

The First Family Trek in VW Bus

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It is surprising to realizing that as head of this family of Zs, we have owned more than twenty automobiles. Of course men fall in love with things, and with women too. What man hasn't placed his transportation on a pedestal, even given it a female name, creating a persona on wheels.

Briefly, I learn to drive in the Navy, age 22. On marriage at 29, neither Barbara or I had owned an auto. When we buy a home, then vehicles retrieved from a junk yard, more or less as transport. Soon a 1939 DeSoto sedan, worn out too when bought, yet reliable. Chrysler made great engines.

Comes 1955, the first new automobile. Through a Navy Reserve friend with a distributorship in Hope, Kansas, we buy a light brown Plymouth 2 door Station Wagon. We identify all extras, there were few, pay \$1840.00, cost plus \$25.00 for the Distributor who will never see the car. A train ride to Detroit pick it up at the factory, drive it home.

This would be the second most memorable auto the family owned. It was utterly reliable, economic, comfortable for the growing family.

In 1958 while on Navy Reserve two week training in Africa, a few days of R&R were spent driving from Gibraltar to Malaga Spain. Our group of five rented a VW bus with a driver. Summer time, six men, short distance, flat terrain; delightful. The vehicle made a good impression.

In 1962 we plan our first visit to my parents/friends in Pennsylvania. A new vehicle should assure a breakdown free passage. Barbara and I drove several vehicles, liked the spaciousness of the VW Bus, bought.

This became our most memorable family transportation.

Delivery from the Volkswagen dealer 1700 So Colorado Blvd was flawless, completed two weeks before the trek. One week-end later we drive two other adult couples on a Leadville visit. This is when I learn that the enlarged engine meant little to the Rockies. On Highways, still two lanes, we accumulated a constant stream of unhappy drivers. Low gear, needed for most climbs, struggled to exceed 25 MPM. The two hour trip there took more than three. We were late for the adventure we had expected to enjoy. Homeward-bound, downhill, kept all speed limits.

That lesson learned, we leave for Pennsylvania 10:00 pm. spring 1962 mid week ,few vehicles on the new Freeway. Hours later my wife reminds we we should get gas for most stations visible are closed. I had observed this also. We drive another 100 miles without seeing gas station lights. About half hour after sunrise we are in mid-Kansas,
at the side of the road out of gas.

The deserved sermon finally ends, and the oldest of six children enjoying that Kansas wheat field and sunrise is enlisted to travel east to next filling station, guy gas, return. The first vehicle thumbed, stops, agrees with the plan. The seven of us begin to explore further into flat terrain.

Traffic remains light. An hour later a Kansas State Patrol car zooms by on the other half of the divided highway. In another ten minutes a State Patrol car stops behind the VW.
Out pops a smiling Patrolman and our son with the gas.

That fresh early morning start, and son Tom telling of riding with the Kansas State Patrolman, 100 MPH, chasing and ticketing a speeder, enlivened the next hour. When we stop for breakfast and gas, all moments this day are memorable adventure.

Wait, there is still another 1000 miles to there, then return. This is got to be a long story.



File photo, similar year model, we have no sun-roof.