

Can't wait to get back on the road again — not

Nine hours. Nine hours of nothing but pavement and other cars. No scenery, no almost accidents, no police chases. Nothing.

In the movies you can't drive 880 km with nothing happening, but real life is apparently quite different. My youngest daughter was in a couple of poker tournaments in Atlantic City and on the map it doesn't look that far away. We thought the drive would be fun and left with high hopes of adventure. Every road trip comes packed with adventure... except this one.

Normally you don't mind driving a couple of hours to get somewhere, but after two hours we were nowhere near getting somewhere. It's difficult to lift somebody's spirits by telling them you only have seven more hours of driving. Or your own for that matter when you're already sick of it. Seven more hours is seven more hours.

We were sharing the driving. I had a book to read and picked up a couple of newspapers along the way. Those were fine, but of little use once it gets dark. Darkness also cuts down on the scenery potential. We were going through some mountains, but mountains at night aren't particularly impressive.

The rules of the road are that the driver gets control of the radio. Unless it's your car, and then you make your own rules. My rule was that I pick the station unless I'm



On the loose

with MURRAY TOWNSEND

asleep. And even if I'm asleep I don't want that alternative rock music where it starts out okay and then they start screaming about nothing. If they want to scream about nothing that's their business but I don't have to listen to it, even if I'm not awake.

Talk radio is okay as long as they're talking about sports. They can talk about any sport and I can listen. A lot of other things are interesting enough, but in the States a lot of the talk is political and I lose interest after 100 km, or 60 miles once you cross the border. A talking book from the library would have been perfect, but I didn't think of it ahead of time.

Figuring out when to stop is important. You don't want to stop too often, but you have to stop. Can we make it to the next one? Do you have to go to the bathroom? Can you hold it? Skipping a rest stop and going to the next one makes it a challenge and something to look forward to. When that's all you

have you take what you can get.

Philadelphia might have been interesting considering its history, but again it was night, and the directions were complicated, so we had to keep our eyes on the signs. We could have driven right by the Liberty Bell or Rocky Balboa, and not even known it.

Once in New Jersey we had the first hints of a possible adventure. There were several instances of deer grazing at the side of the highway. A whole state to choose from and they pick this spot? That kind of makes me think deer aren't the brightest animal, so we moved to the furthest lane from the shoulder in case they decided to go for a stroll on the blacktop.

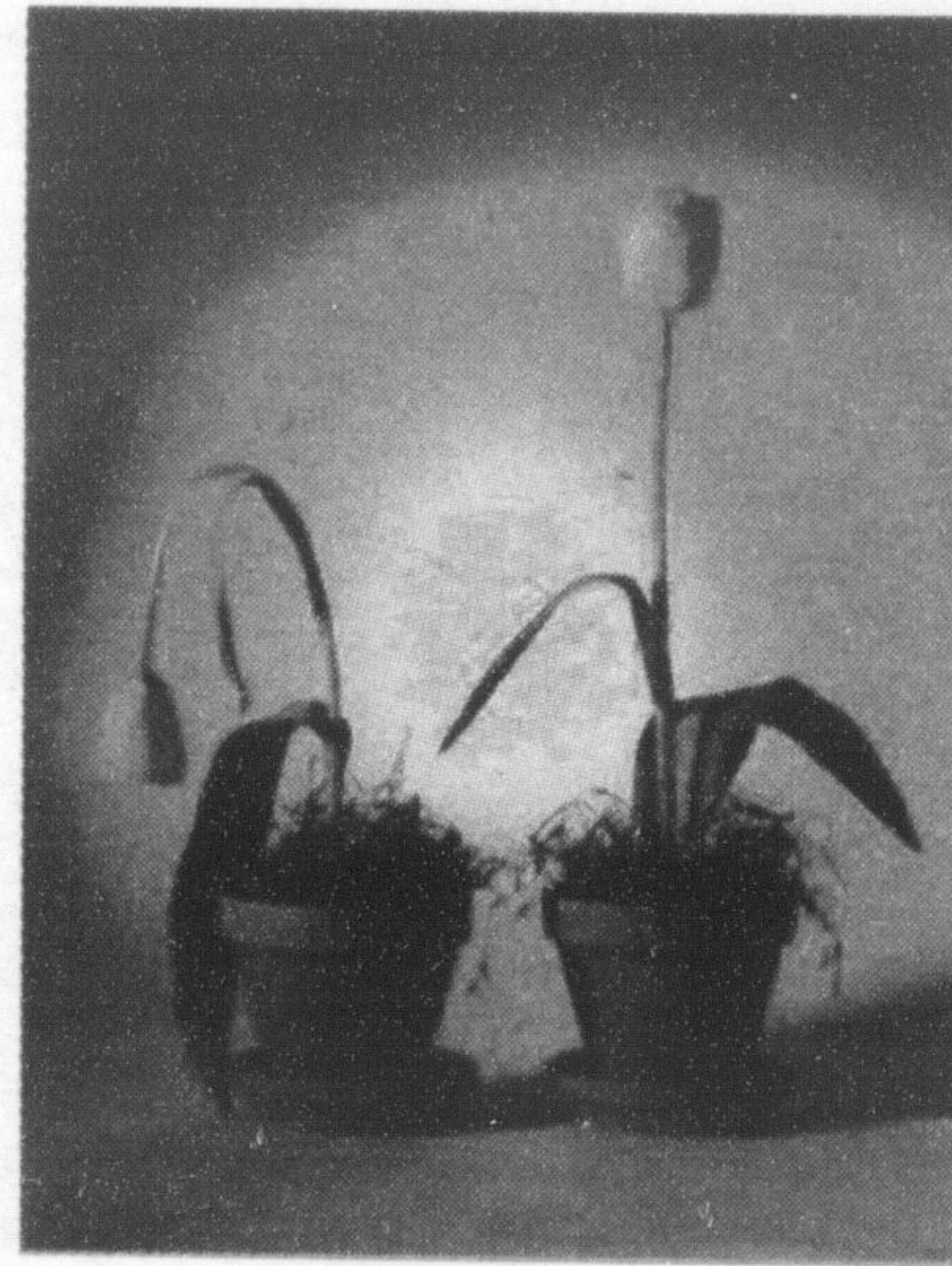
Driving into Atlantic City was spectacular, with all the bright lights. For a few minutes it made the drive worthwhile and we forgot all about the previous nine hours.

At least until it was time to go home. We stayed an extra day so we wouldn't have to drive back so soon, and then I made a plan for the return trip whereby we'd alternate driving every 220 km. My daughter took the first shift and then fell asleep during mine so I just kept driving the rest of the 660 km.

Nothing happened on the way back either, but fortunately it never seems as long driving home as it does when you're going somewhere.

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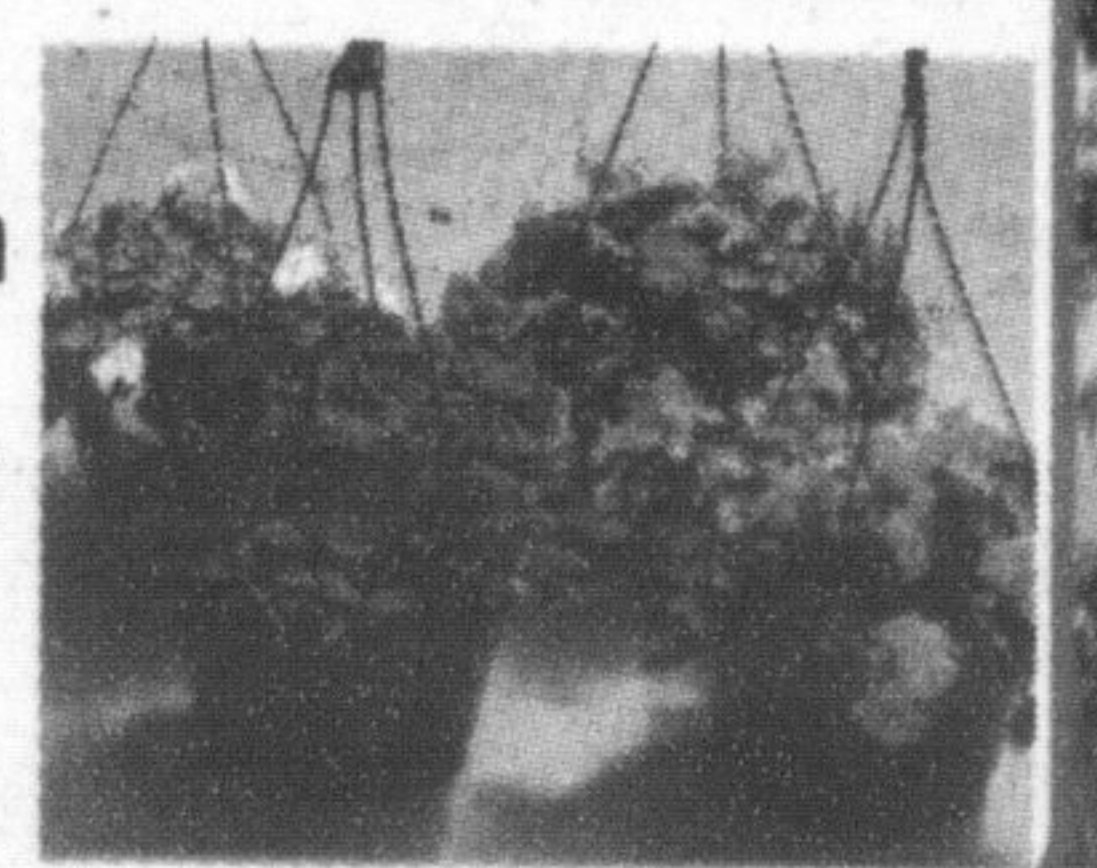
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