

After the big cruise night in Livermore on August 1975, things quieted down. The large numbers of people had been attracted by fliers that had been distributed not only in Livermore, but in other towns. Local cruisers regained their First Street strip and enjoyed their weekends without interference from out-of-towners.

In the early '80s Dan Moy cruised with friends, sometimes in a VW, sometimes in a black and white Bronco. They liked to play Pink Floyd and The Doors. They always had beer in the car. "I thought it was a lot of fun. Some of the cars were gorgeous, and the owners liked to show them off."

Henry Rosa, one of the car

owners, said, "When I was in high school, you were either into sports, into drugs, or into your car." Henry bought a used '69 Chevy Chevelle coupe. He completely rebuilt the engine and redid the car interior himself. He paid someone to repaint the car white and added big tires. Henry reminisced, "Those years when we could cruise—that was a great time to grow up. The street was packed with cars; others were pulled over to the sides of the

street. The kids just hung out. Even the policemen walking the beat seemed to mesh with the kids pretty well. They'd stand there and talk to you. Cruising was a blast." He remembered that he did get a ticket for spinning his tires.

Many of the downtown merchants, however, were becoming more and more disenchanted with the custom. Mondays revealed all the litter from the weekend. Katherine Conrad wrote in the

Do You Remember?

By Anne Homan

Cruising, Part II



Valley Times, "To many First Street merchants, cruising is beer bottles strewn around their shops, spittle on their windows, and other human excrements in their back parking lots." Groth Brothers often had cars on their lot vandalized. To the long-suffering Livermore police department, cruising meant long hours with few breaks and limited personnel worried about what was happening in the rest of the city.

In April 1983 the out-of-towners were back in force. Police reported that an estimated 12,000 people in 6,000 cars, pick-ups, and motorcycles came from as far away as Sacramento and San Mateo. As fights began about 12:30 a.m., 20 Livermore police officers donned riot gear and called in reinforcements from the California Highway Patrol and East Bay Regional Parks to stop the fights and convince the cruisers to leave. Eleven arrests were made, and about 200 citations issued for offences ranging from racing, minors possessing alcohol, and vehicle violations. The Livermore City Council decided that enough was enough. They passed an ordinance against cruising that would go into effect in mid-September 1984.

In August 1984 underground fliers and posters went out from Sacramento to Los Angeles advertising the "Fifth National Cruise Night" in Livermore, the last one before the anti-cruising law would go into effect.

Livermore merchants complained that posters were glued to their buildings. The fliers carried a warning: "The Livermore City Council has determined that cruising is hazardous to their health." Some fliers even said to apply at the police department for cruising licenses. Fortunately, this was before the Internet or cell phones, or the resulting numbers on August 18 would have been much higher.

The evening was warm and pleasant; many participants were attracted not only by the advertising, but also because

many cities and outlying areas had already banned cruising. The estimated crowd was 10,000 to 12,000 people and 3,000 to 6,000 cars, about the same as the April 1983 affair. But for some reason, this evening's entertainment took on a more ugly aspect. At 11:15 pm police announced over loudspeakers that the cruise had been declared an unlawful assembly and ordered the crowd to disperse. Beleaguered Livermore police officers, helped by reinforcements from the Alameda County Sheriff's Department, the California Highway Patrol, and nearby cities, made sweeps down First and Second Streets in riot gear as they tried to control the event. Early street closures by police had had little effect. The crowd pelted officers and their vehicles with rocks, eggs, bottles, light bulbs, and firecrackers. They overturned trash cans, vandalized parked cars, and ripped branches from trees. Some young men rolled large wooden spools that had served as outdoor tables for a restaurant down the street. The confrontation between police and the unruly crowd finally ended about three a.m.

The *Valley Times* said that the downtown area in the morning looked like a war zone. Sixteen people were arrested on charges ranging from public drunkenness to assaulting a police officer. Damages were an estimated \$15,000 from vandalism, property damage, and clean-up costs. The Chamber of Commerce, Groth Brothers, and The Squire, a clothing store at Second and South L, had broken plate glass windows. Eleven police officers were injured.

A controversy arose over the evening's riot, with some people saying that the police were at fault for provoking the fight and then using unnecessary violence. Others said that the police should have acted sooner to break up the event. *Newsweek* magazine wrote a story about the affair. The anti-cruising ordinance that had already been passed by the city council in August went into effect on September 18, a month later. The city council paid consultant Alan Kalmanoff \$27,750 to conduct an investigative study of the evening's events.

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