

## THE "FREAK-OUT 80" ROOKIES GUIDE FOR SURVIVAL

I know virtually nothing about Truck-in's. I am far from brave, and I am so skinny I can lick an envelope after it's been dropped in the mailbox. Yet, although I am a complete novice, I can attend a Truck-in and be considered as experienced as any time-worn vanner. You can do it too.

Wise old conniving Casey Stingle summed it up pretty well in the quote "Ability is the art of getting credit for all the home runs somebody else hits." The trick is knowing the game, the vanning psyche, if you will, and turning it toward your advantage. By memorizing a few simple secrets, you too can break bread with any vanner at the "Freak-out", and without ever having dirtied your sneakers, come off like an old pro. I did it at last year's "Freak-out", it worked, and now I'd like to share a few of my inside tips with you.

### THE PREPARATIONS FOR YOUR TRIP

Before you begin your odyssey to the "Freak-out", it will be important for you to acquire a traveling companion, if for no other reason than to create an aura of a seasoned trucker.

Your mate should be rugged, above all else cute, and preferably a current member of a motorcycle gang. Ex-convicts and child molesters are sure bets for a fun trip. For example, on my friends last visit to the "Freak-out 79", he went with a chick whose face resembled the backside of an Arizona iguana. I told everyone she was a sandblaster who never used a face mask, they loved it.

Give yourself a nickname. It should rhyme with your last name, like "Vanner-Tanner", "Scootin Newton", "Killer Miller", or "Half-Fast Berkowitz". After you stock up with the traditional vanning garb--Jeans, T-shirts, caps, belt buckles that read "If its rockin don't bother knockin"--you should be ready to enter the "Freak-out" and actually live the life of a Vanner.

### THE RULES OF THE ROAD

A very simple set of guidelines govern the vanners life. To master them, one must only forget he is a member of civilized humanity and prepare to revert back to the earliest aboriginal tribal customs.

1. ALWAYS HAVE A DRINK IN HAND. This is the easiest of all the rules, and perhaps the most fun to practice. Most truckers explain the custom quite succinctly: You never know when you're going to get snake bit.

Of course you will want to bring along a hefty supply of snakes.

Modulate your drinking! There is nothing more disgusting than to see a proud American vanner sprawled in the roadways of the campground. Here's a good rule of thumb: If you go to brush something off your shoulder, and it's the floor, you've probably had enough.

2. NEVER BE COMFORTABLE. The very act of Truckin' requires a deep-seated love of misery. And the "Freak-Out" being what it is, you'll find it very easy to keep this rule.

You may wish to demonstrate your stamina and innate sadistic tendencies by simple acts as shaving without water, gargling with peanut butter, or driving a van over your foot.

3. ALWAYS BE DIRTY. You don't need me to tell you how horrible Missouri river water is. Without getting into details, I once knew a trucker who forgot about the water and brushed his teeth. What followed closely resembled the dining room sequence from "Alien". Not a pretty sight.

It is customary for truckers to sprinkle a little beer over their food for effect. It's also interesting to note that after three or four days in Missouri you begin to resemble a mound of cow chips, which is one of the reasons you should never stand in front of a van on the move.

4. ENJOY PAIN. Imagine being a fresh can of paint mixed on a high speed vibrating machine. That's sort of the feeling you get after the games on Saturday. Truly experienced vanners know what pain is all about. You should too. Wear a rope around your neck. Wear a hat three sizes too small. And before you attend THE FREAKOUT drop into your local novelty store and stock up on rubber scars, removable casts, magic blood, and an authentic-looking death certificate. This will really impress your truckin' buddies.

(Continued)

## 5.-THE LOCALS.

Missouri is a quaint country with many quaint customs and taboos. You should thoroughly familiarize yourself with them.

- Never drink the water. And never eat anything that you couldn't overpower when it was still alive.
- Never climb into a van if theres a vanner woman wearing a T-shirt that reads "so many men, so little time."
- Always wear clean underwear. You never can tell when there might be an accident.

## THE VANNERS

What a lively bunch they are. Raucous. Fun-loving. Competitive. The secret to getting along with vanners is being able to speak their language. For example, "to smoke it" means to move quickly. "Truckin" means driving. "Cherry" means, well, it has several meanings. And "Paging Doctor"J" means you told "Heifer Dust" not to drink it!

What I try to do is build a rapport immediately upon meeting a famous vanner. "Hey, you really think you're going to make it in that thing!" and "My grandmother once drove a vehicle like yours" are surefire conversation starters.

Just remember one thing. Knowledge is everything. So, strut what little automotive knowledge you may have and let your truckin cohorts know they're dealing with a pro.

## THE TRUCK-IN

Good sportsmanship dictates everything. You are not there to see your friends lose, you are there simply to finish the games.

At the games, as competitors struggle, scream encouraging comments. "At least you have a courage," or "Hey, you're almost out of last place" are several good examples.

During the games always carry a camera. Or at least a camera bag. This makes you look official. And always wear a cap. Caps come in handy for storing extra beers or small children.

You will find it fun to visit the bonfires spread throughout the campground. Talk to the vanners. Offer them a drink. Take their picture. And, like any good sport would, laugh wholeheartedly when their vehicle drives in to a tree. Everyone appreciates a good joke.

After the dance, be sure and go to the other club's campfires. At about midnight, it's a helluva lot of fun watching the truckers try to stand up. With these few simple suggestions, you can be confident that your trip to the FREAK-OUT will be far from dull. I hope I'll see you there.