

YO

The spring breezes were light, dry and the sweet aroma of wild flowers made it a perfect afternoon for a bike ride. Linda reluctantly agreed as she climbed aboard the Gold Wing and we rode away from the house leaving behind the dog, the kids and the day-to-day problems of raising a family. The soft open air was in our faces and the aroma of someone frying chicken made our mouths water.

After a short stop at KFC for a drumstick each which was our failed attempt at satisfying the sudden desire for fried chicken, we traveled on. The openness of riding a motorbike has many advantages that all of our senses can appreciate, but not without risk of bodily harm or even death. Someone once said that riding motorcycles is similar to a man chasing married women; meaning that about the time you get good at one or the other, you get killed. However, when the conditions are right and all the senses are engaged; time itself becomes richer, the colors of life more vibrant, and all the dangers involved seem to be worth the risk. The thrills just last for such a short period of time. Then they are gone, and motorcycle riding becomes old hat and a little boring. Still, like flying which I haven't done in more than five years, I get the occasional urge once in a while to climb aboard a slick machine and make holes in the wind. I suppose that age and maturity may have something to do with the fading away of that once burning desire, but, both flying and motorcycle riding are things of my past, and I seldom really miss them.

On that Spring day, we ended up at a Toyota Dealership in Norman, Oklahoma's 'Mile of Cars' where a friend worked. He was eager to show us around the dealership, although, we weren't particularly interested in buying anything, we just wanted to take a nice bike ride and coincidentally see our old friend. We guessed that he was probably working at the time, and this was our excuse for the stop.

It wasn't long before we were the owner of a new, shiny, red, 1990, 4 cylinder, Toyota Pickup truck that had that brand new smell inside. Linda drove it home, and I followed behind with a tinge of jealousy in my heart that I couldn't be driving my new truck. That was over twenty years ago, and the little red YO truck has devoted her heart and soul to our family.

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I can barely remember my birth or my coming together as they say in that noisy assembly line, but I do remember that dark, silent, rock and roll ride on the ship from Japan to Oakland where we were disembarked. There were times on that ship that I thought I would puke 10W30 all over the place, but I made it, and life was much better when I came out of the bowels of that ship and caught my first breath of fresh American air. After that rough experience on the boat everything has been awesome in comparison. I loved the open-air train ride to who knows where and then the truck-ride through my beautiful new home, America, to a dealership in Norman, Oklahoma.

There were about ten of us little trucks that made the trip all the way to Norman. We were all cleaned up and placed on the side of the building. I was one of the first to be adopted by my new family. My four little cylinders were happy to show them my stuff, and I was grateful to finally be at home.

On that sunny day, they came to the dealership riding on a Gold Wing motorcycle; Linda on the back and the Boss driving. They were an odd looking couple and I have often

wondered how they came together in the first place. As the years have changed us all and as we gather knowledge along the way, I have come to realize that they both are a couple of the most stubborn people in the entire world. They both seemed determined to make the marriage work or at least stay married come hell or high water, and there has been a good deal of both of those.

The Boss had been flying for an east coast company called "Presidential Airways" when he made arrangements for adopting me. I was born to travel and although in the past twenty years I've only logged 260,000 miles, I'm still fit as ever and can attain and sustain speeds of up to 100 MPH continually. I've never missed a change of fresh oil which keeps me feeling clean and strong. I have had a couple nosebleeds in the past year or two. My original water pump gave up the ghost around 245 thousand miles and I had my first timing chain change at 250 thousand miles. When they did that job they put in a cheap rebuilt water pump and it started leaking in the past 500 miles. Other than those nosebleeds I've required a couple of alternators, a few batteries, new tires every 60 to 80 thousand miles, and that is it. I'm fit as a fiddle and can make another 100 thousand miles with ease.

Everyone calls me a YO truck ever since the Boss peeled the first T, the first O the second T and the A off of my tailgate which left the word YO. There has been many a man ask my Boss where it was manufactured, and how could they get one. They would say that they had never seen a YO truck before. The boss would play along and tell them that the truck was manufactured in Japan, and they could find one at any dealership across the country. This answer usually would satisfy the inquirer and they would walk away contented.

There have been numerous times that I've been a little abused such as the time when the Boss forgot that I was in third gear and we spent the next 15 minutes over-revved doing 70 MPH. I sometimes wonder what that man is thinking! But, we survived all that because he is very particular about getting my 10W30 changed every 2500 miles. Then there was the two times that he taught his children to drive. Andy wasn't too bad, he got the hang of using my clutch after killing my engine a couple of times, but Ashley was a little different. After ten attempts to get going the Boss started raising his voice a little and this upset his daughter to tears. They both hung in there, and Ashley finally got the hang of using the clutch. The Boss then made her drive to the steepest hill in the neighborhood where she learned even better how to use the clutch. This ordeal got my clutch-plate and pressure-plate a little hot, but she did just fine after the Boss showed her how to use my park brake to keep from rolling backward. Both of those kids passed their driving test in my chassis, and they both passed the first attempt. Ashley was crying after her test, but she passed. She told the Boss that the examiner yelled at her, but he passed her and told her that she had a lot to learn. The Boss told her that some people just have to be the way they are—that it was all in their chromosomes and not to worry about it. The Boss is proud of both of them now and claims that they are both top-notch drivers, however, he claims that Ashley has a lead foot on occasion. The Boss is the guilty one here because back when the kids were learning to drive he talked the talk, but failed to walk the walk. Now that he is walking the walk, Ashley just hates to have him as her passenger because he is constantly asking her to slow down. All I can say is that that is just dessert for the Boss because he should have set a better example, and he didn't.

The kids are both grown now and have their own cars, but on occasion when they need to haul something, I get loaned out. It is always good to see them now that they are mature. I still have a broken rearview mirror that is barely useable thanks to the roughhousing of Andy and a couple of his friends back when he was a pup. Something about teenage boys that require them to physically abuse each other. Little trucks like myself

can't handle much of it. But, back then Andy insisted on doing it, and it cost me and him both.

I am still saving the Boss money, because of my frugal use of low lead, the Boss chooses me over my younger big-brother, the Black Tundra. I can pull a good size load but getting stopped with it is another story.

The Boss has driven me all over the country, especially the western half, I've been to the Grand Canyon, Dallas, San Antonio, Tucson, El Paso, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Tulsa, Memphis, Nashville and all over Colorado to mention only a few of the places that I have been. The very worst part of my job has been sitting in airport parking lots for days and sometimes weeks. They are the noisiest places in the world, and very hot in Phoenix and Las Vegas especially during the summer months. I have seen the mercury rise to 126 degrees on more than one occasion. Oklahoma City is hot in the summer and cold in the winter with wind that is unbelievable. I for one am so happy to go between Mustang and the Boss' farm in northeast Texas. Once we get to the farm, I am parked under a great shade tree where the wind seldom gets stronger than a breeze. The only sound is of cattle and horses, and from late winter until earlier winter the sound of songbirds fill the day with melody starting long before first light and lasting until late into the night.

There are times that we go all over the farm which can be trying for me and him both, the pasture is rougher than a cob, and tromping around in the back woods is quite worrisome due to deep holes left by heavy rain followed by a tractor which leaves tracks sometimes over a foot deep. This does more than just exercise my suspension—I bottom out on occasion and this makes the Boss extremely uncomfortable. It hurts me when I do this, but the Boss is the one driving.

All in all, the closer we get to the farm the lazier both the Boss and I become. It is just the way a couple of almost-retired-beings get when they get farther along in years. I am past the life expectancy of an ordinary pickup truck, and I feel great.

~As True as a story can be, by AWD