



I avoid the July 4th classic auto parade every year because I still miss her. Don't want to be reminded that I let her go. Still not over it after 24 years. She wasn't my first, she wasn't even my best. But she was with me from 1978 to 1993, from the fading of my youth into the blooming of middle age.

She was a green International Scout pickup with a white camper top bought in 1978 and sacrificed in 1993 for cold cash. She brought good money because International pickups were extinct by then. Tired of boarding my horses, I was driving around in a new GMC, looking at places, figuring out what I'd need for a down payment. Two older fellows were pulled off the road and one of them had an International. I stuck my head out the window and asked if they had any interest in buying my Scout. They did.

I negotiated a good price, and made a friend of the buyer. I handed him my file of notes and subsequent invoices and got a lecture about telling a mechanic too much. Mansplaining. But he let me keep everything I stored in the camper at his place till I moved. He cured a few problems the Scout had developed and resold her to the guy who uses her in parades, still, as far as I know.

Before I had the Scout, I bought my first pickup, a half ton International, red and strong in heart. Widowed early, I needed to feel powerful and in control. In 1972 that wasn't an accepted attitude for young widows. Plus, inflation hit like a comet and gas soared from 29 cents to over a buck. Lots of money for someone attending college, earning a living and running weekend trail rides. But I was sick of driving a used Crown Victoria, which was out of sync with my personality and had a nasty habit of accelerating suddenly. Driving the International gave me a sense of adventure during economic chaos and long, hard days. Six years later an accident on ice caused some damage, and I traded for the Scout.

I did minor maintenance on the Scout, like replacing the gear shift cable, but soon job responsibilities left less free time as

the Scout aged. Every once in a while she just wouldn't start. After obvious but unsuccessful replacement parts, I put the occasional non-starting off to jealousy of my new GMC pickup. I kept the Scout running, when she chose to, until I sold her. I wore out the GMC commuting 90 miles round trip so I could live in the country, and next made the worst buy of my life. The new pickup I bought barely outlasted the skimpy warranty. I'd tell you the make but I know some may take offense when I call it a horror. The GMC was serviceable, not great, but this new pickup--well, let's just say it was so poorly made if you tied a rope to the trailer hitch, you couldn't pull a calf out of the mud before the transmission squealed. I got tired of breaking down on the freeway. It had to go



I wasn't ready to buy a car even with the commute--good grief, I wasn't that old. But I'd been laid off, took a job for half salary, and I could afford only a plain work truck in 2002. I bought a half-ton Dodge Ram with push button locks. No extra gee-gaws. Fifteen years and 223,225 miles later, we still do pretty well for two old gals. Who says senior citizens don't have fun! Last week I hauled a half ton of gravel to put down between pasture gates. Never have broken down on the road. The check engine light came on about four or five years ago, but I got home just fine. I don't plan on selling her

ever. I'll just bury her in the north forty when the time comes.

In 2014 around 220,000 miles, I semi-retired the Ram to country duties and short trips. The AC gave up the ghost after twelve years and I was too cheap to have it fixed. Actually, I was scared to let anyone mess with her inner parts unnecessarily. I gave in and bought a car, but, hey, it's called an Outback! All wheel drive that's great on hilly terrain. One difference I notice is that no one tailgates the Ram, but a few drug-store cowboys in pickups that never get dirty try to herd me when I'm in my Outback. So far, they've just given up and moved on.



My first transportation choice to enjoy the Hill Country would be a horse, next a pickup rather than a car, but passing years limit options. If I were young, I'd learn about motorcycles and ride Devil's Backbone. But adventure comes in many ways, so I'll combust my brain by rereading Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. And, just for fun, Fannie Flagg's *The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion: A Novel*. It's about Polish-American Catholic girls like me who knew their way around an engine before you needed computer analytics. Some kindred spirits could probably be found around St. Stanislaw's in Bandera, a gorgeous place to refresh your soul and contemplate where you've been and what your next options may be.



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