

Underground Derby Disaster

by limo

The only reason I can justify printing this as news is that I am psychic and I know, for a fact, that shit like this goes on. Do not call me a liar, I am merely reproducing a fictional account of real events that I swear on my left testicle I am not involved in.

"Bring everyone. Bring booze, guns, fireworks, anything cobol," the call went out. Assemble and ride, in caravan, through highly patrolled areas, on the way to an unspecified location in the middle of nowhere to watch or participate in some kind of low budget, backwoods demolition derby. That was the plan. They gathered en masse at a preset, public location. Anyone crazy enough to come to this thing could find it, and anyone there by sheer coincidence must have had a wave of disapproval wash over them, if not sheer terror. The caravan consisted of mostly young people in rusty cars and pickup trucks that rumbled along, spewing black smoke, or rattled like a tin can with the vitality of a dying water buffalo on its way to the drinking hole. They had large front bumpers, some of them home made. Only the big, shiny keg of Pabst Blue Ribbon standing up in the bed of the lead vehicle suggested they might be up to something only halfway crazy.

The very first car to pass the live action Road Warrior reenactment was a cop. The caravan was pulled over and the unregistered vehicles were MIA until they got to the scene. In the confusion cars scattered and some spent far too long wandering down old back roads with hazy directions. It seemed hopeless, as if the whole thing was too good to be true. This kind of shit just isn't supposed to happen. But perhaps it was for the better, and lives were saved as the police must surely have hauled everyone away on charges of endangering minors in the back of a pickup truck on the highway, and suspicion of conspiracy to do something illegal, if the cops could just figure out what it was.

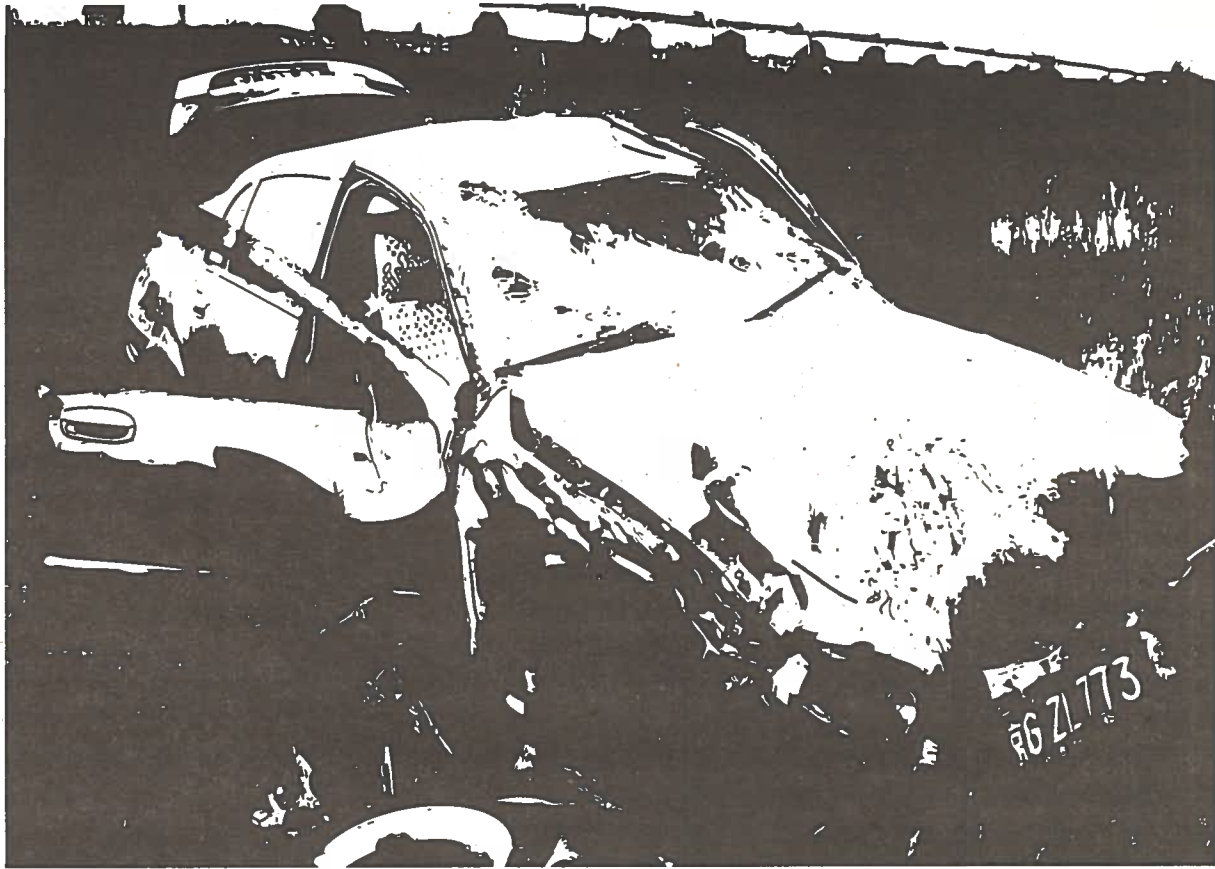
In the final moment of defeat and by luck alone, the stragglers regrouped, and even the guys who's cars who were missing got a ride out to the show. The air was cold that night, especially in the back of a pickup truck. But once they got off the highway the landscape lit up for miles in the mist and silver moonlight. Two cars had been towed away, and a third broke down on the bumpy road out. But here was a coalition to revive it.

Far out in the unspecified backwoods of Humboldt County, people stood around a camp fire under a bright moon. Strewn across the ground were sandals, a shopping cart, and a box of books by the fire. Holy shit! Is this a goddamn book burning? A few were salvaged just in case.

Two of the derby cars sat nearby. All the windows were busted out and most of the upholstery was gone. Perhaps that would make the fumes more eco-friendly once the cars died and had to be incinerated. Or perhaps the interior had smelled so bad after rotting in unofficial junk yards that it had to be removed. Either way, the cars had been stripped down to little more than seats and steering wheels.

The van had a pickup truck's bumper attached to the front. None of the vehicles had roll cages, or any structural reinforcement at all, and no special seatbelts. Any identifying plates and numbers had been removed. They were dented and spray painted all over. They soon bashed the headlights out with a sledge hammer and medieval looking mace. The mace was little more than a metal pipe, welded to a short chain, welded again to a trailer hitch ball and the head of a pickaxe. The device flailed about, nearly maiming its handler numerous times, but it helped stave off boredom until the games could begin.

This kind of experience was new to everyone. No one was sure what to think, but no one was worried. A contender was very calm about the prospect



* Photo not from event

of smashing old cars together in a drunken, metallic hurricane. The prize money, he said, was irrelevant. "I want that trophy."

The "trophy" was a homemade work of rusted metal that was heated in the fire and smashed with a hammer prematurely. It broke into pieces. The prize money, a few hundred bucks, was donated to the guy whose car had been lost en route. There was no prize for the contenders, no reward to take home but the memory and the glory of participating in such a crazed act of delinquency and personal danger. In our history that has rarely been substandard motivation. Some worried that a campfire lit on a nearby hill may draw unwanted attention. "Turn off your signal fire," they cried. But from the high hill no roads or towns could be seen nearby, so they insisted that no one could see them either. They were alone in the wilderness, with no one to ruin their good time, and no one but themselves to rely on if they screwed up. It was a surprising crowd there that night. Some expected guys in NASCAR Racing hats guzzling Coors Light and hollering "Git-R-Done!" at the top of their lungs. But most of these people looked like gypsies in baggy and raggedy clothes. Many had long hair or dreadlocks and spoke softly. They seemed aware that this was all a great sacrament to the gods of pollution and had every intension of cleaning the mess up when they were done.

"By the time we're done," one said "no one will ever know we were here."

"If they're goanna burn those cars," another said, "then they better take all the fluids out first." He then went on with an impressive speech about the toxic disaster of post Katrina New Orleans. The toxic sludge that washed over the land with the flood waters was so complete, he said, that even months later dead animals were not decomposing. No bacteria or maggots would eat them. They just laid strewn about in toxic cocoons.

The casual talk quickly burned out with the arrival of the off noise of rattling metal. Two of the cars, which were taken for a little recreational driving, came racing down the hill at high speed, sliding around corners and kicking up rocks. The scene was filled with the noise of rocks smashing on the undersides of the vehicles as they skidded out in front of everyone, smashing into one another. But what began as a noisy downhill chase and preview to the debauchery that awaited quickly became something far more elegant.

After a few initial crashes into one another, the cars circled one another. They'd face off in a mock game of chicken, swerving toward and away from each other, just nearly missing. It looked like some kind of natural courtship dance for mutant robots or people who were proud to call themselves white trash. And though the crowd's bloodlust ached for crushing metal, there was good sport in the fact that it took more skill not to crash the cars into each other at every close call. It lasted until one of the cars got stuck on the rocks. It would have to be dragged back later when the pickup returned. The night fell quiet again, but pulses were raised. Eyes hung wide with excitement. There had been a taste for the crowd to nibble on. They wanted more, and they would have it. Things had just begun.

In the distance the old war truck returned with more stragglers, accompanied by the creaking Frankenstein of a mid-seventies Cheve pickup truck. It was growing late in the night. There were enough cars to start the thing, but the energy

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