

Hitch-hiking around the Anti-War Movement

Montreal to East Chicago, June August 1973

Roy Lisker

For participation in the historic draft card burning event in Union Square, NYC, November 1965 I received a 6 month jail sentence, (reduced to 4 ½ months for good time.) It was served in several federal prisons, first the West Street Jail in New York, then in Danbury, Connecticut, finally at the minimum security Allenwood Penitentiary in Western Pennsylvania. I was released in December of 1972. My fiancée at the time , Geneviève Manseau, took me to Montreal to meet her family and, as she hoped, agree to live with her there permanently. One of the reasons the engagement didn't work out.

In June of 1973, I registered for the Seminars for Life conference at the Committee for Non-Violence Peace Trust in Voluntown, Rhode Island. . After arranging with Geneviève to return sometime in August, I began what would turn out to be an extended hiking venture that would take me as far as LaPorte, Indiana.

June 25th : Genevieve saw me off at the Montreal Greyhound terminal . The bus to Burlington, Vermont arrived about noon. Getting off I walked to the village Green taking my bag lunch with me. After 5 years in France, it was a revelation to me to see university students with head bands, long hair, ungroomed beards, peace buttons, rainbow colored tee shirts, and so forth. None of these things would have been in

evidence when I was a student at the University of Pennsylvania in the 50's. In those years the grooming of most of the student body looked as if it had been copied from that of the population of Allenwood Penitentiary!

From a drugstore down the street I bought myself a black Magic Marker; a piece of cardboard was dug out from the dumpster, and the words "Voluntown, Rhode Island" written in bold letters across its face. The elderly clerk in the drugstore was sympathetic to my venture. He'd done quite a bit of hitch-hiking himself in his time. A few winters ago he'd hitch-hiked to New London, CT. He sent me away with a warning: avoid the state police don't go onto the highway, stay on the ramp.

It was also my intention, if possible, to stop by the state capitol of Vermont in Montpelier to see if a letter I'd written them offering to be an instructor in its "Poetry in the Schools" program, had been acted on or even acknowledged.

Soon after stepping onto the ramp I was picked up by a grizzly young hippie driving a Volkswagen. He'd spend a year in Germany, working at the American airforce base in Wiesbaden; afterwards he joined a rock band that toured Germany. He asked me to roll him a joint from his stash of genuine Vermont "green grass". The aroma was very soothing, but I've never had much enthusiasm for marijuana.

He let me off just outside Montpelier. It's a small town and the state capital administrative buildings and Arts Commission offices were

easily found. Its' secretary was about 24 and spoke a charming English in a musical voice. She'd read my letter but could offer me no help. The "Poetry in the Schools" project was in its infancy. For the moment it consisted of no more than one week of lectures and work sessions for \$400. Only 15 schools in Vermont had subscribed to it. (*When I returned to Montreal I went to work as a free lance programmer at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (another story)*). The other secretary in the office, for some reason, found the backpack on me as I came in off the street very upsetting. She made a big deal of "getting stuck" between the backpack and the wall as she crossed the room!

It was around 3 PM when I got back on the road. A 'much-prevailed-upon' woman, the mother of a 15 year old son in the front seat, opened the door to the back and invited me to share the company of a big black shaggy dog. The dog pawed me unmercifully and covered me with shedding hair! In fact, most of my drivers on this trip had dogs in their cars.

She let me off at White River Junction. There I immediately found a ride to Springfield, Massachusetts. Based on my experience Vermont is one of the best states in the US for hitch-hiking (Bernie Sanders country, perhaps?)

In Springfield I was given a lift by a school-teacher in a station wagon. This time I sat in front with her 3 children and her Semoia dog in the back. She offered me a beer from a bottle stored in a cold chest under

the front seat. A bottle for myself, another one for her with a cup for the dog! I learned that she was politically active in environmentalism. Along the way she pointed out forests where the Gypsy Moth had ravaged the oak trees.

I was dropped off a few miles from Norwich, Connecticut. My next driver was a teen-ager on the way to a Kung-Fu class in Norwich, dressed in his athletic uniform. By the time he left me off it was 8 o'clock. I began walking up a hill in the direction of the downtown.

A group consisting of 4 women and a small boy were coming towards me in the opposite direction. One of the women was passing out a poster advertising the Norwich chapter of the Sakko Gakkai cult. When she handed me a copy I told her of my intention to try to make it to Voluntown that evening. If I would join their sitting session she said, she promised to find someone to drive me there.

We entered a spacious middle-class house. The sounds of rote chanting could be heard coming from a room off to the left. A dozen persons were sitting in lotus postures, facing a shrine at the opposite wall. As they compulsively chanted the magical mantra "*Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*" they shook jade rosaries. A girl of about 15 stood out among them for throwing herself into the chanting with manic enthusiasm.

Directly in front of me sat a young man, their leader. He was wearing bright maroon trousers and a sports jacket. He'd come over from Hartford.

Another 15 minutes of chanting followed. Then the leader struck a gong and told the gathering to take out their prayer books. Thus began the recitation of the *Gangyo*, which is the Lotus Sutra translated into Japanese, with inter-linear phonetic transcription of open-vowelled sounds printed underneath in the Roman alphabet. The text was chanted at lightning speed. I'm certain that even the Japanese girls who were present didn't understand it. The mingled smells of incense and bare feet saturated the air. The leader recited the *Gangyo* from memory! The monotonous babble continued for an hour without a stop. Then this, the "informal" part of the sitting came to an end.

A young woman held aloft a sign with the words of a song written in large letters. The leader conducted his congregation in the singing. As they did so they waved their right fists in time to the music:

"READ THE GANGYO!

SENSEI, SENSEI, ALWAYS SENSEI!

WE ARE SAKKO GAKKAI!"

After the sitting was finished, someone explained to me that the ancient religions needed to teach people things like "Thou shalt not steal", and so on, because they were ignorant. Mankind today was in need of a mature religion like the Sakko Gakkai!

My notes on the Voluntown Seminars for Life are lost . The narrative picks up on the day of departures, June 28th, 1973.

Steve Grossman and Evangeline Mix had come down together from Toronto. Steve was a draft resister living in hiding. Coming to Voluntown was taking a chance. , as he was. They invited me to stay with them if I should pass through Toronto.

Another new friend was a pleasant nun who worked in Harbor House, a Catholic Worker homeless shelter in East Chicago, Indiana. She also invited me to visit on my way back to Montreal.

Steve Camara, a fellow draft resister I'd met in Allenwood Penitentiary invited me to visit him in Fall River, Massachusetts. With a short visit the Catholic Worker Farm in Tivoli, a village in Dutchess County in the Hudson Valley of New York , I'd put together a program for my "voyage of re-connections" in the Anti-War Movement!

June 28th: One of my new friends from the conference was Phyllis Deutsch. She'd recently been divorced and was rekindling her earlier activism. She offered to put me up overnight in her apartment in Providence, RI. After saying good-bye to friends, old and new, we drove off together in her car – a vintage blue Buick circa 1958!

We drove around Rhode Island before going to Providence. One of the places we visited was the Narragansett Indian trading post in Acacia

State Park. It was operated by two woman, one of them very old, the other her teenage great-granddaughter. The charm more or less ended there: their concession overflowed with tacky tourist junk supposedly made by “Native Americans” from all over the country, though much of it came I suspect from factories in places like Taiwan. What’s the point of plastic wampum, if the real stuff isn’t used as currency anymore? I remarked to Phyllis that, if the Europeans had bought America from the Indians with bags of trinkets and beads, the Indians were now buying it back with the same merchandise

Providence Rhode Island

We strolled about a bit in a beautiful city park in South Providence, then passed through a sad district of tawdry slums, with formerly well to do frame houses gone to ruin, streets filled with garbage and trash, surrounded by factories belching pollution into the atmosphere around the clock. Later we stopped off briefly at Brown University, with its quaint colonial atmosphere.

For dinner Phyllis cooked up some dishes of bacon and eggs. We also drank freely of a bottle of Fino Vino California wine , the kind that makes you sick before it gets you high. Her two children, a boy and a girl, were in summer camp; Phyllis “warned” (?) me that her “boyfriend” (!) Michael, might be stopping by that evening, after his photography class at RISDY.

Phyllis huddled up to me on the couch and showed me some albums of needlework that had been done by her grandmother: "Michael is coming", her manner seemed to indicate, "But there's still time for a little business on the side, if you think it's all right!"

She impressed me as a rather insecure person, looking for some kind of adventure after 11 years of marriage. Fortunately nothing happened and I turned in at 1.

Phyllis owned the building that she was living in. Her apartment was on the 2nd floor. It was very compact, with small cramped rooms, shelving supporting knick-knacks and window displays with lamps and small potted plants. An ardent anti-war activist, Phyllis told me that when she started placing anti-war poster on her doors, the neighbors reacted by hanging out American flags.

She'd graduated from Defiance College in Ohio, studied art in New York and came to Providence in 1968. When I met her she was studying home economics at the University of Rhode Island. Because her ex-husband was an instructor there it was tuition free. By agreement, she raised their son, her ex-husband raised their daughter.

Fall River, Massachusetts

June 30:

Frequent rides with interesting drivers continued to be the rule. I entered Fall River over a large cantilever bridge. Its blue-green/blue girders dominate the view when seen from the center of the town. The

town of Fall River sits on a steep hill between two rivers. The Taunton River skirts the outside of the town; the other river has an Indian name that means something like the falling river.

The first landmark that I noticed was the abandoned Regency Theater , huge and vampire-like , bloated in bulk and windows that ogle you like sick eyes. It was built in 1876.

To the south, what I saw of Main Street was crummy and dying; pawn shops, tattoo parlors, abandoned store fronts. Below this I found a Skid Row.

The northern portion of Main Street was very different. Here I discovered the civic buildings grouped together in one area. Durfee's Trust Bank, named after the oligarchy that controls Fall River, sits opposite City Hall. Down the street stood Durfee's Theatre, the property of a different branch of the same family, built in 1929.



When it was built it was deemed the finest theatre east of Chicago. The inner court is an exact replica of the Alhambra; its inlaid tiles were imported from Spain.

The bank recently bought the theatre. It appears that the other branch of the Durfee family is moving away. It is slated for demolition in a few months. In its place will rise a 5-story bank building; the neon sign on its roof will be visible from the highway. When that happens Fall River, which lacks any public transportation, and has a mean scholastic level of 8th grade, will also lose its one claim to cultural fame.

The Durfee oligarchs don't live in the town and many of them are moving away. Fall River was an important mill town in the 18th century. At the present time all of the industry in and around Fall River is owned by Jewish families. Both the Conservative and Orthodox congregations are extremely wealthy. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of Israel, \$430,000 was raised to donate to it by the Conservative congregation alone.

The French-Canadian settlement here is sizable. Other groups of immigrants are the Portuguese, Italians, Germans, etc. In the Portuguese district one also finds Brazilians and Africans from Cape Verde. There is also a Lebanese district.

The major tourist attraction is the battleship Massachusetts stationed in the river.



I waited for Steve Camara to arrive at the Café Roma, located in the building of the former Regency Theater. Set below street level, its interior had a dark green pallor, and it stank of beer. From the TV set above the bar there blared some inane quiz show. The man next to me had his neck in a plaster cast. He grumbled on about the blue-jays in the trees on his farm and the infernal racket they made. As predators, he explained, they were worse than starlings; they even drove his dogs crazy! Steve Camara came to get me and we left.

Martha's Vineyards

July 2 (more or less): A friend of Steve's, Ray Whalen, is an organist and organ builder. He offered to show me around Martha's Vineyards. At the same time he would pay me to help him refurbish the organ of the Trinity Church in Oak Bluffs.

Ray showed up at around 5:30 to get me. Although Steve had set both an alarm clock and a clock radio to wake us, neither of them went off. Ray finally woke us up at 6:15 by rapping on the basement window. Steve let him in the front door as I was getting into my clothes. By 6:30 we were on our way to the Vineyard. Every year for the past 20 years Ray spends a day in the summer to prepare and tune this organ for the summer congregation.



The Trinity Church at Oak Bluffs

Ray is also the Music Director and organist for the Fall River Jewish Conservative congregation. With his a pink complexion and platinum white uncut hair and beard Ray looked like a cross between a polar bear and a retired Southern colonel!

For the past dozen years he's been the director of the French language programs for the local French-Canadian community. He speaks both European and Quebecois French; his wife is a *Parisienne*. Both he and I delighted in fabricating atrocious puns. Amazingly, although he

bored me all day long with outrageous puns, I don't remember a single one of them. The same must be true of the ones I invented for him.

Every year for the past 20 years he spends a day in the summer to prepare and tune the Trinity Church organ. On our way into Martha's Vineyards he told me about the kinds of music he conducts at the synagogue: Klezmer, Sephardic, and so on. He freely shared some gossip about his congregation. According to him, the Fall River/Newport/Truro Jewish community is the oldest in America.

I held a job at the Oceanographic Institute in Woods Hole over the summers of 1955 and 1956. The last time I'd visited there was in 1960.



The Eel Pond at Woods Hole

We arrived on the docks just in time to board the 8 AM ferry to Martha's Vineyards. The crossing was uneventful. 6 generations of fat seagulls, living (*like the humans*) off the tourist trade, accompanied us over the strait. In the harbor of Vineyard Haven one could see many

different kinds of sailing craft, including the Shenandoah, a magnificent schooner. We stayed there long enough to pick up some tobacco and a refill of gasoline, then headed off to Menemsha. Originally a small fishing village along the coast, it is now overrun with boutiques, art galleries, shops and restaurants. Many yachts bobbed in the harbor.

The permanent population of Martha's Vineyards is about 5,000 but in the summer it reaches 50,000. There is one high school for the whole island, in Oak Bluffs. In addition to tourism there are also some fishing and farming.

Only the coastline of the island is commercially developed. The interior is the property of the Gay Head Indians. For some historic reason they all have Dutch names. One sees the Indians working all over the island, as traffic cops, gas station attendants, road crews and so forth.

Coming to Menemsha we went to visit the Gold family, Howie and Helen and their kids at home in their yacht. The vessel alongside theirs was much bigger, and also belonged to a Jewish family from Fall River. When we arrived at 9 AM the Golds had already been up for 3 hours, waiting for the tide to turn. A fierce current of at least 6 knots poured through the breakwater, and none of the fishing dinghies had been able to get out of the harbour. A major dredging operation was underway to deepen the channel and extend the beach. The dredging pipes extended across the beach and belched a thick dark spray of sand.

I didn't find the Golds very interesting, but as a town Menemsha was charming.

Ray took me up the hills to Gay Head and the Indian trading post. The merchandise was even tackier than that in Acacia State Park! The store sold things like plastic tomahawks, miniature totem poles holding faces of comic strip characters and plastic wampum .

Reaching the top we paused for awhile to take in the beautiful clay cliffs, now savagely eaten away through erosion. A dendrite pattern of channels rippled along the slopes, exposing clays covered with shrubbery. After a heavy rain one can see Buzzards Bay stained red from the run-off. Twenty years ago Ray was able to walk along the cliffs the whole distance from where we were right to the lighthouse. Now this is impossible. Geologists have been trying ways for preserving the cliffs without success.

Coming into Gay Head we passed an Indian road gang laying tar on the road. As we negotiated our way across they treated us with the routine disrespect they probably show for all tourists.

Finally we came to Oak Bluffs and went to the Trinity Church. It is open only in the summertime. Its design is simple, a rather beautiful structure with stain glass panels holding abstract geometric designs and the oddly configured bearded Hebrew.

Passing into the church we greeted David Hewitt, the church organist. Talking to Ray he began a long litany of complaints, about the

clergy, the congregation, the frustrations of his job, with particular animosity towards people they both knew. Unaware (?) of the irony of his being Jewish Ray commented that one rarely found many people associated with a church who acted like Christians! Then David left, and we began an inspection of the organ.

Ray felt that he had to give an explanation to justify Hewitt's bitterness. There is no doubt that he'd been given a raw deal. It was not that long ago that he'd been the organist for St. John's cathedral in New York City, no less! Then a friend from upstate New York offered him a huge salary to be the organist in residence for the congregation of a wealthy church. The ante was raised until Hewitt gave in. A contract was signed and a year's wages deposited in the bank.

Soon after he quit his job at St John's his new employer died in a car accident. Now he wanders from place to place in search of an illusory job security. Every time he auditions before boards of church directors he's humiliated by being asked if he knows how to play the Doxology!

"Ah, yes", Ray sighed, "The days of old JS Bach are gone", not remembering how much humiliation Bach himself had had to endure. However Hewitt did have some good news: he'd just landed a job in New York City again.

Then Ray crawled inside the organ pipe cabinet. My job consisted of holding down the keys on the organ while Ray fiddled with the pipes. I also handed him his tools to him through slats in the side. It was hot

and muggy and the space was cramped. Ray is plump and needed to crawl out every few minutes, sweating and breathing heavily. The tenor A^b on the upper register oboe required major repairs, as did the entire oboe stop. The pads on the pipes had filled up with verdigris. Cleaning them took a few hours. Then we went out to eat in a nearby restaurant named "Nick's Lighthouse".

After she took our orders the waitress asked Ray for his name to call out when they were ready.

"I've come here every summer for the past 20 years, and" he complained, "she still doesn't know my name!"

"But Ray, you only come here for one day out of each year!"

"Sometimes two."

The pastrami sandwich was drenched in mustard. Ray said that his sandwich was also lousy.

That afternoon we tuned the pipes and repaired a leather pouch in the organ console that had developed a hole.

In the evening Ray drove us to Edgartown, with its charming mansions built by the captains of whalers in the last century. The harbor was lovely. On our way back we drove through Oak Bluffs, past rows of summer cottages with names like Chez Nous, Arietta, etc. and a Methodist Camp Ground.

From Edgartown one could see across to Chappaquidick. Ray told me that since Ted Kennedy's tragic car accident, the bridge has had to be repaired twice because of all the pieces being chipped away by people taking souvenirs! As we left we drove past the hotel where Ted Kennedy showed up, dripping wet and in hysterics.

On the way to Vineyard Haven we made a stop at another diner. I ordered a clam chowder drenched in milk, a salad drowning in French dressing and a cup of bitter lukewarm coffee. Ray ordered a tunafish sandwich with a side order of potato salad. He said they were both horrendous. Driving onto the docks we waited in a line of cars for the 8:15 ferry. It showed up an hour late. The ferry docked. After the passengers had disembarked the captain announced that the return crossing to the mainland, the final one for the day, was being cancelled. There was no way of getting off the island until the next morning.



The ferry between Woods Hole and Martha's Vineyards

The reasons given for the cancellation were the fog and a damaged propeller shaft. Ray turned the car around and returned to Oak Bluffs; we were going to have to sleep in the Trinity Church. There was a problem: everyone associated with the church, including the minister, was on vacation. Our only contact was David Hewitt. When we got to his home we saw that the lights were on but no one was on the premises. A dog barricaded inside behind an overturned ladder was barking furiously. We got back into the car and sat down to wait.

Ray informed me that David was a homosexual; this seems to be the case with most church organists. Ray couldn't give me any sociological or metaphysical reasons for this phenomenon! He suggested that it was because playing the organ is a powerful way of relieving sexual frustration. I refrained from comments to the effect that perhaps an adherence to an organized religion was itself something of a regressive fixation. I've since become more tolerant.

Ray's son, now enrolled in Boston University, had written to him to say that out of his class of 12 organists at most two of them were straight. And who knows? These exceptions may have been seeing each other in secret.

We waited until 11 PM. Then a couple(*by appearance heterosexual*) came into sight walking up the hill, arm in arm; both appeared to be drunk. David Hewitt showed up soon afterwards in his car, together with his latest boyfriend, a college professor; they too were

drunk. Then another couple showed up. They'd all been celebrating David's new job in New York City. The couple was extremely rude. When I went into the house to make a phone call, they hovered about me, listening to every word of my conversation. The man went about banging on various things while the woman took up a position directly in front of me and glared openly at me . Clearly they wanted me to get off the phone. When I did hang up the woman gave me a sickening smile. They really were obnoxious.

David gave us the key to the church and we drove back to Oak Bluffs. Before going in to sleep we went out for a drink in some night spot. Then we went back to the church. Somehow we were able to improvise beds by making use of the filthy bench cushions, (they'd probably not been cleaned since the church opened) by laying them in the aisles. I fell asleep almost instantly but Ray hardly slept a wink all night .

We were able finally to get off the island at 7 AM the next morning. In Woods Hole I was able to give Ray a tour of this marine science town which I'd not seen for since 1960. Most of it is unchanged. Motels, bars and restaurants much the same An old man still sits in a little house by the bridge; I doubt he was the same one. Both the Captain Kidd bar and the Landfall Restaurant are still operating.

Some marine installations have expanded or been renovated. The Oceanographic Institute has added a new building on the opposite side

of the street just beyond the drawbridge. The Marine Biological Laboratories have added a few dormitories and labs. Wildlife and Fisheries has also expanded, with an aquarium on MBL Street. Evidently the Oceanographic has overdosed over public relations, and there are now several showcases promoting the work it does in front of the new building.



Elbert Little

The Little family, with its physicist/educator father and 8 children, still own the cottage, a seedy, endearing, very livable property down the road from the Fisheries. The Littles accommodated me for a week in the summer of 1959: (An obituary to Elbert Little can be read here :

<http://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/22/obituaries/dr-elbert-little-educator-advanced-physics-teaching.html>) A picture of Barbara Chase Little and a

description of their cottage can be seen here.

<http://woodsholemuseum.org/WHHWomen/BarbaraLittle.html>

There were 3 cars in the yard, and I could see someone asleep on the porch. Barbara Little must now be a grandmother several times over. I would have liked to visit them, but it was still very early, and the dead silence of sleep was still over the house.

On the way back to Fall River we stopped in yet one more restaurant. It carried a stock of American flags, Cape Cod stickers, and copies of the Pledge of Allegiance.

How I'd suffered at Woods Hole! Now it appeared to be covered by an aura of charm and nostalgia.

Hartford , Connecticut

"50 cents, and all the humiliation you can buy"

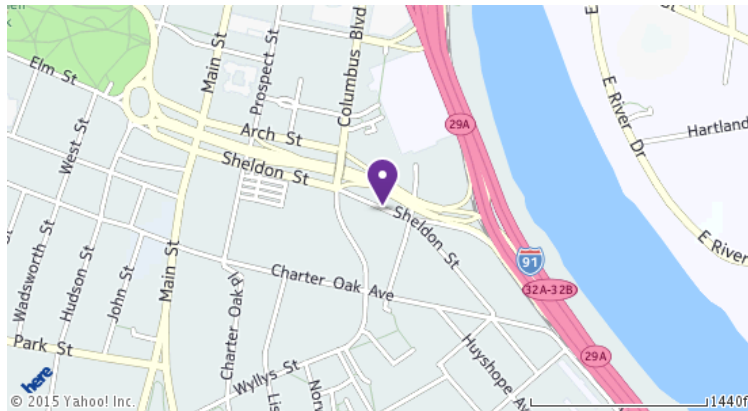
July 5th: Ray Whalen drove me to Providence early the next morning. He gave me an excellent day's wage for the work I'd done for him, and sent me off with a "Bon Voyage!" (Quebecois accent!)

The highways were not friendly on that day. It took me until 8 PM to reach Hartford.

The Catholic Information Center was across the street from the historic center of Hartford. I spoke to a young lady working at the front desk of the bookstore. As we were talking the director walked in. He was quite upset to find someone like myself, unkempt and carrying a backpack, in the Center, even more so when I asked where I could find a homeless shelter for passing the night! His manner of turning to his

employee seemed to say, “And you let somebody like him in here?”

Anyway, she recommended the “Open Hearth” at 437 Sheldon Street, not too far away.



It was fast getting dark by the time I located the shelter. In front of me I approached a pulsing pink neon sign:

H
OPEN
A
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H

In my recollection, the E and the N were broken. There were two doors at the front: the first was labeled “Office”; the other said “Transient Door”. I walked over to this one and tried the handle; the door was locked. I started to walk away when an elderly man, the night clerk, stepped out. He was wearing a sailor’s cap, khaki shirt and black trousers. He spoke a rough, illiterate English; his pasty, mottled face was that of someone who had know much hardship.

His advice to me, delivered with something of a sneer, was to go see if there was a space under the bridge. I walked over to the bridge. Clearly he was ridiculing me; the surroundings were both unsavory and dangerous, so I turned back.

Upon returning I saw that a car was stationed before the entrance. It held a married couple bringing boxes filled with clothes and other goods for the "transients". I used the opportunity to ask the night clerk again, (in the presence of these "respectable people"!) for a bed for the night.

"Everybody's gone to bed. Ye're jest givin' me a lot uf extra werk!" This shocked the worthy couple. They assured me that the shelter was clean. They also suggested the YMCA, not realizing that I didn't have the \$5.00 needed for a night's lodging.

"Okay", the night clerk said, clearly annoyed, *"Come on in."* Entering the building I found myself in an uncongenial room, something like the interior of a police station. Notices behinds plate glass were posted on the walls:

MEN WHO TAKE MEALS AND SHELTER MUST ATTEND SERVICES

ALL MEN ADMITTED MUST TAKE A SHOWER DAILY

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ITEMS MUST BE LEFT IN THE OFFICE

The night clerk disappeared and I sat down on a bench to wait. A younger man came into the room. He made some attempts to be sociable. When the night clerk came back there was some hassle because I'd forgotten my social security number. When he wrote down my name I

could see that forming letters was something of a painful chore for him. The ordeal terminated, the night clerk took me down to the basement for a shower. I will never forget the sneer on his face when he asked if I had the 50 cents to pay for a bed for the night !

I needed no prodding to take the shower. The night clerk sat in a chair facing the curtainless shower and watching while I took it. Then I was given a set of pyjamas two sizes too large for me. There was no belt; the night clerk explained how I was to use the "tips" of the fly, tying them together to keep the pants up. I tried to find out something from him about the problems of homelessness in Hartford. He reminded me that the people in the shelter were not to be called "bums" but "transients"! The sum total of the rehabilitation program consisted of chopping wood to help finance the shelter.

The beds were clean, the "transients" were not snoring too loudly. I fell asleep immediately. It was here, I thought, at the Open Hearth, that I'd touched the "underbelly of America"!

Lights On at 5 AM! The men stumbled into the bathrooms to take another shower. The night clerk was again sitting on a chair and watching us. The deskclerk filled out a file listing age, place of birth, parents' names, hair color, sex, race and religion. There were 3 boxes in which he wrote the word "No":

(1) Does he drink?

(2) Does he beg?

(3) Does he have a police record?

(4)

I didn't wait for the breakfast but left right away.

July 13:

The voyage from Hartford to Tivoli in Dutchess County, NY was relatively easy; I've since made it several times by a different itinerary. There is a single highway going from Hartford to Wappinger Falls, and from there one can go right up the left bank of the river. This trip was exceptional. I took Route 44 through Northwestern Connecticut. The region has a reputation for beauty and I wanted to witness it at first-hand. My first driver dropped me off at Cannon. There a policeman forced me off the road. A college student acting strangely, as if he were on an LSD trip, noticed that I was being harassed and gave me a lift to Winsted. He left me off at the other end of town with the warning, "Don't ever let the police catch you hitch-hiking in this town."

A salesman drove me to New Canaan. There I was picked up by someone who took me all the way to Red Hook, NY, only a few miles from Tivoli, where I would be staying at the Catholic Worker Farm for a week or so. I enjoyed being out in the sun for several hours as I walked the 5 miles to Tivoli.

Ontario

July 18th : Trying to get into Canada on the “Peace Bridge” from Buffalo to Fort Erie can be a disagreeable way to spend an afternoon.



The truck driver who picked me up in Tonawanda used me as a captive audience for his ranting against the “niggers”. Prejudice was an obsession with him, but he did change the subject after awhile. As a young man he’d hitched all the way from Buffalo to Miami . Before starting the trip in Buffalo he’d called his father in Pittsburgh and asked for help with money. The receiver came down at the other end. He got onto the road for Miami with nothing more than 10 cents and a bottle of No-Doz . His father later told him he’d waited by the phone for 6 hours for him to call back, but the rift between himself and his family was irreparable.

My next lift came from a pair of teenagers. They told me they’d been taken in by the police simply for walking down the side of the

highway. The police drove them to the station for the routine check to see if they had police records. They didn't and were released, 20 miles from their original location, left to get back as best they could!

These roads can be dangerous. The woman who gave me my final ride into Toronto told me about an accident that had happened just outside the city of Prudhomme. A couple traveling to their wedding ceremony the next day, were driving at night down the Queen Elizabeth Way. A station wagon approached them coming up the wrong way. To avert a collision the couple swerved across the lane divider and smashed into another car, which itself hit yet another. 5 cars were involved in the accident. The driver of the station wagon has not been found; he escaped and drove away.

Toronto

July 20:

On my first day in Toronto I visited 2 museums: the ROM (Royal Ontario Museum) , a museum combining archaeology with natural history, and the Ontario Museum of Modern Art.

An entire section of the OMMA is devoted to an exhibition of Pop Art. It's been 'choreographed' with the intention of letting the public understand its relationship to modern life! Take the sculpture in white plastic entitled "Spermatogenesis": its' presence is striking indeed! : an

enlarged penis hanging over a marble pedestal with its ejaculation seething like a blob of yogurt!

Another work by the same artist is entitled "Emergence". Rotating about in a kind of crypt is a naked male body with no head.

Other Pop works include 10 silhouettes of a naked woman walking on a circular drum composed of silvered mirrors. There are also several abstract constructions; the standard "Andy Warhol" high-contrast blow-ups; and some collages with improbable names.

A room filled with earlier Canadian art holds some truly beautiful paintings of scenes of the Far North.

July 21:

The apartment of the friends with whom I am staying, on Admiral Road between Bedford Street and St Georges off Lowther is in a charming district of Toronto. Everywhere one sees well maintained houses, tidy green lawns, gardens, cool shade from aisles of trees, gay little spots of light at night.

Evangeline Mix and her friend, Steve Grossman are the friends with whom I am staying. Steve is an American draft resister in exile. He spent two years in Malaysia with the Peace Corps. Upon his return he became involved in radical politics. He fled to Canada after learning that the judge for his draft refusal case was Julius J. Hoffman! Both are very young. Steve puts on a kind of forced bitterness about the US. One gathers however that he would not mind returning if and when it

becomes possible (as it did in the Nixon administration). He's afraid to come out of hiding, even to apply for landed immigrant status. His attitude is basically defeatist.

He and Evangeline were vegetarians for the past 4 years; when they returned from Voluntown they became "vegans". They don't eat meat products, even such things as milk, cheese, honey or eggs. Nor do they wear clothing made from leather or wool, or soaps made from animal fats. They don't impress me as good advertising for their cause; both are devoid of energy, always fatigued, walking about in a listless state. They're very quiet, even withdrawn, humorless, a bit self righteous and somewhat lost.

Evangeline is the daughter of a Lutheran minister, a missionary to the Navaho Indians. She describes him as an obnoxious racist imperialist.

In the next apartment live another pair, Tom and Lise. Tom, a Brazilian, speaks a colloquial American English. He is an excellent guitarist and has plans to study at the Royal Conservatory. Lise is chubby, unaffected, shy.

Joan, an English actress In another apartment lives on the same floor . This evening we sat out on the porch talking. She's been in theatre for 15 years. She comes from a working class family in Cheshire, but through brains and persistence was able to qualify for a good high school . In her opinion she made a mistake to go into acting instead of

sticking it out at a university long enough to get a degree. Quote: "5 years at a university is worth 20 years of living." I didn't agree with her, but it is consistent with her relentless efforts to "get ahead". She did study Shakespearian acting and performed in England for a few years before coming to Canada. Quote: "There's a higher standard of living. Let's face it, there's more money here."

She was married to a producer for 5 years:

"He was becoming too materialistic" I don't believe in resting on my laurels. There's no star system In Canada, and I'm not shy of taking a supporting role."

Since the divorce she said (not without a grimace of satisfaction) her ex-husband has gone to the dogs.

"He's an alcoholic; he was almost there before I left him. Those Quebec separatists are all fools. After their 'insurrection' 2 years ago, all of the money flowed out of Montreal and came to Toronto. It's done *us* a lot of good: Toronto is booming! I try to explain to people in Montreal that Canada must remain united. But they're all fanatics; one can't reason with such people."

July 20: I went to the public library in downtown Toronto and consulted a guidebook. One of the districts recommended for its architectural interest was Don Vale, also known as Old Cabbagetown. It's walking distance, about a mile and a half from the library, northeast of the intersections of College and Parliament Streets.

Although the neighborhood is filled with quaint architectural curiosities of a century ago, it appears poverty-stricken. The elderly, infirm and destitute sit out on the porches. Frustrated and angry young men and women can be seen hanging out on the street corners. But in terms of its architecture, Don Vale is a well-preserved village of a century ago, filled with rose gardens, porches, ogive-shaped windows framing potted plants.

Consulting the guidebook once again, I realized that I'd actually missed quite a bit of what there was to see in this neighborhood. So I went back. In the center of Don Vale a community center has been set up inside the former Trinity Church. There one finds an Indian Aid Center, a Bureau for Legal Aid to Injured Workmen, and the headquarters of a so-called "Canadian Liberation Front" (?) I visited it but didn't talk to anyone. Its' atmosphere was charged with suspicion, pretension, paranoia.

For a lark I ordered a cup of tea in the upscale Café de la Paix: 40 cents for a cup of tea!! (1973 prices))

Last night Joan lent me her beat-up guitar . It's strung with 3 different kinds of strings. The B and G strings are soft and rubbery, more suitable for a ukulele. The box has no resonance worth speaking of . Its' one good feature is that it is very small, making it suitable for street performances.

I came by Admiral Road to pick up the instrument around 5. I'd left it in Steve and Evangeline's apartment. Normally the door can be opened with just a key, but on this night it was also secured with an additional padlock, stuck behind a nest of nails that had been hammered close together. There was no way to pry it loose. I knocked on the door of the apartment of Tom and Lise. She suggested that I go down to the rental office and get Andy, its 16-year old business manager and brother to the landlord. He searched for a key but couldn't find it. He offered to pick the lock; together we went upstairs with a screwdriver and hammer. He was unable to get the screwdriver to go within the cluster of nails. Eventually he rammed it through the molding, so that some of it broke off. These tactics failing, he put his foot against the door and kicked it open! Both the lock and the frame were torn off; paint, splinters and fragments of wood lay scattered on the floor. In a belated attempt to restore the door frame he hammered some long nails into it. This sent long cracks through it all the way from top to bottom! After he'd left I swept up.

I did get the guitar, though I was something of a nervous wreck by then. When they returned that night and learned what had happened, Steve and Evangeline were amused rather than angry. They don't intend to pay anymore rent!

July 22, 1973: Evening

It was a miserable day, the sky overcast, the weather cloying, my nerves were a mess. As for the guitar, it was – well, unspeakable. Somehow I mustered up the resolve to head down to the Mall and attempt some busking.

THE MALL is a long stretch of Yonge Street in downtown Toronto. For the past two years it's been turned into a pedestrian mall. Now it hosts a permanent carnival atmosphere.



The Yonge Street Mall

After 5 PM the Yonge Street Mall fills up with crowds. They walk about, gawk or share in the carnival, buy sodas, beer and food at inflated prices from street concessions. Musak pours out of loudspeakers spaced about 100 feet apart. In addition the record stores are also blaring music into the street, generally loud rock. Yet everywhere one finds street musicians, mimes, jewelry artists. And there was I, with my worthless

guitar, trying to; compete! The sound died away less than 5 feet from its source. Pedestrians didn't even notice I was there.

My impression was that the restaurants had come an agreement that they would compel street musicians and pan-handlers to move on. I sang 4 songs (Which side are you on; All my sorrows soon be over; House of the rising sun; Down by the Sally Gardens) from a repertoire of 50. By 8:30 PM I'd put together \$2.15 (Canadian!). Exhausted and disgusted, I made my way up to Yorkville.

Yorkville stands in sharp contrast to the Yonge Street Mall. It's a pretty esplanade for the well-to-do, the young professionals, and the pretentious. No "beatniks" or "hippies", nobody in tee shirts, no immigrants apart from those working in the restaurants. Just about no motor traffic. The street is quiet, even sultry in a slow Southern style, the perfect ambiance for playing and singing! Between 3 cafes I picked up \$5.00. I also did well in the L'Aiglon restaurant. Its' terrace is walled in from the street, with tables tucked in among hedges and bushes. I was invited to sit down with two garment salesmen; both of them were drunk. They bought me two glasses of red wine. One of them was astonishingly rude to the waiters. The only reason he got away with it was because their English wasn't very good. After a short gig at another café I returned to Admiral Road. The next morning I tip-toed out early and was on my way to the border and Detroit.

Detroit Michigan

July 23: Every experience walking around the downtown center of Detroit had something odd about it. Three young men from Jordan were working in the diner where I'd stopped over for lunch. Two of them went outside with me and started pointing out all the features of Cadillac Park! Their boss had to step outside and order them back to work.

Walking up to Cass Park on 2nd Avenue I encountered the baroque Masonic Hall, a enormous structure with small beady windows, like the caves of anchorites.

In the park I found derelicts, alcoholics, trash everywhere. A mother was sitting alone , her baby boy on the grass. These aging hotels were evidently quite elegant at one time. Now they are filled with destitute families on relief. A rough looking individual was repairing his car. He saw me, stood up, gestured as if of pointing a gun at me, and cried: "BANG!"

Continuing along I came upon 3 teen-agers on a porch. One of them saw me looking at them: "Kill that newspaper man! " He screamed. Across the street a derelict was burning trash in a street litter basket. When I came by he asked me if I had a match. Then he pulled out a scrap of paper from a pocket, wrote something on it, and gave it to me. "I can't see her today, but you can." A policeman came rushing over to put out the fire and I hurried on.

July 24th: It was my good luck that this was the only day in July in which the Wayne State U library was open. I spent the afternoon reading magazines: Plate Tectonics in Scientific American; Susan Sontag, on women's lib, in the Partisan Review (dull); Sartre in Les Temps Modernes railing against elections; an article on the French A-bomb explosion in Muratoa.

In front of a Catholic church not far from Detroit's Greektown, there is a large Bulletin Board. On its lower edge are placed panels:

Crime Law and Order
RiotsPeaceful Dissent
Drugs.....Religion

At the top these words:

A constant vigil of Prayer
To Save America

And below that the message:

"Begin your constant vigil of prayer today. That means that you agree to pray and/or do spiritual reading one extra hour a week at your specified time. Hours may be kept in church, at home, while travelling, in a hospital, etc.

THIS IS GOD'S HOUR."

Finally , over to the right side, in small print :

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A Large billboard on the highway into Chicago:

TAKE US OUT OF THE UNITED NATIONS!

My next destination was East Chicago. My first ride was a right-wing conservative. He was a salesman working for a company that sells appliances for trailers. Right wing conservative. He sold transformers which converts the normal voltage in trailers to 12 volts. Then his company sold special appliances which operate at 12 volts, making themselves a market in the good old fashioned American way!

He was on his way to Marshall, Michigan for a major business conference. His sales had dropped 60% in just one month, and his company is now in serious trouble.

On Ralph Nader: *"He discovered a way to make himself lots of money."*

On the students in Ann Arbor who got themselves elected to the City Council: *"A student ought to be studying, not engaging in politics"*

On marijuana: *"It leads to stronger addictive drugs."*

Once he got onto the topic of the inferiority of the Black Race, there was no stopping him. That he was obviously annoying me seemed to give him added pleasure!

"The black race is obviously inferior to the white; everything proves it. Look at those so-called 'countries' in Africa. You won't find lazier people anywhere else on earth. They're always bitching about

South Africa, yet it has the highest standard of living in the entire continent, even for the blacks! “

“Now they want to bus *my* kids to *their* schools! *I won't stand for it* ! I live in Lavonia; it's all white and I like that just fine. Why the hell would a black man want to have *me* as a neighbor? 80% of all the crimes in Detroit are committed by them coloreds, mostly trying to get money for dope. They've got the city; good, let them keep it! I suppose someday they 'll have a black mayor too. It's the suburbs for me.”

July 25th

East Chicago

East Chicago is actually in Indiana, 28 miles from Chicago and adjacent to Gary. It is part of a complex of industrial towns including Hammond, Whiting and the large area called Calumet City. In this enormous region of perhaps 200 square miles there is no public transportation. If you don't have a car you're out of luck.

Thus, not only does the community discourage transients, it discourages people who don't drive cars! Yet workers do need to be able to travel between the townships, as there are frequent lay-offs from the plants. For example, there is a man from Hammond living at the shelter. There is no work for him there, so he stays at the shelter while looking for work in “the mills”

The mills stretch endlessly like an appendectomy scar across the belly of East Chicago, a 10 mile Bosch-inspired landscape covered with

its own excreta, spurting hypnotic clouds of poisoned clouds, a lethal magma issuing from its tangle of claws, tentacles and antennae.

Kennedy Avenue is the street along which this eco-catastrophe is laid down. The very name invokes the callous gentility of the New England family for which it's named. The whole town is fairly shabby, yet the worst area is around the harbor, which is completely broken down.

Kennedy Avenue becomes Michigan Boulevard. After a stretch of factory sheds it terminates in a district of bars, shops and flophous. There is soot caked over everything, and a single "classy" bar, Pete and Mabel's. The rest of them are all dives: The Mohawk Hotel, Indiana Grill, Tony's Tap.

Harbor House

For my time in East Chicago I stayed at a shelter maintained by a branch of the Catholic Worker organization called Harbor House. The person in charge is named Eddie Quinn. A graduate of Villanova University, Eddie was born and raised in Philadelphia. He's taught school, and was an airplane pilot in WWII, but he's been totally ruined by drinking. He did manage to stay sober for the first 10 months of his term as guestmaster. In that time he did a lot of good for the derelicts living at the shelter. Some people think he returned to drinking when a role model, the former guestmaster George Hand, left the house.

Last month Eddie had a stroke and lost sight in one of his eyes. The drinking may have caused this, or it may be that his depression over

the loss of his eye led to his renewed drinking. When sober he's as civil as the next man but he becomes paranoid when drunk, yells at everyone, even throws residents out of the shelter.

A meeting was therefore convened last night to discuss replacing Eddie. The board consists of local college students, teachers, and locals. It was agreed that Cowboy, Jerry and myself would be put in charge of the shelter until Eddie reformed. After a while he would simply be replaced.

Manpower

One of the "transients" living there offered to drive me to the office of Manpower in Hammond, Indiana. We arrived there at 7 and went to the Industrial Division located in back. It was a small shabby office and offered free coffee. I was advanced 3 dollars and sent down the road a mile and a half to a machine shop.

Viking Engineering consisted of a large hall holding half a dozen enormous lathes. At the entrance we found two more men, also sent by Manpower. They were cutting into the floor with a jackhammer. I was invited to join them!

Never having used a jackhammer before I stepped up to the plate. One thrust of the chisel, I was thrown back against the wall! As I was too frail to use something like this, they put me to work cleaning up the debris from the lathes. Then it turned out that the company wasn't sure it knew what to do with the hole that was being made. So we were sent to

another project at the front of the building. This was a large concrete block sunk a foot and a half into the earth. It was too big to be removed by jackhammers. Our task was to dig a cavity beneath it. After one hour of grueling work, we'd made hardly a dent in it.

A truck came by at lunchtime selling sandwiches at outrageous prices. I ended up with a lousy "Poor Boy" drenched in cheese dressing. Behind the counter of the truck stood a woman dressed in tight shorts, wearing a chauffeur's cap and with a streetcar conductor's change maker on her hip. Positively obscene.

I quit after lunch. Then I walked back to the Manpower office. At the office they gave me a dollar for every hour worked, the rest in two weeks! The base rate was \$2.20 per hour.

I had to hitch-hike back to Harbor House. By 7:30 PM the day's earnings were all spent.

A pleasant week or so was passed at the Catholic Worker's Harbor House in East Chicago . Then I signed on to pick peaches and apples on a farm in LaPorte, Indiana. The experience of working on this farm as a novice in the company of 3 professional, weather-worn and worldly-wise Mexican Chicanos, was a valuable one and I hope to write about it at some point.

After that I returned to Montreal.

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