

Dylan to Return to Roots for Golden Years

by Con Chapman

HIBBING, Minnesota. There's a buzz going around this town of 17,000 in northeastern Minnesota as rumors spread that its most famous musician has decided to spend his retirement here, sparked by an article in Friday's Wall Street Journal depicting a grey-haired man and woman in a parody of the cover from "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan." Will that be a boon or a nuisance, this reporter asks Al Sklarski, a shift supervisor at a local iron mine. "You mean Gary Puckett is coming back? That'll be great for kids who've never heard 'Lady Willpower,'" he says.



When informed that the returning celebrity is not Gary Puckett but Dylan, the world-renowned singer-songwriter, Sklarski draws a blank. "Never heard of him," he says as he takes off in his pick-up truck.



Bob Dylan, ne Robert Zimmerman

The confusion stems from the fact that when Dylan left Hibbing at the age of 18 he was known as Bobby Zimmerman, son of a local appliance store owner. Dylan changed his name after moving to New York City, and skyrocketed to fame when the folk themes and styles he revived found a new audience among college protestors in the 1960's.

Hootenanny

With his wealth, Dylan could retire to one of the golfing compounds favored by the affluent, but friends say homely Hibbing is better suited to the working man's image he has always cultivated. "I played in a foursome with him at the Doral del Boca Vista Rey," says former Chrysler CEO Lee Iacocca. "He kept scribbling down lyrics when it was his turn to putt."

Iacocca and Snoop Dogg: "C'mon folk-boy, shoot yer fershizzlin' shot!"

Dylan got his start singing at hootenannies in the Hibbing area, usually without compensation other than complementary apple cider and chocolate chip cookies. His big breakthrough came in 1954 when he placed third in the Winter Talent Contest at Temple Beth El, Hibbing's only synagogue. "A star is born," reported the Hillel Enquirer in the following week's edition. "Bobby Zimmerman enchanted with his interpretation of 'Jimmy Crack Corn, and I Don't Give a Damn.'"



Shakespeare: Two-time Grammy Award-winner.

Other artists have retired to their home towns from larger metropolises, most notably William Shakespeare who returned to his native Stratford after a successful career as an actor, playwright and theatre-owner in London. Shakespeare, a two-time Grammy Award-winner, died in Stratford, famously willing his "second best bed" to his wife, his Cuisinart Food Processor to his daughter Judith, and his Craftsman Weedwacker to his elder sister Susanna.

The Rolling Stones at Sir Morgan's Cove, Worcester, Mass.

Artists sometimes choose out-of-the-way locations to hone their acts in the hope of reviving their careers. In 1981 The Rolling Stones performed at Sir Morgan's Cove in Worcester, Massachusetts, a small nightclub whose previous claim to fame was a 2-for-1 Margarita and Wet T-Shirt Night promotion. The Stones

cut their set short when they were informed that they were not in Worcester, England.



Dylan, now 69

Dylan, a reclusive artist known for his obscure lyrics and cryptic comments, would neither confirm nor deny that his retreat to rural America was intended to set the stage for a new phase of his storied career. When asked if he would be working on a new album in Hibbing, Dylan replied "What time is the Early Bird Special at Applebee's?"

