

Reporter's Footnotes

TV Comes To The Cape



By Robert Baldwin

Somewhere on a lonely stretch of beach on North Carolina's Core Banks lie the twisted remains of a 1966 Chevrolet — a model which has not yet been introduced to the public.

The demolished car was deliberately destroyed by an explosive charge after it had starred in an expensive-to-make film produced for showing later this year as a television commercial.

"We didn't get a look at the car during our vacation on the banks, but we saw and heard plenty of evidence that something out of the ordinary was taking place out on the lonely, windswept sands.

FISHERMEN, boaters and the handful of residents at Cape Lookout didn't take a great deal of interest in what was going on, but they showed an extraordinary amount of curiosity about what the film was costing.

The only idea of what the total expenditure might be could only be gathered by comparing notes as to how much each resident had been paid for his services and guessing at what other services must have been required and at what price.

The estimates thus arrived at were astronomical. Some guessed that what appeared to be the filming of a commercial was, in fact, a war on poverty in disguise.

First there was the summer home that was rented to the crew at a price spoken of only in hushed whispers. Then, the 20 or so crewmen and a luscious female model found it necessary to provide for the purchase of a refrigerator willingly brought out from the mainland (for a price of course) by a cooperative boatsman.

If it was beer they were cooling, and if they bought it at the Cape, they paid a little more for it. Everybody does that. Prices are higher out there because nobody wants to jump in a boat and cruise over to Beaufort or Harker's Island for such minor purchases.

But nobody on the banks had ever before encountered a group as well-financed or as willing to spend as the TV boys were.

THE FOLKS who live out there have always called themselves bankers, but until the television crew arrived the name had always referred to their geographical rather than financial situation.

We were discussing the going-on with a handful of bankers during our stay and learned that the crew was allegedly paying a man to watch its equipment when it wasn't in use.

"Can you imagine such a miserable job?" one of them asked. "Having to watch something that doesn't do anything."

"You should have gotten down here a little earlier and gotten that job for yourself," another told me. "You're not doing anything but watching things anyhow."

A well-tanned boy in his late 'teens whose family spends its summers at the cape and who was hiring his beach buggy for the hauling of cameras and tripods filled us in on the day's planned shooting schedule.

"They're going to have a fender come up out of the sand," he announced.

"Come again?"

"Well they've got part of the car buried in the sand and they're going to shoot it while a helicopter they rented pulls it up with a piano wire."

We wondered how much they had spent for the piano wire.

We didn't even try to guess at what the car, specially made for the purpose according to our informants, had cost.

ON THE LAST day of the shooting, someone said that the luscious model had fallen asleep with just her bikini on and snoozed for several hours under the blazing midday sun. Her painful sunburn, we were told, wouldn't have looked good on film but the cameramen, providentially, had already completed the scenes in which she was to appear.

We asked why the crew was planning to blow up the car and were told that they planned to run the film in reverse so that the automobile would appear to be flying together rather than apart. Pow—Instant Chevrolet.

The cameramen were nowhere to be seen as Capt. Josiah Bailey Jr. pulled his ferry-sailboat up to the dock and a handful of tourists debarked.

They wandered into the Cape Lookout Sports Center and ordered hot dogs and soft drinks from proprietress Sally Moore. Suddenly there was a thunderous blast from up the beach.

"What was that?" all of them wanted to know.

"They just blew up a 1966 Chevrolet," Sally replied as she put another batch of hot dogs on to cook.