

Pantera International:

Yes, I was in a good mood that day, July 9, 1986, a real good mood because in just two more days I would be celebrating the one year anniversary of the purchase of my first Pantera. I could still feel the exhilaration of that special instant when the keys first hit the palm of my hand.

The thought led to a smile, despite my current status in the U.S. 59 "parking lot" on my way to work. The smile led to a chuckle, and at that point I had to look around just to make sure that my fellow traffic jammers weren't psychoanalyzing my present state of mind. My eyes caught the rear view mirror and passed by...and then back again in the hope that they hadn't really seen what had started my whole body to constrict.

They weren't lying -- there it was, cruising at a speed that not even aircraft brakes could stop -- Mr. Redneck and his pickup truck filled with countless amounts of tools. Nowhere to go: at a dead stop with a concrete barricade on my left, a Buick Riviera in front, and cars to my right. One final scan of the rear view mirror and there was only one thing left -- the release of a very loud and very long version of a monosyllabic word often substituted for "crap." And then, ERRRT BOOM!!!

When I finally pounded my door loose, I really couldn't believe what I was seeing. The back end of the Buick was peacefully resting on my hood -- rear bumper approximately one foot from my windshield. In the back, I had the grill work from a full-size Chevy pickup replacing what used to read "Pantera GTS."

Yes, now I was in a bad mood that day, a **real** bad mood. Nearly every body panel was affected, both doors were jammed, rear deck, rear quarters and rear panel, both bumpers, right exhaust, and both head lamp covers were history. Pirelli 285/50, brake line, tail light, and inner wheel well were also goners.

Anyhow, to make a three month long story short, Mr. See (believe it or not, that's his name) didn't have enough property damage insurance to cover the value of the car, and any settlement would not cover the repair of the car plus my expenses for three months of transportation. I also wasn't too optimistic about the integrity of the car had it been repaired. So the only way out of this mess was to sell the Pantera as salvage -- trying to sue the driver was something that I didn't want to hassle with. The last I heard, #9022 was on a trailer to Atlanta.

Just one final word of caution here: if there are any Pantera owners thinking about venturing to and around Houston in their fine machines, they might want to think twice. Out of every city that I have driven in, Houston is the **worst!** Lousy drivers abound! Speeding is the least of it -- that, in and of itself, does not cause accidents. Tailgating, abrupt lane changes, no turn signals, running red lights and stop signs, and a pervasive habit of overextending both their driving skills and their vehicles' capabilities are the real causes of accidents in this town. Patrolmen do not seem to acknowledge this here -- I wish they would wake up!

Do I sound bitter? I **am**. However, I'm not giving up -- enclosed is my check for one more year of membership. And I can't wait until I feel those keys hit my hand once more.

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