



FOR JONES, LIVING IN LAWRENCE HAS BEEN A LONG, BUT INTERRUPTED, LOVE AFFAIR.

"Yeah, and we do rain dances," the woman says.

You can't haul much stuff from cab to cab, and inside Jones' "dumpy little room" near Waymire's he has few possessions. He most values a box full of memories: matchbooks and bar napkins, diaries and road maps, poems and plans. The tattered treasures are piled high, without order, like the chronology of his middle life.

"I wanna get some big manila folders someday and sort this all out, year by year, and find out where I've been and when."

A scrap book of Pictures from the box shows Jones gradually losing his teeth, guzzling Carling's Black Label beer with his buddies, and his three wives posing in bathing suits.

"My first wife thought I had a bit of money and bought some drivin' gloves, thinkin' I'd get her a car. I was a cabbie at the time and didn't have a spare dime.

"My second wife didn't like to do anythin' but then she became a barmaid after we split up.

"My third wife and me are still married. She had me drive her home to California and she's living with a guy in a suburb of Frisco."

Jones couldn't have children by any of the marriages. He likes to show a yellowed travel journal that tells of a hundred highways, fine diners, nights turned away from jails when there was no where else to sleep, a jumble of jobs pushing brooms, making fiberglass fishing poles, putting out factory fires.

"I was the first doorman at the Royal Orleans, big fancy hotel in New Orleans, when I still had all my teeth. Made up to \$100 a day and drank through a lotta nights.

"In Tucson I took a job no one else would touch unloadin' live chickens into a slaughterhouse.

The guy from the employment agency even tried to talk me out of it. I ate more shit there in a week than most people do all their lives. But I stuck it out a week to get a paycheck."

Best of all Jones liked the carny life, with an open road always ahead.

"I rode with the Royal American, the biggest carny in the states. I ran the 'pop-pitch game', one the kids could win on, not one of those where you always lose. I could never run the cheat games that people never win on.

"We traveled the country in a caravan of 80 railroad cars and kids would see the train comin' and line up near the tracks and wave. Boy, I liked that."

Already arranged in his box is a set of neat colored pencil prints his father drew of the house he built.

"Dad built the old homestead just like he planned it and dreamed about it, it came out just how he wanted it to. Wisteria hung down from the porch and the evergreens were in the front yard, just like in the drawings."

"Blessed Be The Man Who Can Dream"

--Title of a poem by Phil Jones.

AN ORAL CABBIE PRIMER, as told by Phil Jones:

"When I started drivin' there weren't any radios so the dispatcher hadda turn a light on on top of the bank building ta let ya know there was a ride waitin' ...an airport trip here is about the best fare you can get...the guys did okay though in the fifties, even without the radios, 'cause Kansas was dry then and they'd bootleg whisky on the side

...a meter drop is when someone decides they don't want the cab ride... 20 years back when the Union Cab Company was goin' and we all owned our own cabs I made sometimes \$70 a day... workin' the bus is gettin' off your ass and askin' the people at the depot if they need a ride... in some states ya run by time, not distance, and that meter's always clickin' away...for change I deep a fistful of quarters in my pocket and a wad of bills in my shirt...riders tip better in California but all the drivers there hustle out each other for the best fare..."

After an extra-hot sauce dinner at Taco Grande ("your tacos are no good but give me three of 'em") Jones hums "moonglow" and waits in a mobile home park near the Co-op.

The Co-op towers billow white fog that descends on the dark trailer where he's parked. A candle flickers in the trailer window and a skinny woman with tied-back hair and wire glasses comes out to the cab.

"Howdy Ann," Jones says. "It looks awful dark in that trailer."

He turns on the meter. "I don't like to turn this thing on for you, but the way things've been lately..."

"Sure, I know," the woman says. "Jim left last night and I got no money to pay the electric bill. He left me this heavy coat though."

"That's too bad, that's terrible," Jones says. "Maybe you can get back on dispatchin'."

"Ya think so?" she says. "The plants are dyin' in the trailer, it's too cold for them."

A red glow lights up the back of the cab as she strikes a match for a cigarette.

"Think I'll go to the bar and challenge Jim to a game of pool, beat him outta five dollars," she says. "Yeah, that's what I'll do. He doesn't like to play me in pool, 'cause he always loses..."

The woman speaks on in a low whisper. Jones says "Uh-huh" or "Oh yeah" when he's supposed to until they arrive at the tavern.

Jones says he doesn't dream at night but he has a few buried in his box of belongings and during the day, driving around in his cab, he turns them over in his head.

In his box he's got a page of necessities for "the well-stocked bar" drawn in neat columns in red ink.

"If I ever was to have a bar I figure that's what I'd need," he says. "I looked all through a Mr. Boston book of mixed party drinks just to draw that up..."

"And sometime, if I ever get the cash together, I'm gonna get me a big old limosine and start givin' gours of the campus and all the old houses in town. Just take the prettiest houses and only the ones more than 100 years old and drive people by there. Study up on it so I know all the information that they'll be askin' me for."

When Jones picks a fare up at an old house, he'll ask the rider about the place. If the house is more than 100 years old he'll ask who built it, what it's like inside, and how they like living there. If it's not a century old, he'll change the subject.

He's got another plan for making money but won't let it be known because he's sure someone in Lawrence with money would steal the idea.

While Jones waits behind Winona Hall at Haskell for a fare, he curses a kid who ripped his TIPS ARE APPRECIATED THANK YOU! sign off the back seat and tries to recall a poem he wrote 25 years ago in Cleveland.



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