

NEWS AND GOSSIP

CONFESSIONS OF A BUGGY DRIVER

You Read About 'Meat Bombs' in UpHere Magazine Now Learn the Shocking Truth

The following article is based on excerpts from an extended, three-day interview with a former tundra buggy driver whose grizzled identity shall remain undisclosed. Read with caution, there are aspects that you may find distressing.



The early days of polar bear tourism were a bit more rustic...

You see this is a story from the early days of Tundra Buggy. They were different times and there were a lot of things happening, that people just won't understand in these days of politically-correct moss-huggers. There was a lot of research being done on bears, tourism was still growing, it was just developing into an industry.

Now that I look back, there was something genuine, perhaps innocent about the whole thing. It was during this time, if you will, that I got the call. It came early one morning, too early; a message to get my ass over to the office.

I trundled inside and before my bloodshot eyes could adjust to the light, a crooked little man hurried over to greet me. He was a fairly typical dishevelled academic, too much brain and not enough time for personal hygiene. I'd seen his type before, the gnarled movements and unsettling humour of those individuals drawn into polar bear research; a strange lot for sure. The professor - come to think of it, I don't think I did ever catch his name - the professor, however, somehow stepped strangeness up a notch.

He hastily broke the silence, replacing it with bewilderment. "I am looking for a man of few words, discretion is of the utmost, any opinions, suggestions,

reservations or addictions are of no concern to me, as long as they are not openly expressed." I had to admit, that was one of my stronger skills.

Momentarily satisfied, the professor continued, "Towards this endeavour, I have commissioned the services of four of the finest Indian guides that the Province of Manitoba has to offer. Each raised in the northern wilderness, each proficient in specific aspects of polar bear biology, evolution and behaviour. I introduce you to my team - Dinesh, Salil, Bharadwaj and Sanobar." Sanobar, a lad barely out of his teens, bowed low, his turbaned head almost gracing the floor. The others remained motionless, exuding yogic discipline.

A little bleary, still feeling the tug of last nights whiskey, I began to wonder if I was still asleep. The professor, after a pause that was both too short yet too long, rattled me awake. Almost startled, he cried, "The device, I must show you the device!"

Hobbling out of the room, he returned a short time later, and with a muffled

squeak and clank, he wheeled a six foot high blanket-covered contraption through the door. Removing the blanket, his rattled and raspy voice offering a pre-emptive and excited explanation, "This... is the Brain-O-Meter." It certainly was.

The Brain-O-Meter was this otherworldly device; wading through the confusion of the professors meandering explanation, I reckoned it was powered by a stationary bicycle (the professor believe he needed to be an organic part of any project, he was very ahead of his time)... anyway, the professor's Indian guides would strap him onto this bike, the power source, and then place a giant, silver half-orb over his head, it looked like one of those samurai hats, except with a thick mouth strap and heavy goggles.

Once assembled, it looked more electric chair than exercise bike. On the outer surface of the orb/helmet, there was space for 14 or 15 light bulbs (he explained that they were each placed to coincide with bottle-necks in the brain's electrical field). An equal amount of wires connected the orb helmet to an antiquated black and white monitor,

nothing complicated just a regular TV, a Clairtone. Canadian made; I could respect him for that.

The professor was a man stuck in the past, there's no doubt, stubborn, irritable, almost luddite, yet he had a real eye for the future. Despite the antiquated machinery, the Brain-O-Meter had been specifically tuned to coordinate his brain patterns with that of the polar bear. Once 'tuned in' the thoughts of the bear would transmit onto the screen; transcribed by the Indians - who, now it occurred to me, were not just learned in polar bear behaviour, but in paranormal phenomena. He would bridge the gap between man and animal, using only his physical and mental energies. These next six weeks would be the culmination of his life's work. This was something big.

Each morning, the buggy weaved and bobbed out to Gordon Point, Churchill's gathering spot for bears. It was a slow drive and an equally slow start. The first week was spent troubleshooting the Brain-O-Meter; the professor varyingly sputtering incoherent rants at myself, his guides, himself and the Milky Way.

However, early on day seven, the first image came through. The professor pedalled furiously, bringing the image into focus. It was a seal.

Of course it was a seal. These are polar bears, I could have told him that. For the next two weeks, we would approach one bear at a time and bear after bear would be thoughts of seal - seals on the ice, seals in the water, seals peeled like bananas. You see what I'm getting at.

Seals or not, reading the mind of a polar bear would seem like a major achievement to some; you could say Nobel prize material. Not to the

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professor though. He knew that the machine would work but sampling one bear each day was just not working. We needed more data.

The next day, the professor came back with a plan. The professor called it his 'cerebral lubricant' and stretched his face into a hideously amicable grin.

That night, we boiled rocks in this soup of chemical and biological what-nots. Later, we drove slowly by moonlight, chucking 'cerebrally lubricated' rocks out the window of the buggy.

The lubricant worked, increasing the range of the Brain-O-Meter tenfold, and the next morning images streamed across the screen at breakneck speed. With every revolution of those rusty pedals, the lightbulbs flared and more images came. Still, it was clear that bears only thought of seals. The professor's frustration began to grow with the sample size.

And then it happened, nearing Halloween, there was a blip - just a flicker amidst the never-ending stream of seals but nevertheless, there was something. Something not 'seal'. The following days the Indian guides and I poured over the screen as the professor covered mile after mile on the Brain-O-Meter. And each day, more blips came. Peering over the guides shoulders, I caught my breath as they took form.

They only appear for a second at a time but I could swear and I will swear, that they were scenes of a cheering crowd, a factory and always a middle aged man with this crippling look of utter terror.

For five days, the cheering crowd and fear-stricken man inexplicably drifted in and out amidst the ocean of seals. Finally one morning, the professor came back with another device.

It was cobbled together from an old TV antenna coated in what looked (and smelled) disarmingly like KLIK (Canada's version of SPAM). Once again, the professor earnestly explained, "There are sometimes simple solutions." He moved in conspiratorially. "The gel has the same as our, how shall we say, brain juices..."

Canned ham or not, the antenna sure worked. Two hours into the day, the images started appearing with increasing regularity. Seals, seals, seals, then a cheering crowd, more seals, then a late-forties factory, a fist held high in the air, a prison cell, the fear-stricken man.

The antenna poked and prodded the early November air, zeroing in on different bears until it finally aimed at one. Soon, the seals faded into obscurity and the story began to unfold.

This bear was a brute, maybe fifteen, eighteen years old, scarred from a decade of battles for mates, for food, for fun. His neck swelled with muscle, as did his legs, shoulders and rump for that matter. I recognized him from the Cape Churchill tours over the years. I believe the photographers had nicknamed him Cassius or some such nonsense. Photographers do those kind of things.

Regardless of his name, this bear was the source of the anomaly. The professor became increasingly consumed by this bear. Day and night, he obsessed over the potential implications of these images. Was this bear Patient Zero of a new stage of evolutionary stage for Ursus Maritimus? Was there some existential and ancient connection between man and bear? Or simply an acute psychic phenomena?

As the days and images passed, slowly and randomly, they pieced together a human life. Beginning with at home,

an apartment covered in laundry and responsibility, then to a young man in a factory, a man obsessed with power. Amidst this life, images as mundane as shaving, grocery lists, after-work cigars would appear... yet throughout even these banal activities always the look of morbid fear remained.

Only the professor knew for sure, but here is a rough list of the images, as far as I can remember. They began with the rallies, the crowds, the speeches. The fear-stricken man was a leader for sure, a motivator, destined for something big.

But as the images came with increasing clarity they also became increasingly menacing. He was a man of uncommon leadership but leadership had its price. Behind the fear-stricken man were shadows, sometimes men, always dark, sinister, maybe not always there but the fear-stricken man felt like they were. Its hard to explain without the Brain-O-Meter but I'm telling you that's what it was.

I can only explain what would become the final images of the experiment. The sinister men finally emerged from the shadows on the sixth and final week of the experiment. They were on the fear-stricken man before he could resist, whisking him away with a black sedan and a blackjack.

When the fear stricken man awoke, he was in an airplane, flying low over stunted trees and a thousand lakes. The sinister men were beside him. He was cold against the metal hull.

The plane flew low, over a port town, along the coast, skimming the tops of stunted and disfigured trees. The two men flung the door open and with hideous grins, threw the fear-stricken man from the plane.

The next images were that of semi-consciousness, battered and bruised yet somehow alive. The feat-stricken man struggled awake, his eyes focusing on a polar bear and her cubs walking intently towards him. Still bound, he could only gasp as he grasped his fate.

That look, the look in every image we had seen was his last. Cassius, not yet one year old, had watched his mother approach and devour the fear-stricken man.

Only moments after the carnage concluded, the female, docile and satisfied, settled back against the willows, positioning herself to nurse. As the convoluted images of bear and man continued, it became clear that Cassius was drinking this fear-stricken man's memories mixed with the butterfat and seal oil of his mother's milk. The Indians gasped in unison.

At once, sparks erupted from the machine, the professor clawing at his chest; finally overcome by the sheer intensity of the moment. The Indians rushed to his side but he died right there; aboard the Tundra Buggy. Sanobar fell to his knees and wept.

We waited until dark, moving like grave-diggers, I can only assume that the Brain-O-Meter remains in Churchill, along with the professor's bones, locked away in a vault beneath the Eskimo Museum.

As we closed up the room, the final image still flickered on the Brain-O-Meter, forever imprinted on the professor, on Cassius and now on us. It was the repeating image of a wallet lying on the tundra, bloodspattered and half open; revealing a New York Driver's Identification Card issued to one 'James Riddle Hoffa, Born February 14, 1913'.

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