

HOW TO DRIVE ON SAND By Bob White, a Local

Today I'll answer one of the most often asked questions and one of the best-kept secrets on the Banks..."how to drive on sand". I and my crack team of research assistants have spent years of careful, meticulous, scientific research; questioned the few superior authorities (namely, teenage boys in two-wheel drive pick-up trucks, and 90 year-old natives ...but never, ever questioned anyone in any truck whose tires I couldn't see over), and, as usual, I've stripped away the chafe and arrived at a simple axiom, that if followed, guarantees a perfect sand-driving record. IT IS SIMPLY THIS: "**NEVER LOSE YOUR MOMENTUM!**"

Easily said, but, hard to do. In fact, put a different way, it ranks right up there with what your Momma said about your virginity, ..but you didn't listen to her either, did you? Like most laws of nature, this one requires more explanation and additional sub-laws for understanding. Three major sub-laws are:

- Let lots of air out your tires. How much is "lots of air"? Lots more than you think. See "valve stem remover" below.
- Use bald tires (in fact, think big ~ 4 bald).
- Have 4-wheel drive available.
Surprised that 4-wheel drive is last instead of first? It's last, because as the above-mentioned teenagers and old natives know...you hardly ever, ever need 4WD or lose momentum if you run very low pressures and have wide, slick tires. Why? Because, contrary to what seems logical, what you're really trying to do is float on the sand. Aggressive tire patterns (the kind of tires that come on every 4WD yuppie mobile ever made) and high tire pressures make the tire "bite" into the sand and make you violate the first axiom lose your momentum. Here is the hierarchy of tire tread patterns from best to worse:
 - a. Racing slicks with no tread
 - b. Worn-out (bald) street tires of any size and description
 - c. Street tires with a simple tread pattern
 - d. All-season tread patterns
 - e. Mud and snow tread patterns

Some other minor rules (sub-sets) are:

- Never drive in very soft sand for any distance, without letting lots of air out of your tires. How much is "lots of air"? More than you think. (See "valve stem remover" below).
- Have sufficient ground clearance. Cars with low ground clearance, i.e., a sports car, a Nascar (even if it does has racing slicks), and probably even a front-wheel drive car, just ain't gonna make it in the sand because of ground clearance. And, if you remember anything from your Physics 101 class, you'll remember that "sufficient ground clearance is directly proportional to your girth."

In other words, if you can't crawl under your car, don't drive in sand. And, the litter (excuse me, more "rotund") you are, the deeper the sand you're able to drive

in (all else being equal).

"Momentum" and "stop immediately" axioms are nearly impossible to obey. Logically (by the way, logic goes out the window when you're in sand), it would seem that if you lose momentum, you would naturally slow down and come to a stop, right? Wrongamongo. What really happens is that your logic goes to the same place the mates to your socks go, and even though you know you've got to stop, that you're just burying your car and making things worse; your right leg (gas pedal) muscles lock-up in a huge spasm because the left side of your brain (the emotional and voluntary muscle side) is ignoring the right-side brain (the logical side) and the left side" makes you continue to drive on, all-the-while, all your other heightened senses are screaming, "you're down to the frame! Stop! Stop! Abort! Abort! Danger! Danger!" But you keep on throwing up sand until finally the Right side (logical-side) brain regains control of course, by then your car is covered in sand, and you give real consideration to just leaving it there as a memorial for future archeologists to find.

Back-up! For some reason, inexplicable by all the rules of nature, physics, and common sense, you can almost always back up in sand even if you can't go forward Unless, of course, you've violated the "stop all forward progress" rule above and you are buried up to the frame, as, you undoubtedly have.

- Always carry a small shovel. An "Army" fold-up perfect. Murphy's #4 law states: "The only time you get stuck up to the axles is when you forget your shovel."
- Don't let your vehicle intimidate you! You are the master of your car! Be aggressive! Be assertive! Show it who's boss! When you're "plowing" through soft sand; when your car's engine is starting to sound like a wounded buffalo; when your heart is pounding louder than an Indian tom-tom contest; and when your car is losing forward speed....NOW'S THE TIME TO FLOOR IT! SHOW THAT SUCKER WHO'S BOSS, WHO'S THE MASTER, WHO'S NUMERO UNO, THE TOP ENCHILADA...Keep it pegged...or, or, go ahead and stop Cause you'll have to sooner or later), let lots of air out of your tires and continue on...content in the knowledge that you could have showed it who's boss.
- Always carry a "valve stem remover." It takes forever to let "lots of air" out of the tires by holding the valve stem down. You will get nervous about the amount of air you've let out long before the jobs done and stop too soon. Optimum low tire pressure is 15-18 lbs. In big tires and 5 to 8 lbs. In street tires. Regular street tires hold about 32 lbs. of pressure, and big 'ole truck tires hold up to 50 lbs. of pressure; and, in controlled, scientific studies rye conducted, persons letting air out by holding the valve stem down, get nervous around the 31 lb. (If they started at 32 lbs.), and stop at 30 lbs., which brings us to the next item the savvy beach cruiser carries...

- Have a tire pressure gauge handy to measure actual pressures. But before we talk about measuring pressure, let's talk about how to get the air out with a hot tip on letting air out of your tires: This method has been tested on thousands of tires of all shapes, sizes, and pressures, but you have to believe, with oil your heart that it works, because the first few times you do it, you will get very nervous (and, maybe deep down, even have doubts). The method is this; take your handy-dandy valve stem remover and remove the valve stem completely from the valve. Air will come rushing out (in scientific circles, its not rushing out but being "sucked" out by the lower atmospheric pressure-but I digress). Here's where you get nervous and may have doubts, because its takes a long time to let "lots of air" out of your tire, especially when most 4WD tires carry 45 lbs. of pressure in them. You have to wait...wait...wait. All the while, air is rushing out of the tires But, what you are waiting for... and listening for...is a change in "pitch". The air will start to whistle as it reaches the 18-20 LB range (3-10 lbs. on street tires). Quickly, replace the valve stem...and yes, of little faith, may now wish to check the pressure with the pressure gauge you now always carry with you and, viola! The pressure will be between 15-18 lbs, the optimum pressure for Imp tires (for small tires, it will be around 5-8 lbs. of pressure). It works every time And, soon, you won't need the pressure gauge, which is good, because you'll probably lose it anyway.
- Let lots of air out of all your tires! And, it doesn't matter whether you have two-wheel drive or four-wheel drive; you have to let lots of air out of the front tires, too! And, list, the acid test about this "lots of air" thing, is this; If you're stuck, and have let "lots of air" out, but, you're not down to the frame, and you still can't move, it means.... You still haven't let enough air out of your tires! You haven't been listening! Your tires need to be almost flat. You need to be nervous about the way they look.

Don't worry, they won't go completely flat on you...but you will need to get them pumped up as soon as you can once you're back on the hard surface). And, speaking of flats, this brings us to the last law....

- **Always carry extra valve stems with you.** Try to get a mental picture of this...when you unscrew the valve stem, especially in large tires, there may be up to 40-50 lbs. of pressure in them. The stem has a tendency to become a jet-propelled missile, capable of sub-orbital flight. Of course, the tendency of this to actually happen, is directly proportional to:
 - The remoteness of the location.
 - The amount of light available for the job.
 - The absence of other cars, traffic, and people, and...
 - The number of "Buds" consumed by the "screwie".

But rest assured, I've only imparted a small portion of my vast knowledge on this subject.

NOTE TO READER:

You get air for your tires back on the hard road less than 1 mile down (on your right going south) at Winks Store for a small fee. It is advisable to always carry a pressure gauge.