

P.J. O'Rourke's books make excellent travel reading, as they are often very entertaining but also not terribly difficult to put down. The 61 year-old columnist has contributed to publications as diverse as the National Lampoon and Rolling Stone to Atlantic Monthly. These contributions are eventually compiled and published as books.

His latest book is aptly titled *Driving Like Crazy: Thirty Years of Vehicular Hell-bending Celebrating America the Way It's Supposed to be-With an Oil Well in Every Backyard, A Cadillac Escalade in Every Carport, and the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Mowing Our Lawn.*

Filled with materials sourced from his many automotive pieces, penned for such publications as *Car and Driver* and *Automobile*, this book is an ideal read for a long cottage weekend. While all the essays are very entertaining, but being essays they do not usually relate to each other makes the book well suited for vacation reading.

O'Rourke comes from a family that has been involved in the automotive industry for multiple generations. His paternal grandfather was raised in poverty and with nothing but a 5th grade education during the turn of the century was able to get work as a mechanic and eventually owned his own Buick dealership in Ohio. According to the author, most of the staff were his family, including his father who was the sales manager.

One notable exception was "Shorty, the old black man in charge." He provided a teenaged version of the author who was cleaning cars at the dealership with some very memorable advice on cleaning a car's window. "Always leave some lint in the corners of the windows, that way they know you washed 'em."

While his publisher describes O'Rourke as a "hard-bitten, cigar-smoking conservative," a better term may be libertarian. The author's strong political leanings are obvious from the first page of this book's introduction as it opens with a very amusing bit of prose that is almost Orwellian, in its meaning.

"The feminists grabbed our women, the liberals banned our guns, the health cops snuffed out our cigarettes, the bailout has our funds, the laws of Breathalyzing put an end to our roadside bars, Circle the Fords and Chevys, boys, THEY'RE COMING TO TAKE OUR CARS"

At first the reader will wonder if this desire for the unregulated automobiles and unlimited alcohol of a long passed era, is a trait of O'Rourke's generation. It simply isn't.

The essays of *Driving Like Crazy* also create further questions. O'Rourke's narratives up until the early 1990s are pure Gonzo journalism. Beginning with the book's first essay; "How to Drive Fast on Drugs While Getting Your Wing-Wang Squeezed and Not Spill your Drink," O'Rourke blames the decline of the American automobile on so called "fun-suckers."

Fun-suckers who read this book will likely ponder how O'Rourke is still alive despite a career where almost every assignment in the field of automotive journalism, involved enough alcohol to submerge the wheat fields of Saskatchewan.

In some cases O'Rourke admits to exaggerating his claims, such as the second essay of this book, which is a follow up to and admission of stretching the truth in its predecessor. It is comparatively brief all things considered, simply called "How to Drive Fast When the Drugs Are Mostly Lipitor, the Wing-Wang Needs More Squeezing Than It Used to Before It Gets the Idea, and Spilling Your Drink Is No Problem If You Keep the Sippy Cups from When York Kids Were Toddlers and Leave the Baby Seat in the Back Seat so that When You Get Pulled Over You Look Like a Perfectly Innocent Grandparent"

In later essays O'Rourke's writing loses some of its divisive edge but maintains its unique stance with frequent jabs at liberal politicians. The author at some points seems to act in a contrarian fashion to his contemporaries simply for the sake of notoriety.

By the end of *Driving Like Crazy*, the reader understands that virtually anything O'Rourke says or does that seems against the status quo of his field is purely for shock and laughs. With his frequent inclusion of tangents and political rants, he seems to be America's answer to Jeremy Clarkson.

In the UK Clarkson is often the center of controversy as his remarks often offend people who do not realize that he is what the British call a "gobshite." This term is defined by *The Urban Dictionary* as: "a person who blabbers on about incredibly senseless things." Gobshites when taken with a grain of salt are the source of good laugh. Although judging by how much alcohol has gone in to P.J. O'Rourke over the years, it may be appropriate to add a lime and some tequila to that salt.