

Backyard—

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The boys attributed to serendipity much of their luck in interviewing and finding places to stay and eat. Reed said one of the best examples was when they were heading home. They decided to stop in Des Moines, Iowa, because they had heard the prettiest girls in the country resided there.

While on their way through the city, they stopped at a gas station and struck up a conversation with a girl pumping gas at a nearby pump. She told them she was from Nebraska and was in Iowa visiting a college friend who had shipped out to Iraq a few hours ago.

They became friendly and she offered to let them "crash at her place" if they ever came through Omaha. Taking into account that they had been sleeping in the van for the last five days, and were in need of a shower, they took her up on her offer. She even helped set up an interview with another friend.

Reed said she was so trusting, she left them at her apartment one day while she went out, allowing them to use her computer to update their site. "That's serendipity at its best," Reed said.

The group didn't purposely leave out any place or area, but noted there were some things they couldn't do because of time constraints. Many times they found the most interesting people in the most out-of-the-way areas.

Bednarsky told a story of how they were traveling through Wyoming. He said they didn't see any sign of civilization for hours. Finally, they came upon a tavern, stopped in and talked to the owners, whom they described as modern-day cowboys.

In California they met a 93-year-old minister who they nicknamed "The Rev." They said the man was one of the most inspirational people they met in their journey. The group stayed in California a few extra days to play pool and listen to the man's spiritual quotes.

The boys plan to produce a feature-length documentary from the video they shot during the trip. They also are thinking about creating a book and photographs. They are looking for a studio to help log the 40 hours of videotape, hoping to edit it down to about 2 1/2 hours.

"Our objective is to share this with as many people as we can," Reed said.

Though still a bit daunted by the amount of information they collected, the group might consider another trip "after everything settles down from the first."

"The interest is still there," Alesevich said. "We definitely would do it again."

EXPLORING JUDAISM

A free three-session program to explore Judaism will begin Sept. 15 at Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport, open to both believers and those interested in knowing more about the faith. Space is limited. Call 336-1858, or go to the website at welcme@congregationbnaisrael.org to register or for information.