

Truckstop

Rich Tatarka

I'm trying to remember when it was that I met Mr. Shue for the first time, and I'm thinking that I've been one of his customers for about 3 years or so now. Mr. Shue is the proprietor of Bump's Pit Stop Convenience Store in Longview, Alberta, Canada and on this particular route, this is where I stop for fuel. (A quick note about Mr. Shue: He speaks very little English, and I speak very little of whatever it is he uses as he sells me my fuel. His nametag on his jacket somewhat sorta looks like Shue, so Mr. Shue it is...) (An even quicker note about Longview, Alberta: it's a tiny little cow town southwest of Calgary and it's the home of the famous Canadian Country Singer Ian Tyson. There's a guy named Stewart that hangs out at the Bar/Grill where we eat dinner that I am trading American Chewing Tobacco for Ian Tyson's autograph, but several cans into this supposed trade I have yet to see any signatures...)

Anyway, back to Mr. Shue. The first time I stopped there I pulled up beside the pump and went in to prepay for my fuel. It took about five minutes of hand signaling and pointing by Mr. Shue to finally break the language barrier and for me to get the message that you don't need to prepay at Bump's Pit Stop. Mr. Shue really cares about his customers, in fact one morning not too long ago I pulled up to the pump at about 15 minutes before seven thinking that Mr. Shue opened at six. But the door was locked, and the pumps weren't turned on yet, so I figured that it was closed so I got back in the truck and headed across the lot heading for the highway. As I was sitting there waiting for a car to go by, I suddenly had Mr. Shue banging on my door telling me "You come back! We open!!!" Good thing I had to wait for that car to go by or Mr. Shue would have probably chased me clear to Calgary. Quite a while ago as I was paying Mr. Shue for my fuel he asked me if I had a "fagasca" "Huh? Um no, I have Visa Card." "No, you need fagasca. Save plenty money!" he said and handed me a "Fas Gas Card" that earns you plenty of petro-points as you fuel. From that day on, every time I got fuel from Mr. Shue I made sure I gave him my Fas Gas Card, with visions of plenty of valuable free merchandise or fuel I would get with my large accumulation of petro-points. One day as I was paying for my fuel I decided to test Mr. Shue and see how firm a grasp he had on the English language, so I asked him "where do you keep the granola bars, sir?" "Third row halfway down on the right." He replied in perfect English... Hmmmm.... Then came the big day that I decided to cash in my petro-points and get a bunch of fuel for free. I handed Mr. Shue my Fas Gas Card and told him I wanted to use my points today, and would he please see what my balance was. So, he put my card in the machine and printed out a slip with my total on it. "You have Four dolla," Mr. Shue reported. "What? Only Four Dollars? But I've been collecting petro-points for quite some time and that's all?" Evidently petro-points are worth just a portion of a penny and they don't do pennies in Canada so one must collect petro-points for a lifetime before you cash it in, sorta like a retirement plan...

That said, I must remind you of that it's time to pay your Federal Highway Use Tax. Somehow, there's a group of people whom will try and take advantage of you and offer to do the paperwork and pay the tax for you for a small fee. Avoid these types as they aren't necessary for proper filing. If your Accountant does it for you they should already know how to file properly, but if you choose to file yourself, go to the official IRS website and download the forms and instructions and mail it to them. As far as I know, there are no online ways to pay your Federal Highway Use Tax. I've also noticed lately that the "Sharks" are sending me bogus claims that my biennial filing of the MCS-150 form (the USDOT Number required update every two years) has expired and for a small fee they would file an update for me. This is another filing that you can

easily check on and update yourself. Stand by as I research a way to file the annual UCR without having to pay the state of Indiana an additional fee just to file the darned thing...

With that, I must close now as I've got to go fishing because there are actually no Walleye Tournaments this weekend and I've forgotten what it's like to fish just for the fun of it...

Until next time,

That is All.

Rich T.