

# COMMENTARY

## Go east, young man

*A West Coast native visits the East and discovers thugs, peanut butter and jelly, chewin' the fat and Tarheels*

By JOHN DRESCHER

Dave Hampson's first recollection of the East Coast isn't too pleasant. Hampson, a rising senior at the University of Washington in Seattle, arrived in Miami for a month-long trip to the East Coast on June 19.

Less than 24 hours later he ran into two of Miami's finest: a couple of nice, friendly local fellas who merely wanted all of his money or part of his face, whichever he chose to part with. After a long period of deliberation — say maybe a second or two — he gave them his money.

Wham, bam and welcome to the East Coast, Dave.

There he was, thousands of miles from home, by himself, minus \$100. His face, however, remained intact, as well as his determination to see the East Coast and have some fun doing it.

Most of us easterners think of the West Coast as some type of mystical, never-never land, complete with surfers and shapely blonde girls, that only in our wildest dreams would we visit. But in keeping with the grass-is-greener theory, it seems West Coast natives share some of that same curiosity about our coast.

Hampson, a native of Yakima, Wa., decided a few years back that he wanted to see the East. So a few weeks ago he hopped on a plane to Miami, then bought a bus ticket that allows him to travel wherever he wants for a month.

Last Wednesday he arrived in Chapel Hill to spend two nights in the UNC chapter of his fraternity. By Friday he was on his way to Washington, D.C., then eventually to New York and Boston and wherever his bus pass and stuffed duffle bag would take him.

He got over his mugging with no injury to his body but some to his psyche. "I've never had anything happen to

me so scary in my life," Hampson said, admitting that the thought of getting mugged never crossed his mind before. "I don't trust people like I used to. Before Miami, I trusted anyone."

Still, Hampson said his trip had been enough fun to more than make up for the rough beginning. Sitting in my room wearing a "University of Washington" t-shirt and holding a newly acquired "UNC Tarheels" t-shirt in one hand ("What's a Tarheel?" he asked), he didn't hide his enthusiasm about his trip.

In general, he said, people had been "very friendly."

"I especially noticed it in Clemson," he said. "They were the friendliest people I've ever met—anywhere. Outside of the big cities, everyone's been real friendly."

He likes the beer-drinking age in most of the South—18, compared to 21 in Washington—and, of course, the downfall of many an unsuspecting visiting male, the way Southern girls talk.

"All the girls smile and say, 'Hi.' They don't usually do that in Seattle," he said. And those California beaches are great, but Florida's, though different, are just as good, he said.

After bouncing around Florida for a week with an Army soldier ("Put in the story that Frank Crandall still owes me \$25"), Hampson traveled to an area outside Atlanta in rural Georgia. He met some farm laborers, went to their small house and discovered a Southern pastime: sittin', drinkin' and chewin' the day's fat.

"That was really an experience for me," he said. "I could really tell that I was in the South. That was a good time; I really liked it."

From Georgia he went to Anderson, S.C. and then to Clemson, in the same state. In Clemson he sold his services as a free-lance clean-up man for a day and picked up 40 badly needed dollars. With his newly acquired riches, he treated himself by going out to eat and,



*In keeping with the grass-is-greener theory, West visits East*

for the first time in his life, ordered a peanut butter and jelly sandwich at a restaurant.

His trip has had its bizarre moments. In Florida he stayed at the house of your everyday, average minister who used to be in a motorcycle gang. "I was used to preachers being real friendly and cordial," Hampson, a pre-med student, said. "I spent two full nights and one day there and he didn't say one word to me."

Along the way he stopped at a bar with male dancers. Although he was originally skeptical, the bar, packed with women, became one of his favorite stops of the trip.

But for every rip-roaring bar comes a lonely bus station.

"At times it seems like it takes forever," he said. "It all depends on how much fun you're having. If you're in a bus station, things are pretty slow."

To pass the time, he writes in his journal to record where he's been and what has happened.

Not that he didn't want to be alone. Although not the loner type, he was talked into traveling solitaire by a well-traveled friend. "I'd never been by myself before and I wanted to see what it's like. It'll probably be the only time I'll ever be totally on my own."

From Chapel Hill, he knew he was heading north, but exactly where he didn't know. "I never know where I'm going to be the next night," he said. It makes no difference really. No matter where he goes, Dave Hampson will probably see and do more in a month of traveling than a lot of us will in a lifetime.

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*Waiting in the terminal, riding the bus/make the life of a traveler lonely but provides opportunity to reminisce: "At times it seems like it take forever."*