

## **IN SEARCH OF AMERICA – PART 4**

### **A Reefer Trilogy in Thirteen Parts**

We were off to Vancouver, Canada, only half an hour away, our passports in hand, well, mine at least.

The bus, a newer VW, was packed with all our worldly goods – which didn't amount to much but included my favorite rocker and a small 'end table' whiskey barrel – empty, of course. Oh, and a joint in the glovebox ...

Oh, my god – a joint in the glove box! We panicked, then pulled off I5 in front of the 'Canada, 1 mile' sign, rolled down the windows, smoked like a furnace, pulled back onto I5 and, in no time, were eye-to-eye with one of the sweetest-looking, red-cheeked, young, cherub-faced representatives of our great northern neighbor you'd ever want to see.

'Hi. Where are you going today?' she says.  
Hmm. Seemed rather obvious to us ... 'Ah, Canada?'

She glanced at our stuff. True, it was ALL of our stuff, but it really wasn't that much ... I don't know if that was why, but she asked us to park, walk inside, under the huge red maple leaf sign, and talk to an Immigration Agent.

Well, first, everyone there is related ... all young, trim, good-looking, red-cheeked, perky members of the Northern branch of the Osmond family ... Made you feel good ... Welcome ... Just to look at 'em. Maybe that was the idea, I don't know.

So we walked up to what looked like a ticket counter, with three, four Osmonds behind it, told one what the woman outside had said, and he says, "ok, follow me". And we did.

That might have been our first mistake. See, I interpreted "follow me" figuratively ... You know, me walk along outside the counter, him walk along inside the counter 'til our paths would meet at some as yet undetermined spot.

My companion, Linda, on the other hand, interpreted "follow me" literally. She climbed over the counter, then, step for step, move for move, followed him behind the counter ...

Well, that raised a few eyebrows - I suppose anyway - fact is, I never looked at anyone's eyebrows. I don't even know why I said that but you get what I mean.

You've seen the next scene a thousand times. We're separated. Linda in a chair against the wall, me into an office, door closed, the Immigration Man, with my passport in hand, flipping through the pages, glancing up every so often, until, finally, he says ... "What's your occupation?"

See, it used to be, in those days, inside the front cover of a passport, there were some fill-in-the-blanks: occupation, foreign address, stuff like that. I assumed, when you got a passport, you had to fill 'em in, which presented some problems. I didn't have an occupation, exactly ... I did odd jobs ... I had filled in the blank, sure, I just didn't remember with what.

“My occupation?” Yes, your occupation.

‘Oh ... ah ... I don't know. What does it say there?’

You don't know your occupation?

Well, you see ...and I went on to explain ...He listened, very politely, never letting on to what he might be thinking ...

Hmm.

And it says here your foreign address is 10 Downing Street, London, England? Is that correct? Oh ... well, you see ... And he listened very politely ... again ... to what I thought was an eminently logical explanation ... I mean, it was the only foreign address I knew ... I wasn't trying to pretend I lived with the Prime Minister or any of that ...

It was a long morning. The upshot of which was ... a 3-day visa to Canada! With restrictions, of course, which didn't apply anyway, since we weren't planning to stay – just wanted to pop in for the day.

Truth be told ... Only reason I got a passport was I was frightened Nixon might close the borders ... trap us all inside the U. S. - I mean the National Guard had already shot down four of us, unarmed, all peaceful like, in Ohio.

He didn't seem to care much about that!