

1950

**In the summers  
of 1948 and 19  
49, I had hitch  
hiked over 8  
thousand miles  
from New Jersey  
to California  
and back. Aside  
from observing  
all kinds of drivers  
from a Hollywood  
cameraman and his  
crew with the white  
of tums caked all over  
whiskey sloshed gums returning from  
some serious crap shooting in Reno driving  
carefree up the high Sierra into Yosemite  
National Park in one lane Tioga Pass with  
the big trees right up alongside the dirt road  
and **running into a bear and a Chevy and hav** ing  
to **back up a mile, to a Seventh Day Advent** ist  
Cro **w trembling and siezing up with really bad**  
DT' **s in a red satin shirt and a big black Stet** son  
hat **with an eagle feather in it in Idaho, to a Min**  
iste **r who hated goddamn Harry Truman ca** use  
hek **new he was a goddamn secret Jew ca** use  
his **goddamn Jew daughter had a Jew nos** e on  
the **Gulf Coast of Mississippi, to an Army ma** jor  
wh **o looked like the Frankenstein monster who**  
dro **ve 110 miles an hour grabbing a big bottl** e of  
gin **from between his legs to his mouth repeate** dly  
on the sharp right angle turns around the sheep  
ranches in Montana, to cowboys with one boot  
out the car window and whiskey drizzling out of  
their red eyes hooting, "There's one! There's one!"  
all night at pink kangaroos in Wyoming, to steel  
beam haulers playing night tag with each other's  
truck search lights out the window of their truck  
cabs on the curved hill roads of Indiana and the  
most common greeting when hitchiking at night  
was "Drivemetoberdoo, kid while I getsomes shuteye  
inthebackseat." I must have driven drunks over  
eight hundred miles going over 90 while I was  
hitchhiking. I was as sick of driving and alcohol as  
a long tail cat is of a room full of rocking chairs  
but I **loved to smoke like a chimney** as they  
used **to say on the real road in the real time**  
**America that'd die and get up and roll and go**  
**undertheordersof the nam the uawandthe cio**  
**fromhighwatertohell tohightimesandback**  
if you know what i mean takesaswigkid  
shoot forthemoon takeiteasy but takeit**

*One summer day in 1950 I got into my father's car. He said, "No get in the driver's seat, I got a learner's permit for you. You're too old to not have a driver's license. I'm going to teach you how to drive." I got into the driver's seat. "Drive into New York," my father said. "Holland or Lincoln tunnel?" I asked. "Holland," he said. I drove down to Springfield Avenue to Newark and under Penn Station through the Ironbound section over the pulaski Skyway and the Jersey meadows and the legendary smell of the Governor ordered perfumed pigs of the pig farms that smelled an even deeper richer Pig Shit #5 than ever before and through the Holland tunnel flawlessly. I did not even come close to another car. I never exceeded the speed limit. Right out of the Holland tunnel my father said, "Get out of the driver's seat. You're the worst driver I've ever seen in my life. I'm driving home." I got out of the driver's seat. He drove home in silence. I said nothing. I saw him a few times in the next 30 years. Whenever I saw him he acted as if he didn't know who I was. I took an oath there and then to die like a dog in a gutter before I would*

**And this was  
the last time  
I would ever  
be alone with  
my father.**

*[stop trying to  
be my Self]*

**I finally had  
it figured out.  
Whatev er it  
was, it wasn't  
my father.**

