



• Now, as the end of the century inches closer, we once again are coming face to face with Newton's law—for every action, there is indeed a reaction. For every good time, there's a rotten time. For every cheer, there's a boo. For every hello, there's a goodbye . . . throughout all eternity.

The Energy Crisis is really not a crisis at all. It is merely the cold, gray dawn of the morning after the greatest party in the history of mankind. It seems like just yesterday—in fact it was just yesterday—that the world was populated almost entirely by gas-guzzling whoopee-makers who burned fuel with the reckless, joyous abandon of Diamond Jim Brady swilling champagne from a chorus girl's slipper on New Year's Eve. From all points of the compass the happy roar of combustion engines filled the air as everybody from toddling tots to creaking elders blipped throttles and let 'er roar. Trail bikes, all-terrain vehicles, campers, snowmobiles, stereo-equipped air-conditioned lawn mowers, power saws, motor-driven surfboards, motor-driven *anything* all blended in a mighty chorus of hedonistic ecstasy.

And now a chilly sun is rising in the East and casting a dank light over the wreckage of the party. The celebrants, heads throbbing, filled with vague painful remorse, are beginning to root among the remains of last night's debauch, scrounging for a cigarette butt long enough to get lit without setting their red noses afire; each in his own secret way aware that the riotous night is over, just maybe for good.

Naturally, there are those among the hung-over morning-after victims who are loudly blaming everybody in sight for the morning-after disaster. "Some bastard musta spiked them drinks. I told you we shoulda gone home at eleven-thirty!"

The rising wait of recriminations will go on and on for some time. Then, when the full realization that all the booze is gone, even the beer, and no amount of handwringing will bring it back hits, we'll settle in and life

will go on. And the water skis by the tens of millions will gather dust in summer cottages until they become curios of a past romantic age and are sold at large prices as antiques.

In a few years wide-eyed kids will pluck at aging codgers' elbows and ask, "Gramps, tell us again how you used to pull Uncle Donnie up and down the lake all day on those things he wore on his feet," and once again Gramps will recount his wondrous tales of the Old Days when it was nothing for a ten-year-old lout to be towed hour after hour behind a pair of 115-hp Johnsons and down at the other end of the lake was a marina where you could buy a million gallons of gas, no questions asked, and if you wanted to set fire to it and make a bonfire, nobody said a thing. They won't believe it, and you can't blame them. Already those days seem a thousand years ago. Then Gramps, warmed by bourbon and the applause of the wondering tykes, will go on:

"Yep, in them days it wasn't uncommon for one family, a father, a mother and just two kids, maybe, to have four or five cars, just a-burnin' up gas as fast as they could jump in and out of the front seat. There'll never be another time like them days, kids, and I'm glad to say that I was there and I was part of it too. Someday I'll take you down to the museum, show you some a'them things. You kids ever hear of a snowmobile?" He pauses dramatically as a good

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storyteller always does.

Tot: "A machine for making snow?"

Grandpa chuckles. "No, they got a big old beautiful Sno-Slaughterer down at the museum that I gotta show you. I had one a' them when I was a boy no bigger'n you. Got it back in '69. She'd do maybe fifty through drifts. You shoulda seen them cows run! One pig damn near passed out one day when I buzzed 'er. Mary Jo! Hey, Mary Jo, you listening out there in the kitchen?"

His wife, a stoutish blue-haired lady wearing the remnants of a long-gone age, appears in the kitchen door. Her ancient love beads and Gucci miniskirt gives her the quality of a Currier & Ives etching.

"Yes, Billy Bob, I been listening to you rattling on about the good old days, and you kids won't believe it but every word that Gramps is telling you is the gospel truth."

Gramps slaps his knee in senile joy. "Lord A'mighty, they was real men back in

them days. Mary Jo, remember the Demolition Derby? All day long sitting there in the hot sun, cheering them crazy drivers crashing cars and blowing up gas tanks. Kids, they usta even put that stuff on TV. Why there was hardly a show where somebody wasn't crashin' a car or racin' around chasin' crooks, rollin' 'em down hills . . . we had good TV shows in them days!"

Tot: "Gee whiz! Golly, you mean you did all that stuff? You could get all the gas you wanted, just for having fun?"

Gramps: "Son, that's what gas was for in the good old days. Fun! Why, I had maybe ten, 15 things they used to call credit cards—little pieces of plastic with your name on, you'd just drive in any time you wanted and say 'Fill 'er up.' I used to say that maybe three, four times a day, 'Fill 'er up.' I wish I'd kept some of them cards. They'd be worth real money today, all them screwy collectors scurryn' around tryin' to buy 'em for God knows how much money. Why, I had a whole pocket full of 'em. I can still remember the names they had on 'em. Texaco. Mobil. Getty. Exxon. Gulf. And they was so hungry to sell you gas they'd even give all kinds of stuff away so's you'd come to their station. Mary Jo! Hey, Mary Jo!"

"Yes?" Grandma answers.

"Do you remember that time we got a Joe Namath glass at the Shell station?"

"I certainly do, Billy. And the plastic salad bowl that we brought home from Charlie's Gulf Station . . . and the steak knives we got at that Texaco station down on Route 41. I sure wish you hadn't thrown all that stuff out. It'd be worth a fortune today."

Tots, in unison: "Tell us more!"

"Well, sometimes when I get to thinkin' about the old days I can hardly believe that they really were. Why, do you know that I had a big machine-up in my room that they used to call a Hi-Fi. A hundred watts of audio, and I'd play that thing maybe six hours a night, just like there was no tomorrow."

Tot: "Your father didn't get mad?"

Gramps: "Mad! Hell, no. He gave me that Hi-Fi for my birthday. Had me an electric guitar and I'd play along with The Beatles. That git-tar alone musta used 500 watts, and the old man'd be setting down there in the living room watching that big old color TV we had. In those days they didn't have meters on 'em or anything. You just turned it on and played it as much as you wanted. I guess, kids, that's the thing about the old days that made 'em so great. Nobody ever worried, not like today. We just went out and had fun. That was the name of the game, as they used to say. Yep, me and your grandpa were what they called the Fun Generation, and let me tell you, we sure had it. I guess the party's over, but it was great while it lasted!"

Gramps is drowsing off. His voice drops to a mutter. Grandma appears in the doorway. She whispers: "Now you kids go out and play. Grandpa's had an exciting life and he's tired and needs his sleep." •