EDITING SAMPLES

Airplanes and showmanship were the two most important elements in DeMarco’s life. Starting in the mid-1980s, DeMarco spent almost every summer for the next two decades working as a part-time airplane mechanic while piloting in the air shows at the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome, Hudson Valley, New York. The flamboyant DeMarco orchestrated dozens of the death-defying performances that included original and reproduced early airplanes. These shows, to this day, involve earthbound slapstick comedy routines that include old cars and trucks, damsels in distress, and villains and heroes—all linked to a plotline involving the acrobatics going on overhead. By the late ’90s, DeMarco had become Old Rhinebeck’s head mechanic, chief pilot, and showstopping master of ceremonies.

Oh, how I loved San Francisco! It was the beginning of the ’70s; hippies were still hanging out on downtown corners wearing flower garlands in their hair—their beads and music a prominent feature. I loved the sight of quaint cable cars clacking up and down the busy, steeply angled streets. It was a local custom that each conductor of these cable cars composed and played a special beat on the bell. Each conductor was known by his unique beat—the more complicated the beat, the better. My favorite was the one from the cable car that travelled to The Cannery and the Ghirardelli Square. That conductor rang an awesome beat on his bell, and his cable car was always packed with regulars and tourists. Then Sunday, we were going to Half Moon Bay to soak up some of the warm sunrays on the beach. There was never a lack of things to do in San Francisco, only a lack of time.

It was the summer of 1983 when I embarked on my nearly round-the-world trip, starting with the South Pacific. My brother was living in Queensland, Australia, at that time, so I knew I had a home base if I needed one. An old travel agent friend found me an amazing ticket offered by Air New Zealand. They called it their Circle Pacific fare, and I could make as many as twenty-five flights on it as long as I flew to Auckland, New Zealand, first and then on to Sydney, Australia. The cost was only $1,000, which was a fortune then but seems so cheap to me now. So, I did what any responsible person would do; I sold all my possessions, save for my beloved Volkswagen Rabbit, and set off on my adventure.