

FLIM-FLAMMING THE DUTCH (J. D. Stacy)

Some seasons back, J.D. was reported to be dabbling in racing track entrepreneurship, claiming ownership of ten different short tracks in four Mason-Dixon states. Busy fellow!

After a decade, the Dutch government seems to have called off at last its unsuccessful witch hunt for scapegoats in *het schandaal van J.D. Stacy*, a stormy and comic entanglement which pitted the economic ministries of the Netherlands against a lone good ole boy stockcar owner from NASCAR with monster spending habits. That was J.D. Stacy.

The adduced scandal, naturally, was over money: the millions and millions of *guldens* Holland was advancing Stacy to market a radical coal-mining apparatus, the Thin Steam Miner, until gossipmongers spoiled J.D.'s fun by spreading the news that the treasure was really fueling the blue and yellow Stacy Winston Cup stable.

Charismatic James D. Stacy once described himself as a barefoot Kentucky boy from the Depression 1930s who did his growing up in a dirt floor shanty. By 1978, the season of his first campaign with NASCAR, his feet were wrapped in custom reptilian tailored boots. He additionally was biting hard on the \$5 Cuban cigars which were his new trademark. And, courtesy of the fortunes he claimed to have pulled out of empires of mobile parks, heavy equipment, and real estate, he was domiciled within a 16-chamber mansion standing on 21 expensive acres about the Keeneland, KY, thoroughbred facility.

Unfortunately, Stacy's opening stockcar racing adventure was marked by blazing hostility. Screaming for relief, the chief mechanic Harry Hyde –the Robert Duval character in the movie *DAYS OF THUNDER* – testified to a North Carolina court that J.D. was stripping him of everything but his eyes, so he could weep.

But Stacy returned in the 1980s, reinvented as a coal guru with a magic contraption which, he guaranteed to the Dutch conglomerate Rijn-Schelde-Verolme, would draw limitless quantities of black gold from the earth's core. It was the Thin Steam Miner.

Just getting good-ole-boyed by an exotic creature such as Stacy proved to be so overpowering an experience for Rijn-Schelde-Verolme that it agreed to an amazing contract which, among other goodies, rewarded J.D. with a monthly sales salary of over two million *guldens*.

Stacy threw NASCAR into a fit of spending. He bought up one entire Winston Cup team, sponsored a second one, and flung currency in so many opposite directions that in some races his name and colors seemed to appear on half of the stockcars.

Big Bill France, the influential Humpy Wheeler, and CBS television all cosseted him. *Stock Car Racing* magazine reported reverently: "No man or company has had so many cars under one sponsorship since the days of the auto manufacturers."

Suddenly the salad days ended; all Stacy's teams got rolled up and parked. His Dutch partners had shut off the money tap. They really had no other choice. They were spending all those millions for the manufacture of Thin Steam Miners, yet their chief salesman was too pre-occupied with his stockcars to sell any of them. Rijn-Schelde-Verolme teetered on the brink of bankruptcy, then fell in.

Holland's Minister of Economic Affairs launched an emergency investigation. Most of the *gulden* leak had been in government subsidies, so heads were certain to roll. Investigators painstakingly traced the money flow through a labyrinth of different operating businesses known as Coal Systems Ltd., Steamcoal Ltd., Sunbelt Ltd, and, lastly, J.D.'s very own company, MMWOPS, a curious cryptonym apparently meaning Making Money While Other People Sleep.

A team of Dutch reporters dug up fresh scandal unlikely to advance the cause of J.D. or the Thin Steam Miner. Very early in its life, the device had been in the middle of a shady situation with a steel mill in Turkey. Among its original proselytes was one Leser Lee, a professional knuckle breaker and pathological liar who depicted himself as a bodyguard of ill-starred Jimmy Hoffa. Lee, however, surely was being uncharacteristically modest when he said this, for the rest of his rap sheet called him a convicted rapist, federal prison inmate, and presently under suspicion as a violent hitter for the mob. There was, though, no question of further violence from him. He was discovered shot dead inside his pornographic book establishment in Newhope, Ky.

J.D. was located residing in vastly reduced circumstances: in a shed out behind the mansion. He became defensive when ignorant people referred to him as a mountebank and scam artist and protested that he'd done nothing wrong. Was it his fault the Dutch signed such a dumb contract?

A moral presents itself. Back in the 1600s, a rip-off Amsterdam merchant *burger* named Minuet allegedly flim-flammed Manhattan Island away from the Iroquois and Algonquin Indians for \$24 worth of pitiful knick-knacks, thereby helping rush both tribes toward ruin and extinction. And, roughly 350 years afterward, Minuet's own gullible ancestors found a good ole boy with snakeskin boots, five-buck Cuban cigars, and fleets of stockcars who was even more slippery to deal with than the Indians found the Dutch.

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