

I'm overnighing in Nacogdoches, the oldest town in Texas. This is pine forest country decorated by wild honeysuckle vines and white magnolia flowers, high timber, red wolves, snapping turtles and big mosquitoes. About as different a place as a desert raised Shortgrass can find in his state.

Early today I came from San Antonio, another old city. In 1697, the Spaniards blazed a trail along the same route. Part of that Spanish trail, I discovered, is coming out from under the paved roads. The bumps this morning were so abrupt and treacherous that my \$6.50 explorer compass bucked off the dashboard. The road looked like the Historical Society had been in charge instead of the state highway engineers. My compass is so shaken that I'm going to have to drain off the bubbles to get it oriented again.

All I heard on the radio was news of the gasoline shortage in California. Some of the stations I passed were closed for the weekend, or limiting amounts to \$5 maximums.

One gasoline grinder in an out-of-the-way station said he'd been restricting gallonage since the last week in March. All the time he was talking, a lady with a station wagon load of kids was fighting her brood from the magazine rack to the restrooms. The old gal was too busy to be aware of her advantage, but I'll bet 10 gallons of gasoline she could have bought next month's allocation if she'd taken delivery someplace else.

I had time to wonder what was going to happen to stranded motorists. Chicken fried steaks in the motels give you greybeards a colic that's disabling. Off down here in the pine cone jungle, a Shortgrasser would cough like those southern calves do in the feedlots. I was wishing I'd studied more Texas history to learn how the Spanish explorers made it through the woods and across the swamps and rivers to San Antonio.

In that particular gas station, it'd be a mighty dull experience. Two old boys were playing pool for a quarter a game in what looked like a closed table. Over in the corner there were 44 post boxes to use for outside reading, I imagine after a fellow had counted the boxes and read the government warnings, he'd be pretty bored.

The lady in the station wagon might be the last traveler to go through. Congress has been doing a lot of wrangling about priorities for different segments. I bet the worthies haven't considered how important it's going to be to keep the mobile nurseries moving down the road.

Short gasoline supplies aren't going to ruin my trip. Wildflowers are blooming and silver dews glisten way into the morning. I'm not worried about the compass. I think it's time to buy a pocket model anyway. It's sure going to be nice to be able to stay home. Axes and candles may just be the order of the new day.