

Hand-Me-Down Cars

By Marilyn Reeves

The only car I've ever had to buy was the one I'm driving now – a 2004 Toyota Corolla – which was purchased with my 401-K money after I retired in 2006. All the other cars I've owned were furnished by my Dad. I know what you're thinking ... that was way beyond generous on his part, and I shall forever be in his debt. But his motives weren't entirely altruistic – there was method in his madness.

The thing is, Dad had a 'thing' about cars. About every three or four years, he'd get the itch to get himself a new used car, and my sisters and I – whichever one of us was most in need at the time – were the beneficiaries of the cast-offs.

My sister Janet was the first to inherit. She got that stuffy old black Kaiser that we all hated when Dad bought himself a nice two-tone green Pontiac – the car I learned to drive in.

When Tom Reeves and I got married in 1963, he let me drive his 1950 Buick now and then. That thing was a Sherman Tank! But it did have power steering – MY power, that is. When I tried to parallel park that monster, I huffed and I puffed and I nearly collapsed from fatigue. And I was 21 and in fairly good shape at the time.

But when we separated a few years later, I was left in need of a car. So Dad went out and bought himself a black and yellow Hudson (nicknamed The Bumblebee for some reason) and I inherited the Chevy Nova that he'd been driving. I literally drove that car to death. When it pulled into my driveway on its last day, it simply coughed out a death rattle and died on the spot.

The next car I received was a brand new Dodge Dart. Dad got a two-for-one deal on a couple of Dodges, so he gave Rosie a compact and me the Dart. It was the only new car I've ever had, and when it was a week old it got hit by a semi! It wasn't quite as dramatic as it sounds, however. We were at a double-turn intersection, and that big truck – needing his lane plus half of mine in order to make his turn – scraped off all the 'pretty' from the side of that brand new car!

But I drove it for several years until my 50th birthday when Dad bought me a used 1986 Monte Carlo – *vroom, vroom!* My son used to tease me about driving that big hot rod. The hood was so long I could barely see over it, but did it ever have power! I could pass all the other cars going up Crow Hill from Bailey to Conifer and just grin and wave as I watched them slug along. But even hot Monte Carlos don't last forever. It was replaced by another Chevy Nova, which I drove until the mid-90's when Dad passed his Buick sedan on to me after buying himself a shiny black Ford Fairlane. But I think I got the better end of the deal – I just loved that Buick! And this one did come with power steering.

But alas, it finally gave up the ghost and I am currently the owner of the aforementioned 2004 Corolla, which is going to have to last me for the rest of my driving days, as I don't have another 401-K and Dad's no longer around to pass along another one of his hand-me-downs.