

OUT IN THE STREETS: A DRAMA WITH COMEDIC OVERTONES

(and running only slightly longer than Nicholas Nickleby)

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

RALLYMASTER:	WARREN ("Tres Juevos," all of which are needed to pull this off) GROSSMAN
COURSE MARSHALL:	RAY (Where's my Pepto?) MC CANN
CHECKPOINT CREW CHIEF:	ANDRE (Was that ham or salami?) SIGAL
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION:	CAROL (I don't need a calculator) ROSEN
CHIEF OF ANYTHING HE WANTS TO BE CHIEF OF:	MY TH
CHIEF OF LINING UP CARS IN ASCENDING NUMERICAL ORDER:	RICKY (Want some candy, little girl?) SURIANO
CHIEF OF KEEPING HER EYE ON OTHER CHIEFS:	ANNE (You leave when the big hand is on the 12 and the little hand is on the eleven) HUMPHREY
KEEPER OF THE FLAG:	SHERYL (You'll go when I tell you to) COHN
KEEPER OF THE CURRENCY:	SUZIE (There is no change) WALRICH
GOOD WILL AMBASSADOR:	BILL (Don't bug me, I'm handicapped) HUMPHREY

and... a cast of thousands, three of which are competent rallyists.

ACT I: SCENE 1.

The curtain opens on a large, empty parking lot in Sayville, Long Island. It is early on a Sunday morning in April. The sun is shining. Cars driven by bleary eyed occupants, dressed for combat, and cursing, move in purposeful circles looking for the Rallymaster. He is nowhere to be found. This is a marginal irritation and a good excuse to practice figure eights while trying to figure out what to do next. Suddenly, the chosen location becomes obvious and figure eights are abandoned for the task at hand. These are the REGISTRATION OFFICIALS and they are on a mission.

ACT I: SCENE 2.

As the Registration Officials drone about completing their appointed tasks, swarms of humanity begin to descend upon the scene all asking the same question, "Are you ready yet?" As if in a Greek Chorus the officials cry out, "Not until 9:00 o'clock." A chuck wagon poised strategically away from the hub of activity is doing a land office business in expensive caffeine-laced beverages and "Remember Little Big Horn" commemorative buttons. The proprietor sings the praises of free enterprise.

ACT I: SCENE 3.

Suddenly, without warning, it is as if the entire licensed population of Long Island

has simultaneously decided to carry out a Chinese Fire Drill. The battle lines are drawn as the registration process begins. The officials are pressed by an excited throng of warriors. Lines are formed in wanton fashion. A red line, a green line, a blue line and a colorless line for those who decided to join in too late to preregister. They are punished for their procrastination by having to wait for a color. There is also a line to tell you the line you're supposed to be in. The tee shirt line, strategically located away from the others, quickly requires crowd control services to diffuse a run on extra larges. Bags of vintage Hagenhats appear like manna from heaven and are scarfed up faster than our First Lady can read her horoscope. Cash is being thrust about as if it had been mass produced...by the tenderers. The economy is alive and well in the Long Island Merchandise Mart parking lot on Sunrise Highway in Sayville.

ACT I: SCENE 4.

The Rallymaster makes his entrance, stage left. Quietly, happily surveying the pandemonium, he permits his cheeks to hint at that universal symbol of omnipotence. There will be joy in Mudville tonight. Scene fades as the penetrating voice of one behind a bullhorn implores, "Cars numbered 1 through 100 please start lining up."

ACT II: SCENE 1.

As the curtain opens the authoritative bullhorn is heard. "Cars 601 through 700, please begin lining up - that's Cars 601 through 700 - now, please." The Registration Officials are still hard at their task, the tee shirt officials have explained for the umpteenth time that the only way to get an extra large tee shirt is to rip it off someone else's back. Enter Mr. WBABuchman, obviously impressed with the organized nature of the chaos that surrounds him. Groupies inquire if a new attendance record will be set. Visions of the Guinness Book of World Records entry flash about on a laser beam. Personnel from ATV have appeared on the scene and handle crowd control like The Terminator would a pesky fly. In the distance revving engines and the squeal of tires indicate that the Keeper of the Flag is hard at work, confiscating "I Hate Cat" buttons and pretending to read a stop watch. Fade as a sweet young things implores the Ambassador of Good Will to explain how to add 328 minutes to Ten o'clock. The Ambassador flashes his best Snidely Whiplash leer and produces...his watch.

ACT II: SCENE 2.

Raise lights on an empty parking lot. Registration officials, looking very smug and self satisfied, sip on carbonated caffeine.

we held for all of the mosquitoes and other tiny flying beasts that met his smoke and their Maker at about the same time was well attended.

Rallyists also have soul! We had our own brief crisis (before the more permanent crisis) with vapor lock (TH tells me that happens in the carburetor, it's good to know these things) that was quickly resolved when Reese Harris pulled over and gave us just enough of a tow to unlock the problem. This generosity of spirit was repeated over and over again during the event. It's an unwritten rule that no one retires from an event until it is absolutely obvious that they must. This process usually entails consultation with other competitors, their service crews and occasionally the manual. The corollary to that unwritten rule is to make sure you have tried your biggest hammer on the problem before announcing retirement. Murphy strikes again!!!!!!!

The unsung hero's of any event, to my mind, are the service crews and the control workers. While their team is their focal point, and rightly so, service crews willingly make themselves available at a moment's notice to help out someone in need. While we are naturally prone to pat our own guys on the back for putting up with our shenanigans, there is a special place in our hearts for Don Hagen and Steve Novatne who crewed for our now almost svelte Editor and

Mr. Schneider. They were always there with a pat on the back or a shoulder to lean on when we needed it.

There is something very reassuring about seeing a control worker that you know, either from previous events or other autosport venues. Seeing Joe Kwiatek, Lesley Suddard and a legion of others out there gave us someone to chit chat with briefly which sure doesn't hurt when you're trying to regroup at a stage.

Having gone by retired vehicles on a stage, I could certainly commiserate with Dan Thiel and Chris Shalvoy back at the hotel when they told us how shook up they were to see us shiny side down on Stage 6. It's ironic - after the dinner break reseed we found ourselves up seven places in the order, just in front of Dan and Chris. That being a new experience for us, we assured them that we would get over when they caught us on a stage. Back at the hotel after the event, Dan assured us we didn't need to take our promises quite so literally in the future!

From the point of arrival at an event until all is said and done, one of my favorite groups of people, other than the event sponsors who we dearly love, are the spectators. These mostly local folks (except for relatives who drive impossible numbers of miles to watch us) are a little bit fascinated and more than a little curious about us and our rides.

At this event I met my absolutely favorite spectators of all time. They were a sweet retired couple who were carefully inspecting each and every car at Parc Ferme. He explained everything that was readily apparent about each car and she evaluated the paint job and decorations. When they came upon The Mass I overheard her exclaim, "Oh look, honey, a Catholic car!" After regaining my composure, I explained to them that while it had not been officially anointed, riding in it was certainly a religious experience! On the off chance that she's right, I think a baptismal ceremony followed by a circumcision (a little off the tail pipe, perhaps) and then some chicken bone rattling is probably indicated!

After that? Well, here's the plan. Straightening, Fiberglassing, Painting, new decals, new windshield, a small bank job, change the oil and filter and we're back in business. Piece of cake! As for me, I'm going to get my column in on time, grow award winning dahlias so I can turn this into a gardening tips column (that will be in on time), pester the DOT so they'll get around to weeding the lane dividing planters they built last year on the Grand Central Parkway and Cross Island Expressway and when all else fails I'll perfect hairpin turns in a golf cart. We'll definitely/maybe see you in North Bay, where Vinnie assures us there will not be a Car Number 13!