

It was a dark and stormy night...

Actually, it was a bright sunny day. So I decided to do some exploring of the “neighborhood” of east central Indiana. VERY rural. So with the Cabrio top down, I set off on Rt. 101 in search of things to see. I had been living from my motorhome since January 12, which was very interesting as the pipes froze the third day I was there, having arrived to a supposedly “Open Year-Round” state park, after driving about 1.5 miles along a blind and winding road only to find the plow had stopped, leaving a huge mound of impassable snow and ice, and me with a need to back all 54 feet of motorhome and car trailer back the same distance. On glare ice from the storm the previous night. All of which had followed my having to drive through strong lake-effect off both Ontario and Erie in getting there. But they cleared the rest of the road and one site for me. Talk about feeling ALONE!

Anyway, if you haven't lined the cat box yet, the biggest deal was the lack of water. I had filled the onboard 70 gal. tank before travelling, and expected to refill there, but was informed there was NO water, even at the maintenance area. How that is remotely possible is beyond me, but you know gummint...

Turns out the solution to the freezing issue was straight forward and conservative; I put an icemaker kit on a hot water line, which with a trickle flow from the demand pump back to the tank kept hot water immediately at the shower or tap, the 70 gal. storage tank warm, and some movement of the water at all times. Perfect solution. So water lasted about 4 weeks per tank (it helped to eat almost nothing unless prepared by Stouffer's - no cleanup). But I digress...

This was practically the first weekend I had not been busy with the project, so I decided to explore a little in my latest Porsche. The Mounds Reservoir, where I'd been staying, was now open full-season, so I had a two week limit starting 5/1. So I had to go find alternative parking arrangements. The reservoir is man-made by the Corps of Engineers, and is really quite a feat. It stretches some 30 miles north from the dam at Brookville, IN, with Routes 101 to the east, and 1 to the west of the lake. Then they have three crossover causeways along the route.

Connersville, a town about a quarter the size of Syracuse, is the biggest burg in the area, and I was surprised to see a '79 928, white with tan leather interior in excellent shape, and an asking price of \$7995 at a used dealer there. If you are looking for a pre-S, it looked pretty good, though the place was closed at the time, so I have no more info than that. But I can get it. Needless to say, Connersville is not my idea of the hot Porsche market. I continued north on Rt 1 until I did a really un-male thing; I asked for directions to Liberty, which is on the east side of the lake. Good thing. I was about 18 miles north of the short way to get there, as 101 goes east from Liberty. So I am driving back to, then through, town and looking for Rt 46, which supposedly takes me right into Liberty. I've gone what feels like too far, when I come upon an accident, with a cop directing traffic around. Turns out one of the participants is a key player in making the project machines work, but I did not find out until later, and that is another story. Anyway, I stop to ask the cop for directions. He tells me “it is two more blocks then take a left, then bring back the car”. Yeah. Not a bad little town at all.

I follow the instructions, then with a little deducing determine I should follow a road which seems to start in the wrong direction and has no indication of going to Liberty, but it is a nice day, so whatever. Turns out exactly correct, brings me into Liberty, where gas is \$.12 per gallon less than in either Brookville or Connersville. I had discovered that the previous day (Saturday) when I'd driven up 101 to Liberty just to see what was there, and wound up buying a season pass to the three state parks along the way. I had also discovered “Wally World”, and seriously wondered whether the Griswolds knew of its existence.

Here in the middle of farm country was an amusement park with individual entertainment instead of the mass rides and carnival of, say, the NY State Fair. They had a water boat & tank area which allowed you to shoot rubber balls at “opponents”, a long slide, batting cages, basketball (remember, we’re in Hoosier country here) courts, etc. They ALSO have GoKarts; four different setups. I tried each of three, since the fourth was made for ONLY little kids. Of these, the worst was NasKart, with its 3 wide oval track. With my corpulence, and the car’s governor, it mattered little whether I ran a decent line. With even a slight uphill, anyone carrying less mass could simply drive by, but going back down the other side, they could stay right with me no matter how much they scrubbed off in the turns. Add the fact that these things had an enclosed cab on something half the height of a real car, and you see it was a less than pleasant experience on which I did not waste another dime. Believe it or not, that was the most expensive ride there.

They had a better road course, where the line could result in some benefits, but it was basically flat, and again the governor limited the advantage one could gain from maintaining revs by smoothing the arc. In fact, because of the physical rail around the entire track, it was almost impossible to avoid someone lighter merely getting into your line and forcing you wide. Not really a bad ride, but not thrilling either.

But they have a small oval which is worth the drive, and bring plenty of cash - you’ll get a LOT more than your money’s worth there; at the skidpad! They use essentially the same cars as at the road course, but the oval has a 2 Deg negative camber around it, with wide runoff area. They toss flour or some such powder which reduces adhesion further, on what feels like a VERY smooth and lightly oiled concrete surface. And it is a BLAST!! On such a setup, I could teach the fundamentals of car control and competitive driving to anyone, because EVERY car will slide on it, and the faster one goes, the more drift. But it is possible by adjusting the line to almost circular to keep revs, and therefore speed, up, and set late apexes so you come out of the “end corners” inside of the other people on the track, and just blow their doors (or lack thereof) off.

Now reality and the laws of physics says that my mass should make me MORE likely to slide, but that is where this ride is so great; it actually REWARDS capability. Time and again, until I ached from climbing in and out of these diminutive things, I would run at full tilt and lap the field three or four times in the six minutes of a run for \$3.50, a HUGE bargain. Only once did anyone actually pass me, and he took exactly my same lines, and told me later he RACES Karts. The secret is no different from driving the 90 at Watkins Glen, or any other turn on any track, and is precisely how I have stayed with and passed more powerful SC’s in my Targa; by allowing the controlled slide to carry more velocity through the turn.

See, most people have a tendency to drift or even dive right at the turn, so they arrive at a very early apex, then have to lift to avoid carrying into the weeds, which causes the rear to get light and want to come around. Classic 911 parking job. But the secret is to hold the line out at the LARGEST arc possible (visualize a circle with an infinite radius equals a straight line), which smoothly blends to the inside of the road at some point within each of the next two turns. If one can consistently drive that line, then one can apply maximum power and minimum braking. That fact almost caught me out one time, as the “brakes” are merely metal plates which push on the periphery of the tires, and with these do a poor job, but I almost couldn’t reach the pedal when I had to LIFT from my bracing position to get BACK to the pedal for the stop. I had to swerve from the line and loop back.

But watching other people drive there was a stitch. They would obviously be competing with whomever came with them, to say nothing of the rest of the drivers, six in all per run group. Excepting myself and the Kart racer, everybody tried to hold the inside line, then swing around the inside barrier. That was exactly the ONLY way to do anything at the NasKart track, and was pretty much the recipe for the road course as well. But it ain’t the fast line here, nor in the real world. Repeatedly, the inside cars would arrive at the corner well before I would start my “turn in” from my larger arc.

They would turn in, having no set, so they would start with understeer, then try to correct with more steering angle, which would abruptly cause the tail to swing out as the car passed perpendicularity to the camber angle, where they would then brake in an attempt to prevent the car from doing what the laws of physics insist they must do, and scrubbing off any capability to accelerate them enough to keep up with me as I passed on their inside at the exit of the turn, because I maintained the same camber load balance throughout. And the secret to the off-camber was exactly the same secret employed by dirt trackers all over; continuously opening the steering in the direction of the slide to maintain the tail in perpetual oversteer. CONTROLLED oversteer. Try it, you'll LOVE it!