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A Canuck and a Yankee In Uncle Gerry's Court by Mack Truck

Please do not adjust your newspaper. The collection of pointless anecdotes you are about to read is true. Only the facts have been changed. This, gentle American readers, is your country, as witnessed in the summer of 1975 by a pair of blue Canay-tun eyes, and another pair which for complex reasons variously claims a grubstake either in Cornish, N.H. or Windsor, Vt.

June 30: 50 hot, hot miles south of Minnie-ha-ha. Dropped off here by a dairy-farringo-conga-playing-radio-expert, Korean war veteran and part tire bouncer. I zipped into a Shell station in an attempt to pick up a rap, which would have cost me three quarters in the machine if I had wanted it that much. The gas stations of America (and Canada, to be honest) are tightening their rubber hoses. In the office the owner is bitching to the employees about a bad cheque.

Meanwhile, back in the restaurant parking lot, a station wagon (doubtless Dad's) with three college age males in it has wrapped itself quite handily around a lampost. The guys run around wringing their hands for a couple of minutes, as if there's a baby trapped in the back or something, but no, that's not it. One of them finally gets it together to open the back door (the tailgate being obviously inoperable) and pull out a cooler which is plainly filled with you-know-what (starts with B, and ends with R, isn't a Bar but often can be obtained at one) then runs off and hides it, scant moments before a state trooper arrives. We finish our coffee and leave by the far door from where all this is going on. We saw it all, between the two of us, but why get involved?

Later that afternoon, as the fortyish Lutheran who picked us up is explaining how religiously tolerant he is—"why, I have friends who are Seventh Day Adventists, and one who's a Mormon, and some Jehovah's Witnesses...Unitarian? What Bible do you

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use?", we pass a building bearing the inscription: "Truth, Inc. (A subsidiary of the Avatonna Tool Co.)" Gee. And all those people have been looking for Truth all this time. Oughta organize some pilgrimages—make a bundle!

Still later, idle ruminations. Is it possible that the line "The sun is getting high" in the Grateful Dead's "Cumberland Blues" is a subtle pun along the lines of "The Pope smokes dope"? Acid punnery—so subtle, in fact, that nobody could possibly even recognize it as such, except through blind chance. But speaking of juxtaposition, or something very much like it, I think, just outside Austin, Minnesota, a few miles north of the Iowa state line, the sun is getting low. Not that low—it's been sort of misty all day, so that aforementioned heavenly body may disappear entirely even before it gets within a couple degrees of the horizon. So now it's Officially Evening, and time to relax and not care whether we get picked up or not. So what.

July 1: South Dakota. 91 degrees F. in the sun...or 96, 98 or 100 in the shade. Depends what thermometer you look at. There is one in every shop window in White Lake, seemingly as a boast, or maybe an enticement to enter one of the dozen or so air-conditioned bars in the hundred-yard-long stretch of Main Drag. (For us, it works, needless to say).

Farther along, and across the wide Missouri Valley, where there's some hilly green country which soon sinks back into plain old yellow prairie, the engine is overheating, and despite two 6-packs of cold Schlitz, so are we. A hot hard wind blows constantly across the highway, such that if the lone grass didn't anchor everything down there'd be a permanent storm of sand and grime.

South Dakota tries hard, with multi tourists traps, to thwart everyone's natural

inclination to floor the gas pedal and drive blearily through without stopping for more than gas, coffee and cheeseburgers. Most of the main attractions seem to be cowboys 'n' Indians. Makes sense, when you put it in somewhat oversimplified historical perspective. Back in the 1800's this was obviously a completely god-forsaken land, with no redeeming qualities whatsoever. So the U.S. government, in an uncommonly thrifty move, gave it to the Indians. Of course, the Indians would have preferred to stay where they were, but you can't stop progress. However, shortly thereafter the government discovered that all the worthless land they had gotten rid of so handily had a pile of gold underneath it. With an embarrassed smile, Uncle Sam started to kill Indians erect historical monuments, real western frontier towns, and Gold Rush Motor Hotels.

Less than a hundred miles away from here the FBI, with the aid of helicopters and armored troop carriers, is scouring the Pine Ridge Reservation using tactics that they'd never use to search an area inhabited by white Americans. Killing, killing... I don't think that even Art Buchwald can write anything funny, even blackly funny, about this whole deal. So don't expect me to be able to.

Nobody that lives in South Dakota ever goes any closer to I-90 than the adjacent fields. Halfway through the state, I still don't know what S. Dakota license plates look like, much less the protective coloration adopted by South Dakota state troopers. The traffic on I-90 is nothing but camper pickups, station wagons loaded with kids and pulline trailers, van, and motor homes.

A word about motor homes. They are always, always, always driven by a sixty-year-old man with a thin lipped scowl. His wife, hair piled on her head, sits beside him. They never, never, never stop to pick up hitchhikers. Enough about motor homes-cont.pg.3

