

# Trip to Dylan Concert was a lifetime experience

Compiled and written By Paul Haining with the help of the members of the tour.

O mamma can this really be the end? To be stuck inside this mobile with the Dylan blues again.

(In every person's life there is one event in which coincidence combines with reality to create such an incredible series of events that the story usually begins with the phrase "Your're not going to believe this, but..." So be forewarned.)

Our story begins, as do all good stories, with a dream. Bob Dylan (well, what can one say) was playing at the Forum in Montreal. Tickets were secured, the transportation rented, provisions laid in.

And so we were eight. Dave, Kathy, Sue, Paul, Paul, Chris, Jill and Les. All eager, and frankly excited at the prospect of seeing Bob Dylan in concert. After all, wasn't it his first tour in eight years? And with the Band to boot.

So at the appointed time and place, all packed and ready to go, we set out. Our home for trip was a twenty-six foot motor home, one of those in which your rich relatives go to Florida.

As everyone knows, on an important event to begin with, something must go wrong. We were prepared to accept this fact and did, as our friend and conveyor, the motor home coughed lazily to a stop, halfway up Smythe Street hill, in 5 o'clock traffic. This was our first encounter with The Curse. And as usual, when you least need them and the moment is most incriminating, the local constabulary arrived with much shouting and flashing of lights.

"Back into that court!" they said, "and we'll direct the traffic to keep it moving!"

So while they carefully manoeuvred their van in such a way as to completely block off all three lanes, we carefully backed into the nearby court, tail firmly between the legs.

After much grinding and considerably weakening the battery, the engine whimpered to life once more.

"Better stop at the rental place," Dave, our driver, said, while trying to manoeuvre up the icy hill at 5 m.p.h.

Fortunately, when we arrived, the service man was an understanding type and cheerfully explained that our temporary home hadn't been used for about

six months and the battery was most likely dead. So, he jumpstarted the generator, showed us how to turn it on and off and sent us on our way, assuring us we would have no more problems and the lights would be on momentarily. For good measure, he inserted, in the gas tank, some vile substance, "to clear the gas line of any ice."

Ten minutes later, sitting in the cold and dark, generator no longer generating, we were waiting for the repair truck. Apparently the ice clearing fluid had done its job marvelously. It had not only cleared the ice, but the gas as well, it seemed.

Suddenly, there were flashing lights everywhere. Paul and Paul who jumped from the bus, to welcome the service man, fell into the welcoming arms of a service man of another color. Blue to be precise. Yes, your friend and mine, the Fredericton City police had once again arrived.

Due to the method that our vehicle had been secured, none of the "official" documents, red tape, etc. had been obtained. Conclusion? Of course, the police had just cracked the case of the century before it even had occurred. Just because there were eight individuals in the "stolen" vehicle with enough supplies for a long week-end, all with plenty of local addresses and enough ID to get one into and out of the Pentagon didn't seem to deter the officers from their duties. And with the classic line, "Oh no! We're not trying to hassle you." Dave was removed to the backseat of the patrol car for the usual round of names-and-addresses-of-all-with-you-please.

Just when it seemed Bob Dylan would have to do without us and the Curse had once again raised its ugly head, the service man arrived.

He kindly explained to the officers who and what we were, sent them on their way and in a quiet aside explained what was wrong with the police, nowadays.

Apparently, what was wrong with the motor was that it was out of gas. (Ignoring, of course the fact that the gas gauge read "F" and it was supposed to have been filled by the agency we had rented it from.)

So, filling the gas tank from two five-gallon cans, we proceeded to the nearest gas station and added an additional sixteen gallons. Amazing, we thought collectively, A motor home that runs on faith

alone

The generator, having kicked out again and refusing to restart, and the young gentleman at the counter of said gas station refusing to travel a distance of twenty-five feet to his tow truck to jumpstart our battery ("Well... Donnno. Ya see, I'm not suppose ta leave the till.") we headed off into a dark night, totally in the dark.

It was at this point, that we should have realized that the project had a sword over its head from the beginning, since, from leaving the SUB at 5:30, it had taken us two hours to travel three miles.

If any of our readers remember early that Friday morning, about 1:00 a.m., they will remember cold. Below zero. We had been travelling for about five hours. At this point we had had visions of blissfully sleeping in our warm motor home heading for our rendez-vous. However, the Curse stepped in and on and on and on.

The actual scene deviated from the ideal considerably. Travelling at 50 mph with all the "M Flow-thru Ventilation air vents frozen open and a malfunctioning gas heater is far from ideal. So with Dave driving, Jill and sleeping bag in the suicide seat, Paul and Kathy trying to eke a little heat from the engine heater, the rest were huddled on one of the double beds under five sleeping bags, three blankets and anything else that wasn't nailed down, we shared beers and brandy and tried to keep the circulation circulating. We also changed places as often as possible and as a result, everyone got to know everyone else a little better.

Suddenly, the engine began to overheat. The engine stalled again. Nobody spoke. A lot of cursing, but nobody spoke. Once the engine had cooled, we crept along the road looking for a few quarts of oil.

We finally found a service station with limited French and about a half hour to find the dipstick we managed to discover that there wasn't enough oil in the crankcase to oil a rollerskate.

But the Curse had not finished with us, it seemed that the oil had not been checked for six months, and the engine paid the toll. For a few short miles later, to mix a metaphor, the roof fell in.

The sound which resulted can only be described as sickening; approximately the same sound as the bottom of the engine falling off,

dragging on the road, followed by all the pistons exploding, in sequence in their respective cylinders. Added to this were huge billows of oil-smelling smoke that welled up out of the engine compartment, all combining for the apparently desired effect of sheer panic on all contained therein. The only thought that raced through your author's mind was FIRE!!! Fortunately, however, there was none.

After the smoke had cleared and everyone was awake and calmed down, we tried to assess our situation. We were about forty miles from Quebec city, and God only knew how far from any kind of civilization. The engine was tried and it replied with a resounding "clunk".

All this considered, we also considered that one of our group had noticed at our last stop that the temperature had dropped to -22 degrees and there was a 15 mph wind blowing. Our only source of heat had just gone up in a blaze of glory and building a fire was not highly practical. Suddenly the meaning of the old phrase "you can't get there from here" had new significance. The night got a little darker and colder and the Dream had begun to fray around the edges, just a bit more.

Dave and Jill were more or less volunteered to go for help. We realized that at about 2:30 a.m. on Route 20, traffic was a little thin, but a try had to be made.

After about a dozen tries, a large tractor-trailer pulled to the side of the highway. Dave and Jill then encountered a problem that we had only discussed briefly before. Both they and the truckdriver, a man about 6'5" and tipping the scales at about 290, were indescribably unilingual, and as might be guessed, both had their own different languages.

If U.N. awards are ever given for extreme devotion to the preservation of life on Quebec's highways and the advancement of patience and understanding when trying to understand a half-frozen Anglophone, this gentleman should get the first. He listened with great patience, waved them into the cab and set off for help.

So, we left in our now completely lifeless hulk of a motor home, sat huddled in the dark, in spite of the fact that the generator was now running. In retrospect, we decided we were saving the lights for something more important. (What I couldn't imagine!)

We suggested everyone bundle up together and try to sleep to pass the time. Chris and Paul assumed the driver's and co-pilot seats in the front, cocooned in sleeping bags and sharing what heat came from the silent engine.

In a crisis situation, no one ever talks of the crisis. The conversation turned from the classic "Read any good books lately?" to movies to buying notebooks, pencils and erasers in Grade school. Individuals would occasionally be roused, complain about the cold for a moment, join in the conversation, then drift back to sleep. We waited.

Paul had just begun to move towards the door (the beer had begun to work its magic on our own Flo-thru systems) when flashing lights appeared in the rear of the bus. At once, all were awake if not up and heading for the door. Most soon fell back to sleep for it was too cold to concentrate on much of anything. After about a half an hour of prodding, testing by the mechanic who had arrived, we

began our journey to his garage, completely bypassing the one Jill was left in when he was first called. She stayed there for about five hours or practically until we were on our way again.

It had begun to snow lightly as we left our unintended stop-over point and as the trip progressed, Dave, at the wheel of the motor-less home, had his hands full trying to avoid sideswiping snowbanks and any vehicles that passed us.

The garage turned out to be an overly-large quonset hut affair, which was HEATED. So as each awoke and stumbled out into the glare of the florescent lights, the circulation in numb toes and fingers began again. It was snowing quite hard at this point and even though it was dark it was obvious we had a real storm on our hands and one hell of a Curse to go along with it. The mechanic began major surgery on the what he considered to be the offending part, the starter, and assured us we would be on our way in about an hour.

It was, ironically, at the darkest point of the day, just before dawn when through the simul-trans services of one of the Pauls, that he informed us the entire engine was burned out. Everyone quietly said good night and tried to get some sleep.

O, Mama, Can this really be the end? We had to ditch the mobile, with the Dylan blues, again.

It was now six o'clock Friday morning. The situation looked, frankly, bleak. We still had fourteen hours with which to get to Montreal, but the storm had continued to become worse and we had no sure method of getting out of Beaumont (which was where we were) to begin with.

It was decided to notify the rental agency back in Fredericton, but that would take a few hours since they didn't open until 9:30 Quebec time. Breakfast was in order since most of us had not eaten since Thursday noon. Paul brought out a can of soup, and Paul discovered that his toothpaste had frozen. Paul's soup had to be carved up into small chunks to get it out of the can.

In the meantime, our mechanic friend had invited in all his friends to examine the engine. They all became ecstatic at his good fortune when the go-ahead for repairs came through from Fredericton. Good news for us too, as they had authorized us to rent another vehicle from their Quebec City branch and forget about the motor-less homes.

So while Dave and Paul headed for the city, those that remained tried to pack their belongings to transfer them when the time came.

When Dave and Paul arrived back there was a full scale storm raging. So all the gear for eight people including four pairs of skis, poles, boots, tow guitars, sleeping bags and blankets, plus enough food to feed us all for three days was packed into an eight passenger station wagon.

At this point Jill arrived back, safe and sound, and we all piled into the station wagon. It appeared that this was the largest vehicle in Quebec City that was available and it was only obtained after about an hour's wrangling, in spite of a quick Telex message from Fredericton. A fifty dollar deposit was also extracted before the car was ours.

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