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## Pulling the Ox Out of the Ditch

A blog by Luke Sommer Glenn

The show must go on! New Year's Eve 1989. A bar in Kissimmee, FL on what was the outskirts of town. The Brass Rail or Oak Rail, no matter, it was a nice place on a beautiful piece of central Florida property. It was a 5 nighter that started on Wednesday.

The band was based out of Mims, FL. The bass player's family had a small RV that he parked next to the bar. Sweet set up for a number of reasons but mostly to avoid getting arrested leaving the bar at 2AM every night.

Everything is going fine all week. Sitting on the picnic table under a giant live oak I saw an albino grey squirrel for the very first time. It was a white streak zipping around the huge branches of the century old tree. Too bad I didn't have a camera. Nice spot to have a beer and smoke a bowl...Relaxation...

The bass player's side hustle was selling weed and business was good in Kissimmee. He sold out the first night. Thursday morning he and the singer drove all the way back to Mims to re-up. For some reason lost to time, the bassist drove his "in the

process of being restored" Dodge rust bucket project truck, not exactly reliable, with the singer following him in his baby mamma's car.

They arrived right at stage time. The drummer and I were standing on stage holding our breath. Damn it, man. That's a good way to have the bands pay "docked". The bar takes it out on the entire band not just the offending member(s).

By Friday night he had sold that QP and decided to drive the 2.5 hours back to Mims to retrieve more product on Saturday. New Year's Eve. The biggest gig of the year.

I had a bad feeling about it and told him I thought it was a bad idea being New Year's Eve and all. That's 5 hours round trip not counting the time hooking up with the product. In a project truck, a polite way of saying "a piece of shit." What could go wrong?

The quickest route involved using SR528, back then known as the Bee Line Expressway between Orlando and Cape Canaveral/Cocoa Beach. A toll road with manned toll booths.

It's 8PM. No bass player.

All we know is that he left his house around 5PM. I ask some of the help(staff at the bar) if they know any musicians. How hard could it be to find a competent bass player on New Year's Eve Saturday night with zero notice?

We're a country band without any bass, no bottom. The drummer had a "light foot" meaning he couldn't kick the bass drum with much authority at all so without the added punch of the bass guitar we sounded flat.

The bass rig is on the stage. Out of 200 or so people there, not one can pluck the bass - the night continues with an empty dance floor, bored expressions on the faces sitting around the room; I wasn't experienced enough to do anything other than keep playing my own guitar. I should've played the bass guitar, "lead bass" so to speak but that was then...

People were having more fun when the juke box was on than when the three of us sans bass tried to entertain them.

"Where the \$%^# is Rick?" and "Can you play bass?" were the mantra of the entire evening. Not much fun but when the ox gets stuck in the ditch you have to pull the mother effer out some way or another.

The drummer at the time, nicknamed Smoothie, whined at the management long enough to get us a little pay for what should have been a BIG payday otherwise. Also to not fire us for the upcoming week. You really can't appreciate his skill at passive aggressive manipulation unless you've

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seen it for yourself. (Didn't work on his hot ex-wife though.)

So what happened to the bass player? The toll booth I previously mentioned happened to have some officers standing by and the old Dodge with the redneck in it looked suspicious. It was held together with baling wire and somehow that didn't meet the vehicle inspection code at the time. The reason for the stop.

Upon closer inspection by the police dog it was revealed that a quarter of a pound of marijuana was in a toolbox in the back of the truck. Four ounces of weed, \$250 worth back then. Compressed, seedy and stemmy. The claimed "street value" was \$1200.

Unfortunately, he was taken to the Orange County jail. The gig was in Osceola county. Mims is in north Brevard County by the Volusia county line. "Why can't you boys just play in town" asked the old folks.

That wouldn't be the last time the Law made making the show go on a challenge. There was the night in Alabama the cops arrested the drummer for a "roach" while we were on break. Played 5 of 6 nights, got paid zero for "breaking club policy" for having illicit drugs on the property. Ahh... That's another story...

Could've been worse, could've have gotten the death penalty if we were in China!

