

# GOIN' UP THE COUNTRY©

January 16, 1991

The flash of scud missiles was being seen over the airwaves of CNN worldwide. Broadcast executives moved at a frenzied pace to capture any part of the media rush that had been triggered by the latest world crisis, a crisis that would, within a few short weeks, be remembered as The Persian Gulf War.

One month later, Rick Taylor, seasoned legend of legends in the music industry, kissed his wife through the window of their car and hurried to the curb with his luggage. They had agreed that there was no danger of terrorism flying from Minneapolis to Los Angeles. If the Iraqis were planning to retaliate in the U.S. for the missile strikes against them, they surely would not choose a small city in the Midwest. So it was safe, with a grain of salt, it was safe.

The plane was full, Rick found his way to the pre-booked seat that he always used and that would be every bit as comfortable as first-class, at half the cost. In the countless number of flights Rick had taken over the years, he had learned to Zen the labor of travel. He quickly maneuvered himself into the window seat of the bulkhead and studied the activity outside on the tarmac to avoid the distractions of hurried, remaining passengers passing through to the packed cabin behind. He hoped, as he always did, that the middle seat would remain vacant, and was determined, as everyone in a Minneapolis February is, to reserve cheer and outgoing behavior for warmer places.

Rick's internal travel calculator told him that all passengers had been boarded, the middle seat was still vacant, he had rolled a seven.

"Oh, there you are, we've been waiting for you," the flight attendant said to the young man working his way down the ramp on crutches.

Suddenly, Rick knew his fate had changed, the seven he had rolled had become snake eyes. He knew that the middle seat, the proverbial empty, middle seat, would now be occupied by the awkward despair of an injured, young man in a crowded place. A man who had probably flown only a few times before, who was probably not given to the graces of travel, not given to the conduct of travel that Rick, in his countless travel experiences, had grown to know were so critical to the prospect of a reasonably pleasant experience. Nonetheless, Rick possessed the skills to deal with this situation. Pressing closer to the wall of the craft, adjusting his space, Rick settled into a virtual suspended animation, resolving to make the best of the situation.

"Third Army," Rick heard the young man in full uniform reply. "Home for a stay."

"Gulf?" the man across the aisle continued.

"Yep," the soldier answered politely.

"Gonna be OK?" the man asked.

The soldier nodded his head.

“How’d it happen?” the man asked.

“Ah, no big deal, gets me a Purple Heart and a two week visit with the folks and sister,” he said in a modest tone. He then placed the headset over his ears in an unintentional maneuver to end the conversation.

The man across the aisle knew it was unintentional, but complied all the same. By now, Rick’s senses were stirred. His firm isolation had been penetrated. The power of this young man’s understatement was “haunting,” Rick knew not why. It was enough for Rick to attend to the curiosity of a vision, to make visual contact. As Rick turned to look, the young man poised with an aged half-smile, nodded a gesture of greeting.

“How ya doing?” Rick asked genuinely.

In the seconds that followed, normally reserved for response, the young man attended to his small pack, removed a CD with the intent to use it immediately, and finally responded in the same genuine manner that Rick had asked, “Good...., you?”

Rick wasn’t able to answer before noticing that the CD he had removed, and was about to insert in his player, was a Greatest Hits Collection. A collection of songs that Rick had personally been responsible for as the manager/producer of a band in the sixties. A collection of songs that had driven his passions, reflected his values and positioned him as a leader in music for decades to come, a CD that placed these songs of Canned Heat at the upper level of a decade’s best music. For an instant, the “haunt” began to take shape, but was just as quickly disguised in Rick’s mind as mere coincidence.

“Where’d you pick that up?” Rick asked. He was curious. This was music from a previous generation.

“My Dad sent it to me... why?” the young man asked.

“I know it well,” Rick replied, with no intention of expounding. “Those songs have kept me alive for many years. You know...”

“Funny, that’s kinda what my Dad said... said they kept ’em goin’ in Nam,” the young man interrupted as he activated the CD and began to nod his head in the delight of the first notes, “I dig it,” he concluded in a peaceful tone.

Rick sensed the same maneuvering that the man across the aisle had complied to just moments earlier. It gave him a moment to realize that there had been no reality in his self-serving prediction of imposition, that the only imposition was the young man’s image, and that there had been no invasion of space. He had misjudged the situation and the kid. Smiling to himself and repositioned in his seat, he was glad he was wrong and thought, “I’ve been living in Minnesota way too long.”

Within minutes, Rick was in his usual airline trance. The occurrence of the last several minutes, although he did not yet realize, had made a profound impact on him. He was about to tell himself a story, to reveal an untold truth that had remained dormant in his mind for over two decades. This was no deep, dark secret, on the contrary, this was simply a small treasure that Rick hadn’t known he’d possessed. Not a forgotten treasure, this was a discovery. As he drifted further and further away, the songs, the times and the faces began to emerge. March, 1969... twenty-one years earlier.

The only things awake at 5:00 in the morning were the lawn sprinklers. It was the beginning of another perfect day in Laurel Canyon; an upscale neighborhood in the Hollywood Hills above the

Sunset Strip that suited the lifestyle of many movie and music hot shots. Rick Taylor's English Tudor home stood above Wonderland Park Avenue on a large piece of property. Gated and fenced, it was very private, just the kind of pad needed to compliment his flourishing management and concert business.

A conspicuous, blue Ford Fairlane crept up the street toward Rick's entrance, turned in through the open gate, moved up the driveway and came to a stop. Two men in dark suits stepped out and headed toward the front door. Kathryn had already been up for a few minutes. Her modeling job called for an early morning shoot at the beach. When she heard the knock, she moved toward the door and opened it without hesitation. The two men stood on the step, looking tall and conservative. Kathryn, somewhat startled said "yes...a...good morning...a...what do you want?"

"Is this the residence of Rick Taylor, Mam?" asked one of the men.

"Yes, what can I do for you?" Kathryn replied.

The man doing the talking looked at the other man and, with a sneer, continued his questioning. "Are you his wife, Mam?"

"No, I'm just a...," Kathryn began to reply as she was interrupted by the second man.

"Is Mr. Taylor here, Mam?" he asked.

"Yes, he's still...," she began to reply but was interrupted again.

"Mam, this is Agent Williams and I'm Agent Carr. We're with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Would you wait out here on the step please?" the agent asked.

"Am I under arrest for something?" she asked with a slight tone of sarcasm.

"No Mam, should you be?" the agent asked in a predisposed tone.

Kathryn's common sense was jolted by his tone. She moved out onto the step, completely out of his way.

The agent then began knocking on the door again, with much more force than he had before. Kathryn, not understanding what he was doing asked, "Would you like me to go and wake him?"

"That won't be necessary, Mam," the agent said.

Rick lay in bed, still asleep, dreaming vividly about cops banging on his door in a drug raid. When the real knocking on the door finally woke him, it took a moment to shake off the dream and adjust to the abrupt reality of having to answer the door. He quickly threw on his robe, routinely glanced out his bedroom window and spotted the blue Ford. He'd seen that car before, he thought, but his head wasn't clear enough yet to figure it out. The agents continued knocking, and by the time Rick had reached the top of the stairs, he realized that the situation could be related to only one of two things: drugs or the United States Army. As he started down the stairs, he struggled to think quickly, but it was difficult. The agents continued their relentless pounding.

"Can't be drugs...," Rick thought, "they'd have busted the door in... it must be the Army."

The crisis in Southeast Asia had escalated to a peak in 1968. The government was inducting non-volunteering, young men at a rate that paralleled frenzy. The draft had become one of the most infamous and tragic "eminent domains" in American history. The collective instinct of America

knew that the war in Viet Nam and everything that went with it, mostly our involvement, was wrong, but this is what it had come to. The government had resolved that all that were able would serve, even if it took two expensive cops to escort one 25-year-old businessman to the “inductee lounge.”

Now that Rick had figured there would be no arrest, he knew the agents would allow him a few minutes to dress before dragging him down to the post where thousands had, and thousands more would be inducted into an army that had resorted to actions beyond crisis and into the panic mode. Counter culture methods of beating the system had become myth: swallowing tinfoil, eating two pounds of sugar, psychiatric counseling, religious claims, acting gay; none of these were ever really known to work. If your I.Q. was above 75 and you could walk, see and hear you were in. Rick figured there was nothing to lose, he’d try anything, what the hell.

“Don’t tell me I’ve missed my tee time?” Rick said as he completely opened the door.

“Are you Rick Taylor?” the agent asked.

“You got me...,” Rick said with an impertinent tone. “Will I go directly to Nam or do I get a physical first?” Rick asked, presuming that the agents were there for that reason.

“We’re here to see that you report, immediately, to the U.S. Army Induction Center for a physical. You’ve been called for service young man,” the agent said in an official, unwavering manner.

Rick was right, this was it! He had managed to avoid this nightmare since he left college by migrating from the east coast to the west and using his parent’s address back east as his residence another time or two when he had received notices to report, but it had finally caught up with him.

“Don’t suppose I could meet you down there, eh fellows?” Rick asked facetiously.

“You have fifteen minutes sir,” the agent said, “and you’ll be riding with us.”

By now Kathryn was clearly upset. “Have they started drafting women yet? If not, may I be excused?”

“Sorry Mam, just doing our job,” the agent replied.

“Forgive me for not inviting you in,” Kathryn said, as she closed the door abruptly behind her.

The agents looked at each other and, without speaking, acknowledged that this was not their idea of exciting duty.

As the agents walked back and stood next to the blue Ford, Rick hurried to find anything he could swallow that might make a difference. Acid, speed, and a handful of aspirin were all he could find. He quickly swallowed what he could, figuring that halfway to his fateful destination, he’d come-on to a drug rush that perhaps, just perhaps, might keep him out of the Army.

As the Ford crept back down Laurel Canyon, Rick opened the window. He wanted to hear the sprinklers and the sounds of L.A. just waking up. Rick’s world, as he knew it, had vanished. He felt helpless. This change could destroy everything he had accomplished over the past few years and all his plans for the future. This change may mean his life.

Seconds began to seem like minutes, minutes like hours. Rick was in an emotional spiral downward. As the acid and speed slowly began making their mark on Rick’s system, they seemed to magnify the reality of what was taking place. As he closed his eyes to ease the pain of the emotional journey he was about to take, he thought of friends from high school and college,

remembering their faces as boys, their interest in sports, cars and girls. He now faced the fact, with no escape, the blunt reality that had become razor sharp with the early rush of the acid; he had lost some of his friends, they had been called to, and not returned from this war. The speed began to kick in, and the acid rushes increased in frequency. The cool, morning breeze through the window of the car was the only thing, it seemed, that comforted him now. Images of helicopters in formation strafing jungle villages, disintegrating grass huts in flames... faces of a dozen, young men that Rick had known who had been killed...caskets being loaded on transport planes to be shipped home to the States... and, the students shot down at Kent State, raced through his mind. The drugs were now driving his thoughts to a level of revelation. This abrupt, instant and new reality plagued his mind; it rushed his consciousness. He considered his parents who, as members of a generation who had also become adults in the throws of war, represented a rapidly growing number of mainstream Americans who openly opposed this war. He remembered the heartbreak in his mother's long distance voice when she phoned, it seemed, time and time again over the past few years, with tragic news of another of Rick's childhood friends... and who, now, would be faced with this, her worst nightmare.

The two agents in the front seat said nothing to Rick, they were involved in their own small talk, and Rick, far too fortified by the drugs he had swallowed to attend to anything other than his emotional hallucinations, wasn't certain whether to laugh or cry, pray or jump out of the car. The only real escape now was to resolve that the worst would happen. Just as the car pulled into the Center, Rick began preparing himself for a destiny that meant, within two weeks, he would be on his way to Southeast Asia.

Rick was one of very few whites and, at twenty-five, was older than the dozens upon dozens of black and Chicano nineteen and twenty-year olds who stood, waiting in silence, waiting for the doom that had fallen on many of their brothers and friends. There had to be something clearly wrong to fail the physical, to be classified "4F." It had become the aspiration of millions of young Americans, it was a status synonymous with freedom, it meant that the Armed Forces didn't want you. A bad knee, double vision, punctured eardrum, anything that, in the opinion of the Army, represented a defect, resulted in a treasured "4F" Classification.

Rick stood in line, in his underwear, for what seemed to be an eternity. His mind was still racing from the chemicals, his body stood silent. The boy in front of him seemed to be the only one of the lot that would, by visual analysis, fail the test. He was overweight, his ankles caved inward a bit, and he wore eyeglasses. As each kid entered the examination room, the kid preceding him exited the room, walking past the waiting group. A spontaneous, unsaid pact emerged from the emotional camaraderie of the moment, a moment that was perhaps their last peace.

As each boy exited the exam room, thumbs down meant pass, thumbs up meant fail. Failure meant 4F, but 4F meant freedom. There were very few thumbs up. Out of thirty or so that Rick had counted, only two had failed their exam. It was very clear that most of these healthy, young Americans were on their way to a hell that would last the rest of their lives.

Rick was next in line. The kid before him, the awkward kid, the one Rick was certain would not pass, exited the room, thumbs down. He had passed the exam. He was in the Army. Rick began to rush from the chemicals again. He was next. He was feeling what he imagined it would feel like just moments before being executed. He walked into the room where a physician sat, visibly exhausted from his routine. Nothing was said. The man, appearing to be in his fifties, distantly completed the paperwork from his last exam and carefully began the process of initiating the paperwork for Rick.

"Name?" the doctor said flatly, without greeting him.

"Taylor, Rick Taylor," Rick replied.

"Sit on the table please," the doctor said in a tone that exposed the sad monotony of his duty.

Rick slowly positioned himself on the examination table, instinctively moving as slowly as he could with no real conscious reason for doing so. The doctor spent several minutes examining his frame, Rick paying close attention, saying nothing, was hoping for a sigh, a raised eyebrow, a question regarding the origin of the scar on his leg sustained in an athletic injury years before. He got nothing. He felt like a piece of manufactured equipment coming off the assembly line, passing all inspections. His heart was beating faster than he could imagine, the speed, the acid, meant nothing to this doctor, for every kid who had come through that morning had a heart beating at the same rate as Rick. The doctor was oblivious to Rick's condition, and even if he had known the truth, it wouldn't have mattered. Next, was the eye exam; Rick knew he would pass with flying colors, and so it was. Even though he falsely called out some letters, it didn't matter. His eyes were strong, the doctor knew it. It was at this point that Rick knew he was in for a big change in his life, he was convinced. Like so many times in his past, when the situation became desperate, he did the only thing he knew he could trust. He started to think about his future and what he needed to do to make the best of the present situation. He started forcing positive thoughts, resolving that he would land on his feet, possibly even get a stateside post and ride this thing out. As the doctor placed the earphones on Rick's head, Rick maintained his concentration. He was too busy planning his strategy, if he couldn't beat them now, it was time to do what he did best, promote and manage.

"Tell me when you hear the tone," the doctor said routinely.

"Nothing yet," Rick replied briskly as he abandoned his intense concentration.

As the seconds passed, Rick heard nothing. The doctor was saying nothing. It was the first instant that he felt outside the boundaries of the routine. He sensed a problem.

It was his right ear. The doctor perceived a problem in his right ear. "What is your occupation?", the doctor asked. Now, they were clearly outside the boundaries of routine.

"I'm in rock 'n roll, a personal manager and record producer," Rick replied, wide eyed with a hope he had never felt before.

Without hesitation, the doctor asked Rick to follow him into an adjacent examination room. The doctor escorted Rick to a soundproof booth where he was hooked up to wires and electrodes before being given another test.

"Thank God for all those nights in recording studios with the speakers at breakneck volume," Rick thought, "I bet my hearing really is damaged."

After several minutes of further analysis, the examination was complete. The doctor said nothing while completing the forms. His last act, the abrupt motion of his hand moving through his signature on the form, was, up to this point in Rick's life, the most pivotal, the most intense, the most emotional point of destiny he had ever experienced, yet he still didn't know whether he had passed or failed.

In a low, aloof voice while looking away, the doctor said, "Good luck."

Rick accepted the paperwork from the doctor's hand and said nothing. He assumed he had passed. As he walked toward the door to exit the exam room, he looked down at the paper and realized that the doctor had become the instrument of fate that would save his life. He felt another major rush of chemicals to his brain, turned and looked at the doctor, only to see a man, a human being who had, all along, possessed the compassion to care for the plight of these men. He only now chose to show it, carefully, by giving up a subtle, but real smile, as if it was a possession. This sudden and brief offering instantly vanished as it was consumed by the probability that the next young man entering the room would soon be on his way to war.

Rick said nothing aloud, and what had been a massive, emotional storm suddenly calmed; he was numb. It was at this very moment that the most profound revelation of the day struck Rick. There would be no celebration of this fate, there would be no joy, for the experience that had just occurred had been an awakening. The weight of this personal dilemma, while lifted from his shoulders, could not balance the weight of the realities that had faced him that morning. Life was heavy that day and would remain heavy for many more days. Rick walked out of the room, gave his “thumbs up” to the remaining draftees, dressed and made his way to the street.

After walking for miles, Rick realized that he was as high as he'd been that entire day. As relieved, as lucky, as happy as most would have felt, Rick couldn't shake the intense mix of emotions. He hadn't fooled anybody, he hadn't needed to, his right ear really had been damaged, his freedom was legitimate. But his acid trip had taken him on an introspective journey. He remembered an article he had recently read about a POW who had escaped the horror of a Viet Cong prison, making it back to his way of life, but who had never really recovered from the sense of having left his friends behind. There was no guilt, but Rick knew he would not forget this day, nor would he celebrate this day. As he started up Laurel Canyon after walking nearly fifteen miles, half the day was done, the sprinklers had been shut down, and the early morning sounds of L.A. had been replaced with the afternoon sounds of the big city.

August 10, 1969

Rick hadn't been back home in nearly three years. As he drove his rented Lincoln along Route 523 close to his parents' home, the sights of the old farmhouses grounded him. The red light of the only signal in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey allowed him to drift. Thoughts of Little League, American Legion ball, his best friend Jo-Jo and Leo's Garage, where he had helped restore the '34 Ford pickup that he and his Dad discovered in a farmer's field. As he bathed his emotions in the memories of the restful late fifties and early sixties, the light changed and the courteous nudge of the horn behind coaxed him back to 1969.

Two days of his mother's pampering and dad's advice was just enough of an influence for Rick to abide by the speed limit on his hour drive to New York City. The disk jockey positioned the number one song without naming it, and as Rick entered the Holland Tunnel, he accelerated with hopes of reaching the city before the song was over. He wondered if it was his band's song, which had already been number one in other regions of the country during the past few weeks. Rick and his parents had been too consumed by their visit to know if New York had discovered Canned Heat.

The streets of New York were busy. It was mid-morning in Manhattan. First stop, the Camera Barn, mid-town. Uncle Leon was a gem. For years he'd been insisting on giving Rick a camera. Leon did business and treated family the old way; you had to be there! So this was the day. The store was already busy for the hour, full of commotion. Too busy for small talk, Leon looked Rick deeply in the eye, making no mention of his bizarre appearance, and said while nudging him toward the door and handing him a package, “you're doing fine young man, I'm proud of you... why I don't know. Read the instructions and be sure to list this for your insurance.” As Rick walked out the door and looked back at his uncle, he knew his mother had been behind this. She knew how busy Rick would be in the next few days and she knew Leon would have had him up in Westchester playing golf and gin rummy with the boys like he had done so many times with Rick's dad. She knew this wasn't the time to let this happen.

The St. Moritz Hotel was only a few blocks away. Rick figured he could check-in and make a few calls before the band arrived. As he drove up to the curb he couldn't help but be amused at the timing of the disk jockey. There was his song again, only to be cut off by the urgency of the

valet sticking his head in the window of the Lincoln, expecting Rick to get out so that he could go about his business. Rick got out of the car conceding that he would catch the song and its ranking later in the day.

Rick handed the valet a tip as he stacked the final item on the cart. The bellman hadn't seen that a package had rolled off the cart, nor had Rick. Another valet picked up the package with the camera and positioned it on a cart being loaded for another guest, directing the bellman to find the owner once inside the hotel. The young woman owning the luggage that Uncle Leon's camera had now joined had not witnessed the transfer. She had been occupied with the hustle of events outside the hotel entrance and was also avoiding eye contact with nearly everyone around her as she was quite striking and sensed, accurately, that it was difficult for people, especially men, to not stare at her.

Rick arrived at his room not noticing the missing piece. In fact, he was so routine with his travel, that he had virtually forgotten the addition to his items, and was too hurried to miss it. He wasn't in his room five minutes when the phone rang. It was Greg, the facilities manager at Columbia University wanting to move his meeting up to 3:00 p.m. so that they could get started with the stage for tomorrow's show. Rick agreed, with one condition; he had to call and reschedule another meeting. Rick immediately called Jon Rydell, an old buddy, at the William Morris Agency. No luck, Johnny said he needed to see Rick at 3:00 p.m.! Rick sensed there was something up Johnny's sleeve, so he agreed to keep the three 'o clock with him. Rick quickly phoned Greg and while reluctant to start building the stage prior to their meeting, agreed to reschedule.

Not noticing until the bellman was well down the hall, it was too late for the young woman, in town from Vassar College for a shopping lunch with her executive daddy, to return the piece of luggage that was not hers. She quickly spotted Rick's name on the camera bag and called the front desk. "Please, do you have a guest registered by the name of Rick Taylor?" she said with the intent of informing the clerk of the mix-up.

"One moment please," the front desk clerk said. Unaware that the clerk misunderstood and connected her to his room, she was quite surprised when Rick answered the phone.

"Rick Taylor," he answered.

"Oh... excuse me, I'm sorry, I meant to tell the front desk that your camera bag was placed in my luggage by mistake. They must have thought I meant to contact you directly," she concluded.

Rick liked the sound of this. Thinking quickly he said, "Oh, no problem, where are you, I'll come and get it?"

"No, that's OK," she replied. "I'll bring it to you."

"Great... I'm in room 1204. When will you come by?"

Rick had never seen this woman, but had a feeling from her voice and conduct, that it might be interesting.

"I'm on my way... Oh, give me ten minutes," she said.

"Fine. See you then," Rick said, deciding he had enough time to make another quick call.

Just as Rick put the phone down the ringer went off. "It's Johnny, forget our lunch, I've just heard of a gig you can't pass up, you're going to have to cancel Columbia University too. Get on the horn now and make arrangements to get upstate as quickly as you can 'cause it's going to be tough to find a way up. You play Saturday night!"



“Wait a minute, hold on, what the hell...,” Rick tried to say before being interrupted by Johnny.

“Rick, trust me on this one... wait a minute, turn on the TV, take a look for yourself... there’s a...,” Johnny continued while Rick flipped the television on.

“Go to Channel 4,” Johnny said, “you’ll see what I’m talking about... there are hundreds of thousands of people trying to get upstate to see Hendricks, The Who, Dylan... my God, they want Canned Heat and I guarantee it’s a lot more dough than the college gig!”

The young woman with Rick’s camera bag had walked up to Rick’s room, his door still open, and overheard the excited conversation Rick was having.

“So what do I tell the Columbia guy, and how the hell am I going to get my band up there, the reporter on TV is saying all the roads are jammed and there are no flights... there’s no way to get there!” Rick said in excited frustration.

“Rick, figure it out. If I know you, you’ll find a way, and here’s what’s in it for you,” Johnny began to claim.

Without even listening to all the terms, Rick said “OK, OK,” and hung up with the intention of calling to cancel the Columbia gig and trying to book flights to upstate New York.

The young woman from Vassar College stood outside his open door, now enjoying the sense of mischief and intrigue.

Rick’s first call was to the facilities manager at Columbia.

“Greg... Rick Taylor here, I...,” before Rick could get another word out, Greg interrupted.

“Rick, I’m glad you called. I think we’re going to have to cancel this show, every person from the age of 15 to 30 is headed up north... there won’t be a soul in town for this thing,” he said with a distinct tone of weakness that Rick had heard many times before.

After silently thanking the powers that had guided Rick along in situations like this countless times before, Rick said, “Greg, no problem, that’s why I insisted on that “Cancellation Clause” in our Contract so I could recoup all of our expenses in a case like this.”

Relieved, Greg replied, “Thanks man... this could have been my job. Figure out what we owe you and I’ll have the University cut you a check before you leave the city. I had no idea this Festival upstate was going to be...”

Rick interrupted, “Neither did I Greg, neither did I.”

The next call was the concierge at the front desk.

“Rick Taylor here, I’ve got to get nine people and their luggage up to Bethel, New York, or...” Rick said with a tone of urgency before being cut off.

“No way sir, there’s no way you can...”

“What do you mean no way...” Rick said with a raised voice, “you mean to tell me there are no flights to upstate New York...” and as he tried to continue, the young woman stepped into his room; he looked at her, his jaw dropped, he said nothing.

He put the phone on the receiver without taking his eyes off of her. She stood there with a smile on her face that told Rick it was OK to stare at her, and while he knew she was simply there to deliver his camera, it didn't really matter. Nothing else, at that very instant, really mattered.

"I might be able to help you get upstate," she said with confidence.

Quickly regaining his composure, Rick replied briskly, "What, you own a jet or something?"

"No, but my father does. I'm going to meet him for lunch right now. He grants most of my wishes, and I've had bigger ones than this..." she said with a tease. "Want to come along?"

Rick jumped out of his chair, and prematurely accepted her invitation in a voice higher than he wanted. He cleared his throat and accepted again.

"Gotta go," she said with underlying laughter, "you coming?"

As the two settled in the back seat of the cab, the young woman searched her handbag and pulled out a small ribbon. "Here, no time to get a hair cut, but you can at least tie it back," she said with an accepting smile.

"Where are we going?" Rick said as the cab pulled to the curb.

"We're here," she said. "My dad is the President of TWA."

Rick jumped out of the cab and looked up at the huge, imposing building that housed the largest airline corporation in the world. It was almost as if the building peered down at Rick to say, "You better have a good story to tell, pal."

Rick's new friend jumped out of the cab and said, "Come on, he's expecting me in his office, let's go up and find a way to get you and your band upstate."

Rick had experienced a miracle or two in his past, but he couldn't help but think this one was too good to be true.

"Hi, we're here to see Mr. Brookfield," she said with poise even though Rick's appearance was creating a small scene in the lobby.

"And you are?" the security guard asked.

"Miss Brookfield," she replied.

Rick reflected back and realized it had been the first time he had heard her name, that he had forgotten, in the chaos, to properly introduce himself, and that he still didn't know her first name.

Rather than impose an embarrassing moment, he decided to wait until her father addressed her and pick it up then, acting as if he had known it all along.

As the guard issued two visitor badges he said, "55th floor, second elevator."

The elevator door opened, out hustled a crowd of suited New Yorkers on their way quickly to no where, Rick decided.

As they both jumped on, Miss Brookfield said, "Better let me do the talking." Rick nodded in agreement. The ride up was awkwardly silent, but curiously romantic.

The elevator door opened and there, standing with arms poised to embrace, was a man in his late forties, impeccably dressed, and very handsome.

“Hi Babe,” he said. “Where’ve you been, I expected you half an hour ago?” His tone was upbeat, as if he knew that she would respond with a sound reason for being late.

“Daddy, this is Rick Taylor,” she said with the look and tone that she learned as a little girl would almost always crumble her father’s boundaries.

Without missing a beat, Brookfield aggressively stepped toward Rick, reached out his hand to shake and said, “Rick, you’re the proverbial bird with a broken wing here, I know by the tone of my daughter’s voice.”

Rick stood there knowing he had only a few seconds to respond with something that would make Brookfield an instant sympathizer. Minutes of analysis streamed through Rick’s mind; can’t use her name ‘cause I don’t know what it is and it’s too risky to use Babe, gotta make sure he knows I’m educated, can’t be too cool, can’t be too slick... and finally, as Brookfield stood waiting for his response, exactly at the threshold of too much time elapsing, Rick said, “Indeed, I am the victim of two broken wings, one of which your daughter has mended, the other I am afraid will be beyond her means.”

“Man!” Rick thought to himself with a smile under his breath, “some of the shit that comes out of my mouth...”

“Is that so...” Brookfield began to say when Miss Brookfield interrupted.

“His camera bag rolled off the valet’s cart at the hotel and I recovered it,” she said quickly, as if to be downplaying the deed and as a set-up for the next.

“Valet?,” Brookfield said, knowing there was no need to suspect anything in the way of Rick and his daughter being involved where a hotel was concerned, but including it as comic relief nonetheless.

Rick sensed that his silence would pay-off right about now. He decided to let the father/daughter playful sparring take its course.

“Yes Daddy,” she said. She had detected his sarcasm and knew it as a cue for permission to kid a kidder. “Rick and I eloped yesterday and we’re staying at the St. Moritz.”

Her young sense of humor was enough to jar Brookfield back to his sense of conversation.

“OK, OK, what’s up Elise?” he said.

“Elise overheard me talking to a business partner when she brought the camera to me,” Rick said, using her name for the first time with the confidence of having used it many times before. “I am experiencing a dilemma that she apparently believes you may be able to remedy... you see...”

“Well, I know a little about business,” Brookfield interrupted, “what is it that you need?”

“Wait now,” Elise said looking at Rick. “I’m supposed to do the talking. Rick has a band and they’re scheduled to play upstate this weekend at a music festival. He can’t find a way to get up there because there are no flights available, all the roads are jammed and some are closed, so I thought we might be able to help him find a way to get his band up there in time to play.” She took a big breath.

The awkwardness of this situation was nearly unbearable for Rick now. His instincts told him it was time to bale, get back to his room and figure this out for himself.

“Must be that big festival creating all the havoc,” Brookfield said calmly. “You must have a pretty good band if you’re playing that gig.”

Brookfield knew Rick was suffering from this unlikely situation his daughter had brought him into. This intuition stimulated a stream of one second memories that consumed him, memories of his daughter and her sense of mission, her direct lobbying of him that suited a cause, never really her own, but good and solid nonetheless, causes she had found to believe in since the day she was old enough to care.

For the brief moment that Brookfield had been attending his memories, Rick had been responding to him with nothing more than polite small talk. “Yes, it is suppose to be quite a weekend up there, I’m told the venue is...” Brookfield hadn’t been listening anyway, Rick knew it.

“I need to find a way to get about nine of us up to Bethel by 3:00p.m. tomorrow...” Rick said, changing gear mid-sentence.

Brookfield looked at Elise to listen to her language not heard but spoken nonetheless. “Better make that ten, young man,” he said, “I’ve got a private that will burn about \$50. bucks of fuel per head, that includes her.”

“Meet me back at the hotel,” Rick said to Elise as she and her father jumped into a cab. “The guys are due to pull-in there anytime, I’ve gotta let the roadees with the equipment truck know about the changes and get them headed up north right away... with any luck they’ll get there in time.”

“I’m going where the water tastes like wine...” the driver sang along to the radio as Rick jumped into the next available cab.

“St. Moritz,” Rick said with the intention of breaking through the young cabby’s dedication to singing along with the song on the radio, “You dig that song, eh?”

“Heck yea,” the cabby said. “Thiz the number one; they play it all la time... can’t seem to shake it outta my mind.”

Rick finally realized that his band’s song, “Goin’ Up The Country,” had hit New York hard. He hadn’t really had time to pay attention, and here it was, a guy in a cab as the messenger bringing the news he had hoped for. He sat back and enjoyed the sensation of knowing that he’d accomplished something big and it was about to get bigger. It’s not something he could express to anybody, he just sat silently and enjoyed the moment, the pinnacle, and resolved to make it keep happening as long as he could.

The old tour bus waited to turn left into the reception zone of the St. Moritz. The cab Rick was in had the right of way and pulled in first. It had only been a few days, but Rick nearly jumped out of the rolling car. He missed the guys and wanted to share the news that this unlikely messenger had given him. The fare was a few dollars. Rick handed the driver a twenty and said, “Keep singing that song brother, keep singin’ it.” He ran off toward the bus as it pulled in without waiting for a response from the driver who wished to thank him kindly for the large tip.

As Rick entered the bus, the heavy odor of spilled Budweiser and marijuana instantly transformed him into a howling maniac. “We’re on the chart, Bear... we’re number one in the Big Apple,” he howled toward the big lead singer as the road weary members of the band began to come to life.

The hootin' and hollerin' picked up as Rick started to hype the situation that had occurred during the day. Walkers-by tried to witness the excitement inside the bus, curious, but "New York busy" so as to not create a scene.

"You gotta be shittin' me!" Bear said. "That gig's being hyped all over the country; there's people comin' in from L.A., Dallas... they're comin' from all over, man!"

Rick was gazing at Bear with the look he had given him so many times before, that smile that said "I got it babe, I got it." That crick in the neck that sarcastically asked, "What am I, a schmuck?" That reassuring hand in the air that signals, "I've got this act under control, don't you worry about a thing."

"You're the greatest, Rick, the greatest... when do we split?" Bear asked as he tolerated Rick's bravado. "We've got a private jet from LaGuardia at noon tomorrow to Bethel and then a helicopter to the gig from there," Rick said with a sudden change to his manager tone.

"What about the equipment?" Bear said.

"I'll have the guys leave as soon as they pull in here. With any luck, they should be able to make it to the site by tomorrow afternoon. The roads are pretty jammed up, but Bob and Stender can get through anything!" Rick exclaimed.

"Yea, let me lay some "pane" on 'em... set 'em free," Bear said with a big smile on his face; he needed Rick's approval. Rick nodded his head and jumped off the bus hoping to see the truck pull in at any moment so he could get them on their way.

As soon as the roadees arrived, they were given the new schedule and departed. Rick was on his way up to the floor with all of the rooms he had booked for his entourage. Trying to attend to several of the messages he had picked up at the front desk, he began to feel the pressure of pulling this thing off. It wasn't going to be easy. The boys would, more than likely, go downtown to jam with some of the local musicians, stay out most of the night and be worthless in the morning. At least there wouldn't be room damage to deal with. He figured he could count on everyone being asleep in their room at 8:00 or 9:00a.m. after a long night of playing music and everything that went with it. Thirty minutes to the airport, make that forty-five and since it was a private plane with no set schedule, it would be very tight but should be doable. He could have them at Bethel Airport ready for transport to the gig. The only loose end was the arrival of the equipment. If the roads were as jammed as the media was saying, it would be questionable. Rick had no choice but to rely on luck.

The messages read: *Jon Rydell... call me at the office, 678-8000. Elise Brookfield... meet you in the lobby at 6:00 p.m.*

"Jon Rydell..." the voice claimed on the other end of the line.

"Rick Taylor..." Rick mirrored.

"Hey, are you all set? Meet me at Bradley's on 23rd at 9:00 and I'll buy you dinner. We'll catch up and you can dig Red Mitchell's trio," Johnny said presuming that Rick would comply.

"I've got a date..." Rick started to say.

"Bring her," Johnny said and hung up knowing that Rick would either be there or some way inform him otherwise.

Elise had changed into something a little less conservative hoping to close the enormous appearance gap between her and Rick. Johnny was now receiving his second martini as he

noticed Rick walking through the door. He wasn't surprised by the beautiful companion Rick had with him. It was Rick's hair, mostly his hair that surprised Johnny. It flowed well down his back and his beard was a groomed Van Winkle. There were no words. The hug said many of the first words that normally needed to be said. They had been very close at one time.

"This is my new friend. Her name is Elise Brookfield. She saved my ass today and I will be forever grateful. She can tell you the story and you can tell her how you saved my ass a time or two in the past! I'm gonna get a round of drinks. Elise, what will it be?" Rick shouted over the crowd noise.

"Whatever you're having," Elise shouted back.

Rick headed for the bar.

"Hello Elise, I'm Johnny; Rick and I go way back," Johnny said.

"Hi Johnny, I understand that you're with the William Morris Agency here in New York," she replied.

Johnny was surprised by her maturity. He had misjudged her he thought, and realized that Rick's quick move to the bar was more than just the avoidance of an "under age" alcohol scene with a waitress.

"Yes, I actually got my start at about the same time as Rick, we both worked in the Personal Appearance Department signing and booking music acts," he said.

Elise finally got a hint there was a more business and maybe conservative side to Rick after all, not that she hadn't figured that out already.

The only wedges that separated Rick and Johnny were the 3000 miles between L.A. and New York and the business surroundings they now worked in that influenced each of their personal styles. The last time Johnny had seen Rick was the day Rick cleaned out his desk at the William Morris Agency in Beverly Hills where he and Johnny had met years ago as young, up and coming agents.

Rick was sporting a Brooks Brothers suit, Las Vegas style hair cut, and the mandatory Italian shoes. William Morris was a conservative place, but they loved the posh look, mahogany desks and martini lunches. Johnny quickly reflected on the time and reason for Rick's departure.

It was California, mid sixties, Rick was becoming more and more frustrated with "Top 40 Rock" and began paying more and more attention to the Haight Ashbury scene and San Francisco rock groups. The Fillmore and Avalon Ballroom were his venues of choice almost every weekend. Hanging with Marty Balin of the Jefferson Airplane, he soon met band members from the Grateful Dead, Big Brother, Quicksilver and most of the other popular, but as yet unrecorded and unsigned Bay Area acts. The "underground" rock 'n roll movement in L.A. and San Francisco was too much for Rick to ignore, especially as a young show business agent with a specialty in music acts. Johnny was also frustrated, but stuck with the agency business and managed to carve out his own niche to become one of the top players in the music industry.

"How long since the two of you have seen each other?" Elise asked.

"Let me see, it has to be two, three... almost four years now," he replied with an increasingly distant tone of small talk. "So tell me how you saved Rick's ass today," he quickly shifted hoping to revive the conversation.

“He’s exaggerating, I’m certain he would have found another way upstate without me,” she said, hoping to avoid the details.

“Where are you from?” Johnny asked as Rick finally returned to the table.

“Johnny, what have you gotten me into upstate?” Rick asked, recreating the excitement of their reunion.

The evening sped on. Elise explored the two men with fascination. They were young and worldly and, to her, they were very much alike.

They spoke the same, laughed at the same things, shared the same values and grieved over the same lives lost in a time so filled with change, so different than any other time. She asked questions and probed as if she were in a social laboratory conducting research for a thesis paper. Her questions were challenging. She stimulated curiosity; she led the evening and its company through a course in history, present and future, of the two men who had once been very close but had chosen different paths. Only to find out, in one short evening, by the grace, brilliance and command of a very young and intuitive woman, that they were still very much alike. As the night grew older, it showed no signs of aging.

Being at the airport and ready to go by noon meant that the phone had to ring at 8:00 a.m. “This is your courtesy call, Mr. Taylor,” the operator said.

“Thanks, have you called the other rooms on my list yet?” Rick asked with a predictive tone.

“Yes Sir, doesn’t seem to be anybody around,” the operator said.

Rick had figured the guys rolled in from their all-nighters about 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. and were all “totally crashed.” “Did you try Miss Brookfield in 1230?” he continued.

“She just left the hotel with a gentleman,” the operator said.

With no time for concern, Rick went into his “management mode.” He knew this was going to be quite a day. On his way out of the room he noticed a note had been slipped under the door.

*Thanks for being a gentleman. Having brunch with my Dad. Meet you at the private jet terminal at noon, please don’t be late.* She hadn’t signed her name, but had drawn a smiley face. Rick’s first thought was “how was I a gentleman, his second thought was the smiley face... she finally showed her age.”

Rick felt pleased that she would be with him that day as he marched to the elevator. Next step was to “round up the troops,” get them on the bus and to the airport by noon, get to Bethel by 1:30 or 2:00 p.m., get some food, catch a shuttle to the sight and mellow out for an hour or two before the show. With hope, the truck and equipment would be there in time.

It was just past ten. Rick wasn’t surprised to see the guys, or most of them, assembled in the lounge just off the lobby that was half-open at that hour. Even with all their partying, they were fairly reliable in the eleventh hour.

“Who we missing?” Rick asked, already knowing that Bear was the only one.

“No one that matters,” one of the guys mumbled as they all laughed, still almost asleep.

Rick sent a bellman to Bear’s room to see if he was there, and if not, collect his luggage.

“Screw him, he knows to be at the airport at noon,” the drummer complained in his Mexican accent.

“Let’s load up!” Rick commanded. Bear was an eleventh hour, fifty-nine minute character, but everyone knew he’d be at the terminal just in time.

As Rick completed his business with the hotel clerk, which included instructions for Bear in the event he came back, he noticed the bus had pulled up and the guys were already boarding. “Check point one,” he thought.

Elise waited patiently with the pilot, nearly a family friend after many years of personal service, politely engaging in small talk. As the bus rolled onto the taxiway, Elise youthfully interrupted the pilot’s repetitive stories of statistics and inner circle hub-bub, “now remember, these are not a bunch of Ivy Leaguers, these are real rock and roll stars!”

“Ten four,” the pilot said, revealing a smitten smile.

Elise climbed out of the aircraft to greet the bus as if it were her duty. Rick was first out, no one followed, all had fallen asleep on the ride from the city out to LaGuardia.

“Hi...,” she said. “Where’s everyone?”

“Asleep. Bear’s not here yet, either, is he?” Rick asked.

“No, I haven’t seen anyone. We can wait as long as you need to,” Elise said. “This isn’t a scheduled flight.”

The first ten minutes were filled with relived moments of the night before, compared notes on the news and rumors of the festival and a little small talk with the pilot about the plane. The pilot also informed Rick, “There isn’t an airport at Bethel, the nearest is at Whitekill. Supposedly, there are helicopters operating from there to the festival site. We’ll fly into Whitekill, if that’s all right with you, Sir.”

The next ten minutes were virtually silent, the band asleep on the bus, and Rick growing apprehensive about not being in absolute control. When the cab finally rolled up, Rick jumped on the bus and sounded the alarm, “OK boys, let’s fly!”

As the plane taxied down the runway, Bear pulled out a big joint of some California “home grown” to share with everyone on board, save the pilot. “This should make the flight even more enjoyable,” he said as he lit up.

Elise looked at Rick as if to ask for an explanation or permission, Rick wasn’t exactly sure. He responded with a side to side shake of the head knowing that if Elise were to start smoking now, the remainder of her day might be much different than she planned.

Elise looked off to the horizon, feeling a bit left out. The day was clear and the summer of upstate New York was a beautiful sight from the altitude of 5,000 feet.

Twenty minutes into the flight, the energy level in the plane had risen considerably. There was a virtual jam session occurring and the only real instrument in sight was a harmonica. By the time the craft landed in Whitekill a half-hour later, the boys were hootin’ and hollerin’ and ready to go. Elise, for one, was relieved to be grounded, the pilot for another.

They taxied to an area that was noticeably populated on an otherwise quiet airport. It was where the shuttle, a National Guard combat helicopter made familiar by the media coverage from Vietnam, would transport the show people and support personnel to a sight approximately twenty



miles away, a mere 15 minutes by helicopter. It was now about two o'clock, still plenty of time to get there, set-up and do the gig. The hanger was home for now. There were upwards of one hundred people gathered in the area, National Guard personnel, State Police, medical personnel, media reporters, cameramen and music folks. For the next three hours, the shuttlecraft carried ten at a time to the site. The medical personnel, National Guard and State Police all had priority. Rick wondered if the equipment truck had arrived and, if and when, he would ever get his band on that craft.

As the wait continued, Bear pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and began to carefully tear it into same-size squares and pass them out to everyone around him. "Eat this," Bear said. "Trust me, it'll take care of everything and we'll be totally ready to play our asses off when we get there."

Again, Elise looked at Rick and he quickly shook his head knowing that if Elise were to eat that small piece of paper, her day would surely change and this was surely not the time to introduce her to such things. She crumpled the paper and tossed it inconspicuously. Before it even settled, Rick had ingested his piece. Elise looked at him with a sense of impertinence, as if she was being slighted, but he knew best.

"Got to stay on their wavelength... I don't think you need to handle this right now," Rick said inflexibly.

With all of the medical and law enforcement personnel now shuttled to the site, it was evident that the next load would be the band group and some media. There was a mad dash as the helicopter touched down. Most of the band got on first. The Bear was last to the door and had a small confrontation with a reporter.

"I've gotta get there... I'm going to report the news," the reporter barked. Bear grabbed his arm, and not too gently, pulled him out of his seat.

"Well, buddy... I've gotta go make the news!" Bear replied abruptly.

With that, the craft was fully loaded and ready to lift off. As everyone was instructed to "buckle up," two soldiers ran toward the craft signaling to stand-by. "One of you has to stay behind!" an officer shouted. "Gotta have this medic on board now!"

Without hesitating, Elise jumped off the craft. She knew she was the one, at this point, that had to stay behind. A young soldier jumped up and sat in her place next to Rick. For the first time that day, there was a sobering moment, quickly absorbed by the thrust of the engine and the piercing noise of the rotating blades. Rick and Elise's eyes stayed glued on one another, there were no good-byes.

A few minutes into the flight the young soldier broke the verbal silence by tugging on Rick's shirt, "Sir, what band are you?"

The soldier was no older than Elise, his voice would still crack if he wasn't careful.

"Canned Heat," Rick replied, "ever hear of us?"

The young man sat silent, peering into Rick's eyes, then turning to survey the rest of the group, now suddenly not such a young man anymore by the look in his eye. For a few moments he gazed at the floor of the craft and, as he looked back up to Rick, solemnly said, "yea, back in Nam... you guys helped keep us going; 'On The Road Again' and 'Goin' Up The Country' kept a lot of us going, Sir."

Bear started to sing an old blues tune. He kept singing as the rest of the passengers silently surveyed the landscape below.

Several minutes had passed since Bear had finished singing.

“How’d it happen?” Rick asked, referring to a long, newly healed wound on the young medic’s brow.

“Ah...” the medic claimed modestly, “good for a Purple Heart and two weeks stateside.”

The young man had made eye contact with Rick for only a brief instant, just long enough to resume his silence.

The group of passengers watched Rick urgently dig into his pack and remove the new camera. Standing, Rick could see through the pilot’s front window. As the craft increased altitude to clear the bluff ahead, the sight of five hundred thousand people gathered in front of a huge stage suddenly appeared.

Not having a clear shot through the front, Rick, with camera in hand, stuck his arm out the side door opening where a crewman sat with his feet hanging out. He pointed the camera down toward the mass of humanity and pressed the shutter release a few times in succession. Just as Rick was about to share the sight with the others, the craft veered to the left, the crewman slid the door entirely open, and there was the entire festival site. Now everyone in the craft could see what all of the television and radio stations across the country were talking about. In a small valley, beneath a rolling hill on an old farm field, a makeshift amphitheater created by a couple of young promoters was in the process of making American history.

It was an hour before dusk in Rick’s estimation, as the craft set down behind the stage. The Incredible String Band was playing on stage but struggling, from the silent reaction of the crowd. The Festival announcer, Chip Monck, recognizing the Bear because of his size and extremely long hair, walked toward Rick and the band.

“Hi, are you the manager?” Chip asked, thinking Rick appeared to be in charge.

“Yea, hi... Rick Taylor.”

“Chip Monck, good to meet you.”

Just then, Rick noticed a big Ryder truck pulling in behind the stage, and then, Bob at the wheel. “Holy shit, they made it!” Rick yelled.

Rick had a theory about playing outdoor shows. The best time to go on was just before sunset. Start in daylight, bathe the band in the colors of the sunset and then be first to take advantage of the transition to the full nighttime stage lighting. It was the best of all worlds.

“When do you want to go on?” Chip asked.

“Next!” Rick exclaimed. “Get that group off the stage before they hurt themselves. We need a bunch of guys, right away, to help get our truck unloaded.”

“When will you be ready?” asked Chip, as they walked briskly to the truck.

“Once they get everything on stage, we’ll need about 20 to 30 minutes to get set up,” Rick said. He knew it may only take 15, but extra time would relieve pressure and assure that everything was just right.

Bob and Stender looked like their trip upstate from the city had taken them through hell.

As Bob “flew up” the door on the rear of the truck, Rick said, “Hi guys...we’re on next. I want to hear your story as soon as the guys get those people off their asses and dancin’. OK... Let’s boogie!”

“Great, I’ll go announce that you’ll be on in a half-hour,” Chip said.

As Chip walked up the ramp to the stage, Rick took a moment to pause. The sun was beginning to near the horizon; it was going to be a beautiful sunset. At that instant the thought came to him.

“Chip!... Wait!” Rick yelled as he ran up the ramp and toward the side of the stage where Chip was about to make his announcement.

“Don’t announce that we’re on next, I’ll let you know when we’re ready, OK?... trust me,” Rick demanded.

Scanning the crowd and with a slight reluctance, Chip agreed and walked toward the back of the stage as the roadees and stage crew were already connecting wires and, simultaneously, testing microphones for location and levels.

Rick sensed that the flute beginning to his band’s number one song was the only introduction the thousands of young Americans would need to know it was Canned Heat that had taken the stage. He knew that the drama of sending his band on stage with no verbal introduction, merely the flute solo, was the shot this Festival needed and would be the moment that everyone would long remember.

The stage was set; everyone was ready. Rick looked at Bear and Alan and said, “start with ‘Goin’ Up the Country’.”

“What? How come?”... Bear said with a tone of pain and confusion from the last minute change. “We never begin with that song!”

Chip looked at Rick expecting the nod to announce, but instead got the opposite. Everything was falling into place. Rick surveyed the area and saw that the helicopter had landed again and another group was exiting. The last to jump off was Elise; she had made it. The sight of Elise affirmed that nothing was missing. Everything was in sync. In the next several minutes Rick sensed there would be an occurrence, a moment of high consciousness, the type that would be neither seen or heard, but in a deeper sense, an occurrence that could only be felt. He ran to Elise, and in his high emotional state, finally showed her the affection that had been building in him. “I can’t believe you made it! Stay very close to me. I don’t want to lose you again, something extraordinary is going to happen soon!” He gripped her hand tightly, she didn’t need to say a word as she smiled and looked deeply into his eyes.

Rick quickly pulled Elise toward an area behind the stage where his band waited and huddled with Bear and Alan. “Trust me guys. Alan... I want you to go to the front mic unannounced, and start with ‘Goin’ Up the Country’... then, just rock on!”

Ordinarily, their entrance was met with the cheers of fans who knew them, fans who had purchased tickets to see them and who knew their songs. This time it was different. Their visual image was not well known yet, and while they had a previous hit, “On The Road Again,” their new, number one song was instantly recognizable. This was a time for the people, the kids who had made their way, their pilgrimage, to a time and a place that would be theirs, and the only way to fit into their time and place was to become part of it. Rick’s intuition had been telling him all along that there was a reason for his band to be there on this day. It wasn’t for the money, or the recognition. It wasn’t as a favor to anyone, it wasn’t even for the fun of it. It was to become

“part of it,” one with a nation’s generation whose collective intuition knew America was wrong, very wrong, and who reacted the only way they knew how. Rick knew that this day was their day and would always be their day.

When the sound of the distinct flute that had become so familiar on the radio stations in California, Texas, Minnesota, New York, even Southeast Asia, began to fill the air of Woodstock, half a million people seated in the dirt, rose to their feet in unison, in religious joy and glee and suddenly realized why they were there. It had finally become their day, their place and their time.

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Then the piercing announcement, “Ladies and gentlemen, we’re in our final decent to Los Angeles...” abruptly brought Rick back to 1991.

“Quite a dream you must have had...” the young soldier said when Rick finally came to life.

Rick sensed an intuition that merited more than just a polite response. It forced him to quickly review the introspective journey he had just taken.

“No, not a dream, just a really good visit to the past,” Rick said with a tone of wisdom and satisfaction that came as no surprise to the young man.

“Can I help you with your bag?” Rick asked.

“That’d be great!” the young man replied with a tone that finally fit his age.

Rick strapped the bag, along with his own, over his shoulder. Since the kid was on crutches, he was first off the plane with Rick just behind. As they made their way slowly through the ramp toward the terminal, their first sight of the waiting crowd was met with the young man’s uncontrolled burst of joy. His sister stood waving, his father proud, and his mother shedding a tear. Rick did his best to cautiously deliver the young man’s bag aside a scene that had happened countless times during countless wars. As he set the bag down, time seemed to stand still for an instant; the entire family looked at Rick and the young man said, “Thanks.”

“Don’t mention it,” Rick said, thinking the young man was thanking him for the bag drop.

Just as Rick turned and started to walk away, the young man, in his final word said, “no... I meant thanks for the visit to your past!”

Rick nodded, and while he was compelled to do or say something, he didn’t. The intense eye contact with the young man was only broken by the father’s commanding smile. Returning a smile, Rick noticed a large scar on the father’s brow. He stared for a second, but then thought... “Nah... that only happens in the movies...”

The End