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A Time Travel Friendly Field Guide

By Matt Latorre

It was time to make an early morning coffee run from our room to the Peet's Coffee at the bottom of the Portola Hotel in Monterey. After sufficiently creaming my coffee to the color of cardboard I headed toward the exit and noticed an out of place, cafeteria-esque dining/meeting area attached to the shop accommodating the overly caffeinated spillover of patrons. A man sits isolated at his own table, probably around 50 years old, pawing his gray hair like a relaxed cat. Not simply running his fingers through his hair, rather just giving it a gentle caress as if it's been behaving, staying in its place. My eyes try to zero in on this oddity without being too obvious. This hair though...*wild!* Neck length throughout and encompassing all shades of silver and gray, it just might be a wig because it looks like a machine has methodically combed it in the same direction for the past 12 hours. Perfectly straight on the sides and devoid of any part, a slight curl cliff hanging off his forehead like a homeless Superman. He gives a quick, creepy glance in my direction and I avert my gaze. Unphased, he seems accustomed to inquisitive and prying eyes piercing his privacy. He is adorned by a weathered, army green jacket, the overall vibe about him is not one of homelessness, but rather...*debatable* in some unknowing way. He looks like

he's been in the sun too long, a kind of time-worn, been through the ringer leathery film dominates his complexion.

He returns his attention to a small black screen on an even smaller raised black stand. The screen is maybe 8 inches wide by 5 inches tall at the most, peculiarly small to be working on. I can't make out the exact content on the screen but it shares the same color palette and pixelation of the classic arcade game '1942'. However, in this strange arena no game is being played, no word document is being typed. He seems to be staring at a series of scrolling, indecipherable symbols and what's more bizarre, I don't recognize *any* of this AV equipment. It appears partially homemade, integrating old technology and new, a black market potpourri of unidentifiable components from the island of misfit electronics. Adding to the disorder I notice two or three cables leading out of the screen into something reminiscent of a vintage geiger counter, a few bulbs and switches haphazardly mounted and again, I don't recognize this equipment!

Once back to our room I immediately tried to explain this anomaly to my wife, insisting that she see this spectacle for herself and add some validity to these red flags of bewilderment waving wildly in my mind. I lead her through the coffee shop with a cautious gate and luckily, the man is still there. Her eyes lock with mine and we both silently whisper with a smile, knowingly, "*Oh yeah...*". We're immediately on the same page and what is more, this time I notice a white, 5 gallon bucket on the ground next to him, his cables from the tabletop spilling down and snaking their way inside. On top of the bucket rests a small stack of neatly folded white linens, perhaps a collection of recently starched pillow cases with an odd tea towel thrown in. Is it so inconceivable that this linen stack could simply be the result of post laundering success? Yes, yes it is. It's too inconceivable.

We exit the shop and I pleadingly utter, “See?! Am I crazy?!” Has another passenger quietly and successfully hid his anonymity from the rest of the world, but left his true nature exposed to my imagination? Perhaps, but my wife replies reassuringly with a phrase I’ve been throwing around for some time now, “Oh yeah, that guy is *definitely* time travel friendly.”

The account you’ve just read chronicles just one encounter not at all dissimilar to many others we’ve all experienced, those abnormal, eyebrow raising moments when the very fabric of time seems utterly out of place. The words that follow do not make up a treatise or manifesto on the mechanics of time travel itself, but rather a collection of observation techniques and telltale signs that can help you, the reader, identify these aberrations in your day to day life, an assemblage of common traits that could be connected to the aforementioned hypothesized mode of *tempus itinerantur*. Of course, it would be futile to extrapolate on all the theories of a temporal paradox seriously without the combined knowledge of a quantum physicist, theoretical physicist and perhaps a man of the cloth to make it really interesting. The aforementioned occupations were not available at the time of this writing so all factual validity will have to rest on the reader’s own conscience. You will not find a scientific journal within these paragraphs, rather an intriguing and sometimes comical look at the attributes and behavior of a *possibility*. Speculative imagination with a deep seeded hope that I *could* be right and on my way to uncovering a long upheld fascination with moving through time, not simply through space.

My observations intensified upon moving to San Francisco, an apparent epicenter and hotbed of passenger (time traveler) activity. Understandably, one could make the assumption or argument that many of the individuals observed in similar metropolitan hives have been wrongfully judged due to mental illness, bouts of psychosis, or simply a general disdain or lack of public etiquette and hygiene. To those local neighborhood cast members, those anomalies of

questionable individualism, I mean no disrespect. In fact, the behaviors they've exhibited have only aided me with a heightened sense of awareness towards who may be and who is not, a time traveling friendly individual. These head turning moments will always reach far beyond the condensed cityscape of a metropolitan area, undoubtedly occurring in remote locales across the globe since time immemorial if, in fact, time traveling 'distance' remains unbound.

Spending time in a large city has two particular advantages for detection and discovery: (1) Population and density can only logically yield a higher frequency of sightings. (2) Due to said population and density, sightings can now be connected with specific jump off and arrival points. The per capita rise of public restrooms, parks, post offices, libraries and subway systems have exposed themselves as geographical switchboards, portals for weaving in and out of the time stream where passengers can be seen entering without exiting and vice versa. Despite the frequency of sightings at these locations most passengers have remained steadfast in maintaining the highest levels of untraceable anonymity, except under the watchful and inquisitive eye of suspecting citizens, aka, you and I.

The general appearance of a time travel friendly individual will more than likely be slightly disheveled. Worn, perhaps, but not necessarily squalid. Exhausted, but still anxious. Overtaxed in a way similar to the feeling post transatlantic flight or a day spent at the airport due to delays only *much* more severe. Can you imagine the temporal jet lag that comes with time travel? It must be horrendously unnerving to endure that type of shock, far surpassing the discomfort you may find associated with your lack of legroom in Coach. Worn down from the journey a passenger's complexion may show signs of prolonged sun exposure, not burnt, but a hardened and darkened look overall. It is my belief that this weathered exterior may be from the

technological side effects of low level radiation or intense lighting experienced during the apex of the journey, that exact moment when he or she makes 'the leap'.

A few minute changes in a passenger's wardrobe can easily turn an individual from the future/past into an anonymous patron of the present day. Clothing is often loose fitting but not excessively baggy, traveling comfortably over what could be millennia is paramount. You will unlikely find a passenger peacocking with bright, flashy colors or a fashion sense that seems all too futuristic. No need to draw attention to oneself, the secrets of time travel are not for everyone to know! It would be erroneous to assume the dress of say, an early 1900's Londoner or the yet to be invented stylings of a future fashion. Regardless, brimmed hats are customary, a fedora or pork pie to hide a disheveled head of hair is recurrent in many sightings.

Dark overcoats are popular and of course tweed jackets lend themselves fashion appropriate for several decades at a time. An unmatched vest underneath or simply an overkill of layering is also common. Such clothing is undoubtedly picked up along their travels, for a time traveler (unless a seasoned one) couldn't possibly dress for every era they encounter and must adapt accordingly, always leaving room for improvisation. Boots are the appropriate footwear in this game of time and again, worn but not ragged, seasoned but not soiled. If one was to find him or herself displaced out of their familiar time and place they must have steadfast footwear to cover all possible scenarios of terrain and weather. Basically, be on the lookout for footwear and fashion that I have aptly dubbed 'century chic' be it Cowboy, Chelsea or Chukka on one's feet.

What's fascinating to me, and a subject in which I have not gotten close enough to examine in depth lies within the realm of jewelry adornment. It wouldn't be shocking if an amulet, talisman or other phylactery was hidden around the neck, a good luck charm being kneaded inside one's pocket worn down by nervousness, superstition and hope. Such items

would likely need to be guarded over and kept safe at all costs, their importance and function a possible link to the methods of time travel itself!

Lastly, an undeniable trait that may prove most important would have to be a passenger's personal luggage. The ultimate intrigue awaits here because the personal belongings contained within one's luggage may in fact hold the very keys to unlocking the mysteries of how time travel is achieved! Where did they come from? Where are they going? How did they get here? The clues and answers to these questions must be hidden in the luggage! Contraptions, gadgets, apparati and correspondence equipment unknown to our science all could be harbored within. Commonly a briefcase is seen, a reliable and time tested carry-on that says under a humble guise...*business*. It's vagueness causing a stranger or newfound acquaintance to never be so bold as to ask about the contents therein. Be it carried in hand or in the mind, can you imagine the secrets and the sheer eye opening - world changing discovery that lies in wait like an unattainable dream? The scope of a time traveling itinerary can be vast, but nowhere near as vast as the treasure trove of knowledge contained within the passengers own mind! How many trips have they made? How far back/forward have they gone? Does the Grandfather Paradox hold true? A paradox that proposes a time traveler *can* do anything that *did* happen, but *can't* do anything that *didn't* happen, the classic conundrum wherein one avoids altering the future by not altering the past.

Tragedy strikes when a passenger has become detached from the mechanisms of time travel. These are individuals who have found themselves temporarily timebound and for whatever reason are unable to return to their past/future. I believe this to be the reason for such a haggard and bewildered look upon the faces of these individuals. It's a look of stress, disbelief, contemplation over the chance that the miracle of time travel has faded and they've found

themselves marooned in a time/place highly unfavorable. They are now stuck *OUT* of time, horrified by the implications their travel snafus may have unearthed. To most unassuming observers this new and unfortunate position a passenger may find themselves in goes undetected without empathy. To the passenger unfortunately, today could be the same day they've experienced a hundred times! In addition, it is my belief that during these moments of duress a traveler's synapses can snap, mentally breaking down from time's all pervading nebulosity, their struggles now take on a camouflaged anonymity in the form of a mental illness. The wonder of a technology unbound has now left them grounded and directionless.

If there are rules to time travel that must be strictly obeyed, imagine the discipline and exactitude the passenger must exert in order to be successful. The lure to stick around and miss your extraction date, the temptations involved in foresight, the impulse to right past wrongs! Passengers! Travelers! Tourists on the Timeline of Eternity! Share your secrets with me! Reveal this cryptic conundrum for what it is to ALL of us, the humble members of the human race who will NOT jeopardize your whereabouts, point of disembarkation or terminus. If in fact, any of the aforementioned intricacies within these words contain any validity, I still implore, encourage and support your ability to remain - time travel friendly.

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