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Lao Tsu's Chinese Relativity Axiom:
No matter how great your triumphs or how tragic your
defeats, approximately one billion Chinese couldn't
care less."

W E L C O M E N E W R E A D E R S !

Dear British Car Enthusiast,

This non-commercial e-publication will arrive in
your email about twice a month with information
about what's going on in the British Car world. We
are always looking for short pieces on just about
everything British so let us know what YOU think.
Your input is what will make this e-publication
a path to fun with British cars.

Send to a friend!

Rick Feibusch, Editor

The British Car Network #13
July 1, 2007

Photos Attached:

- ** Morris Minor Traveller Woody
- ** Reader's Ride montage
- ** Woodies On The Wharf montage
- ** Bentley Drivers Club montage
- ** 1933 Ford Y Type Hot Rod montage

"Never explain. It tires your friends, and your
enemies won't believe you." - - Abraham Lincoln

E D I T O R I A L

Dear Readers,

I would like to thank all of you out there who have called and emailed me
to say how sad they are about the "Last Waltz" at El Camino Park and have
offered suggestions for new locations. Even though I grew up (a relative

term) on the San Francisco Peninsula, there have been many suggestions that I had never considered. Some writers even had gone to automotive events at these places with other marque clubs. All will be explored and hopefully we will be able to announce the new venue at the British Meet on September 8th & 9th. Hope to see you there!

Best,
Rick Feibusch,
editor

MAN BURIED IN VINTAGE MORRIS MINOR

An Indian farmer loved his vintage Morris Minor so much that he was buried in it. Narayanswami, who died at the age of 64, bought his beloved Morris Minor new in 1958, reported the Times of India.

Relatives, including his three children, decided to honour his last wishes of being buried with his beloved car. A huge grave was dug with an excavator and a large crowd gathered to see the master and his machine laid to rest together. The Morris Minor was decorated and his body placed in it before it was lowered into the grave in Sivapuram village, Tamil Nadu.

submitted by Tony Burgess, Minor News

SCENTED TIRES

Westways - Jul/Aug 07

Would you rather smell lavender or rubber? Thought so. That's one reason Kumho Tires has introduced what it claims is the world's first scented tire - the lavender aroma tire (Kumhotire.Com). It's available in 205/60r16, 215/60r16, and 235/60r16 sizes to fit popular vehicles like the Toyota Camry, the Honda Accord, and the Chrysler Sebring. If it succeeds, Kumho may offer jasmine- and orange-scented tires, too.

Editor's Note - What would you like your tyres to smell like?
Butterscotch? Chocolate? Espresso? Corned Beef? Naaa, not corned beef

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submitted by Carolyn Ward

The 17th Annual Central Coast British Car Club's
All British Car & Motorcycle Show
July 22, 2007 All Day 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Channel Islands Yacht Harbor
3600 Harbor Blvd.
Oxnard Beach, CA

Featured Marque: Morgan Cars and 3-wheelers

Trophies in every class- Raffle Prizes given all day!
Swap Meet! ~ Entertainment! ~ Food! - Fun!
Please call C. Darryl Struth at (
Or Don Greene (
To get a registration form go on line to the clubs website:
<http://www.centralcoastbritishcarclub.com>

L E T T E R S

MG fans mourn Jim Maul from Maul's Garage

Richard, Just want to pass along that Jim Maul suffered a major stroke last February, last week his family had removed life support from him and he passed away on Saturday morning, June 23rd..

Jim owned Maul's Garage located in Huntington Beach since the mid 70's. He was one of the last dedicated MG repair shops in the area. His passing will be a loss in the MG world.

Steve Ruzek

So sorry to hear about Jim. Thanks for reporting this sad news - The world is changing too rapidly for me. The NorCal MG clan continues to feel the loss of Skip Kelsey of Shadetree Motors. Soon we will all have to learn how to repair our own cars or buy Toyotas. We finally had to replace Carolyn's daily driver MGB with a BMW when Mike Goodman closed up shop in the Valley a few years ago and we are seriously worried that Peter Petrov (Marina Motors - www.englishcars.com) will be hounded out of Venice by LA city agencies. It should be noted that Steve and Josh at Classic Rovers West will be there to service Jim's customer's cars. - - editorRick.

Hi Richard,
It is with great sorrow and disappointment that I read your message confirming that this will be final meet at the wonderful venue in Palo Alto. While I have never displayed a car at the meet, I have been a faithful attendee for many years and think it is the greatest meet around. I certainly hope a new venue can be found before 2008 - it will be difficult to match the ambiance of the present site. GOOD LUCK in your search!!!

Thanks and cheers,
Sid Shadle
A-H '56 100M
A-H '59 BN6 (in many, many bits & pieces)
A-H '62 BT7 Tri-carb

Hello, Rick,

Please add me to your British Car Network news list. Sorry about the demise of the Palo Alto British meet. Seems too many good things pass too soon.

If you own an Austin Healey or have friends who do, we hope you come to the 2008 Austin Healey Conclave in San Diego.

http://www.dcoyote.org/conclave_08.pdf It's going to be a real winner!

Drive safely - and if possible, top down!

David Coyote

www.dcoyote.org

Coyote's Classic Cars

Austin Healey Club of San Diego

See David's beautiful Healey 100/4 pictured on the Reader's Rides attached page

Dear Richard:

Congrats on your very interesting and useful newsletter. I own a 1969 Rover TC 2000 which I still have and has always been my daily driver. I bought a 1970 Rover 3500S from a Roveretter in eastern Canada last year and just had it repainted.

Here's a photo of it.

Best regards,

Albert Boasberg

See Albert's striking Rover 3500S pictured on the Reader's Rides attached page

Unearthed "Time Capsule" Car Provides Valuable Vintage Gasoline

NORMAN, Okla. - The Plymouth Belvedere buried in a time capsule was rusty and undriveable but gasoline cached with the car could have scientific value.

The people who put together the time capsule 50 years ago in Tulsa included two containers of gasoline in case fuel was no longer available for the Plymouth when the vault was unsealed this year.

For Paul Philp, a professor of petroleum and environmental geochemistry at the University of Oklahoma, the gas is valuable on its own. "We're going to begin fingerprinting the gasoline and compare it to modern day gasolines," he said.

Philp, who specializes in environmental forensic work, hopes researchers will be able to use the comparison of old and new gas as a reference to determine the age of gasoline spills that have leaked into the ground. "There aren't many of these age-related samples available," he said. Philp took the two jars of gasoline, along with four others believed to contain motor oil, to his laboratory at the university's Sarkeys Energy Center.

The time capsule, a concrete vault buried under the lawn of the Tulsa County Courthouse, was unsealed June 15. Although the Belvedere had been sealed in protective wrapping, water had penetrated the vault and the two-door hardtop was covered with rust.

submitted by Dave Barry

Santa Cruz "Woodies On The Wharf" Features British Wood
by John F. Quilter
(Picture montage attached)

A spectacular sunny day in Santa Cruz greeted the annual June 23 Woodies on the Wharf show of cars made with wood. There were scores of Fords, Mercurys, Buicks, Dodges, Chevrolets and other American woodies spanning the 1930s to the early 1950s on display but the British made a fair showing with a number of Minis Travellers or Austin Countryman woodies from the 1960s.

Morris Minors were next in frequency followed up by the truly unusual such as a 1952 Humber Pullman which had been bodied in England at the time of production into one of the largest woodies the UK probably ever produced. Known as a shooting break (brake?), this huge car was powered by a 4086cc side valve six driving through a column changed four speed gearbox. According to the owner, the car was intended to be used by the servants of the nobility to supply the hunters with food and refreshments while on fox hunts, hence the name Shooting Break. This car was owned by Tom and Colleen Corcoran of Paradise, California.

Also quite rare in this country was a 1937 Morris 8 small commercial van with a wooden made body. This unique vehicle has been imported from New Zealand and restored in Southern California by its owner, Dr Jeffery Brown of Pomona, California.

Humber Musings - Break or Brake?

Hahaha....calling a Humber a Shooting "Break" is a wonderful slip of the tongue...or keyboard I saw that car ... pretty clunky compared to most woodies, but DIFFERENT that's for sure. My favs at Santa Cruz were the unrestored ones, natch'erly. Some of the woodies had their gorgeous varnish sprayed on, which I felt ruins the quality and warmth of the wood as originally intended. It starts to look like German plastic. Buick made the nicest woodies I think...the way the tailgate slopes back, and the lines of the car....just great.

Joe Troice

That Humber is NOT a shooting brake - I feel that it is an "estate wagon" - similar to an American "depot hack." A quality "country car" that can double as a truck when necessary. These are what evolved into station wagons.

I have heard that "break" is the correct term as in "we are taking a break from hunting to have some tea (in the afternoon) and single malt scotch in the evening," while the servants prepare a meal from what was shot. (Don't invite Dick Cheney) A proper brake is more like an American "chuck wagon" or a wartime canteen wagon provided by the Catering Corps. - editorRick

I think that in British usage the descriptive spelling is brake. I know that I have seen that usage in publications. I usually notice spelling usages, primarily I think due to the spelling of my first name. It is Darwyn and not Darwin, seemingly of little importance to anyone than my parents (who chose the spelling) or me who has now spent over 70 years with the differentiation.

Without much bother, I found that Michael Sedgwick, in his book Cars of the Thirties provides the following, in speaking of American station wagons. "Socially, however, it was regarded as a 'utility', much as the shooting-brakes of Britain were associated with beaters and the Servant's Hall, though it was spared that truck-status in law which restricted its speed to 30 m.p.h. on British roads until 1950." (p.37 of the aforementioned book. Robert Bentley, Cambridge, Mass. 1970)

From that it is easy to conclude that timbered-bodied Brit vehicles, which may have resembled our station wagons, may be Estate Wagons or Shooting Brakes or some other terminology. (Did any Brit's use "Station Wagon?") The differentiation seems to be that of class and purpose. (Or, purpose and class.)

As to the term break, you may be right about the tea service but the vehicles I believe were all spelled brake. As a means of guessing, based on hours of reading this-and-that at this time I think that the origin does not come from a rest period, or tea-time, but from a wagon used to carry beaters in the era before autos.

In any case, the social status and etc. is now a thing of the past as Aston-Martin, Bentley, Audi, and others now have had shooting brakes or have shown them in various shows. Just Google shooting brake for some examples.

Darwyn Lumley

Bentley Drivers Club:
USA West Region Cambria Weekend Getaway * May 2007
by David Johnston
(Photo montage attached)

We started the 2 night 3 day Cambria weekend on Friday May 18th; at the San Simeon Pines Resort located on Moonstone Beach. This trip was focused on a relaxed weekend on the central California coast. The weekend started with a 300 mile drive to Cambria stopping in Solvang to pick up some knickknacks for my wife.

In addition, at the same time my 1950 MK VI needed some attention as it blew the exhaust manifold gasket (again) coming over the "San Marcus Pass", I was fortunate to find a garage with an English mechanic from Durham who was able to help me.

Brad and Tori Klein joined Marie and I in time for a wonderful dinner at the "Moonstone Beach Bar and Grill" restaurant overlooking the ocean. They came in Brad's magnificent and flamboyant 1953 R Type James Young Sedan Coup originally owned by the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright, hence the number plate "X Wright".

Cambria is a very friendly, scenic small town on the California central coast, located on Moonstone beach. Winston Churchill and some US Presidents were often guests at Hearst Castle a few miles to the north. Cambria has a very relaxed life style with lots of small shops, restaurants; and even a Lawn Bowling center (everyone wears white). There is a colony of over 1,000 Elephant Seals on the coast that are currently molting; Turkey Buzzards nest in the local "San Simeon Pine trees" and are as common as sea gulls.

We had a wonderful weekend, but unfortunately on coming out of an Italian restaurant in town on Saturday evening we discovered someone had made a very large dent in my right front fender.

BRITISH HOT ROD - Bill Czerwinski's 1933 Y Type Ford
by Rick Feibusch
(Photo montage attached)

One aspect of the British Car hobby is people who go well beyond bolting on a set of wire wheels or some Lucas "Flamethrower" road lamps and painting their car a non-original colour. One such enthusiast is Bill Czerwinski of Ventura. Bill has built some real hot iron over the years, including a frighteningly fast Chevy powered Morris pickup "Pro Stocker," a custom framed, V8 powered Minor Woody, and now this bright blue 1933 British Ford "Y" Type sedan. These cars look like 3/4 scale American Fords of the era and came originally equipped with a 1172cc sidevalve four and 3-speed gearbox

This is actually the second time Bill built this car. The first time it was fitted with 1800cc MGB running gear and wire wheels but didn't give the kick Bill was used to in his V8 Minors.

The car was rebuilt with quality aftermarket suspension, a Buick 3.8 litre V6/automatic, bright blue paint and polished aluminium galore. The shots in the attached montage page were done when the car first hit the road. But Bill, always thinking and always building will add and subtract pieces as he goes along - That's what rodding is about - Restoration without rules while combining form and function. Bill's '33 is functional art, an automotive canvas for a fellow brimming with innovation as well as an appreciation of things of the past. Sometime, we'll show you his V8 powered Minor Traveller Same colour, same quality work more power!!!

THE ART CENTER CAR CLASSIC 2007

Art Center College of Design
Sunday, July 15, 2007
10:00AM - 4:00PM

Dream Machines: Imagination Gone Wild

Celebrate the wildly entertaining side of automotive design at the Art Center Car Classic 2007. This year's event includes speakers Luigi Colani and Harald Belker TRAN 190, two of the world's most wildly imaginative designers. Barry Meguiar, host of Car Crazy and KABC's Dave Kunz will once again emcee the event.

Event Highlights:

Dream Machines Showcase Corral featuring incredible vehicles by Figoni & Falaschi, the Alfa Romeo BAT cars, Italian concept cars and more than 100 rare and exotic vehicles on display including classics, sports cars, racecars, hot rods and customs. Tours of Art Center's transportation design studios and galleries will be available.

TICKETS TO CAR CLASSIC 2007 ARE \$55 AND \$25/ALUMNI.
For more information, e-mail

UPCOMING EVENTS - Compiled by Jim Perell/Rick Feibusch

Dream Machines: 7/15/07 www.artcenter.edu/carclassic
Imagination Gone Wild
Art Center College of Design - Pasadena 626-396-4216.

Golden Cove Coffee Meet 07/15/07 9AM Don Newman 310.265.4813
Golden Cove Shopping Center - Palos Verdes Drive at Hawthorne

Central Coast 07/22/07 Darryl Struth 805-644-6211
British Car Club's www.centralcoastbritishcarclub.com
All British Car & Motorcycle Show

Pebble Beach Concours 08/19/07 www.pebblebeachconcours.net

All British Field Meet 08/31-9/3/07 www.abfm-pdx.com
Portland International Raceway, Oregon

Palo Alto British Meet 9/8-9/9 07 Rick Feibusch:310-392-6605
30th & final show at El Camino Park <rfeibusch1@earthlink.net>

Chico Concours 09/09/07 www.chicoconcours.com

Ironstone Concours 09/22/07 www.ironstonevineyards.com

San Diego British Car Day 10/07/07 www.sandiegobritishcarday.org
Bonsal Farm

Triumphfest 2007 10/11-10/14 07 www.triumphfest.com
in Laughlin, NV

British Car Roundup 10/13-10/14 07 www.valleybritish.org
Valley British Auto Club - Fresno area

California Autumn Classic 10/20-21/07

Bill Meade autumnclassic.100mregistry.co

Look, Ma, it's Nigel Shiftright
Contributed by Phil Frank
Sunday, May 13, 2007

Cartoonist Phil Frank, 63, is the pen behind the "Farley" local comic strip in The Chronicle's Bay Area section and "The Elderberries" on The Chronicle comics page. Phil and his wife, Susan, live in Sausalito.

I spent my early years in the small town of Holland, Mich. I found myself drawn to cars from the 1920s and 1930s that survived in the back alleys of our town. Most were unlocked, unloved and just collecting dust. I enjoyed sitting in them, relishing the mysterious aromas of mohair, leather, wood, road dust and oil. I often toyed with the idea of one day owning one of these curious vehicles.

Around 1948, I read a magazine story about a "sports car revolution" taking place in the United States. It highlighted a small British roadster that GIs were bringing back from England after the war. The little car was the MG-TC. I was stunned by the images of this fast little convertible with skinny wheels and classic lines from the early 1930s.

On the cusp of my 16th birthday, I began lobbying my father and mother to be allowed to buy one of those Model A Ford "alley cars" I was attracted to. I dragged my father to a gas station to look at a 1930 Model "A" Coupe buried in snow. It was for sale for \$200. It was the day before Christmas. The next morning it was sitting in our garage with a red ribbon on the key!

My clearest automotive memory, however, took place a few years later on a cold morning at Michigan State University when I was walking across a snow-covered campus on my way to class. Suddenly I heard the rattle of an unfamiliar engine. Entering my field of vision was a black sports car. Rooster tails of snow flew up behind the skinny rear wheels and it entered a four-wheel drift as it made a turn at the corner and pulled up to a university building. A young woman got out of the car and left the motor running. She headed up the stairs of the building and suddenly the car revved up and drove away without her. I wanted to yell to warn her. Then I realized it was a right-hand-drive car. In fact, it was the same car I'd

clipped a photograph of out of a magazine 10 years earlier. It was the mysterious MG-TC. I'd finally seen one and I was in love.

Old MGs and Model A's became a pattern for me. When I am behind the wheel of either breed I feel transported to another era. The more rural the landscape, the better. Thirty years ago, Susan and I packed up our 1928 Model A Ford with our two children, Philip and Stacy, and did a cross-country trip, almost all of it by secondary roads, from California to Maine. We didn't have many problems until we hit the Rockies on our way home. The car's engine blew up. We ended up in Walsenburg, Colo., for a week while they located another Model A engine, pulled our broken engine out of the car and installed the new one. Then we fired it up and headed south around the Rockies.

I sold my last Model A -- a 1929 cabriolet -- four years ago and committed my switch from Detroit iron to British tin. I'm now on my third MG-TC and, with my friend Terry Sanders of Oakland, recently completed a 12-year restoration of a rare four-passenger 1937 MG-SA drophead coupe. I am now restoring an early 1960s Jaguar Mark II saloon that is currently in the paint shop in San Rafael.

My current MG-TC, still running its original post-war British license plates (FUN 504), is my favorite of the three I've owned over the last 30 years. The car is famous in its own right. Along with my writing buddy Joe Troise, I have been doing cartoons for nearly 20 years for Road & Track Magazine, including a feature about a character named "Nigel Shiftright - Automotive Anachronism." Nigel is an Anglophile, loving all things British and imagining himself to be an unrecognized member of British royalty living in the United States with a fleet of spindly-wheeled old cars at his estate on Flapping Bonnet Lane. Nigel refuses to ride in any "sports car" that has electric windows. He also has personal conversations with his vehicles. The magazine did a six-page story about the car last year titled "Four Angry Cylinders."

I drive my MG-TC daily around southern Marin County and occasionally venture to San Francisco in it. Inevitably, when I fire up the MG, I imagine that I am motoring off along a hedgerow-edged road to a temporary airfield on an estate north of London, not far from the English Channel, where my Spitfire fighter is being fueled and tuned. The year is 1944. That's the way it is when you're driving a time machine.

submitted by Dave Barry

About Those New Lifetime Super Air Filters

(editor's note: OK, OK, I'm always taken by this sort of thing - I love the advertising, I love the colourful packaging, I love being cutting edge, all of that sort of stuff. I ran STP in my drag car in the 1960s - Slick 50 in my 65 Malibu in the 1980s, water wetter in my MG TD in the 1990s, and more recently, I put K & N "Filtercharger" reusable, low restriction air cleaner elements on both my daily runner '73 Nova 350 and the PT Cruiser that replaced it. I swear that I could "feel" the improvement and the \$50 cost

would be justified after just five cleanings and re-oilings. Many of my friends just rolled their eyes and said I was gullible (and worse!). One, a recently retired Jag factory guy who uses "numbers" instead of "feelings" like flighty writers and artists, found some facts to ponder about these aftermarket super filters Rick)

As seen on JagTalk.com
Posted by Steve Hannes
May 29, 2007

Thought I'd post some hopefully useful information for those interested in wanting to improve air induction on their Jaguars through "expensive" filter alternatives. If you're following my blog, you know that my 2002 XK8 came with a K&N replacement filter that I promptly replaced with a paper element.

The popular choice appears to be K&N oil bath air filters in two versions - a simple direct cartridge replacement and the more expensive cone types claiming to offer more HP. It's not my intention to single out K&N, but it does appear to be the most popular aftermarket choice and I have some real data on them. I'll use the XK8 as it is now the center of my attention, but same data should apply to the S, X and XJ.

These test results are not mine, but come from a guy in CA who owns an XK8 and coincidentally also works at a dyno shop. He conducted three controlled dyno tests on his XK8 with very interesting outcomes. Here are the test descriptions:

1. First he dynoed the stock air induction system with a new Fram paper element (about \$12usd).
2. Then the stock induction system with a K&N replacement element treated with oil as recommended by K&N.
3. Then the stock air induction system with no air filter of any kind.

Conclusion - All three tests came within less than a 1 hp range! The difference between the Fram paper element and no filter at all didn't even produce 1 full HP gain proving that it is very difficult to improve a factory engineered design. The difference between the Fram and the K&N was nil. There was no measurable improvement using the K&N. The cone type was not tested, but it is suspected this system will actually produce less HP as the air charge becomes super heated by engine compartment heat.

Now comes the other bad news. Because the K&N uses oil on the element, this oil is sucked into the TB coating everything with oil along the way, including the MAFS. I recently removed and cleaned the MAF sensor in my XK8 and, sure enough, it was coated with oil and carbon deposits. So was the TB which I covered in my blog.

A dirty MAFS cannot accurately measure air flow so the ECM does not deliver the correct air/fuel ratio to the engine in the operating temp range from warm up to op temps. Both the MAFS and TB, when dirty like this, can cause rough idling, poor gas mileage, hard starting, etc., but might not be off enough to set a trouble code.

A note about dyno testing (from this guy in CA) - Dyno tests can be "rigged" to produce almost any results the tester is looking for, so be careful of dyno results used as advertisements as they are about as meaningless in real life as can be imagined.

Hope this helps decision making, but K&N won't be too happy with me.

submitted by John Quilter

I Hate My Classic Car

Thank goodness they don't make 'em like that anymore.

By Paul Boutin

My wife and I ditched our dull late-model sedans a few years ago. We adopted a 1963 Studebaker Avanti (pictured on the Reader's Rides page attachment) as our only car, driven once or twice a week from our downtown San Francisco home. I blame the Avanti's seductive powers for our infatuation. It looks futuristic even today - Ethan Hawke drove one in the space-age fantasy film Gattaca and the car is loaded with luxury options.

When we took our first spin, it was like yachting down the boulevard. Its engine is free of the emissions controls that hamper modern motors, so you feel a direct connection between your foot on the gas and the tires on the pavement. Without today's federal mandates on its construction, the Avanti sports chrome bumpers fore and aft instead of crumple zones. It serves a spacious, wraparound view to passengers, unobstructed by headrests, airbags, or complicated belts. The car's body, designed by the legendary Raymond Loewy, flips the bird to modern crash tests, while its interior is designed to resemble an airplane cockpit full of overhead switches that nowadays. Every grocery outing became a pleasure cruise. As many a passerby reminded us, they don't make 'em like that anymore. But several years with this rolling museum piece has taught me the truth: Even the best old cars sucked.

To begin with, they're hard to start in the morning. The Avanti doesn't have computer-controlled injectors to squirt the exact amount of gasoline into each cylinder of its engine at the precise moment. It doesn't have computer-controlled anything. Instead, it's got a carburetor, a comparatively crude device that passively mists fuel into the engine's air intake.

The carburetor is dumb. It works great at full throttle but is bad at starting the engine. It fails completely when facing uphill in chilly weather, a frequent position in San Francisco. It's not uncommon for our romantic dates to end with the hood open and me draped over the engine, trying to "choke it" by blocking the carburetor's airflow with my bare hands while my wife cranks the starter. When the engine kicks in, I spring back to avoid its big metal 1963 cooling fan, which doubles as a finger-chopper. This was all kind of sexy the first time I did it. Nowadays it's just an unnecessary risk, since whenever you turn the key on even the cheapest modern car, an amazing thing happens: It starts. Every time.

Because the Avanti predates Ralph Nader, it's as devoid of modern safety perks as it is of emission controls. There are seat belts, but no air bags or crumple zones. No supercomputer-generated crash studies went into the design. We have friends who refuse to ride in it. And you can see their point, since the brakes have a habit of dropping out all at once, just like in Hitchcock movies. Old brake systems didn't have backup cylinders in case one failed. After my wife lost the brakes three blocks above Fisherman's Wharf and nearly ended up sleeping with the sea lions, we decided that classic cool only went so far. Our mechanic cobbled together a modern brake upgrade from a mix of brand-new Mustang and Chevy truck parts.

The Avanti is a sexy-sounding machine. It doesn't purr, it rumbles like a big cat. Its exhaust tone, unimpeded by pollution controls, wows pedestrians and passengers. But try driving the four hours to Tahoe with it. Today's cars have much better noise insulation, not just for engine noise but for wind noise and for rolling-tire noise from the road. Cruising Interstate 80 in a new Cadillac is like lounging in a living room with a wraparound view. The Avanti is more like flying a small plane. The car sails beautifully at 90 mph, but the constant rush of noise is sure to give you a headache before you get to wherever you're going.

We've learned to live with all of the above<sort of<but the real miracle of modern automobiles is how long they go between breakdowns. After 10 years with a Honda Civic, I'm spoiled. Our car's cutting-edge 1963 tech is feeble and flaky by today's standards, even with new parts. The electric windows are dodgy. The power steering leaks<this model was known for it, even when new. The car goes through a lot of oil and is prone to overheating in hot weather, where "hot" means above room temperature. Manufacturing processes have gotten so much better since the days of chrome bumpers that cars just don't break anywhere near as often as they used to.

The Avanti now slumbers in our garage, broken again, while my wife and I ponder its future. Despite the new radiator we put in two years ago, it's leaking coolant and overheating. Friends we meet ask us how our car is doing, but we're not sure we're up for another multithousand-dollar round of maintenance for a car we can't trust for a 30-mile trip. The very last time I piloted the thing home, one eye on the road and the other glued frantically to the climbing temperature gauge, I nearly ran down a gray-haired man in a crosswalk. He gave the Avanti a long, loving look and chirped to me, "I haven't seen one of those in years! They sure don't make 'em like that any more." The poor guy clearly had no idea why I snapped back at him, "Be glad they don't."

submitted by Dave Barry