

'Hands on a Hardbody'

Struggles, perseverance make an interesting documentary



If there's one thing that draws a crowd, it's a bunch of people. But a bunch of people with their hands firmly planted on a truck is asinine.

Deena, my favorite person (with the exception of Britney Spears), and I watched a most amazing documentary. It's, like, weird because nothing is made up.

Every person, every situation is completely spontaneous. OK, so the situation is what makes the documentary a possibility, but the people make it worth seeing.

It's about grit, hallucinations, determination and the ability to pee during the designated pee-times.

I'll let you in on this film, and then, by the grace of God, you all will go out and rent it.

It's called "Hands on a Hardbody." Don't let the title fool you; there is no nudity. Nor would you want there to be with this crowd of people.

There are 24 people to be exact, from Longview, Texas (from where director S.R. Bindler hails), and they all want to win the same prize in a contest — a brand-new, option-packed Nissan Hardbody pickup.

The way to get it is, on the surface, quite simple: keep a hand on the pickup for as long as you can without leaning or bending over.

If you're quick to dismiss this as simple, then apparently you think staying up for four days is as easy as heating a cup of water or picking your nose.

This documentary will make you reevaluate the important things in life — winning a new car and not losing your mind while doing it.

This documentary may never have existed if it weren't for the fact that director Bindler's best friend in high school was actor Matthew McConaughey, who gave

him money to edit more than 100 hours of footage.

The contest allows participants to take a five-minute break every hour and a 15-minute break every six hours.

Pshaw! Weenies! These are the words that are uttered from your lips. But after 78 hours of standing, you'd be squealing, waiting patiently hour to hour for another measly break to suck down a pot of coffee and hoping it doesn't make you pee your pants.

Bindler shines his light on a few of the contestants who, from foreshadowing, we know will make it to the final stages.

These 10 people became my friends, and each situation surrounding their ejection was difficult to watch. But there had to be an end, so I kept trudging on.

I have never laughed so hard as I did while watching rednecks struggle with the relationship of mind and body. Benny, one of my favorite contestants, sums up a lot of the drive behind this madness with his oddly natural poeticism.

In regards to the weaker competitors, he says, "If you can't run with the big dogs, you'd better go sit on the porch with the pups."

Of course, this does come from the man who won the contest two years earlier, lasting 83 hours. So he has every right to be a cocky dog.

Ronald was another one of my favorites, though quick to dissolve, who swore to walk off if there was even the slightest hint of a rain cloud. (The contest was held outside in the summer Texas heat.) Needless to say, he didn't last long, not because of a rain cloud, but because for one and a half days straight he ate nothing but oranges and Snickers bars.

Janis was another crazy kook. She was missing her front teeth, and the best part about her presence was her husband, who talks to the camera about his "20-ton air conditioner" that can bring his living room down to "12 below."

Norma was my pick to win the whole shebang. From the very beginning, I knew this gal had it. She had the greatest girth of all the contestants, which would seem to hamper her chances, but the lady was a Jesus freak with a capital J.

She had people from her church praying for her night and day, and when asked how many people this included, she estimated "somewhere around two

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or three hundred."

I was so damn proud of that gal, especially because what made her lift her hand off the truck was a moment of clarity. The spirit of the Lord entered her soul, and she started clapping her hands to rejoice.

Poignant? Yes. But also oddly inspiring and complex. We've all been sleep-deprived and had an epiphany, but when has it ever made us lose sight of our goals? I know that she could sell tapes of her epiphany for \$19.99 and make enough money for a new truck!

As Benny says, "It's a human drama thang."

This film is 96 minutes long, but it feels like, well, more than three days, as the viewer struggles vicariously along with the contestants trying to outdo one another. Some participants don't even want to talk with one another for fear of making, then breaking, a friendship.

This contest is the epitome of

American culture, one where crazy contests to win things are the norm. Every year, people do the stupidest things to win Super Bowl tickets, and radio stations constantly beckon to the youth of America to "cram as many people as you can into a phone booth." All for a pile of CDs or a new outfit.

But "Hands on a Hardbody" is about people who need the truck for rent, or basic transportation instead of a bike, or to quit one of three jobs. These people aren't well off, and this makes the documentary extremely personal.

But no matter how it turns out, it seems to have been worth it just to have given it a shot. I would love to try this myself, and I think I could go in for a fairly long haul. But I can see my back starting to hurt, and my pink elephants becoming all too real.

As Benny says, "It's like the first time you kill a really big animal. Exhilarating!"



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Shawn Ballarin/DN

Discrimination leaves mark

NU College of Law lost respect in question over long hair



Perhaps you remember the story of Thayne Glenn, a former student of the NU College of Law. The story is brief: The University of Nebraska forbids discrimination on the basis of personal characteristics; the law school denied him entrance into a program because his hair was too long. The law school violated the university's nondiscrimination policy.

The facts are simple, the reasoning almost syllogistic. If the length of one's hair isn't a "personal character-

istic," I cannot imagine what one is. This should have been an easy call for the law school, right?

Not for this one. When we brought you the story last year, my predecessor at the Daily Nebraskan predicted that the law school would adopt a "Delay Until May (DUM)" strategy. That is, the College of Law would put off making a decision as long as possible, waiting until the student involved had graduated, and the rest of us had forgotten about it.

Truer words have never been spoken — the law school did exactly that.

The story of Thayne Glenn and his long-hair incident was first reported last year in the middle of January. The law school took no action until a meeting on Feb. 9 where "nothing was resolved." Then it waited to discuss the issue until April 2, when a motion to allow Glenn into the program was tabled.

Finally, on April 20, 1999, the law school faculty voted down a motion to affirm the university's nondiscrimination policy. Of course, this meeting took place during the very last week of classes, long after it would have been possible to allow Glenn to enter the program and receive credit.

Coincidence?

The matter was finally put to rest in August, after Glenn had graduated. The law school Delayed Until May, and the problem went away ...

But we haven't forgotten.

There never was an official statement as to why Glenn's hair was such a problem. It was surmised that Lancaster County Attorney Gary Lacey (the individual responsible for the discrimination) felt that juries might react negatively to seeing a long-haired prosecutor.

I suppose it's possible — juries are

often irrational. But it's much more likely that a jury would react negatively to seeing a black or female prosecutor, and that's certainly not grounds to bar one from the program. In fact, long-haired lawyers practice in courtrooms all across Nebraska, and there's never been evidence that they fare poorly compared to their short-haired brethren.

Of course, Lacey didn't commit a crime. Hair length isn't a protected category in state or federal nondiscrimination laws. But he did violate a clear university policy, and a majority of the law school faculty let him do it.

This is a great example of the problem inherent in having a policy or law enforced by the very same people whose conduct it is intended to limit. The policy was intended to control the behavior of faculty. It was unambiguously meant to forbid dis-

crimination based on arbitrary factors unrelated to merit — such as hair length. In this case, the faculty got to decide for itself whether it was discriminating or not. The result is not surprising.

The faculty who voted to allow this discrimination to continue come mostly from a generation where long hair was viewed as unprofessional and a badge of the "freaky people." These faculty members weren't necessarily being malevolent. But good people can make bad decisions, and this entire incident is an example.

I suppose it's over, though, and we should just let it drop. The law school and the county attorney won. They succeeded in keeping one highly-qualified, long-haired student out of a law school program.

And they also succeeded in losing our respect.

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