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The Earth's People

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Every Saturday night our household had a particular custom. At 7:00 o'clock our Grandmother commandeered our only television in order to watch Saturday Night Wrestling. My parents and my sisters couldn't figure out why this particular program held her interest. This program was the local version, sort of like the minor leagues of wrestling. Most of the combatants were overweight and lacked the rudimentary skills, but they had flashy names and would prance about the ring and beat their chest like a perverted version of an Orwell novel. She had her favorites; Tony Bourne, Lonnie Mayne and Dutch Savage could do no wrong.

My grandmother had moved in with us to provide babysitting and the majority of the meals since mom worked and dad couldn't turn on the stove without burning down the house.

"KIDS, WE NEED TO GET SUPPER!" our father's baritone voice boomed off the walls of our house.

"WE HAVE 5 MINUTES!" he continued as he picked up the keys off the kitchen counter. To my sisters and me, this was our signal to head towards the "red torpedo."

My older sister Karen named our father's pride and joy, his 1965 Pontiac Bonneville the "red torpedo," a deep red on the exterior and jet black top and interior. Like a torpedo that zeros in on its target, dad's torpedo always found its destination in the shortest time possible, especially with dad behind the wheel.

We reached the curb just as dad started the engine and was lowering the top. Jumping in, I noticed our dog, a long-haired Pekinese named Dolly, wanted to go. By the time we started up the hill, all of us had taken our assigned seats: Karen up front with dad, my younger sister Donna and me in the back.

Our destination was the Speck drive-in, 6 blocks away at the top of the hill. As we screamed up the hill, my dad had this content look on his face and I always thought he imagined himself at Daytona, piloting the red torpedo into turn 3 with the checkered flag in mind.