

Arms of mobility

Since I have used public transportation most of my life, I am not acquainted with the world of motor lingo. But lately I have been introduced to words such as supercharger, intake manifold, gear ratio and so forth. It's all thanks to my friend John Conner that I met recently. He is a genuine motor head with his own dragster or Hot Rod as the lingo calls for. He is helping me change parts on my commute ride. It is an old muscle car, a left over from the sixties. I purchased it recently for 600 bucks so most of the biceps have deteriorated and turned into rust. One evening three of his friends came over with a truck bed full of beers in exchange for using his arc welder. After dark, when the job was done, they were all hanging on hoods and trunks swapping neighborhood gossip. I am in the back, where rookies are supposed to be, nursing a beer and listening to these rugged oily men talking unplugged big block combustion. One of the unwritten procedures was to describe the car's parts and performance before talking about the person who owns it. When most of the news was reported they began sliding over to drag racing which is way over my head. Cars armed with over 8000 horsepower taking a human on 4 wheels a quarter mile under 5 seconds. John knows that I am a novice, and turns around and explains to me:

"With one of those you can get to the store and back in under a minute, Stan." They are all grinning and nodding honestly.

"When the top fuel dragsters go by at the strip, you feel a concussion pounding in your chest and your brain is rattling man." He says that while pounding his chest like a gorilla and wobbling his head. Obviously this is not true and I let them make fun of me, accepting my part as a slapstick target. A month later the National Drag Racing Circus is passing through our town and I am taking Friday off so I can see the qualifications. I wanted to see as many Hot Rods as possible. I sit at the end of the grand stand where it is close to the beer tent and the port-a-potty's. Drinking beer and watching drag racing walks hand in hand, I learned that at home by the TV. Due to the excitement of the engine roar and burnouts, I am extending my bladder to the point of leakage. To my disappointment I do not recognize any top fuel Funny Cars from the TV coverage I have been following on ESPN this year. The lineup lanes became empty around noon so I try to hurry down to the bathrooms. I hear some muffled burnouts behind the grand stands; not thinking much of it I carefully walk down the stairs. While inside this great invention that a port-a-potty is, it occurred to me that my bladder had the same PSI pressure as my tires. Halfway through my natural procedure, two supersonic jets are flying by just over the treetops. ...WWAAAAAOOOOOMMMMM. The port-a-potty is shaking powerfully from the sound waves. In this brief earthquake I am terrified and losing my grip. This was my first encounter with top fuel dragsters and luckily I came out with dry pants from it. Every summer there are plenty of car shows somewhere here in town for the local garage teachers. This Saturday it is going on at the Broadway Mall and I alter my shopping list so I have two reasons to go there. That is one of the disadvantages of being a motor-head; you get your priorities compromised. I have not yet discovered so many ways since I just recently became a one. Another thing I have in common with the motor carried youth is the long arm of the law. Peeling rubber in the neighborhood gets the attention of police cruisers. It is amazing how small you feel in your big rig with the red/blue lights in the rearview mirror and what looks like a trigger-happy officer walking up to you. Anyhow, so when I get to the parking lot by the car show I see one car that stands out. It is John Connor's black Hot Rod with phosphor flames and burning skulls all over it. You see, his weird taste and opinions have their origin in a hospital visit a few years ago. He was scheduled for a minor operation and died in the middle of surgery. He was transferred over to the morgue for an autopsy and woke up 10 hours later scaring the daylights out of the staff. Their high pitched screams lifted him right out of the ocean of dizziness. He once told me in confidence, while laughing, that he walked out like a stiff Frankenstein with his head wobbling and his eyeballs rolling back. Dear reader, you understand that I just don't know about all of his stories, although I verified the morgue part and, oh boy, did they stare at me. Who knows someone like that huh? So anyhow, I am walking around and admiring all the polished paint jobs and chrome when I see John Connor talking to a police officer. While I walk up to them I hear the police officer saying:

"No Sir, that's not how the civil obedience and the constitution are meant to be when it comes to arsenal of arms."

"Hi John, what's up? Are yo' thumb wrestling with the arms of the law again?" I asked him.

"Oh, hi Stan. Well, there's a lot of untapped resources like the Police ride-along an' compensated follow up of leads in the Department of Firearms, Tobacco and Alcohol... an' how on earth do yo' set up a government division with that mix anyhow? Too many wild Saturday nights or what? "

"What's up with all this arsenal talk? It sounds important, like its revolv' around all the four elements." I asked.

"Well yo' actually right Stan. There's firearms, water pistols an' air guns."

"But what about earth?" I asked him.

"It's funny yo' should ask' bout that. The Salvation Army handles all the fightin' down here. Even the simple lifestyles in Africa, over there they do drive-by shootings with the voodoo blow dart pipes. In my next column I will tell you more about the opinions of my friend John Conner.

Your man in the zone
Stanley Mintras