

SAY WHAT?

Road tripping with Elvis in a UFO — I've got the disease, and baby, there is no cure

It was a good time to get the hell out of town.

First of all, there was that environmental Threshold conference here, with a bunch of long-haired academics droning on and on about how rainforests in Cameroon are being demolished at an alarming rate. I'm still trying to get used to the existence of Cameroon, much less to the fact that it's getting a lot more open space for development, so I didn't see the need to hang around. (By the way, you ever notice how these environmentalists always complain about the air quality, then go out and drive around in their '69 VW vans which put out more smoke than R.J. Reynolds? If these people would just learn about Lube World we'd have an ozone layer left.)

Then Rainbow found out I've been writing columns about her, so she got all mad and threatened to tie my lips around the trailer hitch of a Dallas-bound Peterbilt, which didn't sound all that appealing to me, especially since I had no desire to go to

JOHN BLAND

less filling

Dallas.

Finally, Arthur, the mutant poodle who lives in my house, hadn't been bathed since sometime during the Carter presidency, and I figured, all things being equal, that a road trip was definitely in order.

But then I was kidnapped by a UFO.

I know, I know, you've heard these stories before, about how a couple of simpletons are driving alone on a dark, deserted dirt road in northwest Arkansas when suddenly they are blinded by a sharp light from the heavens. A metallic banana-shaped object hovers overhead, beams them aboard, they see weird stuff, and then they sell their story to the *Weekly World News* for 25 bucks.

Well, this is different, mainly because I didn't sell my story to the

Weekly World News because they wouldn't shell out the dough. Besides, as a dedicated and professional journalist I believe in giving you, my dedicated and professional Less Filling audience (all three of you), the first chance at laughing in my face.

I was driving outside of South Hill, Va., my cruise control set on 35, singing along with my favorite Trini Lopez tape, sweating like a hog in heat because the air conditioner was busted when all of a sudden I felt this strange wave sweep over me, an energy wave, pulling my stomach up and over, until I realized it was only the Chicken McNuggets I had eaten earlier coming back to haunt me.

That's when it happened. There was a blinding light, and the next thing I knew I was stretched out on a white table, and Elvis was looking at my teeth.

"King!" I shouted.
"Grudnik," the King said, but he said it just like he was singing "Viva Las Vegas."

"King! I knew it! I knew you were

alive!"

Then a door slid open and four more Elvises walked out! I couldn't believe it! I had—

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NEWS FLASH!

ELEPHANT ENTRAILS, Pa. (AP) — Has this ever happened to you? You're at home, writing a letter to a friend or family member, when you find yourself making up things about your life which are blatantly untrue?

Many of you may suffer from this syndrome, which affects more males than females. Its scientific name is *Bullstufus Toomuchus*, but it is more commonly known as "Deep Stuff," and it occurs mainly when you realize you've stepped in something up to your kneecaps which you can't quite get out of.

"I used to think I could talk my way out of anything," said one afflicted male, whose name shall remain anonymous. "I had 17 girlfriends

before I realized I was hooked. It's like a disease, man."

With proper treatment, *Bullstufus Toomuchus* can be controlled.

"Basically, we isolate the subject and try and control his imagination," said Dr. V.S. "Cookie" Potzrebie, director of the Center for Deep Stuff Studies here in Elephant Entrails. "Gradually we limit his drug supply, and eventually his behavior becomes as banal as the next person's."

Dr. Potzrebie added that there has only been one case which has not been cured.

"A guy in North Carolina, a young newspaper writer, wrote that he had been kidnapped by aliens who resembled Elvis. A sad, sad case, and it looks terminal."

(We return you to our regularly scheduled column, already in progress)

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— so I said goodbye to the Elvises, and came home.

And to think, it's all true!

Yuppies talk of Armageddon

'Bureaucracy,' John said, perusing the menu, "is not something that will just go away if you hide in the closet."

I scratched my head and thought for a moment.

"You know," I said finally, as a busboy refilled our water glasses. "The only real solution to the whole problem would be a nice big nuclear holocaust."

"Not really," he said with a smile, knowing he had defeated me yet again. "It is a fact that the federal government as well as several large multinational corporations have detailed contingency plans for a post-Armageddon world."

I flagged down a waiter and ordered the crab-stuffed rainbow trout.

"Do you mean they actually intend to keep the paper flowing after the big Nagasaki?" I asked, incredulous.

"I mean," he said, "that it is quite possible that many of your larger conglomerates have already built huge facilities under mountains somewhere in Oklahoma that are self-contained, electromagnetic-pulse-resistant, radiation-shielded post-WWIII corporate headquarters, ready to be fired up when the first mushroom cloud blooms."

I decided not to call him on the mixed metaphor.

"So how do they intend to have all the bills and junk mail — I'm assuming here there will be junk mail in this Mad-Maxian nightmare — delivered to your shelter-step?" I asked eagerly, sure I had finally stumped him.

John looked up from his plate.

ERIK FLIPPO

yeah, right

"I don't know," he admitted, "but you had better make sure you file a change-of-address form before you abandon your poisoned city and turn tail for the mountains, that's for darn sure."

The waiter slipped the check onto the table as he breezed past.

I had to admire their foresight. Even in the depth of nuclear winter, our government would have an economic base from which to overspend

"Yeah, you wouldn't want to miss one thrill-packed issue of *Radiation Review* or *Mutant Monthly*," I said.

"Don't go making light of mutants," he advised, examining the bill. "The IRS would probably use the four-armed ones as tax collectors."

John plopped down a credit card. The waiter snapped it up in a flash and disappeared, mumbling something about the dangers of plastic money.

"I wonder if the IRS would give

you an extension if you used the recent destruction of the world as we know it as an excuse for late filing," I pondered.

"It seems to me that they would have this thing," he speculated, "about getting all the money in on time, regardless of the end of humanity, Mutual Assured Destruction or the conspicuous lack of post offices at which one could get one's return postmarked by April 15."

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"I think it's just sentimental nostalgia that's got 'em by the heart strings," John said.

"They just don't realize that after the nuclear frijoles are spilled, well, they can't go home again," I agreed.

"They can't have business as usual if the survivors are too busy trying to keep from turning into little green men from Mars to play the game," he said.

"Filing that change-of-address form will be my first priority before I scurry from the flash, I'll tell you," I told him.

After what seemed an eternity, the waiter returned with the charge slip.

John took it, examined the amounts, wrote in a paltry tip (flashing a wicked grin as he did so) and signed the thing in his elegant scrawl: "J. Q. Public."

"Press hard," the waiter seethed mechanically. "Five copies."

Editors' note: Erik and his imaginary friend John will ponder the mysteries of life semi-regularly, occasionally displacing Joe Bob. Sorry. Life's rough.

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