

## Vehicle Vexation

My six cylinder vehicle doesn't struggle with the cold until the temperature gets down to around -25, so last week I was prepared for the cold snap. So I thought. The timer I had set for my vehicle was set to come on at 6 a.m., after my husband's vehicle timer shuts off, since having the two plugged in at the same time blows the breaker. I discovered that an hour and a half isn't enough time to warm a stone cold engine. When 7:30 came around I pressed the remote start and nothing happened.

So I get out our battery booster and raise the hood. This is where the vexation comes in.

Why, in this world of ultra-mini computer chips and electronics, do the auto makers cram everything in so tight together under the hood? Not that a person needs a lot of room to boost a battery, because you don't. It is getting to be more and more of an irritation to me that the auto makers are making it so difficult to do any maintenance let alone repairs on our vehicles.

If you were to read my grade 12 year book, under my picture you would read "Bernie most of all likes working on her car". The "car" being referred to was a 1960 Pontiac, which was 15 years old at the time, but it was my first car and I loved her dearly. My school mates may remember seeing me after school with the hood up on my car, air cleaner off, sticking my rat-tail comb into the carburetor to hold the choke open while starting my "gray beast." Whenever something went wrong with my car, one of my brothers would be kind enough to diagnose the problem and then tell me how to fix it.

I was determined to have wheels and actually enjoyed learning everything about my car. I replaced the wheel bearings, the starter, the fuel pump and overhauled the carburetor myself (no more rat-tail comb trick). When I took the carburetor off, I simply climbed right into the motor section with my foot on the frame and my butt on the fender well. I had lots of elbow room to work and a clear vision of what I was doing. Granted, that car didn't have air conditioning and the only thing power were the disc brakes, but the engine was a lot bigger than the engines of today. I could still have hidden two friends under the hood beside that motor if need be.

Everything is so compacted under the hood of vehicles today you can hardly get your hand near the motor, let alone tools. Chances are the part you want to have a good look at is hidden behind something else. Why can't auto manufacturers go back to the styles with the longer hoods from the sixties and early seventies' sports cars? They were considered aerodynamic and each one had its own style. They would have enough room under the hood to accommodate all the electronic gadgets of today with room to spare. I'm sure mechanics would love this idea, too. When you work under the hood of a vehicle, there is no such thing as having too much space to work.

The cars look so much alike today, they just don't have the character of cars like the Road Runner, Barracuda, GTO, Camaro, Thunderbird or Cougar. I'm sure auto sales would jump dramatically for the domestic auto makers if they would just take a small step back in time to duplicate these designs once again.

I felt that old feeling of accomplishment getting my vehicle started that morning, although I was an hour and a half late for work. I drove with a feeling of sadness for the way cars have changed. The feeling of familiarity and bonding that I had with my first car will be something my grandchildren will probably never experience. They won't be able to fix anything on their own vehicles and learn what makes them work. Although I do enjoy the electronic extras on a vehicle, the changes in style and the way the manufacturers put it all together is definitely not progress.