

Redneck Heart of Darkness

Written by Richard Brooks (photos by Mark Shaffer)

Wednesday, 21 July 2010 14:46

A couple of enlightened journalists get their Southern on, Knievel style.



Every once in a while a Southern man needs to get in touch with his Inner Redneck: eat some barbecue, drink a Pabst Blue Ribbon, listen to “Sweet Home Alabama,” howl at the moon.

Mark Shaffer of Lowcountry Weekly and Richard Brooks of Bluffton Today, both of the Enlightened Redneck persuasion, eschew the racist, violent and misogynistic aspects of their heritage.

Nevertheless, there is something to be found in the motorsports arena that appeals to the Southern-born male on a visceral level – and it’s not just the head-turning appeal of big hair, halter top, cutoff jeans and stiletto heels peculiar to the culture.



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Thus they found themselves on a July 3 road trip with a dozen or so like-minded Beaufort boys and girls (average age: 60ish) barreling through that cultural wasteland known as south Georgia.

Also on board were Wilson Kirven (the chauffeur), Whitey Poertner (the travel guide), Daniel “Duby” Dubatowka, Stephen Dubatowka, Pam O’Bryan, Kevin Lewos, Carolyn Lewis, Michael “Stretch” Stavac, Alan Kirby, Jesse Foley and Mary Arne.



Their destination was greater metropolitan



Valdosta. Their purpose was to watch motorcycle daredevil and local celebrity “Kaptain” Robbie Kniewel jump over stuff.

Kniewel, as the son of Evel Kniewel, comes by this craziness naturally, or genetically anyway, and bills himself as “The World’s Greatest Daredevil.”

Kniewel has made more than 250 jumps, according to his website, www.knieveltour.com .

Like his Dad, he jumps over the usual, mundane daredevil objects like buses, trucks, military vehicles, the Caesar’s Palace fountain and the Grand Canyon.

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But he's also turned in some oddities:

- A barge-to-barge jump in March 2006 in Jacksonville, Fla.
- The Batmobile, a 1959 Harley Davidson and four huge flame throwers in July 2006 in Butte, Mon.
- \$4.8 billion in fake money (the amount of interest paid to customers of ING Direct) in June 2007 in Wilmington, Del.
- And four airplanes and a helicopter in August 2008 in Heyward, Wisc.

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