

# St. Some Times



Ruben translates for me in the USA, well, little Venezuela - MIA area  
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Visiting with Mom and Dad in Naples again. Building toys.  
**page 5**



SW Florida to Houston - no, wait, Fort Worth First, then Houston to fly out.  
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Orpheus. Colin takes the Lead in the OffBroadway Production of HadesTown.  
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## Summer 2023

**This short repatriation trip was fantastic. It was a whirlwind of laughter, hugs, friends, family, and driving. Whew. This is the trip in a nutshell...**

**June 21** - I landed in Miami and hooked up with my long-time friend Ruben. The next few days were basically Venezuela in the USA.

**June 25** - Joe flew down to see me for a few days of "Greg Percentage". I picked him up at the Ft. Meyers airport and spent a few days of fun with Joey.

**June 28** - I dropped Joey off at the airport and spent the next few nights with Mom and Dad.

**July 1** - At 9am, I drove away from Naples and headed to Texas to catch Colin in Hades

**July 2** - Two shows of Hadestown and overnight in Fort Worth.

**July 3** - Back in the car and a short trip to Houston for lunch with Jim Miller, my taxman.

**July 4** - A lazy morning of packing and shopping, an afternoon in the IAH airport, and flying away.

**July 5** - All day flying. I was back on the island and in bed by 23:00. Back to work in the morning.



# Help! I need a translator. It's been quite a while since I spoke fluent Spanish.

**Above - eating Venezuelan styled empanadas de queso with Ruben's family in Miami. Near the airport, it is all Venezuelans. Awesome!**

"Ten years dude! Ten years!" -Gross Point Blank (1987). That's how long it had been since I had seen Ruben Delgado. Ruben, my local guide, confidant, co-worker, wingman extraordinaire, friend. I enjoyed life in Venezuela much more because of Ruben.

Now, he's living with his wife and child in Miami, right near the airport. What a small world. I arranged to meet up with him for a few days before I headed to the west to see my parents.

The first thing we did was drift back into VZ life by sitting in a Vene-owned restaurant for a few hours of drinking Polar beer and eating empanadas. Two important food groups that sustained my life for four years in the Caribbean. The funniest part...Ruben translated Spanish for me the whole time. Just like the first few years in VZ. It just seemed natural.

Day two, Ruben met up with me a little later in the day. It worked out so well because I caught up on my jet lag and camped out in my hotel restaurant from 6am to 10am eating bacon and feasting on the American breakfast buffet, while Ruben ran his tech business and made sure his guys were out with clients.

Little did I know, Marcelo (whom also has an apartment in Miami) was in town from his life in Brazil. Ruben and his wife (forever Blondie to me), Nathan his 5yr old son, and Marcelo were all there at the next restaurant. Nathan is new to me. I had never met him. I'm so happy for Ruben. He is successful. His wife is in the process for Asylum - Ruben is a US citizen.

Marcelo and I said our "see ya later" and I headed back to Ruben's family apartment to hang out. Nathan drew some pictures for me with his new crayon pack and I watched him play video games with his dad. What a day.

I'll have to make an effort to always check in with Ruben as I travel to/from Florida to see my parents. Ruben is family.



**Marcelo Pacheco? The techie team together again.**

# Annual Retro Beer Day River Float Modified to Fit Florida

**Joey decided he couldn't pass up the opportunity to get his "Greg Time Percentage" by flying down to Florida.**

You just cannot underestimate Joe's level of friendship. Nope. If there is any way to spend time with me in the USA or any other country for a little time, Joe will find it.

Remember 2021? Joe had the brilliant idea for me to spend New Years in Canada to continue my New Years resolution of 2001? He and I went skiing in Canada. His idea.

This time, when I called Joe to let him know my repeat trip was short and only in the south, Joe called me back after he bought plane tickets to Florida. He always manages to get some percentage of my vacation time to spend with him and him only.

That's the nature of our friendship now. It has been since I left in 2001. We usually float down the Wisconsin river and brainstorm while we drink beers.

Every year is different, whether we change from retro beers to expensive beers, stopped driving to and from the river day, or included Danica. (That was the greatest improvement to date!)

Prior to the trip, I spent hours researching river tubing trips in Florida. Unfortunately, I couldn't find even one river in the state that allowed alcohol and food. What's with that? WTF? I love Wisconsin so much. Failure. And I passed this on to Joe.

His immediate response was "Don't worry. I've got it all planned out." When I picked him up at the Ft. Meyers airport, we caught

up with life in about five minutes. We camped out in a bar for beers and started our annual brainstorming session. After a few beers, he outlined the plan and we headed over to his sister's condo to sleep.

His sister Kathy lives in a condo complex about 20 minutes away from mom and dad. Since my bed had so many pillows on it, I took a snapshot of it with my iPhone so I could make it look the same upon my departure.

Joe's sister Amy, who has been a musical hero of mine since my high school Swing Choir days, lives just across Collier from my parents (basically across the street). Amy, her husband, and two daughters have a small 24ft motor boat docked on Marco Island. Small world. The plan was to spend the day on the boat. A new kind of annual float!

We met Amy at the back bridge of Marco with beers. For the first time ever, I got to see Marco from the water. Captain Amy navigated through the channels, under the main Marco bridge, past my parents slip in the Marina, to Tigertail.

Oh the memories. I just sat in the boat and sipped a few beers while Joey and Amy took a stroll on tiger tail. I figured a little family time was appropriate.

Captain Amy drove us out in the blue waters along the entire Marco Beach. We passed all the condos and my memories of years past and ended up on some small island just south of the main beach.

A storm was brewing so we had to cut the small beach a little short. We ended the day meeting up with her husband at Island Gypsy on the Isle of Capri.

**Kathy called ahead and cleared Joe and I to have access to the pool area of their condo association. The only caveat: only family members are allowed without a hefty fee. Joe and I presented ourselves as a gay couple to get into the pool. Hah. Love you, Pumpkin!**



Joe and his sister, "Captain Amy"



TM

Meet my newest musical instrument. I had Amazon send it to my parents house, along with gifts for my dad's 80th birthday. So, dad, all those boxes weren't just for me. Again.

This is the Roland aerophone AE20 electric wind instrument. I call it an EWI [eeh-weeh] for short. I've wanted to have one ever since 1991, when Michael Brecker played one on his intermission set for the Paul Simon concert I saw in Boston.

The instrument is basically a synthesizer with Saxophone fingerings. I'm not joking. Like the Roland synthesizers, this clarinet-sized instrument packs an endless library of authentic sounds. According to the company:

Aerophone AE-20 puts a world of stunningly authentic acoustic instrument sounds at your command. Instantly call up soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxes plus clarinet, flute, trumpet, and more. Violin, cello, and other string instruments are included as well, along with world instruments like erhu, shakuhachi, and bagpipes. Backed by our SuperNATURAL technology, every nuance of your playing is translated with lifelike dynamics, articulations, and overtones.

Simply put, I wanted a travel conscious way to continue playing in future jazz combos even though I already shipped my 1925 Antique Selmar Alto Sax and Yamaha High School days tenor sax back to the USA.

I still have my 1920's Silver King and Buffett clarinets to play, but now I can explore the world of instrumental sounds with my EWI.

It's truly amazing. I'll post a YouTube video at some point, but I have to practice and get to know this instrument first. Google it. Find a few videos on YouTube. There is a plethora already. Truly wow!



# An 80 Year Old Playing with Models

**If you cannot think of a present for an 80 year old retired doctor, buy him creative building models.**

The last time I was in Florida with my parents was epic. I bought my father some modern tinker toys called KNEX. We spent days, yes days, building rollercoasters together. It was so much fun.

This year, I opted to buy him a model set made completely from wooden laser-cut pieces. Snap on. No glue. No tools. Just follow the clear instruction booklet and snap tiny pieces together.

Once again, dad and I spent a wealth of time together in the kitchen. We only finished about 30% of the marble run, but it was fun. We spent the rest of the time together with mom, watching old videos

and going out to dinner. I cherish these alone times with my parents. Hopefully, we'll have many more to come.

The entire time with mom and dad was full of highlights. Here are just a few of them.

The first highlight requires a little backtrack explanation. I had agreed to spend time with Joe because mom and dad had just returned from their European trip. They needed a few days rest after two weeks of cruising up and down the Danube between Prague and Budapest.

While Joe was still here, I called to see if mom and dad wanted to meet up for dinner. Dad wanted to pop for Tony's BBQ, so we all agreed to meet up. It was no stress on mom to clean the house. We would just meet at Tony's.

Since we were going out, I also called Pierre, my friend from Aramco days past, that now lives a mile from mom and dad. Yep. Once again, a small world.

Pierre, Joe, Mom, Dad, and I had a wonderful BBQ dinner at Tony's, just down the street from home. Mom surprised me and invited us all back for a drink at their house. I certainly didn't expect this. But mom really wanted to extend our time together and entertain my friends.

Mom showed Joe all around the house and answered his barrage of questions. Meanwhile, Pierre was able to share stories with dad and get to know him a bit. This was important to me. Now I know someone I can call on in an emergency. If dad or mom (or both) need anything, they can call on Pierre. He might be a life saver in the future. Just

knowing he is close to my parents means a LOT to me. Pierre and I have talked about it. He and I have a bond from life in Saudi.

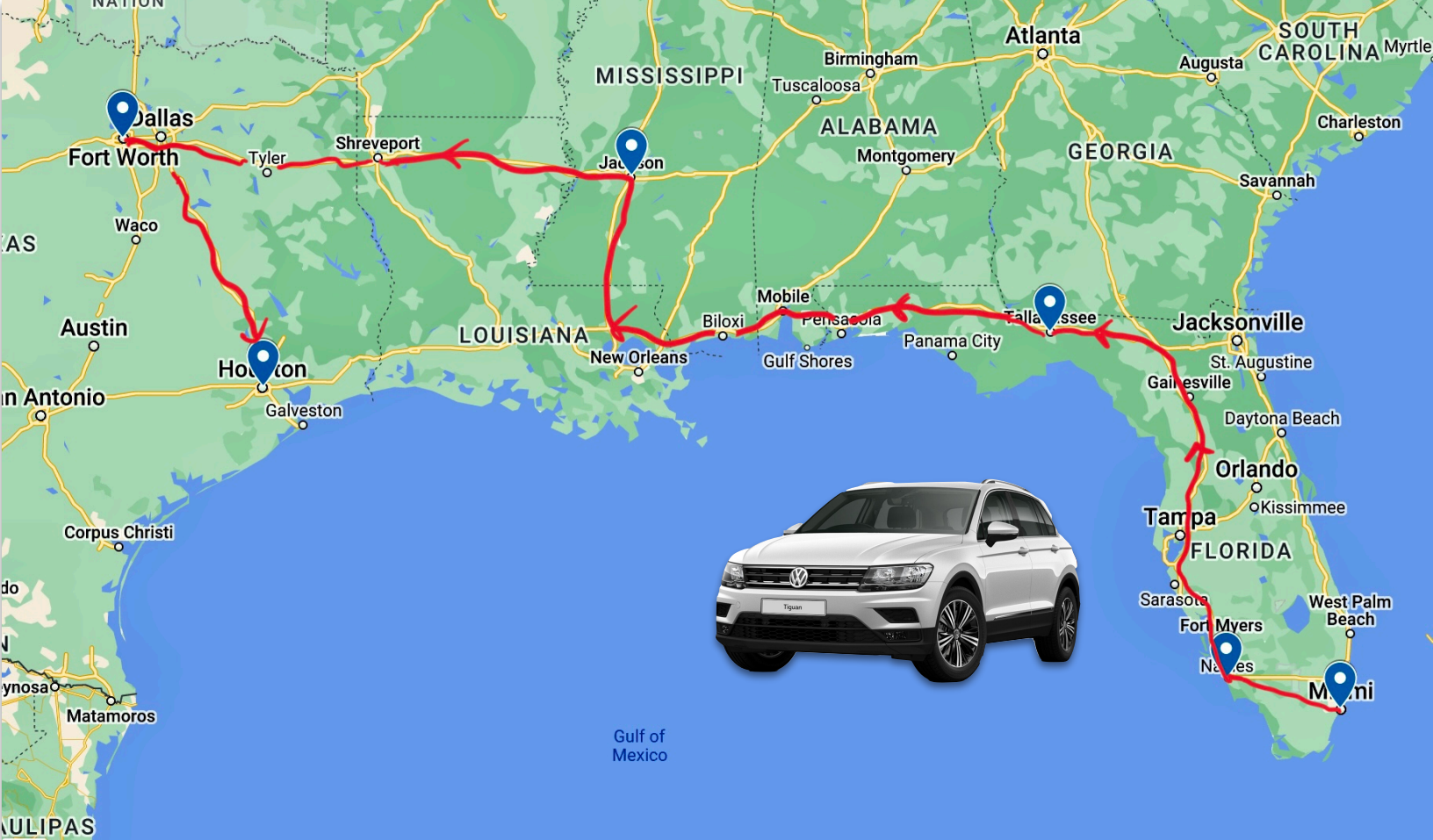
I also have Amy to call on in an emergency, but she is a proxy through Joe. Pierre is direct. Nuff said. Thank you Pierre. My mind is at ease.

Anyway, another highlight was videos. Mom and Dad have access to my brother Jason's Plex TV. After showing mom how to navigate their Apple TV with her phone, she went right to PLEX. We spent hours, yes hours, watching videos of mom and dad in the 1950s at Prom, interviews with Grandpa talking about our family tree, and other family videos I have never seen. Quite amazing. I realized it is time for me to interview mom and dad, to record their memories.

I will always remember the days of building toy sets with dad in the Florida kitchen. We laugh and listen to Jimmy Buffett or 50's music while we struggle to complete kits. Too bad these kinds of kits weren't available when I was a kid. Oh well. There is a time for everything. This was a perfect time for building kits together. Happy 80th dad!



"It's hard to find quality contract workers these days," dad says while I hand him pieces.



"You're a Fu\*\*'n Idiot, Greg!" - Jason on the phone, when I called him from the Florida Panhandle, on the way to Houston.

It was July 1. I've had tickets to see Colin in the OffBroadway production of Hadestown since March. When I bought them, it was from a list of shows all over the USA and Canada. What I didn't catch? It was not in Houston. Colin and the show were in Ft.Worth, Texas.

At least I got the date, time, state, and country correct. I won't ever live this down. It's a good thing I called my little brother. I always come across to him as the village idiot. Why Jason? Why?

The little rental, a VW Tiguan, had all the upgraded connections for my iPhone. That made it easy to use Google maps to navigate 18hrs of driving and listening to my current second favorite podcast - A Little Bit Culty. (You should listen to it. I'm hooked.)

I drove straight through. Never got tired. I slept in a Denny's truck stop parking lot for about two hours when I arrived (in Dallas) on July 2 at 4am. It opened at 6am. I had plenty of time for breakfast and log onto the [booking.com](https://www.booking.com) app to secure a room for the night.

The nice lady at the desk even let me checkin to my room at 9am, after a bit of flirting? There I was, 9am, in a hotel across the street from the Theatre where Colin was performing.



## The Road to Hell

**HadesTown's railroad tracks are leading to a city near you. Check it out. Keep your eyes open. Go see it. It's one "hell" of a show.**

The cannonball run trip was sooo worth it. I met up with Colin at 11am. I ate a taco while we caught up a bit. He let me know he'd be on stage as a worker, not as Orpheus. The other standin (there are only two for Orpheus) would be taking the matinee.

I wandered into the theatre and retrieved my ticket that I had reserved back in March. Balcony. Stage right. Good enough. While I was at the ticket counter, I bought one of the few remaining tickets for the evening show - Orchestra N7. I figured, why not. Even if he wasn't performing, I'd see it twice.

The show was awesome. After the show, Colin and I rushed to get him some lunch. He handed me a ticket that the director had given him with the news he was to be Orpheus for the evening show. The ticket was N8 next to mine. Colin called his buddy in Dallas and told him he was sitting next to Uncle Greg.

I cannot begin to explain how proud I am. Colin was fantastic. Much better than the other standin in the first show. Colin will be a household name on Broadway!

## HadesTown at Bass Hall

Two hours of sleep in the past thirty? Didn't matter. I wasn't an ounce of drowsy for either showing. Colin Lemoine rocked the stage. I watched as the entire cast surrounded Colin, as Orpheus, and Colin belted out his solos.

This is Off Broadway. The final step to Broadway. Off Broadway productions travel around the USA all year to promote the Broadway production in New York. 8 shows a week. One day off for travel. Hotel after hotel. Stage after stage. My nephew is doing this as one of the youngest performers in the industry.

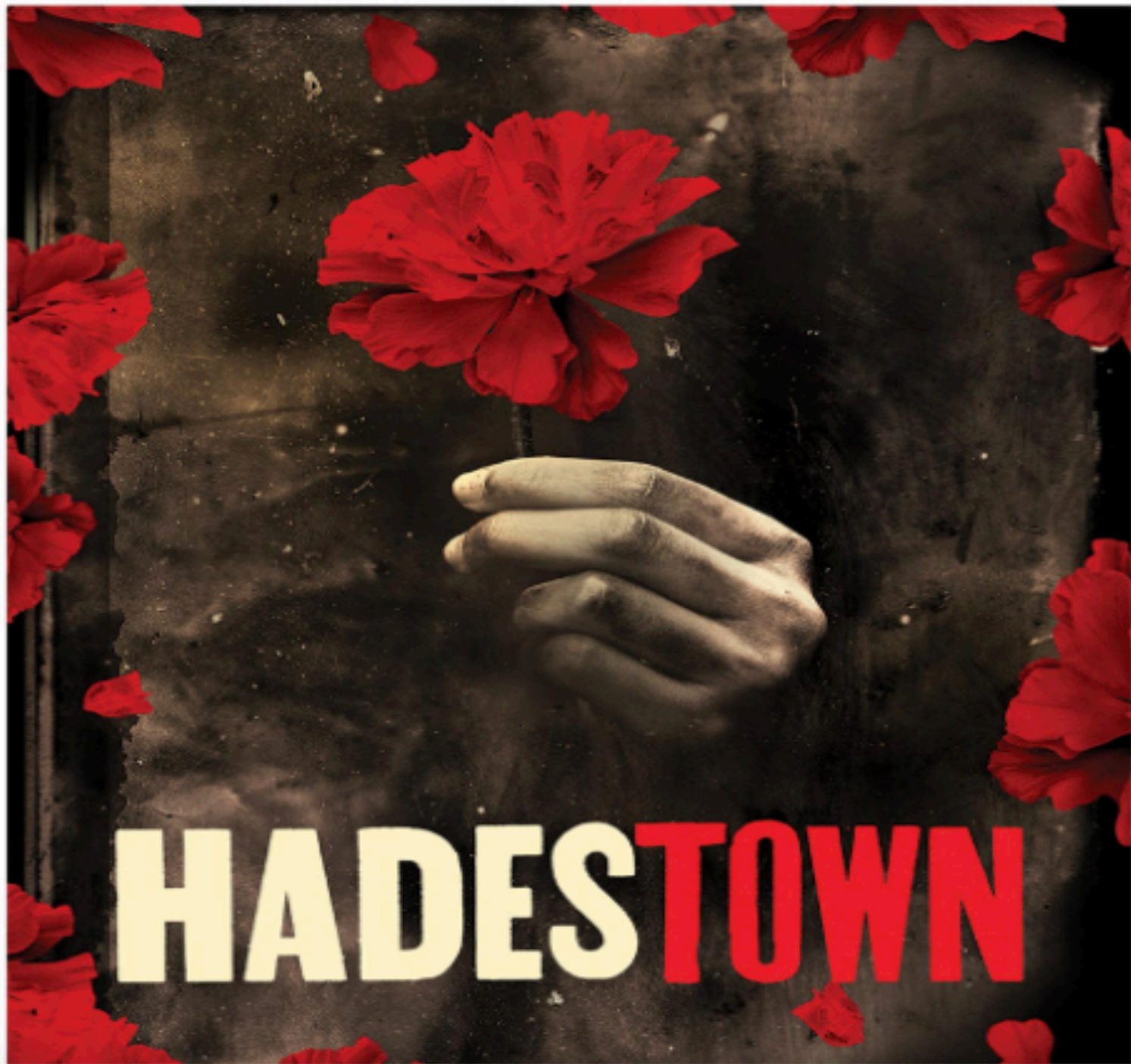
Did I mention how proud I am of Colin. This much... and more... and more.



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