

America is a trip. The circus. The midway. The zoo. Live television.

I believe that Washington is still the capital, though the hysterical accounts of the Tall Ships at Newport and New York give me cause to wonder. But for total indulgence in the Bicentennial I wouldn't be anywhere else. And I am not. A tourist in every respect - here to enjoy the spectacle, the counter-spectacle, the foolishness, irony, ignorance, faith, hope, power, the grandeur, the passions, the reflections, and, perhaps, for better or worse, the ~~resurrection~~ ^{resurrection} ~~resurrection~~.

Che said it. When asked where in the world he would like to live he said America. And why. Because he'd like to be there, in the belly of the beast. He would, no doubt, have caused considerable indigestion. Hereafter is described is America's revolutionary Pepto-Bismal, the Bicentennial, or more particularly Mr. Charley Goes to Washington on the Fourth of July 1976 And Stands Waist Deep In It All Weekend.

My respects the rabid nationalist among us, but alas it is true - America has more fun. When all is said and done, when we finally put into port and furl our sails after that great Canadian voyage of cultural self-discovery we must realize that Canada is just an echo of the great American hootenanny. What do you learn from an

echo? Only ~~to sing softly, and live wistfully. I prefer the hootenanny, to sing & stamp my feet.~~ ^{my opinion}

Lest my position be misinterpreted let me record at the outset that we Canadians do many things better, not the least of which is Shakespeare. We're less garrish, and better mannered. We have Medicare, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver put most

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But we are better only American cities to shame. But all this is by their standards.
Those who ~~seek to discover true~~ ^{strive to uncover unique} Canadian values are like the fools who refused to use the wheel because they didn't invent it. Everything they propose or boast about for Canada can be found in America, if not flourishing in ~~the~~ establishment politics and culture, then striving in opposition.

How typically provincial, to start on the defensive trying to justify my deviance. What reason is required? It's only a holiday. Besides I like it. ^{Certainly} not all of it, or even most of it. I don't even appprove of it. But I learn from it. I think more clearly when the culture is so vivid, and the profile of power so grotesquely visible.

My trip to America.

Truck Stop

There are trucks in Canada, but not like ~~down~~ here. Giant ones, purple and maroon, with super-duper chrome deco, sleeping cabins, names like Crashers, Grunt and Pussy, and CB radio. And we do have highway restaurants where trucks stop, but we don't have Truck Stops, with fifty on one side of the road, and fifty on the other, lined up nose-by-nose, wild stallions in the night. Nobody goes barreling down Number Seventy ~~One~~ to Moose Jaw. In the Truck Stop the signs say: "This counter for professional drivers only," "Restroom - Professionals Only." (I went in there thinking lawyers were "professionals." Answer-No.) And on the menu: the Big Jim Platter.

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In Wawa it would be an ordinary hamburger ripoff. but in Erie, Pa., it is an artistic con.~~th~~, Rollin, rollin, rollin onto D.C. —
And the Smokies in hot pursuit.

One especially interesting feature of the American road is the ubiquitous citizen-band radio (CB). Maybe a third of the cars and all the trucks are equipped. It could be the biggest mistake technology ever made. Now all those lonely alienated truckdriving proletariat can, and allegedly do, talk constantly with their comrades in their now formidable argot. ^(10-4, Rubber Duck etc) Solidarity the likes of which was never dreamed. ~~The alleged gas shortage a while ago, and the consequent speedlimit slowdown showed the potential of all this.~~ And think of the effect of improved communications among the travelling citizenry. No roadblock will ever work again. No bank is safe. Lock up your other daughters Randolph Hearst.

As you drive around you wonder how these people can stand to eat. In Canada greasy food is served in a greasy spoon. So be it. But here these friendly disgusting ^{restaurants have} ma-and-pas have been utterly and totally wiped out by the franchises. Howard Johnson, Ronald McDonald, Hardee's, A & W, the Carnal and his Buoys. There is no place to be quietly miserable about your soggy french fries. Not only do you have to drive in it, work for it, and sleep with it, you also have to eat the American Dream three time a day.

Anyhow we arrived in D.C. driving right ~~past~~ ^{past the} big white ~~showroom~~ called Jerry's Ford.

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July 2nd 1976. The Space Museum

The Smithsonian has just opened a huge new building on the Mall called the Air and Space Museum. Lovely sky-lite chambers filled with antique planes, including a DC 3, suspended from the rafters, rockets large and small, assorted satellites, and other space vehicles. Positively the best exhibit hall I have ever seen. Spacious yet full, inspiring, well-labelled and explained, and highly intelligent. You can touch a piece of the moon; go inside the space lab, examine the moon-landing contraption, as well as the three-man space vehicles. ^{I was proud to be an American, you see flying is one my fantasies too.} They had one of those giant-screen extravaganzas, a film on how man dreamed, and learned, to fly. If I said "man" I meant America. It was the same technique as the Ontario film at Expo, split-^{image} etc, Even a few of the scenes were similar, but this was better. In the last ^{bit} scene we went kite-gliding, sailing ^{above the forest, across the meadows} silently through the evening air down to the cliffs and the sea, and off those cliffs, man, right out into the fucking ocean, and of course the setting sun. I was absolutely blown away. And let me tell you I'll never need to go higher in the air for my thrills than the tenth row of that theatre. Americans dig flying, and so do I. (In my favorite person dream I learn to fly by jumping higher & higher, further & further. As I recall my initial jumps, more like bounces actually, got me in trouble with such things as ceilings trees & hydro wires.)

① They had daily reports on the Mars probe. (Did you know they found a rusted handlebar from a Honda dirt bike up there.)

July 2nd 1976 The Folk Festival

One of the

~~Another~~ feature attraction in Washington this ~~week~~ ^{Summer} is a Folk Festival in the Mall. (If you've never been here you should know that this Mall is utterly enormous, ^{formal} a park stretching through ~~from the Capital Building to the Washington Monument~~ the heart of Washington, and this festival of maybe ten acres occupied but a small corner.) Now I was fresh from Mariposa, ^{three-day} Toronto's very mellow, no-star, multi-stage folk and blues (and dance) ~~weekend~~ festival, a serene non-profit cultural ~~meeting~~ ^{happening} ~~Washington~~ by the lake, preserving the best hippy traditions. This ^{thing} was inferior. The music I heard was second rate, not just amateur. They had a lot more crafts which might have been interesting, but it wasn't. Do you know who were the featured craftsmen? Bricklayers, electricians, high-steel workers, pipefitters, welders and crude carpenters, each performing their typical work and telling us "folk" all about it. Now this is Official Culture presented by the Smithsonian Institute and the U.S. Department of Parks. It is trite to say that the hippy's have lost control of the counter-culture, ^{I'm not putting down the trades, ~~now~~, but they're being used.} but to the A.F. of L. - C.I.O.! And again. Two other pavillions were the Family Story, and the Family Movie Pavilions. Come in and donate yours to the archives. Everybody is a star. A little off the track but in the same vein is the current vogue among the New York critics and collectors fine photography is the snapshot-style photo, heretofore known as the tacky picture. ^{You see to-day} Everybody is an artist, or ~~at least one of the all-potential~~ a model. Is this ultra-democracy? Andy Warhol says in the future everyone will take turns being famous for ten seconds.

I used to think that folk culture was a clever defence against the ravages of capitalist and bureaucratic efficiency. Clever hippies, ~~protect themselves by living outside wage labour, an outmoded and~~ pre-capitalist situation

I used to think that folk culture was a clever defence against the ravages of capitalist and bureaucratic efficiency. Clever hippies, protecting themselves by living outside the wage labour system, deliberately useless to the system. Until you become an hourly rated employee of a folk festival, and paid to be living gravy.

Folk music seemed particularly useful, because it is at odds traditional bourgeois art. It isn't, or shouldn't be regarded as art because not much skill is required to perform or enjoy it. It is "good" folk music when it complements the people in their activities, dancing, commiserating, praising God, celebrating, whatever. It is simple. But folk music is ~~susceptible~~ to mystification. It becomes an art in the process of collection and codification. It can be separated from its constituency, and commercialized. The critics will discover techniques that the players don't know about, and eventually they will blink into the spotlight and become artistes.
~~Indeed~~ My whole theory is wrong.

The New York Times in its review of the Washington Folk Festival praised it extravagantly. Attic in the Open Air. Museum of Folk Culture. Their screed advised the protesters (more of whom later on) to take up folkdancing and the dulcimer instead. I think it is safe to say that folkdancing will not bring down the government. That is probably the point. ~~Attic in the Mall~~

Come to think of it the German Fascists were great promoters of peasant virtues and crafts.

It ~~was~~ was southern week at the Festival but I see hardly any black people, aside from the performers

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July 3rd 1976 The Parade

The Bicentennial Parade down Constitutional Avenue was interesting quantity rather than its content. more in its ~~form~~ than its substance. It was surely the biggest that I have ever seen - two-and-a-half solid hours, fifty bands, sixty floats, ⁹nty marching units, and ninety-five hundred red-blooded participants, two-thirds in fancy band ~~bands~~ ^{or} drill costumes, and the rest ⁱⁿ ~~sundry~~ other elaborate costumes. There were ~~but~~ ^{only} a few real military units, all at the front of the parade. ~~(Their special drill parade was Sunday.)~~ The parade came in sections, with the floats telling the story of America in crepe paper and chickenwire. You'll be pleased to know that the Civil War didn't happen, nor the massacre of the plains Indians, nor the Spanish War, the Great War, the World War, the Korean War, the Bay of Pigs, the Vietnamese War, or the Cambodian War. ^{But} ~~the~~ immigrants arrived on schedule, the poor, the tired, the huddled masses, ~~but~~ ^{who} they found, according the announcer, that the streets were not paved with gold. Some were disappointed, naturally, and went back to the old country. The rest stayed. The first generation did the struggle-struggle scene, and the second joined marching bands. Colonel Saunders was in the parade. Nelson Rockefeller. Johnny Cash was the parade Grand Marshall. Yogi Bear. Terry Savalas. And the Arch-Angel Gabriel ^{but} without his fabled horn. The Ford Motor Co. debuted a new car during the parade, a car for the city driver of tomorrow. It looked like a covered golfcart. Also the "best-looking seventy-seven year old in America" — ^{on a float} some old jerk ^{who} leads a fitness campaign. But no Paul Bunyan, Donald Duck or John Glenn ^{who} were left out, presumably, because ~~of their participation in the Watergate affair.~~ And, as I'm sure

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you guessed, there was **No** Watergate float. I found the floats intellectually shallow, compared to the bands.

THEY said that half-a-million people watched the parade. The organization was frighteningly thorough. There ^{were} bleachers on both sides of the street, sold out mind you, at ten dollars a seat. The traffic downtown and back was extremely light, I gather due to an elaborate special bus network to outlying parking lots. The crowd was very well managed, and equally well mannered. Happily I was present at one of the few ugly incidents. At ^{our} ~~the~~ intersection (beside the airconditioned reviewing stand) for some reason the police were very lax about keeping the crowd back behind the line of the bleachers. Some loyal Americans had arrived hours early to station themselves on the curb for a good view, but the late-comers, pushers, shovers and foreigners who poured down this exposed by-way at the last minute totally obstructed our view. We booed the lazy police who wouldn't ~~beat~~ these dogs into submission. We chanted "Move. Move. Move," ~~and~~ and other moving slogans. Somebody shouted "Don't pay the police." Very tense. Later we joined the pushers and shovers and went a sat on the road in front of the paying customers.

Three college kids with a poster, "Challenge Big Business", were totally ignored.

It was so big, so bland, so clean, so polite, so happy, neat, trim, bright and proper - a giant nice-in.

As ^{with} the folk festival the big boys have mastered the contempoary art of staging public events, previously the domain of the hip. No more Resurrection City messing up the Mall. No protest marchers with candles and dirty songs. No fucking in the fountains. Just

good clean Americans in pretty costumes outdoing the peaceniks on the their own turf in syncopated rythem. No marching choir (ever seen one of those?) is going to bring down a government. Bus 'em in, and bus 'em out, and BEAT THAT DRUM! Come to think of it the Fascists were great at staging mass rallies.

I think I was on television. Did you see me? The star of a crowd pan shot?

The City

Staying the Maryland suburbs and driving downtown to Monument City through Chevy Chase on the tree-shrouded trails of Rock Creek National Park you have the impression of the richest and most luxurious ruling class in the world. The residences are large, well-manicured and utterly tasteful, redbrick Georgian, elephantine clapboard Colonial, with a smattering of Ante-Bellum. ~~This~~ ~~the~~ district stretches on for miles, uniformly elegant. The park mentioned previously is in reality a greenbelt that runs ^{miles} up a narrow river valley, quite idilic. Rock Creek is as the name ~~a rocky creek~~ suggests, ^a Classic arched bridges keep the city traffic overhead and out-of-sight. Bicycle trails meander through the trees and criss-cross the road. I'm told the only people who actually use the park are the blacks, and my observations confirm this, especially July 4th. Two exceptions. We saw a fairly elaborate riding ring for the horsey set. And one morning in a lush meadow deep in the valley we passed a small group of tweedy ladies out with their dogs, setters and the like, for a well-organized training session. My driver commented that the scene had the aura of the pre-revolutionary French aristocracy. ~~My mind~~ ^{For my part I} contrived a post-revolutionary training session, perhaps in tweed, but definitely ~~in a different variety of dog~~ ^{with a different} locale.

Georgetown is an elegant townhouse section in the centre of the city. It is the same stuff in miniature, packed tight side-by-side. When I say the same I mean the same - rich. Nothing Ante-Bellum here. It's all antique red brick, roads, walks, walls, steps, porches, trees, cars, stores and clothes. Trimmed with wrought iron and brass.

In downtown Washington every major building is a monument. And all the

for the tourists.
government building are free. It really is a beautiful city, an architect's dream, a client who prints money. A few points of interest: - the International Monetary Fund ~~building~~ ^{headquarters} is a magnificent building, pale orangy-yellow with deeply recessed windows, built around an interior courtyard ten stories deep. The inside walls are terraced slightly to allow plants to grow and hang everywhere. Fountains and Persian rugs ~~everywhere~~ ^{in the Foyer} naturally;

- the Pan-American Building, now the O.A.S., is your average Greek temple on the outside but inside it is a Spanish hacienda, a courtyard, a fountain and a giant Aztec figurehead. Very clever, symbolic too;

- the Kennedy Centre is new since my last visit, very elegant, white marble, gold pillars, a balcony overhanging a four-lane highway;

- the Hirshorn Museum on the Mall is a perfectly round donut-shaped structure, unusual if nothing else. The surrounding sunken sculpture gardens are exquisite;

- the old red Smithsonian is a Victorian monstrosity that would be more at home in Toronto, and all the more fun for its awkwardness;

- one gem out in the Maryland suburbs deserves special mention, the new Mormon National Cathedral. It is an off-white marble affair, without windows, an elongated octagon, maybe four stories high, with five rather stubby towers rising not much above the building itself, but on these towers ~~five~~ golden spike-like towers soaring upward. There are several spectacular views from the surrounding valleys. But the single most breathtaking event in all of Washington is to approach this building ^{by night} ~~unaware~~ on a nearby throughway, when suddenly ^{it} arises over the horizon as

you breast a hill, ~~smack~~ ^{smack dead} in the middle of the road, set
against the sky, lights ablaze, quite ready to take off. ~~Needless~~
~~Had the choir been singing, and the heavens open then, I would have levitated~~
~~to say I have joined the Mormon Church unannounced.~~
the other world.

It's pointless to go on. Every official building seems to have
a spacious entrance, a Greek facade, a fountain ~~or~~ ^{and} one of those
white domes. The entire downtown ^{landscape} is lush, and elegantly trimmed.
They've just planted half a forest and a large pond in one corner
of the Mall. It's all so grand and dignified, so honest looking.
I hate to say it but you know who else liked monumental architecture.

I don't plan to dwell on it but this seems the place to mention
by way of contrast the number of burnt-out and vacant four and
five-story apartment blocks in the black section of Washington.
It is reassuring in a way that the scars of racism and class
oppression are as visible as the fruits of the plunder.

One further note: America has gone restoration mad. There are
probably more authentic colonial town today than there were in 1700.
Mansions too. Plantations. Indian settlements. Townhouses. Even the
^{been} Lost Colony has ^{been} found, reconstructed and preserved. Williamsburg is
the ultimate, but more ^{it} later. I can't imagine the millions,
public and private, that has been spent. Maybe these ^{black} tenement buildings
just aren't old enough for restoration.

July 4th 1976 The Hirshorn Museum The Golden Years

On the day-of-days my first stop was the dounut-shaped gallery on the Mall - dounutted to America (Dear God forgive!) - by the uranium magnate of the same name who incidentally started his career in bush leagues of Bay Street. There was a special exhibit, The Golden Years, about the art and architecture of the early twentieth century as practiced by a generation of refugees from the high-bound traditions, and the war ravages, of continental Europe. Or as one newsclipping in the display put it - how America got culture.

If I had known I had forgotten the extent of the immigrant art community. Joesph Stella. Ben Shahn. Mark Rothko. Arshile Gorky. Willem de Kooning. George Grosz. Max Beckerman. Hans Hoffman. Mies van der Rohe. Walter Gropius. Piet Mondrian. Jacques Lipchitz. Marcel Duchamp. Josef ALbers. And many others.

It was a confusing exhibit in the sense that the works had little visually in common with their neighbour. Artists from a dozen major movements were represented without the usual commentary about who belonged where to what groups when and who was friends with, and influential over whom. I suppose it is perversely appropriate to have an attack of the anal retentives in an art gallery and I did. I suffer extreme discomfort if my movements are not regular, individuated, and solidly grouped. The theme of the show, if you didn't guess, was pure Bicentennial - Behold the Immigrant Artist and the Wonders He has Rot. Everybody Makes It in America. All art is nice. Everybody is their own movement.

The exhibit was tantalizing on a number of points political. There were extensive comments on the rigours of immigration and the controversy surrounding the Immigration Act of 1924 which dammed the flow of huddling masses. A little of the social and intellectual reaction to the new artists got space in the exhibit, but not too much, and usually the favourable reviews. The fact remains that "Ellis Island Art" was not popular, alien, unintelligible modernism. We should have been told the true dynamic of how and why the New York blue bloods discovered and promoted their new bohemian pets. The exhibit featured some of Ben Shahn's political portraits of the Sacco and Vanzetti case. But it was made to appear that it was just one immigrants sympathy for another. And the socialist realism of the thirties, was not mentioned as style I believe typical of this artist community even though there appeared to be several other obvious examples in the exhibit. Some of the news snippets included in the show on the bohemian culture of these artists, their schools and clubs etc. were interesting, but there really wasn't enough of it to establish a grand theory of the relationship of art style, class struggle and artist milieu, always the prime question for discussion in any big exhibit.

Another thing that interested me was that the fact of immigration had little effect on the nature of the finished art products. Perhaps some of the artists mellowed a bit in the new world, but not much. Grosz, for example, turned from the horrors of war to the pretensions of cafe society for his subject matter, or should I say victims. But it seems that the major modernist movement merely continued to grow and evolve in easy and uninhibited fashion. Cubism, surrealism, constructivism, fauvism, futurism and concrete scatology all

had their American practitioners, though probably the best work of each genre was produced in Europe, except may-be scatology in which America has always excelled.

The exhibit raised in my mind many questions about the motives of the artists, and of the Artist, and the political significance of the modern movement. It certainly didn't answer any. Tom Wolfe's book, The Painted Word which I read when I got back was infinitely more helpful on that score.

Twentieth century art, he tells us, is a priori bohemian, individualist, alienated, the work of proto-type garret genius and not a gentleman, self-justifying, basically snobbish, a device to exclude the philistine pseudo-culture of the middle-class. It is art indifferent to public approval, preferring the ultimately remote judgement of "history". It is the cult of creation, self-expression, newness as proof of uniqueness. And this, I hope it is obvious, is a very different trip from the patronized artists who decorated the churches and palaces of royal and religious Europe to flatter the rulers and inspire the followers.

This sense of uniqueness was desperately needed by the haute bourgeoisie, increasingly threatened in their ill-got status by a middle class rich enough to attend the galleries, buy pictures, and talk in paragraphs. How to tell us from them. Answer buy incomprehensible art, and then say you understand it. No middle class smuck would dare match that even if he has been to Heavehard.

It was a great chance for the boho's who were now a much sought after status symbol. Of course they played hard to get, and then were got, courted and captured by the uptown gentry, and then put in museums,

arranged chronologically, and number by our old friends the Rockefellers. The greening of Greenwich Village.

Lesson: even the most extreme outrageous anti-social unintelligible and hostile creatures can be made into commodities and put on displays to prove simultaneously two contradictory propositions: that America loves and nurtures the most extreme individualism; and that the ruling class knows where it's at and will get there first.

I'm sure this dynamic was the same on both sides of the Atlantic. The point is that it was new in America after the Great War. What this exhibit should have told us about the coming of Art to America was the precise history of how and why the blue bloods got their rocks off on all this stuff. I really want to know. I mean why didn't they stick with pure-bred cattle.

Anyhow is modern art counter-revolutionary? Generally I support any self expression that interests others and is not too expensive. But IF as Famous Art Critic Rosenberg says, "All profoundly original art looks ugly at first" then nothing original will ever happen in a big way without the help of a selling job, without a patron, and an "interpretation". And all this is elitist, and worst kind of mystification. So therefore modern Art is bad? But good communist social realism and heroism is boring in numbers greater than five. Alas.

I am confused. And so were the car salesmen from Ohio, and the culture pouts from Georgetown, obeisant before each objet on the day-of-days.

July 4th 1976 The People's Bicentennial

Next

We attended the People's Bicentennial Celebration at the foot of Capital Hill ~~during~~ the afternoon of the Big Day. I imagine that it was a disappointment to its organizers, being a relatively small crowd, maybe five thousand. They had very powerful speakers set up for a mighty throng ~~forty~~-times that size. The audience was long-hairs with fancy cameras, fresh ~~looking~~ scrubbed student types, a very few blacks, just a few political heavies, a decent number of middle-age couples, the odd crazy costume (ArchAngle Gabriel again), and, I must presume, representatives of the various official and unofficial surveillance organizations who don't know a paper tiger when they see one. The crowd was well-behaved, and enthusiastic about the speeches and music.

The stage rose very high against the backdrop of Capital Hill, dome and all, and the podium higher still. It was framed in red, white and blue bunting. The sight of Jane Fonda, so framed, reared ^{the Dome} against the heavens, and the government was too much.

We listened a while to the songs and speeches:

Tom Hayden, good ol Tom;

Utah Phillips, the Wobblie singer, who'se running for

President this year on the Sloth and Ignorance ticket;

Flo Kennedy, the black feminist lawyer;

Ed Sadlowski, the Steelworker reformer;

Jonathan Kozol, the radical educator

.....you know the crowd.

It was pleasant rhetoric for the fourth of July. "Let us continue the Revolution so long ago begun...this is not a protest, this is celebration...It's time for socialism and communism to come out of the closet...Ten years ago on this spot Martin Luther King had a

dream, today I have a nightmare." They adopted an Economic Declaration of Independence. Populist Pap. "When in the course of human events...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights... that to secure these rights economic institutions are instituted among people, deriving their just power from the consent of the citizens; that when any economic system becomes destructive of these ends it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it...Such is the necessity that compels us to act in support of decentralized economic enterprises, with ownership and control being shared jointly by the workers in the plants and by the local communities in which they operate - with similar patterns of shared representative control being exercised on a regional and national level to insure smooth and efficient coordination of all economic operations."

I admire the political opportunism of these people cashing in as ~~they~~ ^{hokum} have on the Bicentennial ~~_____~~. It seemed to me the right political profile for the time and place. They probably gained very little by all this, but on the other hand they ~~stood~~ ^{stood} to lose a great deal ~~more~~ by remaining silent while the American psyche is done-over.

It is also obvious why the more serious political types organized their own rally in Philadelphia. ^{Theirs} ~~Their~~ was a protest against American Imperialism, in Puerto Rico, Guam, Wounded Knee and everywhere. I understand they had about thirty thousand. It was not reported ^{at all} in the straight press to my knowledge.

July 4th 1976 The Fireworks

One million persons - one million - gathered on the Mall, around the Tidal Basin, at the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Memorial and on the Oval, the front lawn and the veranda of the White house itself. We sat in the middle of the Oval, just in front of the White House, and the Jefferson off in the distance, far front the actual ~~site~~ of the rocket blast-offs, but with a reasonably good view over the trees. The Fireworks were good, certainly the best I have ever seen, but not spectacular. I'm not complaining. Once again it was free. The commentary and hymns of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir over the nearby loud speakers dissolved into Musak part way through. We were supposedly seeing the history of America written in the stars, ~~but it was just big firecrackers~~. Every settler a star for ten seconds, just like Mr. Warhol says. At the end of the show they shone laser beams out the four ^{tiny} ~~windows~~ ^A at the top of the Washington Monument. It was just like the spotlights from a prison tower.

Was everybody happy? Do you really need to ask.

The biggest traffic jam in history?

You bet. But who cares when your destiny is written in the heavens by your own government.

July 4th 1976 The President

Later that night they took me to Meet The President.

--Tonight's third guest is a carpetbagger, he's not married, has no children, and he loves his work. He comes to us all the way from Canada to see the big parade and Meet The President. Say hello to him Miss-s-s-ster President.

P. Hello.
Always glad to have foreigners on the show.
You know what they say - a guest is as good as a dollar.
Tell me what do you think makes America great?

C. The monumentality of its capital, the thoroughness of media thought control, and the deftness of its ruling class.

P. Oh, too bad, wrong on all three. But you know what they say - what's a guess to the goose is gossip to the turkey.

C. Here's a question for you Mr. President.

P. I entirely agree, and I can assure you that every possibility will be carefully explored by my staff, however until then I not in a position to comment further on that subject.

C. You know what they say Mr. President - never open a can of worms too quickly. Tell me Mr. President after Washington should we go to Nag's Head or Virginia Beach to finish our holiday?

P. Mayor Daley is fine American, and Chicago is one of my favorite cities.

CUT

Virginia Beach is nice. Nag's Head is nice. They are both my favorite place.

--And now its time for our special guest to ben-n-n-n-nd over for for the Presidential Seal of Approval. Are you ready guest?

C Right now, Mr. President.

P Right now, but you're suppose to say Yassur. Get it?

C Yassur

P You know what they say -

C Yassur, Mr. President, an inch of penetration ...

P ...is worth a yard of control.

C Yassur.....
and fuck you to our president

A--Friends do YOU wonder what makes America great? If you do I'll bet it's not for long once you take your pants down. Like our friends from foreign countries you know the answer. It's the Big Dick. The Presidential Schlong. For total penetration, for deep long-lasting satisfaction - nothing compares. Friend or foe, one of us or one them, it FEELS GOOD. And don;t ever forget it. So smile, be happy - and do what you're told.
NOW let's hear it for the President as he zips up, and stands up.

Rah. Rah.

Stick it in the camera Jerry.
And a big hand for our guessed - who came all the way from Canada to get fu-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-ucked by Mr. Pres-s-s-s-s-s-s-sident.

Boo. Boo.

C Can I go now?

P Anywhere you like, son.

What I Missed That Weekend

- the Tall Ships and accompanying hysteria in NYC;
- the Billy Graham Bicentennial T.V. Prayer Special;
- the Air Show;
- precision drill demo at the Iwo Jima Monument;
- Bob Hope as George III;
- the Smithsonian special exhibition: The U.S.A. at the Centennial, 1876, the Philadelphia Exposition;
- the National Gallery Special Exhibition - the U.S.A. at the Time of Jefferson;
- the National Pageant on the Mall, suppertime till the fireworks, July 4th, featuring Nelson Rockefeller, Johnny Cash and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir;
- the national bellringing at 2PM on the Fourth;
- the raising and lower of 9,000 flags over the White House on the 4th, one for each of 9,000 very special constituents;
- Queen Elizabeth of England making the scene;
- in Williamsburg the Volley of Joy;
- Open House on Capital Hill, with ten thousand singing Happy Birthday U.S.A.;

Americans have become true exhibitionists.

What I Didn't Miss

- T-shirt - I choked Linda Lovelace
- New Product - Edible Panties
- Gimmick - a free record to the first caller every 20 minutes in the Revolutionary Record Rampage;

- John Robert Jones, the host of a black phone-in radio talk show all about love...."love is the greateest... once you've found it never let it go...love is all.... but ,no ladies, I've never, never, been in love...now I'd like to dedicate this next number to a lovely Sagittarian lady." My heart stood still as two weeping lovers were reconciled on the air. "All part of the stotal music experience...." he said.
- and the best commercial of the weekend..."Men, this is William R. MacGregor and I want to talk to YOU in a personal way about something that concerns us all, and something YOU can do about it. Crotch Rot. That's right. How many times..."

July 5th 1976 The Picnic

In this idyllic little Pennsylvania valley, out of sight of the hurly-burly world, in company only with two dozen pasturing sheep, we staged the grand finale to our Bicentennial extravaganza.

On the lawn between a little white farm house and two aging weathered barns, thirty reverend Americans, two real-live Vietnamese refugees, and we awe-struck Canadians, gathered - to drink Jack Daniels, eat chocolate cupcakes, and race the great three-legged race.

Our host was a former Africa-based wire-service operator, presumably CIA operative, and now a Washington PR man. His charming daughter, in red, white and blue is a newslady for the Voice of America. We asked her, "What is propaganda?" and she answered, "While we are obliged to reflect official policy it should not be regarded as propaganda." I'll skip the rest of the introductions - you wouldn't remember the names anyhow.

But it is important for you to know that I won the sack race - the second leg in the Triple Crown of Sunday School Picnic Racing. I beat three six-year olds, an arthritic newsman, and a paraplegic war vet who ~~I~~ pushed over and rolled down the hill. These hicks should know better than to tangle with ^{the} touring pros. My prize was a plastic whistle presented to me, and not very graciously I might add, by Miss Voice of America.

We played with the Bicentennial Frizbee. ~~We ate well, smoked ham,~~ We ^{smoked ham, and ate well,} salomn casserole, Vietnamese tossed salad, and hot dogs.

After dinner and before the Fireworks, ~~which~~ we unfortunately missed, we had The Ceremony. Dear friends, you'll believe me when I say that it was truly moving, the fortissimo to our Bicentennial orgasm.

We gathered on hard wooden benches there on the lawn of the little white house, overlooking the valley and the sheep, beside the ancient barns, by the old red well (I forgot the well before) and ⁱⁿ the setting sun, five generations, united, strong and true to our Maker.

We started with a reading of the Gettysburg Address, by a dearer friend of our host, now ^{our} MC. The reason for the choice eludes me. Three ~~possible~~ ^{possibilities}; we were close to Gettysburg and he found it by the road driving in; he didn't know that it wasn't the Declaration of Independence; or possibly he couldn't read and this was the only thing he remembered from grade school. Our MC then invited his retarded son to tell the story of Taps - that immortal bugle piece that put me to bed for so many years at summer camp. The words were allegedly found crumpled in the hand of a dying young Union soldier by the triumphant Confederate warrior who slew him ^{and} who discovered, alas, ^{that it was} the body of his long-lost brother. Oh the misery that divides us. The kid did O.K. except he forgot the crumpled words - Day is done, etc. I didn't even realize he was handicapped until after we left and I was told by some vicious stranger. He seemed just like all the rest.

Then Mr. Host, Mr. CIA, Mr. MC, introduced his wife, sitting there on God's bench beside him. She could do nothing of interest except smile sweetly, and bear children.

And then Miss Voice of America read selected passages from the Declaration of Independence - not propaganda, of course, though I do believe it did reflect official policy. Certain truths were held self-evident, and certain others were not mentioned.

Then we sang America The Beautiful. Or rather they sang America ~~The Be-~~

The Beautiful, because I don't know the words. But I would have sung if I had only known. Yes dear friends.

And then we sang Yankee Doodle Dandy. Me too. Yes we did. Right there on the white house lawn, all those people. We just sang our guts out.

Why, you ask? Why?

Why did I love it?

Let me count the ways. Well, I guess I'm finished counting. ^{because} There is only one. There was no television, no media felons to steal these moments, albeit ignorant, stupid and foolish moments, it was only us. Everybody believed (except me and my friend), and did so all by themselves without Walter Cronkite there to assist with the thinking. Pure pride bursting in air. Utterly shameless. What has America got to be proud of in the last twenty years. Who knows, but at that time and place who cared.

When all this ended we drove off the mountains of Virginia pondering to ourselves about these things ^{we had seen.} ~~revealed to us this~~

July 6th 1976

We drove from Gettysburg to Jefferson's mansion at Monticello by way of the Skyline Drive atop the Blue Ridge of the Appalachians overlooking the Shanandoah Valley. It was very misty and consequently we couldn't see much from any of the various lookouts built along the highway. A bit of a bore. One point of interest along this route was Big Meadow, and it was - in the manner of the Great Wall - a big meadow. Very pretty. It was opened in 1936 by FDR. Presumably ten thousand lucky unemployed city boys worked here on public works during the Depression planting wild flowers.

Monticello was interesting. It confirmed that Jefferson was a fonce. He was into red wigs, and trick doors. He used child labour in ^{his} nail factory.

That night the real Colonel Saunders slept in the next room at the Notel Motel ~~with~~ some chunky blond chick.

If an antedote to five days of America The Beautiful/Happy
Birthday Us was required, Virginia Beach on the Atlantic shore
is surely it.

The rites of passage to this riparian disaster are traditional grotesque: miles and miles of suburbia, trailer camps, McDonald's, the Colonel, giant shopping plazas, drive-in banks, A&W, everything all neat and new. And then old-fashion campy junkland on the oceanfront. T-shirt stores, motels, hotels, all-you-can-eat seafood breakfast, disco's, pinball shops, souvenir shops, artificial ice skating, nine shades of tan lotion for the advancing ~~stage~~

stages of crypto-negritude, confederate-flag air matresses,
franchised and non-~~fran~~chised grease. Just everything you could want.
It cost fifty cents to walk out on the dock and ~~fish~~^{catch God's Fish}. We didn't.

My curiouosity ^{amply} satisfied I was truly, and quickly, moved.

July 9th 1976 Williamsburg

I had known that America loves its pioneers. But I hadn't really known until I saw Williamsburg. It is the quintessential sense of good taste celebrating the ~~glorious~~ ^{glorious} private lives of the early American aristocrats. An entire townsite has been preserved, and where necessary reconstructed to show how a gentleman of leisure lived, dressed, ate and played at revolution in the capital of Virginia in the early eighteenth century.

The townsite is huge, about one hundred acres, with I'm sure over a hundred colonial buildings, and no evidence of modern urban amenities. (I'm also sure the hydro and phone lines are ~~buried~~, and after 9 PM the cars came back in.) About twenty-five of these buildings are exhibit halls duplicating the colonial way-of-life. In the wigmakers shop one of the staff, in colonial garb of course, lectures on the wheres and whyfores of this early business. A new wig cost more than ~~4~~ years rent for a fancy town house. The same routine in the millinery, the cabinetmakers, the doctor's, the jail, the taverns. The other buildings on the site are private homes or staff residences. Some of the staff are just loose on the grounds wandering around in costume driving ox-carts, playing in fife-and-drum corps, or just sitting there being either aristocrats or slaves, depending whether they're black or white. I couldn't resist eating in Christiana Campbell's Tavern, colonial game pie, allegedly George Washington's favorite, though I am ashamed of myself for the extreme ^{familial} indulgence. On the periphery ^{of the town} were lovely expensive tasteful stores selling Approved reproductions. The method for touring was masterfully organized, ^{The introduction at the main gate} and simply forced all visitors to behave like grateful guests.

The so-called American Revolution makes a lot more sense to me now. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Patrick Henry and the like all lived up-state in what we'd call the boonies today, enjoying life on their lovely inherited plantations, being kind, gentle, but stern as required with the slaves, and reading Montesquieu in the afternoons. Twice a year they went to Williamsburg ^{for a couple of weeks} to sit on the colonial council which they chose to believe ran the colony. This was an important event, because it was lonely up there ^{in the boonies, and a Man needs Action}. These sessions were called "public times" in town. Everybody ~~dropped in~~ ^{came.} They also did the judging and the hanging during these few weeks. Williamsburg is the site of William and Mary College where all these guys "read law". So "public times" was more-or-less like the contemporary Homecoming Weekend. It was carefully explained to us how the various taverns were the centre of the town's social, commercial and political life on these occasions. Some taverns had more class than others. Factions developed. The analogy to campus fraternities fairly ^{leapt} to mind. The tavern-keepers, or innkeepers as I gather they preferred to be called, were by law obliged to provide sleeping space for any and all travellers. ^{Wives I note did not travel.} Sometimes space is all that it was. ^A Allegedly it was frequently necessary to share your bed with total strangers. ~~Wives, I note, did not travel.~~ So buggered were they by these ~~los~~ sleeping arrangements that legislating by day was a testy chore. ~~(Sorry.)~~

It seemed the custom to fight for freedom, and against the Stamp Tax. Fairly regularly they pissed off the Governor who kicked them out of the Legislature. This was bad strategy on ~~His~~ part because they just went back to the tavern and ^{they} got ~~ever more~~ pissed, and started theorizing - always a risk with lawyers. Then

they wrote letters to their faggoty friends in Boston and Philadelphia. The ~~disruptive~~ ^{success} effect of these trouble-makers ~~on~~ the common folk, the law abiding citizenry, is ^{now} history. ■

Williamsburg tells us to be grateful to those noble "leaders". What did the "common folk" think about these grand gentlemen. Were they happy before George took over the Continental Army.

It will not surprise you to learn that the whole affair, Williamsburg, that is, not the entire American Revolution, ~~was~~ ^{is} a Rockerfella Foundation project. Maybe the Revoltion too, who knows.

We left feeling as I am sure we were suppose to feel...that the Founding Fathers were fine men. They put on a very tasteful Revolution. That we could never do better. And that we shouldn't mess around.

July 5th 1976

McClewin says people don't read newspapers these days, they slide into them like a warm bath. Ergo the Bicentennial Bubble Bath.

I am overwhelmed by the sweet shower of congratulations. I shouldn't be, after all I am a certified news freak. I should know. But I am stunned by the enormity of the pride.

What is a two-hundred-year old American? Why he is a canny combination of idealism and pragmatism, hindsight, foresight, charity, diligence and enterprise. Just ask any one of half-a-dozen foolish Washington columnists.

One ass-hole in the New York Times waxed lyric about his dear old Home and how tragic that it was torn down, oh the memories, how could they do it, even if it was the worst slum in Broklen. God what how mother say?

Jack Anderson, muckraker to the Gods told us that despite everything that he had learned in twenty years crawling around in the sewers of American politics he was sure that America would ~~reconcile~~ ^{redeem} itself.

Another two-hundred-year capule commentary on American culture concuded that America may not have Art but it surely has Culture. Look at the world-wide demand for blue jeans.

Or you might be interested inthe imaginative story about what happened when Jesus ran for President? You're not! As an alien his name was not allowed on the ballot, but they ran a campaign based on the slogan, "No one votes against the Lord." They rest is too awful to retell.

Another popular motif was What would George Washington think if he were alive today? To start with he would probably regard the freeing of the slaves as the most vile and unjustified expropriation of private property known to man. The Stamp Act be damned! It would be down-hill from there.

But the newspaper trivia is but a small part of the media presence. I guess I don't watch enough TV but it truly astonished me to see everything immediately in terms of video footage. What is the ultimate significance of non-stop news, constant professional analysis, soap opera emotions, and deep truth commercials. It is a substitute for thinking, acting and doing? Are we debased, immobilized, and bored to death? Everything is on TV. Everything is a promotion. Every emotion is acted out for us by professionals. How can we mere mortals dare to weep. One of the radio stations had a giveaway gimmick this weekend, the "revolutionary record rampage". Will our children every know what the word really means.

Or is TV a way of transcending ~~our~~ alienation. One million people came downtown to watch the fireworks? Maybe it was because the event was on TV and they could be one of those million tiny little stars. It is said that saturation coverage was responsible for bringing the Vietnam war to an end. Perhaps. I'm sure it was media coverage more than any other factor that brought Nixon down.

Can television redeme America?

Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman, is a case in point, in point. This lady embodies the true believer in cleaner wash and never-yellow floors. Hardly by accident she is picked as Ms. Typical America as the subject of a special TV documentary. She is viciously attacked by a

panel of culture experts alleging that she has no personality. She denies it, but she cracks, right there on the tube, she cracks, she screams, she rants hysterically, and the men in the white coats come and take her away.

It is profoundly important that television can make fun of itself in this fashion. Will she recover? The answer has to be yes.

How do you attack media control when the media stages its own fake attack. It parallels the entire Bicentennial number, the celebration of a fake revolution. Message: it has all been done before boys, so don't waste our time.

If we all went into the streets and masturbated in white gloves would that be shock enough to bring it all down on their heads, or would they make a musical comedy about it with excerpts on the Carol Burnett show? I wish I knew.

Conclusion, Postscript and Ending

I have omitted reference to our stay at Kitty Hawk/Nag's Head, on the Outer Banks of North Carolina not because it was unworthy, but rather because it didn't seem to belong in this particular narrative. My notes there are ~~musky~~, wistful and poetic - indicating to me that that lovely locale is not part of Bicentennial United States. In other words there was not simultaneous telecasting of the beach.

Aside from our stop in Williamsburg as described we sped directly home spending one night high in the Pennsylvannia mountains at a place called Donegal. We had breakfast there in the local Bar and Grill filled with ^{the} lazy, ^{the} injured and ^{the} retired ^{local} farmhands who seemed content watching cartoons and drinking ^{Coors} at nine AM. It rained very heavily for about three hours as we travelled north. We had home-made soup and blueberry pie at Mum's Roadside Diner ~~near the border~~.

On the road I read a fine article by Ted Morgan, an unashamed New Yorker, about his perceptions of "The Good Life" in California. He had interviewed various persons, all migrant, all proudly living their dreams, all ~~situated~~ ^{located} exactly astride the San Andras Fault. It was a facinating tour of personalities. I suspect a sightseeing expedition ^{in California} ~~there~~ would not be so rewarding as the present one. Self-fulfillment seems to be the order of the day, not the public patriotism I have just witnessed. But I would like to ^{go there & get to} know that ~~de~~ determined manic crowd of immigrants -ever bit as much a circus as the east coast.

Before I left Toronto by way of a Washington warm-up I went to see All the Presidents' Men, staring perfect Robert Redford and his

little Jewish friend as the preppies who clean up America and
~~the Hamburger~~
chase away President, what's-his-name. ~~Who remembers him any more~~
~~anyhow~~ At the end of the movie when they discover that Mr. President
~~himself~~ has done some no-no's, and Deep Throat warns them ~~that they should~~
~~Be Careful.~~ They rush off like children to tell their tough, warm-
hearted, courageous, patriotic, rich editor/coach/father that
they are "in danger." As ~~are~~ ~~The Paper, Justice, AND~~ ~~the Republic~~
~~democracy~~
The Hardy Boys Work For a Newspaper! Anybody can save America.

On my return I continued the flagellation with Robert Altman's
Buffalo Bill and the Indians or Sitting Bull's History Lesson.
Herein Buffalo Bill runs his famous Wild West Show. It is revealed
that he never did anything much except team up with a good PR
~~fraudulantly~~
man, and then ^{live} the image that had been created, not to mention
believe it as well. Bill was ~~always~~ a star, always selling himself,
and always proud of it. He made everybody in his show a star,
and expected them to be grateful for this most precious gift.

~~But when Sitting Bull joins the show is not grateful, and then~~
~~he~~
~~has a lot of funny trouble with the Bull. Bill suffers an identity~~
~~crisis at the hands of Bull, who more or less ridicules the~~
~~Can Bill believe in himself anymore?~~
~~sacred hype. Just like Mary Hartman - making it THE new all-American~~
~~plot. Bill carries on, sadder, wiser, but not visibly affected.~~
~~Can Mary? - No, she didn't~~
Is this the American renaissance?

"Custer was a good man," Bill says to Bull in one of their arguments.
"He gave the Indians something to be famous for."

Study the classics, young man.

Yassur. Yassur.

But when Sitting Bull joins the show he is not grateful, and thereafter we have ~~the~~ Funny Trouble, Climax, and Subsequent Denouement. Bill suffers an identity crisis at the hands of Bull who silently ridicules the white man's hype. Can Bill believe all his own lies anymore? Can he believe in HIMSELF? Are those commercials true? And does it matter? It's the same problem as Mary Hartman. Indeed it ~~is~~ ^{is} the ~~the~~ American ~~identity crisis~~ identity crisis. Bill, in the end, manages to carry on, sadder, wiser, but not visibly affected by ^{the} psychological hosing. Will Mary be able to re-establish herself? Probably yes, with ^{the assistance of} ~~she will carry on a true believer~~ some TV therapy programme. This is the American Renaissance.

"Custer was a good man," Bill tells Bull in one of their arguments over the meaning of life. "He gave the Indians something to be famous for."

Study the classics, ^{young} ~~man~~.

Yassur. Yassur.