

## Romance of open road has short honeymoon



Wouldn't it be great to climb aboard one of those huge "land cruisers" and head for the open road leaving all your acres and responsibilities in a cloud of Nottoway dust?

Nichole Bryant, a 13-year-old who was living with her father and step-mother here, thought so—and her mother drove on, a beautiful Kenworth 007 Special Edition, with two bunks, TV/VCR/CD, eight speakers, air ride, special diamond interior, refrigerator, closets, shelves...Wow!

Only 150 of these trucks were made, and her mom's truck, which she drove with her husband had been used in a James Bond movie. Wow! It

would be so romantic, living in a truck, having adventures, seeing the country...

Nichole was having troubles at home and needed a break. So this call of the open road was not a fantasy for her. It was real! She could do it! Her father said it was her choice.

With plans of being home taught by her mother, Nichole hit the road. Now her real education would begin.

“For the first couple of weeks it was fun, but after that it was the same everyday. You never knew where you were going to wake up or where you were going to go a shower next,” said Nichole, who was now back in Nottoway High School, ready to talk about her experiences.

Life in the truck reminded her of the movie *Ground Hog Day*, in which Bill Murray woke up to find everyday the same day. He was trapped in time until he learned some important lessons about life.

“You’d be in a small bunk all the time,” continued Nichole, “with a dog, too. I’ve been from Florida to Maine, out to Oregon, California. There are very few states I haven’t been in.” but looking back now it’s all a blur of road signs, truck stops which all looked the same, and ribbons of asphalt that never came to a stop.

As far as the 007 Special Edition living up to its name, well, there were two “adventures” Nichole remembers. She saw one major accident, in which a car pulled out in front of another truck.

“We stopped and helped clean them up before the ambulance got there and helped put out several fires on the truck. But nothing got out of hand and no one was killed.”

And then there was the time her truck was shot at. “One night a taxi was being robbed in Florida. We saw this cab break onto the main highway from a maintenance road and gets tuck. Two teenagers had put a shotgun to the cabbie’s head and he had fought back. They ran and waited for us to leave. We didn’t want them to come back and kill the driver.

“They shot twice, once at the cab and once at us. We were all ducking down in the truck. When the police got there, they had gone.”

And that was about it, for a whole year! And then Nichole lost a year in school because her mother didn’t follow the correct procedures for home-schooling. “I was really looking forward to a senior year. That year in the truck really blew it for me,” said Nichole. She is, however, able to make up enough credits to graduate with her class.

Now, when the trucks roll by heading for the horizon and “freedom,” Nichole doesn’t dream about the romance of the road.

“They say that once it gets in your blood, you stay with it, but it didn’t get in mine!”

In fact, being trapped in a truck for a year I a dream from which Nichole is happy to awake.