



## Building Billy's Door

"Billy's been looking for you. He's anxious about building that door."

Work referrals and prospective jobs often materialize under quirky circumstances for the Professor. He's turned a hand at an alarming hodgepodge of misfit handyman projects and Gypsy trades from building turkey fences to repairing gutters. Misguided clients believe, incorrectly I assure you, that the patient Professor secretly enjoys tasks piddling, slimy, and distasteful. They couldn't be more wrong.

Billy's emissary has traced me to my downtown office, the porch of Osburn's Grocery and Deli. I consult with Ron Logan later. We agree to travel to Billy's house on Saturday, accompanied by Ms. Sally Lackaff, and will then attempt to construct a cedar slab door for Billy's cabin. Trips to Billy's are a different pot of beans altogether. Projects and lightheartedness get all muddled together in a delightful stew of savory moments. I always return home refreshed and uplifted, skylarking. As a general rule, the perceived projects, and the urgency to complete them, dwindle as a day at Billy's unfolds. My secret doubt, kept close to the cuff, is that no saw will touch Billy's hewn cedar door slabs this Saturday. A few more month's seasoning will improve the cedar's grain and texture. Late spring. Maybe even summer.

Saturday finds us slashing east from the coast under curtains of wind driven rain. Milk chocolate streams and rivers chew off chunks of farmland and head to sea. Tips of new spring growth pink out the red alder thickets. We pass coastal farms with busted and rusted D-8 Cats mouldering into yellow rust melts. "Double wide" trailer houses squat on cut-over timberland, paint peels from their walls. Glutter fills their yards: garish, battered Tonka and Coleco Toy gym sets and heeled over tricycles abused by children. One farm settlement looks like a Laotian Hmong tribal compound strafed and bombed by B-52's. Dozens of car bodies litter a muddy field, ghastly testimony to the failure of things.

My spirit relaxes as we leave the main highway and turn down the county road toward Bill's. One senses a change immediately. We drop back several decades as the road spins behind us. The things of people slough off as we snake down the winding road. We park the car and begin the 25 minute hike to Billy's log cabin.

"Billy loves company!," Ron assures us.



Bill's cabin hunkers down on a knob in the foothills of our coast range. Remnants of the cedar stands once common on the West Coast blend with other conifers on his property. Billy greets us warmly. A red rug temporarily covers his door opening. The mountains lump away in green mounds in all directions.

Once inside, we chat briefly about the two-foot wide slabs of cedar door boards. Our intentions were good, but concentration on the project waned. Over English beer, cheese, and water biscuits, I felt the door drifting off. Brandon and his dog Bear showed up. Billy pulled out his Shaman's stone. We discussed the habits of shrews. A mysterious drowsiness and languor prevailed. Wind soughed through cedar branches outside, and the day just plain slipped away. That's all I can tell you. Too many stories. Too much laughter. Days at Billy's are like that.

## SEA SLUG HOLIDAY

Ron Logan

While boarding a plane in Los Angeles, I recall joking with my traveling colleague, Matt, about the prospect of finding a banana crate large enough to ship his body back to the United States. Matt is notorious for unintentional, self-inflicted injury, so this concern was not entirely unjustified on my part. His consideration of the prospect was moot, for he and I were en route to the mild and hospitable Cook Islands, a place where risks are limited to sunburns, mosquito bites, and hangovers. Matt was well accustomed to all of these phenomena.

Matt is known to most friends as Sluggo. The origins and meanings of this name are not clear to me, but it has been an integral part of his persona for as long as I have known him.

The island of Rorotonga is surrounded by an extensive coral reef which creates a giant, encircling lagoon. Outer islands and exposed reef skirt the lagoon. The waters of the lagoon are filled with, among other things, giant purple sea slugs. For Sluggo, the sea slugs were, at first, a source of great intrigue. They appeared to gravitate toward him whenever he entered the lagoon, slowly turning their heads in his direction and making slow, straight lines toward him. It was as if the slugs had been waiting for him. Sluggo referred to himself as the "king" of the slugs and gloated in this self-proclaimed, regal status. I became concerned as his infatuation with the slugs perpetuated. He spent hours rescuing them from the shallows, stroking them with his toes, and preaching to groups of them that would gather in his presence. Foreign beer can have strange effects, I thought, and high humidity can render a person all but unconscious.

I believed that the sea slugs were a prophesy. I felt that they sensed an imminent danger, a pending doom, and were attempting to express these things to King Sluggo. These slugs, and other occupants of the Cook Islands, once fostered an admirable monarchical system that was ruled by portly Polynesian queens. Centuries ago, however, the societal and cultural attributes of the Cook Islands, as with much of Polynesia, were fragmented and destroyed by a deluge of religious zealots and missionaries. The Cook Islander's spirituality, once closely

related to natural phenomena, was replaced by what others thought better for them. Tributes to the Cook Islander's favorite God, Tangarora, were overshadowed by dozens of stucco churches and western architecture.

During our visit to an outer island, Aututaki, we sensed that we had found a veritable paradise. Young, slightly dressed and docile Polynesian girls attended to our needs. A thatched bungalow, complete with a high speed ceiling fan and an unlimited supply of mosquito coils, made an excellent shelter from the 80 degree nights. The lagoon was laden with the same purple sea slugs and they continued to pay Sluggo particular attention. Kiwi Lager beer was our mainstay. We would pack our cooler with it each morning before trekking out to pure white sand beaches and outer islands. Everything was as it should be, but I was haunted by the sea slug's constant presence. I was not fearful for myself, for I knew that any misfortune would first affix itself to Sluggo, and I would have time to get away clean.

On Aututaki we meet the only American we encountered on our trip. Sitting at a table in an outdoor eatery near us was a very large, red-skinned man wearing bright blue shorts and a flowered tee shirt. His stomach was bare where it hung below his waist line. His table was stacked high with empty Steinlager beer cans. Seated next to him was a petite and timid appearing woman, smartly dressed and nervously reading a book. Later, the man got up from his seat, snagging his shorts on the metal table, and started toward us. "What the hell does this oof want", I asked Sluggo. "I need to get away from this viscous woman," the large man bellowed, "would you guys like to go snorkeling at Half Foot Island tomorrow?" We would come to know this man as Bob. He was indeed a man of great proportion and wore a perpetual grin, even in times of intense debate with his estranged girlfriend, Debbi. He was a man who was prepared to snap at any given moment, but likable non the least, and a consummate drinker. We would come to learn that Bob was retired. He had spent several years transporting materials to and from exotic places throughout the world. He was silent as to any other details of his existence. We choose to believe that he was a courier for the United States government and had handled a variety of highly sensitive documents.

For Sluggo, doom seeded itself the day we left Aututaki. From this point on, his trip would be fraught with imminent peril. It was the Saturday before Easter Sunday, a monumental holiday for the Cook Islanders. Our small twin engine Otter was stuffed with Aututakians traveling to celebrate on the main island, Rorotonga. The woman next to me cradled a strange melon, others had baskets of bread and parts of dead animals. The plane sat on the runway for some time in direct 90 degree sunlight. I looked to the back of the plane where Sluggo had been forced to claw and inch his way to an open seat. He appeared blank and clammy. A bumpy flight would surely bring misery and mess, I recall thinking.

We arrived in Rorotonga with Bob and Debbi. After the flight, Debbi was not speaking directly to Bob. He had apparently upset her in some way during the flight. She was glad to see Sluggo and me when we disembarked and expressly began interrogating Sluggo about a rash which had developed on his neck. Sluggo explained that it surfaced that morning and had excruciating sting to it. Her apparent frustrations with Bob, who had since entered the airport bar, manifested themselves in the form of animosity toward Sluggo's newly surfaced affliction. She began reciting tropical disease horror stories, all directed toward Sluggo. "Bob has made this woman crazy" Sluggo told me as we escaped into a taxi.

On Rorotonga, Sluggo's rash condition continued to progress. After being chased out of the lagoon by a large, overly aggressive Parrot Fish, Sluggo realized that his malady needed specific attention. It was beginning to have adverse effects beyond pain. Strangely, the sea slugs were now sparse in the lagoon. Things were becoming all too unusual, and I agreed that he should go to the island hospital the next day to for some comforting advise and remedy.

That evening, Sluggo reluctantly agreed to go down to the bar to meet Bob and Debbi. Debbi continued with her campaign of dread and doom. She had cataloged dozens of tales of injury and death in the tropics. "Yesterday, a woman was severely bitten by a Moray Eel at Maurie Beach and had to be flown to Auckland for treatment", she lectured, "The hospital here is left over from World War II". Sluggo rolled his eyes and gulped

Sluggo, Continued on Page 7

VELOCIPEDIQUES

SPECIALIZED  
adidas

KLEIN  
PRO-FLEX  
Burley

MIKE'S BIKE SHOP SINCE 1974  
CANNON BEACH

(503) 436-1266 P.O. BOX 518  
BIKE TALK: 800-492-1266 CANNON BEACH, OR 97110

## CHANGE YOUR SOCKS FOREVER



Acorn's wildly unique Polartec® constructed socks maximize foot comfort in a broad range of elements and climates for which traditional socks were never designed. They flatter feet anytime, anywhere with high-performance, durability and uncommon style. For use with sandal wear, leisure shoes, technical sport shoes and boots, AcornSocks™ will indeed change your socks forever. Experience the difference with pleasure.

ACORN SOX™

Foot comfort through performance fabrics™

Made with pride in Maine, USA by Acorn Products Co., Inc., the company that warms the feet of astronauts on shuttle missions into outer space.

Available at:

SHEARWATER AND PACIFIC COAST CLOTHING IN ECOLA SQUARE

10% OFF Reg. Retail for local residents

FREE Espresso drink with \$50+ purchase  
123 S. Hemlock 436-2473

## QUALITY TOOLS, INC.

738-3074

2966 Hwy. 101 N.  
Seaside, OR 97138

Tom Brownson  
President

sales, service and sharpening

SAWS  
DRILLS  
GRINDERS  
COMPRESSORS  
STATIONARY EQUIPMENT  
AIR TOOLS  
2 & 4 CYCLE