

spotlight 9



In A Toyota

dard went to get some liquid refreshment (12-pack) at the convenience store, opposite the restaurant, and entertained themselves by crossing and recrossing traffic. The satellite dish at the motel provided the guys with a dracula movie but not racy flicks to close the evening.

Providence, RI was the next destination as Tuesday morning dawned but as it turned out, the Guilco guys got royally lost in the city, and the next think they knew they were in Fall River, Mass. For lack of anything better to do, the two took an exist and found themselves next to the U.S.S. Massachusetts, a WWII battleship. If that wasn't neat enough, there was a submarine and a destroyer there too! The men scoured the vessels for the better part of the morning, climbing on guns, peering through sights and looking through the periscopes. Stoddard wanted to get a souvenir pennant of their visit but Stuart said no.

Upon returning to the car, Stuart said, "Cape Cod?" "Why not?" Stoddard said carefreely.

Tourists were scarce in the little towns which live for the summer trade. Consequently room rates were down at the motel where the pair registered Tuesday after. But the guys soon found out that rock-bottom prices meant rock-bottom service. The Australian working the desk was folding bed linens when Stoddard signed in. The Guilford men had clearly gone from room service at the Sheraton, to self-service at the "Resort Hotel" in Hyannis.

Late that afternoon, the voyagers walked to the beachfront where they held a conversation with an acrobatic seagull. The winds off the Long Island Sound were strong and Stoddard, an avid sailor, had to be restrained from "borrowing" a sailboat nearby.

Stuart tried to call home when they returned to the motel room but they discovered there was no phone. They then realized

that there was no satellite TV and that the toilet had not been "Sanitized for Your Protection." "We got the low budget shaft," Stuart recalled later. Temperatures were unseasonable warm that day and both men were doubly shafted when the guy at the desk told them that the air conditioning had been turned off "for the season."

Following an "Early Bird Special" dinner, the two loitered under a "NO Loitering" sign and on the Hyannis main drag, but the empty town offered no excitement. The prospect of another lonely night loomed. After watching several hours of network TV, the Toyota was cranked up once again and the two set off on a beer run.

"There was not one store open in the whole friggin' town," muttered Stuart. "We drove around like yahoos for a half an hour and when we finally found a Fast Fare kind of store, it was right behind our motel! What's worse is they didn't sell beer"

Stoddard added, "They must not drink beer in Massachusetts."

Wednesday of break, saw the two easy riders turn back toward home. The 525-mile drive from Hyannis to Harrisburg PA included more time lost in downtown Providence, a gas gauge on empty during a interstate traffic jam at Scraton, and a lesson on photo-journalism in the midst of a tractor-trailer convoy. Stuart also took time out to do some philosophy on the human condition.

"Death and Sex," said Stuart to Stoddard. "One you don't want and one you can't get." Stoddard nodded.

Determined not to get "shafted" two nights running, the guys checked into the Harrisburg Quality Inn, somewhere in the vicinity of Three-Mile Island. Appropriate thoughts of radiation poisoning filled the men's heads as they ate supper at Bob's Big Boy Restaurant. After a day of nothing but Phil Collins on the radio, the World Series

graph our copies of your novel," said Stoddard.

"Oh yeah? Guilford. Yes, of course," Warren responded. "Let me get a pen." The literary great disappeared into the house before Stuart or Stoddard could offer him one of theirs. Mrs. Warren stepped to the door and surveyed the unshaven students who were attired in ragged t-shirts and jeans.

"You know, we don't usually come to the door, for safety reasons," she said. "But I guess you look like college students."

Mr. Warren returned with an ordinary 29-cent Bic ball point pen and accepted Stoddard's copy to sign. While Stuart entertained notions of the visit interrupting Warren while he was at work on the next epic novel, Stoddard volunteered that they had driven all the way from North Carolina for the sole purpose of getting the eminent writer's autographs. To which Warren replied, "I think you should have your head examined."

After dating Stoddard's copy, Warren extended his hand to receive Stuart's.

Stoddard piped up again saying,

"We think this is the Great American Novel!"

"Well I wouldn't go that far!" demured Warren. He then asked, "What's your name?"

"Robert, sir."

"Well let me do this a little differently, then," said Warren requesting Stoddard's copy back. The Literary Luminary then added at the top of the inscription "To Robert. Best Wishes. Robert Penn Warren October 20, 1986. In Stuart's copy he wrote "To Andrew. Best Wishes. Robert Penn Warren October 20, 1986."

Both Guilford pilgrims thanked the author profusely as he wished them well on their trip and they disbelievingly headed back down the driveway. Both students had fantasized about being invited in for a couple of Moslons and being able to kick back and talk about Souther Literature and the Great American Novel with "Red" (as Warren is nicknamed), but as they headed back to the car, each was

overwhelmed by the realization that they had just come face to face with a living legend!

"Maybe he was in there working on some Pulitzer Prize-winning poetry or novel," mused Stuart.

"I think he was watching a game show," said Stoddard.

With the road trip's prime directive having been fulfilled less than 36 hours into the adventure, the pair opened the road Atlas and decided where they might head next. New Haven wasn't far so the lonely men decided to go check out the chicks at Yale. As it turned out, there weren't any to be seen but the campus tour was nice and both students were glad that they weren't under the same crushing academic pressure back at Guilford that was in the air at Yale.

A late afternoon check-in at the Red Roof Inn (spend a night, not a fortune) in New London, CT gave the trippers some time to relax and hang out in the motel room. After dinner, at the "All American Steak House" nearby, Stuart and Stod-