hip guide the hipset travels

BILL SOFIELD

KEITH SMITH

BILL SOFIELD is on the verge of becoming a household name. The mastermind behind the retail store looks for Yves St. Laurent and Gucci arrived in New York from Japan to open Baker Furniture's seventh location and debut his first retail collection. He raves about the Park Hyatt Tokyo, as he shows me luxurious wheat-colored twill laundry bags marked "Pressing" and "Dry Cleaning" in both English and Japanese. "I graduated; can't do the tatami mats anymore," he remarks with amused resignation.

"I used to do the London-Tokyo return route so often it worked because my body would take what sleep it could get!" He pulls out Refresh Plus eyedrops as he announces: "They're better than anything else for your eyes." Also in his black Gucci leather doctors bag is a copy of Frank Lloyd Wright's *Many Masks*, Yves St Laurent sunglasses, a Samsonite converter kit and a Radio Shack calculator given to him by one of his staff. "I have a dalmatian and a mutt," he confides as he shows me the fuzz roller tucked away next to the elegant JF Rey sunglasses and Gucci antique flask.

Bill says that service is what makes the difference in travel. "When I showed up at The Clarence Hotel in Dublin [for a wedding] I had just finished transforming an airport into an event site and had walked thousands of miles. When I [arrived] at the hotel, the reception said to me, 'You must be exhausted, throw your clothes outside your room, we'll press them.' When I awoke, they had pulled the car around and drawn me a map to get to my destination!"

On the subject of consideration, he says, "I'm appalled at how people don't treat flight attendants with respect." He tells the story of how he was on a flight coincidentally with Olympia Dukakis and the two of them had to stop a man who was drinking too much from verbally abusing the staff.

His travel advice? Wear something neutral. "It's when you're wearing the Hawaiian shirt that your bag will get lost!" True to form, his Yves St Laurent cashmere T, jogging pants, running shorts, socks and Adidas sneakers are matched tones of grey and black for maximum wearability.

Bill is a testament to American spirit. Not only is he jetting to and fro, but he is adamant about the 12,000 foot-Tribeca Baker store. "It symbolizes the rebirth of New York. Success and accomplishment against the destruction of downtown."—*Every month, Syl Tang spies into the weekend bags of the HipSet and captures the contents of their carry-ons. Reach her at Syl@hipguide.com.*