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ONTARIO
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ONTARIO
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discusses problems of non-status Indians.
Buster: There used to be an old lady over, living over there by the locks, old Mrs. Hicks. And by golly she was an awful old lady for talking, you know. She wouldn't talk about anything nice, it was everything was bad. And we kept the place clean, and we made a great big outhouse. There was a big ravine down in just back of where we were camping. Oh, it must be six or seven feet, you know, just ravine, you know. And that's where we made the big outhouse, I guess it was about a five holer and we kept it clean. And that old lady if you wouldn't go and visit her for one day she'd get mad at you, you know, for not going. And by gosh she got worse and worse and at that time the superintendent of the Trent Canal, his name was Tilaly, from Peterborough. And she'd call him in there and tell him a whole bunch of lies. "These Indians here they're making an awful mess there. You can smell this and smell that." Trying to make it worse for us, you know. And here we kept that outhouse nice and clean, and cover things up nice, you know, so it wouldn't...

And by gosh, there was one time old Tilaly come up and he says, "You'll have to move." Well, he didn't say where we were supposed to move, but there was nothing here. There was all tag alders right from Jacob's up along through here and all here; so we moved up here. And we cleared the shore lines, cut all them old tag alders out, you know, burned them and cleaned

up the place nice, just the way you see it now. And they never charged us anything and then they did charge us after that, \$5 a year for each family, like each house. Well, we paid that, and after two, three years then they raised it to \$10. And then it went up to \$15, you know, they kept raising it, raising it every two, three years till it come up to \$75. That's what we pay now. And, well there wasn't much we could do at that

time. But they didn't bother us too much after that, as long as you paid your lease. So we've been here ever since.

Fay: What happened when the Trent Canal people wanted to put you off this (inaudible)?

Buster: Yeah, there was one fellow come here one time and I didn't know who he was. He left his car out here at the road and he walked in. And he sat here, he never said nothing and I says, "Where you going or who are you?" Oh, he says, "I'm from the Trent Canal." And then I had an idea that there was something going on. Well, I says, "What is it all about?" Well, he said that they were thinking of moving us out. So I told him, "I ain't going to move." I says, "If I have to move," I says, "I'll put it right across that highway over here," I says, "and you can do what you like with it." I says, "I'm not going to move again. But if I have to that's just what I'll do." (laughs) He never said nothing. And well, he says, "I thought I'd come up and see you." But I did that, all I said to him, I didn't tell him this and that or the other thing, you know. I thought to myself, "I better not say too much till I know what's going to happen." So he left.

And here about a year ago two fellows walked in here, and I don't know whether I showed you that letter or not that they left me. They walked in and give me that, handed me a letter and it says there that, well, they just didn't know. But he says that we might be allowed here for ten years or more, they didn't know. I never said nothing. I just took the letter and put it away. (laughs)

But then they're still fighting for that land claim here. They tell me that it's getting to look pretty good, might get it yet. By gosh, they're fighting pretty hard for it.

Fay: Would you like to see that happen?

Buster: Yeah.

Fay: Because, after all, you said the people settled here first.

Buster: Oh yeah. Yeah. Now you take now, Russell Taylor belongs to Curve Lake. And those Taylors across the road they're from Curve Lake. And there's another lady over here, Pauline Taylor, she belongs to Curve Lake. Now if we did get put out of here they'd just sit there and laugh when... We wouldn't know where to go, we can't go to the reserve. But

they could pack up and go to the reserve, they're all right. But it's the people here, there's six, seven families of us. You see, that's where it makes it bad. They don't care whether they get their land or not. If they get put out they'd pack up and go home. Where we can't go in on the reserve. There's just as much Indian in us as any of them. So it's kind of hard, you know, and by gosh I hope they don't.

They had a big meeting up here one time. Oh about, I think it was last spring. There was a lawyer come here to quite a few of the people and he was saying, he says, "What are you going to do with those people that's from the reserve?" He said, "Don't you think that they should go home?" Well, nobody didn't say much. Tom Bridey said that they'd have to see the chief. Well, they don't have to see the chief. They live

there just as well as the chief. They don't have to ask him for those people to go home. You know, it was kind of a mix-up.

Fay: When the Trent Canal wanted to put you off in the 1930s, were there people from Curve Lake living here then?

Buster: Yeah, my sister was living here. My sister, and Marg belonged to Curve Lake but she married that, she married that Stencil, (?) eh. Well, when you marry an Indian... Well, if you marry a white man, I should say, and you belong to the reserve you lose all rights. Now supposing you belonged to Curve Lake and you married somebody around here -- even a halfbreed -- well, you lose everything. You lose all claims on the reserve.

Fay: Do you think that's very fair?

Buster: Eh?

Fay: Do you think that's very fair for the people to lose their rights?

Buster: Yeah, you see they get a little bit of money every six months. Well, you might get that but that's only when you marry an Indian. But if you marry a halfbreed, or like the way Marg is over there, you might just as well not belong to the reserve the way the government had it fixed. And if you wanted a franchise, like draw all your money out, out of the band and move out, they could just... If they like they could just scratch you off the book and you wouldn't get nothing. You see that how they worked it? Boy, it was crooked, by God. I've never seen such a crooked laws in my life, and just nothing to it.

Fay: Can you remember when you first signed the lease for this land that you're on now?

Buster: Signed the lease? By gosh, I know but I don't know when that was, the year, like. By God, there must be some papers here where... You see, we all had to sign your own

lease, you see. We didn't all sign for this place. When you got your lease you signed it yourself and so the next one, and the next one. But by gosh, that's quite a few years ago since I paid the first \$5 lease. But we didn't sign nothing.

Fay: When you first came here...

Buster: Yeah, nothing at all. I bet you we lived here for about six or seven years before they start checking up on us for lease, you know, and stuff. And I don't think this would have happened if that old lady would have kept her mouth shut. (laughs) Well, she's dead and gone now, I shouldn't mention her name, but oh boy she made us mad. She was just a (inaudible), by gosh.

As Russell was telling you about the hunting rights, I was, we never used to pay no license for hunting or anything; just go and hunt. We used to just -- well I didn't -- say the people that belonged to the reserve. You see, they classed me as a white man. By God, there's more Indian in me than a lot of them right on the reserve. But that's the way they have it, you see, just make it bad for you. And we used to hunt, and the Indians instead of buying deer license they used to just get a piece of paper from the Indian Agent. Give it to whoever wanted to hunt deer. That was just so nobody would, game

warden wouldn't pick you up for... So of course I had to. I never did hunt deer much because I didn't like that game. I was more after the fur, there's more money. But I paid my trapping license -- that was \$5. And if I wanted to run a deer dog, that's \$2, and a dollar for your gun license, and \$2 for a guiding license.

Well, there was some commissioners, I guess they used to call them, come from Ottawa. Oh they're smart, oh gosh they're smart. I think there was two of them that come there. They got there at ten o'clock in the morning and they had a great big suitcase -- I guess it was full of money. So they called a meeting and everybody... There was nobody left at the houses, only the dogs, everybody went. And went up to the council hall there, upstairs, where a lot of people could get in. I didn't go in, I stayed out. No, I did go up and stood at the door there. By God, they got started talking and they were going to buy some land off the Indians some place way back around back of Ottawa and up on that district, you know, land. And they got talking and there was some old people there, old Dan Waiton -- he was an old man, he used to keep store there -- and he says, he asked one of them. And then he says, "Now," he says, "if we sell that land," he says, "would it be just the same as it is now or would we have to pay license for everything?" "Oh no, you'll live just the way you're living now," he says. "We want that land and you don't have to pay no licenses." And he offered them \$25 a head for everybody. If you had five or six kids you'd get \$25 apiece for them, you and your husband. And he says, "The best thing you can do is take that money," he says, "because that's the last time you're going to put your hand in the government's pocket."

Well, just then old Jack Jacobs and somebody else, one of the Notts, had got a stenographer to come in and take all that, you know, take that all in. Them commissioners wouldn't allow her in there, see. Yeah, they wouldn't, they wouldn't allow them in the hall at all. I suppose they were afraid they'd have a copy of all that. So anyway they wrestled and some didn't want it. Some said, "Well, we might as well sell it," and all that. Some wouldn't. By gosh they were there till about five o'clock that evening. It was in the, it was around May, I think, or June. So anyway, they wrestled around and by gosh some of them signed off. You're going to sign your name on the piece of paper and you get your money right there, you see. So the whole village took the money, took the whole thing.

Fay: But they didn't sell their hunting rights then?

Buster: No, no, it was just that land. But it, they might just as well the way it worked out after. You see, they promised the Indians, "You won't have to pay no guide license, no hunting license, nothing," he says. "Just live the way you're living now," he said, "forget about that part." So when they paid off all that money the next year by gosh we had to buy license. (laughs) You see how they worked it? We had to buy guide license, trapping license, gun license, and even to run a dog it was \$2.

Well, you take the whole reserve, I just forget how many hundreds of dollars they paid out. Well, in about five years they'd get all that money back, government money, you know, when you buy license. By gosh, I tell you there that they were crooked. And what got me was when they wouldn't let that -- it was a woman -- the stenographer to take in everything, they wouldn't allow her in there. That's it. That's what they wanted. You see, they were fooling them there. So anyway they took it and that's what happened. We have to pay for everything.

Fay: Is that when the trap lines came into being?

Buster: No, no. The trap lines hasn't been here only about five years. It was most... Well, yes there was. But then it's not strict, you can trap here anyplace. Nobody don't say anything. But most of it was for beaver -- beaver was good price, you know. Back here, back north (inaudible). They had to have trap lines for that or everybody would be running all over your traps and everything else. So there was only about five or six had trap lines up here. Some took up trap lines here for beaver, but then they didn't bother with them much. So that was the way that the things went. Oh gosh, them fellows that come from Ottawa was crooked. Boy, they just pretty near made the Indians take that. Some of them was smart enough to fight for it, you know, but by gosh, they wouldn't listen. Some of them didn't know what these fellows was talking about and some of them were smart enough, they didn't

want it. But there was so many wanting that money. Yeah, they didn't know what they were walking into.

Fay: So this happened when you were still living there?

Buster: Oh yeah, I was there at the time.

Fay: And you just moved early after that?

Buster: I moved after that. I just forget what year that was. Yeah, they were going to sell me a piece of land there --

one of the Nott boys -- right near the road. Said, "I'll sell you an acre of land," he says. God, nice piece of land too. I says, "How much do you want?" He says, "Give me \$40 and you can have it." Land was cheap then. So I was going to buy it, so I went to see the chief about a couple of days after. And I asked him, I says, "I have a chance to buy an acre of land here, which I would like to do." Well, he says, "I'm sorry," he says, "you can't buy no land on the reserve." You see the way they worked on me because I wasn't a member of their band. He says, "You couldn't take a handful of grass off the reserve."

Fay: Who was the chief then?

Buster: Eh?

Fay: Who was the chief at that time?

Buster: Alfred McKeough. He says, "You couldn't take a handful of grass off the reserve and take it across the lake," he says. Oh yeah, they was strict with me. And old Jack Jacobs, they put him off the reserve but they didn't put me off. They didn't put me off, just old Jack. So that's the way that the thing went. Gosh, I wish I'd known the year that was, but I never kept track of the year. You know, never kept track of anything like that. But by gosh, there's a lot of money paid out here for the lease at the Trent Canal.

Fay: When the people came here with the first lease did they explain to you what was happening?

Buster: With the Trent Canal?

Fay: Yeah.

Buster: No.

Fay: Did... They didn't explain the terms?

Buster: They didn't explain anything. Never explained anything, and they didn't... I never had anybody come here and tell me that I'd have to move here. And wherever that news come from I don't know. I never heard anybody ever told me to move from here. And I often wonder where did that come from.

So Marg and that lawyer in Lakefield, and quite a few other people, you know. Not us here, but different... They got at it and they're fighting for that land claims. They went to Ottawa and that lawyer in Lakefield didn't charge us a cent for his trouble. Go to Ottawa and fight for us and Marg went there a few times.

Fay: Did you go to court in the 1930s when the Trent Canal wanted you to...?

Buster: Yeah, oh yeah. There was once we had to go to court in Peterborough. Del's dad was living then, and Wilfred Jacobs, and me. Well, there was five or six of us, we went into court and... I forget the name of that judge.

Fay: Mr. Gordon?

Buster: G.N. Gordon, we got him. He done the talking for us, G.N. Gordon. By God, he was a good... By God, he'd scare you if he yelled at you; big strong voice, you know. Anyway, we got into it there. I think that judge's name was Hatton, Judge Hatton. And he was pretty good with us. And there was a

couple of Trent Canal men there. So when we started the judge just asked for how many years we've been here, you know. Asked us where we could go if we got put out of here. We told him we had no place to go. And then G.N. Gordon started. Oh my God, he give them two men hell. He just told them right off. He says, "Just leave those Indians alone," he says. "They were the first people around..."

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Buster: ...so the judge says... G.N. Gordon says, "Just leave those Indians alone," he says. "And you go on home and stay there," he says. "Don't listen to nobody," he says. "You go back to Burleigh Falls and stay there." So the judge was satisfied, "You can go home," he says, "it's all over now." And we never heard a thing about it for oh, another two, three years. And then that's the time they started to charge us the \$5 and, you know, kept charging us so much a year. Gosh, we had an awful time. We're still here anyways. By God, I tell you they didn't bother us too much, you know. They didn't come here and raise the dickens for you to move off, in a nice quiet way, you know. But I don't, can't figure out why they'd come. That we were going to be put off here. Nobody ever come here and told me I'd have to move. I often wonder why that... But I guess they had an idea that they were going to be put off, you know. But I wasn't sure, nobody never told me anything. So Marg there she's fighting like a little, she's fighting good. And I don't know what will happen, they give ten years or more here. And Wanita was telling me the other day that this land claim is starting to look good. She said, I think maybe she says you're going to get this place. If it does I'm

going to be chief. (laughs) Yeah, I'm going to be chief and you can be my secretary, eh? (laughs)

Fay: If they'll let me into the meetings.

Buster: Yeah. Oh, they'll let you in if I say so. Well, we've been getting along pretty good over here. But what they didn't do now there was nobody come along and say, "Well, you got to get out," you know. I never got no mail for that, it just... But wherever that come from I don't know. But I guess maybe the Trent Canal was doing it in a sneaky way too. Yeah, so by gosh, there's other people, other Indians, what do you call them? Metis? They're fighting for us too here. Of course they're fighting for their own land up there too, up north. They're fighting like cats and dogs up there too, but they're getting somewhere. You see, what they were doing up there, they had good land, good reserve and everything and then the white people buy a little bit. Buy a little here -- they were crowding them off you see, off this land and that's why the Indians got mad up there. So I don't know how they're making out now.

Fay: Well, they're negotiating all time.

Buster: Yeah. So I don't know what will happen, things looks pretty good and it's quiet. They don't bother us much, the Trent Canal, just when they want their \$75. (laughs)

Fay: Did you ever have to approach the government to have a school here?

Buster: We did try. We tried once. We went to Toronto. There was a man there that kind of helped us, you know.

Fay: Do you know who that was?

Buster: Oh, Mr... (speaks to his son).

Fay: Mr. Fraser?

Buster: No, Fraser didn't help us much.

Fay: But you went to Toronto, you said?

Buster: I went to Toronto, me and Sandy and this Hogarth over here. He used to live over here. And we went with this old fellow. Oh yes, old Piper, and he took us all around Toronto. We went in see what we could do for a school here.

Fay: What did they tell you?

Buster: They didn't, we didn't get no satisfaction. Didn't get no satisfaction. Well then, we decided then that we'd gather up a lot of logs, you know, and make a log school. And there used to be a woman here, Miss McLaren. She wasn't married, and she said, "If you do that," she says, "I'll teach

the kids here." Well, the trouble was we couldn't get together. Some was willing and some wasn't, you know what I mean? And so I don't know what she done then. There used to be an ice cream parlor where they used to have lunches there, at that Walkaround store there, you know. You could (inaudible). And we, they got that and they got some desks, and I don't know where they got. And that's where she'd teach the kids. (Inaudible) and everybody. God that little place full of kids.

And that's all the schooling they got was what they learned from old Miss McLaren.

Fay: Did she have all the grades there?

Buster: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, she was pretty good. I don't think she was what you call... but she was pretty good though. By God, the kids got picking up a lot of stuff. And then when that school... Oh, they built this one then where Bob Brown lives now.

Fay: Who came and built that one?

Buster: I think it was the government that built that. Well then they went to that, and I guess they used it for about ten years and then they closed it and sent the kids down to Youngs Point -- it's up in Lakefield, you know, the older ones, you know. So they sold the place to Bob. Yeah, times weren't good, very good them times. Well, they were satisfied. They didn't worry about anything much them days, long as you had your three meals a day. (laughs) So that's how it went. All the little bit the kids knows, oh, they can read and write, and make up some figures.

Fay: Did Miss McLaren ever learn to speak Ojibway?

Buster: No.

Fay: No, she never tried that?

Buster: Never tried it. I used to wonder at her, you know. And she was a very wonderful woman. She was, you know, good-

hearted, she was good to kids. Oh, she used to come here, and there was no church here at that time. And there used to be some come from Peterborough. There was one used to come from Peterborough, his name was Stanley. He was a very religious man and he used to play the guitar and, well there was no church so they asked me one time if it would be all right if they held church here, you know.

Fay: In your yard?

Buster: Yeah, down the lake. I says, "Go ahead," I says, "it would be nice to listen." So every Sunday they used to come down here and sit around, sing, pray. We used to listen if I was home. Other days I was out on the lake. They got along all right like that too. It was pretty hard, you know, no

schools, no church.

Fay: Yeah, for the kids especially.

Buster: Yeah, the kids, yeah. Might have went wild, wild Indians. (laughs)

Fay: Well, they were learning other things.

Buster: Oh yeah, yeah, sure. It was tough but we got along all right.

Fay: Did your kids ever go out with you when you were fishing or trapping?

Buster: Well, I used to take them out. Mac -- he's the fellow that's, he's crippled, you know. I used to take him out; and the other boy, Lloyd, the oldest one, I used to take him out. Take him out show him a little bit about what's to be done. Yeah, they've done all right.

Fay: Well, they were learning something about that anyway.

Buster: Oh yeah, yeah. But the way the thing is nowadays there's not that many trappers as... Oh God, there used to be a lot. Now I don't suppose there's one or two canoes down there in the spring. They don't seem to go for trapping.

Fay: So they used to trap beaver from here all the way to Apsley?

Buster: Yeah, back this way north and then there's a creek runs all through there. They calls Eels Creek and it empties out into Stony Lake. And, you know, there'd be, we'd see beavers swimming around here. God, about three, four weeks ago, there's beavers living in that little around Russell's there.

Fay: Yeah, Russell was telling me this morning he saw a beaver.

Buster: Yeah. You see there's not many. Well, they're not much of a price, but by gosh, when they go up in price then they go after them. Yes, there's a lot of beaver. There wouldn't be if they were a good price, they'd be killed off. But they keep coming down the rivers, you know.

I was thinking about the party that I used to guide -- they were from Dayton, Ohio. I used to guide the whole family of them, the old man, the mother, their daughter, and two boys. But the two boys used to, they had their own canoe but they, you know, they wouldn't go very far from where I was, you know, they sat around and fished. And I had the mother and the dad, and he was kind of sickly and he was (inaudible). When we'd go in for shore dinner, you know, I'd clean fish, peel potatoes,

boil eggs, everything. And he used to be so hungry, but he couldn't eat no greasy stuff, you know. And he was crazy for fish and he'd just sit up, lean up against a tree looking at it, watching me there cooking. So when everything was all ready I told him, "Go on down Mr. Hendricks," I says, "go and fill up with fish." He says, "I wish I could," he says. And here he must have had a pain, you know. And every once in a while I'd see him taking a pill, you know. Well sir, I says to him that day, I says, "I'll fix you up a good meal tomorrow." I says, "I bet you won't leave any of that fish either." He just laughed.

Well, we come home early, about four o'clock, went out again the next morning. Well, I says, "I would like to get a good big queen bass." I says, "I want to cook it for you the way that you should eat it." So all they done was cast, you know -- they were good casters, good fishermen. So I took them way down around through the Grind(?) Channel and way out around in the rice beds, you know. By gosh, we got four nice big bass, and about eleven o'clock I says, "By gosh," I says, "I think we got enough fish." I says, "I think we'll go in." I says, "By the time I get everything ready it'll be twelve o'clock."

So they were satisfied so we went in to the dinner place and there was a table there and I started. I picked out the biggest bass and I didn't scale it, I cooked scales and all. So I ripped him up the back right down to the tail and I even split the head right open so it would, you know, open right up.

And I left the scales on, just washed the outside of the fish good and clean, and scraped it, washed the insides out good and I went in and got... He was sitting there watching.

I went into the bush there and I cut a stick, oh, about an inch thick. I cut it about that long and I split that stick down to about that far and then I wittled two small sticks. They had to be green -- if they were dry they'd burn off, you know. So I had to use green stuff. So I put the fish in the stick that I split but I put a stick in here, just kind of like that in the fish, you know, so it would hold out. I put two sticks and then put the stick that I split on and wired the end of it. I had a good fire going, you know. And you don't want to fry them, you want the coals. So I stick that in the ground and then you can regulate your fish with that stick, you know. If it's too hot you'd bring it up.

So I just got it started. It doesn't matter if you burn the scale side, I done the scale side first. And then the meat kind of leaves the skin when you do that. And then I got some butter and I just buttered, I just put enough butter inside of that fish to brown it up, you know. Not too much because the way he was too much butter would hurt him too. So I cooked it good. While I was frying my fish and the rest of the stuff I put right there and I could just watch it too. And when everything got cooked then I'd go and set the table, you know, get them ready, get them around, take the potatoes up and the eggs, the fish. And I says to Mr. Hendricks, I says, "Come on

now." I says, "By God, you must be hungry." He just laughed, you know, he thought it was funny. I took the fish off the, the wire off the stick and pulled those little sticks out that held the fish out, you know. Took it out of the split stick and I put it on a plate and by gosh, he says, "I think you've got yourself a job." He meant that that's the way that I was supposed to cook his, you see, that's what he meant. Well, I says, "As long as you're satisfied," I says, "I don't mind doing it for you. You're awful nice people." And by God, you know, when he got through with that fish there was nothing left but the skin. (laughs) By God, he ate the whole thing.

Fay: I guess he was satisfied.

Buster: Oh yeah, you know, he was so good that afternoon, jolly, and joking, and you know, it kind of helped him. By gosh, he says, "You've got yourself a job," he says. Well, I says, "All we got to do is get the bass first and not eat it first and then... (laughs) Got to get the bass first," I says. And that's the way I done it for him every day. It was no bother to me, everything was right at the fire, you know. Well, he never forgot that. Oh, they used me good. They paid me good and sometimes we used to go out for supper, you know, in the evening. We'd leave here about three o'clock in the afternoon fishing on our way down and get off at the dinner place and cook supper there; they liked that. Come home just dark. They liked that, they really liked that. But I haven't seen them for... I guess maybe he died, I kind of think he did. And the boys, I often wondered if the boys hasn't been around. The old lady come. Oh yeah, he did die, but the old lady used to come down to McCrackens Landing. She'd come there two, three summers, alone. So he must have died. They were a good party.

Fay: Did you have many guiding parties like that?

Buster: Oh yeah, but not quite as good, you know. The pay was good. They didn't stay out as long as they had dinner, and fish down and fish back. Lots of times I was home here at four o'clock. They weren't no fish hogs or anything, you know. Yeah, they were awful good people. And I used to have some people that you just feel like throwing them in the lake. Yeah, they were awful mean some of them. Most of them was nice, they used me good. And always paid me more than my wages.

That party I was telling you about, they used to stay three weeks. Stay there at the park for three weeks, I used to have them every day. Now you don't see hardly any Americans now. I had a party of eight girls here and I used to have to get three other extra guides along with myself, two in each boat, you know. God, they were good too. All widows and one single woman. There was two widows, two of them was married. They used to come and they used to stay six, seven days. I went to visit them in Cleveland, you know. By gosh I was surprised at

that. We went there and I went and visit the main one that was my... the woman I was guiding, she was a widow. I used to guide her husband before they got... they were only married about, my gosh, a year and a half and then he died. And we went and visited them, went to her apartment -- she sold her house. She had two houses and she sold them and she got an apartment for herself. She was a retired stenographer and he was just about ready to retire when he got married. We got there about six at night, six in the evening. It was in the fall. Gosh she was glad to just see us there. And then the next day... No, we went to the Holiday Inn. She took us there, got us a room, big room, and we stayed there two...

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