

Attacked

A Memior
By Mark Simon

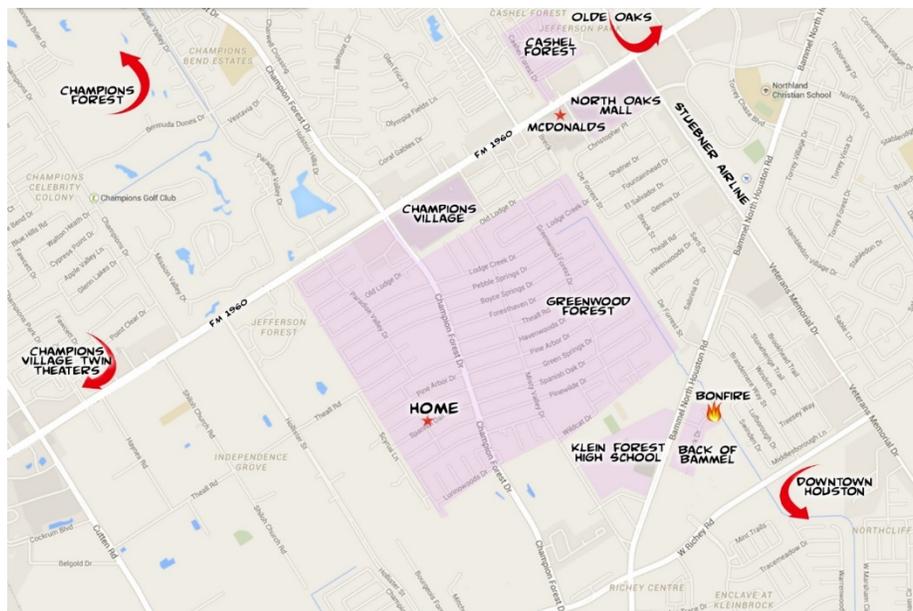
Bullies Friday, September 19, 1980

The Night It Began

My name is Mark Simon and I will never forget the night my family was attacked.

My antique car slid sideways around a wet street corner as we drove more than a bit too fast down the rain-slicked Texas road on the north side of Houston.

I had a classic teenage lead foot and pushed the pedal to the metal. My car fishtailed down the street and around the other speed-obeying cars as we streaked towards an evening that promised of a great time.



The kids at my school had a special hangout where our parents wouldn't bother us and the large-bellied Texas cops couldn't find us. We called it the Back of Bammel. It was an unfinished subdivision off a dark road, Bammel North Houston Road. It consisted of a few weed-filled empty cement streets, but no homes. It was deserted, except on weekend nights. We filled the place with our hidden private parties like a raucous Texas cult. The area was heavily treed so no one could see this huge group of cars that lined both sides of a short, vacant road and kids partied and built a bonfire in an empty cul-de-sac.

We all went there to hang out, hook up and have a great time. The girls dressed in their skin-tight jeans were as horny as we were. Parked along both sides of the street were cars and pickup trucks from the '70s. There were Camaros, Pintos, Broncos, Toyotas and a few mom and dad Benzes and station wagons. The street was slick with booze and a minty scent hung in the air of pot mixed with wet pine needles. The booze was also easy to get back then. The drinking age was still 18 in 1980 but we knew which local stores to go to and which employees would sell us beer even if we didn't look close to 18. I was one of those who looked much younger than I actually was.

I loved to drive around in my classic 1963 Ford Thunderbird which I had rebuilt. We were all into our cars back then. Mine was a sparkly midnight blue T-Bird with torpedo taillights, chrome trim

and mufflers loud enough to raise the dead. That car was my pride and joy and everyone could hear me coming as we screeched off the main road and drove towards the party.

Sitting in the passenger seat was one of my neighbors and buddies, Neal Lipsky. Neal lived just two houses away from me. He was fit, dark, good looking, loved the outdoors and bow hunting more than school books; a good wingman.

Neal and I enjoyed the party for about 10 minutes from inside my car, had touched base with lots of friends and talked to a few really cute girls who gloriously strutted around in their two-sizes too small Levi jeans and expensive cowgirl boots. We drove slowly to the far end of the street, near the bonfire, and turned the car around.

We slowly pulled up to another group of friends, stopped and turned down the music to a low roar. Bob Seger's *Night Moves* played on my powerful Kenwood stereo. While most of my car was original parts, my stereo was all new and rocking. I had cut a hole in the dashboard to accept the premium stereo and sliced through many layers of steel to install large speakers in the door and back dash. Under my driver's seat was an amplifier and hidden in my trunk was a large custom speaker box with two 10-inch sub-woofers.

There were a few people on either side of my car who leaned in as we talked. I kept the car running, but in Park, and we had a great time teasing, joking and testing to see who might be a willing filly for an evening of fun.



My 1963 Ford Thunderbird.

And then I heard it.

I heard the words that started my descent into hell.

“Hey. There’s Simon. Let’s rumble!”

Neal glanced at me and then we both looked back out the windows to find we were suddenly alone. It was as if a big wave of water washed away all the kids who had been around my car. They just disappeared into the dark.

I looked behind us and silhouetted against the bonfire was a group of five or six guys who stomped towards us. I could see that some of them carried what looked like long pieces of burning wood from the bonfire. The flickering light glinted off their eyes and glasses and they looked possessed. We had no idea what was happening, but whatever it was, it wasn’t good. Fights were a common occurrence at these drunken parties, I had even seen cars from other schools get flipped upside-down, but I had never been involved in any.

Suddenly an angry mob appeared at the windows to my car from every angle and started to punch me and Neal. I couldn’t see who attacked Neal, but I recognized the asshole who was punching me through my window; Perry Proctor.

Perry was a skinny white kid in my grade with a crooked nose, slit eyes that were always at half-mast and an evil grin that showed he was always up to no good. The way he walked around was more like stalking than walking. I had seen him in tons of fights at school and he and I never got along. His equally ass-holish friends behind him tried to punch me too.

Neal screeched in the seat beside me and his voice cracked for the first time in years, “Hey! What the fuck?!”

I felt my car bounce as others jumped up on the trunk and started to climb all over my car. My body instantly flushed with sweat from fear. Fear for both myself and my precious car.

Numerous fists flew through my windows to sting us like a swarm of killer bees. Multiple people at each window tried to reach in, all with their fists trying to connect with one of us.

I grabbed Perry’s skinny arm, held on tight and leaned back towards the center console in my car. I yelled out to Neal, “ROLL UP THE WINDOWS!” Luckily the buttons for the electric windows are on the center console of the ’63 Bird so Neal leaned away from the window and the flying fists and hit the rocker button to raise his window.



I raised my window, but I held onto Perry’s arm with my left hand and trapped it. My adrenaline-fueled grip, strengthened by years of construction work, held his arm like a vice.

He screamed at me through the window as spit flew from his mouth and he thrashed around like a wild animal stuck in a trap, “LET GO OF ME YOU MOTHER FUCKER!”

I felt my car bounce again and looked out the front window to see someone standing on my hood. He reared back to swing a baseball bat straight down at my windshield. I gasped and imagined what that bat could do to my classic car and windshield.

I sat up, threw my car in gear and stomped on the gas. The guy on my hood lost his balance and rolled over and off my car before he could smash my window. I heard both his body and the bat bounce off the roof and roll down the trunk of my car as we took off.

It was impossible to think straight. Everything felt off-kilter. The world had gone crazy and everything was spinning. Both Neal and I hyperventilated as we flew up the narrow teen-filled party street to escape.

Everyone in the road jumped out of the way. Perry’s friends ran after us. I continued to drag Perry with my car like a pennant hanging from my window. He screamed at me to let his arm go. He

banged on the window with his other hand as he tried, with little luck, to stay on his feet while he frantically ran and tried to keep up with my car.

I heard people scream at me as I ran over a few of their feet. Sneakers, high heels and cowboy boots had their toes flattened as I flew by. I tried to avoid as many as I could, but there was so little room to maneuver and I was scared shitless.

The teen bystanders, who didn't know what had happened, threw beer and Jack Daniels bottles at my car. They shattered on my windshield, back window, roof and bumpers. Not all the bottles hit their mark, so a number of kids on the opposite side of the road were pelted with half-full bottles. Even more kids were showered with shards of glass and alcohol from the bottles that shattered on my steel beast.

None of them knew why I drove through them like a jerk. They didn't know I was running for my life. They just knew I was fucking up their night of drunken partying. They yelled at me and started to follow my car and threw any bottle, rock or stick they could find at us.

Then one of Perry's large upper-classman friends, David Purdy, who was not the brightest bulb around, jumped in front of my car with his arms out to try to get me to stop. That was a mistake.

David was a year older than everyone else in his grade. I can only imagine it's because he was held back a grade. That wouldn't have surprised me at all. He was also a good seven to eight inches taller than most of us and he carried a bit of extra weight around the middle, which was the exception instead of the norm back then. David wore a plaid button-down shirt and an old cowboy hat, which fit his redneck looks perfectly.

I didn't like David before that night, I had seen him slam kids into lockers at school and I sure wasn't going to stop and listen to him at that moment. I accelerated and ran right into him. I'll never forget the sight and sound of his hip as it cracked and bounced off the front of my car and of his face as it smashed against my windshield.

I barely heard Neal shriek, "Holy shit!"

As David bounced off the driver's side of my windshield, and left behind a greasy imprint of his face as he hit Perry and knocked him from my grip and they both rolled off to the side and slammed into one of the parked cars. I didn't look back to see exactly where they landed, but I wouldn't be surprised if they had also smacked into a few other kids as they flew off of my car.

Neal was white faced with fear, his mouth hung open and his hands gripped the dash like he would rip it clean from my car. My eyes were wide open and I surged with a full adrenaline rush. I felt like my heart was going to explode it beat so fast. I continued to sweat like a fiend.

Between my attempt to escape the attack and weave around the kids in the road and then running over David, I accidentally drove past the turn to exit out of the area. I missed... the only... exit... Shit...

I turned the wheel hard, hit the brakes and spun my car around in the middle of the vacant dead-end road. It slid to a stop and faced back towards the direction we had just come from. The view was quite different than we had just seen a few minutes before when we first entered the Back of Bammel. The new view was not inviting. It was more like a scene from a Frankenstein movie.

One of the kids from the street party pulled an old and rusted wood-sided station wagon across road which blocked us from the exit. It looked like at least 30 kids ran towards us. They held flaming boards from the bonfire, bats and pipes from their trucks and anything else they could grab. More bottles flew through the air and crashed in the street in front of us.

They all yelled at us because of that crazy driving stunt I had just pulled. All they knew was that I was the monster and had driven like a maniac, run over someone and crushed a few toes. Perry and his buddies lead the pack and riled up the townspeople even more as they stalked towards us. They all screamed at me with blood in their eyes.

Neal and I were stuck. A wall of pissed off, armed and drunken teens ran towards us. I had never been so scared. My shirt was drenched. My teeth ground together. My insides felt like they would explode. Neal and I looked at each other with impending doom and back at the approaching horde.

“Mark?!!” Neal screeched at me with his pleading eyes to save us.