

Jon Foster

Introduction to Folk Studies

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Cruising has been a permanent fixture in the everyday life of most high school students since cars became affordable and accessible to young drivers. Whether it be cruising a favorite local restaurant, the town square, or the town itself, cruising has been an important means of socialization in large and small towns across the nation. In this paper I am discussing cruising traditions in Glasgow from the life of my father, Jeff Foster, and cruising traditions from my own life.

My father's cruising days first began in the eighth grade. He was lucky enough to live around older neighborhood friends who were generous enough to take him out with them. The biggest cruising spot in Glasgow at this time was Jolly's restaurant on Happy Valley Road. This is where my father claims he had his first "Big Mac." Here it was called a "j-burger" or a "j-box," because of the box it was stored in before eating. At this restaurant you had the choice of eating inside or eating outside in your car. There was an intercom system set up outside, and food could be ordered from here and be delivered to your car by a waitress.

People used this restaurant as a cruising spot and sometimes as a hangout. Many people would pull in to cruise around the restaurant, while many pulled in the parking lot to just watch the cruisers.

The cruising route began at Jolly's restaurant, where one would pull in and circle the establishment. Then the cars would pull out of Jolly's and turn left on to Happy Valley Road.

Eventually you would make your way to the town square, where you would circle the courthouse a few times and then start toward Jolly's again. Every once in a while a detour would be taken from the square to the local bowling alley, and then you would journey back to Jolly's again. After you reached Happy Valley Road, you ran into a line of cars backed up one-half mile from Jolly's, the cars wanting to cruise Jolly's, of course.

Cruising back then usually began at dusk on every Friday and Saturday night. People usually cruised until about 11 or 12 o'clock. Cruising was also popular on those nice Sunday afternoons after church was let out.

People also used cruising for showing off their girlfriend(s)/boyfriend(s) and more important, their CARS! Cars were worked on all week to get them in shape for the weekend. How well your car looked, sounded and ran was very important, because it usually decided how popular you were in the cruising population.

Cruising usually started for students when they obtained the right to drive, or when an older friend was generous enough to let them cruise with him/her. As I mentioned before, my father began cruising during his eighth grade year and continued until his first or second year of college. Dad said that after high

school the novelty of cruising wore off, and in the first place, he didn't fit in with the high school kids anymore.

Cruising now hasn't changed much from back then, except maybe for the location, but it's still basically taking place in the same area. Cruising is still a big part of most high school students in Barren County/Glasgow and is going strong.

When I began high school, I had never cruised before, until my older girlfriend took me out one night. I never did see the great fun everyone else found in cruising (and still don't), but I gave it a couple of tries. However, after those couple of tries I didn't participate in cruising ever again.

Cruising during my high school years was done primarily around three restaurants and two roads. The cruising route usually began on Cherry Street or Wall Street, and incorporated McDonald's, Wendy's and Arby's. Usually you would start on Cherry Street and circle McDonald's, then turning right back on to Cherry. Then a left turn was made on to Wall Street, and you ended up facing Happy Valley Road. Here you would either cruise the town a little and then make your way back to Cherry or Wall Street, or simply get right back into line again. This process usually took around 20-35 minutes, sometimes longer, depending on how many people were out that night.

Cruising took place generally at the same time, pretty much like my father's cruising days. Cruising started a little bit later and ended a little bit later, but took place on Friday and Saturday nights as always. Sunday cruising now is not as big as

it was then, but is still participated in on those particularly nice Sunday afternoons and nights.

Showing off the girlfriend(s)/boyfriend(s) was a big reason for cruising as it was during my father's time. However, the car show put on every weekend by cruisers has been taken to a new level. Cars now have space-age design, looking nothing like what it started out as, and booming stereos now occupy 3/4 of the car or truck, leaving barely enough room for the passenger, and sometimes the driver! One's car and how it looked, sounded, and ran often helped determine (and still does) status and popularity within the cruising population.

Cruising took a major turn during my senior year when local authorities closed down Wall Street on Friday and Saturday nights because of the traffic problems created by the cruisers. This didn't phase them, as cruising was simply moved to Smith Road which ran in front of McDonald's and an Auto Zone. Use of the road for regular traffic became virtually impossible as the cruising route became a complete straight line, with very few streets leading out. This road ran into the parking lot of a Wal-Mart related bargain store named Bud's. Here cars would turn around and get back into the "strip" and start the process all over again. The parking lot also turned into a hangout for many, especially those wanting to show off their cars or car stereos.

As a whole, cruising has not changed a great deal in thirty years. The location has basically stayed the same, with the exception of the town square, and people still use cruising for

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socialization. The most evident change is probably the look of cars today, as the design of cars has changed drastically in thirty years. One thing that definetly hasn't changed is the popularity of cruising and the good times that are created there.