

Cultural Daily

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Truck Driving Poem: Go-Carts Go Go Go

Dave Newman · Thursday, July 19th, 2012

Dave Newman is the author of the novels *Raymond Carver Will Not Raise Our Children* (Writers Tribe Books, 2012) and *Please Don't Shoot Anyone Tonight* (World Parade Books, 2010), and four poetry chapbooks, most recently *Allen Ginsberg Comes To Pittsburgh*. He's worked as a truck driver, a book store manager, an air filter salesman, a house painter, and a college teacher. He lives in Trafford, Pennsylvania with his wife, the writer Lori Jakiela, and their two children.

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The Pennsylvania Turn Pike, and I'm wired.
 It's the coffee. It's the sugar. It's the pills.
 Growing up, it was go-carts on a tar-covered track.
 I was eleven or twelve, too old to pretend,
 but sound and motion make dreams and dreams
 thrive on speed. It didn't matter that my dad
 was in the next lane, driving like crazy, his knees
 around the steering wheel, laughing, embarrassing
 us all but not really, not then, not when he'd been
 gone—West Virginia, Reading, York, wherever
 he drove our green Cutlass, the one without air,
 to jobs he took to pay for kids he never got to see.
 My brother took a turn and came up hard on his bumper.
 My mom was in her black leather jacket, on the edge
 of the track, screaming for all of us to slow down.
 We were often not a family, so I like to remember
 when we were. All that wind and the roar of tiny
 engines. You could scream and not hear your own joy.
 But I did it anyway, screamed that my dad was home,
 that my mother was not at church, was not weeping
 that my brother was naked again with his girlfriend,
 that my brother was with us, safe behind the wheel.
 I hit the oil slick and screamed, screamed when the man
 raised the checkered flag to pull off, screamed when I
 stayed on, when my dad stayed on, when my brother
 stayed on, when my mother smiled at our collective

defiance, and how I skidded into the pit, and the man
 said, "That's it," and my dad offered him extra money,
 but he wanted us all gone, and how I want that now,
 a man with a checkered flag, someone to wave me in,
 someone to pay for the extra lap, someone to take me
 home and love me and someone else to tell me about women,
 though I'm fine out here, all alone but dreaming, still wrapped
 up in motion. I'm steering gracefully while the other trucks
 swerve into the nighttime, crossing yellow lines, and honking
 their horns like alarm clocks, but I'm awake already.
 It's the sugar. It's the coffee. It's the drugs.
 It's my father, my mother, my brother in a dream.
 I'm so hopped up on pills, I'm sharp as a tack,
 sharp as a nail, the one that's about to puncture
 my right front tire, and blow it all to smithereens.

Special Note for Los Angeles fans of poetry:

Tongue and Groove presents a monthly offering of short fiction, personal essays, poetry, spoken word and music. Gerald Locklin, Dana Johnson, Yuvi Zalkow, Kerri Kvashay Boyle, & Wendy Rainey will be reading, plus musical guest Foster Timms on Sunday, July 29th, 2012 – 6 PM at The Hotel Café – 1623 ½ N. Cahuenga Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90028. Admission is \$6.

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