

THE REAR VIEW

LAST GASPS

Towmen often haul away old friends

By Ben A. Shaberman

I'm getting rather sentimental as the odometer of my 1989 Volvo 240 approaches 200,000 miles. That's because I'm proudly following in the footsteps of the patriarchs of my family. Like my grandfather before me who drove a 1969

Buick Skylark and my dad who owned a 1964 Chevrolet Corvair, I'm running another car into the ground.

Forget the fact that the Skylark had the pickup and handling of an arthritic pack mule, or that more exhaust from the Corvair was released inside the car than



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out, or that a passing shower sets off the unnerving *ding ding ding* door-ajar chime on my Volvo. Let it be known that no man in my family will junk a car before its time, no matter how much the vehicle may beg to be put out of its misery.

I won't deny that this phenomenon can in part be attributed to the persistence of the "cheap-bastard" gene in my bloodline. But it also represents our appreciation for preservation and conservation. It's about history, longevity, and loyalty.

There's a bond that forms between man and car – you work together on the road as a team. That car has gotten me through hard winters in Iowa, Beltway traffic jams in Washington, D.C., and even a carpool of screaming kids going to and from a birthday party at Chuck E. Cheese.

If I gave up my Volvo while it still had some life left, I'd be crushed if it got into the indelicate, insensitive hands of some hardcore, pierced, head-banging teenager. Everyone knows that Volvo 240s are only for peaceniks, old hippies, and vegetarians who continually scan the radio for Crosby Stills Nash and Young tunes.

It can be traumatic to drive my old Volvo among the high-strung, power-addicted drivers of today's highways and byways. I'm overwhelmed by the plethora of shiny, over-sized, gas-gulping, late-model SUVs and pick-up trucks roaring by me. I feel as though I am in some Jurassic Park-like, prehistoric jungle. These huge vehicles are the velociraptors, and my '89 Volvo is a three-legged poodle soon to be their dinner. When I'm approached by one of these monsters, it's like an eclipse of the sun quickly followed by a decapitation.

In paying tribute to my 240, I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize the masterful, economical work of my mechanic, Han, whom I refer to as Genghis Han, because of his relentless determination to rid my car of its malfunctions. When I ask Han about my 240's long-term prospects for survival, he just gives me a sheepish grin and shrugs his shoulders.

I know that my old Volvo's day will come. Inevitably, it comes for everything. The day came many years ago for my dad, my grandfather, and their beloved cars. Their legacy is now in my hands. For now, I'll just enjoy each and every mile with my car, along with the nostalgia, low insurance rates, and freedom from pesky supermodels asking me for a lift.

And if you happen to see a guy stopped on the shoulder with the hood up on his white 240, slow down in respect and honor the hundreds of thousands of miles that the man and his car were united in adventure and camaraderie. Then call a tow truck. 🚚