



*A coming-of-age tale from the
"Wilds of New Jersey."*

Tales from the Wilds of New Jersey

By Ted Lyons

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A photograph of a forest scene. In the foreground, a large, dark tree trunk with rough bark and some vines is prominent on the right side. A path leads from the bottom left towards the center of the image, disappearing into the woods. The background is filled with various trees and foliage, some in focus and some blurred, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is soft, suggesting a slightly overcast day or a shaded forest.

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- Up on the Roof -

I think it was 1971-72'. A couple pals and I had made our way over to the Rutgers Athletic Center to catch Laura Nyro in concert. The RAC was a cool place for a show.... close, general admission, and easy to sneak in. Sneaking in was half the fun. We never considered that maybe the cost of admission was helping to pay the artist. Ah....youth.

First attempt, walking through the front door. No good. Second attempt, climbing the tree on the side of the RAC that led to the men's room. Usually, reliable. Tonight, locked. This called for Plan C.....chipping in for one ticket and the unlocking of the bathroom window. Straws were drawn and Ronnie (great drummer) went in. Turned out the men's room was closed, and the locker room was being used in its stead. Now it was the dreaded every man for himself. Remember where the car was and see ya inside or, hopefully, after the show.

I moseyed (spelling) around back to the loading dock. Everything locked up tighter than a crab's ass. And, as my best pal Rock would say, "that's watertight!" I took a seat on the upper step of the dock close enough to enjoy the aromas emanating from the dumpster. It seemed I had run out of options. I hopped off the dock just as a black stretch limo came around the corner. I stood there as the car pulled up and stopped. The driver got out and opened the back door. A witchy, kind looking lady got out and as I put out my arm I said, "Welcome to New Brunswick." She took my arm, gave me a

warm smile and her eyes pierced me. I immediately fell in love. I didn't know what would transpire in the next few minutes, but we ascended the loading dock stairs and as we reached the doors.... they opened. Busted? I gently handed her off to the RAC welcoming committee and, as they went left, I went right. She gave me one last look, and a smile, that said, "Nice move, dude. "

I hooked up with an inviting group and my buddy with the lone ticket. We convinced our new friends to join us (drive us) to the River Road Tavern, post show. And there was our crew. Racks of pool and frosted mugs followed and the night, for me, evaporated into the ether of legend. I'm not sure if the guys believed my story or not. Didn't matter. Laura Nyro and her piano owned the Rutgers Athletic Center, and a chunk of my heart, that night. I hadn't really been a fan. Just seemed like a fun way to kill a Fri/Sat night. I was a fan after that. She left the earth in 1997. Too soon. Her birthday was yesterday. I'm late. She was right on time. "Can you surrey?" Peace.....

**



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