

## Antique or Classic?

My 93 year old mother-in-law reluctantly gave me her car a little over three years ago. She and my late father-in-law are the only previous owners, but her eyesight was failing and she could no longer drive safely (which is the operative word.) The car is a Buick Electra and recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. In the eyes of the tag office, that makes it an antique car which no longer requires an emission test. I'm not complaining because it saves me \$25 on the test, but logic would suggest that the older the car the more important to have an emission test. Supposedly, the tag office's computer can't cope with the fact that a 25 year old car continues to traverse the highways, or that anyone would wish to drive a car that resembles a mechanical dinosaur.

This is a brute of a car which could easily accommodate seven people and also have room for Snow White. The hood is the size of a six person dining room table, but the piece de resistance is the horn which I swear was salvaged from the Titanic. I've witnessed grown men cower in its wake. Fellow motorists, who have had the temerity to cut me up and incur the wrath of the horn, take alternative routes or slam on their brakes in shock and awe.

There are a few disadvantages in driving a monolith around the streets of Atlanta. For one thing, the Peachtree Street lanes through Buckhead are approximately the same width as my car much to the consternation of fellow motorists. It is not very environmentally friendly or energy conscious since I'm lucky to achieve 12 miles to the gallon, and it barely fits into my garage. It also has no air conditioning, which came to my attention in the drive back from Alabama where my mother-in-law lives. We attempted the journey during the dog days of summer 2005. We had just made it across the border into Georgia when we drove smack into a thunderstorm. The windows and my eye glasses immediately steamed up and the car was quickly transformed into a portable sauna. I managed to leave the interstate at the next exit by hanging my head out of the car window while keeping one hand on the wheel and gasping for air. The only solution was to open all the windows, turn the heat onto the wind shield and tentatively return to the interstate. Soaking wet and exhausted, I must have lost about 7 pounds by the time I finally arrived home.

There were many occasions when I have wanted to sell the car; none more so than when I drove to a job interview approximately 18 months ago. It was during the middle of August, (the dog days of summer again) and the interview was arranged for 3.00pm at a location just south of the airport. I knew it would be uncomfortable in the car without air conditioning, so I allocated 2 hours for a trip which would normally take approximately 25 minutes and, boxing clever, packed a change of shirt. Georgia Navigator indicated that my best shot was to take I85 south through downtown, and the journey went well until approaching The Varsity where unaccountably a yellow Volkswagen and a semi-truck had become acquainted sufficiently to block three lanes. Wet and bedraggled, I managed to arrive at my destination with about 15 minutes to spare and an opportunity to change my shirt.

Unfortunately my shirt was stuck to me like a second skin, and I abandoned my plan of a quick change. Entering the building in a mired state, the receptionist led me into the conference room where the interview was to be conducted. I quickly discovered that the thermostat in the room was set at 66 degrees and I began to shiver uncontrollably. A few minutes later my interviewer arrived and took one look at me and asked in an anguished voice: "Are you sickening for something? It would appear that you have a classic (get it? Classic? Oh well please yourself) case of summer flu. Needless to say I wasn't offered the job, but I learned two invaluable lessons. What are those Cecil? I should never apply for jobs between May and September if my only mode of transport is a 1983 Buick Electra, Park Avenue. Secondly, I should never have promised my mother-in-law to have and to hold her precious car for better or worse for the rest of its natural life.

### **SIX NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP REVISITED**

Cymru am Byth! (Wales for Ever) I received one of the best Valentine presents a Welshman could ever wish for. Wales defeated England 23-15 despite having to take the field without their injured talisman, Shane Williams. Bring on the French next Saturday and more of the same please. The nation and I are assured that Shane will be fit to take his rightful place on the left wing against Les Bleus.