



Fuel For Thought

Landspeed Louise

The Wendover Perspective

As the newly formed Save the Salt Coalition whips up public consciousness with racers, government officials and assorted involved industries it occurred to me that no one has bothered to talk to the “locals” in Wendover. As happens often in emotion-charged situations, the obvious is overlooked, leaving behind a valuable knowledge base, which might alter a direction, improve a process or strengthen a relationship. Certainly those who live and work in Wendover and West Wendover, especially those who have resided there for decades, have very finely focused viewpoints on the how to “save the salt flats” from destruction.

I sought out the easy-going Crawford siblings, Mike and Kerrie who have called Wendover home since 1962 when their father, Ray, became the manager of the Standard Oil Company full-service service station garage on Wendover Boulevard and then bought the place in the '80s and renamed it Crawford's Conoco. The tall, dark-haired Crawford kids worked pumping gas, changing tires and oil, even performing tune-ups.

Mike recalled Chevy speed king Nolan White guarded his speed secrets like Fort Knox shields the nation's bul- lion; he would “move in” to one of the repair bays to work on his racecar - often making key changes in his trailer - away from prying eyes. Kerrie recalled that dad would let motorcyclist Burt Munro tinker and tool but one of the kids always had to “keep an eye on him.”

Both kids began their “save the salt” education by removing salt from racer “salt flats” vehicles left in the back of the station. Fascinated when the racers came to town, they often rode their bikes on the salt to see who and how speed deeds were done.

While neither is a geologist, nor scientist, they both have observed, close-up, salt conditions for more than 40 years - wet, dry, mushy, hard, smooth, pock-marked, underwater, all of it. “Film crews are the most blatantly destructive out on the flats,” said Kerrie, now a mother of two daughters, Allison and Morgan Supanich, “The BLM rarely, if ever, monitors their activities, but we often see production sets and building materials left behind and gouges in the salt from vehicles that got stuck. Wendover doesn't see any of the permit money, yet for years the locals have cleaned up afterwards, including the “secret shoot” people who never bother to get a permit. The BLM ought to put up a gate at the end of the access road to prevent people from driving out on the salt without permission.”

She added that the locked gate ought to be flanked by at least two miles of fencing on either side of the access road and even though access would still be possible it would be at a much greater risk of punching through the thin salt layer into the wheel-sucking mud.

As for the salt shrinkage noted over the past quarter century, Kerrie quickly points to two big culprits: the Salduro Loop and salt brine collection pond dykes. “When you make a bowl smaller, the usable surface shrinks as well,” she noted of the distinct 6-foot high mud mounds visible as you drop down onto the salt at the end of the current access road, “lots of prime salt sits inside that abandoned loop.”

More “damming”, according to Kerrie, is the dyke that runs from the interstate, close to Karl Momen's peculiar-looking “Tree of Utah” sculpture at mile marker 26, all the way out to floating island - more than 22 miles away.

Supposedly erected to protect the racecourse back in the '80s when the

October 1988 and then again in 2003 showing a marked improvement of salt crust after the construction of a 1996 berm, an extension of the existing mud mounds that form collection ponds zig-zagging along the eastern side of the speedway. More interesting is that the photos also show a great deal of salt collecting against the north side of the road and the shrimp dyke. One can only guess where all that jammed up salt might flow during the water-laden winter recovery period if the impediments were removed.

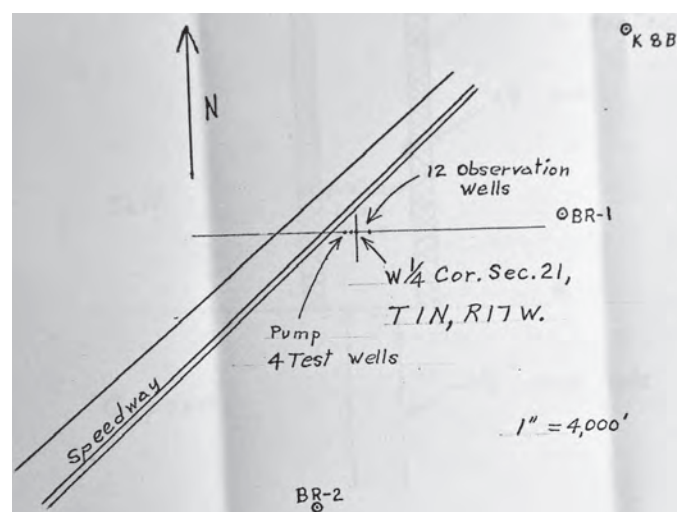
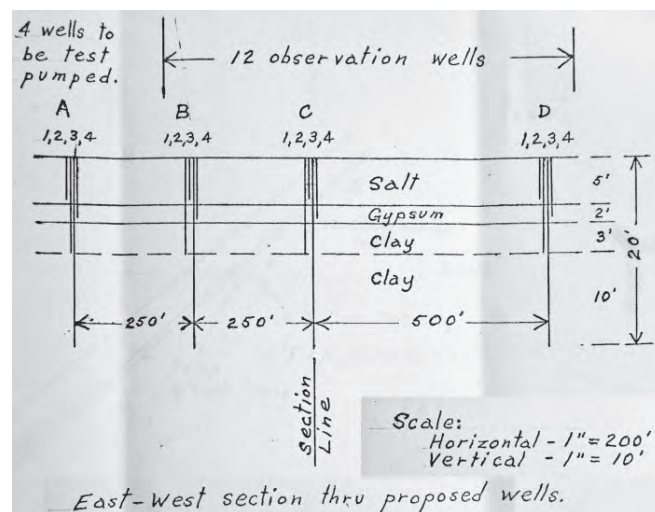
Mike Crawford, who owns the auto parts store in town, wasn't too concerned about this year's mushy, pockmarked salt surface. “It always looks like that when we get too much rain,” he said with almost a dismissive tone, “Too much water dilutes the brine concentration and prevents the salt from hardening on the surface.” That also made sense to me. I thought about how rock hard the salt gets as it dries in the wheel wheels and along the rocker panels of vehicles all week long only to quickly dissolve when sprayed with water.

A later 1997 USGS report downplayed the occasional flooding and clearly showed that mining was the biggest culprit behind the salt loss with the loss of crystalline salt from the playa surface estimated to be about 975,000 tons per year. The concurrent subsurface loss of salt in solution was computed to be 850,000 tons annually.

One thing is clear: no single phenomena or action is responsible for the salt flats shrinkage. The hand of man bears a great deal of responsibility, but nature and weather also play a distinct part. Any corrective action must consider all three.

“No one in Wendover wants the Bonneville Salt Flats to go away,” said Crawford, who worked on the flats for 13 years, “No more than they would want their backyard to evaporate, but who can you trust to say what's happening? There are too many voices and I am not sure if the loudest is the best or the craziest.”

Crawford noted that one downfall of the newly formed Save the Salt Coalition



Great Salt Lake was flooding, there were plans to pump the excess lake water onto the west desert's Newfoundland Basin, but the big pumps installed were never activated. Instead, the new dyke was a boon for the brine shrimp industry that set-up a processing plant on the east end of the flats close to the interstate. It is this shrimp dyke, insists Supanich, and the road that connects to Floating Island to the Silver Island Mountain range, that blocks the natural annual ebb and flow of salt from the north - an area now being investigated by some high speed racers looking for a safer, longer salty speedway.

She has a good point. An analysis of the salt-crust thickness and its relationship to the Salt Laydown Project on the flats by geologists White and Terrazas included satellite images of the flats in

During the winter and early spring of 1992-93 extensive, prolonged flooding radically changed the salt surface by preventing the formation of the annual crust well into the summer. When the water finally evaporated the salt that bubbled back up through the muddy clay “goo” was now spread out much further and much thinner than the previous year.

Satellite photos showed the 43 square mile playa in September 1992 ballooned to 58 square miles by August 1993 according to a 1997 United States Geological Survey (USGS) report. USGS reps James L. Mason and Kenneth L. Kipp, Jr. estimated some 10 to 14 million tons of salt might have been lost to the aquifers or was deposited beyond the existing salt playa. A similar condition arose during the 1983-84 racing seasons.

(STS) was it lack of faces - in Wendover, or in the news. As a member of STS, I have to agree, yet believe the slight is unintentional as the group is newly formed and still figuring out its game plan. “They've had meetings, wrote letters and have contacted our state and national legislators, but never once contacted the City of Wendover - the best source of local knowledge - about the Salt for help, information, or expertise.”

Ouch. Crawford ought to know, besides a life-long resident, Eagle Scout and business owner, he also serves as Mayor. He also thinks the local voice has been diminished, overshadowed by the gaming industry. “I've been told by several racers that ‘this is a federal issue not a

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Rodders Respond

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clubhouse.

How about if Goodguys establishes some guidelines for the use of these before they get more out of hand? Set up a time, or just ban them in paved areas or on sidewalks where they block passage. Finally, as a taxpayer, I don't want to see members driving spikes and screws into the pavement to erect these things. It damages the pavement and costs us money.

Thanks for a great show and a place to vent!

J. R. Nicewarner
Gahanna Ohio

J.R., Great points that I think many will agree with. Even with our ongoing efforts to police lawn chair space saving, people still constantly try to claim space. I don't get it personally, but we'll continue to try our best to make the events as fun and fair as possible. K!

LAND SPEED LOVER

Hi,

Thanks for the great Goodguys events and "Gazette" magazine. I enjoy the events and professional organization.

Thanks for publishing Louise Noeth's "Fuel for Thought" monthly column featuring land speed racing particularly Bonneville Salt Flats. Having attended this year and last it is truly a blast! It's a huge party, huge car show, fast cars and loud noises. Louise captures it very well.

Keep up the good work. See you in Scottsdale.

Larry Crosby,
McAllister, MT

Fuel For Thought

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local problem?" Crawford revealed, "I think the whole town is minimized by that kind of thinking. Save the Salt needs to quit pointing fingers and start figuring out what to do, the science needs to be investigated."

We're on it Mike. I've already spent nearly a work week of hours researching precisely those things science-based at the University of Utah's Marriott Library, Utah Historical Society and the USGS - an enormous task that begs weeks of focused study but has already yielded one piece of salt science. In the late 1960's then Governor Rampton commissioned an evaluation study of the salt flats. One of the engineering geologists recorded a five-foot-thick salt crust observed from core samples taken at multiple locations along the speedway. Today you'd be lucky to find a few inches.

On a more personal level from the local perspective, both Crawford and Supanich ask the question many Wendover residents and employees do: "Why do the racers forget to wipe their feet when they come to Wendover? They track salt into every public place without a second thought. Would they do the same thing if it were mud they were tracking all over town?" Supanich agreed and pointed out how upsetting it is during race events to watch people kick the salt loose from their vehicles in parking lots and along city streets in town expecting that "someone else" will clean it up.

Ouch again. Is it asking too much to extend a bit of friendly courtesy and knock the salt off before coming into town to eat? If everyone took a few minutes to stop on the salt, just before climbing onto the access road, and kicked off the accumulated salt - better yet, brought along the water sprayer that many use to clean out the racecar wheel wells and clean the salt off each night, there would be more salt to race on. Maybe not millions of tons, but as I see it, we can all do our part, however small, to save the salt and be welcome guests in the process.

Anyone attending this year's racing knows how wet the salt at the end of the access road as you dropped down onto the salt. Supanich knew exactly why the area was a mushy mess. "Most people don't know that there are thousands of small holes, worm-like tubes that run horizontally through the salt filled with water. When these are broken through at the surface you get water that runs out, pools and causes the pock marks we had this year." There is an underground spring that crosses at a 45 degree angle about 120-feet northeast of the road's end," she explained, "All the vehicle traffic, especially the heavy trailers, crack the salt cap - it was only about 3/4" thick this year - and acts like a sponge, every time a vehicle rolls over, it breaks the fragile surface a bit more and squeezes out water from below."

After talking with Supanich I made it a point to stop at the end of the road each night and scrape off the salt from my vehicle. It took less than 10 minutes to clean the whole thing. Now imagine how much less mush we might have had if everyone coming off the salt had done the same thing. Saving the salt can be done one bucketful at a time and it is something to which each and every one of us can contribute.

Note: Photojournalist Louise Ann Noeth is the authoress of the award-winning book, "Bonneville: The Fastest Place on Earth," a complete historical review of the first 50 years of land speed racing. After 11 years in print, less than 15 of the author's special autographed edition remain. For more details and to order, go to: www.landspeedproductions.biz.



Bangin' The Gears

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illegal drags, high school fistfights and racing with trains. "Recollections Regrets & Random Acts" contains youthful stories of 11 well known men in the hot rod world. "Accidents & Incidents," contains "guest" storytellers and some Denver rod running stories. To order each or a package deal on all four, visit www.RAJetter.com.

PPG Dream Car Pick

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Derek loves to scour the local wrecking yards for solutions and found the OEM-looking A/C vents in a Ford F-150. He also sourced the seats from an '07 Ford 500 four-door sedan and re-contoured them to fit. To retain the OEM, concept car feel, he reinstalled the various interior buttons and fasteners. Owner Frank was also trial fitted into the car several times to dial in the ergonomics.

One of the only remaining factory pieces is the car's original Rosewood steering wheel. It works to blend the gauges, the Hurst shifter, and the leather-wrapped dash together in a classical manner.

Derek says that with the Art Morrison chassis, the three pedals, the big block and the big Wilwood disc brakes, the Chevelle is like a racecar in a show car skin. He's abused it in testing and it's fully functional and comfortable.

OCD Customs has several other cars in the works, and judging from their website, www.ocdcustomcars.com, they will all be as noteworthy as this black Chevelle. We will be keeping our eyes open, you should too.

Good News

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of December, 2011, most all the world stops to recognize that special event which took place. Office parties will take place; Christmas bonuses will be given out; days off will be granted; little kids dressed in their Christmas costumes will sing their Christmas carols at various churches across this land; families will visit other family members locally as well

as others across the country whom they have not seen for perhaps years; and we in the street rodding world 'gear' up for an up-coming exciting year of more Goodguys events; all the while one other most important exciting event is to be recalled and remembered. A little further down in that first chapter of Luke 1 tells us about it: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Jeannie and I trust that this Christmas will be even more than you ever dreamed or expected it to be. Not only that you will receive your heart's desire in material gifts given and received, but more importantly that it will be the year of recognition of what John said, in John 1:29; "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." And for that we're promised "The Old Becoming New!"

We trust you have a most wonderfully and blessed Christmas season! See you next year at the first Goodguys event of 2012 in Scottsdale, AZ.

Are you interested in either sending your son/grandson, age 16-19 to a CRA Hot Rod Camp in '12? Perhaps you would consider sponsoring a young guy? Call or write CRA for more info: CRA, PO Box 2029, Branson West, MO 65737; 417-338-8537; cra@integrity.com.

Flashing Back

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then issue tickets."

In 1958 Tom sold his '40 coupe to Bob Lindquist with a stock engine; he sold the built flathead to Chris Olendorf. Then he bought a 1955 Chevy Bel Air, which he modified, with the front end in the weeds and the car was striped inside and out by Baron and Roth. The next year he bought a '57 Chevy and made it a duplicate of the '55. Over the years he owned a bunch of hot rods, including four '40 Ford coupes. In fact, he's never been without a hot rod. But, as Tom is quick to point out, among hot rods he prefers the '32 Ford 3-window coupe, the Victoria and the roadster, in that order. In 1981 Tom was finishing up a '32 5-window coupe when he found a 1932 Ford Victoria in rough shape. It was missing a lot of parts, the interior wood was mostly missing, it had bullet holes, the rear frame horns had been whacked off and the fenders were inside the car. "But it was already chopped 3 1/2 inches," Tom said, "and I saw what the car could be rather than what it was." It took Tom years of hard work to make the car right, and although he's had it on the road the car keeps evolving. This past winter he put in a genuine '32 3-window dash with the little glove box. He and his wife drive it to many rod runs in the southwest, and