

"Grumbles, Gripes - Grins and Giggles"

By: Edwin Thompson

"Grumbles, Gripes - Grins, and Giggles"

By: Edwin Thompson

Ramblings and babblings inspired by drives in a Porsche 986, reading too many magazine articles, internet forums, and watching too many YouTube car videos.

Table of Contents:

"A Sunday Morning Sunrise Service"	4
"Sensibility, Reality, and Sports Cars"	7
"I Long for Analog"	16
"Waah! They Took My Flat Six"	20
"How Often Have You Been Overtaken?"	22
"The Stupidity of Genius"	25
"The Mystique and the Machines"	28
"Driving A Slow Car Fast" or "Elixir 986"	33
"Simple Desires Hidden in Big Dreams"	37
"Diminishing Return"	40
"Buying Cars As An Investment"	42
"0 to 60"	44
"Fifty-Five Degrees in June... in the South!"	46
"Sublime"	48
"Working on a Mid-Engine Car"	50
"Installing Sound Systems in a Porsche"	53
"Living With a Manual"	56
"One Owner Cars and Multiple Owner Cars"	59
"Amortization"	63
"You Sold a Two Year Old 370Z for a Twenty Year Old Porsche? You're Crazy!"	66
"Cars and Coffee"	70
"A Practical, Subtle Supercar - An Oxymoron"	72
"Old Cadillac's"	75
"An Envie for a Vintage Light Ivory Mercedes Wagon"	79
"Slot Cars"	82
"Vanity of Vanities"	85

"Bentley's Future—A Sad Day For The Few, The Privileged"	88
"Polar Regions"	91
"Alcantara, the New Velour ... And Other Gripes"	94
"A Daily Driver: An Appliance or a Tool?"	97
"A Twenty Three year Old Porsche 986 As a Daily Driver"	99
"The Finest Materials Available"	101
"Commuter Pod"	105
"A Ten Dollar Car"	108
"A Hollow Feeling" (First story written in collection)	111
"I Need Therapy"	118
"Heel and Toe Do-si-do - and Ftth She Was Gone"	121
Conclusion	126

Sunday July 30, 2017

"A Sunday Morning Sunrise Service"

After a week of rain and 95 degree-stand-still-and-sweat weather, a cool front was forecast to move through Saturday night. I was ready, and when it did, we were going to have us a Sunday morning sunrise service! We, being me and the six cylinders of my Porsche Boxer engine... as well as the fact that I have always addressed myself in "The Royal We" tense.

I woke up at 5:15 a.m. Sunday morning, stepped outside and smiled; the weatherman scored a hit - 65 degrees, clear, and no noticeable humidity. I uncovered the Porsche, she was already grinning. I went inside, fixed a cup of coffee, and more quickly than my usual lollygagging over coffee, drank a tolerably warm cup of coffee rather quickly.

I went out, started the car, folded the top down, put on my driving gloves and headed east towards the breaking light of dawn and my favorite mountain road, Highway 25. The sound of a Porsche Boxer engine is so sweet, and she was singing this morning.

Once on Highway 25 I was no longer just a driver, I was also the maestro; I grabbed my conductors baton - the stick shift - and had the six cylinder choir do some warm-ups. Yes sir, they were in fine form this Sunday morning, everyone was there, the baritones of low revs, a countertenor, as well as the tenors and bass, the whole rev range was on key; and did I mention, we had a guest soprano soloist who was going to hit the real high notes, she's known as the "Banshee."

Turning onto Highway 25 it almost seemed fitting that as we all started coming into harmony, right around the first curve, off to the right, sat a little white country church with a graveyard on the side. The sunlight streaming through the ancient oaks was illuminating the headstones as though they were in the spotlight. It gave me two immediate sensations/thoughts - you better enjoy life while you're alive - cause they ain't hav'n no fun in the bone-yard - and I asked the Lord for protection as I began my self-indulgent, earthly pleasure.

Suddenly out of the corner of my eye I saw three dogs racing through the graveyard towards the road; I downshifted - directing the Banchee to wail, and we raced away from the "hounds of hell" headed my way. Oh yeah, this "spirited" drive had begun.

As I raced towards the mountains crest, the six cylinder symphony performed a flawless accelerando up the octave scale.

As I reached the crest I noticed the scenery from my peripheral vision, it was amazing; I felt as though I truly had ascended closer to heaven.

I slipped into third gear at the crest, awaking the alto section, approaching the hairpin turn that begins the decent. I moved my baton into second gear, sending the revs up to 5000, the Banshee stood up and began her soprano solo... 5500 rpm, she started climbing the octave scale, she held her aria all the way to 6300 rpm's.

"Bravo!" I shouted.

With the flick of my baton into fourth gear, I directed the choir into a caesura - a sudden stop - as we gently glided down the mountain, the choir sang in a perfect mechanical pianissimo, complete with harmonic back burbling performed by the exhaust/horn section.

At the bottom of the mountain the road turned into a serpentine asphalt ribbon through the low lying hills and lush, green valleys. At this point the choir nearly directed itself - fourth, third, fourth, second - low tones, mid-range, soprano... I just relaxed and led the symphony with the gentle, rhythmic movements of my baton, shifting smoothly through the gears.

As I entered the section of Highway 25 that is literally an extended series of esses, with a few fifth gear straights thrown in, the choir began to take on more of an upbeat tempo.

As I glided swiftly through the esses my body began swaying side to side in the seat like a singer in a gospel choir. It was exhilarating! The tempo was increasing. We swayed through the final set of esses and into the crescendo straight; I floored it, and let the Banshee have a three gear solo.

I threw my hands high above me into the air and shouted "Hallelujah!" And then I heard it again, twice!

"Hallelujah, Hallelujah"

"Wait, that wasn't me," I thought.

I swore I could hear the angels singing, I looked in my rear view mirror and sure enough, there were my two guardian angels, sitting on the rear clamshell like it was a rumble seat; they were smiling, happy to be assigned to me this glorious morning. They winked and gave me a thumbs up...

Of course "when the roll is called up yonder" I'll be there, but you can bet your butt that my guardian angels will be asking for overtime pay!

I grinned and continued on, turning south onto Highway 53 and headed home. My spirits had been lifted. The whole experience was sinfully delightful. I hadn't violated any of God's laws, but I sure did ignore the laws of man, and probably pushed the laws of physics to their edge as well.

As I pulled into the driveway, I sat listening to the engine purr like a happy cat. I turned it off, raised the convertible, put the car cover back on, and went inside.

When I walked inside my mom asked if I would bring her to church.

Smiling broadly, I said, "Sure, I'll go again."

Thursday August 3, 2017

"Sensibility, Reality, and Sports Cars"

I have always had the view that cars, for the most part, are nothing more than soulless, boring, transportation boxes manufactured for the masses. I say "for the most part" because they're are, of course, exceptions.

In 1965, when I was six, as we sat at a stoplight, a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud glided along side of us, stopping beside us, perfectly framed in my field of vision. I immediately fell in love; the desire to own one was planted in my mind and heart.

It's not that my dad drove boring cars, we had a Cadillac Fleetwood Brougham that was a close to a personal limousine that one could own, complete with footrests and picnic tables, ala Rolls-Royce style. It was a great car, I learned to hunt blackbirds from the backseat; sending the dog out to retrieve my downed birds.

He also owned a diesel Mercedes, which he gave to the preacher, because my mom *hated* the car; a lesson/feeling plated in the annals of my mind, that would surface in my own life years later - unloved car equals unhappy wife.

Dad had an Audi Super 90 when I was a teenager, a car that I drove. The Audi, along with the childhood memories of the Mercedes, planted an appreciation for simplistic style and exquisite German craftsmanship into my psyche. Before I was born my dad also owned an MG TD for goodness sakes.

I suppose my disdain, or rather unimpressed attitude with cars began in 1970 when I got my first motorcycle. From then on I saw cars as "cages", as described by the popular biker vernacular of the day. But I still had, and still do, have a desire to own a Silver Cloud; even though I owned the identical car, except for badging, a 1958 Bentley S1.

By the time I was fifteen, and driving, I was also at the height of my motorcycle fanaticism, to the point of being nicknamed "The Fiend" by my sisters and their boyfriends. My first car was a double hand-me-down 1965 Comet that my grandfather had given to my older sister who subsequently passed it down to me.

I drove that car like the maniac I was, jumping railroad tracks, blindly blasting through corn-high Johnson grass in vacant urban lots -- until Frank and I hit a two foot high sewer drain that was installed in preparation for the coming urban sprawl of housing, ripping the front wheel off and cutting the rear rim in half.

I even flipped the poor Comet three times after a dog ran out in front of us - "us" being my girlfriend-to be first wife. The brakes pulled so hard to the right on that Comet that we were pulled into a high street curb which sent us sailing, spinning three times while airborne, landing on the passenger side in the mud ... in front of one of New Orleans largest cemeteries. To this day I do not brake for animals.

A car full of hippies stopped to see if we were okay; mainly just stonedly reaping, "Man, that was so cool brah..." one even asked if we could do it again. They helped us push the car over; to everyone's amazement the only damage was to the passenger side door handles, which were ever so slightly bent downward; and I broke the key off in the ignition with my foot as I super humanly opened the drivers door, straight up with my left hand while lifting Lisa up and out of the car -- yes adrenalin is a powerful stimulant. I was getting us the hell out of there as my first thoughts were that the car would burst into flames, which was not uncommon in those carburetted days of motoring.

Months later as I was checking something under the hood, my father who was once in military counterintelligence, sauntered over; as he stood there looking under the hood, he looked up, to the sides, then at me, and said, "This cars been upside down."

I had become an expert at straight faced denial by that time; I coolly threw the suspicion towards my sister, stating, "Maybe so, Bob's driven this car."

Bob was my sisters boyfriend who was not a bad driver, and not a cautious driver, just prone to bizarre accidents - it was early seventies, the heydays of muscle cars, which he owned and had wrecked several times - see how convenient that was?

And on a backtrack thought about tearing the wheels and steering related pieces to pieces while blazing blindly through the weeds... my dad came out to the scene, looked the car over, and in a questioning tone said one word to me, "How?"

Not missing a beat, because I can lie faster that most people can process their own thoughts, said, "The front tire blew out and the car pulled so hard I had to let go of the wheel so I didn't break my hand!"

"Uh-huh," he said, "And -"

"And before I knew what was happening it felt like a bomb went off, when I got out I saw what we hit." I interruptingly interjected.

He surveyed the blocks long open field of soon to be developed house lots... which thank God, had been mowed that morning while we were at school, thus removing the bent Johnson Grass trail we had plowed earlier the previous morning. But how I do digress. I believe we were talking about the beauty of a Silver Cloud.

At that this time, Al Copeland, who had recently founded the infamous Popeye's Chicken franchise, used to have an office on Veterans Highway, right in the path that Lisa and I drove several times a weekend; he used to park his white Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud out front. Nearly every Sunday I would have to stop and drool, dream, and plan how I too would own one.

One particular Sunday the car happened to be unlocked, without hesitation or thought I got in - which years later helped me understand why several times I would return to my Bentley to find strangers sitting behind the wheel; also because most of the time the old door locks on these cars did not work - anyway, as I sat behind the wheel, peering out across the long shapely bonnet, staring at the rear of the outstretched wings of the Spirit of Ecstasy, lost in my dream - or vision - and not hearing Lisa telling me, "Someone's coming."

"What-da you think?" a voice asked.

I turned to see Mr. Copeland leaning on the open drivers door with a grin on his face.

"It's drivable art," I mumbled, "Just beautiful. And it smells so nice, I've wanted one since I was six." I proclaimed.

"First time you been in one?" He asked.

"Yes sir." I replied.

He patted me on the shoulder and said, "I have a feeling it won't be your last."

I got out. He got in. He drove off. That was my first encounter with the infamous Al Copeland - it wouldn't be my last.

Being in that car for just a few minutes cemented the fact that I would own one, so much so that I confidently proclaimed - which at that time in my life meant that it *would happen* - "I'm going have one of these by the time I'm twenty-five."

Lisa sure the hell didn't doubt it, as on our first date to a Uriah Heep concert on Friday September 13, 1974, a night of torrential rain that left nearly one hundred kids stuck in the parking lot of the Municipal Auditorium after the concert, I had found someone who came to the concert in his dad's wrecker; together; we made several hundred dollars, as I hustled cheap tows, splitting the money with him. I sold, he worked.

Lisa was 2 a.m. getting home, but her parents were so impressed by my entrepreneurship - I already had my own janitorial route as well - that night I truly believe they came to the conclusion that Lisa could do well to marry this boy one day.

Fast forward seven years, I'm twenty-four, killing it in my own commercial pest control business. I bought a 1958 Bentley S1. Dream fulfilled. Which brings me back home to my attitude towards cars from then on: I saw everything else as mere transportation.

Okay, I liked the Honda Prelude I bought for Lisa, which I could do a killer "Tennessee Turnaround" in that car using the handbrake and front wheel drive, but she didn't like it; she had some issue over it being a stick shift and her not knowing how to drive one. I don't understand women, she said she wouldn't drive the 1968 Mercedes 250 SL I was going to buy either, and it had an automatic! So I surprised her, to no avail, with the Prelude, which some of her disdain seems to be related to not being in on the decision to buy a car in the first place. Women!

The lesson I learned from an unhappy, pissed off wife? Same one Rick Nelson shared in his song *Garden Party*, "I learned my lesson well. You see, ya can't please everyone, so ya got to please yourself."

A motto and words to live by for me from then on - and I just can't understand why three marriages didn't work out for me. Humph, go figure! And by the way, I should have bought that Mercedes SL 250; I still regret that!

All to say, the Bentley skewed my view of automobiles permanently.

Throughout my late twenties and into my early thirties I owned cars that were "sensible", some that were crap, several Cadillac's, a few pickup trucks, and an array of throw away cars.

Then while dating my third wife-to-be, I decided she would look cute driving to school in an MG Midget, she agreed, so I bought her a 1974 bright red Midget. She loved it!

She also rode motorcycles, I gave her a BSA for her high school graduation present - and so you don't get the wrong mental picture of her, she looked like a super model, a healthy Kate Moss without the cocaine habit.

That little MG was a fun little car, it sort of drew me once again into thinking that a car could be fun, that some, besides a Bentley, just may possess some soul. It turned out that the MG and her BSA did indeed have soul - albeit that they were both possessed by the evil soul of Lucas, "The Prince of Darkness."

For those of you familiar with most British cars and motorcycles, especially those from the 1970s, you know why I use the overused term "Prince of Darkness", for everyone else, let me simply say that they all possessed electronics that were dependable and reliable - you could both depend and rely upon them to leave you stranded in the darkness - they were pure crap!

But the bug had bitten me. Coming fresh off of a two year, way over budget restoration on a 1974 Harley-Davidson Sportster hardtail chopper; I decided we should sell the red MG and find another 1974, pre-rubber bumper MG, and do a complete restoration! Can you see the "sensibilities" part of the title taking an ironic tone?

Well, we found one, we restored it, it was beautiful - and yes, it too went way over budget like some governmental sponsored aeronautical project. But it was beautiful.

We removed every piece of unneeded anything from the body and brought it to be painted by the artist who had done the chopper paint. The black paint was so flawless and deep it looked like a black mirror.

The beige interior was striking to behold. Holding the wooden steering made some inert sense of touch well up within you, that when at all possible you had to run your hands around the glossy wooden wheel, caressing it's smooth, polished perfection.

The wire wheels with center knock-off caps were the epitome of European sports car motoring style. The throaty muffler, complete with back burbles, begged you to rev the car to the point of instant death - for the car, not the driver. Of course it you had to rev the guts out of the MG if you planned on getting it to perform at all.

We completely reworked the electronics - well, let's just say I now know that it would take a Catholic priest and an exorcism to remove the demon Lucas from lurking within the electrical harness of a British vehicle, not an expert mechanic.

Some of the most beautiful roads to drive outside of New Orleans are across Lake Pontchartrain. To reach them you must traverse a twenty-six mile long bridge/causeway, yep - two, six - twenty six miles, no shoulders, a turnaround connecting bridge every seven miles with your faith placed in Lucas electronics.

Twice, not once, the MG made it a hair past a turnaround and stopped running. It would jerk, run a few seconds, jerk harder, then the tachometer would drop hard to the left. Dead, in the middle of the Causeway bridge. I emphasized "twice" to remind us all of the old adage, "Screw me once, shame on you; screw me twice shame on me."

Well, bigger things were looming on the near horizon, my wife talking me into buying property across the lake so that we could build a house and raise Paso Fino horses; so I sold both the MG and the chopper. Not a particularly sad moment, only because I am the living proof of another old adage, that "A fool and his money soon go separate ways."

I only lost four thousand dollars on the chopper, the only person that would buy it was a State Police officer, because he could drive it without losing his license and a small fortune to fines - to say, *nothing* about the chopper was legal, not even the spotlight I used as a headlight.

When it came to selling the MG I was adamant that I would not lose money on the car; no sir, "I'll keep the thing and drive it on the Northshore when we move." I boldly stated. Deep down I didn't really want to part with the MG.

However, once again I was living proof of yet another ancient saying, the one that proclaims that "God takes care of children and fools," I was thirty-five, so that leaves one option to fit my description.

I had about twice as much invested in the car as it was generally worth, the paint alone cost what most Midget's in decent condition were selling for. I had one phone call of interest about the car. One. A sweet sounding woman said she wanted to come see the car, "Now."

"Okay." Said I.

When she arrived and I opened the door I was confronted by a petite, blond woman, perhaps in her late forties. I brought her down to the basement - ground floor below living quarters in New Orleans. She lit up like a Christmas tree when she saw it gleaming under the spotlights aimed at the car, as it sat upon the checkered flag patterned floor beneath it.

When I started it and pulled it out into the sunshine, she said three words, "I'll take it."

"Okay." Said I.

She pulled out a bundle of cash, just a few hundred dollars short of my asking price, and thrust it towards me.

"I'll get you the rest this week."

"Okay." Said I.

No dickering over price, not even a mention of it. It just seemed odd. After I took her for a get acquainted drive and we returned to my house she finally explained her joy of purchasing the beautiful little British sports car - and why expediency was of paramount importance.

She had terminal cancer and would dead within the month. She explained that she wanted to go out in style and fun and that she had always wanted a British sports car, "just like this one."

"Yeah." What are the chances thought I.

Sanity for me lasts about six months; the phone rang, it was my favorite used car dealer, whom I had bought several cars and trucks from - these were the days when I was smart enough to buy used, and let others take depreciation hits.

"Hey Ed, I know you're not looking for a car - are you?"

"Not really, why?" I asked

"I just took a car in on trade that I know your wife... and you... will love."

Notice the clever ploy of saying, " your wife," first?

"Uh-huh. What ya got?"

"A Porsche 924; gorgeous, black on black, low miles, might need a front strut, you decide. I'll hold it for you, come drive it, you'll want it."

"A Porsche huh?" As I realized that my wife really did need another car, and we did like the sports car thing, and this is German quality, as well, the demon Lucas didn't usually visit Germany.

"We'll be there in an hour to take a peek." I told him.

I think we were actually there and home again - in the Porsche, within that hour. Yep, we had us another cool car, and five acres of paid for land. Wife was happy, I was happy, a semi-charmed life indeed.

Within a month we had also bought a little house across the lake to live in while we designed our dream home for the five acres, this one had a couple acres for the horses and sat on the old Tantella Ranch property.

We were planning to make it rental property after we built our house... life sure was looking good. Beautiful young wife, money rolling in, two pieces of property, horses, free time - and a seventy mile commute to go to work when I did three days a week.

I wasn't quite sure what had happened that I was become "sensible" all of a sudden after two failed marriages and being a life long spendthrift...

"Oh wait!" I said, as I had an epiphany.

My wife had just crested twenty years of age. Frighteningly I remembered they all want to start growing up and looking ahead to the future around that age. All of a sudden I was scared to death. I sensed an impending doom on my horizon.

I was correct. Four months later she was gone. So was the Porsche. So was my paid for property. So was half of my bank account. She left her orange cat.. a month later he was gone to. I hated that cat.

From there I was left alone, no one to answer to, the ensuring seven years were a time of solitary self indulgence. Motorcycles, playing music, fine dining with my female friends, full moon parties at the ranch that went on for days. Good times.

Once again motorcycles had taken priority in my life as fun and interesting transportation. It would be nearly ten years before I would own a sports car again, and that only happened after I stopped riding motorcycles after forty-plus years and stopped drinking, after forty-plus years.

Life went in unthinkable directions. I ended up buying a new Nissan 370Z in 2014. With motorcycling over, the 370Z induced a new passion for sports cars, a phine-like passion as I had once had for motorcycles. Obsessive is another adjective that aptly describes my feelings.

The next two years I consumed auto magazines and YouTube videos on the subject. I learned that Nissan was a soulless substitute for a Porsche Cayman. I began lusting in a German direction again. I decided if you're going to have a Cayman then you may as well have one that the top drops down - a Porsche Boxster.

I sold the 370Z, as usual at a a substantial loss, and purchased a one owner 1997 Porsche Boxster; and as of this

writing (6/11/19) I have owned the Boxster over two years as of this story. My infatuation has not waned towards her, my passion for her has only deepened... but there are numerous stories that follow in this compilation that express the joy I have thus far derived from the Porsche.

NOTE: And nearly a year passes without the slightest inclination to write...

6/1/18

"I Long for Analog"

I woke up the other morning and lay in bed in a foggy minded, half consciousness; I began to think back to a time that I could remember when there were no cell phones, cable or satellite television, or even beepers - the first annoying, "I want to talk to you now!" mobile device.

I realized I had to go back to the early 1970s in my memories before I reached a time that the world was still analog, there wasn't even a digital watch; speaking of which, I also recalled the first time one of the rich kids at my high school got a digital watch, it was somewhere around 1975 and had cost his dad about \$800.00! It's technology was less than the free digital watches that basically come in a cereal box now.

Once my mind had reached a walking level of clarity I got up and began my morning ritual. I poured a cup of coffee and began looking through the new pictures of cars posted on Instagram. As I perused the pictures - or rather, the digital images - my progress was halted by a picture, or rather, an image, of a modern Formula One cockpit and it's "steering wheel."

As I looked at the pageantry of buttons, dials, center mounted screen, and endless array of controls set within the airplane shaped handle - yes this is still the steering wheel; I realized two things: technically it's not a steering wheel, by definition a wheel is round. I would argue that this should be called a "control center" instead. I also realized that more and more I long for analog.

I pulled up a photograph of a Formula One car's cockpit from the early 1950s for comparison. The early car had a beautiful, thin-rimmed, wooden wheel; there were no buttons or gadgets to be found, just a beautiful, polished aluminum inner frame with the Porsche logo emblazed in enamel right in the center, all framed within a thin, wood rimmed wheel, It was round, like a "wheel" is.

In front of the driver there were a few gages, a tachometer, oil pressure, a temperature gauge, and a start button - and everyone thinks that a start button is a new idea - and that was it, nothing beyond the essentials.

The new car was a carbon enclosed cockpit reminiscent of a fighter jet. Gages and gadgets strewn in a semi-circle around the entire cockpit. Sorry, nothing to wax poetic about in there.

The early car had a windscreen that rose about three inches

high, one that you looked over, not through, with the driver totally exposed to the elements of nature as they drove. The body a hand-hammered aluminium work of art.

The simplistic beauty of the older car stirred my inner senses; I gave in to the fact that one of the feelings I felt was that this is a sure sign that I am growing old, as I find beauty in simplicity and confusion in the clutter of technology.

Simply put, I found the new car to be flat out ugly and tasteless in execution of design. I also feel the same way about tatoos - but that thought just slipped out and fell onto this page...

If I had to give a one sentence summary I would say, "I liked cars better when the only computer that controlled the car was your brain; but I don't have to employ brevity, so I shall continue.

In no order of importance, because my opinions are in no way important, I will share things that I like better about old cars from the era of analog.

Let's start with the bad news, a crash. The early cars didn't even have seat belts, let alone four point harnesses to hold you inside of a carbon tub that could probably survive a re-entry ride into the Earth's atmosphere from space, were the car would be quite at home - oh wait, it would already have company in the Tesla that is littering the heavens - man is so vain.

No, your only protection in a crash was God's grace and the hope that you may be thrown clear of the carnage, usually accompanied by a fireball of fuel. Death rode with you each time you raced; but half of the thrill of racing was knowing that you could die from your self-chosen mode of excitement. When I raced motorcycles I felt that survival was the reward of finishing unscathed; it was the victory of having beat Death, fair and square. Not really, it was God's grace.

And while we're blowing that note, racing in the past was more about competing against other human drivers, drivers that had honed - or not - their skills behind the steering wheels, you know, "seat time", "track time." You were not racing against some kid that Nissan hired as a Formula One driver because they had won a "digital driving" contest held in a simulator, not on a racetrack. These young people have sharpened their driving skills behind a screen while sitting comfortably in a simulator, which begs the question: how does a simulator simulate an actual crash?

There are no wailing sirens from an ambulance and fire trucks while your heart is racing at a higher RPM than the race

engine in the car, there is no sensation of pain, no feel of warm blood, no fear of dying... you just hit the restart button. Yeah, that's real. And yes, I accept that the skills possessed by such "kid" were razor sharp, and that's real as well, depressingly real.

I suppose a logical transition from the worst case scenario would be the abilities to avoid said crash. Today you have a myriad of technological wizardry that helps, if not actually controls the car and keep it in a safe zone by correcting and preventing driver mistakes; basically stopping the driver just short of crossing the line, going past their limits.

I suppose one can argue that such technology saves lives, and young drivers can find their limits without a real crash; however, I will again argue that the chance of death in racing, not street driving, is a part of the overall potion that is so intoxicating, and thus highly addictive. But we won't go into the pros and cons of that argument, mainly because it's my story and I've said what I believe.

But I will say that the crash avoidance technology of old was more tactile and driver focused. It was actually quite simple; you either backed off of the accelerator or applied more brakes.

As for the gazillion buttons, dials, and gages in a new race car, that lets you monitor the weather in your home town or adjust the thermostat in your home - okay, I won't wonder in thought, I'll be concise. They suck.

In the older cars you generally did not have a speedometer, you didn't need one. A driver didn't need to know their speed, they drove as fast as they could, and when they crossed the threshold of safe limit - to use a term relevant today, they were "gathering data," which is now used to program cars that will drive themselves.

[Side thought] I wonder if the Greyhound Bus Company would be willing to share their slogan, ". . .leave The driving to us." with the soon to be autonomous automobile industry. Just wondering.

The one instrument a driver did need was a tachometer. It was near vital that they would know when the car, not themselves, had reached its limit of performance, and that pushing further would generally end catastrophically, if not for the driver or car but certainly for one's bank account.

I have learned through the years that regardless of how I feel, technology and the advancement [sic] thereof cares nothing about how I feel. It continues. Accepting the fact that technology marches on made me realize that the human mind is still analog, as are our choices, so in honor of

that, I choose not to be in, nor participate in the parade of technological advancement. My choice.

I'll keep wearing my mechanical watch, using my flip- phone, taking pictures with my Pentax K1000, looking through my authentic Ray-Ban Ambermatic aviator glasses, and driving my twenty-one year old Porsche as I breeze, semi-frozen in and through time. And by the way, the convertible top, which is manual, will be down to blow through my hair... while I still have some.

6/12/18

"Waah! They Took My Flat Six"

I have grown tired of listening to journalist and Porschephiles alike bemoaning Porsche having taken away the Boxster and Cayman's flat six engine and replacing it with a flat-four. They, more than most, should be aware of the Porsche philosophy of "Evolution, not revolution," - shouldn't they? Or perhaps they do not fully understand it's meaning... and consequences.

The evolution and regression of the Boxster back to it's roots. The Boxster was inspired and built in the spirit of the 550 Spyder, a 4 cylinder, albeit a naturally aspirated engine. The progression, or digression as many see it, to a four cylinder engine was necessitated by, or demanded, by increasing regulations for fuel economy and tightening, read strangling, emissions standards.

This truly begs the question, "What is all the fuss about?"

In the true spirit of its concept the Boxster should have been a four cylinder engine from the outset of the design concept. I truly believe the dominance of the 911 and it's flat six achieving cult status is why a flat six was first installed in the Boxster. Porsche knew no one would have bought another flat four, look at the demise of the 912 decades ago, and of course the Japanese influence of how to build a car profitably.

Don't get me wrong, I love my flat six 986, but I applaud Porsche for standing firm in there ethos of "evolution, not revolution," when it comes to the new 718 models.

By not keeping ahead of the curve in the past Porsche nearly went bankrupt; with their "evolution" to the 718 they have made a sports car that is improved the Boxster platform in every way except the sound. They have also jumped ahead of pending regulations.

They were smart enough to build SUV's and sedans, which caused the purists to wail and moan, it's those models that allow them to continue making the treasured and beloved 911.

Let's face it, Porsche has always been wise enough to stick to what works in the long run. Do you see any new 914's? 928's? 924's? 944's? Do you get the point? Oh, by the way 911 diehards - remember the 911 was slated for disposal as well. As Porsche lore and fact tell us, it would have been history, as may have been the Porsche brand altogether if not for Peter Shutz, the first American CEO of Porsche, who drew the line in the sand -- or rather on the wall, with the Porsche engineers and executives to keep making the 911.

Speaking of saving Porsche from demise, and returning to the Boxster, it was the Boxster that is also regarded as staving off bankruptcy for Porsche with its phenomenal success and introduction of a new streamlined, efficient, cost effective manufacturing process that replaced the Porsche's ledger books from red ink to black.

And I bet-ya, just bet-ya, there will be some sort of a stratospherically priced "special Edition" 718 that will come with a 911 flat six stuffed in there; because through the decades Porsche has become savvy in their marketing of sports cars that have created high profit margins from low build Special Edition models.

You have to admire a company that can charge you for a radio and air-conditioner, but take it out, and then offer it back to you "for free", all the while making you think you got the better end of the deal. Well I admire their savvy for taking advantage of dumb people with deep pockets.

Let's face it, no Boxster, no Porsche - and yet it is still treated as the bastard step-child of Porsche. I really think for the same reason as always; it's a better handling car than the one that comes with child seats in the back. I also believe any Boxster/Cayman with an equal power plant would be faster than a 911 as well - but who would dare dethrone the "iconic king"?

Hum, perhaps we should start a "Boxster Revolution" and overthrow King 911.... Nah, let's remain in the shadows and wait for government regulation to require the 911 to move to a flat-four, and then let them drown in their tears on a level playing field - but I digress...

All to say, to all of those people that are crying, whining, and, waahing about the four cylinder engine, most of which do not even drive a Boxster, I suggest that you put on some Pampers, pull up your big-boy pants, and accept the "evolution" of the Boxster and Cayman and stop thinking that your tears will start a "revolution" of reversal within Porsche.

Now crawl back into your outrageously priced special edition 911 and go wake up the Banshee that lives within your flat-six -- while you can, and polish that 911 badge, because you too may one day be driving the 912 Gen.2 When regulation strangle the flat-six out of the 911, or replace it with an electric power plant - and please, don't forget to wear those Pampers, I would hate for you to ruin the seats from one of your hissy fits.

"How Often Have You Been Overtaken?"

From Facebook response 6/13/18 and drive commute 9/21/17

Recently the question was posed on a forum I follow for Porsche Boxster's that asked, "How often have you been overtaken?" An excerpt from my response was, "Okay, I'll be honest.

On my mountain commute through the backwoods of Alabama, I actually get passed quite often - by old, raggedy assed, half rotten, rust eaten, blue fog emitting, oil burning smokescreen making, thirty year old Ford and Chevy trucks, with some 300 pound, shit grinning, BBQ-eating Bubba driving up my butt on bald tires. My conclusion? I'm either a dead ass slow driver, or smart enough to let them go by. I haven't decided which yet.

To expound upon this reply I need to share a little background about that "commute." I began substitute teaching in Leeds, Alabama in September 2017, a fifty mile round trip each day.

The fastest commuting route - and the most fun - is Hwy. 25, which happens to be one of my favorite drives going back over a decade. Highway 5 twist, turns, undulates, rises and falls through the mountains; it is loaded with S-curves, off camber turns, and a serpentine section that reaches its crescendo at the peak that is also a decades old scenic overlook.

Now my Porsche 986 was designed for roads exactly like this, it is in its element on this commute. My car has been meticulously maintained throughout its life; however, I don't push the car to it's limits, nor anywhere close to its limits, for several reasons: its twenty-one years old, rubber that looks good is still twenty-one years old, particularly the rubber and bushings associated with handling are the ones I would rather treat nicely, most of the time.

Secondly, and very connected to the first reason, is that I do not wish to find myself tumbling, rolling, dodging conifers, and boulders that make up the landscape if I found myself off-roading in the Porsche.

My response to the post was also fueled by the driving techniques of fellow commuters on Highway 25. The old pick-up trucks in afore mention response is a big part of my being "overtaken." But one group of commuters that particularly have stirred my thoughts are school bus drivers - yeah, the big, yellow, forty foot long, thirty-thousand pound behemoths full of children, perhaps your children.

On one commute home, in one of the more serpentine, flat area, I got caught behind a school bus laden with children.

After the bus pulled out in front of me, not fifty feet from me as I approached - a very common driving trait in Alabama - I said to myself, "Oh great, there goes all of the fun!"

In what was most unusual behavior, the bus did not stop at every driveway, even if they are only twenty feet apart; but rather, it seemed to have a destination to reach.

"Well, at least we won't be stopping every twenty feet," that's a consolation, I thought.

As we traversed the twists and turns I noticed something highly unusual happening to the bus - it was rapidly pulling away from me, to the point that I was soon no longer huffing diesel fumes in the open topped air. In no time I found myself trying to keep up with the bus!

Subliminally I was noting that I was being smoked by a school bus - to add insult to injury, some of the kids in the back seats of the bus had flicked me off as they vanished into the turn ahead. Worse, there was a pick-up truck riding on my tail.

Okay, at this point is when I realized that either my Porsche handles way better than I have pushed it towards its potential, or its way out of tune. That's when probable truth struck me - I am really getting old, more specifically, I am afraid to crash. I've grown allergic to pain and bleeding as I have aged.

"No chance of any of those thoughts being correct!" I silently screamed.

Then another probability dawned on me, which I am sure it must be - the bus probably had the optional sport package!

Over the course of the school year, and several thousand miles of this exact commute, which may I add, never gets old or boring, I have concluded that the truth is actually a combination of all of the reasoned theories stated/suggested. Alright, one is impossible - the bus does not have a "sport package."

I have accepted that the real issue responsible for my seemingly slow paced commute is that in comparison to the locals, I suck at driving a Porsche; no wait, let's say I have a dulled sense of competitiveness left in me; I mean I used to race moto-cross in my youth.

Either way, I have consoled my conscious and pride with this little salve of truth, which in all fairness to me is a truth that cannot be ruled out as to an explanation of the phenomenon of the skill of the local drivers. I have to remember, these roads, and those people are where NASCAR

racing came from, it's in their blood, as probably is a near illegal level of alcohol! Hey, watch the news.

Their ancestors honed those future NASCAR skills while out driving the police as they careened around corners in a hot-rodded car full of booze hot enough to add 10 horsepower to their engines.

Finally, as I think back on following behind them on the twisty roads I realized one last thing, which solidifies my NASCAR theory... they are really fast in left turns!

6/14/18

"The Stupidity of Genius"

Porsche undoubtedly employs some of the finest automobile engineers in the world, no one can argue the fact that they build a superior sports car. However, they have had design flaws throughout the "evolution" of their cars that simply put, borderline on the inane; some of their designs seems to be a lapse into sheer stupidity; they say it is a fine line between genius and stupid. Just say'n.

Within the Boxster models alone, three letters will send fear into the hearts of early model Boxster owners - IMS. The stories of imploding, self-destruction of some M-96 engines is legendary; thousands of pages on the issue litter the internet; rivers of tears have flowed from the demise of many Porsche owners engines and pocketbooks.

I agree that the IMS issue has been vastly blown out of proportion by internet, mind you, I bought one that had the IMS replaced. Remember, the Volkswagen Group, which owns Porsche, is known to deny known problems with their vehicles, as are most manufacturers.

Internal engine issues can be expected - to a degree; but the design flaw that puzzles me the most is one of sheer, useless oversight - that's how we will refer to it at this point. Let me share the dumbest engineering flaw I have ever seen on a Porsche.

In the vast wisdom and in all of their genius, Porsche engineers put the main brain box, the ECU, immobilizer unit, that controls the function of so many electronic signals on the car under the seat, in the lowest place possible! Take a teaspoon of water and pour it anywhere on the left side of a Boxster and it will inevitably flow to the location of the ECU control box. Is it not simple third grade science that teaches us that water seeks the lowest point of anything?

When this little box, that retails north of one thousand dollars, or six-hundred to repair, gets wet, it is though a band of electrical demons that would make the Prince of Darkness himself - Lucas Electronics, seem like Casper the Friendly Ghost. Nothing starts, lights go on and off, alarms ring out, unable to be silenced, tops try to open, and of course, the windows open, allowing more water to pour in.

This is such an inane place to locate this control box that I can only make sense of why it was placed there in my imagination, deep in the crevices of my imagination, and there are many crevices in there that run deep, some making the Mariana Trench seem shallow.

I image the placement of this unit must have happened something like this: It is if the engineers showed up on Monday after a bender weekend, the Boxster design was seemingly complete and then someone walked into the shop with the ECU in hand and asked -

"Hey, Fitz, ver are ve goings to put zis?"

After realizing the interior was completely finished and parts already rolling off of the assembly line, and the interior was already packed tight, to the point of not having room for a glove box or a passenger cup holder, the mouths of engineers became agape.

Suddenly, a bleary eye Fitz suggested, "We vill jus putz it under da seat."

"Ja! Ja! Goot idee!" The majority of the hung over engineers agreed, as they drank more coffee. "Problemz zolved."

Perhaps the teetotaller amongst the design team mentioned what a bad idea that was concerning the possibility of water intrusion and mentions this to the others.

"Nein, nein, it wilz be okay. Vee vill putz it der."

Teetotaller mentions the possibility of lawsuits strung together with the words "negligent" and "remiss."

Well, we know who won the argument.

As soon as the quick thinking legal team gets word of this guffaw they shift into high gear, no pun intended.

One savvy lawyer proclaims, "I've gots it! Vee will puts a disclaimer in ze owners book!"

So in fact, they did. Within the Boxster owners manual they let the world know that "by design a convertible can't be waterproof..." -- really? By design? And if this is true, why didn't they put a Volkswagen Thing interior in the car, instead of leather, foam laden floors topped with plush, deep pile carpets, a gazzilion micro switches -- and oh yeah, the brains to the car!

Why couldn't the genius design team do like the Florida company Eccudoctors, the inventors of a waterproof case that retails for \$150.00, come up with that idea and put the brains-box in a waterproof case? One of the first mods I did on my 986!

Why couldn't the put one-way drain holes/plugs under the seat? Mount it on the rear fire-wall? More importantly, why couldn't they design a water proof convertible? For goodness

sake, even Rolls-Royce and Bentley made a waterproof convertible, long before the German geniuses took over the helm!

Perhaps Porsche likes to help create cottage industries that finish the faulty designs they create - think IMS - one shop in my city will move the ECU box to higher ground, for \$500.00 plus dollars, several businesses exist only to repair water soaked ECU units ... you get the idea.

When I first considered buying a 986 Boxster, the second major problem to be aware of, next to the IMS bearing, was noted to be the ECU box getting wet. I live in Alabama, it rains a lot; and my car stays outside. I did not wait a month after my car arrived from San Francisco before I installed the waterproof case and bought a waterproof half-top to help ward off water intrusion.

Over two years have past, so far, my pro-active waterproofing efforts, combined with a disciplined regime of cleaning the drains monthly and hand massaging the top related rubber seals with Adam's VTR rubber conditioner, has been successful at abating an H2O disaster. If the ground is sloped, I always park the car with the front end elevated so water will run away from the ECU low spot.

In summary, it amazes me that some of the worlds top engineers succumb to moments of a total lack of brain waves, hence leading to my theory of "The Stupidity of Genius.

6/15/18

"The Mystique and the Machines"

"Great title!" I told myself.

I wanted to write about how vehicles like Harley-Davidson, Bentley, Ducati, and Porsche have a mystique about them; I chose these simply because I have owned those vehicles and have experienced their allure first hand.

As I walked this morning I realized that I knew what the word mystique means, but not really the "definition of the word; so I decided I best look it up.

After reading the definition(s) of "mystique" and its synonyms, I discovered that it is a great title! So before I get into my writing I figured it appropriate to acquaint my reader with the definition of the word as well, that way my feelings can be "definitive" about the vehicles at hand.

So, here it is:

Mystique:

1) a fascinating aura of mystery, awe, and power surrounding someone or something.

2) an air of secrecy surrounding a particular activity or subject that makes it impressive or baffling to those without specialized knowledge

Synonyms: charisma, glamour, romance, mystery, magic, charm, appeal, allure

I know there are many brands that have a mystique and uniqueness about them, having owned several of these brands of cars and motorcycles I have had the pleasure to experience and understand first hand the wonder of their mystique, so I shall focus on those I know.

From the first time I drove my Bentley, Harley, Porsche, and Ducati I felt it. All of your senses work together, they come into harmony, creating one sensational experience of driving/riding - the sound, feel, handling, and even the smell. You become lost inside your own self-created world as you go down a wonderful road.

As you come into harmony, about a minute in most cases, the reason why these vehicles have a mystique and aura about them becomes clear; it permeates your being, you understand it, and you fall in love with the totality of the experience.

I think the synonyms combined create the total mystique.

These vehicles have an allure when you see them; the long bonnet of a Bentley crowned by "The Flying B", the sensual, curved lines. Open the door of a Bentley and the aroma of Connolly leather immediately attaches to you sense of smell, and after you own one for several years it remains with you forever.

When you sit behind the wheel and gaze down the long, curved bonnet and center the hood ornament in your sight, it is really magical. It transforms your senses; you realize everything else is mere transportation. It fits the synonym "glamour."

Much like a Ducati - or nearly everything Italian, the curvaceous, flowing design has a romance to it; lets face it, the names alone sound like the name of a hot, alluring, seductive Italian: Ferrari, Lamborghini, Ducati.

When I owned Ducati's I actually learned to speak to them in love related Italian phrases. I used to have a cocktail while admiring my worldly possessions, and Ducati's make you talk to them, "Ah, mia adorabile ducati, sei così bella, ti amo." Use Google translator - I do.

Just as amazing, and part of the mystique, is how each vehicle gives off a sense of personality. The Harley's I have owned send out the vibe of bad-boy excitement. I do think these personality vibes are what would be the charisma part of the mystique. Charisma is that quality that inspires devotion, " a compelling attractiveness that inspires devotion in others," is how Mr. Webster said it - he obviously has owned these type of vehicles.

Whenever I would go somewhere and park the Harley, particularly the hard-core, old-school chopper, it would somehow transform my one hundred and thirty pound, 5'6" statue into something seemingly to be reckoned with - seriously, people backed off a little as I approached.

This is the part of the second definition (see above), and positively fits the synonym "magic," for it is magical what a Harley-Davidson does to other people and as to how they perceive you, and make a 5'6" man seem imposing; of course many who know me say it has more to do with the insane look in my eyes and the pissed off at the world scowl I possess; and I'm not pissed off at the world - only a portion of it.

Of course all of the marques I speak of also possess that transformative quality. Drive up in the Bentley - Poof! Treated like royalty, sort of like the transformation of Cinderella. People automatically assumed I had wealth and style - which is why I never owned a Rolls-Royce, they are not stylish, they are simply ostentatious.

I could park my Bentley anywhere I wanted, fire zones *sometimes* being an exception. No one questioned me, because they have been put under the spell of their own imagination, based on the mystique of the car. It became a nuisance! Not really, I loved it, especially at twenty-four years old!

The best part of having owned these vehicles was the fact that not one of these vehicles, with the exception of the Harley's, cost over twelve-thousand dollars. What a bargain when you think about it; you get treated like a million dollars while the person in the new Honda Civic that spent twice as much on his car, was treated like a begging, peon, pauper. Poof! Magic.

The personality that Porsche's exude to others, and the magic they project upon one's assumption of the driver can be a mixed bag. I have to honestly say that they do, for the most part, somehow fit the stereotype which led to the joke, "What's the difference between a Porsche and a Porcupine? The pricks are on the outside of the Porcupine... yeah, okay, it's funny.

The first Porsche I owned was also driven by my younger wife, people assumed her daddy - or in most cases, Sugar-Daddy - bought it for her. I was younger at the time, early thirties, so it cast a spell of hip, young, partying, young man - oh, and of course, "rich." I might add she also drove the Porsche away when she left me.

My current Porsche, which has mostly been driven on back roads, as I have no social life these days - nor desire for one- or is driven to schools where I substituted teach. The kids all think I am rich. Period. I could show them proof of poverty and they wouldn't believe it, the pat answer was, "You're rich, you drive a Porsche."

I have come to realize that they are correct; no matter the money, or lack thereof, I have, I am rich, because I drive a Porsche - anytime I want to, on twisty mountain roads, with the top down, and a flat-six wailing in my ears. Yep, I agree, that is a "rich" experience.

I have found that a Porsche, more than the other marques I have discussed, fits the part of the definition of mystique that states: "an air of secrecy surrounding a particular subject that makes it impressive or baffling to those without specialized knowledge."

A Porsche is a unique sports car, the style is not striking, but the performance, engineering, and craftsmanship is truly special. It cost more because it is more. Lets try the school age analogy of - Bentley luxury as Porsche :: performance.

What it really holds true to is the adage, "If I have to explain it, you wouldn't understand." And that is not said in snobbery, not at all, it's simple truth; you have to experience it firsthand. Words can not do the experience justice; as mentioned before, these vehicles are all a summation of many senses, a totality to it all that is "an experience, not a description.

I still remember my first ride in a Porsche. It was 1980, I was selling Honda automobiles, which at the time were coveted, and you waited up to six months for one. The dealership had no inventory, but salesman had demonstrator models that we were given to use as personal vehicles, a new one every month.

Another young salesman that worked there, who seemed like an arrogant preppy prick, but wasn't, drove an 1974 911 Targa; he did not drive a free, demonstrator Honda; he literally turned his nose up at the notion! In talking with him one day I asked him what was so special about a Porsche that he wouldn't drive a free Honda.

Rob looked at me, grinned, and said, "I can't explain it, come experience it for yourself."

As mentioned before, the sight of it stirred my emotions, open the door and sit in the seat, the smell and interior tell you this car has a sense of purpose - speed. When Rob started the car and we accelerated down the route we took customers on a drive, within that magic minute, the totality of my senses came together with the knowledge that I was in something unique.

As we approached an S-curve that we used to use to show the customers how well the Honda Prelude handled, and to scare the Bejimmies out of many, I glanced at the speedometer, we were doing 80 miles per hour and approaching the turn that we would push the Prelude to it's limits at about 45 mph. Rob wasn't slowing down... nor was my pulse.

Just before, and I mean *just* before, the turn began, Rob downshifted, braked hard, slowed to seventy, entered the turn under power, accelerated and brought that 911's rear end around ever so little as to set you on the edge of what felt like pending doom, like you should have a will already drawn up.

We went through the turn, Rob stopped at our turnaround, looked over at me, and before he could finish his hand and eye gestures that asked, "Well?" I said, "I get it." So did my heart, and adrenalin gland. From that moment I wanted a Porsche - after I would own my first love since six, a Bentley.

To say; I had to experience it.

The last thing I would like to share about what I fell is a large factor in creating the mystique of these motorcycles and automobiles, a commonality if you will, is the sound.

We all know music stirs the soul; it helps ingrain, or sear, or at least solidify an experience into your memory; it doesn't matter what the experience is, even your first kiss, dance, whatever.

The sound of the Harley and Ducati have something in common, they are both V-twins, and there is something about that sound that is so unique that Harley-Davidson patented theirs. Interesting how the Harley sound American, like an American muscle car sounds "American", and a Ducati sound "Italian", like a Ferrari sounds Italian. Confused? Once again, you have to be there.

The sound of a Bentley, that which can hear, is simply a powerful murmur. It's not growling in any sense, but these multi-thousand pound automobiles are quick and fast! It's an unexpected sensation from such a luxurious and elegant vehicle.

The Porsche sound, in particular the sound of the iconic flat-six engine, with it's linear exhaust aria... it's like an opera, it can't be described, it enters you through your hearing and spreads throughout your soul - you really do have to experience it...

Never mind.

Not being rude, just being honest; If I have to explain it, you wouldn't understand.

6/16/18

"Driving A Slow Car Fast" or "Elixir 986"

I haven't driven my car much the last three weeks as I have nowhere to go, not working at the moment. The morning air was cool, the sun low in the eastern sky; once again, time for a walk in the woods and drive in the Boxster - with the top down.

Which I have to add, I passed going the opposite direction a man in this small town that has a Cayman... I know he had to be looking at me thinking, "I wish my top went down." Maybe not, but I was glad mine did.

The car wasn't warmed up yet, so I was keeping the revs in the boring zone until after my walk and a few more miles to get the fluids warmed up.

After my walk and when the car was to a temperature that allowed spirited driving I cut off onto a back road and revved it to 5K rpm's. My heart beat a little faster and I felt three times as alert as I had been thus far this morning. Another run up the rpm range and the alertness increased to the point that I could feel "something" at about 5300 rpm's. Something not quite right.

On the next run through the gears I decided to bring it to 6000 rpm - Something I don't do often, but something that should be done on a high revving engine more than occasionally; plus I wanted to see if there was some hesitation issue happening that I was sensing.

As I approached 5300 rpm's I was focusing in on any sign of hesitation, around 5100 rpm I felt it - I pushed the revs on up...

In an instant all of the following took place: As I quickly ran up to 5800 rpm the car seemed to be slowing - and then I found the problem.

I let her run to 6100 rpm, it was glorious! It was smooth and linear. My senses were on high alert; no, rather; I was on full alert, and there wasn't a damn thing wrong with the Porsche!

I realized how sedate my life has been the past few years. I remembered how I spent decades fueling my adrenalin rushes all throughout the day. I realized I only feel awake of late when I drive my Porsche in a spirited manner.

Much like the scene in "Young Frankenstein" when Gene Wilder realizes, and accepts, his genealogy and that he is ". . . a Frankenstein!" I too screamed, "I - am - an - adrenalin -

junkie!"

As mentioned, I had found the hesitation issue - it was me! I realized that subconsciously I was pulling back ever so slightly on my right foot. It was me that was hesitating, not the car.

In a split second after keeping my foot down on the accelerator, that moment of fear quickly turned into an adrenalin and endorphin cocktail that transformed my fear into pure pleasure. I was seriously high.

The sound of that flat-six wailing as the speed was increasing to 83 mph, the country road beginning to curve slightly to the left at a perfect camber. I was aware of the slight tightening of my right arm muscle as I piloted the Porsche through the turn, which was in a literal tunnel from a canopy of trees. The morning sunlight dappling through the leaves so quickly at speed it was like a strobe light flashing through the trees, and almost as hypnotic. I felt very alive.

People pay big money to learn to "live in the moment;" and this entire experience in which my senses were so heightened that every minute detail of the "moment" - that lasted perhaps six seconds - had become embedded in my visual memory.

Mine was had a bargain price as well. I'm so thankful that Boxster's are so unappreciated; it has kept their prices affordable, even to the unemployed as myself.

I was once paid to teach students to write in a focused, concise manner as an English teacher; "Stick to the thesis," I had to say over and over, which I suppose proves the old adage that states, "Those who can, do, those that can't, teach. So I too will [try] to stick to my title/thesis, "Driving a Slow Car Fast."

Thousands have spewed their opinion and knowledge of this subject, most simply point out the obvious, that a truly fast car is only fun on a race track, let alone only safe to drive to *some* of it's potential there as well.

I believe Jay Leno, who is certainly qualified to be an expert judge on this subject, summed it up best when he said, ". . . most of the fun happens between 40 and 100 mph. . ." (or something close to that).

Consider these two facts:

First, the 986, with it's little 2.45 liter engine was letting the Banshee out the box at 6000 rpm in third gear, hitting about 83 mph - which was: A) Illegal. B) Pushing the

edge of not being safe, nor sensible. C) A real adrenalin rush that felt great. D) A, B, and C are correct - yeah, the answer is "D".

And secondly, a true super-car, such as a Bugatti would have been traveling at 117 mph in 3rd gear at 6000 rpm. Round it up - or down - and that's 50% faster than my 986.

In second gear at 6K the Bugatti would still be going faster than 83 mph. A plus for me is that I got to paddle through twice as many gears, hear the revs climb to a crescendo twice as many times as a Bugatti driver could have. Now think about that, I get twice the fun for nearly two million dollars less than a Bugatti!

My two-hundred or so horsepower 986 is getting wrung out, my sensations get twice the action, twice the fun than the 1000 plus horsepower Bugatti. And most of the fun of a sports car is the sensation of wringing it out. The thrill of the total experience in my 986 is also at a pace that sticks to your memory cells, instead of crushing them with G-Forces.

Super-cars have to be, what I will call, stiffly precise in steering and braking. As I have mentioned often, the 986 is precise and linear in both steering and stopping - but it's also light, and something about a light open-topped sports car harkens back to a more romantic age of motoring. It becomes nostalgic.

"Slow sports cars somehow conjure up the thrill that early motorist must have experienced when speeds and power, as I experienced this morning, was the "bees knees." It was new, ground breaking, thrilling, like the six second sonata of my senses were this morning - like several "instruments" moving harmoniously through several "movements."

The difference between having to be stiffly precise and driving my car is simply summed up in these additional sensations that were thrown in to the moment: the excitement of a Porsche sports cars front end, so light, yet precise. The feeling does, at times, remind me of one journalist's opinion: "Driving a Porsche is like riding a squirrel."

The leather steering wheel dancing ever so subtly in my hands, the sound, the feel, and the feel and the sound of rushing through the air in a convertible - an open top just adds to the experience and excitement of driving.

The best benefit of open top driving in a slow car is that it feels faster. Yep, that's it; driving a slow car fast is like a magic elixir that heightens reality to a level it really isn't. Isn't that the same reason people use drugs?

And just like a junkie, an adrenalin addict believes the same

two lies: It's not addictive. I can quit anytime I want.

I told myself those same things this morning as I was putting on my driving gloves, in preparation of having my "Porsche fix," having gone a week without my elixir. By the way, if you want some of this elixir, ask for "elixir 986." It'll alter your reality and how you see things. It will get you high. Guaranteed.

But don't worry, it's not addictive, you can stop anytime, I promise...

6/17/18

"Simple Desires Hidden in Big Dreams"

While visiting family in Baton Rouge recently, my sister decided to bring me out to see her brother-in-law, Frances and his wife Bootsy's house. They bought a historic creole cottage built in the 1700s and owned by a priest that purchased it and moved it to its present location sometime in the late 1800s. He had added onto it with the local help of parishioners - read free money and labor.

Frances and Bootsy had bought the cottage, which sits perched sixteen feet above a small bayou, and had restored it just in time for "a hundred year flood." One that went 24 feet high, ruining all of the restoration work.

Now don't sell me on the lie that urban growth in many areas hasn't changed the natural water flow of Louisiana bayous and rivers; my own house I once owned near a river has flooded three times since I sold it and the natural run-off lands has been developed.

But this is not a story on such woes. I like architecture and design, I wanted to see the house; but what I really wanted to see was Frances' 1963 Porsche 356 that he has owned for over thirty years. He has never restored it, never driven it, and keeps it tucked away in a trailer ready to be moved to higher ground on a moments notice - which it has, several times.

Frances and Bootsy are both Porschephiles, they have owned and raced many Porsche's; Frances and his family are also hoarders, like the one's you see on "The Pickers," which I will add at this point my former neighbor was a featured "personality" on the show once.

In the past year I have grown fond of old Porsche 356s. I have read stories that showcased 356s that the owners have owned since new, some with hundreds of thousands of miles on their odometers, one with nearly one million miles!

I have studied, read, and watched videos of 356's that run the gamut from daily drivers that are ratters, to the immaculate concourse cars that are only allowed to be exposed to UV rays in order to pick up another win at Pebble Beach or Monterey.

One of my favorites is the one owned by, Matt Hummel; now this man knows how to own a classic Porsche. There are many videos about Matt and his Porsche 356, one that he takes everywhere - I mean everywhere. He goes so deep off-road that 4X4's out in the wilderness wonder how he made it there! His car is not restored, it's in what I will describe as its

"natural state"; it looks like it has been driven hard and left outside for forty years, because it has. Check that one out for yourself, very interesting man and story.

Back to Frances. When we arrived I saw a very nice enclosed trailer sitting in the front yard. After polite pleasantries, he open the tailer. As the door/ramp swung down, there inside sat a very nice condition, red, 1963 356, original except for a past re-spray. Otherwise, there sat a defunct time machine.

Though he has never started or driven the car, all that is needed to be back on the road is love and care - or more precisely defined, someone to give a damn! Frances has turned the engine by hand to keep it unfrozen, several times per year, a dose of fresh fluids, a tune-up, tires, a battery, and... well, let's see, turn the key and drive the thing!

Now this would be the perfect candidate for the type of 356 I would like to own - and drive. Not perfect, not ugly, all original. Yes, sir, if only I could purchase a car like that for the price Frances paid for it, an astronomical \$3,000.00; no digits missing from what I said the purchase price was; but it was thirty years ago.

Now this is were the rub comes in for people like myself - read: poor. Even thirty years ago I could have afforded the car at the price Frances paid. I could have afforded to get it running and looking nice. I could have afforded even that modest sum more so thirty years ago than I can now, as leaving the pest-control industry ten years ago to pursue a college degree and a teaching career has not been the best financial endeavor of my life, on the contrary, it has been the single most worst decision I have ever made in my life. But we know what the say about spilled milk and tears.

However, all moaning aside, and back on focus. As I sat behind the wheel of the 356 dreaming about driving it, Frances shared the fact that he has turned down more than \$60K for the car, many times in the recent years. And therein lies the issue I have about classic Porsche's.

I would like a 1974 911 Targa as well; have you priced an air-cooled 911 in usable condition lately? Not cheap, but I could own two for what Frances can sell that 356 for. Of course either of the cars would crack 100K if restored to a mid level show condition car.

I suppose my point on this is quite simple; time has moved on and has drug the prices of classic Porsche's along with it - into a realm I can never visit. It's a simple desire really, own an old air-cooled Porsche in nice mechanical shape, without being cancerously rusted, and I'm not even talking about a decent paint job, just a runner that is safe and reliable.

Yes, just a simple little 356 "daily driver", like some of the ones in stories. One that would never under my custodianship become a concourse car, just mechanically well maintained and a million miles of adventures waiting to be explored and enjoyed.

Too bad that dreams now cost money as well. Doesn't sound like much to ask or to want, but these days, simple desires are hidden in big dreams that cost bigger dollars to come true.

3/4/19

"Diminishing Return"

Working fifteen days in February as a substitute in the petri dish of Elementary schools, as well as having to drive fifty mile round trip through my favorite mountain road, had left me drug out, fighting a bout with the flu, as well as tired and cranky! Let's not get into the trip that sent me sailing across black ice, skating across lanes on a mountain turn.

No let's look at the upside: I leaned something today. As I lay down for my usual nap, I noticed the sun was shining for a change - I decided to forgo the nap, put on my long john's and go for a drive in the Boxster to the woods. I was long overdue for a little walk and talk with God in nature.

As I progressed deeper into the woods I felt my head/thoughts becoming calmer and clearer, and felt the peace of nature overtake the noise of Hwy 280. As always, I found myself more able to talk to God about my feelings and concerns.

One thought became overriding in all: diminishing return.

My favorite ride on Hy 25 had become a chore, not something I chose to go drive; no, it was now a four to five days a week mandatory "commute." Subbing at the Primary School during the flu left me with the "Lilliputian Plague" - the flu, that I gave to my 87 year old mom. Not to mention, every day in a classroom becomes a test of patience and for me, a test of hold your tongue.

Yep; working and driving more than two days a week is simply diminishing return of time, money, and wear on my car and mental health. The scarce monetary gain above eight days a month is in no way a fair trade for the hours and aggravation.

Plus life is simply better when one walks in the woods several times a week, drives a Porsche on a nice mountain road twice a week, and much less stress, that the amount of pennies earned does not buy the time given away for ridiculous petty earthy gain.

So, I decided to scale back the subbing to a level that is still "fun" - I know work is not supposed to be fun, but I have always reasoned that if it is not, why bother? The "commute" reverts back to a nice drive; the time spent with the kids becomes more of a visit than a job.

Note at 6/8/19 - Of course financial reality crept in by mid-April, as well as the realization of no work for two months during the summer; so I accepted a long term sub position at

the Middle school... and you know what? As spring arrived, and the top went down, the daily drive for six weeks became the highlight of my day, taking the edge off of dealing with Middle School kids all day.

The Porsche, on a mountain road with the top down is truly blissful. With the sun on my face and only the sound of the wind and the flat six purring along it almost becomes hypnotic, at the very least, it is literally medicinal, it does for me what motorcycles used to do; driving my Porsche under those conditions puts the world, and my life, into an acceptable perspective... and for forty minutes, all is well.

"Buying Cars As An Investment"

The title alone makes a purist scream, the middle class dream, and the one percent smile. How can anyone purchase a car meant to be driven, run up the rpm range, and wrung through the gears, stow it away in a secret garage somewhere? Unused at that.

With so many companies making special edition and limited edition models that are guaranteed to rise in value before the sold out production run even starts, many of these companies have instituted a no resale agreement as part of the purchase agreement; lawsuits between Ford and a GT40 customer have already been flung, settled, and filed. What is with this new, greedy trend many ask.

Let's start with reality; it's not a new trend. Watch any high end auction and you will see a myriad of cars, many fifty years old, roll across the stage and fall under the hammer, all the while the auctioneer keeps pushing the prices higher with the one detail of, "And the car only has three-thousand original miles . . ."

This has been going on since automobiles and people with expendable cash first met. And it's no different than the fact that my Schwinn Apple Crate that I sold for the astronomical sum of forty dollars in 1972 is now worth nearly two-thousand - I too wish I had all of the things I have owned in the past to resell at huge profits.

But this more directly about going into the deal with the intent to squirrel away a vehicle for future profit from the start.

I would like to throw this out at this point. It used to take decades to see a car double in price, all the while the owner had to maintain a vehicle that wasn't driven. Today however, you can buy a limited edition run and wait a week and see a 50% to 100% return - don't start crunching numbers for a rebuttal, you get the point within the example. This rings all the more true with models of various makes of exotic, limited run spots cars that cost millions; prices double before they are built.

A few other points may be made here; mainly that blue chip cars are investments normally set aside for the one percentile. If you're not one of those fortunate few, then here are a few things to consider:

Let's talk wine. You don't make wine with sour grapes; but you can make money! Several years ago the ROI on an average wine portfolio was averaging over 25% per year; and these are not \$3.00 a bottle Boone's Farm of yesteryear.

Also consider the old adage of "putting yourself in the other person's shoes" - if you had expendable money sitting around in boring investments that you could neither see nor touch, wouldn't you do it? I would have a garage full of beautiful cars that I could enjoy as they appreciate.

The argument, "It's bad for the car," doesn't hold water for many reasons, namely, it's not your car. And just as fine wines must be turned and maintained in climate control environments to preserve their value, car collectors have people that maintain their cars by driving them and circulating the fluids. Most wealthy people did not obtain their wealth through stupidity.

Another "Waah," argument is that the common man doesn't get to see cars that are tucked away in private collections. Here's another shocker - they also don't get to see super models walking around on a regular, if ever, basis. Want to see the hidden cars? Become friends with those people that own them, or better, become a Shmee type YouTuber, get to drive them, make piles of money from it, and buy your own. There is a solution to ever problem. Go to a museum.

Finally, and ultimately, the true, definitive answer for the 99% is that thing called "rarified air." Yeah, we don't get to breath it. Period. With wealth comes privilege. But alas! There is a silver lining in that restored Silver Cloud.

Stop whining, go to work, make big money, buy a super car, and then you can either join the argument from the other side, or do like most - don't worry, nor give time to the argument, instead; slip on your \$1,000.00 Gucci slippers, open a bottle of \$10,000 wine - which has appreciated at a rate of nearly 25% per year, and admire your car collection as you stroll through your Garage Mahal, smoking a \$1,100.00 Gurkha Black Dragon cigar, enjoying your favorite music coming through your \$100,000.00 Rosso Fiorentino - Florentia speakers, and mull over how wonderful it is to be you.

Let's face it, for the 99 percentile, "investing in cars" is generally not for financial gain, but rather an investment in enjoyment, living and enjoying life. I have never held it against those who took the time, initiative, and risk to become wealthy, nor begrudge them of their well earned prizes.

I suppose I feel this way because I had opportunity dropped in my lap at a prime age, which had I focused on making money from it rather than milking the immediate pleasure and free time, perhaps I too could be enjoying my multimillion dollar car collection. I played my hand that was dealt the way I wanted - no regrets. And cheers to those who played their cards the way they did.

6/8/19

"Zero to Sixty"

I can't seem to find out at exactly what point in time that zero to sixty became the magic number to determine performance, but zero to sixty has become the gold standard of car performance; it's a convenient measure of acceleration. Of late it's also a convenient measure of time.

The best explanation I found is from, Jim Moore, who is a Cabinet speech writer, journalist, and audio-book narrator; Mr. Moore said, "My off-the-shelf guess . . . is that back in the day, when sixty miles per hour was a substitute for a mile a minute (with highway markers set that way so you could calibrate your speedometers and odometers), zero to sixty incorporated a very everyday speed range for most of us. Many American speedometers were pegged at 120 mph (2x60), and lots of roads around the country had 60 mph speed limits.

I understand the ROW (rest of the world as Porsche refers to it) is measured 0 to 100 kilometers, however; I am an American, and we do not care about the metric system or how others measure things, and when I say "things" I mean everything, we just don't care, we have our own standards of measurements, from speed, success, and freedom.

As of this writing the fastest production automobile is still the Porsche 918 Spyder, which is a hybrid vehicle taking 2.2 seconds to accelerate from 0 to 60 mph. Two point two seconds, it took you longer to read this sentence. We won't touch on the mind bending, nearly 7G's, 0 to 60 in under one second top fuel dragster's; we'll stick to the common mans cars.

My 1997 Boxster, manufactured when I was 37, and left alone for the first time in life, with no one to answer to but God - don't know where that crept into the conversation - takes 6.7 which is plenty fast, and strangely, very much in time with where I am headed with this story; zero to sixty is a good measure of time when looking at one's life, if you have lived to sixty, as I have.

Having turned sixty two months ago, I have found myself looking back on my life in ten year increments - more so than I always have. The zero to sixty term has taken on new meaning, greater depth. I see it in a different way; and I may add that in retrospect looking back, I have reached sixty seemingly faster than a Porsche 918 does.

However, my classic Porsche 986 seems to fit the zero to sixty metaphor more aptly and precisely in for my life. Each decade of my life can be summed up in about one second, the .7 second over six seconds fits nicely into the slowdown in

my life at forty-eight when I had the two heart attacks.

Looking back on the past sixty years is much like being a passenger in a car and looking out of the window while the car is accelerating from zero to sixty. Things start passing by faster the closer you get to sixty, becoming a near blur.

You catch clear glimpses of the passing world momentarily, but it becomes hard, if not impossible to capture a moment clearly. Much like the 986 under the acceleration run to sixty, you remember the "shifts" most clearly, much like the "shifts" that have occurred in my life through each decade.

I rather enjoy running my Porsche up the rev range quickly, shifting into a higher gear at the precise moment, keeping the power and acceleration in harmony; as I mentioned, the shifts are the key moment of measurement that is remembered...

Birth to ten. A consciousness to the world beyond a child's view.

Ten to twenty - High school. Lisa. College. A nervous breakdown.

Twenty to thirty. Easy money. Drugs. Alcohol. Good times. Two failed marriages. A child on the way. Sandy. Music. Tabitha.

Thirty to forty. Kacy born. Horse's. Music, Motorcycles. Failed marriage. Massive creativity. Tantella Ranch. Self indulgence.

Forty to fifty. Flipping houses. Easy Money. Hurricane Katrina. College. Heart attacks. Moving five times.

Fifty to sixty. Teaching. Moving nine times. Father dying. Brandy. A massive shift in values and habits. Sobriety.

When a car is accelerating there are too many thing happening and moving inside the engine that one can hardly fathom it all. Gears whirring in circles, explosions of volatile gases, a wake of wear and tear happening inside - unbeknownst to the driver. 6.7 seconds of fun. 6,7 seconds closer to the day the engine no longer runs, when it just dies from being run into the ground.

Going zero to sixty - keep your foot on the accelerator, look straight ahead, shift five times, hit sixty - it's a quick ride. Enjoy it.

6/14/19

"Fifty-Five Degrees in June... in the South!"

A week long cool front, with temperatures in the mid to low sixties with nearly immeasurable humidity, in the deep south in June is not unusual - it's unheard of! Even better, after several days of this bliss the weather forecast called for a morning temperature of fifty-eight degrees on Friday. I wasn't working, I had nothing to do, no where to go... like hell I didn't! I was going for a drive with the top down!

This isn't a story about the wonders of my Porsche, the near spiritual hoo-froo that I can usually muster up several hundred words about; no, this is a short declaration of what a rare treat was thrown my way in June!

I grew up in New Orleans, a town that is world renown for it's culture of music, food, and fun... for the initiated that have visited in the late spring through early fall it is also most likely etched into their minds the feeling of the "wet blanket humidity." A cooler temp in these times are great, more pleasant is cooler and lower humidity.

Alabama has this sweltering weather to lesser degree; so when true fall weather shows up in June, it's a cause for celebration in an Epicurean sort of way. For me, that was to take a drive through the mountains. And so I did.

One word can really sum up the experience of driving through the mountains of Alabama in June with the top down, wind blowing through your hair, temperatures so cool that I had to wear a light jacket - "surreal." Everything in your mind and senses is telling you it's October, yet you know the truth, it's the middle of June.

Your thoughts pretend your in some more northern part of the county, even throwing in the fantasy for a moment that you're in Europe, perhaps France. But just around the curve was an immediate reminder that I was still in Alabama - a mobile home with so much crap in the front yard that you could not even see from whence the smoke was rising.

You could only smell the BBQ wafting through the fall-like air... the whole scene was an abrupt flash of reality that you did know from whence came your wince... but now is not the time to be snooty.

The drive lasted an hour. The memory of that rare-weathered-day still remains, and will for many years. It was a surreal remainder that life's greatest pleasures are truly the simple one's given from God - like a fifty-eight degree day in June in the deep south.

You know, in retrospect the only thing that could have made the experience of that day and drive better was had I stopped and asked for a piece of that sweet smelling BBQ!

6/21/19

"Sublime"

The definition of "sublime" is: of such excellence, grandeur, or beauty as to inspire great admiration or awe; to elevate to a high degree of moral or spiritual purity or excellence. Yep, that pretty well sums up my driving experience this morning.

Unlike most people that own a classic Porsche I drive mine almost daily, but not in the summer, as most do. I don't usually work in the summer so my fifty mile round trip on the mountain road four or so times a week doesn't happen. Sometimes I think it works out well not having to drive in the ninety plus degree heat, I know the car doesn't mind!

However, I am a firm believer in the fact that not driving a classic car is the worst thing you can do to it; so, at least once a week I like to take an early morning spirited drive around the mountain to keep the fluids flowing - in both the car and myself.

This mornings run, after a seven day hiatus, was one that awoke my senses once again to what a wonderful car my Boxster truly is; I think that driving it many times per week most of the year makes you numb, desensitized if you will, to what a bull's-eye Porsche hit when they built the Boxster.

You forget how sublime this car is. Smooth. A power band that is linear, it just smoothly keeps gaining speed, After a fifteen mile warm-up I began to subtly run up the tack not looking at speedometer - I glanced down at saw that I was doing ninety mph! It was an open, rolling hills section of road, no close trees or objects that tightened, or made you aware, of the speed you were traveling. Ninety felt just like forty-five.

Entering a section of road that has curves ranging from sweeping, to esses, and a few banked corkscrews, I kept the engine in its happy rev range of 4000-5300 rpm, allowing for smooth power out of turns.

The Boxster was literally designed for these type of roads; this type of driving is where the car becomes sublime; the handling is excellent, almost too easy. The engine and power band, as mentioned, is simply linear. There is no waiting for power, no sudden, jolting burst of power, just a smooth, refined increase in speed and power.

The handling and power delivery of a Porsche work together in such a way that it is effortless. The only give away that you are driving in a quick, spirited manner is the increase in your pulse, the tunnel vision like focus you began to have, and the smile on your face.

Now here is the shocking part of it all. This is a twenty-two year old, well maintained, less than \$10,000.00 Porsche! People don't understand the quality and refinement that can be purchased in this price range, not to mention the grins and giggles - which are truly priceless!

A classic Porsche Boxster is not the only example of this automobile bliss I have experienced in this exact price range. When I was twenty-four I owned a 1958 Bentley, another twenty-five year old car that also can also best be described as sublime.

What the Porsche is to sports car fun the Bentley is to luxury; I have experienced two opposite ends of the automotive scale for less than a used Honda Accord. Remember, both of these cars were ten thousand dollar cars!

Imagine if you will what modern Porsche's and Bentley's have to offer when both are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars range. They have innovated and integrated technology into performance and luxury, setting the standard in both areas. They are now both owned by the same parent company, the Volkswagen Group. I do find it mildly disconcerting to hear a German accent introducing new Bentley models.

I have not driven either of the newer cars, but I have heard, read, and watched reviews that are all unanimous in their views; these automobiles are above and beyond other brands; they make driving a sports car "too easy" and have re-established the hand made, bespoke quality of old, new again.

My two cars both offered a ticket-to-ride in the automotive realm that if bought new would have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. I experienced what both marques had to offer, quality, style, elegance, leather, incredible rides - albeit at polar ends of the ride scale. Both cars also emanated the sense of wealth to others, unwanted on my part... okay, it was great being able to park the Bentley anywhere I darn well pleased.

For the most part having people "think you can afford an extremely expensive car, when you can't, is not my intention nor pleasure, I think the term for such desire/behavior is called being a "poser." I only purchased the Porsche and Bentley because I appreciate what they are, and twenty plus year old models are the only ones that fit my budget.

All to say, my ride this morning reminded me of what sublime means, both in a metaphorical and inner-being way. The cost of the Porsche, and the Bentley, aside, I believe is fair to say that I have had a million dollar s worth of automotive enjoyment for less than twenty five thousand dollars.

I wonder what the weather is going to be like in the morning.

6/21/19

"Working on a Mid-Engine Car"

"Where's the engine on that thing?" Is a frequently asked question when I either go to the grocery, gas station, or for whatever reason I happen to have the trunk and "frunk" - the front trunk - open at the same time on my Boxster.

If you aren't aware, the Porsche Boxster is a mid-engine car, the engine is located directly behind the seats - inches behind the seats; this of course allows for both a rear trunk and a front trunk, the common nomenclature being a "frunk."

Once this has been explained to the interested parties their next question generally is, "Can I see the engine?" At which point several options for an answer arise - at times I go behind the car, squat down, look under the car and tell them, "You can see the bottom of the rear from here..."

It's generally easier to pat the folded top, or point to the carpeted engine cover if the top is up, and explain the process of accessing the engine: open the top half way, undo the cables that latch the rear top fabric, pull rear of top forward; remove carpet above top engine cover, remove quick latch keys to engine cover, remove engine cover. That exposes the top of the engine.

Open the doors, pull the seats forward, lean the back of the seats forward, remove carpet on rear fire-wall, unbolt access panel on rear fire-wall, remove panel. That exposes the front of the engine.

To access the bottom of the engine: Place rear of car on jack stands. Crawl under rear of car. Remove air flow cover, two of them if you need to access further forward.

To gain access the sides of the engine, place rear of car on jack stands. Remove rear wheels. Unscrew wheel well covers. This exposes the sides of the engine - useful to replace spark plugs and coils.

This explanation is generally followed by my saying, "No, you can not see the engine." No one ever seems to be disappointed.

Only once did a man say, "Great, you got time to show me?" "Uh, no, we're in a grocery store parking lot..."

It all sounds terribly complicated to have to do anything on the engine of a Boxster, when in reality it isn't that complicated at all. More amazing is the amount of access and ease to parts and pieces that need to be accessed for normal maintenance.

Granted, most mid-engine cars are extremely complicated to access the engine - and most of those cars carry names such as Lamborghini, Ferrari, McLaren, and other brands that start in the hundreds of thousands of dollars and require an engine-out procedure for many simple service needs.

I credit the Porsche mid-engine cars ease of serviceability to German engineering. This is one instance where the German engineers did not over engineer and over complicate the situation.

Before buying my Boxster I researched - overly so - the how's and how to's of general maintenance that a layman, shade tree mechanic, such as myself, would be able to perform on the car. With independent Porsche mechanics charging upwards of \$100.00 to \$150.00 an hour labor charges, little things add up quickly.

As it turns out, the car is incredibly serviceable to anyone with a few tools, an ounce of mechanical ability, a service manual, and the internet - thank goodness for the internet. I believe you could learn to do open heart surgery from YouTube videos.

In my two years of ownership I have been able to perform a myriad of maintenance on my car, all of it general maintenance items. I have replaced brake rotors, pads, transmission mounts, done several oil changes - ten quarts of oil is what a Porsche holds - removed front bumpers to clean radiators and install screens to stop such debris from building up, changed air filter, cabin filters, ignition mechanism, serviced the top mechanism... the list goes on.

Best of all, over a year ago I had bought spark plugs, coil packs, spark plug tubes, front engine mount, water pump, thermostat, and the dreaded air/oil separator; none of which I have changed yet as it seems the previous owner replaced many of these items as preventative maintenance about forty thousand miles ago.

With 94,000 miles on the clock I figured I will wait another 5000 miles and do these as preventative maintenance - and wait until the fall, when it's cool. I have been keeping my eye on these parts, which are prone to wear, and unless they show signs of needing attention before the next few thousand miles I may as well leave well enough alone.

As I have done other work I have looked at what will be involved in replacing these parts; all very do-able. I have to admit that I have gained much satisfaction from working on the car myself, there is a sense of true accomplishment when you complete these types of jobs. You become closer to your car. You understand more deeply what is going on beneath that

wonderful purring flat six engine, as well as the moving and turning parts as you drive spiritedly through the curvaceous mountain roads.

The Porsche has become more than transportation for me; it has become a hobby. I find myself following the trials and tribulations of other Boxster owners around the world on Facebook and internet forums - which are an encyclopaedic wealth of knowledge.

In the past two years I have learned what noises mean what; and how bad, or harmless, that noise or problem may be. I find myself reading how-to articles on repairs of my 986. Quite literally it has become both an interest and a hobby above and beyond the joy and thrill of driving a cabriolet Porsche.

It turns out that a mid-engine Porsche is not the scary maintenance beast as was expected and as seen by many owners. It is well engineered for maintenance and fairly easy to access the engine with little effort and time.

One caveat; in the event of an engine fire, I'm getting out of the car as fast as possible, moving a safe distance away, and calling 911. While I wait for the fire trucks I will try not to chant the words made infamous by 1960's R&B disc jockey Magnificent Montague, "Burn, baby, burn," as I begin planning what color and options my next Boxster will have.

6/25/19

"Installing Sound Systems in a Porsche"

Reading several posts on the forums today where people were discussing installing these massive 1000 watt sound systems in their Porsche's made me think about mine. They go on and on in an audiophile manner that makes you think they are installing a new sound system in a concert hall.

Redoing half of the control in the dash panel to fit a new head unit that must include sat-nav - which I'll come back to - amps in the trunk, CD changers in the frunk, sub woofer behind seats or on parcel shelf, speakers in every door, dash, and cubby they can cram one in.

They discuss what wattage and placements are needed to be surrounded by sound to eliminate the sounds of the car and the passing world as they drive their open top, flat-six Porsche's.

Can I go ahead and take my left turn and get on my "rant" now?

What are these people doing? I appreciate a great sound system that lets you hear the nuance of every instrument, every tone, every octave. I think these type of investments in audio pleasure are wonderful - for your living room, or for some SUV, or land yacht automobile. But in a convertible Porsche? I think not.

The systems they are installing have to have blue-tooth, satellite navigation with accuracy to the quarter inch, and at least two different ports to plug in addition outside forces to the new onboard system that they have redesigned the interior to accommodate.

Let's break this down as I see it.

Satellite navigation. I don't have one. They come on any Smart phone these days - I don't have one of those either. Granted I don't generally have anywhere to go that I don't already know how to get there, plus I disdain having a fake female voice telling me where to turn, I used to have a beautiful wife that would sit next to me and navigate, and her voice and bare legs were a heck of a lot sexier than some artificial intelligence telling me what to do.

I think these units should have a program that once you have ignored the directions twice it then turns more realistic; instead of telling to make a U-turn as soon as possible it should say something along the lines of, "Well fine! I you not going to listen to me and be an ignorant man that won't take directions then why do I bother?" And then it should

turn off until you have sufficiently said your sorry for about ten minutes while you sit stranded and lost on the side of the road because you don't know where you were headed anyway!

Two things on a summary of how I feel about "navigating a route."

One: When I rode motorcycles I would ride until I came to a corner or a fork in the road, pause, then decide if I felt like taking a right or a left. It was about the journey, the fact that I was out riding. I really didn't care where I was going, as long as I was going. I usually feel the same way when I am pleasure cruising in my Boxster.

Two: I have never had the faintest clue as to where I am/was headed in life, I have always taken it as it comes and made what I felt were appropriate turns accordingly - which, admittedly, has left me lost and stranded many times in my life's journey. But my point is, if I didn't have directions for life or a motorcycle trip, do you think I want to be guided by an "eye in the sky?"

As far as the actual audio system that plays music; the one that highlights the one I previously described as being able to enhance and refine every nuance of every instrument, every tone, every octave. Let me say that I rarely, and I mean rarely, even turn my standard Becker radio/CD player, with four speakers and perhaps 50 watts of mega-power on.

I believe Porsche installed an orchestra of sound in its sports cars - a flat-six engine, and even the flat-four. The worlds best mechanical and audio engineers designed the sound of a Porsche to the Nth degree.

Beginning with its starting (pun intended) overture when you turn the key, through the array of mechanical noises - we won't even go down the air cooled road - to the finale of the exhaust note; pure genius, spine tingling. It took the worlds best to create, write, and orchestrate the sound track for driving a Porsche.

Beethoven in his genius could not write and arrange a symphony of sound with such an aural range to excite the senses as did Hans Mezger, the man who designed Porsche's first flat-six and many of its greatest race engines.

No one, including Lorin Maazel, the great conductor has been able to harness an orchestra of instruments into a spine tingling, perfectly timed, flawless performance of sound as did Dr. Porsche.

I suppose I just wonder why people want to drown out the sound of a Porsche under power. The sound of the engine

running through the rev range, the mechanical noises of thousands of moving parts working in harmony and unison; and the sound of the wind when the top is down. Those are the sounds of a Porsche. Those are the "noises" you are suppose to hear and enjoy. Those are the sounds of driving!

These people talk of spending thousand of dollars, many spending upwards of twenty percent of the value of the car on an "upgraded sound system." I don't know if they are aware that for less than half the price of an audio system they can upgrade the sound system of a Porsche. Fab-Speed, Porsche themselves, and endless manufactures make wonderful exhaust upgrades to enhance the sounds of driving your Porsche.

Ah, enough of my rant already. Let people do what the must. Let them have artificial intelligence map out their course. Let then place power boosters in the trunk and the frunk instead of in the engine bay. Let them surround themselves in a sea of speakers instead of the whisper of the wind, blowing in your ear like a lover. Let them do what they want.

Meanwhile, I'm still using the factory installed sound system behind the seats, under the carpeted areas - the volume button is on the floor, just to the right of the brake pedal; I love to turn it up to 5500! Now that is music to my ears.

6/25/19

"Living With a Manual"

"Save the manual!" It sounds like a rally cry of Green Peace or some other environmentally focused group. No, it has become the cry of sports car and automotive purist of late. You see, the manual transmission is becoming somewhat of a telephone with a rotary dial; too slow, outdated, and few know how to use it.

The demise of the manual transmission reminds me of when I purchased a Harley Davidson in 1999; as I reviewed the price I found out that the glimmering spoke wheels were an extra cost option, not standard. It was then that I realized I was aging in a fast changing world, as I remember when spoke wheels on a motorcycle were the *only* option available if you wanted round wheels.

Much like spoke wheels, a manual transmission is now, for the most part, an option - if available at all. Manufactures will tell you that they no longer use manual transmissions for many reason; of course my favorite is. " . . .the customers just don't buy them." Is it perhaps that they created that "fact" by not offering them as standard equipment for the better part of a new generation of drivers to the pint that most new drivers don't want them because they have never driven one - nah, couldn't be.

Their best arguments, and facts, are based upon meeting the standards and regulations mandated by world governments. Noise limitations, fuel economy, costs - these things have made the manual transmission a hinderance to meeting the mandates and thus meeting the shareholders mandate for certain profit margins. Let's face it, it is cheaper and thus more profitable to design, manufacture, and install one transmission instead of two.

It is interesting how several years ago Porsche only offered a PDK - Porsche-Doppelkupplungsgetriebe or, Porsche dual clutch transmission - which in plain terms translates to "it shifts so damn fast mere humans could never match the shifting speed - in their highest priced and highest performance 911. The customer base was so outraged that within a year or so, the manual had returned as an "option."

Meanwhile manufactures have been blasting around the Nuremberg circuit at record lap times, giving credit for the .000001 of a second lap time increase to the wonders of the dual clutch transmission. It's a performance thing they sell - I mean tell, you.

Seems to me I remember when driving a sorts car was about being engaged, one with the machine, and several other

cliche's. I also don't quite buy into the need to increase the 0 to 60 time by a hair of a millionth of a second because the car can do it for you; and I am not even going to rant about launch control, another "Nanny" for naught, removing yet another vital piece of the adrenalin puzzle out of driving a sports car.

But I will say this: traction control, lane keeping assistance, wheels that adjust their camber, brakes that sense what wheel needs more or less brake assistance, sport mode, race mode, comfort mode - really comfort mode is relevant how in a sports car - and the list of driver assist options is longer than the performance and color choices. Sad.

Now mind you, I understand that most people need a commuter car, something to trudge through mindless stop and go traffic, or even, smooth sailing along the same route, every day, for years... the thought makes me both ill and thankful that my life has not had to be a part of that cog-in-the wheel lifestyle.

However, I will succumb to this fact. If I had to drive, or rather commute, daily in a manual transmission, then yes, that is like some sentence into the upper echelons of the nine circles of Dante's Hell.

I too would want an automatic transmission. I would also want a car that sits higher off the ground. I would want a vehicle with eighteen way adjustable seats with lumbar support, a Harmon Karman sound system, burlled walnut trim, lambs wool carpets; I could even accept a chauffeur under these conditions. I certainly would not want a sports car for stop and go traffic - STOP! I sense myself being lulled into the future of autonomous vehicles.

Meanwhile, because my driving consist mostly of a 50 mile mountain road commute, my manual transmission is heavenly! To overuse already worn out euphemisms and cliches about the manual transmission I will quickly say that living with a manual transmission under my driving conditions really does provide, or induce the following symptoms: Engagement. Increased adrenaline levels. A quickened pulse level. Smiling. The ability to run that Porsche flat six into the rev range that releases the Banshee out of the box, without the "machine" shifting before she can be unleashed.

There is a unique feeling to using both hands and feet to control the power range of a sports car, somewhat reminds me of playing the drums. There is a pulse when you have to take one hand off of the steering wheel in a corner to shift into a lower gear, while both feet are doing the rev matching dance moves required to get the steps correct and fluid.

A manual transmission undeniably forced you to become a harmonious part of your car, you must be engaged beyond two fingers and one foot. If you drive a manual transmission, you know what I'm talking about. If you don't, words cannot express emotions in this case. It's special. It's unique. It's a disappearing pleasure.

I see the future of sports cars heading towards something akin to an amusement ride; pay your outrageous entry fee, get in the pod, strap in, and hold on. The machine will do all of the work for you, you just get to enjoy the rush and thrill of G forces, nothing else will be required on your part.

With that said, I suppose I should stop complaining and writing about the demise of the driving experience and go uncover my 986, put my butt in the seat, press the clutch, start the engine, listen to the sound of a real, naturally aspirated, fossil fuel sucking engine, shift the manual transmission into gear, begin the ballet of hands and feet required to drive such a vehicle, and go enjoy the experience while I can.

Yep, better go enjoy the wind blowing through my hair, because I am afraid one day the only wind will be the wind of change that blew through like a hurricane and wiped the pleasures of driving a vintage sports car off of the map.

Oh, by the way, a "map" is another antique tool that was once used to navigate on your journey - Google it.

6/26/19

"One Owner Cars and Multiple Owner Cars"

When I decided to sell my new 370Z and purchase a twenty year old Porsche Boxster I had a list of several criteria that had to be met. This criteria was created by having read and studied the major issues associated with an older Boxster.

One of the things I wanted in the car was it having had a replacement IMS bearing - I don't care what the statistics say, it was a peace of mind issue for me. I also wanted a car that had been maintained, meticulously.

After looking at many cars, talking to their owners, and putting pieces of information together, a major criteria quickly rose to the top of my list of a car that I would purchase - it had to be a one owner car.

Finding a one owner, twenty year old Porsche sports car proved to be quite a challenge. It is not uncommon for a Porsche sports cars to have had multiple owners, actually it seemed to be the norm. And when I say multiple owners, in many cases that translated to way too many owners.

Many early Boxster's had been pushed from home to home like an unwanted child, many had as many as seven owners. I began to wonder why that was; it seemed like a Faberge egg - every time I opened one layer there was another layer to open and uncover.

Porsche sports cars seem to get passed around like prostitutes; and seemingly they are often used as such - give me my pleasure, but I don't have to take care of you, let the next person have a more used product... you get the idea. If not, let me put it this way - many Porsche owners just screw [up] the cars and move on, especially as they age and become less expensive to purchase and more expensive to maintain; most see no value in preservation.

Several other less diabolical factors seem to be in play as to the multiple ownership of Porsche's. Many are leased cars. Many owners, especially higher up on the "new car food chain" you go are affluent, they can afford to keep a car a short time and move on to a new one. Under most of these circumstances the cars are well maintained.

By the time they are through with the ownership the car is reach an average age of four years old; depreciation has set in, the car is now worth about half of its original cost. That seems to bring in the second tier owner; less affluent, but a true enthusiast who can now afford to own their dream Porsche.

At this point statistics seems to play a role in Porsche ownership. Consider the following.

According to *Consumer Reports*, the average age of a 911 buyer is 52. The Boxster buyer is an average age of 47. Buyers tend to be relatively affluent men. When you read between the lines of these statistics you can easily begin to insert a psychological term that may be a driving factor in these statistics - "mid-life crisis." Might I add, this was not my motivation, I thought I would be dead by thirty so I got my mid-life crisis out of the way in my early twenty's when I bought my Bentley and married younger women.

It turns out it was the same for the 370Z I owned, many were short term, multiple owners. In talking to these owners I found a several common threads and statements.

"I got bored with the car and stopped driving it." Which explains the amount of sports cars with low mileage.

"It turns out this car is totally impractical, I can't carry anything in this car." Surprise! You should have bought an SUV or truck.

"My wife is driving me crazy; she said I have to sell it." This I have no answer nor snide comment to...

And then there is this tell-tale statement of the beginning of the downward spiral, "Parts for this car are really expensive! I just can't justify spending the money on upkeep."

So they don't. They pass it on with upcoming maintenance looming. Remember a car that sits unused usually begins to require more "upkeep" than when you do use it often.

So, the second tier owner sells the car, generally at a loss, for a quick sale, plus more depreciation has set in. Enter the third tier owner.

For the most part several things happen at this point: the owner becomes younger. The new owner drives the car harder. The new owner bought the car at a price that when repairs or general maintenance in the realm of several thousand dollars is needed, they see it as diminishing return, can't afford the maintenance, or never intended to keep the car for the long haul, where the cost will average out.

At this point let me point out a few things I have seen. This seems to be the crucial turning point in the life of an older Porsche. The car will be passed on again, either to another person who is just buying their dream car at a great price and is clueless to the fact that the car is at a preserve it or run it into the ground juncture in its life. These dream

cars often turn into a nightmare, and at the first hick-up in their dream, they sell it, for less money, in worse condition.

On the upside, at this point some of these older Porsche's fall into the hands of owners that appreciate the classic Porsche and have the means and/or where-for-all to maintain the car, these owners are the ones that bring the car back to a higher standard and better condition than when they purchased it.

After weighing all of these facts I became fixed on purchasing a one owner, first year Porsche Boxster. It took a while, but I found one in San Francisco, which is another hindrance to many buyer - they aren't willing to pay shipping cost and are therefore cursed to purchase only local cars, which severely limits their choices.

I would once again like to quote experts on the benefits of purchasing a one owner car at this time; it's a long quote, but it's a definitive explanation. YouTuber and auto journalist, Doug Demuro tells us:

There are several reasons why one-owner cars are considered to be the darlings of the used-car world. The primary reason is a consistent maintenance and driving history. If someone buys a new car and drives it for a decade, it's likely that car received roughly the same level of care and the same driving experience throughout that time period. With multiple owners, a car may have been subjected to various levels of care and a wide range of different driving styles, which may negatively affect its long-term dependability.

Another reason why one-owner cars are so sought-after is that the original owner, who purchased the car new, likely has more financial resources to devote to maintenance and upkeep than, say, a sixth owner who buys the car when it's 15 years old and costs \$3,000.

Before I finish I must share my favorite "red flag ad's" for a used Porsche, and I have seen several. They state that the, "Roll cage will be removed before sale." To me, that is code for "Run Forrest run!" There is no need to ask the owner if the car has ever been tracked. And I have a theory that many of the failures associated with Boxster's - or any Porsche sports car- is track use.

Yes, the cars were meant and designed to be driven in a spirited manner - that is not the same as "hard." Sure they can be tracked and driven hard on the street; but there is no argument that can upside the downside of the effect on the longevity of a car that has had it's guts wrung out over and

over. It's simple physics.

That physics is not limited to the engine. The increased stress on every part of the car will make it more prone to wear and failure. There is plenty of evidence from mechanics of the demise of flat-six engines from oil starvation from increased track induced G forces.

Do we need to talk about the cooling system of a tracked car and the volume of failure data related to overheating... even in just one cylinder? Most deaths to Boxster's, especially earlier models comes from heat, be it oil or water; and a "spirited" drive generates a lot less heat than blasting around the track at red-line.

I would never purchase a that has been tracked. Porsche's race cars do not come off of the assembly line, and the track focused Porsche's that do come prepared for track days also comes with a hefty price tag for all of the "extras" that make it track worthy. There is a reason a GT labeled model is twice the cost of one that isn't.

I read the woes of Boxster owners on the forums, most of them seem to come from people that have bought a car that has had many parents, many of which were abusive and unloving. Others bemoan the fact that their Porsche blew up or had some catastrophic failure, either mechanical or financial after they drove it like Hurley Haywood.

Flip side of the coin seems to be owners that have either owned their cars since new, bought cars with an impeccable maintenance history, or bought one owner cars. These owners constantly offer rebuttals to those that whine about the unreliability of a Porsche, and usually the argument stops dead in its tracks when they point out that their cars have been driven 180,000 to 220,000 miles.

Say what you may, but I sure am glad that I took the time and paid the premium and shipping to find my one owner 1997 Boxster; I only wish the shipping cost would have been the trip I had booked to fly out to San Francisco, drive to Yosemite, go to Sedona to see the stars, and drive it back to Alabama, but once again Mother Nature changed my plans with torrential, record setting rains, wildfires, and record setting snowfalls, all conveniently located along my planned route home.

6/26/19

"Amortization"

Over the past *thirty years* I have paid an average of \$425.00 per month on a car note, the cost of having transportation I reasoned, be it a new car or used, it seems to average out to that magic \$400.00 a month. With maintenance and insurance that's over \$200K to ride, less than the cost of one new exotic car.

A little over two years ago, in February 2017 to be exact, and to keep this story relevant, I decided I would purchase a 1997 Boxster and pay cash, \$9200.00, For the first time in many decades I do not have a monthly car note. I had grown weary of the massive depreciation and interest portion of monthly payments.

So, I sold my two year old Nissan 370Z at a loss of over \$4000.00 - almost \$200.00 A month in depreciation, plus the portion of money lost in monthly payments that was not recouped in the sale. All in on the Boxster with shipping, tax, and license was less than \$11,000.00.

Amortization is not the best title for discussing the monthly cost of automobile ownership; as amortization in financial terms is generally used in the depreciation of intangible assets. Mr. Weber defines "intangible as: "unable to be touched or grasped; not having physical presence." But the word sounded so good and so scientific that I just had to use it. To my amazement, as you will see, when it comes to owning my Porsche Boxster the word "intangible" becomes quite relevant.

As to the reasons that led to my justification for selling a new car for a twenty year old car, I have detailed those in another short story. I will stay focused on the "amortization" of automobile ownership.

Throughout my adult life, read from twenty-one on, I have had to finance my automobiles, I did not have the funds to pay cash for cars. It did not help that my tastes in automobiles ran from classic Bentley's to brand new Honda Preludes - simultaneously.

Being self employed in a service industry I also needed reliable transportation; there is no faster way to be out of a service related business than to be chronically late or rescheduling appointments. This lends itself to the business decision to own new cars or trucks... plus you can depreciate the asset for a tax saving; notice I did not use "amortization" in this context.

My comfort zone, for the exception of when I was paying three car notes per month, was in the \$400.00 a month range. From a business standpoint it was merely the "cost of doing business" and thus factored into the operation cost of the company.

Slowly through the years the time span for getting a new car shortened. It finally reached a point that I could justify getting a new Dodge truck when it needed a new set of tire - it had nothing to do with the new, more aggressive styling of the latest model.

This type of thinking, or lack thereof, soon found itself totally unconcerned with the overall cost, loss rollover, extent of the financing, or the interest rate. In no time at all I was still rolling along in a new vehicle at \$400.00 or so a month, unaware, nor caring about overall cost - it was a "business expense" after all.

After Hurricane Katrina came along and changed the game plan and business plan; I found myself with no business that worried about transportation costs as well as no need for a gas-guzzling pickup truck. I was going into the sales rep business, I needed a road car, a fleet-type vehicle, I needed a new Impala.

For the first time in decades I came face to face with some startling facts; I was upside down in my truck from unconcerned "roll-overs" to the tune on nearly \$7,000.00. It seems as though the salesman and finance managers of the past few transactions had little to no concern to point out my stupidity. Neither did I when I sold cars.

Fortunately with my good credit and little money down I was able to get my base model, \$17000.00, Impala, plus the \$7000.00 carry over truck monies for only \$400.00 a month - and it would only take seventy-two months and a total of nearly \$27000.00 to do it. Yes, I am an astute businessman.

The best part is, I didn't go into sales, oh no, I went back to college for three and a half years, with no income - so all expenses came out of savings, including college and living expenses. Yes, I am an astute businessman.

Onward to ten years down the road. I quite riding motorcycles, got into sports cars for my fix, and found myself lusting after a classic Porsche, one with a drop-top. Being main caretaker for dad = unemployed - again, I did not want ongoing debt waiting to sink my 824 credit score. So we arrive at the cash transaction of the Porsche, and thankfully for the reader, the "amortization" part of this tale.

In a fast summary; buying the Porsche has been the second best automobile purchase I have ever made, the Bentley will remain the best, I am sure of that. I have been fortunate and have been doing my due diligence on maintenance and care of a classic Porsche, and have thus far reaped the rewards of classic Porsche ownership, especially a convertible -fun!

I have enjoyed tens of thousands of pleasure filled miles through twisty mountain roads. I have enjoyed the sun on my face, wind through my hair experience to the fullest that any automobile can offer. I have stood for hours admiring the classic, timeless lines of the Porsche Boxster.

I have had the hair stand up on the back of my neck from the sound of the wailing flat-six boxer engine, a sound that only a flat-six Porsche can make. I have smiled until my cheeks hurt, literally. I have had my pulse raised high and faster than any cardiovascular exercises. I have had a blast!

Many have said, "you can't put a price on fun." That's a lie. My Ducati cost \$6,000.00. Skydiving cost \$400.00 for ninety seconds of thrills. A great night out from my memory cost about \$1,000.00 - with tip. The Porsche cost \$9200.00. No, fun has exact pricing.

Fun, hair raising thrills, excitement, the thoughts running through you mind as the earth rushes towards you at 124 miles per hour, smiles that hurt your face, bloody knees from taking a Ducati through a turn at max force and lean, memories created from such experiences - all of these are intangible according to Mr. Webster.

Perhaps so, but science cannot understand the way the mind works, if it could then it could explain how all of these experiences and memories are as real within my mind as though they were happening in real-time. I can touch them. I can feel them. They all cost money. They have all been spread out across linear time now.

The joy and thrill of owning my car is not a tangible asset/thing, however it is the driving factor (no pun intended, but a good one) of my owning my Boxster.

If my argument were to stand true that these intangibles are in fact tangibles, then the amortization of these experiences have been reduces to pennies per second. As of this writing, the "intangible" experiences and fun from the Porsche has averaged out to \$379.31 per month - I have not had an automobile cost less than \$400.00 a month since 1980 - thirty-nine years... the amortization of my Porsche thrills makes them less and less expensive with each passing month.

You know, perhaps I am an astute businessman...

6/28/19

"You Sold a Two Year Old 370Z for a Twenty Year Old Porsche? Are You Crazy?"

I suppose for many the title could be both a statement and the story; many would not need to hear anything else to agree with the title as a definitive statement. But they don't know the whole story, yet. But to clarify two things: Yes, I did sell a new 370Z to purchase a twenty year old Porsche, a 986 Boxster to be exact, a car with a reputation of self destruction.

Secondly, yes, I am crazy. But here is how this seemingly insane idea took root and grew into a reality.

Fast overview, I had ridden motorcycles for over forty years, never was much of a car guy, owned some cool cars, but not "my thrill." Literally months after being without a motorcycle and driving the Impala I had bought after Katrina, a car I owned for nearly eight years - the longest I had ever owned a vehicle, an uneasiness set in, as did new car fever.

I went car shopping, looked at Nissan's, for grins and giggles drove a 370Z, a week later picked up a Pearl white base model for about \$30K dollars. Bought the base for the quieter ride of more rubber from smaller wheels. Bought an automatic because it had been years since I "suffered" through shifting.

Within months I installed paddle shifters to try and add a little more excitement to the automatic. It did not take long to remember driving a sports car with an automatic transmission is akin to riding an automatic motorcycle -- which I have never done, I was able to clearly image how dreadful the experience would be.

First let's move to the praise or the 370Z. The car is a great deal for a new sports car; actually, I found that in the price range there was really no competition. It is good value for \$30K.

Once you started stepping up in options on a Nissan you soon began approaching the void curve where for a bit more money you can get a POC Porsche Cayman; the car that auto journalist consistently compared the 370Z to, when in reality, there is no comparison.

My main concern in a car purchase was at root, I needed a commuter car, reliable and trouble free for 12K miles a year; besides. As usual, the bottom line was money. I needed a new car, I wanted a sports car, the Nissan 370Z base was my best option.

I was in love with the Z for quite some time. During our honeymoon period I began reading car magazines as voraciously as I had motorcycle magazines. YouTube videos of sports cars were my new addiction. As usual, the media influenced my mind, life, and decisions - as did the movie "Easy Rider" nearly fifty years prior -see my book, "My Life Through Motorcycles."

The more I read, watched, and absorbed the lines of European sports cars, and the more I looked at my Z from all angles, the more disenchanted I became. It's a fact I get bored fast, hence forty plus motorcycles in as many years.

The more I looked at and lived with my Z, the more its looks started to take on an anime style. They were captivating and stylish at first, but living with them for a few years they became a bit too "Japanese". Every line is angular, and razor edged, not organic as most European cars. The lights on the Nissan are a fine example, pull up a picture to see what I mean.

My driving consisted of an equal mix of straight line, smooth, double wide, rolling roads that just beckoned and dared you to push that Z slightly above 100 mph. It was a great "grand touring" car.

The backroads I drove were undulating, twisty two lane country roads. The Z did a nice job of providing a thrill. It is on these roads that I began to desire a manual transmission.

The more I drove the Nissan the more I could push her a bit towards her limits and the roads limits. I started to realize that in a subtle way the 370Z is actually a somewhat brutish car in its mannerisms, like a Japanese Mustang.

The more I pushed, the more I began to notice how heavy the front end was, and that the car suffered from understeer when under pressure. Meanwhile I was reading a lot about how dreamy mid-engine sports car were, like the Cayman...

I was also feeling enclosed and mildly claustrophobic in the Z coupe. I was also beginning to miss the open air, the sound and the feel of the wind that a motorcycle offered. That sound was always a catalyst to mental calmness and solitude of thoughts; but I did not want a motorcycle again.

I drove on for another year, all the while becoming less enchanted with the Z. Quite frankly the Nissan is soulless. I had become attracted to the smooth, flowing, curvaceous lines of the "schöne Frau Cayman." I was in lust for the Porsche.

I won't use the analogy of falling head over heels for a good looking woman only to end up spending a year with her to

realize her hips are out of proportion, her eyes are spaced a little funny, and that many of her features are slightly brash, and some things begin to seem/feel cheap. Okay, so I just did use the analogy - true love has not been my forte through the years; I suppose I don't understand what it is.

Now in all fairness, the original 240Z is an icon, a styling tour-de-force of stolen lines from the sexiest cars of Europe; however the fact that Nissan had not changed anything on the 370Z in nearly a decade did not make it timeless; but the 240Z has proven itself to be a timeless design, albeit a mix forgery in design.

Within the latter part of a two year ownership I had read too many articles praising the Cayman, I also decided I wanted a convertible - lucky me! Porsche makes the Boxster!

Like staring at too many "girly" magazines, I began to compare the Porsche to the Nissan every time I saw her. Many say the Boxster can't tell its ass from its nose, but does that not prove to be a graceful, smoothness in design.

The German Porsche had a heritage, it had superb engineering and quality. The Japanese Nissan had an overkill of plastics - it reminded me of when I realized my Yamaha V-Star was a cheap knockoff of the Harley-Davidson.

My love affair with my Japanese Geisha girl was dead. I began doing my homework on cost and risks of getting out of the relationship. I was not going into used Porsche ownership blind. Suddenly becoming unemployed again helped me hone my thinking quickly.

As noted in another story I had a \$425.00 a month car note on the 370Z and zero job prospects. Even with a sparkling credit score, no one would be offering me financing; and as previously mentioned, after many decades of the \$400.00 a month transportation related ball and chain I was tired of it.

I found that I could actually get just what I wanted in a price range that I could afford to pay cash for, a first generation Porsche Boxster 986, a car that since it's debut in 1996 has been lauded for it's handling and performance. The first generation seemed to have one flaw, it's M96 engine which had a 2 to 10% catastrophic failure rate due to an IMS bearing - there are literally thousands of pages written about this issue.

After much research I found that finding a one owner, well maintained, IMS retrofitted 986 could be had for under \$10K - even with a catastrophic engine failure it would still be nearly half the cost of what I paid for the 370Z. I put the Nissan up for sale.

It didn't take long to find out that sports cars make up a miniscule sector of the car market, with a lessening demand each year. Didn't take long to figure the depreciation rate was kicking my butt. Didn't take long to sell at near wholesale to stop the monthly hemorrhaging and depreciation curve. Didn't take long to lose thousands of dollars on that car!

Having been shopping nationwide all the while for nearly six months - knowing the breakup with the Z was immanent, I found the ideal Porsche Boxster that ticked all of the boxes for me. It was in San Francisco.

To wind this story up without going into another; I bought the car, a one-way airline ticket, booked lodging along the West coast. I had the perfect trip planned: Yosemite, down the coast, over to Sedona to see the dark areas for star-gazing. I was stoked - suddenly so was the weather out west.

Torrential, record rains around San Francisco were forecast for a week. Record snow was falling in Yosemite. Roads were closed everywhere. It was going to be cloudy in Sedona. I cancelled the trip and had the car shipped to Alabama.

So, I sold a new Nissan 370Z and bought a twenty year old Porsche Boxster - a 986 to boot. Did I make a mistake? Do I regret anything about doing it? Nope, not for a second so far. I have owned the Porsche now for over two years, and here is how I feel.

I got twice the sports car and twice the quality for one third of the cost of the new 370Z. The Porsche has soul. I have yet to tire of it's timeless curves and looks. I smile every time I drive the car. The wind blows through my hair and circulates around me. My claustrophobia is gone. The Boxster does 95% of what motorcycles did for me.

I rarely turn on the radio, the sound of the wind and that infamous flat-six engine symphony puts me in a happy, tranquil place every time I drive.

No, there can be no mistake woven into that scenario, only pleasure and contentment... perhaps I have found what true love can be.

6/28/19

"Cars and Coffee"

Cars and Coffee, Caffeine and Octane, Cars and Taco's, Coffee & Convertibles, Cars and Camera's, Cars and Donuts, Cars and Trucks... you get the picture of where this is headed. It seems as though the trend of having clever names for a simple car meet has become endless.

The whole situation makes me wonder: are these "spin off groups" akin to church break-ups? Everyone gathers for a common belief, love, enthusiasm, and then suddenly there is a similar, yet different group that forms.

First, let me preface this by pointing out that I have never been sociable enough, nor defined enough in my preferences to be a "joiner." I didn't like the Cub Scouts, I didn't like team sports - not any of them. I rode and raced motocross aboard a myriad of makes, no loyalty to a single brand. I liked racing motorcycles simply because of the old adage "To the victor goes the spoils." I didn't have to share the "win" with a team. But I digress as usual.

However, one more digression - secondly, I would just like to add that I have never been to a Cars and Coffee where they had coffee - you could go to the restaurant in the shopping center, or across the street to a fast food restaurant and buy some, but no coffee at the "Cars and Coffee." Just me? Or should coffee be provided or available at an event that has coffee in its name? Not necessarily for free, but available.

- and now, back to our scheduled rant -

I read a lot on forums and in magazines about how cliquish the events have become - so what's new? When I was young and had a Bentley I did not go to car meets; I did go to the Rolls Royce and Bentley club meets only because it was great parties and I was twenty-four, it was just fun having all of the old men, who were younger than I am now, tell me I was "too young to own such a car."

My favorite reply was usually, "Really? The titles in my name."

There has always been the like minded, if not single branded car groups; hot rods, antique cars, classic cars, and so on. That is pretty much how I remember the car culture of my youth and throughout the 1990's.

The only diversity I remember were the Thursday nights motorcycle meets at "Pete Maroney's" bar in New Orleans; it seemed like every type of motorcycle and motorcyclist was there - but it was the early 1970's, the height of

motorcycledom.

There is a popular video on YouTube that parodies the Cars and Coffee attitude, as seen by many. The video, "Regular Car Reviews Goes to Cars and Coffee" supposedly sums up every Cars and Coffee type event, portraying the cliquishness, snobby, segregated into groups attitude that many seem to experience. I find it almost funny, nothing more.

I have been to few of these different modern car gatherings since living in Alabama, from the old men with their 1960's American cars in the Publix parking lot, to the group that meets in the local gun range/firearms shop's parking lot, which is mostly Mustangs - but Mustangs and Alabama is a whole other anomaly to me. Thus far my favorite meet is "Magic City Octane" which gathers in a upscale shopping center parking lot.

All of the events I have visited since living in Alabama the people have been friendly and talkative. However, the Magic City Octane event seems to defy all preconceptions or prejudices related to car meets; this meet has hundreds of cars that cover the gambit of "types of cars," there is literally ever type of vehicle present - name it, it's been there.

The people are unbiased, nearly every cars has a diverse group listening to the owner tell about their car, or discussions going on. There seems to be a mutual admiration for every vehicle. I have yet to hear a snide comment about even the - oops, I was about to be snide - any car. Everyone just seems to enjoy cars. Even better, the people who attend are as diverse as the cars in many ways: socioeconomically, racially, ages, and it's also a family event.

Having grown up in New Orleans, a town that welcomes the world - also where certain sectors carefully keep the world locked out, to Los Angeles, which is too diverse to describe, and also very segmented in it's way, and for the last decade I have lived all over Alabama; which in some small towns the people would not even speak to me because I was from that "heathen city" of New Orleans.

It seems everywhere can be both exclusive and inclusive, regardless of social class or race. It's just human nature to be that way, always has been, always will be.

When it comes to cars, maybe Alabama is different, when it comes to football... well never mind that; but at the car meets that I have been to, people are sociable, cross culture friendly, non judgmental of others cars, and very talkative.

Here's an idea for a new title for a car meet; perhaps I should start one called "Cars and Conversations."

7/4/19

"A Practical, Subtle Supercar - An Oxymoron?"

It's amazing how fast technology changes things; a few years back a supercar was a sports car capable of getting to zero to sixty mph in under five seconds or so. Today, a supercar needs to be able to do that in the two plus something second range, or less.

There are endless automotive experts that have put there definition on what makes a supercar and what makes a hypercar. For the sake of time let's just throw a few names out in each category.

Supercars: Ferrari 488, Lamborghini Huracan, and McLaren 650, the Porsche GT2 and 911 Turbo. All of these are in a league of supercars that include many others by a vast array of manufactures.

The major players in the hypercar market are: the Bugatti Veyron, LaFerrari, McLaren P1, Koenigsegg Agera, Pagani Huayra. All of these cars as well as the cars considered supercars get to sixty mph in the blink of an eye. So what is the difference between super and hyper?

The real difference seems to now lie in the exclusivity of the car. The list of supercars are for the most part, made in higher volumes than the extremely limited production numbers of the cars considered hypercars. Blah, blah, blah...

The real difference? About one million to three million dollars is the real difference between the two. Lets face it, the difference between reaching sixty in 2.7 Seconds opposed to 2.6 Seconds is, well pretty much immeasurable without a technology. Most humans would not be able to sense the difference, their brains are being sucked into a deformed shape during that type of acceleration.

Remember when three hundred horsepower was awe inspiring? Now the electric assist motors make more than that, while the total horsepower rounds out at and above 1000 horsepower on many of these cars. Horsepower and zero to sixty times have become irrelevant.

How does the average person who drives an appliance car define a supercar? Here is what I have been told in my informal surveys. They are: impractical, obnoxious, uncomfortable, ostentatious, these are a few of the adjectives that are used to describe most supercars.

Others like to get into the psychology of supercar ownership. They have told me that they believe the people that buy these are: flashy, showing off their wealth, trying to be noticed,

and the ever popular and timeless making up for a small penis complex. I suppose the last does not apply to women that purchase these cars, I suppose they must have small breasts.

I have never understood buying a car for the "look at me factor", and if you do want one for that reason get an older Rolls-Royce or Bentley, it silently glides through the crowd like a beautiful woman, it doesn't have to try to draw attention, people are naturally attracted to timeless beauty.

I personally believe these cars are technological works of art that can be driven - though many are just garaged, which is fine as well; I owned a motorcycle that was never started and sat in my living room as an objet d'art. I get it. Many are bought as investments. I get that too.

But the subject here is a practical supercar, you know, a daily driver. Here is where I will just agree with most auto journalist, as well as owners of all of the cars in both super and hyper category. And once again, which car seems to top the category as a practical supercar? Yep, a Porsche.

The owners and journalist seem to be unanimous in their view that the Porsche GT cars or the turbo, depending on your preference of a naturally aspirated engine or a turbo to help out, is the best practical supercar. How do the Germans do it?

In my opinion, as an ever increasing Porsche fan, it lies in their philosophy of "evolution, not revolution." The engineers at Porsche have been refining the attributes of the 911 for nearly sixty years - long before most of the other players were in business, and even the manufacturers that have been around that long have not been refining one model, they have been designing new models.

I, like many, have always found Italian cars stunningly beautiful. They are eye catching and down right sexy in their design. I have always felt the Porsche was "nice looking" but not beautiful. But having lived with my Porsche Boxster for over two years now, I have begun to see the true beauty in a Porsche. The design is organic.

The Porsche is timeless in design; it is eye catching, in a subtle way. A Porsche is generally not considered to be a flashy car design, many consider it almost boring in comparison to a Pagani or Lamborghini. In a stark comparison, I would say they are probably correct.

And I suppose that is why I keep growing more fond of the Porsche design; it's not a flashy, "look at me" design. It can go nearly unnoticed, especially when under full acceleration - you hardly see it as it disappears from your sight.

Now let me clarify. I had mentioned that a difference of a couple of hundreds of a seconds acceleration time has become a mute point. So when I say I admire the Porsche 911 "supercar" I am talking about any of models in the 911 lineup except those with a GT badging.

The GT Porsche's are phenomenal, but as I had mentioned, I have never desired a car that has a built in "look at me" factor. The non GT Porsche are the ones that best exemplify the quiet, beautiful, subtle design of a Porsche I prefer, a Targa model to be exact.

With the GT cars comes a front splitter, fender flares with air extractor vents, side skirts, a diffuser, and an enormous rear wing. When you throw in a Lizard Green paint job on top of those shark grilled extractors can you really call that a practical, subtle supercar?

But really, is there such thing as a practical/subtle supercar? It just seems to remain an oxymoron no matter how you look at it. But who wants practicality when you can have "super?" Look at super heros, are their designs and clothing practical? Certainly not, so why should a supercar be/look practical as it flies by faster than a speeding bullet, and is more powerful than a locomotive - Look! It's a bird. It's a plane. No! It's a Supercar!

7/5/19

"Five Year Old Cadillac's"

"Standard of the World" was the motto of Cadillac by the 1940s, with its triumphant V-8, 12, and 16 cylinder engines; it was the standard of performance. Its luxury was legendary. As a child in the 1960's Cadillac was still a car that drew awe and admiration for its luxurious appointments.

I can speak with authority on this matter; my mom had a 1966 Cadillac Fleetwood Brougham - what a car! The backseat, my domain, was huge! It came complete with footrests and fold down wooden tables. It was a level of luxury that rivaled a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud, a car I began to lust after seeing the front end of a Silver Cloud gliding past and the flank of the car coming to stop next to us at a red light when I was seven... what a car! Sorry, back to subject at hand.

At this time my grandfathers had a suicide-doored Lincoln and a Chrysler Imperial, both wonderful cars, but they could not compare to the near limousine status of moms Fleetwood. Admittedly, if I could own any of the cars today it would be that black on white Lincoln. And suddenly, I recall playing with/touching each of those hood ornaments, of course the Cadillac wore the more ornate of the bunch.

The backseat of that Cadillac is were I began my incessant drumming, as I would fold down the tables and drum along with the latest hits from the Beatles and Herman Hermits. I used to hunt from the backseat of that car; dad would find a flock of birds, I would press the button to lower the window, point my 410 gauge shotgun out of the window and shoot - yet another direct line that traces back to my lifelong tinnitus.

The lines of Cadillac from the late 50s and early 1960's was something to behold, and to be wary of. I remember playing at my friends house as a child, his mom had a 1959 Cadillac, the one with the chrome rimmed, shark finned rear fenders, with two bullet tail lights jutting out.

Run into one of those lights and you learn what "stabbing pain" is. Ask me how I know. Shame though, it truly is an example of era when having to "suffer for style" made sense. By 1965 the rear end had become a lot more flush... for afore mentioned reasons.

As I recall Cadillac's reputation went untarnished until somewhere in the mid 1970's, as did the reputation of all American cars. Cadillac's were becoming a symbol of American excess and disintegrating quality. I remember going to lunch my senior year in the Thompson twins moms Cadillac and not being impressed at all. And then came the release of the Cadillac Seville.

A compact Cadillac? Really? They described it as a "smaller-sized, premium Cadillac." It was also at the top of the price range of sedans. Cadillac desperately needed to start competing against the European Mercedes-Benz and BMW's and the Seville was the contender.

I personally liked the car and still find its design appealing. They say that Cadillac took the Seville's styling cues from the Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow; perhaps, but I am not even going to dignify that pearls-to-swine comparison with a "maybe so."

But on to old Cadillac's. By the late seventies and into the eighties buying a five year old or more Cadillac was like... well, I don't know what to compare it to - it was generally a dumb idea. Electrical components were "iffy" at best, the "riding on air suspension" had worn to a point more like a being in a mid-sized yacht on rough seas, you damn near needed Dramamine to ride in a Cadillac with worn suspension.

Then by 1980 the slant-backed Seville appeared on the scene, a good looking car in my opinion - and by 1988 doggoned if I didn't own a five year old Cadillac! Silver over black, just like my Bentley had, plush gray leather interior, most of the electronics were reliable, even the suspension was still semi-firm if not a little floatable.

I had very little trouble the first year of ownership. One morning I got in to go somewhere and when I put the car into gear the front end began jumping as though someone had installed low-rider hydraulics!

I brought it to my dad's mechanic, because you sure didn't go to a dealership; it turned out that the harmonic balancer had gone out. The cost to fix the car, on top of the other things that had "suddenly" started to deteriorate, like the silver paint, and more electronic components, convinced me to sell the car to the mechanic and move on. Lesson learned. Or so one would think, but remember, I am a slow learner.

Exit second wife, enter third wife. Tabitha drove an MG Midget we had restored, gorgeous black over tan combination; a very reliable car as well - you could rely on it to break down nearly every time you drove it.

My wife and I being in a band, and me having to pick up the other band members for practice, because they were too young to drive - whole other story - I decided we needed a bigger car as well, one that would seat four to five people comfortably. I decided a used Cadillac was just the ticket; a 1988 Sedan DeVille. By the way it was 1992, that Cadillac was approaching five years old...

By this time the Cadillac sedans had shrunken somewhat, the rear C-pillar had become thin, the lines flatter, the electronics more numerous, but the quality remained the same. It made a great car for band jaunts. It looked a bit strange with a thirty two year old man carting around a car load of seventeen year old girls, but again, another story that can never be told.

It was actually a nice riding car, looked good, ran good, and dependable. The only reason I can recall selling the car was to get a new Dodge Ram truck. Not a bad decision; the only flaw in selling the car was that I sold it to my sister; that's right, sold a five year old Cadillac to my sister - remember the slow learner thing I mentioned?

The car actually turned out to be a great car for my sister, it only had mechanical trouble once, unfortunately it never had another chance to break down again.

My sister was on the interstate and the car began to overheat, she called my other sister's husband for help, as they all lived in Baton Rouge and I lived elsewhere in my own world.

Gordon was a bit busy, as he always is, and he told her that it would okay if she drove it to the next exit a few miles up the road, just don't use the air conditioner, since it is already nearly one hundred degrees outside. So on his advice, she continued towards the next exit several miles up the road.

The car never made it to the next exit, instead it decided that no water combined with highway speeds and deep south summer time heat was just too much to bear. It gave up the ghost on Interstate 10.

Now this is one case where you just can't blame the five year old Cadillac; I can question the rational of Gordon, who is a mechanically inclined man, to advise my sister to even start a car with a temperature gauge buried in the red zone, let alone drive it. Of course it turned out, by general consensus that I sold her a "piece of crap car."

It seems as though between my parents experiences with Cadillac's and my own, we all should have learned some sort of cumulative lesson about buying a used Cadillac; it seems like we should have, but we didn't.

Somewhere around 2004 my dad bought a Cadillac from an old friend, it was his wife's car, they were both doctors, to say, the car had been maintained well. It was about five years old...

After about a year or so my mom came home with a brand new

1996 Toyota Camry, a light blue one, we still have the car, the paint is suffering from a spot of clear coat fade from living outside for the past thirteen years - but you know what? The electronics still work and the car rides smoothly.

7/6/19

"An Envie for a Vintage Light Ivory Mercedes Wagon"

I am a man of extremes. On an impulse I moved from the country to a condo in the city. I sold a Ducati to get a Harley Davidson cruiser. I have a Porsche Boxster, and now I have an envie or a vintage Mercedes station wagon; not just any wagon but a Light Ivory with a Palomino interior - the one that is almost yellow.

On top of that, I want a TD300, yep, a diesel, the W123 series. I suppose since turning sixty I feel as though I'm not in a hurry to get anywhere; if I haven't gotten there yet, guess I'm not going.

I don't know what it is about a Mercedes station wagon that attracts me; in general I find the classic Mercedes from 1970's and 1980's timelessly good looking. I suppose it epitomizes the German design I admire from that era: understated, smooth, and timeless. There is nothing gorgeous about German cars, but there is something beautiful in their design.

Usually I can trace my fetishes back to their origins, and we will stick to cars on this one, such as my desire to own a Bentley or Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud back to seven years old. The best I can do on the desire for the Light Ivory Mercedes is perhaps the television series "Hart to Hart" - that my girlfriend/future wife and I used to watch every Sunday night - they drove a wagon a few times, and I like the SL convertibles because of that show as well. I always wanted to grow up to look like Robert Wagner, I suppose owning a classic Mercedes wagon will have to suffice as "close enough."

A sedan in the same layout is something I would consider as well as the wagon. The other morning as I was walking I saw a sedan that matched my desire in the Publix parking lot. Upon closer inspection I noticed it was faded, but the paint would truly shine with a buffing. The interior was trashed from seats to carpets. There was a tool on the seat for charging an AC unit. It had 255,000 miles on the odometer.

I was going to leave a note on the car asking if they were interested in selling the car, but as I continued my walk I did a bit of math and came to the conclusion that there are plenty of these cars in good to great shape... that car was worth maybe \$3,500.00 in reality; and without a garage, a major interior restoration becomes challenging when you have to do the work outside in the land of "50% chance of showers, high in the upper nineties" - two days later I am still regretting not leaving the note.

A sedan is nice in it's own way, but the wagon has some deeper attraction for me. I do suppose I can trace the station wagon desire back to some deep rooted nostalgia of stations wagons of yore. Station wagons were the SUV's of my day, or rather, my childhood. I spent thousands of miles watching the world go by from the rear seat of a Ford station wagon - sitting backwards.

Often I have considered that perhaps many of my views of life that many consider "backwards to reality" may be rooted or were formed from riding backwards; perhaps psychologists figured that out about my generation, and thus, the SUV's of today have all the seats facing forward. Just a side thought.

Now I never just jump into things without some logical reasoning to back up my quests, no matter how lame or "backwards thinking" it may be. But in this case there is logic, Mercedes diesels last for hundreds of thousands of miles! They seem to be bullet proof.

Of course most of the ones for sale have hundreds of thousands of miles on them. Many have replacement engines with an average of 160,000 miles on a 2-300,000 mile chassis. Many have had extensive work done on them. And the irony in my logic of their lasting hundreds of thousands of miles, as I look at cars with hundreds of thousands of miles on their odometers is not completely lost on me.

I have thought that I have begun to desire a classic Mercedes wagon because I have turned sixty, and it does seem to be a cool classic car for an older man, especially one with an English Education degree, particularly for an unemployed English teacher. But I have actually desired one of these off and on for decades. Somewhere deep inside I am hoping for the "off" again part to kick in.

Perhaps the desire for a wagon is ingrained in our psyche dating back hundreds of years, particularly to the 1800's in America. To me the name "wagon" conjures up images of trail blazers; like the pioneers that followed The Oregon Trail. All of which I have thought were crazy to go blazing through Indian territory in search of the unknown.

The pioneering spirit of a wagon seems to carry through into the 1950's and 1960's when America's "wagons" were filled with dreamy eyes people that were trailblazing into the space age.

In my youth, and perpetual reruns, television was filled with Western shows, wagons full of families, gathering in a circle at night for safety. Wagons losing wheels, breaking on the trail, wagoneer's constantly working on them - Whoa doggie! Slipping into the negatives of traveling in an old wagon, no place for that in my fantasies that filter out reality.

I wonder if there is a Mercedes Wagon Club, and if the grand Poo-Bah is called the "Wagon Train Captain?" I wonder if when they meet they park their wagons in a circle around a campfire. I wonder where I even got such an idea, for I doubt the people that own vintage Mercedes wagons are longing for the wild west and the misery of primitive camping, because I know I sure the hell ain't.

Reasonable thinking tells me there are many Porsche Boxster's that have over two thousand miles on them, and mine only has 94,000 miles. I also would think that the miles on Porsche go by faster than the miles on a Mercedes diesel wagon - literally. Besides, a Porsche makes a great car for an older man as well.

Well, hopefully as I mentioned earlier, with any luck the desire for a wagon that "comes and goes" is nearing the "goes stage. Meanwhile, looking and researching the pros and cons of owning a classic Mercedes diesel station wagon helps pass the time.

So, as my search for a Mercedes wagon seems to already have begun, I suppose the call should go out as it did on the television series *Wagon Train* - "Wagons Ho!" ...or would that be an interesting name for a movie about a pimp that drives a Mercedes wagon - nah, we won't go there.

"Slot Cars"

Straighten the copper brushes. Put the pin in the slot. Pull the trigger and - ZZZZZZZZZZ - the 1:32 scale 1970 Porsche 917 instantly sped off towards the first turn. The only sound was the whirring/whining of its electric motor...

A vision of the future from the past? No, it was Slot Car racing! Slot cars were first sold by Lionel in 1912. It didn't take man long to harness the power of electricity and release it in the form of fun and profit.

As an eleven year old boy my friends and I spent countless hours at the local Slot Car track. Racing around the Le Mans styled track, flying off the track in turns when you came in too fast. Pick it up, put back on the track and in the slot, pull the trigger, and away you went; albeit with a bent part, or cracked body.

We were always amazed by the instant acceleration of the little cars. We used to say how we wished our 50cc motorcycles could take off like that!

"Dude! Could you imagine if we had instant speed like that brah?" We would wishfully shout.

Some of us were crafty and fitted larger electric motors into the little cars, which did little more than make them fly further when they lost traction. Today the cars have down force magnets that almost keep the little racers glued to the track.

Funny how tiny 1:32 scale electric powered cars with tremendous down force have grown to full scale automobiles and are capable of over 200 mph now.

Today I received my September 2019 issue of *Excellence Magazine*, it contains an article by Johannes Van Overbeek that talks about the next generation Porsche 718 being all electric. It also has pictures and a cut-away of the 2011 Boxster E. It also tells of a running prototype of the electric 718.

His viewpoint is excellent in his analogy of sports cars and cookies - it's the little things in the ingredients that make the difference. Johannes feels as though two main ingredients will be missing in an electric sports car - sound and shifting.

He addresses the slow demise of shifting towards double clutches and feels in time that sound won't be missed either. He believes the key to success of an electric sports car will a platform that heightens the senses in other areas; much as when we lose one of our five senses generally other ones are

heightened. I agree with him.

I find it ironic that what has been, and probably will continue to be missed most in sports cars is shifting. When driving my Boxster on country roads, for the most part, I like it when it is nearly silently cruising along, with only the sound of the wind.

I suppose that somehow having a hand in the powerband, more than sound, must connect people to the driving experience to a higher degree than just two hands on the wheel; which quickly becoming less rounded, un"wheelish" if you will. But shifting seems to be key. Of course Porsche has already started addressing the shifting issue, as one of their new EV cars is a two speed.

But the true irony for me lies in the fact that the only important shifting that will play a key in an electric sports cars future success is a paradigm shift - the irony. It will literally take, by definition, a "fundamental change in approach or underlying assumptions" to get the public on board.

As for the Porsche brand going electric, it only takes a quick glance backwards to not be surprised. In 1898, Ferdinand Porsche designed his first ever car and named it the Egger-Lohner electric vehicle, C.2 Phaeton model or "P1" for short. From the very beginning to the future, it's been coming, an electric Porsche sports car, perhaps time does travel in a circle.

Johannes feels that it will take time and a struggle for the sports car driver to accept the electric sports car, one without sound and shifting; I believe it may take less time than many people think. I think the saving grace of acceptance will boil down to one thing, which is already the amazing thing about all electric cars - acceleration. That's the smile maker.

In 2010 I would nail the throttle on my Ducati and brace my ass into the seat back and hold on. Nearly instantaneously my eyes were sucked into my head and my vision slightly blurred, and a huge grin would stretch across my face. That V-twin, bevel drive engine would roar gloriously past the legal speed limits within seconds. It was all about the acceleration, the sound was secondary.

In 2019 I press the accelerator in my 986 and speed off towards a turn. It always puts a grin on my face. I love the sound of the flat-six engine building revs, but it's about the acceleration.

In 1970, at eleven years old I had a Honda 50 with a megaphone and shifter. I was thrilled then by it's zero t

sixty time of sometime before lunch - of course the roar of the open megaphone pipe multiplied the thrill by noise factor. At eleven, it was about the acceleration, especially when compared to riding my bicycle.

Even as a child I appreciated the rising and falling of a combustion motor's revs as you worked through the gears be it a Honda 50, a Ducati, or a Porsche; but pressing the button on those slot cars and watching my car silently speeding towards a corner was a blast, and it put a smile on my face. It was about the acceleration.

I'm positive that being strapped into an electric powered sports car with instantaneous, silent, shiftless acceleration will not do the same thing as the combustion powered vehicles and the tiny slot car did - I have a sneaking feeling they will do it better, and put a bigger smile on my face.

I have begun to look forward to the day it happens, I even priced an electric motor swap in the event of an engine failure in my Porsche - because when you get down to the basics of the grin, it's not about sound. It's not about rowing through the gears - it's all about the acceleration!

Ultimately the lure of a sports car is the fun factor. Connecting fun, electricity, and profit was a formula companies like Lionel figured out quickly. Reaping huge profits in the sports car realm will be easy-peasy; it's nothing new, nothing's changed, ultimately, they're selling us smiles; and acceleration equals smiles. Big ones.

7/8/19

"Vanity of Vanities"

It's important to keep on a schedule with your daily life. It's vital to have goals. That's why before I went to bed last night I made it point to be up for 5:15 a.m. and leave the house by six and go on a drive, that and the fact the car has not moved in a week.

I find that having definitive plans and running on time are even more important when you are unemployed, such as myself. I say I am unemployed, but in reality I am a substitute teacher, but do not work during the summers - the big money I make - \$90.00 a day before taxes and gas - allows me to save up and enjoy a leisurely summer - just as though I were actually teaching again, only caveat being an income six times less than a "real teacher".

These thoughts have made me so glad I went back to college after Hurricane Katrina and spent \$40,000.00 for a degree in English Education, otherwise this fantastic opportunity would not be available to me; without the degree I would only be paid \$75.00 a day - see kids, an education pays!

Regardless of reasons, I have the summers free, which means my car does not have any reason to move, and nothing is worse for anything, shy of a person with a broken back or neck, than not moving, be it mechanical or physical. So I try and make my thirty mile mountain loop once a week, it's good for the car and great for my mind-set.

I've said it many times, but my vintage Porsche Boxster makes me smile every time I drive it with the top down and the radio off. This morning I glanced down at the tripometer and noticed it took exactly 1.3 Miles to bring a grin as big as a "jackass with a mouth full of briars" across my face; the country witticism is courtesy of my late dad.

As I made my way around the mountain I decided to come in the backside that leads through the idyllic town of Mt. Laurel, Alabama, featured in Southern Living magazine at one time for its quaint charm. It now suffers, like most of that area from explosive growth. As soon as I got within a few miles the traffic started to increase and the growth of new neighborhoods, grocery stores, and all supporting businesses were evident.

I have never pursued the "American Dream" of 2.3 kids, three bedroom house, quaint suburban living, and a hellacious commute to and from a mundane job for thirty years; so therefore I can be a snide, lonely, turd without a family, paid for real estate, or a retirement benefit.

With that said, I can find some fulfillment in not having chased that dream, which then allows me to find some bewilderment in how people fall prey to the "dream pitches" thrown at them.

The road into Mt. Laurel were littered with them. One neighborhood declared that if you lived there you would "live more fully." Neighborhood after neighborhood were named with romantic, perfect life, titles: Canterbury, Camelot - really? People buy this crap? Yes, yes they do, with bidding war prices to get in.

I continued on to the unnoticeable gravel pull-off/parking area that is the backside entrance to a three mile walk along a beautiful rapids-filled river, that meanders through fern grotto's, huge swaths of ancient pine trees, moss covered rocks. After a five minutes walk you can no longer hear the sound of the traffic rushing in pursuit of "The Dream."

I have written before about this drive and this walk, how wonderful both are, especially on a weekday morning. I have spent nearly forty years dancing to this, my tune, marching to a different drum beat, or whatever you want to call it. In the past it was motorcycle rides against traffic as I took off for a scenic blast through the country.

It all started when I was sixteen, on a crisp September morning as I rode a Suzuki GT380 towards my high school. I pondered how nice the day was, and how much I disliked school; I flew past the exit and continued on an hours journey on an elevated portion of Interstate 10 through/above the swamps of Louisiana. I have not changed my attitude in the forty-six years that have followed that September morning decision to "not participate" as is expected.

Thinking about these things I realized an important fact; being sixty years old, and retirement age bearing down fast, I totally accept that whatever the cost may be when the Piper comes-a-call'n soon for having "did it my way," will not only be worth the cost, but it will be a bargain.

The "retirement years" are short, most likely shorter for me with my chronic heart condition, in comparison to the past forty years. I have always been glad that I have lived while I'm alive and healthy enough to pursue body destroying activities. Every choice and decision comes with a cost; I feel as though I have gotten the better deal on living when weighed against the cost.

I have owned nice things, lived in nice homes, been married to wonderful women, had a few true friends, and have had more fun than ten people should have. The longer I find myself out of the normal pursuit of the American Dream, the more I am content with my choices. Most importantly, the more I realize

the timeless truth in King Solomon's words, "Vanity of vanities, it is all vanity."

7/12/19

"Flat Spots"

The other morning, on the drive that inspired the writings of July 8th, as I approached seventy miles per hour I felt the slightest of a shimmy in the steering wheel that continued up to about eighty mph. When I let go of the wheel it wobbled ever so slightly.

"Odd," I thought. It would be unlikely that tires would be out of balance or ball joints would wear while sitting in the driveway - then it dawned on me that it is most likely that my tires would have developed flat spots from sitting idle. That prompted me to "schedule" another drive into my already bust schedule.

Normally I have a flexible schedule; however, the day before my monthly round of magazines subscriptions had arrived: *Excellence, Architectural Digest, Road and Track, Autoweek*, on top of my daily reading from the *Bible* I now had plenty to do; I had hundreds of pages of new information to ingest. But I felt it of utmost importance to go run the Porsche at highway speeds and try to re-round the tires.

Luckily, just two blocks from my driveway is Highway 280, a super-smooth, undulating, four lane highway with a seventy mile per hour speed limit - and areas safe to tap the throttle a bit more. I decided several six mile turn around runs would be just the ticket, without a ticket.

So, off I go. First run east and there is the wobble in the seventies, oddly it lessens at 80 mph. I turn around. On the run back I hold the speed up - and go up to ninety since I know the area is clear. I stop to turn around and have to wait for traffic. Tires cooling.

Second run, a little better. Again hold the speed near eighty. Stop, wait for traffic, run back. The wobble lessens. Coast is clear I put it on 95 mph and hold it to get some heat in the tires. The wobble is all but gone.

On the last run, which has totaled a bit over thirty miles, the wobble is 99% gone. Enough evidence to prove that there is nothing wrong with the car except inactivity. I think to myself the car/I need a road trip. I realize in reality I have nowhere to go worthy of wasting money, a precious and rare commodity these days.

As I pull in the driveway, pleased with the ride and results, I ponder how similar the effects of inactivity are in both a car, a body, life, talents, or whatever. Things get out of "round" if you will, they get sluggish, "stove up" as old people used to say.

As I covered the car I thought about how in my own life, this past few months and past few years a lot of things have become "flat spotted" from non use. I realized how little I care about some of them.

After my dad passed away a little over two years ago I have had a difficult time writing. I think, "for what purpose? No one reads my writings, and when I too pass, to what avail is it all anyway?"

However, the little voice inside has all the while persistently kept whispering, "Write. Just write." After finally listening to it this summer, and setting a goal of reaching one hundred pages by summer's end, I have re-realized the reason I have always written. For me.

I have written since childhood. One of my earliest memories is beginning to write a book called "Space" when I was in second grade, brought on by my love/fascination of astronomy. Many times throughout the past forty years I can clearly see that I missed my calling. And it was a loud calling in the fall of 1979.

In 1979 I began writing a book, as yet unfinished, called "The Family Jewel" one night as our little group, Jay, Janna, Vickie, and Vickie (Cricket), sat around in a diner at 2 a.m. I shared the first pages and idea. Everyone loved the premise. The only class I was doing well in that semester was a Junior level Creative Writing class. But I really wanted money, and a Bentley by twenty-four; noway was my "calling" to be a suffering, starving writer.

Since then I have written thousands of pages that include: a large book of poetry, a children's audio series, three screen plays, a collection of short stories about the forty plus motorcycles I have owned, over one hundred songs...

And then there is music. Such a vital part of my life from thirty years old to forty-three; and then it began to trickle away, becoming non existent. I do keep the piano and guitars in storage just in case the desire returns; but I gave the drum set of twenty-five year away a couple of years back. I just no longer have the anger and angst to play drums. Music - flat spotted. I don't care.

Socializing with people. I always had quite a social life, big parties in my twenties, and especially when I played music and lived at Tantella Ranch. That tapered off once I moved back to New Orleans in 2004. Then Hurricane Katrina. Then college. Then way too many moves. Then taking care of aging parents. A once vibrant social life dwindling away. Now completely gone. Flat spotted. And I don't care.

I have never "needed" people, even as a child I would avoid

people at times so that I could be alone with myself - which has always been quite entertaining in itself. Mind you, I can be sociable, I'm a lot of fun, less since sobriety - but, I just don't need people. Social skills have become an area of my life, through the lack of use, has become non existent as well. Flat spotted. And I don't care.

Love related relationships. That diminished as said/predicted it would before my last wife left, many, many years ago. I said it then, and live up to my word now; if it didn't work with Tabitha I would give up, 'cause it could never be better. If I could not make it work between the three wives I have had, then it won't work with anyone. Tried off and on. Now, non existent. Flat spotted. And I don't care.

As I went inside from my drive I realized that the only area of these flat spots in my life that have haunted me to return to and use, is writing. Writing literally saved my life once when I was twenty five, but that is not a story I wish to delve into at this point.

[day later thought] I did wake up last night at 2 a.m. and thought that perhaps what is truly needed is to take my life and go run it up to high speeds again and get it back in round and balanced. Maybe I need to "drive" myself at speed for awhile and run out the flat spots that have developed.

It's a interesting thought, but the engine in the Porsche has been better maintained than my own; and for as much "soul" as I give the Porsche credit for having, it is but a mere inanimate object in the end. It can lay dead and be revived. I can't [end of latter day thought]

So I have returned to writing, for the sake of writing, for me, for the comfort of mind, for the expression of feelings. I find writing for these reasons fills the voids left by not being able to share my feelings with a person, a love. I find writing fills the void left by music's absence.

I find writing to be a type of magic. When I sit down and begin writing, I have no idea where the train of thought may go, where it may derail, or where it may stop - just like this story.

7/14/19

"Bentley's Future - A Sad Day For The Few, The Privileged"

As I walked towards my 1958 Bentley S1 the sun gleamed off the many layers of hand polished lacquer paint as it raced down the flowing lines from front to back - nearly eighteen feet of sculptured beauty. Many times as I approached my car I would say aloud, "Isn't she fine!"

Opening the door would draw the smell of Connolly leather, burl walnut wood, wool carpets, and lambskin rugs rushing together to create a scent that the best of perfumers have yet to create. It envelopes your senses. It whispers of luxury.

When I would sink into the plush seat, rub my feet through the inches thick lambs-wool carpeting, aim the tiny key into the ignition switch sunk into a forest of gleaming burl walnut, turn the key and listen to the huge straight six engine purr to life, I wrap my hand around the large, thin steering wheel and think, "What a symphony for my senses."

A 1958 Bentley S1, a car that was created for luxury without any thought to sustainable substances, without any thought to dwindling resources such as fossil fuel, leather, wood, and sheep. A car that was built for the privileged few at a time when the wealthy were given the opportunity to buy exclusivity.

That was then, this is now. The Bentley EXP 100 GT was revealed at Crew this month. All I can say is "Wow!" Welcome to the future. I have mixed feelings about the future of automobiles and the driving experience/involvement. But Bentley's future vision blows me away.

There are so many amazing things about the concept car, and yet so many things that make me feel simultaneously sad for the future and happy for my past, especially having owned a vintage Bentley.

Double sided news: when I'm around children teaching and have mixed news to share I ask, "Do you want the good news or the bad news first?" Inevitably they say, "The good news."

The good news is that the Bentley EXP 100 looks towards a future that uses sustainable resources in its production. Examples of this technology are very impressive and forward thinking. It's an extensive list.

Bentley's future include paint pigments derived from rice hulls, no more lacquers. The use a "leather-like" organic materials derived from wine making, no more leather. Copper infused, five thousand year old, salvaged river wood, no more

raping exotic woods from forests for your pleasure.

Since their inception Bentley's have been a performance oriented automobile. The future holds to that tradition in an impressive manner. Acceleration for the massive car allows it to rocket from a standstill to 62 mph in 2.5 seconds, under electric power only. That will ensure the "driver focused participation part" will bring grins to the faces of those pushing the accelerator.

Now this is where the future becomes really interesting, impressive, and spooky. The interior is designed to "cocoon" its occupants from the world through the use of artificial intelligence. The car can sense the owners mood and adjust everything to lift one's spirits. Question marks dancing across your thoughts?

As one drives, or is driven, because autonomous driving is part of all cars future, the Bentley monitors and records sounds, smells, appearances, and the general style of the road your on... still with me?

Now, let's suppose your caught in miserable, city traffic; the car can reload one of your favorite drives and replay it. The glass canopy and windows turn into a screen that projects the recorded scene, the sounds and smells are also piped into the cabin, perfectly recreating a better time, a better place, as you are transported to your destination - oblivious to the miserable outside world of commoners. That is weird science.

Does anyone remember when "scratch and sniff" was mind blowing technology?

The bad news about the future of Bentley ownership? Well, all the above, just flipped to another perspective. Let's look at the other side of the shiny new coin.

It seems as though Bentley perceives a future so bleak that the rich are not given the privilege of raping the world of precious resources, the best they can give them is a cocoon that recreates better drives, with sight, smells. Memories.

Owners will not be given the endless options of leathers, woods, and related upholsteries; but nothing suffers. No cows, sheep, nor trees need die to be immortalized in a Bentley interior.

Dinosaur remains may also rest in pieces, undistributed for fuel use, as the silent pur of a massive fossil fuel guzzling Bentley engine is replaced with the dead silence of a battery. I suppose only the Energizer Bunny will die, only to be resurrected by a quick recharging system.

I'm sure Bentley will offer several sound tracks that mimic the sounds of past combustion engines; a "Greatest Hits" album of Bentley engines if you will. Imagine recreating the sound of an old Bentley blower at full tilt, or perhaps the ticking of a mechanical clock from the Silver Cloud. Ah, the options that will be available to the privileged few.

Yes, Bentley has always been a forward thinking company, not only looking towards the future but actually creating it. Bentley has always offered its exclusive clientele an endless array of the finest, rarest materials to create their bespoke vehicle with. I sense an end to much of that.

But for future generations, I suppose what my grandmother used to say to me when I would ask how they ever lived in New Orleans without air-conditioning will be befitting. Her answer was always, "Honey, you can't miss that which you didn't have." And so I sense it shall be for Bentley owners of the future.

To me, it seems as though the future for the rich seems to be choosing from an array of recycled by-products from the masses, that Bentley owners strive to be above. Their exclusivity looks as though it will be wrapped in the refuse of products used to feed an overpopulated world.

Perhaps in all their future whiz-bang technology, Bentley will be able to recreated the ambiance, smell and sight of opening the door to, getting into, and driving a 1958 Bentley S1 - Nah, there is no chance of that, really; because with your eyes open you will not be able to escape the reality that you are living in the present, not the past.

But then again, perhaps one option they could offer is a set of virtual reality glasses that would completely alter your vision and perception of even walking up to your car, you could be seeing a Bentley from the past of your conjuring.

Think about that, the future may hold the ultimate leveling of the classes. A poor working stiff that can only purchase the latest "toaster model" Toyota would be able to put on his virtual reality glasses and gloves, and as far as their five senses could tell they would driving a 1968 Ferrari 365 GTB/4!

Oh, the future looks bright! The lyrics from Timbuk 3's hit song *The Future's So Bright* from 1986 come to mind, when they sang:

"Things are going great,
And they're only getting better . . .
The future's so bright, I gotta wear shades . . ."

7/19/18

"Polar Regions"

It's been a week of polar opposites when it comes to car releases this week. On one end of the scale the new Lotus Evija Electric Hypercar was released; absolutely stunning example of rolling sculpture; futuristic in design and execution of style and technology. I am very impressed with the car

And then at the opposite pole is the new, mid-engine C8 Corvette Stingray. Finally after sixty-six years a mid-engine Corvette has arrived. Those folks at Chevy are on the ball, taking only decades to catch on to the idea of putting the engine in the middle. But the car is wonderful from all reports.

The technology is not the only polar difference between the two cars - \$1.7 Million for one of the 130 units of the Lotus compared to a base price of under \$60K for the Stingray. But there are yet more vast differences between the cars. Performance.

The Evija has 1000 horsepower, and zooms to sixty in 2.5 seconds, while the Corvette has under 500 horsepower - which is adequate, as Porsche has proven over and over again, and it jets to sixty mph in under three seconds! Somehow those performance numbers don't seem to make you say, "Wow, for \$1.65 Million dollars more I can get to sixty a half second faster.

I agree with so many experienced owners and journalists on the horsepower debate; 1000 horsepower is uselessly ludicrous, unless your tracking a car you will never get near its potential. But if you can afford hypercars, why not, for they are not based in the real world, it's like marrying a super-model, 99% of the population will never own a hypercar, date a super-model, or let alone see either one in person.

Now for my opinion. As if it matters.

Watching Shmeel50's coverage of the unveiling of the new C8 Stingray, I have to say, the new Stingray looks great! The car can compete with many European marques in both performance and handling. And the looks are stunning.

Chevrolet got it together and made real sports cars. Starting under \$60K, they are a bargain in comparison to their European competitors; and they will be offered with right-hand drive.

All of the wonderful changes, mid-engine mounting, which as a Boxster owner I am a fan of, doesn't change my ambivalence

towards the Corvette at all. I suppose this may have impressed me had Chevrolet done this a long time ago.

I have never have been a Vette fan. Sure, they caught my eyes as a kid, my neighbor had a '58, red metal-flake, black leather button tuck interior that was stunning. The day he finished the car and wheeled it into the sunshine to take pictures, our little trap-mutt named, Angel saw an open car door and did what she always did - jumped in, but not before running through mud. Louis was livid.

Corvettes always seemed to be the "muscle-man" car when I was growing up, the "Pitts" drove them, and "Frats drove Fords. The Vette, like every other American muscle car was a straight line rocket that didn't handle for crap in a turn.

From Shmee's video it seems as though this still holds true. His video shots were littered with nearly obese Americans, and watching some squeeze themselves into the Vette was sad. And yes, "muscle-men" abounded, only much older. Seems the demographics for a Vette have not changed.

Taking the muscle-man Pitt out of the picture and replacing it with female drivers/owners did not ease my dislike of Corvettes. The Thompson twins in my high school class both had new Corvettes for their seventeenth birthdays, a black one and a white one.

It was a sad day when one of the twins wrecked her Vette; she cracked the front spoiler backing out of the parking lot, and nothing short of a new Corvette would do, to which daddy lovingly obliged.

Seems as though I have deep rooted childhood, superimposed - by a Ford family - feelings, and teenage grudges ingrained in my feelings toward a Vette. Oh well, Freud would be proud that I surmised that.

As far as my feelings toward the Lotus Evija Hypercar? I am biased once again. I have always been a fan of British cars and motorcycles. Understated elegance and beauty. Never anything hung on the vehicles that wasn't necessary. Nothing gaudy, over the top about British design. Stoic some say. Beautiful I say.

If I had \$1.7 million in expendable funds saying "spend me," I would be putting my name on the list to own one of these cars. Art. The car is art. The lines are simply sensuous.

One journalist described the Venturi vent tunnels in the rear as having been carved by a glacier; and he is dead-on in that analogy. The flow of the curves and vents do look like the ice carved by a glacier; they are so organic.

The tech on the car would make Buck Rogers envious, and the curves are going to make J-Lo jealous. One thousand horsepower on demand, for only \$1.7 million dollars, that is going to make one hundred and thirty people in the world feel very happy. Exclusivity is yet another polarizing feature of the Lotus Evija Hypercar and the Corvette Stingray. A limited few for a few, and many for the masses.

These are exciting days we live in, in so many ways. This week has made me thankful that I didn't die young, to be witness to where cars have been, to where they are, and are going. It has taken 116 years since Ford first mass produced automobiles to get to the era of hypercars such as the Lotus Evija.

It has taken over six decades for Chevrolet to catch up to the mid-engine concept; and within days of the C8's release on July 18th 2019, we will celebrate fifty years since the USA was the first to have a man walk on the moon! And getting to the moon took less than a decade. God bless America.

Note: Two days and many videos later - I want a new Stingray!

7/21/19

"Alcantara, the New Velour ... And Other Gripes"

This morning I got trapped by another one of those internet "slide-shows," this one was about "thirty things that confound millinials in older cars" - "older" being from the 1980's or so. One item they said that is confounding to the younger generation is velour interiors. Really, that one surprised me; isn't Alcantara just the new velour?

The list of confounding things was interesting and understandable for the most part. I can see how younger drivers would be confused about an actual key that you must insert into an ignition and turn. I can see where a parking brake that you either have to pull the handle or step on a pedal in the pedal box area would be confusing.

When I went to move my sister's new Mercedes I could not figure out how to start the car. Then I could not figure out how to get the electronic gearbox into reverse. Then I fumbled on parking brake release; things younger drivers - or people who drive new cars - intuitively know. I felt like an idiot. Remember, I drive a 1997 Porsche Boxster - real key, manual transmission, fly-off hand brake.

One of my favorite "older" items on the list was a floor mounted high beam switch button that you stepped on; those still make sense to me. Door locks were another amusing item; I can see where if you don't understand using an actual key this could be confusing.

One thing on the list that yanked my crank was manual roll-up windows. That is something I wish I had in my Porsche, for several reasons. Porsche's as they age seem to have window regulator issues, micro-switch problems, window motors that fail.

How hard is it to hand crank a window? Being from Louisiana where most roads are either over or alongside bodies of murky water, I often wondered how this works when you lose electricity to the windows... just a thought, or paranoia.

And now that we have had an "all's fair according to what you're used to" moment, let me return to the title of this rant. The article/slide-show listed velour upholstery as something the younger generation will/do find confounding, unusual, perplexing.

This was the point in the article that bewildered me, and I had to scratch my head and ask, "Why? Do they think it is some type of unusual alcantara?"

The other items causing younger people confusion, I get; a

soft fabric that is overused, and for the most part, gaudy, and shows wear badly, should that be perplexing? After all, what is the real difference between alcantara and velour anyway? Glad I asked.

Here is the difference in a nutshell: velour is a synthetic velvet - it cuts out the middle man, the silk worm. Alcantara is a synthetic suede - it cuts out the middle man, the cow.

Velour is a plush, knitted fabric similar to feel to velvet. There was also a velour leather-type fabric. Velour became hugely popular in the 1970's. It was used on everything: furniture, clothes, and especially overused in car interiors during the 1970s and 80s. When it wears down from use it becomes crushed, flat, dull, and ugly. Velour is usually made from cotton or polyester. Remember the word polyester.

Alcantara was developed in the 1970s as a durable synthetic alternative to animal products - i.e. Leather/suede. It is used on everything: clothes, furniture, and especially overused in car interiors thus far in the 21st century. When it wears down from use it becomes, knappy, shiny, dull, and ugly. Pretty much the other end of ugly of worn velour. Alcantara is composed of about 68% polyester and 32% polyurethane.

The two fabrics seem to have a lot in common to me, besides polyester, and one becomes dull and the other shiny when worn out. However, there is one huge difference between the two products, and that difference is who gets to make it, who gets to sell it - who keeps the profits.

Alcantara is a patented product, the material is named after the company Alcantara SpA, who holds the reigns with a registered trademark. The material was developed in the early 1970s by scientist, Miyoshi Okamoto. It was first used in Audi car interiors in 1978.

The timeline from invention to its dominance in the fabric market is interesting. You can go to:
<https://www.alcantara.com/en/story/2/index.do>
 To explore it in detail. Bottom line - alcantara is a gold mine that shares it's profits only with he who manufactures it, and he who distributes it. By eliminating the cow, Dr. Okamoto created a new breed of cow - the "cash cow."

So with these facts and similarities in mind, my question is: "In thirty years from now will young drivers be confounded by an alcantara interior as young drivers today are befuddled by velour?" Or worse, in thirty years will car interior use a mix of both velour and alcantara?

Hum... perhaps I should get busy inventing a new fabric, I'll call it Velourcantara! Now that would be confounding!

7/30/19

"A Daily Driver: An Appliance or a Tool?"

A car that is considered a "daily driver" is a vehicle that in essence gets you from point A to point B, for most of the world point A is home, point B is work. Inarguably, a daily driver is used to complete a specific task; therefore, we can consider and call a daily driver vehicle by the most unflattering of terms - an appliance.

Before you jump into a defensive mode consider the definition of an appliance. An "appliance" is defined as: a device or piece of equipment designed to perform a specific task, typically a domestic one.

When told this, many people immediately try to reach a middle ground with a better sound than "appliance," and decide a daily driver is a "tool." Once again, let's look at the definition. The definition of a "tool" is: a device or implement, especially one held in the hand, used to carry out a particular function.

We do not hold a car in our hand, with the exception of the steering wheel, which is also quickly diminishing as a necessity; but we do use the car to perform a specific task - so, a daily driver is nothing more than an appliance.

If you drive a three million dollar Bugatti to work or a thirteen thousand dollar Nissan Versa, either way, you are driving an appliance. Let that ugly truth sink in.

Now mind you, if we compare appliances of all kinds then there is a marked difference between two that perform the same task. Let's say you need an appliance that makes coffee. There is the \$6,000.00 Jura GIGA 6, or the \$9.00 Mainstays Coffee maker, both are quite capable of performing the task of making you a cup of coffee; one probably does it with more panache than the other.

What makes a Bugatti worth millions? If you're a car person you already know. What makes a Jura GIGA 6 coffee maker worth \$6K? Well, according to the description on Amazon which states the following.

Constructed using top quality materials and with Swiss precision, the GIGA 6 features clear design with radiate power and expertise. The impressive quality of this automatic coffee machine is emphasized by the solid front section made of 3 mm-thick aluminum and the substantial aroma preservation cover made of chrome-plated, die-cast zinc (www.amazon.com).

Not to mention the Jura has wireless connectivity, a full

color, 4.3 inch, touchscreen display screen, and a Blue Crystal Rotary Switch - whatever that is.

On the other hand the Mainstays is made out of plastic and features a genuine glass pot. Being from New Orleans, where we love our coffee, I can guarantee this; put crappy coffee in either appliance and you will get a crappy cup of coffee. Put in quality coffee, and you will get a good cup of coffee.

Enough about coffee makers; I believe you get the point of appliances. Back to daily drivers as an appliance. The reason many, I won't say most, people cringe at the thought of their car being cauterized as an appliance is because auto enthusiasts have an emotional attachment to their cars, few people have that with their washing machine and dryer.

We spend time in our cars, it becomes an extension of ourselves, a personal environment; and for many people it is their only place for solitude. An automobile is mobility, freedom, and the dozens of other cliches used throughout the past one hundred plus years to express our love/attachment to our cars.

I believe the most obvious sign of attachment people have with their cars, none being more obvious than the fact that many people name their cars. When is the last time you or someone you know named their toaster or iron?

Even referring to a car as a "daily driver" somehow rings of the dreadful connotation that it is nothing more than a beast of burden, and as such, people have always been more fond of their horses when they were "daily riders" than of their cows, mules, or oxen.

Given the fact that I have loved many cars that I have owned, in particular the Bentley; and that I have lovingly cared for nearly all of my automobiles, I too would have found it abrasive had someone called my Bentley an appliance.

I was offended when my parents used to remind me that the Bentley was, "just a car." My parents were the first people I knew that considered automobiles and trucks inanimate appliances, something to do a job, they were generally unwashed and dirty - blasphemy to me.

I must admit however, I too considered all of the trucks I have owned as "business tools", nothing more than soulless and replaceable whenever they needed a set of tires. I have never liked trucks.

So, whether it be a Bugatti or a Toyota, a Jura or a Mainstays, if you use it to perform a certain task on a near daily basis - it's an appliance, nothing more.

8/1/19

"A Twenty Three Year Old Porsche 986 as a Daily Driver"

I could have just stopped the title at "A Twenty Three Year Old Porsche," but a Porsche 986 as a daily driver raises the level of being risky, daring, or brave to the heights of "your nuts!"

Without a dissertation on the whoa's of the 986 model I will simply recap the general populous feeling that it is considered a ticking time bomb to your finances. A few key words: intermediate shaft bearing (IMS), rear main seal (RMS), air oil separator (AOS), electrical control unit (ECU), water pump failure, cylinder bore score - the list is endless, true, and highly exaggerated.

For over two years I have driven a first year, 1997, Porsche 986 Boxster as a daily driver; am I crazy, or is it a reasonable risk?

First I think we should consider what most people need, want, or require of/in a car that they will be using as their main transportation, or a daily driver. There are many common attributes that people seek in a daily driven car.

Most importantly, people need reliability, a car needs to get you to point B - otherwise it is useless in it's function. It needs to be comfortable and offer modern amenities for many; bluetooth, hands-free telephone use - personally, I think there should be no telephone use while driving, but no one asked me. Connectivity to their favorite music stations/providers, for most cars do not produce a sonorous sound-track on their own.

Ease or lack of maintenance is important, and nice in any case. Most cars today go for 100K miles before you need to do anything. Just put gas in and go. The ability to carry lots of possessions is important, hence the rise of the SUV - which is about the only reason I can fathom its popularity.

Ease of driveability, in other words, get in, push the start button, push the gear select button, turn on nannies, and head off to your destination with the least amount of driver involvement necessary.

These desirable traits have become ubiquitous among drivers, which means that a manual transmission is simply otiose in their thinking. All of the reasons listed are, for the most part, exactly why I drive a classic, twenty-three year old sports car.

Drivers who are enthusiasts, and not wealthy, buy a car for the fun and thrills it offers the driver; driver engagement

is a necessity, not an avoidance. Enthusiast want a car that has soul, offers fun, strikes an emotional chord of some type, be it nostalgia, thrills, style - something that raises your adrenalin level rather than a car that seems to pump lithium into the cabin.

Now let me explain driving a classic Porsche as a daily driver; the caveat being that I drive approximately 8K miles per year. The first key for me was to purchase a well maintained, often-driven car. Mine had 76K miles on the clock when I bought it. People assume a low mileage classic is better than one with miles on the odometer; not necessarily true; cars that sit, rot. So do people.

Is it fun? Not always, having a manual transmission in stop and go traffic sucks, thankfully my commute has been fifty miles of mountain roads with no stops. If I had a traffic filled commute I would buy a classic sports car with paddle shifter's.

As for reliability, thus far in two and a half years and 16K miles the car has not let me down once. Again, I credit this to the car haven been a one owner, well maintained, spiritedly driven car.

I differ from most drivers because I do not want any modern conveniences. I seldom play the radio, the car has a built in symphony behind my seat, a Porsche flat-six engine. I don't like telephones, I don't own a smart phone, I do not need connectivity, with the exception to my being connected to the car.

I don't have lane assist, good thing as I often run apexes in a straight line, which requires using both lanes on a two lane mountain road. This feature drove me crazy when I recently had to drive a GMC SUV, every minor variance from a straight line had Nanny pulling the wheel in my hands.

Fuel economy seems be a vacillating desire amongst American's, it seems to ebb and flow depending on the price of fuel. Most new cars and SUV's actually get decent fuel economy - because they have to. My old car gets an average of 24 m.p.g., a little less with my foot deeper into the accelerator; and it can get near thirty on the highway! But "smiles per mile" - I win, hands down!

Generally, driving is a boring, mundane task on a commuter car; once again I am fortunate that my commute is on one of my favorite roads that I have ever driven. However, as a point, my trip to Leeds takes on an entirely different vibe when I drive my mom's Camry. Even though it's a 1996 Camry, lacking any modern amenities, compared to the Porsche, the drive is simply boring, nearly nonexistent. I look up thirty minutes later and I have arrived.

I suppose one of the things that turns many people off of driving a classic car is the pampering required. Admittedly it takes more effort, especially if you do not have a garage, to keep an older car in nice shape. The Boxster, being a convertible, with an ECU located in the lowest part of the interior - under the front seat, requires more attention to making sure water drains and seals are clear and pliable. This isn't an issue with a hardtop car, which I do have the hardtop option for the winter.

Keeping the sun away from a leather interior requires always covering the windows. Stopping the UV rays from killing the paint means a cover is required as often as possible. My routine whenever I am going to be leaving the car parked for extended hours - rain or shine - is: solar reflective shades in all of the windows, towel over rear plastic window, then a half-top cover over convertible top, and finally a full cover over the car. Too much trouble? It's a labor of love, or being enslaved by a possession - you decide, because I can't.

Another note on reliability; my niece, brother-in-law(s), and friend, as well as my neighbor have all had issues with new cars that have had their vehicles sitting in a shop more than mine over the last few years, in particular my neighbors Mustang California edition with the Coyote engine.

I did my homework going into the pros and cons of using a classic car as a daily driver. I took into account the possibility and accepted the possibility of a financial catastrophe, in particular to the Porsche 986. At the bottom line, even if an engine failure occurred and cost \$10K, I would then have \$10K less into a car with soul, and a new engine, than I did in the Nissan 370Z I sold to get the Porsche. Risk and reward.

Has it been worth it? To me, yes. I have enjoyed the pleasure of top-down driving in a classic Porsche for over two years now. Not once has it failed to bring a smile to my face. Not once have I regretted it. I have done my due diligence on general maintenance, thankfully with projects I could do myself.

Over a year ago I bought \$1,400.00 worth of parts: waterpump, plugs, coil packs, oil separator, and a front engine mount. I have replaced the brake discs and pads, the transmission mounts, horns, hood struts, and the rubber horn bushings; the rest of the parts have yet to even given a hint of needing replacement. I will replace the other items later this year as I approach 100K miles - seems wise, and fair.

The total cash outlay, including shipping, tax, tools, unused parts, maintenance, and other frivolous items is close to thirteen thousand dollars. The thrill and joy of driving the

car doesn't seem to diminish. The best news is: the longer I own and drive the little Porsche, and divide the total costs by months owned, the less expensive it is to own and enjoy.

8/14/19

"The Finest Materials Available"

As I perused my new issue of *Autoweek* this morning I read what I thought was an article - which turned out to be an advertisement - for the new KIA Telluride SUV. Ms. Susan Woo, a senior designer, told us that since the new Telluride is KIA's flagship SUV they used "some of the finest materials available" in the interior. The materials that they listed made me realize that "finest" is a subjective adjective.

They boasted that it has, "Exquisite available napa leather trim - double stitched, quilted, perforated, and extra-padded." However, the rest of the seat is covered in SOFINO, a synthetic leather material that in Ms. Woo's opinion, "looks and feels more like leather than most automotive leathers." Say what? Ms. Woo is also a talented spin doctor.

What really made me smile was the description of some of the other fine materials used in the cabin. Ms. Woo went on to claim that there was stunning simulated wood veneers with delicate graining. Not to be wowed by that alone they also used simulated metal trims inspired by copper.

They concluded with letting us know they went to all of this thought and trouble so that when people open the door of the Telluride they will be "almost shocked at the richness." I suppose almost is close enough. I realized that the finest materials available meant at a price point.

I was impressed by the detail of thought that went into making the center console grab handles so prominent that when one opens the door they see those first and think, "OK, we're off on an adventure." In reality, most owners "adventure" will be to work, dropping kids off at school, to the soccer fields, and the shopping center.

The advertisement went on to herald the fact that the Telluride is "positively brimming with advanced driver assist technology," which is also standard in many cars manufactured today. The Telluride has highway driver assist, head-up display, a warning light to make sure you don't forget about your children in the backseat, and lots of storage bins in the console to put all of your unnecessary crap. But the one I love the most is the a driver awareness monitor.

All of these "standard features" prove to me that people have become so distracted in life that they can't stay in a lane, can't glance at dials, and have become so scatter brained that a computer has to monitor their attention span.

Personally, I believe these items should be offered as options that filter out stupid; anyone who chooses them

should automatically have their drivers license revoked.

This fake article - I mean ad - made me smile, it reminded me of when I was looking at a new Impala in 2005. As the young salesman pointed out the features of the interior he ran his hand along the front of the dash panel and told me with great pride that, "This is genuine faux burl walnut wood."

"Really?" I said, in awe. "Where do they grow faux burl walnut trees?" I inquired.

"Somewhere up north." He replied.

"Oh." I said, raising my eyebrows in amazement.

For just a moment let us review how Rolls-Royce defines the finest materials available: flawless leather from vegan cows raised in climates without biting insects and barbed wire to mangle their hides. Many cows sacrifice their lives for your seating pleasure.

Like wood? Then pick any type of exotic wood you can imagine, including wood that is thousands of years old - and if you have the cash, probably woods that are extinct. These veneers are hand cut, layered, polished, and mirror matched; they also have very fine grains, I might add.

The floors require many sheep to go to the sheering pen to offer their wool for carpets. Several lambs lay down their lives so that they may be immortalized in lambs-wool throw rugs on the floor of a Rolls-Royce to protect those wool carpets; and they feel so nice under your feet.

KIA may not strip metal ores from the earth for your driving pleasure, but Rolls-Royce will rape off millions of pounds of soil to acquire exotic metals for your viewing and tactile pleasure. But then again, I suppose Rolls-Royce does not have "customers" but rather a Coterie of like minded consumers.

And while many manufacturers have concentrated on saving the earths fossil fuels, Rolls-Royce will gladly provide your foot access to twelve cylinders to fill and explode dinosaur remains in. Rolls-Royce obviously does not adhere to the philosophy of Hippocrates when he said, "Everything in excess is opposed to nature."

Yes, I think "the finest materials available" is an open ended statement; however, my sister has been waiting for over six weeks for her new KIA Telluride to arrive. Soon I shall draw my own conclusion. One thing is for sure, I can't wait to open the passenger door, see the massive grab-handle, and think to myself, "OK, we're off on an adventure."

But that comes with a caveat, whether it be a new KIA

Telluride or a 1974 Toyota Corolla, riding in a car with my sister behind the wheel in Baton Rouge traffic is why I would say, "OK, we're off on an adventure," - that and three "Hail Mary's" thrown in for safety.

9/2/19

"Commuter Pod"

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. - Proverbs 16:18

I have always believed the bible emphatically, which should have been enough of a heads up to me that a fall was coming. For years, and throughout these earlier written stories, I have been haughtily boasting about my morning drive to Leeds, AL through the twisty mountain roads, with no traffic, top down; basically a mellifluous yet spirited ride in the Porsche. I never could call it a commute because it was my favorite road to drive.

Yep, for years I would smile at my good fortune that even though I was having to work I was having a wonderful drive, not participating in the mundane, inane ritual of commuter traffic. That was then, this is now.

This year I decided to start working with another school system that pays more, slightly shorter miles to schools, and a lot more work. The downside, and I mean downside clear to hell, is that many of the schools can only be accessed by driving two of the worst commuters roads in Birmingham, AL, Highway 280 and I-459.

Depending on the day, weather, and time, it takes anywhere between forty minutes and one hour and ten minutes to travel twenty-one miles. Mornings on 280 are always stop and go, and thirty minutes to go eleven miles. Friday evenings on I-459, stop and go. Thankfully the weather has been a pleasant 95 to 102 degrees in the afternoons. Nope, I'm not smiling now.

Sounds like the exact type of commute that a twenty-three year old Porsche with a standard transmission would be ideal for. I have taken the Porsche several times into the hellacious stop and go routes; and actually, it does fine. I don't like that the temperature gauge rises a bit further to the right than it ever has; and being sandwiched between two eighteen wheelers and looking up to their lug nuts is a comforting view - at least death would be instantaneous.

Well, lucky me, as usual - and I don't want to brag nor blow my horn here, but my mom no longer drives her 2006 Toyota Camry, and like any older car, it needs to be driven; so I have been using it to make the traffic jammed commutes to many of the schools. And now I understand why such cars are built.

The Camry is comfortable, automatic, light steering, gets unreal gas mileage - heck, I can turn the air-conditioner on high/recirculate, turn up the jazz station, take off my

shoes, adjust my lumbar support, tuck my left leg under my butt yoga style and become Zen-like-one with the traffic, all in the comfort of my own little commuter pod, and the temperature gauge never moves past its comfort zone; and it seems as though I never move more than fifteen feet in five minutes.

Thankfully, of late, I have been given the gift of patience and realize that the ranting and raving that once was my norm when I did get stuck in traffic, only changes my blood pressure, and nothing else.

I now can also clearly see that traffic is another place where the socioeconomic classes converge, much like the street level of New York. No matter your position in life and society, if you must commute, the classes converge in traffic.

Which led me to the thoughts that just like every other differential aspect of the various social classes, they commute in a manner befitting their financial position. The substitute teacher - me - moves along in a decades old Camry suffering from clear-coat cancer and total lack of style and soul.

Glance around the herd and you see the more successful and productive members of society heading to their destinations in cars that work their way up the social ladder: Lexus, Mercedes, BMW, Jaguar, Aston-Martin, and the occasional Rolls-Royce - and might I add, most of these are indistinguishable SUV's except for their badging.

On my last Friday afternoon, one hour plus commute I was "humming" along in my Zen-pod looking at the faces of other commuters, most were lifeless or stressed. I imagined their lives, the routine of their mornings before they leave for work, the mundane jobs they go to, the evening routine when they get home and having to deal with spouses, children, and usually unfinished work.

I cringed at the thought of spending decades in such a situation and this type of traffic - day-in, day-out. I found it depressing in its own way. I found the thought of such a life that requires you to live in such a routine for thirty years in order to "survive" just so you can die to be inane.

Slowly a smile came across my face as I began mentally reviewing my day. I awoke at 4:15 a.m., undisturbed, had coffee, went for a walk under the stars as a crescent moon was rising and dawn was emerging in the lower eastern sky. I drove the back roads to the school, a smooth flow, albeit on roads drowning in a sea of suburban strip malls.

My job that day consisted of subbing for a second grade class

in a wonderful school. The classroom was serene with trees outside the windows. I was surrounded by the unbridled creativity of children.

I flew around the room with my arms outstretched like an airplane. We went to an assembly where the kids danced and cheered. After it all we went to the playground "garden" where we had a Popsicle and shared what the coolest birthday presents we ever got were - I won, two motorcycles for my eleventh birthday, and then I played hop-scotch with some of the kids.

I smiled as I thought about how far from reality my life is from that of most sixty year old men. And to think I used to have to take drugs to heighten the mundane harness of reality.

I looked around me at the people stuck in the "commute" part of our lives. I turned up the jazz, adjusted my left foot beneath my thigh and smiled as I said aloud, "Hummmmm - I am one with the traffic..."

9/10/19

"Addendum to Commuter Pod"

Nope, no Zen in a commute - no way, no how. It sucks.

9/29/19

"A Ten Dollar Car"

"Prepare for a red light! All hands on deck!" I yelled to my high school comrades. They all set their Miller Ponies on the seats and prepared for action. I grabbed a thick towel, Greg had a screwdriver, and Willis prepared to flag traffic.

We rolled up to the red light, lurched to a stop as some of the drum brakes did a portion of their job. Within seconds the car, and nearby cars, were engulfed in a thick, blue, burnt oil fog so thick you could barley see the hood... and then it happened; we heard a small popping sound, followed by flames emitting from the cracks of the hood seams.

"Fire in the hole." I yelled.

We all spang into action. I jumped out with my towel, untied the hood rope, opened the hood - the light turned green - Willis went into action flagging rear, oncoming traffic around us; I quickly smothered the small fire around the open carburetor and jumped back in and pumped the accelerator pedal. Greg jumped the solenoid with the screwdriver, the car roared into life and began its fumigation process all over. Everyone jumped back in, grabbed their beers, and in a howl of laughter the party was in motion again.

Bruce Springsteen once sang, "And have a party in your pink Cadillac." Well, he ain't got a clue about a party in a pink car. This was no Cadillac, it was a faded pink, 1963 Ford Falcon station wagon that my dad had bought from my Uncle Bobbie for \$10.00. Yeah, a ten dollar car.

This car was no ordinary twelve year old car, it had near magical powers, it lured you inside like a barker at a strip club on Bourbon Street, only the beer inside the Ford was colder. The rich kids at my high school would pay me money to ride in it, a "cover charge" if you will.

Take a visual tour with me. Faded pink exterior with rusted highlights along - well everywhere. Four may-pop, completely bald tires - rounded slicks with thumb sized wear marks that you could see air escaping from. A bright yellow nylon rope, that could be seen in the oil fog, held the hood and rear door closed, most of the time.

The edges of the hood and fender lines were singed with bubbled paint and black-sooty burn marks from the fires that frequently erupted when two or more of the drum brakes decided to work and bring the car to a lurching halt, which caused fuel to splash out of the open carburetor onto the hot engine or exposed electrical wires.

Open the drivers door and step in, rest your foot on the

piece of wood that was the drivers floorboard, be careful how you move your knees around the hanging, bare wires below the dash. No ignition key, just a hole. None of the gauges worked, occasionally the speedometer would jump around for a moment.

The passenger and rear floorboards consisted of approximately two inches of rust rimmed sheet metal, the only solid place to rest your feet were on the transmission hump and the side sills just below the doors. It was a straight drop to the ground - perfect for disposing of empty Miller Pony bottles - just let em drop like bombs.

The starting procedure consisted of: pump the accelerator to get fuel in the carb, raise the hood, take a screwdriver and jump the two poles on the solenoid, take a deep breath, make your way through the oil fog, and get in. You are now ready to party.

The rear cargo area was strangely spared from a complete rust out like the other sections of the interior; this allowed a safe place to keep the essential fluids that I carried: extra gas, because you never knew how much you had in the tank, and you never wanted a full tank, two gallons of used motor oil, as the car got about the same miles per gallon on oil consumption as it did gas consumption and leakage, and a few gallons of water, because the Ford had a tendency to run hot - no fire pun intended.

Now the magical thing about this car was that everyone loved to ride in it. It was 1975, I was sixteen, attended a private school laden with rich kids that drove brand new Dodge Love Vans, Corvettes and the like, but they all wanted to party in the "Pink Station Wagon;" even my girlfriend would ride in this thing without shame. Of course back then if you were a teenager and mobile, no matter the mode of mobility, life was good.

I came to believe the loss of pride and shame was caused by the oil smoke and gas fumes that were ever present in and around the car. At times I do think the smoke and fumes made riding in the Pink Station Wagon an intoxicating experience. If not that then the "smoke" and beer sure did!

When you drove the car the cloud of burnt oil was huge, so thick at red lights for a moment you literally could not see the car next to you. It burned over a gallon of oil nearly every one hundred miles; I never understood how the spark plugs did not foul out constantly, only occasionally.

Some of the drum brakes worked, one of the rear ones never worked. You planned stops way ahead of time, and depending on which one of the front ones grabbed the hardest you had to countersteer to kind of keep a straight path. Most stops came

with an abrupt lurching, and because of this gas would splashed out of the carburetor.

Every third red light or so you could expect a small fire to erupt in the engine compartment, nothing serious, nothing a thick towel couldn't extinguish - I quickly leaned to keep extra towel/rags on hand after one gas soaked towel erupted into a ball of fire. The term "Chinese Fire Drill" took on a whole new, more literal meaning in the old Ford.

But the car was know for its oil smoke, it billowed; this car had a smoke screen that would make James Bond jealous. A rusted out muffler gave plenty of notice to all that the car was coming. I never quite figured out why the police never once bothered to at least harass us.

However, it was the mid 1970s, many cars burned oil, open header hot rods were plentiful on the roads; however, the best I figured was they didn't see us in the smoke, just didn't want to bother with the excessive paperwork, or out of pure pity ignored us. Either way it worked out well as a party wagon - who could smell anything besides burnt oil and gasoline/

One time I had my sisters miniature collie dog, Jim Dandy, with us in the car - why? Who knows, he always seemed to be in my cars. This breed of dog is notoriously nervous and rambunctious, which made him hard to hold. Willis tried, but Jim Dandy got loose and went to jump down... Willis just did grab him behind his front legs; meanwhile his rear half was in semi-contact with the ground hanging through the open hole in the floor, his rear legs pedalling like Fred Flintstone as Willis held onto him.

My friends and I went everywhere in the Pink Station Wagon, a rolling party of intoxicating, or intoxicated, laughter. About the only place we didn't go twice was up Lakeshore Drive on a Saturday night.

Lakeshore Drive was the quintessential 1970s cruising strip in New Orleans, thousands of people in stop and go, mostly stop, traffic. Here, the car was too much, people became feisty and combative. After three fires I realized the best rides were those that kept the car in motion.

I only had this car perhaps eight months, tops. It finally gave up the ghost, or burnt to a crisp, can't remember its definitive demise. It was a wreck, it was a fire trap, it was dangerous, and most of all, it was a blast!

The Pink Station Wagon was rolling proof that some of the best times in life are free - well, maybe they will cost you ten dollars. Like I said, Springsteen ain't got a clue what a party in a pink car is really all about.

Tuesday July 18,2017 (Written four months after my fathers death)

Note: I moved this one to the end to bookend the beginning and last story before a conclusion.

"A Hollow Feeling"

I woke up at my usual 5:10 a.m. peeped out of the window to see a clear sky; the weather was forecast to be in the high 60s and a dew point in the 70's; I had decided the previous night that I needed to rearrange my usual schedule that consists of: coffee, reading "Creation Moments" and a Charles Stanley devotional, a two mile walk, and a return home to have coffee, conversation, and breakfast with mom - no, this morning, especially after letting the cats outside and feeling the crisp, cool air, I needed to take an early morning loop around the thirty mile "track" of Hwy 25 from Vincent to Birmingham. I walked out the front door at 6:10 a.m.

After removing the car cover, hosing off the dew, and drying - rather petting - down the Porsche, I dropped the top and I was on my way. I turned east out of the neighborhood onto Old Hwy 280, immediately my senses were aroused with the pleasure a cool crisp breeze circulating around me. I like raising my hands above the windshield, much like a kid on a roller-coaster, and force the air down across my head and face. I was all smiles, and I hadn't driven a half a mile yet.

I turned north onto Hwy 51 and stretched the revs a bit higher as the engine warmed up. The undulating road that cut through the surrounding hills offered an incredible landscape with the low lying valleys/hills shrouded in fog; the sun peered over the horizon to my right, sun rays beamed through the forest illuminating the fog shrouded lowlands.

My smile turned into an audible laughter as I relished the truth that once again, for nearly four decades, I was off enjoying such a morning as others trudged off to mundane jobs, the grace of God upon my life amazes me. At times I feel as though the only explanation for my situation/gift is that He knows I would truly go insane if crammed into the confines of normalcy.

As I leaned forward, peering across the silver-laden bonnet of the twenty-one year old Porsche Boxster, I had to revel silently in the fact that this morning, an unusually crisp July morning, slicing through the mountains of Alabama in a classic Porsche convertible, was happening to me - pride, arrogance, or whatever aside, I felt so deserving, for I have paid the price to be here... much of that in cold heartache.

Several miles later I had arrived at one of my favorite roads

for the past decade, Hwy 25; a mountain road that twists, undulates, rises and falls through elevation changes of at least 1500 feet; it is in essence a dream drive in a convertible Porsche. Ah, dreams and reality - they've always been blurred and translucent in my life, a gift and a curse, part of the price I pay to be me.

As I wafted through the turns, rowing through the manual gearbox, listening to the flat-six engine hum, purr, and growl through the rev range inches behind my head I entered that intoxicating oneness with the machine, an acute consciousness of the atmosphere that I was flying through, and a total freedom from a life that I have both feared and successfully avoided for my entire life - pursuit of "The American Dream."

As I raced up the mountain, dashing in and out of wisps of low clouds, climbing in elevation and temperature the temperature rose from 67 degrees at the base to 72 degrees at the scenic peek. As I neared the mountain peak, I made the hairpin turn and then ran the Porsche up to near red-line through the last quarter mile portion of the serpentine road to the crest. The crest is a true scenic overlook, offering a view so expansive that if you look east you can see tomorrow coming on the horizon, looking west you can glimpse yesterday fading into the past. I pulled over to live in the moment.

From the crest, you can climb upon the rock ledges which put you in a position that creates the feeling and view that you are floating above the valley below. This morning the valley was shrouded in clouds, only the high peaks of the lower hills breaking through the mist, their tops crowned by a warm, golden sunlight.

Above me the sky was crystal blue, or as I called it, "Alabama Blue Skies." The silence and beauty made me understand why throughout the eons people have retreated to the mountain tops. The solitude and beauty, which always seems to bring me into a clearer consciousness of the beauty and unlimited creativity of God; and this morning, an appreciation of his grace, which theologians define as God giving you something you do not deserve, and this moment was a gift, a truly spectacular gift which enveloped and heightened all of my five senses as well as my consciousness.

I walked back to the car and admired it's classic elegance poised in front of the mountain backdrop - Porsche could have used the scene in an advertisement, the car seemed to be basking in its element; I had to thank God for the earthly pleasure this temporal trinket was giving me this morning.

I pulled into the road and headed down the mountain, occasionally pushing the clutch in, coasting silently down the serpentine road. I imagined that this is what electric

motoring will be like. Silent.

Reaching Hwy 43 I turned south. From this point onward each mile brought me deeper into reality as I crept into suburbia, laden with cars leaving their heavily mortgaged homes, merging into the straight line of traffic which would lead them to jobs that most of the auto occupants hated. I pointed my Porsche towards my next destination, my morning walk in the woods.

I pulled into the parking lot of the huge soccer field complex that is on the corner of Hwy. 280, the main artery from suburbia into downtown Birmingham, where unbeknownst to most people who pass this location twice a day, is a perfectly maintained, three mile long, mountain trail that cuts through the forest and follows the natural flow of a rock filled mountain river, complete with rushing water, that at times offers miniature white water rapids and small waterfalls.

Within a half mile of walking you have sufficiently reached a depth of the woods and mountains that combined with the sound of the rushing water of the river completely drowns out any society related noises.

The trail meanders through the forest offering a variety of topography: fern filled flatland, sheer cliff mountains, natural stone steps that guide you up and down the side of the mountain that the trail follows. This has been a magical, peaceful, dare I say, spiritual place for me for nearly a decade.

Along this trail I find it easy to both speak to and listen to God, many an epiphany have been had along this trail, as well as creative inspiration for several screenplays and a book having materialized in my mind along this trail.

Along this trail I have come to understand the ancient Chinese proverb that states "if you are depressed you are living in the past, if you are anxious you are living in the future, if you are at peace you are living in the present." Along this trail I have come to better learn how to live in the moment.

This morning I found myself realizing that in "this moment" I had been blessed with the freedom, wealth, and health, to enjoy a drive through a beautiful cloud enshrouded mountain road in a classic Porsche; I had the health and full use of my faculties both physically and mentally to walk and commune with God as I stroll through one of His magnificent gardens in Alabama; and yet, as usual I feel a vacancy within my psyche, within my soul.

I realized I have no "needs", nothing to complain about, but

the truth revealed within my soul this morning was that I have been given life, both temporal and eternal by the mercy of God and through Jesus, and yet my life is still a semi-hollow existence of self.

As I audibly cried out to God this morning, my consistent plea for direction and purpose became more of a request that He use me for His purpose To have a deeper understanding that the only life that has been given to me by God, is His.

The hollowness within me was clearly shown to be a void that can only be filled by living in harmony with His plan. I stopped and asked the Lord to "redeem the days" that I have left - for His will, not mine.

I walked back to my car, pulled out to Hwy 280, fought and snaked my way across the lanes of traffic flowing towards their daily game of trivial pursuit, made a U-turn, headed East, red-lined the Porsche's engine until she screamed like a Banshee, raised my hands high above the windshield, forced a stream of air through my hair and across my face, grinned from ear to ear, and headed home to have coffee with my mom - which all told, is the biggest blessing of the entire morning - having family.

9/23/19 (moved to end)

"I Need Therapy"

I raced up the hill winding the Flat Six through it's sonorous song; as I crested the hill I hit the brakes - the sun was rising directly in the middle of the undulating two lane road. The half-sun arced from one side of the road to the other, creating the illusion that it was fifteen feet wide.

"Wow! Absolutely glorious." I said, "Thanks for sharing that with me God."

It's been nearly two months since I started working in a school system that requires me to commute in traffic - hence, the writing "Commuter Pod" - to which I now realize there is no Zen in traffic, that's a lie my mind was telling my soul.

Traffic sucks. Traffic represents the epitome of all that I dislike about society. Traffic makes me feel like I have finally lost at the game of life. Traffic makes me feel defeated. Traffic makes me silently, yet deeply unhappy, uptight, impatient, and angry. It represents conformity, something that I have fought against since I was a child.

Yesterday I realized I really needed therapy; I needed to talk to God. I needed what motorcycles, and now the Boxster, and a walk in the woods have always done for me. I needed to get up this morning and drive my mountain loop and go for that walk. And not two miles up the road my session began with that sunrise. I knew I was on the "right road."

How bad has it gotten? After nearly two months of not using my car to commute, I thought, "What's the point of having a Porsche if it just sits?" So, two weeks ago I placed an ad to sell my Porsche in Excellence Magazine's classified section - albeit at a price that puts it in the category of "no one will pay that" for it.

I even went into the attic and pulled out a card of a man I met two years ago at a Cars and Coffee that told me to call him if I ever wanted to sell my car; turns out he has sold his Boxster and just sold his 911 two weeks ago. I met with him last week to show him the car and let him drive it. He's holding off for now - thankfully.

At this juncture I have to digress onto the fact that I have never been a passenger in my car, let alone with someone that knows how to drive a Porsche properly. I was quite impressed with my car from the passenger seat; actually I was very impressed with the ride, handling, and quality of my twenty three year old, nearly one hundred thousand mile Porsche - to the point that while driving home I asked myself, "Why are

you trying to sell *this* car? The man could find no faults in the Boxster, only praise for the purity of a first year 986.

Yesterday after returning home from my traffic ingestion, I mean congestion, I was browsing through the Bring A Trailer auctions - you have to love the irony of that site; by the name you would assume that all of the listing would be non-running junkers, when in fact some of the most high quality, rare vehicles are listed, a Ducati caught my eye.

"Maybe it's time to return to motorcycles," I thought, "They have always blown the bugs out of my head."

As I read the comments of everyone praising the Ducati and sharing how they have/had one like it stories, as well as the maintenance intervals required to be much like that of an early Ferrari, I realized that is exactly why I had sold mine.

Thankfully the reasons why I had quit riding after forty-five years came back clearly to memory, as did the fact that the Boxster does the same thing for me as motorcycles once had. I stopped looking at the motorcycles. I started planning my Saturday morning ride and walk.

I have written many times about the therapeutic effects of my route around the mountain and my walks in the woods, it hasn't changed, so I won't go into details. The only important detail is that it works. It gives clarity to cloudy thoughts, it brings hope to what seems hopeless, and sense to what to me seems senseless, it helps bring the "game" back to playing life's game of trivial pursuit.

After my session had ended and I reflected upon that which I had been told by that still voice deep within me, I feel a bit more at ease. I have decided to put the horrendous commute into its true context, what else do I have to do? Sitting in the car listening to music at the forward pace of a praying mantis is like sitting on the sofa, just a different view with a destination. Yeah, I hope that works for me.

I find it interesting, as always in my life, that God always provides me with exactly what I need at the exact time it is needed. Example here; the Toyota Camry. Just this past month my mom has surrendered the keys and no longer drives due to age and ability, a painful thing for an independent woman who drove hundreds of thousands of miles. We put the Camry in my name.

At the time I started working in a system that requires a commute that is not Porsche conducive I ended up with the perfect car that is. Right on time as usual. Need to do as the old song suggests, "Count your blessings, name them one

by one..."

I also felt the contentment of knowing that I am exactly where I am supposed to be at this time. The irony that I started subbing in the new system was because they paid more than my little town with the perfect commute. Guess what? I found out unexpectedly that Leeds raised the pay to the same amount as the new system I am in. --??

Oddly, try as I may to snag jobs back in Leeds, I am only getting about two per month; it seems as though technology and my not having a smart phone with a notification app, combined with the lack of substitute teachers in that system, has left me in last place of finding jobs via the internet. But I will not conform!

"Ouch!" Was that my own attitude biting me in the ass?

As for feeling defeated, two things come to mind: I have already won, gained, or possess all that this life has to offer, eternal life through Jesus; there is nothing this world can offer more valuable. As well, in the context of time I beat the odds of being conformed to society by a long shot, matter of fact, I beat the crap out of conformity.

I often told myself that there may come a day that I have to pay the piper for my waltzing through life; I always said that ten years of suffering when you're too old to partake in extreme fun is a price that is fair. Perhaps that time is upon me, so I realized this morning that I need to live up to my deal with the piper and smile at having won overall.

Taking those two realizations - and the fact that I am now sixty years old with heart issues - and placing them into some sort of metaphor, it came to mind that I am much like a convict that has to serve five to ten years in prison, but when he gets out, all that money he stole is waiting for him. Unbelievably, I have some social security benefits waiting soon, if I live; and sooner or later when I die . . . Heaven awaits.

I win either way. Amen.

2/18/20

"Heel and Toe Do-si-do - and Phhf She Was Gone"

Three years. I have owned the Porsche Boxster for three years; and I could never get the heel and toe shifting dance down. Over the past five years of being into sports cars all I have read/heard about is the "art of heel toe shifting;" and that you're just not a true master of the manual transmission until you can come into a turn and downshift using the rev matching technique of heel toe.

I told myself that I suppose I shouldn't be so hard on myself, after all even Porsche has rev matching technology in their new generation of manual transmissions - as rare as they are becoming. But I'm not a young driver, I'm sixty, I grew up driving a manual transmission.

The problem seemed to center on misinformation. Every video I watched showed the driver using the heel to blip the throttle while simultaneously pressing the brake pedal using the right foot. Every time I tried it with my small foot I just ended up braking badly and no rev matching every took place.

And then in the beginning of February while making my wonderful drive/commute to Leeds through the mountain roads in the rain a revelation occurred, albeit strictly by accident.

As I entered into a turn tight left hand, downhill turn I applied the brake, but I felt something else on the right side of my foot - the accelerator pedal!

It seems that I had not moved my right fully left onto the center of the brake pedal and a bit of my foot was firmly on the accelerator pedal. I couldn't wait for the next turn!

As I entered into the right hand turn I placed my foot on the pedals just as I have felt in the turn before... I applied the brake, and as I pressed down it also began applying pressure onto the throttle, raising the revs a little bit. The downshift was smoother, more exciting, and yes, more engaging - I had done it! I had revved matched a downshift using the heel and toe technique!

I have read endless accounts of how Porsche's pedal placement is perfect. Porsche had designed the pedals to be worked in harmony with each other. I found that the brake and accelerator pedals were perfectly spaced for my small foot; I was thrilled to a new level. Oh yes, I was my own hero.

Highway 25 into Leeds offered me ample opportunity to practice my new found thrill and skill. By the time I got to

Leeds I could come into a turn and rev match the downshift in near perfect harmony. I said aloud "Oh boy, now we're doing the Heel and Toe Do-si-do!"

After going inside and reliving my thrills one thing came to mind; why the heck do the only call it heel and toe shifting? I could never use my heel, but here right under my nose - no pun intended - was a right foot roll that worked perfectly for rev matching; the term itself was a defeating misnomer to people with small feet.

By the time I drove the twenty-five miles home that afternoon I had become very proficient at rev matching; I had to tell my eighty-nine year old mother all about my new skills, and admit that I truly had been missing at least twenty-five percent of the thrill of driving a manual transmission Porsche.

By the end of the third day of commuting I was able to use my new skills even when driving in the city and neighborhood. I was looking forward to driving anytime I could to induce my found thrill.

Alas, this is where the story takes an unexpected turn that even rev matching couldn't help.

Several months earlier I placed an add on Facebook in the Porsche Classified section; I had gotten several inquiries that amounted to nothing more than irritation and contemplation on my part about whether or not I really wanted to sell the Porsche, it's not like I had to, it was just that weird feeling I always get when I own a vehicle that could send some repair or maintenance bill my way that could bankrupt me - i.e. Bentley, Ducati, Porsche... all of which through the years have been unfounded, but, I just sometimes feel it may be time to quit while I'm ahead.

I had prayed about it, thought about it, and had come to the conclusion that if God wanted me to sell the Porsche he would send a buyer, thankfully thus far it seemed as though He did not want me to sell the Porsche, rather, it seemed as though based upon my new found rev matching skills that I was destined to have a deeper, more meaningful relationship with my Porsche.

After a weeks worth of driving in the rain and dirty streets the Porsche looked as though it had competed in LeMan's 24 hour race; it was filthy like never before - but it had been worth the dirt. I decided it needed to, or rather, deserved a complete detail - including a buffing and sealing. I decided that I would pamper the Porsche this weekend after the rains stopped. Later that Friday afternoon I received an irritating message from Facebook user wanting to know if the

car was still available; after blowing it off for a while I responded with a, "Yes it is, I have been enjoying it all week on a mountain road commute." - End of conversation. Now leave me alone, I thought. I settled into the night looking forward to detailing the Porsche the next day.

Saturday afternoon finally brought some sunshine and warmer weather, enough to get the car washed and clayed. It also brought another message from the man on Facebook, wanting to know if the price was firm -- AAARGH! My pet peeve with selling anything!

I gently replied that the price was "pretty close to firm." To my disgust, several hours later he said that he would like to come see the car -- I dreaded the thought, I hate selling anything, even though sales has always been my forte; I have just grown to detest the idea of having to deal with people and selling them something.

I told him I was busy Sunday - which I was - and decided I would finish detailing the car Sunday afternoon and basked in having avoided dealing with another waste of time, tire-kicker. Maybe he will go away I reasoned within.

Sunday afternoon allowed me the time and weather to finish detailing the car. After several hours I buffed it down and sealed the paint and did all of the interior and rubber trim. She had never looked so good, odd after the fact that she had also never been as dirty as she was before the detailing.

I covered the Porsche up and decided I would take her for a drive Monday morning after bringing my mom to

When I returned home Monday around 11 a.m. from bringing mom to physical therapy, I had another message from the Facebook man, he had asked me to call him.

"Damn! This man won't leave it alone," I thought.

I was about to blow him off again and go for my drive, then I stopped and remembered what I had heard/felt during that morning's prayer session - believe what you do, but I know what I hear; I was told that morning, "You asked for me to send you a buyer when it is time to get rid of the Porsche, this man is your buyer, call him." Reluctantly I did.

The man asked if he could come out now and see the car, as the rain would be moving back in tomorrow.

"Sure." I said.

I met him at the Publix parking lot around the corner thirty minutes later. We looked at the car, I told him everything

about the car - and I usually tell too much, but I want people to know the eccentricities of what they are getting into.

We went for a nice drive, he liked the car and explained that he had been looking at this car for some time, all the while looking at, and driving, other Porsche Boxster's - most of which he drove about a block before turning around and leaving the abused cars to their eventual demise in the hands of some other soul that just drives the crap out of them and passes them on down the line at a cheaper price to someone else to drive the crap out of them without maintenance and pass them on down the line at a cheaper price... and the endless cycle continues to the salvage yard.

We returned to the Publix parking lot, and I was expecting the usual, "I'll think about it and get back to you," response; however to my surprise he asked me if I would take \$9000.00, two hundred dollars less than my asking price.

I told him, "I would be crazy not to." I asked when he wanted to do the deal.

"Now." He replied.

We drove to my moms house, he pulled out cash, I pulled out the title and cache of spare parts I had for upcoming maintenance, we signed the paperwork and title, and the deal was done - before I even realized what had happened. He said he would come back for his truck later or tomorrow. We went outside and loaded up the parts and related items in his truck.

The man got in the car, started it, stuck his hand out and said, "You've made me a happy man."

I thought, "Shouldn't I be feeling the same way? Happy that I sold the Porsche?"

I wasn't happy, I wasn't sad; I did have a deep sense of peace knowing that I had done the right thing - selling the Porsche.

As he drove off and turned around, passing me again, I said aloud, "Damn that is a good looking car." And it was; it was gleaming in the sun after it's detailing the day before, or perhaps it was just the sun reflecting off the man who had just bought a perfect Porsche Boxster's smile.

I smiled and laughed to myself; perhaps God had waited to bring a buyer after I had finally learned how, and experienced the thrill of, diving into a turn and using the heel and toe technique for a perfect rev matched downshift. Thankfully, my last drive was on my favorite road, Highway 25.

As he turned the corner and disappeared the lyrics to an old Buck Owens song sprang to mind:

"I searched the world over,

And thought I found true love.

You met another and

Phht! you were gone."

And just like that, my three year relationship with my Porsche Boxster was over. Deep inside I also knew that my five year relationship with sports cars had come to an end; I had the same feeling a little over five years ago when I sold my last motorcycle after forty-five years of riding -

"Nothing to be sad about, for only good times were had."

12/20/19

Conclusion

In editing these stories it was surprising to realize it has been over two years since I started writing these thoughts down. Amazing how mellifluously, nearly unnoticed life changes.

Creativity has been elusive the past three years. The best I can muster has been these short writings, all car related. Over time they added up, so I put them together into this collection.

Months prior to writing "A Hollow Feeling" my dad had died. I felt hollow and without a purpose after having taken care of him the year prior to his death. Funny, at the end of the story I went home to what was my purpose - family, in particular, mom. I have to admit, my dad's death has changed how I look at everything in life, and what value I see/put in/on so many things. It has changed me inside.

These past few years I have been substitute teaching in order to have a flexible schedule and be able to help with my mom. It has become clear that is my purpose at this time.

The glacial movement of my ride to schools has been sad; from a wonderful mountain road in the Porsche to suburban nightmare roads to school in the Camry. The drive to Leeds can be looked at as the "halcyon days" of a commuting.

Not once in two years did I complain about the forty minute ride to Leeds through the mountains. Seldom do I not feel inner defeat from a thirty minute commute in suburbia. There is some hidden lesson in there that I have yet to understand. But for now, I'll keep the Porsche.

NOTE: At 2/22/20 - The Porsche is gone.