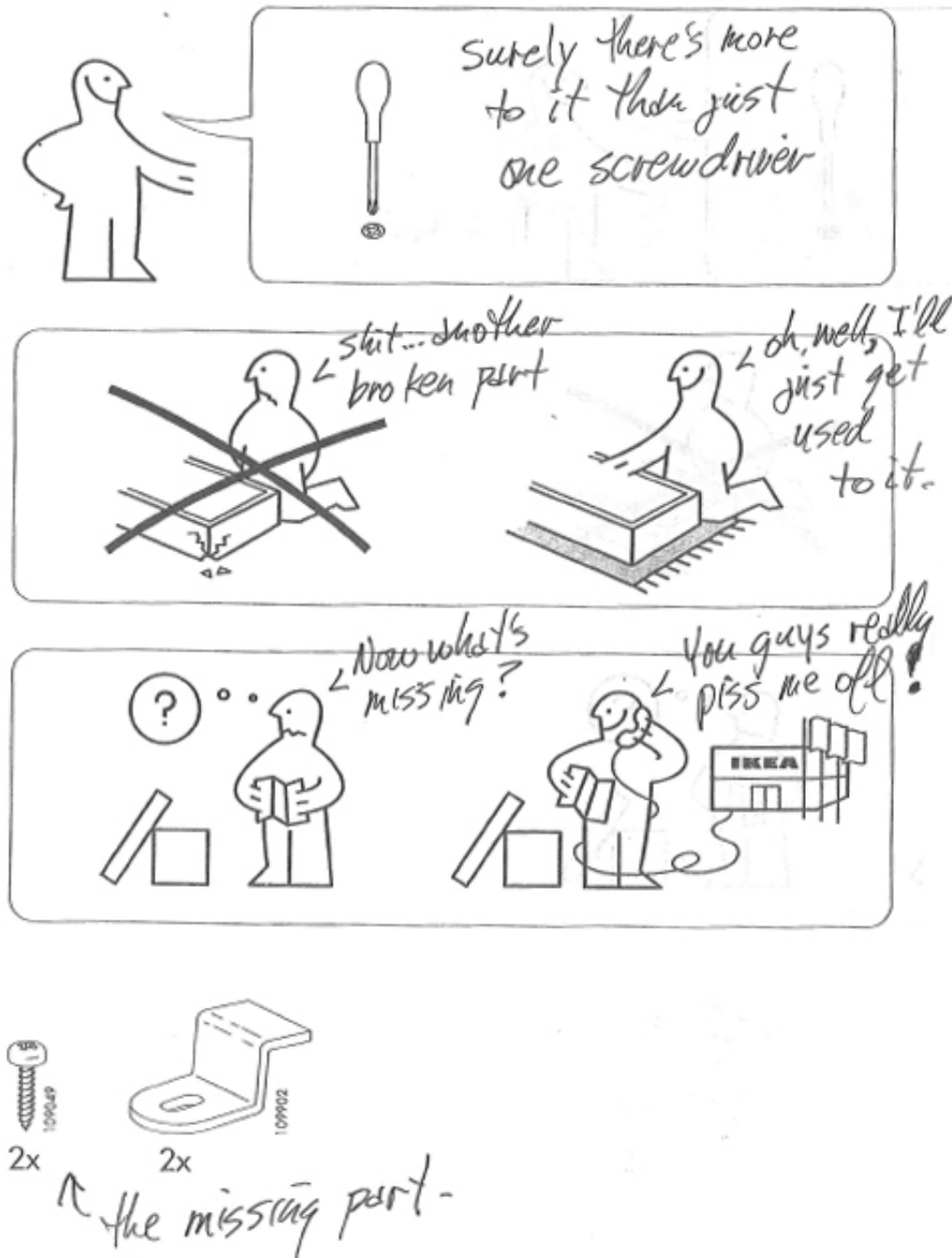
So here we go again. Just when you thought 1 was out of your life. The moment when things went "whew, everything seems straight now: no more mosquitoes," And yet, those pesky little bugs do have a purpose, Besides being the most dangerous animals on the planet, they serve to remind us to stay awake, to pay attention.

That's why I sent to you the preceding press dispatch from Laos. It says, in short, that things in that land are really screwed up. It says, in short, that things in that land have not changed since the whole bloody fiasco we Americans call the Vietnam war (and the Vietnamese call the American War). That was 30 years ago. This is now and its still the sane. The point is that there are many places where people are selling each other out.. Places where you cannot trust anyone. These places are hither and yon.

But. But, There is always great hope in the spaces between the words. Hope in the subtext to the story. Hope in the silent shine in the eyes of the people who are there and who believe in something more than the chain and drudgery of broken dreams. This is the story: three guys were changed with murder by the Laotian government: two photo journalists (Belgian and French) and an American pastor (who was really a Laotian who had immigrated to the US). What I suspect they wore doing was good journalism. They wore doing a story about the government oppression of the Hmong people. But they wore doing it in a country controlled by dictators under the guise of communism. The Hmony people have been savaged by each and every person who has had any control of Laos since the 50's.

## THE IKEA EXPERIENCE

Drawings and frustration from an actual Ikea instruction manual, Dialogue added by the writer.



become of those characters within the grid of intergalactic communication. in short, I gets a cell phone, so use It if you want. I]o this really wraps it up. I don't expect to have much new to say for awhile. Thanks for hanging in this far.

Last tree cidvico: listen to as much music as you can.



That includes the Americans who controlled a secret war in the 60's when the focus was on Vietnam. Laos was homhed savagely: to the point where several cities lust disappeared. During that time the Hmong hill tribe people Fought intensely at the side of the Hrnerican secret forces operating inside Lava. That was all aLaret.

'then when the whole Vietnam thing crashed (197:1, Laos wan left to fend for itself, The Hmong pooplo who had been part of the American secret way in Laos were "forgotten," The irony is that these people who had given their lives and their family's heritage were simply dropped off the map. The war had been secret, sra the Hmong sacrifice also went sli:icret.

For the Last 20 or -no years the dictators of Laos have been savaging the Ilmong people. Secretly killing people is what I rmean. This is rio different than many other places on this planet. Take Liberia, for a current example, or Cambodia (arid the Khymer Rouge) as a past example.

The brief arid taint word of hope in the fate of "the thBANGKOK /pree" is that there's talk of getting there out of Laos, The hypocrisy is that they were apparently convicted of bogus offences. How the Teatlan government: just wants there to be gone: but the whole message from that government is "do not get in our way or we will tuck with you."

it seems to me that whenever we see, hear, feel, .smell Ar ta:3te any kind of evil we should do something. Mostly we don't. That's why we need mosquitoes. Those were the facts, Now the point. The pesky mosquitos I referred to earlier was not me, but rather that infernal network or friend: each of us has. Those friends who use this intergalactic web to disperse information and to perhaps from time to time to time to got us to say "holy shit."

Often the "holy shit" Feeling relates to a massive sense of injustice. I should say that a permanent state of "holy shit" is what we are all destined to live Lhrougi. In other words, if we are aware of all the bad stuff that's going on in the world, then we may forever be in a state of imbalance, But I don't think that nature, nr any of the Gods ale are out there want us to be perpetually imbalanced. So somehow, somehow, we van relax and say "well, I really think those journalists in Lane got a bad deal and the Hmong really got fucked in the process." flut in the end we also need to balance that in Ourselves to think: "there are bigger processes in operation here and I hope they Involve all those various gods and deities who were once famous. I also hope that my destiny is somehow interwoven with the strange horoscopes I read everyday and those other mystic writings that profess intervurvival harmony. My hope is that all those cats and dogs in nature along with me care somehow work this all out."

Well there's a bit of optimism for you, lifter all, the reason I write to you is to be optimistic, rather than pessimistic. Someone bigger than me once said that all acts of writing are an act at optimism. It is they hope of cemmunicatinn.

So now onto something new, That, very probably, is the last of My travel reports for some time to come. I am chasing various things in Vancouver, Canada. One of the things is a job, the other is a place to stay.

Nether of these pursuits worries mo much, since things will work cut as they do. Arid this leads to the most important thing I will say here: life is much lighter it tie approach it with a friendly

## John Says This

About Being Inside the DR Congo

<http://johnsaysthis.com>

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curiosity. 'the idea of living each day with a "friendly curiosity,, was tossed to me by a .friend, And once again our friends act as friendly, but pesky mosquitoes: reminding us to rethink things just a tad, if we so Choose.

So at the end of this I ask you if you can live each day with a sense of "friendly curiosity:" a curiosity about, well, you figure out what's worth being friendly and curious about.

In the mean time T will be hanging out somewhere in Vancouver. of course, I welcome whatever discoveries you have shout the nix of curiosity and friendliness, if you want to be in my neighbourhood, then I welcome you. Following the traveller's tradition I will have a place that has a shot for someone or two to be safe from the ebb and flow of life.