



Pilgrimage to Eclipse

February 26, 1979: Oregon

Four a.m. I began a pilgrimage. Entering the freeway was a merger of myself with a procession headed east. All pilgrims became one in the dark. Countless pairs of scarlet lights flickered along a winding path. Eastward. On and on I went in search of—Eclipse.

As the sky lightened, I left the caravan. I would experience individually a communal event. On the road to Bend, two or three miles south of The Dalles and near the crest of rolling hills, I found a convenient stopping place. The panorama of plowed hillsides girdled with grass and ribboned with a highway invited participation in a solar liturgy.

The clouds parted in a gesture of hospitality to those who came that way. A gift from the gods in "God's Country." With this benediction, I waited. The time of the eclipse drew near; excitement mounted. Not the carnival, Woodstock excitement of Maryhill's Stonehenge. This was a quiet, privately shared intensity. A sense of power, not magic, prevailed.

During the movement of the moon over the sun, an eerie dimly bright daylight-darkness evolved. Untimely shadows lengthened. The world was dark in the midst of day's brightness. Through mylar-veiled eyes, I watched the sun

become the moon; completing the moon's cycle in minutes. Full to crescent and back again, the sun-moon paused mid-cycle for two miracle minutes. Totality!

Looking now with naked eyes, I beheld an awesome, incredible sight. Above, in a midnight sky was the black circle of sun with its gem sprinkled crown. A rivalry of diamond-chip planets accented the sun's glory.

In the darkness the south became the east. Toward the distant southern hills, dawn's first light spread across the horizon. Totality was ending. Turning my back to the sun, I found another offering awaited. Rippled shadows, like waves of wind on beach grass, moved over the hillside. And the air was still.

Time to leave. Coming down from the hills, timeless pilgrims dispersed. I left filled in mind and soul.

Homeward. With each mile, the weather worsened. Clouds hung low in the Columbia River Gorge. Miracle's end brought misty-eyed skies; thinking of those who hadn't shared in nature's gift. Finally a steady rain of tears for truckers who kept on truckin' straight through Totality. Two minutes in a lifetime acknowledged solely by turning on headlights. I was sad for those who could not be there. But most of all, I was sad for those who passed through and were not touched.

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