

PREFACE

Or, is it a Foreword? Or an Introduction? Damn it, I never know the difference.

No, I think a Foreword is usually written by somebody other than the author, so this really can't be a Foreword.

Maybe it's an Introduction. Am I introducing anything? Is that any different than prefacing something? Kinda, I guess. It's not really new, so it's not really being introduced. Just duced. If I talk about it afterwards, will that be an Exroduction? Or maybe a Postface?

Ok, it's a Preface. Face it, but don't deface it. At least not on the surface.

Whatever it is, this is this. A few prefatory and introductory remarks that will make no difference to the stuff that follows. I don't think I ever once read a preface, foreword, or introduction in any of the hundreds of books that I've read. Why bother? If it was full of knowledge or entertainment, it'd be in the frigging book itself, not shoved off onto one of those dumb Roman-numeralized pages. And lower case Roman numerals at that. C'mon, how vital can page "iv" be?

So, if you're like me, you'll look at the daunting 104-page, 48000-word volume before you, and jump right to the first page that matters, which is Page 1. Actually, you'll probably thumb through the thing first to look at the pretty pickiwicks, and maybe read a random sentence or two along the way.

See, that's the problem: if that random sentence happens to elicit a chuckle or a nod from you, then you might actually come back to Page 1 and start reading. If you pick a random sentence that I only put a half-assed effort into, then you'll keep flipping, run out of photos, and toss this on your chair or desk or toilet tank with the insincere promise, "I'll read it later."

So I have taken special care to see to it that the sentences that are most likely to be randomly chosen are awesome sentences. I mean, they are true marvels of structure and syntax, and they are sure to lure. Now the pressure is on you to randomly pick the right ones. If you blow it and pick a lame one, then you owe it to yourself to go read the whole thing and find the dandy ones.

Well, now that that's clear...

The summer vacation fortnight in June of 2004 is chronicled in the following pages. As is the case with all the Blings, this is not intended to be a travelogue of any kind. If it's anything, it's just a reckless recreation of what goes through the mind of a roadtripper at and in between some of the country's nicest places.

Now, maybe I'm not the typical roadtripper, and that's kind of relevant. In fact, it is totally relevant. I have coined a term for my own particular style of roadtrip: the ramack. Ramacking involves: driving lots and lots of miles; having a plan that will yield to whim and fancy; taking certain occasional ingestions of adult beverages and what-not; being wowed by plenty of good scenery; making visits to cool places, both famous and unknown; cutting corners on superfluous luxuries, like food; and, probably most of all, sleeping in the vehicle at least most of the time. It is an economical cross between camping, touring, partying, and being a nomad.

In the course of it all, I made up a few other words here and there, but that's how language is. If you know what the sentence means, then the word is a word. Sometimes they are good legitimate vocabulary words, and sometimes they are nonsense. You decide.

Hopefully, everything in this volume (and the one that will follow on its heels) will all be meshed in with the things I've already composed about the 2003 southwestern vacation

(SW03), and the 2000 mega-roadtrip (Roadrage2000, a.k.a. RR2K), which incorporates flashbacks from all the other ramacks from the 80's and 90's.

It's getting there. I had finished everything up to Oregon, but now I've taken too more vacations and have to add more stuff about more places (like all this stuff, for instance). I've even had to institute the sure-to-backfire literary technique of Flashforward, where I leave the train of thought of RR2K so I can talk about a related thing that won't happen for three or four years (i.e., in 2003 and, now, 2004). So, it continues to be a work in progress.

When I first began to gather all the whacko and not-so-whacko notes for the book, I referred to them as my RAMblings. Since my initials are RAM, it was a nifty play on words. My friend Skott responded with "Bling? What is that?" and the concept of RAM's blings was born.

This book has been taking some time to write, though, being placed here and there on the priority list as needed, and getting pinched between jobs and all the other distractions of real life. In that time, the word "bling" has been born into hip-hop culture, as a term for jewelry. I thought it was a term for screwing, as in, "I got some bling bling for my ho, y'all." But, no, it turns out to be jewelry.

I worried for a bit that my delayed use of the term "blings" would be undermined by this newly popularized term, but I surmise that my book won't attract much of a hip-hop audience. Bling them anyway, though. If the word "up" can have 14 different definitions and usages, and the word "cleave" can have two totally opposite definitions ("to adhere to firmly" and "to divide into distinct parts"), then "bling" can mean a few different things too. So sniff my socks.

Rambling is just one of many blings in the language anyway. I decided to make a list of as many bling-words as I could think of, and came up with 40. This list does not pretend to be comprehensive. This is what I could come up with in one sitting. Fortunately, it was a fairly long sitting. And, yes, they can all be found in the Merri-Web.

We have plenty of A-blings: *ambling, gambling, scrambling, Grambling (College), babbling, dabbling, scrabbling, squabbling, tabling, cabling, enabling, disabling*, and a word that means you are behaving like rabble, *rabbling*.

There are only a few E-blings: *trembling, resembling, assembling, disassembling*, and, believe it or not, a word for stoning someone with little stones, *pebbling*.

Likewise, only a few I-blings were found: *dribbling, scribbling, quibbling, sibling*, and a word that means "treating something in a trifling manner," *fribbling*.

O-blings started simply, but became noble at the end: *bobbling, cobbling* (it's what a cobbler does), *gobbling, hobbling, doubling, troubling*, and *ennobling*.

The U-blings are mostly fun words: *bumbling, humbling, tumbling, rumbling, jumbling, stumbling, crumbling, bubbling, burbling, and rubbing*, which, of course, means "reducing to rubble."

So, with all those blings going on, I fear no hip-hop connotation. At least my usage derives from a real word. Harrumph!

But back to this thing I'm prefacing here. As always, this stuff is best read in kick-back mode. It's not written at a frantic pace; it is intended to be more reflective of the relaxing pace of the journey itself. I did not rush through my trip, and neither (did you pronounce that "nigh-ther"?) should you.

So, sit back, have a buttered scone, pour yourself a libation, put on some cool instrumental tunes, and ride along....