

Trip Report: ID4 ET Highway Inauguration

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Fear and Loathing in Rachel, Nevada - One Man's story

Prelude: When I first learned of the impending plans for Fox Studios' [ID4/ET Highway Inauguration](#) (henceforth referred to as The Fox Follies) and the inevitable counterinsurgency response, I was fascinated, being a D.R. subscriber and Freedom Ridge Vet. Imagine my delight when I realized the dates - April 17th & 18th - coincided perfectly with the conclusion of my attendance at the National Association of Broadcasters Convention in Vegas.

I decided to attend. In a slight deviation from my established career track of Broadcast Engineering, I decided that a reporters identity was more appropriate for the Follies. In reality, it wasn't much of a stretch, since I had a prior agreement in my home town to guest on an all-night AM talk show slot with area 51 as a topic. My goals were simple; observe and report. I would not allow my sympathies with the protest to interfere with my objectivity. Someone had to bring back the truth, and I knew it wouldn't be "Entertainment Tonight". Using some Las Vegas contacts, I secured a spot on the guest list and contacted Psychospys regarding my intentions. He in turn provided a strategic briefing to prepare me for what was to come.

April 16: Suspicious Minds

The first glitch in my well laid plans emerged when my Vegas contact informed me that Sean Dudas, Fox's Promotion guru, had contacted her inquiring what my intentions for attending were. I found this a little strange, as these types of promotional gigs are usually wide open to anyone with even the most tenuous media connections. And why would the guy in charge even bother with such a trivial detail? The pungent odor of major paranoia hung in the air. I complied with the instruction to call the studio only to be informed by his lackey that the Man had already split for Rachel. I left word that I planned to attend the Gala and Inaugural event and hoped there wouldn't be any problems. Returning to my overpriced room at the Tropicana on the 16th, I received an ominous message from the desk. I was to contact Sean Dudas at once! I did so ready to answer all challenges but received only a irritable Sean, who dumped me off to press handler Kellee Jones. She explained that I would be resigned to standing in the "Crew Line" for interviews at the Gala, while only the Paparazzi would be free to graze the hors d'oeuvres. Having reached my fill of standing in lines with fellow media pukers at the convention, I ungraciously decided to blow the Gala off and go to a real party, leaving Psychospys' operatives to do their dirty work.

April 18: D-(dedication) Day

Concluding some last minute business on the convention floor, I scurried out to the convention center parking lot at the appointed time and located the Fox press registrars, bedecked in their designer shades and flashing the industrial strength dental work peculiar to Southern Californians. The balloons suspended from the parking lot fence bolstered the carnival atmosphere.

Shortly after I received my credentials, the caravan slowly began its exodus from Sodom. I spotted Agent X in his sleek red drop-top -- emblazoned with a Bechtel logo. Discreetly displaying the high sign, I fell in line well behind him. Once the caravan reached the near vacant freeway, Its constituents accelerated with reckless abandon, proof that open roads are a scarce commodity in La-La land.

My own vehicle was a dubious Dodge Neon rental festooned with mag-mount antennas and jury rigged with dual scanners, UHF/VHF transceiver, freq counter and cell phone. Unfortunately, this somewhat busy arrangement made it difficult to stay focused on keeping up with the rest of the caravan which and I fell badly behind owing to several antenna blow-offs at the frenzied speeds of the convoy. One of the more amusing aspects of the trip were the Fox film units that kept racing past the pack, only to leap out of their minivan and shoot the oncoming hoard from the ground perilously close to the lane line. I wondered who would draw first blood...

As I struggled to pick up the pace, I couldn't help but admire the official looking ID4\ET Highway signs strategically placed along the route, dutifully pointing the way. I was witnessing the work of maniacal genius in progress! Still, I had doubts whether the bait would be taken.

It was at the turnoff to Nevada 375 that my spirits lifted. The tour busses that had zoomed along at 75 plus and strung out for miles slowed as they made the laborious ascent up Hancock Summit. A major portion of the caravan formed a solid pack behind Agent X while I trailed two thirds of the way back. As we cleared the summit and started down, X used his position to hold the pack in check. Approaching the Groom Lake Road junction, my pulse quickened. I rounded the last turn in our descent to behold a wondrous scene! X had not faltered, taking the quick left turn with suave confidence as he led a line of California Lincolns, Beamers and chartered busses off into the desert, trailing dust in a glorious plume. They poured down Groom Lake Road following X and the signs like a line of the Damned en route to the fiery Pit. It went on this way until the Bus immediately in front of me paused. The driver had been tipped off by one of the Fox advance people onboard! The Bus remained motionless and traffic lined up behind me as its door opened. Not wanting to be left behind, I seized the moment, veering left around the bus and leading the remaining column defiantly down the dirt track, the lone Bus forlornly straddling the intersection.

Meanwhile, on the scanners, all hell was breaking loose. Nevada Highway Patrol cars, on hand for the occasion, buzzed about. Since it is considered bad form to relate such conversations verbatim, I will deliver the abridged version: "there is a line of vehicles down there in the desert!" ... "gotta go down and get them outta there" ... "looks like someone moved the signs" ... "Ok, we got the signs straightened out" ... "make sure no one else comes down" "You better get over there.. You better keep your eye on those signs!"

Nevada's Finest hadn't even figured out that the signs were ringers.

Out at the forward Groom Lake guard positions, the long line of vehicles and dust must have looked like the approach of Hannibal's legions. Their digitized transmissions came up and burned the airwaves with nary a pause for ten minutes. I could just imagine the Cammo Dudes fumbling for their LAW rockets, wondering if the Big One had finally arrived...

The diversion concluded, as planned, back on Highway 375, with the befuddled, dust covered convoy slowly proceeding to its final destination.

April 18: High Noon at Rachel

Disembarking at the parking area, I girded my waist with scanner, freq counter and pocket cassette recorder. Hellish 30 mile an hour gusts whipped up more dust as the press corp made for the tiny enclosed tent. As I approached, I noticed some agitated Fox personnel rushing about with tightly pursed lips, white knuckles clutching their radios. Shortly after entering the tent, I looked on as one toadish Fox employee fingered a credentialed Agent X for expulsion by the Mounties. "That man...that man is not allowed here...take him out" she croaked. X held up his press pass and smiled a becoming smile, but it was no good. He was hustled out just before the Paparazzi, flashing their finest Hollywood demeanor, paraded into the tent. The exception to this was the Governor, who, making a solo entrance with his guards, seemed to me a deeply troubled man.

It was just after the Governor's entry that the Yellowshirts (counterinsurgents) approached the gate brandishing their pickets. As Psychospy emphatically demanded entrance, a most peculiar defensive line began to assemble. It is an historical fact that Adolph Hitler used his famous "Brown Shirts" to silence his political opposition at public rallies. It was somehow fitting then, that the [E.T. Guv](#) should defend the tent perimeter with the dreaded "Orange Hats". Yes, safety orange they wore, those menacing, ominous...HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE MEN!

I know it sounds bizarre. But these are the facts. Four or Five of the blaze orange toughs sealed the entrance to the tent holding Psychospy and the Yellowshirts at bay. While Psychospy stood outside demanding equal justice, I elbowed my way to one of the thugs and innocently asked "what do those people want?" One hat replied "they wanna come in... but they ain't". Another confided "they're just sum local troublemakers.." Meanwhile, the shells droned on over the P.A. system. I had heard enough. Who could give serious consideration to a Governor who employed an unwashed road gang

as his personal Gestapo? I bolted from the tent.

Outside, I mingled, my recorder running. I caught a brief interview with Psychospay and some political hacks before the sign unveiling. What a bust! Not only was the sign trashy and unimaginative - can you believe it? - it was COPYRIGHTED! I actually asked a state Senator, John "Jack" Regan WHY they had copyrighted the thing. "Well...this is a promotional thing, you know..ah..there's been thoughts about T-shirts and key chains.." "and bumper stickers?", I prodded, "Yeah!..there's no reason why we shouldn't make some money on this thing." Jack was revved up now. He laid a State lapel pin, a Vegas lapel pin, and even an official Nevada Legislature cigarette lighter on me. Departing, Jack slipped me his card. "that'll fix anything but a speeding ticket.." I moved on.

The inauguration pontifications complete, the Governor was attempting to make his escape when I cornered him signing an autograph for a kid. After introducing myself, I asked "Governor, has there been any reaction from the Air Force.." "No.." "...to all this publicity?" "We haven't had any reaction at all.." "Have you talked to them?" "No...ah..we had some conversations early on.. (unintelligible)..just letting the military know we were going to be in the area, but this is all state area, state lands.." "OK, so they don't have a problem with this?" "I can't speak to whether they have a concern or not..but, ah..we're..you know..just dealing with being able to traverse a regular state highway". I desperately wanted to point out the fact that 375 was no longer a "regular state highway" after the cock and bull show that he and the other taxpayer funded shills had turned for Fox, but there was no fight left in him and he seemed genuinely embarrassed. I exercised "catch and release" and turned my attention to the remains of the spectacle.

The crowd was starting to thin out, so I was reduced to interviewing a wiseguy sporting a Darth Vader outfit when Psychospay fell victim to some evil Karma. Me: "Darth, we're glad you dropped in today" faux Vader: "It was such a pleasure joining you earthlings" Me: "What do you make of all this.." my sentence was punctuated by the sound of Psychospay hitting the dirt courtesy of an unstable looking fellow named Ray (the Hayloader). Turning, I saw an evil glint in Ray's eyes as he backed off and finally turned away. While the Yellowshirts rushed to the aid of their fallen leader, the faux Vader didn't miss a beat, intoning: "It certainly indicates that Nevada needs more tourists."

Needing a break from all this intensity, I made my way down to the area near the Inn where all the seedy UFO merchandisers were hawking their wares from the tailgates of beat-up station wagons. I recognized one of them as Chuck Clark, the notorious Glenn Campbell wannabe. I couldn't resist asking him if he didn't agree that all this hoopla was going to set up naive tourists for a fall. He replied at a slow, deliberate pace: "What seems to be something basically along that line is Mr. Campbell is just a disgruntled ..ah..person that is just trying to protest something that he's just as guilty of as anybody else..getting people arrested...He sent more people up there to get arrested than anybody I know!" Apparently Chuck felt that somehow his plagiarized version of Campbell's Viewers Guide was immune from the misinterpretation of careless readers.

This done, there was nothing left to do but take the requisite peek inside the Inn, where a potbellied Elvis performed the bump and grind for an enraptured audience of mostly local drunks. It seemed a fitting end for my first and probably last stint as a reporter. But, having witnessed some of the finest moments of the human tragicomedy, I concluded that it had been a most satisfactory trip. My hat is off to Psychospay for succeeding both in sending a message as well as providing some superb entertainment.

HTML by Area 51 Research Center, 5/20/96.