

[PDF] Tuva Or Bust: Richard Feynman's Last Journey

Ralph Leighton - pdf download free book

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Author: Ralph Leighton

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Description:

Richard Feynman, brilliant physicist and inspirational teacher, wasn't much for coats and ties. He lived a life that the adjective "bohemian" doesn't begin to cover, scripting percussion scores for avant-garde ballet troupes, musing over life's imponderables, and delighting and annoying his many friends with odd-duck questions--all the while teaching generations of students at CalTech.

Always adventurous, Feynman was also a careful planner, recounts his friend and fellow drummer Ralph Leighton in this affectionate memoir. When a chance remark happened to dislodge a long-dormant memory of a faraway Siberian land called Tannu-Tuva, Feynman and Leighton set about scheming to get there--a program that included learning the little-described Tuvan language, picking up the rudiments of throat singing, and reading the scattered, hard-to-find literature concerning a

place that, in Feynman's fond view, was as close to paradise as the earth contained. It also involved corresponding with scholars in what was still the Soviet Union and wrangling with bureaucrats to secure the necessary papers--all for the sake of seeing a country that had to be interesting, Feynman insisted, just because its capital, Kyzyl, had such an odd spelling.

These picaresque armchair adventures make up the bulk of *Tuva or Bust*, an unconventional mix of travelogue and scientific biography that's a pleasure to read at every turn. The book yields a memorable picture of Richard Feynman--who did not live to see Tuva, but whose memory is honored there today, thanks to Leighton's refusal to abandon their shared dream. --*Gregory McNamee* --This text refers to the edition.

From Publishers Weekly As a kid, physicist Richard Feynman collected triangular postage stamps from Tannu Tuva, a remote, mountain-capped fastness in Mongolia. In adulthood, a chance conversation with fellow drummer and coauthor Leighton (*What Do You Care What Other People Think?*) kindled their yearning for this exotic land of nomads, yaks and camels, nominally independent from 1921 to 1944 and now part of the U.S.S.R. The duo spent a frustrating decade trying to get to Tannu Tuva, dickering with Soviet officials while Feynman, who died in 1988, also coped with recurring cancer and investigated the Challenger space shuttle disaster for NASA. Only Leighton would ultimately make the long-sought pilgrimage to Tannu Tuva, where he was serenaded with songs by ethnographer Ondar Daryma, who wages a "one-man crusade to preserve Tuvan culture." (A vinyl record of xoomai --Tuvan throat-singing in which one singer, incredibly, intones two melodies at once--comes as an insert with the book). Animated by irrepressible high spirits, this serendipitous saga is a tale of adventure, heartbreak and rare friendship.
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