

GETTING THEIR KICKS: THE AMERICAN-SAUDI GO AROUND COME- AROUND

Despite a decent amount of negativity roiling around the socio-political scene lately, on a fine Saturday night right here in the ole USA, this gives me a lot of heart somehow:

Then, with a scream of revving engines, it begins: a yellow Corvette and a red Mitsubishi go head to head, racing down the road at terrifying speeds, just inches apart. Shouts go up from the sidelines, and another pair of racers shoot down the road, and another.

This may be the most popular sport of Saudi youth, an obsessive, semilegal competition that dominates weekend nights here.

...

For Saudi Arabia's vast and underemployed generation of young people, these reckless night battles are a kind of collective scream of frustration, a rare outlet for exuberance in an ultraconservative country where the sexes are rigorously segregated and most public entertainment is illegal. They are, almost literally, bored out of their minds.

"Why do they do it?" ... "Because they have nothing else to do. Because they are empty."

Despite all the shrieking of teh military-industrial class, the iron curtain fell and the cold war subsided because of information, lifestyle and ethos penetration into the supposed enemy. Thing was, they were not the enemy, they were people just like us. And so the

walls came down. The Rolling Stones, Beatles and Beach Boys had as much, if not far more, to do with the victory as military might (not to mention the start of the internet and satellite teevee).

The United States government and tunnel visioned world press were too slow to figure out what was really up the first time, and lo and behold, they are biting off on the same steel fisted bunk again. It is cultural progression that is softening the underbelly of yet another clash of the civilizations. Who'd a thunk it? Who will realize it?

Then the car leaps forward, accelerating furiously, and breaks into a sudden skid, spinning around, nearly colliding with a concrete barrier and leaving thick black marks on the pavement. A stifling smell of burnt rubber hangs in the air.

It is not the bombs. It is La Bamba.