

Frank had done one side of the built-in box with "Seattle or Bust", the other side with "Westward, Ha!", and on the back it said "You're following a couple of Dolls". This proved totally tantalizing to many who could hardly wait to pass the truck as it lumbered along the freeways. Most often their faces gave them away when they saw that whatever that sign meant, it didn't mean bimbos.

The Dolls worried a bit about someone trying to get into the truck at night. They calmed down after they had printed a small sign beside the padlock. It said "You toucha this lock, we breaka you head." One senses, of course, that the truck, unlike a Luis Vuitton suitcase, did not offer the would-be thief any glittering possibilities. It appeared to me more a vehicle that poor migrant workers would use to transport their meagre belongings in.

In Seattle, the Dolls had planned to sell the truck and fly home. They figured they would be bounced to pieces after that trip. Oddly enough, they found themselves putting off running an ad. Then, when they did run it, they got picky about people who rang up [like they wanted to ask 'em for references and things like that!]. Suddenly it dawned on them that they couldn't part with Big Red. So they threw their suitcases into the now empty box behind and started home. In Missouri they pulled into a place that had old booze barrels cheap, and they tossed in some of those fragrant things. By the time they got back to the weigh station in Kinston, North Carolina, that truck's inside smelled pretty ripe. And, to the surprise of no one who knows Murphy's Laws, that was the only weigh station on the whole journey that checked on anything. Not another place anywhere has there been the remotest interest. No problem, though, they had the papers and all was in order. Luckily, the guy in that station had no sense of smell.

And so Big Red began to grow older. It had to be taken more often to Charles Barnes, the truck doctor in Morehead. Charles pampers that truck as if it's a brand new Cadillac. And it stays in working order. It's got to; people need it for everything. Before Bogue Banks Country Club got its own truck, Big Red was borrowed countless times for heavy duty jobs over there. Kids move back to college with it, people move stuff from one house to another, and it got a good workout some years ago when volunteers decided they would clear the lot for the new Town Hall, not trusting it to a bulldozer!

That truck's been taken many times to haul boats, clams, crab traps, garbage, pine needles, logs, manure [talk about smells!], and just a couple of weeks ago a group of women from Greenville rode in the back wearing custom made T-shirts that said, for unknown reasons, "Fruit of the Dunes Against AIDS".

It got painted again recently. Bill had this spray gun and, after taping all parts that weren't meant to be painted, he went wild with that thing. When he finished, there stood Big [Brighter than ever] Red, looking like a solid truck-shaped thing from outer space, surrounded on the street by spilled paint that made it seem as if a murder had been committed on the spot. Bill, at last, after almost 15 years in the South, was indeed a true red neck, and it took half a cup of paint remover to get his neck back to its normal color, by which time that neck was about to blister from so much attention.

The red truck rests quietly under the trees between jobs. It is still available to anyone in need of its services. There is never a charge; a nice gesture, though, is the putting in of some gas at the end of a run.

MARY DOLL

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