



Life in the other
LANE

To tell you that the beige MASS was not real pretty the day it was deposited in our driveway is tantamount to saying that Ollie North had a side job. Missing body parts not withstanding, those that did exist were pockmarked much like the surface of the moon. More than a little rust and corrosion had begun its steady march up the rear panels and the absence of any moldings or body accessories made the MASS look like a discard from Lifestyles of the Poor and Tapped Out. It took more than a little imagination to visualize all the plans my TH had for this buggy so I just smiled and nodded my head. I've done a lot of that lately. The last thing a MASS reincarnator needs is a blank stare from his spouse.

Enter Tony Zanello. Tony is, among other things, the owner of Mitchel Park Collision in Uniondale, N.Y. He is a friend of the highest magnitude and shares a level of imagination about MASS reincarnation that is only matched by my TH. They needed it.

Somewhere along the line Tony agreed to open up his facilities and give of his very limited free time to guide my TH through the final stages of the reincarnation of the MASS. If this isn't sponsorship I don't know what is. If this isn't friendship then there ain't no such thing! It goes without saying that we are equally grateful to Dina and Andrew for tolerating Tony's absence when they had better plans for his time.

Within the world of pro rallying a myth has been perpetuated that I would like to officially deny. It is not duct tape that holds a body together, it is stuff called Bondo. Basically this is silly putty for a car body and no self-respecting automotive cosmetologist allows himself to be seen without a wad of it in his back pocket. This grayish goo had the consistency of chewing gum that has been worked on non-stop for about 14 days. When applied liberally, Bondo magically makes the offending dent and surrounding dings disappear.

After the Bondo has been applied, a plastic file, known as a "cheese grater" in the trade, smooths out any unintentional bumps. In the hands of a master, the cheese grater, which actually looks like a nail file for a pteradactyl, minimizes the amount of sanding needed after the Bondo has dried completely. It doesn't take the casual observer long to realize that Tony is a master. In short order he has the dual action sander at work feather-edging the now non-existent dent. This process is patiently repeated dent after dent. O.K., I'll be honest about this, I did observe one application of Bazooka but I won't say where.

Repairing metal work is another matter altogether. Quite frankly, there is just no gentle way of reporting that the implements used in this endeavor are called a "Horsecock Hammer" and "All Purpose Dolly." The very idea that someone actually shaped a tool and then had the audacity to name it as such denies an enlightened society. These names, by the way, replace as most peculiar, that term commonly used in the automotive cosmetology business to describe a simple car wash. Since this newsletter is rated G, I will refrain from jeopardizing that standing. Oh what the hell, it's known as douching.

As the noon hour was nearing, I interrupted the guys to see what they wanted for lunch. (Do you see a pattern in all of this?) I am told briskly to use my imagination as they are busy getting ready to shoot the MASS! I regained my composure after being told the equipment being used was a spray gun not a .357 Magnum! By the time I returned with lunch the beige MASS had become a grey MASS and I am told that by the end of the day it will be a DuPont Centari Acrylic Enamel #10 Corvette White MASS with #8108S Hardener. Over deli sandwiches, (this was too important a day to depend on bologna) chips and soda, Tony and my TH explained how they would sand the primer with 320 trimite paper (an excellent choice I thought) then mask and blow off the MASS before shooting it. I agreed that being masked before being blown off or shot was the civilized approach.

The late afternoon shadows were creeping peacefully over the impatiens and other decorative weeds that grace the front stoop at Chateau Walrich when I heard the insistent rasp of a horn beckoning me outside. There she was, the #10 Corvette White MASS with #8108S Hardener. A tear came to my eye. My thoughts flashed back to those dark days so many months ago when I doubted this day would ever come. We had indeed survived MASS reincarnation, my TH had met his goal and life could return to a higher level of sanity. My TH put his arm around me and planted a kiss on my forehead. Just as I cuddled closer to him to indicate both my pride in his accomplishments and relief that his struggles were over, he leaned over and whispered, "now, let me tell you what we're going to do next."