

A VENT WINDOW VIEW – Driving 75 at 85

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I hope that I am still a safe driver after my 85th birthday. That appears to be a long way off at this moment, but each day that passes seems to go by just a bit faster than the one before. This of course means the months and years are doing the same danged thing. I'm pretty sure this ain't fair but, what is worse, not one of my friends seems willing to listen when I gripe about it. And, I can tell you right now that a wife, especially one that is as old as me, has limited sympathy for any grumping around about problems that involve aging. These days about the only thing that takes my mind off the fact that I am getting old is the fact that I am becoming ever more absentminded; sometimes, that means I actually forget my worries. Sadly, at the same time, I forget everything else. That, of course, is not such a good thing especially when one tries to follow the plot of a TV program. Truth is I am unsure if that problem is simple absentmindedness or if it has to do with the fact that if I am not standing upright, I am probably asleep.

The one thing that helps me forget my years and spools up my memory is the sight of a vehicle that takes me back in memory to an era of youth and innocence. It doesn't take much. A flash of hot pink paint on a finned fender and the throaty rumble of a big V-8 always reminds me of a day back in the mid-fifties when I was awarded my first traffic ticket for speeding. That costly lesson followed one of my more spectacular idiocies, one of those "miles to go and not much time to get there" situations. The car involved was a pal's brand-new pink and white '57 Mercury Turnpike Cruiser; at ninety (or more) mph, while crossing the rolling hills in that section of the Lone Star State, that thing rode like a rocket-powered sofa.

At other times, my memory is jogged by the grand fun of working all day to get the 327 engine of a too long idle '63 Chevrolet convertible to stutter, sputter, and finally run long enough to cover the twenty-five miles from its seedy, weedy back-country home to my garage. I must admit that even with the dirt, rust and dust infesting its interior that swirled around the cockpit any time I got the Chevy up to a *guesstimated* forty mph, I enjoyed a thrill that only a ragtop with the top down can provide.

Still, not all my remembered motoring treats came from cars with big V-8s; my first new car was a fire engine red, six-cylinder 1963 Falcon. I was, by then, a family man with more restraint, a bit of common sense—and a limited budget. That little car was like a Timex watch; it just "kept on ticking."

A memorable car from even earlier days was the 1952 Ford two-door sedan that my wife, Marjorie, owned when we were dating in college. Let me make it clear that I liked her better than the car, but it was a close thing! Her Ford was motivated by a quiet running six-cylinder; the only option it boasted (besides her) was a fresh-air heater.

After all is said and done, boys remember their high school transport more than any other, less because of the miles they covered, but the girls they took to drive-in movies. I used Dad's 1953 Chevrolet 210, the same car in which I took my driving test. Later on, he had a 1955 Chevy two-door with a six-cylinder and an overdrive. That was a really nice ride and its teal blue and white color made it the fanciest set of wheels anyone in my senior class drove. Such memories are what cause guys and, maybe even gals, to buy a fifties classic; we all want to feel and enjoy once again our youthful exuberance. Of course, that may not be a good thing for guys my age. Too much excitement might end up costing us a ride in a vehicle equipped with a siren and flashing red lights.