

COMMENT

On the road again with the Lil Red Rocket

By Ted Brown
tedbit@hotmail.com



A Ted Bit

I truly believe, in everyone's life, there is something that stirs up frivolous sentimentality.

It could be a beat-up comfortable old chair, maybe an old hat or jacket, that is probably beyond its best before date or at least out of fashion.

Mine is a car.

It's the Lil Red Rocket my baby, my toy, my one and only indulgence that I keep in the garage, pulling her out from under wraps on April 20, and then packing her back into storage Oct. 20, every year.

I bought her July 3, 1997, and she still occupies a spot in the garage and my heart.

Years ago she was unofficially named by former Halton Hills CAO Bob Austin.

One morning as I drove to work, I met Bob on the road, en route to the Civic Centre. We waved at each other in passing.

When I arrived at the office, there was an email waiting for me, stating simply, Ted, the Little Red Rocket has a driving light out.

It wasn't an official decree from the Town or anything grand, but for some reason, it stuck.

And from that moment on, I was the pilot of the Lil Red Rocket. Every year, she took me on various jaunts all over the province, throughout spring, summer and fall.

Until last year.

For some reason, I ran out of time. I paid the insurance for the summer, and we had a few drives in mid-April and May probably three times. Then June rolled around, and with June being my birthday, I had to book her in for emission testing, to renew her licence sticker. I never got around to it.

And with no sticker, I couldn't legally drive her.

June became July, then August and before I knew it, we were edging up on September.

To top it off, her battery went dead, and the two rear tires became cracked.

I wrote it off as a bad summer no Lil Red

Rocket.

Fast forward to this past week.

I had to move a couple things in the garage, and looked at her, all dusty from being in storage, complete with two flat tires.

I felt ashamed.

I knew the battery was toast, so I fetched my booster, connected the cables, and turned the key.

Vrooom! She roared to life!

I inflated her tires, backed her out of the garage, and let her sit running for a half hour.

I set the time on the clock, pushed play on the CD player, and let Eric Clapton's *Blues* album lull me to another time and place.

It was great!

Impetuously, I drove my truck to town to buy a new battery. Back home, I installed the battery, and fired her up.

Vrooom!

She was a mess, but man, she looked spectacular.

Earlier that day I had driven The Sidekick to work. That night, unknown to her, I drove the Lil Red Rocket to pick her up.

I pulled into her workplace parking lot in the pouring rain, and waited in the car.

I waited. And waited. And waited some more.

I finally pulled right up to the door of her office, and a look of recognition flashed across her face.

I was expecting the F150, she said, Not the Lil Red Rocket.

We took a long drive home, in spite of the rain, the tunes cranked up, to enjoy the Lil Red Rocket a bit longer.

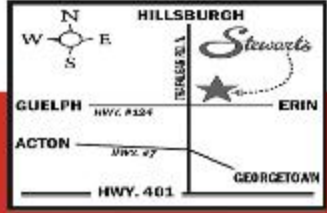
As I parked her in the garage, I knew I'll have to spend money on an emission test, and new tires, but that's okay.

Cuz the Lil Red Rocket is back on the road again



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