

# Among the Natives

Huffing Fumes at the Matt Court Monster Jam



Not to gloat but, on paper, my cultural resume is fairly sophisticated. I have eaten escargot. Every year I loyally re-up my *New Yorker* subscription. Within a few bars I can identify Beethoven's symphonies, one through nine, and I'm not averse to watching movies with subtitles. I am conversant in the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx, the post-structuralist critiques of Roland Barthes, the scorched-earth feminism of Luce Irigaray and the transcendental idealism of Gilles Deleuze. My bookshelves are home to such worthies as Woolf, Whitman,

Stendahl, Dostoyevski, Hamsun, Nietzsche, Malamud, Munro and Melville. I can explain the Monroe Doctrine.

That said, I would now like to offer some different bone fides which, say what you will, I do not consider contradictory: Whenever I have to blow my nose, I plug one nostril with my index finger and fire a string of snot into the street. My favorite place to piss is off the end of a porch. I eat pork rinds. Growing up in a small rural town on the Olympic Peninsula, I was reared among an extended family of Croatian immigrants who

fished and logged for a living, who drank Rainier out of cans and drove Ford pickups that were bashed in from sideswiping trees. My jobs have included running skiff on a purse-seiner, pumping gas, shoveling shit, picking gypsum in Omak and butchering salmon in Dutch Harbor. I lost my virginity by walking a wooded trail behind my house to visit a sweet girl who lived in a propped doublewide and whose mother drove my school bus. My favorite smell is turpentine, and I think farting is hilarious.

So when I hit the floor of the Advance

Auto Parts® Monster Jam truck show on Saturday morning, March 26, at Matthew Knight Arena, and beheld the collected crowd of mullet-heads, shit-kickers, tough mamas, grizzled yahoos, grease-monkeys, cud chewers, bikers, long haulers, cholesterol cowboys and tow-headed kids with tight crew cuts, I thought — without an iota of irony — *these are my people*. I grew up on this shit. The euphoric masochistic auditory pleasure of having your eardrums blown by the unmuffled roar of eight cylinders revving is not lost on me.

If you've never been to a monster truck jam, you've likely made fun of a monster truck jam. It's understandable. Cars have colonized our once-beautiful planet, and bounteous nature is losing the asphalt battle, eaten to shreds by the exigencies of highways, byways and parking lots. Addiction to oil has cost us gazillions of dollars and an immeasurable sacrifice in human blood — not to mention our spiritual integrity. Why in the name of all that is holy would anyone want to spend his money and leisure time watching other people drive around for entertainment?

Why? For the same complex reasons arsonists start fires and nymphos seek sex and cutters cut themselves and commuters rubberneck at head-on collisions. The thrill of watching a jacked-up truck with 62-inch tires (\$2,500 per tire) drive willy-nilly over the top of four cars is all that, and more: excessive, explosive, sensual, deliciously painful and extravagantly, compulsively pointless.

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