



FUEL FOR THOUGHT

BY LANDSPEED LOUISE

“The once brash lad was now slumped in his chair, head down, pondering the folly of his loose lips; he recognized the unintended consequences of his feeble attempt to appear more important than he was with the crutch of vile gossip.”

Rumor Control vs. Mature Manure

The guy came storming up to Lee Kennedy in a fully developed rage. His nose was clearly out of joint so Kennedy said asked what was wrong. “People are stealing outhouses,” began the annoyed, “They are dragging them into their pit and putting a lock on them so no one else can use them!” Astonished, Kennedy replied, “I’ll look into it.”

He found plenty of private potties throughout the pits. However, unlike the annoyed, Kennedy made no assumptions and asked why they had them. He found that more than 40 teams had rented their own “comfort stations” from the same company that supplies the SCTA/BNI for SpeedWeek 2013. In response, ignorance laughed heartily helping to give traction to a raging rumor. It was not a singular event.

After a particularly chaotic and vexing day on the salt, my son, Connor, saved the day with his discovery of the tasty Mexican food trailer parked on the corner of Wendover and Aria Boulevard back in town. No lines, no inflated prices, we all happily chowed down on great food until a SCTA/BNI volunteer still clad in his white Speedweek shirt began yammering away about the spins, crashes and out of control cars. I damn near choked on my taco when he blamed the starters.

“They did what?” I blurted out as I grabbed my water bottle to wash down what was left of dinner. “Yeah,” he contin-

ued with self-imposed authority, not knowing who was seated around the communal table, “Those starters get in the

face of drivers just before they leave the line and make them all nervous pulling at the safety equipment.” It took a moment to process such an enormous load of mature manure before formulating my retort.

“How long have you been a volunteer;” I asked. He was a salt virgin. Had he been working the starting line? “No, the staging lanes.” Did he know why the starter approached each car before it started its run down the course? “No.”

Two veteran racers seated with us knew what was coming for the kid and walked off. “Be assured that what I am about to say to you is meant to educate, not to verbally beat you up. Please understand first how incredibly wrong you are. Next, recognize how much more damaging your statements are simply because you are wearing a Speedweek officials shirt. Someone listening to your crap might just believe it. It is clear to me you don’t know the first thing about what the starters do – precisely the opposite of what you spewed out. The starter is the last stop in a long line of land speed racing safety checks. It is their duty to visually inspect the race vehicle and its operator to ensure both are ready to race. That includes making sure helmet straps are secure, visors are down, restraints are snug together with a variety of other items that also includes calming nerves with last minute conversation and course instructions. You need to understand the

tact a spectator has during their visit. Do you want them to go away thinking the sport is run by a bunch of inept clowns?”

The change in the young man’s face reflected his chagrin, it was clear he was sorry for his braggadocio and he certainly did not know the meaning of “inept” but “clowns” got his attention.

“Let me ask another thing,” I said, not waiting for permission, “You made a number of comments about Tegan Hammond’s incident, have you spoken with her, or any of the Hammonds? Did you seek out an SCTA official that investigates such things? What about motorcyclist Ralph Hudson, did you talk to him, or any of his teammates?” The young man admitted the thought never occurred to him to do so.

“Let’s pretend I am not a journalist and I am a family member of one of the people involved in an incident, or accident,” I posited, “Let’s say I had just arrived and had not a chance to find my family member, but encountered you first. Imagine the shock, worry and fear you just gave me about someone I love, someone who matters to me every minute of every day. Is that your intent? To hurt someone?”

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“I never thought about it that way,” he said with contrition, “I never meant to harm anyone and I won’t do it again.”

I believe he got a life lesson on that Wendover street corner. It will make him a valuable volunteer, a more dedicated worker who makes a point to serve racers, teams and their families.

And don’t get me started about the diarrhea that flows across interest pages, forums and snotty emails. Frightful fairy tales and mean-spirited trash talking can only damage this effervescent and evocative amateur sport.

It is imperative we speak to each honestly and openly. If you have a problem go find that person – don’t tell everyone else BUT that person. Be human. Be fair. Be kind.

“Accidents are fully investigated with the rider or driver and team member involved,” Lee Kennedy told me, “It is up to the team, not the SCTA, to release all, some or none of our findings. Our focus is to determine if the incident requires any rule and safety changes. When conditions have warranted, the SCTA has

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gravity of your words, how they might severely traumatize the casual listener. You may be the only point of official con-

~~They are there for you to be able to hang out and display your pride and joy with other folks who share your specific passion. Take advantage of this fact and make some new friends, research your next project or ask questions of other guys or gals who may know something that you don't about your ride.~~

~~The bottom line is that Goodguys events are meant to be fun and our Special Parking Areas are meant to bring together likeminded rodders for their benefit and that of the spectator. Like life, Goodguys events are what you make of them. If you come to have a good time, you will!~~ 

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asked drivers to surrender their license when the racer demonstrates they are a danger to themselves and others.”

Not a knee jerk decision, such an act requires full board approval and lots of discussion with experts in the respective field of concern. There is no one person who makes big decisions.

The young man's comments, together with a half-dozen other “spin tales,” found me talking to Tegan Hammond the next morning. As expected, Ms. Hammond graciously offered a mindful, factual recounting of the event. She did not spin. The lakester did, however, swing like pendulum and while the steering wheel was abruptly torn from her hands she regained control and got the car stopped, albeit 180-degrees from whence she started, but halted upright and undamaged. After a thorough recheck and SCTA/BNI technical inspection, father Seth sent his daughter down the course for a few more check rides to ensure everything was mechanically and mentally happy.

For you grumblers who think the plus 300MPH slender lakester ought to have been magnafluxed for weld fractures, listen up. Former military chopper pilot Hammond, while building the car, adapted a build process used in the helicopter industry. The frame was fabricated so that every inch of tubing is pressurized with nitrogen monitored by a small gauge tapped into a frame rail. Several hours after the car's “swing fest” the reading hadn't changed, telling Hammond the chassis was sound. Talk about peace of mind. Wouldn't it be grand to see that little feature on more speed machines? If you are interested, try to catch Seth at his far back corner pit and tell ‘em LandSpeed sent ya.

Note: Photojournalist Louise Ann Noeth is the authoress of the critically acclaimed, *Bonneville: The Fastest Place on Earth*, a complete historical review from 1896 to 1997. A noted expert on the sport of land

speed racing, she consults with industry, government and media on a variety of levels and disciplines. For more details on her fast self go to: www.landspeedproductions.biz. 

~~and everything seems to be OK. Friday, the gray car started acting up...we replaced points and condenser toward the cooler part of the evening and it's fine. So far, two cars have acted up...hope the rad '57 doesn't...it usually doesn't, it's a good car.~~

~~We had a great time that weekend, got to see lots of cars we don't normally see and enjoyed summer like weather. We headed for home Sunday after checking out the award winners.~~

~~End of story, right? Well, no, not exactly...more next month!~~

~~Now available on KINDLE. My first book, *Bangin' Gears & Bustin' Heads* and coming soon to a Kindle near you: *Arsenal Code R.E.D.* What happens when a 15 year old is arrested by the FBI for causing an airliner crash? Is he involved in Domestic Terrorism? It's an adventure of epic proportions. Don't forget to check out my recently “overhauled” website: www.RAJetter.com to order books personally autographed. ~~

~~In every relationship there will be bumps along the road. But I am here to tell you that you can smooth that road by having balance. I've been at it for twenty years now and while sometimes life seems like there's a fat kid on the other end of the seesaw, there are things you can do to even out the weight. Don't overdo it. It's better to beg for forgiveness than to ask for permission. Try not to assume anything. And remember that, “Do whatever you want” really means “If you do it, you'll be sorry!” ~~

~~too fast, thinking perhaps as he went off the road and the roadster tumbled end-over-end, killing him, that he was flying through the traps at Scappoose. Perhaps Housman had his finger on the truth when he wrote: “Smart lad, to slip betimes away/ From fields where glory does not stay... Eyes the shady night has shut/ Cannot see the record cut...”~~

~~I love the way that all works out, but I have to admit it's not quite accurate. The business at the Scappoose drag strip was true, I was there, but the stuff about the accident was based on rumor, which was how we got a lot of our information in those days. In 1991, several years after~~