



# **A SUNDAY JAUNT**

by owen mould

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Under the somber skies of Sunday morn, who should come a calling for a visit but none other than the Island's Man About Town and Chief Motorist of the Island Motor Club, Percy Mandeville-Boughzplatt, perched upon the expensive leather upholstery of his open-top cream and chrome 1937 Bugatti Mandeville-Brot, the perfect Island gentleman out for a Sunday jaunt. For Sunday is the day of the Island Car and Italian Motorcycle Show and Percy required a second to assist.

Not having ever attended a car show, save perhaps for the portion at the How Berkeley Can You Be Festival, I hopped right in expecting us to putter right on over to the Green, but I had little understanding of Percy's European sensibilities and I soon discovered that Percy needed a second hand present so that someone could keep the helm steady while he unscrewed his pocket flask and took a little nip. Or two.

First item on the agenda, before popping into the festivities at noon: stock up on provisions and take in a few East Bay events along the way. Due to a number of credit difficulties, too complicated for Percy to detail while touring through the tunnel, built as the first of its kind in 1927, this involved obtaining provisions off of the Island and off of the Island we went at the luxurious speed of 112 miles per hour. The radio went silent when passed under the estuary, allowing us to appreciate the smooth operation of the Italian motor. When we erupted from the tunnel on the Oaktown side a troupe of carriers just leaving the Kim Mee Fortune Cookie Factory had to throw all parcels in the air and scramble for dear life as Percy took the turn on two wheels, LIVE 105 blasting something soothing by Rob Zombie from the radio, which found its voice once again.

Persuaded by various threats, imprecations and the presence of CHP on the freeway, Percy throttled down to something reasonable, which is for Northern California something between 75 and 80 miles per hour. And so it was we motored up to Berzerkeley in time for the 10th Annual Nude and Breast Parade, which we knew about from perusing the *Urban Stew*.

This marvelous rag is distributed free and contains that noteworthy section called by various weeklies "Calendar" or "Billboard". Many free weeklies contain this section as a public service, except, of course, for the *EB Express*.

Unfortunately, we must inform you that

***THE EAST BAY EXPRESS FORMAT STILL SUCKS !\****

\*Now, as for the Nude parade, a joyous time was had by all, except a few prepubescent high schoolers who were looking for, shall we say, spicier entertainments than the dignity of 40 and 50-year old flesh is built to provide. Well, admission was open to all, guys. Nevertheless, Percy, dressed in plus-fours, white waistcoat, brown and tan oxfords and a linen driving cap, saluted the nudes and his gracious toast to the "Naked and the Proud of Berkeley" was accepted with applause by all of People's Park. In fact, one UCB undergrad, named Jolene, was so taken by Percy's toast that she hopped over the sidewall of the Bug and plopped into the back seat as we took off. Jolene, it turned out, was a language arts major and so she and Percy hit it off right there, singing all of the cabaret songs of the French Resistance. Down at the Black and White on San Pablo, we stocked up on some basic necessities as french bread -- of course -- cheese, six bottles of Sundial Chardonnay, four bottles of Remy Martin cognac, a case of Tanqueray and another of Jack Daniels, two token bottles each of Johnny Walker and Jamesons Irish, a case of seltzer and two lemons.

Let it be known that Percy vigorously spurned all offers of harder stuff, being the legal gentleman that he is. Jolene, however, got all the "ladies" down there up in arms about the competition and so with zoot-suited men wearing slouch hats sporting huge ostrich feathers pursuing us with pearl-handled revolvers we beat a hasty retreat back to the safety of the Island. But not after Jolene had scored a feather boa off of one of the downtown "ladies". After all, it would not do to come into the Island *totally* naked.

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\* (editor's note: as of 2007, the Calendar had been returned to the Express format)

A side jaunt to visit the memorial to the infamous "Massacre of the Jackasses", commemorating the 1852 mining disaster caused by the cloned descendents of Tallulah Bankhead, the mule, could not be left out for the spot lay only thirteen or so miles out of our way.

You may recall that the genetic structure of the recalcitrant mule -- responsible for the destruction of the priceless statues -- had been inadvertently cloned by a alchemical con artist during the Gold Rush. The details of that story and the 1952 mining disaster must remain for another issue. For now we stick to the present.

Here, before the skeletal structure, with Jolene's boa flapping like Old Glory in the wind, Percy gave his brief honorarium: "Once a jackass is always a jackass, no matter who was responsible. And Tally was definitely one hell of a stupid jackass. *Stetenorium Est.*"

Back to the Island we drove, boa flapping out behind like a great flag, radio playing and songs of the French Resistance filling the air. There remained only the Sunday Promenade at the beach, where the fogs of fair Babylon shroud the distant hills across the water and the dogs wait impatiently for bureaucracy to clear the way for the construction of the downtown dogwalk. Down the Central Avenue we pattered at the Island's strictly enforced 25 MPH rate, observing the change in the air and the birds circling in flocks and all the oaks now, even though the temps remain warm, remembering the changes by going all golden before dropping their coverings. And its as if all the trees just know at this time, its the time of the Nude and Breast Parade.

Down by the water, into the third, or fourth, bottle of Remy, while Jolene startled the poodle walkers -- who seem to become scarce about this time the closer to Thanksgiving we get -- we heard the news.

Bombs on Kabul. War -- real War -- has started.

Suddenly it becomes very hard to laugh. To make joy in this world. Jolene chills in the suddenly cool ocean breeze and there has been no sun all day. Percy gives her his coat. What will her parents back in Iowa think about their daughter running all over the county with no clothes on. Everything changes. We know that this war is unlike all the others, going back to WWII. Then, we relapsed into the age-old race-buried Berserker of the Vikings and bombed entire cities to dust, leaving not one stone upon stone amid terrible firestorms. Given the implacable nature of what we face, the Berserker must come out again, and that is a terrible thing. For us. For the world.

The only way we can defeat such an enemy that carries a memory for over a thousand years is to come to such a point that afterward we look back and say, "My god, I did not think I would ever do that! I am sorry for what I did even though it was necessary." I have been to the Middle East and I tell you this is true. But no one important will ever read this.

You could imagine how this story would normally end, with everyone thrashed out in some Hunter Thompson orgy of excess, a frenzy of atavistic desires and smashed up glass. But these times are not normal. Percy dropped me off at my place underneath a hardware store and then drove Jolene back to Berkeley, presumably, without ever visiting the Island Car and Motorcycle show.

It would have been nice to have taken a Sunday drive with Percy about the Island where I live and maybe startled a few citizens intent on Barry Bonds finally breaking the Record. Even so, the Giants are locked out from the Playoffs and so its harder to care about these things. You could hear the shouts across the Island when he hit that 71st, even as the longest game ever played went into the wee hours. We are happy for Barry, but we know, and he knows, that what follows is not at all very certain.

*(From OCTOBER 7, 2001)*



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