



FUEL FOR THOUGHT

BY LANDSPEED LOUISE

“I don’t care if you don’t know a spark plug from a wheel hub, walking through the pits and staging lanes up to the starting line is a visual treat on multiple levels.”

The Gee Whiz Wonder of Salt Virgins

Age is superfluous at Bonneville. Young or old, it is all the same: wide-eyed wonder of a regal place constantly swirled with a riot of color, cackling thunder ripping out of homebuilt metal magic and the indescribable feeling of being so incredibly lucky to be there, to take part, to bear witness to the heart of motorsport still so pure and so welcoming. You marvel that it exists at all.

That’s what coming to the Bonneville Salt Flats for the first time does to most everyone. It doesn’t matter what you might have read, heard, been told or watched, the real deal is a gargantuan knockout. Some freely admit this while others pretend not to be affected.

Oh, but pity those liars in denial for they rob themselves of pure joy, of being immersed in the saline speed dimension. Such people remind me of some teenagers that are so wrapped up in image and showing off the latest trendy thing that like’s most important parts rocket past them.

Forget the speed machines for a moment and simply consider the place. It is such a place that astronauts use salt’s splendid immense size and stark shimmering whiteness as a landmark whilst orbiting earth from outer space.

Such a place that if you get your butt up and out of bed before the sun and manage to be present for the fiery orb’s awakening then you will be treated to unexpected grandeur, a brain-stretching vista that often invokes a dose of

humanity humility wrapped up in a personal outpouring of thankfulness.

There is something inviting about being reduced, put in your place, made to understand how stinking small and insignificant you are in relationship to the planet. It made me feel honored to be there and later, it made me very protective of the place which is why I am intensely annoyed with the BLM for not being likewise invested.

If you drive out from Salt Lake City you get a good sense about the place as it requires you cross the salt to arrive at the access point just outside Wendover UT/NV – take your pick there are two of them with a line painted right down the main drag that is the state line.

If you have lots of coin and few brains you can try to access the salt from the interstate, but make sure you have cell coverage or a working CB because when you get stuck you will be stuck like nothing else you’ve ever encountered.

Spinning your wheels only drives the vehicle deeper into the plastic-like mud that has been trapping things since well before the Conestoga wagons got mired. The salt flats are thick in the middle, but thin out to practically nothing on the edges.

And yes, it is salt, just like the stuff that comes out of the shaker at home. Taste it. Most everyone does whether they admit it or not.

Driving in the from the south on Highway 93 is a ‘peek-a-boo’ way to see the salt as the mountains rise and fall giving you only a hint of the place here and there along the road until it opens up and wows you as you get to the Wendovers. The most dramatic way for salt virgins is from the West as the Silver Island mountain range blocks the view of the salt until

you pass through the Wendovers and take the #1 exit.

Even so, the roadside dramatic reveal has withered somewhat. The immense salt playa has shrunk, the bright white salt that once hugged either side of Interstate 80 is patchwork now, dirty in other spots mixed with the mud or absent altogether and the ubiquitous sagebrush has moseyed back onto the plain.

Worry not, there is plenty left to astound you and for most racers to try their luck upon. Let’s talk about those racers, those wonderful, marvelous, inventive amateur folk who put on the best damn mechanical circus in the whole wide world.

You can be one too. Did you know that you can get a time slip driving your own car or bike at some events? Try that at Indy or Daytona.

I don’t care if you don’t know a spark plug from a wheel hub, walking through the pits and staging lanes up to the starting line is a visual treat on multiple levels. Watching them roll off on a run, or flash through the mile-markers is an eye-candy spectacular. Lucky you if you get to see a parachute blossom.

There are hundreds of cars, trucks and motorcycles in race ready form, each the dearly held dream of someone or ones about to face the truth of the timing clocks.

They are categorized by engine size and body style and each carries a number and series of letters that tell what area they are sniffing around for a record.

For example: A/BFR is a blown (supercharged) fuel roadster with an engine between 440 to 500 cubic inches designated by the “A”. If the “F” was a “G” then it would be a gas-powered car.

Pick up a rule book at the sales trailer or better yet, order it in advance and familiarize yourself – one less thing to be stunned about – there are plenty of classes but they are easy to navigate with a little study time.

None of these speed machines come to the salt all by their lonesome, each has a team, a few big, but most are a small gathering of like-minded speed hopefuls who will be delighted to tell you darn near anything you might want to ask of them.

Now we have arrived at the core of land speed racing, what gives the sport its fantastic edge over every other form of motorized competition on the planet: the people!

Be bold, walk up and introduce yourself, introduce the whole family, tell

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one of the best seasons in years with tons of new cars debuting at every event so far; I can't imagine what we'll see in the competitions for Street Rod of the Year and Street Machine of the Year when we hit Columbus. There are some very heavy hitters already slated to show up, not to mention the usual surprises.

All that just gets my juices flowing with thoughts of the Pacific Northwest Nationals (my personal favorite), West Coast Nationals, Speedway Nationals and of course the big bang that is the Southwest Nationals in Scottsdale, Arizona where we'll get to see all of the top 12 cars one last time and all in one place.

So yeah, the anticipation is killing me. Let's go! 

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them you're salt virgins, ask them about the machine, who designed it, built it, drives it and THEN ask how fast it goes.

Warning: Be very careful not to ask "how much" questions if there are any wives around without tools in their hands or wearing fireproof driving gear. Besides, most racers would prefer not to add up all the bills incurred along the build-up that way they will never know they overspent three times more than they intended – if they are lucky.

You may not be ready for the welcome you get, but let me assure it will last long after you get back home to "normal" life. Once home, if you experience an unexplained sadness or sense of loss, you have been afflicted with "salt fever" and the only to medicate away the symptoms is to return as soon as possible.

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. For more details on her fast self go to: www.landspeedproductions.biz. 

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The look on his face was priceless...he's taken aback. With a stunned voice he said, "You want thirty-five thousand dollars, not thirty-five hundred?"

"Yes," I said, not really surprised he misinterpreted my price.

He didn't say another word...got into his Cadillac and drove off. Dan and I got into the '57, laughing about our failed 'near deal' as we headed out.

To this day, we still get a chuckle out of the diamond dealer that thought he was going to buy a toy...really cheap. It's

a great story, worth telling over and over.

At least, that's the way I remember it.
Roger

Now available -the fifth book in the series: *Faded Thunder*, stories of Denver hot rodding, cruising, car shows, drag racing and general chaos on the weekends. Don't forget to check out my recently "overhauled" website: www.RAJetter.com to order the fifth book personally autographed. 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. 

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the traditional hot rod is to recreate the past. Not all are 100% era correct, but the feel is there. Sure, some guys go as far as using the same methods and materials available back in the day. While others may fudge a bit and just go for "The Look". The intent is the same, and that is to have something that looks, drives and feels as if it were built sixty or seventy years ago. And no, '40s, '50s and (let me kick you in the nuts now) '60s trucks that are done up without fenders are NOT traditional hot rods... they're rat rods, plain and simple.

The purpose of the rat rod is to gain maximum shock value. If yours sits four inches off of the ground, I'm going to build mine two inches off of the ground. If yours drags on the ground, I'm going to put air bags on mine and dig a ditch so it sits four inches BELOW the ground! I'll admit there is a lot more creative license when it comes to building a rat rod... sometimes going so far as needing that license REVOKED!

When building a traditional hot rod there are rules, a road map, and history to copy. While the reference material is limited, the parts selection and ability to compile all of those parts into a running traditional hot rod is there, albeit leaving little room for creativity. You may find an interesting way to mount your steering column, or geek out on the fit and finish of the entire build... but go too far, make it too trick or too smooth... and you end up having to make excuses to the traditional hot rod police.

While I've tried to leave my opinion out of this one, it may be apparent that in my mind there is a hierarchy of sorts when comparing the two. I know traditional hot rodders cringe every time someone uses the term "rat rod". And boy, do they get downright nasty when people refer to their hard found collection of old car parts by that name. I'm not sure if rat rodders get their panties in a similar wad. Honestly, I can't say that I've ever carried on a conversation with any-

one who was proud to say, "My name is Dave, and I am a Rat Rodder". I tend to just stare at their creations in a similar way that one stares at a train wreck. After all, I think that is their intent. 

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After spending time in Kentucky it was sold and shipped back over the Pacific to a native Hawaiian enthusiast in the 1960s. Miraculously enough, the car stayed unmodified over the years and eventually found its way back to the mainland and up to Gerald Greenfield in Washington, who eventually sold the car to Greg.

Gerald is an avid Golden-Era automobile fan, and a noted judge of Auburns, Cords, and Duesenbergs. He refurbished the mechanicals and added a rare Miller-Schofield overhead valve conversion. Prior to the flathead, bangers were the engines to beat, around which sprang an exciting hop-up culture. Racing legend Harry Miller and his financial partner George Schofield had Leo Goosen create a true overhead valve conversion for Ford's popular inliner. Later, Miller and Goosen would go on to create the famous Offy engines.

The Miller head was a true overhead valve conversion, and when Miller's fortunes started to fade, the tooling was sold to Cragar who made some modifications and sold them through Bell Auto.

The Model B four-cylinder has a pressurized oiling system, and with the overhead conversion, twin carbs, and a set of stronger Zephyr gears in the three-speed, the B400 was now quite a peppery little sedan.

Greg took ownership and installed a set of hydraulic '39 Lincoln brakes after the front wheel locked up and pitched the car sideways in a panic stop. "I didn't want to hurt the car's historical integrity," he says, "but it needed to stop a little better than it did with the mechanical brakes. The Lincolns kept everything period correct."

While the car's mechanicals had been gone through, the paint needed attention and the top and upholstery were heavily tattered. Greg decided to blow it apart for "extensive work" and brought it to Wayne Wulfemeyer for paint and body. It was he who discovered the roof repairs. The factory two-toned paint was laid down after the body panels were smoothed to perfection, and the car's 17 and 18" wire wheels were shod in Excelsior blackwall tires.

Wayne Saunders is an Englishman in Colorado Springs who is widely known for his beautiful faux wood graining on Rolls Royces and other luxury automobiles. His talents were applied to the dash and garnish moldings before Dick Shelton trimmed the cabin in gray leather. The stock dash, steering wheel, and forward-folding passenger seat were all restored to original condition.

So Greg's rare B400 adds yet another chapter to its interesting history, looking better than ever. The car's rarity has been preserved in its near-stock state, and the modifications are period correct and reversible, if ever so desired. In the meantime Ford's upper-level sport sedan has been enhanced with a special blend of parts that create a great little car, and there are few things more distinctive than the rapping exhaust note of a hopped up four-banger.

Tech Specs:

Body: 1932 Ford B400, factory gray paint with black fenders. Paint and body by Wayne Wulfemeyer.

Chassis: Stock frame and suspension, '39 Lincoln brakes.

Power: 204ci Model B four-cylinder, Miller overhead valve conversion, twin Stromberg carbs, stock trans with Zephyr gears.

Wheels & Tires: 17 and 18" wire wheels, Excelsior tires.

Interior: Stock dash with wood-graining by Wayne Saunders, original steering wheel, stock gauges and seats, leather upholstery by Dick Shelton. 

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others from 1911 to 1935 right in Indianapolis, Indiana. Harry C. Stutz changed the name from the Ideal Motor Company after placing 11th at the first Indy 500 during his first production year and quickly developed a line of racy four-cylinder Stutz Bearcat roadsters, often credited with being the first sports cars. A second place finish at the 1928 24-hours of LeMans would stand as the best result for an American car until 1966. With dangerous driving conditions of the day, their "Safety Stutz" ad slogan was highly publicized and marked innovations such as an under-slung chassis design, the 1927 debut of their four-wheel hydraulic brakes, and safety-laminated glass with wire mesh. This explains the white lettering on the car's frame covers, along with a list of drivers on the cowl, starting with George Holman, the car's owner, and his son Bill.

Stutz didn't have the resources to keep up with the "Cylinders Race" of the early '30s luxury cars, but they successfully upgraded their potent inline eight-cylinder with a new 32-valve, dual overhead cam head developed by Fred Duesenberg, called the DV-32. Speed records and global recognition quickly followed. A DV-32 powerplant of 1932 vintage with 328 cubic inches, often called the "Vertical Eight," has been added to this black 1928 roadster for