EDITING SAMPLES

Airplanes and showmanship were the two most important elements in DeMarco’s life. Starting in the mid-1980s, DeMarco spent most 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, in New York’s Hudson Valley. The flambourant DeMarco was the guiding light behind dozens of death-defying performances that included original and reproduction early airplanes. To this day, the shows generally include earthbound slapstick comedy routines that include old cars and trucks, damsels in distress, 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.

How I loved San Francisco. It was the beginning of the ’70s, yet hippies were still hanging out on downtown corners with their beads and music, wearing flower garlands in their hair. I loved the quaint cable cars that clacked up and down the busy, steeply angled streets. It was the local custom that each conductor composed a special beat, which he played on the bell of his cable car. Each conductor was known by his unique beat, and the more complicated it was, the better. My favorite was the one that went to The Cannery and 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 rays on the warm sand. There was never a lack of things to do in San Francisco, only a lack of time in which to do them.

It was the summer of 1983 when I took my nearly round-the-world trip, starting with the South Pacific. At that time, my brother was living in Queensland, Australia, so I knew there was a home base for me if I needed it. An old travel agent friend of mine had found an amazing ticket offered by Air New Zealand. They called it their Circle Pacific fare, and I could make as many as 25 flights on it as long as I flew to Auckland, NZ first and then to Sydney, Aus. The cost was only around $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 for my adventure.