



Three new ones and one good one!

It was the summer of 56 and I had to go to the cities – that's what everyone said, it was always the same regardless of whether you were going to Minneapolis or St Paul – to register at the U. It was my first trip to Minneapolis on my own and, Minneapolis to a farm boy, was like a foreign country save for the fact that you didn't need a passport. The few times I had been there the

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place seemed like a maze and the traffic scared me. So I asked Sticky if he would come along. He obliged and I was relieved.

When the day came Sticky was coming down the driveway at 6:00am sharp. The plan was to do whatever I had to do and be back home by 9:00pm.

Before we climbed in the 35 Sticky drilled me. Did I have gas? Did I have money? What about the oil (the 35 smoked blue when you put the foot to it)? I said "Never fear never fret everything is perfect". "How about the tires?" I said I got 3 new ones and a good one. He was satisfied. We headed East on US 14.

The day was sunny, not a cloud in sight, causing me to wonder if the line "and the skies are not cloudy all day" in "Don't Fence Me In" meant that the skies were never cloudy or that they were clear only part of the day, but I chose not to bother Sticky with the question. We drove on and were rolling out of Young America, when Bang! You guessed it. The good one checked out. We limped back to Young America.

For certain we did not have money between us to buy a new tire so we settled for another good one – \$2 as I recall. The guy at the tire shop slipped the tire on and we were on our way again.

Eventually, as the sun was coming overhead we arrived in Minneapolis and about an hour later with wrong turns and Sticky reading the map (sort of), we arrived at the U. Sticky cooled his heels as I went about my business and by 3:00pm I was done.

We retraced our steps (sort of) and, in due time, arrived at my Aunt's place in Minneapolis. It was on the way home (sort of) so why not stop? She was my favorite aunt, sort of like a second Mother, and no doubt she would feed us! Sure enough. She put on a spread.

Around 7:00pm that evening we headed to the car to notice that the good one had lost air, not so much so as to be undrivable, but low enough so as to cause us to hightail it to the nearest gas station. We squirted some air and headed West.

Three new ones and one good one!

The night was clear, the air was good, and the 35 was running like a top. About an hour out we stopped for a pop and a pee. On coming back to the car I noticed the one good one was low again so we squirted more air and rolled on, albeit, at least for me, a bit more apprehensive because I knew my spare was about 3 grades below the good one. Besides, the rim for the spare was bent, so much so in fact that the tire rubbed against the frame with each revolution. But these are things one keeps to oneself. Sticky never asked about my spare in the drilling and there was no sense in volunteering stuff then or now.

As we rolled on the interval between squirts lessened so much so that we stopped in every town to squirt but it was becoming progressively more difficult to find a place to squirt because, by now, it was after 10:00pm and the gas stations were hanging shingles. But we managed. We took a fresh squirt in Gibbon and rolled on secure in the fact that there was an "all night" station in Fairfax about 20 miles down the road.

Everything would have been OK had it not been for Bang! about 5 miles pre Fairfax. I looked at Sticky, Sticky looked at me, and more or less together said "There goes the good one!".

There was nothing to do now but to put the spare on. Sticky noticed straightaway that the spare was 3 steps below the good one, causing some mutterings, but fortunately for me he did not notice the bend in the rim and, as I said before, why volunteer stuff? So I kept my mouth shut.

After a "little" cursing, I got the tire on and was pleased to see it stayed up when we let the jack down.

By now both hands on the clock were together and pointing due north, but the good thing was that we were on the road again. I took off and hadn't gone 20 feet before Sticky asked about that thumping sound. First, I stonewalled. "What sound? I don't hear anything." But the faster (a relative term) I went, the louder the thump. Finally, as nonchalantly as I could, I said that it was the tire rubbing against the frame of the car. The next few things are bleeped out because who knows who might read this? But I guess it would be fair to say that Sticky was none too happy, especially since our maximum speed now was 15 miles an hour. By my reckoning, the likelihood of another "bang" increased exponentially as a function of speed and if the spare went we were stranded.

Three new ones and one good one!

Now every mile without a blowout was a triumph. When the lights of Fairfax came along side we had but 25 miles to go. Sticky occupied himself by counting down on the miles and calculating the walking time to Sleepy Eye. I turned again in silence to my question about the sky.

The run from Fairfax to Sleepy Eye is a lonely run. Once you go down the Fort Ridgely hill, the only thing between you and Sleepy Eye is Louisiana's store and for certain there was nothing there for us, most assuredly no tire.

Eventually the lights of Sleepy Eye came into view and we knew we had just 5 miles to go to get there and then only 4 more after that. We hit Sleepy Eye. We checked the tire, hot where it was thumping but still inflated! We headed West to the cadence we had, by now, grown accustomed to. It was pushing 3:00am when we headed West out of Sleepy Eye. The thumping was like a sedative. I could feel myself nodding off and Sticky was flaked out. I needed something for an adrenaline rush other than the ditch or another car so I took a deep breath and with all the force I could muster I shouted Bang! Sticky jumped and none too happy at that, but it served its purpose. We came awake and we thumped on.

Around 3:15am we shut down the 35 in front of the house, triumphant in our passage with 3 new tires and one good one!
