

Maddog Unleashed

Annual Fuelishness Is a Spring Tradition, Like Pollen, Potholes

Suppose I was planning a 1,500-mile driving trip, get 25 mpg, but find gas costs 50 cents per gallon more than I'd anticipated. That's still only \$30 more for gas. No wonder we won't get out of our cars. —Randy Kasten of Oakland, as the average price per gallon of Bay Area unleaded hit \$3.36



BY PATRICK O'GRADY

Gas prices are shooting upward like tulips hunting sunshine. Come summer, gas may cost as much as drinkable beer, and then Mothers Against Drunk Driving will have to disband, because even the most committed drunkard will finally be forced to choose between drinking and driving.

The press is dutifully cranking out the traditional viewing-with-alarm over this seasonal affliction, but it doesn't bother me nearly as much as the pine pollen does. I don't buy as much gas as I do beer (Anchor Liberty Ale is roughly \$14 a gallon right now). And with our crumbling roads sporting more pits than Charles Bukowski's cheeks, drinking at home is a lot more fun than driving.

Where's a guy going to drive at four smacks a gallon that beats home sweet home? I've motored from Maine to Spokane, Canada to Mexico, and most places in between—hell, I've toured more states than a Communist Party presidential candidate chasing federal matching funds—and I can tell you for certain, one gas station looks pretty much the same as another.

And don't even talk to me about air travel to some exotic foreign land. I'll cross the pond just as soon as Gen. George Armstrong Bush makes Europe as safe for Americans as John McCain says Iraq is. That bulky getup Mr. Straight Talk was sporting when he went impulse-shopping in Baghdad with a hundred grunts, three Blackhawks and a couple of Apache gunships looked a little warm for a summertime spin along the French Riviera.

The Road to Hell, Etc. Here in God's country we've already burned through the overtime and materials budget for fixing what winter has done to the roads, and given that it's only April any cyclist who's stowed the snow shovel and the stationary trainer in the garage is in for an unpleasant surprise.

So is the weight-weenie who favors wheelsets built of spider webs and moonbeams. Gram-counters will be spending a lot of time squatting in heaps of sand and broken glass on various unswept shoulders, fixing flats and straightening wobbles, envying the old-schoolers rumbling blithely past on wheels they once thought better suited to oxcarts.

With the rising price of oil, asphalt suddenly costs more than Britney's bar tab and rehab, and Colorado Springs is thinking about filling potholes with its surplus of drug-addled, hooker-nuzzling, heterosexually challenged sky pilots.

This will be a shock to cyclists unaccustomed to hearing Ecclesiastes lisped at them through a meth pipe from a hole in the ground. But the innocent will have to suffer alongside the guilty, as everyone is sick of communion wafers that taste like Sudafed and baby oil.

Good News and Bad News. The good news is, before long most everyone who isn't a lawyer, an "American Idol" hopeful or a presidential candidate is liable to be in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Guantanamo or the cemetery. So the nation's roads should be a good deal less congested for those of us who are too old for war, too young for the nursing home and too fond of playing with what many of our neighbors will insist on dismissing as a child's toy until the last gas station hangs up the last sign reading, "Out of Business. No More Gas."

The bad news is, it's going to take a fleet of sailboats to bring all of Taiwan's welders to the States and retool those idle GM plants for bicycle production to meet the sudden spike in demand.

And with the oil wells gone dry, where's the rubber for tires coming from? Do we nationalize the contents of Bill Clinton's nightstand? Who among us dares enter that bedroom? I say we send in Dick Cheney, wearing a blue dress. Put that sneering mouth of his to good use for a change. If I recall correctly, Big Bill likes to have a little something extra to get ahold of.