

Chevelle

By Alex Strampp

Bridgeport High School, Marion County
3rd Place Winner (Grades 11-12)

The engine snarled as I cruised up to the stop light. The low thumping of the idle 454 pulsed through my entire body. The clean pure smell of sheet metal mixed with that of gasoline and incinerated rubber. The sweet combination of smells permeated the driving compartment. I couldn't help but smile. I was sitting in a dream, literally my dream.

The clean sinuous lines of the car evoked images of a wild animal poised for the kill. This sculpted sheet metal was bathed, no kissed with a black so deep it rivaled the oceans. The chrome trim felt like the sun had somehow made into long pieces of metal and attached with a jewelers precision to the sides of the car. The car was so perfect in every way that it couldn't have been made by mortal hands and yet, by some miracle, I had made it.

The light turned green. I gingerly touched the gas. The car surged forward with the strength and sound of 900 horses straining at the reins. I blinked and almost missed the next stop light. I hit the brakes. Immediately the four six piston brake calipers bit down on the polished slotted brake rotors. The once slack race harness immediately grew tight against my chest and shoulders as I flew forward from the force of the sudden and abrupt stop. I laughed uncontrollably, nothing this much fun could possibly be legal. The light changed and I set off once more with equal parts deafening roar and molten rubber. I had to get out of the city, to escape the short, regulated streets that had become choked with an endless sea of drones. I had to escape the people floating through life never aspiring, never challenging anything, never asking why. They just did what they were told from the day they could understand the language to the day they died. These people are so afraid of failure that they never did anything at all. Not me.

When I get behind the wheel of this vintage piece of iron that is what I'm saying, not me. I won't give up on a dream because it's hard or because it might not work, no I charge full speed ahead into it and hope for the best. People ask me why. Why did you put such a large engine in it, you don't get the mileage that you get from something smaller? Why did you waste so much time fixing something so old and out of date when you can buy a new car and save the trouble? Why did you make the tires so big, why did you do this, why did you do that, why, why, why, why! Why not! People forget that just because it's not the norm doesn't mean it won't work or shouldn't be done. The point of restoring a car is not simply to drive an old car, it is to express yourself with a two ton, 800 horsepower statement. A statement that says, "Hello world, wanna race?"

As I thought about all these lofty ideals I noticed that the brick and concrete jungle had given way to a lush green blur of trees and foliage. I was free, for a short time however, from the rest of the world. I mashed the pedal to the floor and let the supercharged engine breath deep. The entire car torqued to the right as the power was sent to the ten inch wide Mickey Thompson racing slicks. The world seemed to disintegrate around me as I sped ever faster toward my unknowable destination. I could not possibly know where I would end up but I knew two things for sure. It would be far away from the city, and I would get there fast.

Day turned into night as the sun set into a bloody sky. The distortion of the heat coming off the hood warped the very sky I looked into. The yellow lines of the road extended forever into the surrendering sun. Night fell swiftly; I assumed it fell silently for the roar of the engine drowned out anything else. There was nothing, nothing around to disturb the brilliance of the stars ahead of me. It was as though a great black veil had been draped over the world then pierced with the most brilliant light. The weight of what I was seeing was so overwhelming it

compelled me to pull over. I sat on the hood, staring, simply staring. I slept under these lances of light. I slept a deep contented sleep, free of any dreams or distractions. The reason for the absence of any visions of faraway places or exotic settings was simple, I was living it.

I awoke to the damp cool air of a lazy morning. The perfect serenity was enough to evoke the slightest pity when I fired the engine and shattered it forever. I drove on, eventually the road led unstoppably to a place. In this particular case, a town. I almost felt bad as the idle of the engine reverberated off of the ancient brick and mortar of the ancient town. When I shut the Chevelle down I looked around and I was immersed once again into the quiet stillness of the morning. I fueled the engine, checked the oil, and picked up some sandwiches for later. When the convenience store clerk asked where I was headed I shrugged indifferently and left, the little bell marked my exit with a little chime.

Back on the road, the sound of metal vibrating inside the cabin was music to my ears as I continued to chase the sun. The road continued for infinity as I raced the clouds and leaves and sky itself to oblivion. Then the scenery once again changed. The dark greens and browns of the woods evaporated into the soft yellow of vast fields of grass. I wanted to continue forever, sailing unendingly forward on the asphalt waves. Alas the limitations of time forbade this.

Eventually earth would once again claim my body, rust would claim the car and the roads would return to the land it was built upon. But not today, today I would live more in a quarter mile stretch than most lived in a life time. Today I would do my best to find the end of the never ending roads. Today I would drive.