

LOW HEELS

As your new car ages it may become more attractive to thieves

Your five-year-old car sits next to a brand new model in a parking lot.

Any car thief would steal the new one, right?

Not necessarily.

As your car ages, it may become even more attractive to thieves. From the time a car is new until it's about four to six years old, its popularity with thieves increases. According to the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB), the top 25 stolen cars in 1992 were 1985-1989 models.

Why are older cars popular with thieves?

For several reasons: As a car ages, its parts may become more valuable, particularly if a model line had few major changes over time.

An older car is also less likely to be protected by an anti-theft device.

Many owners hesitate to install such devices as a car ages and loses its value.

As a car ages, some owners tend to value it less and take fewer anti-theft measures.

While your car could always be a target of thieves, it will remain most attractive until it's five or six years old. So continue taking precautions as your car ages.

How You Can Give An Auto Thief A Hard Time

■ Close all windows, lock all doors and pocket the key

■ Park with the front wheels turned sharply to the right or left, making it difficult for the professional thief to tow your car away.

■ When parking a car with an automatic transmission, place the vehicle in "park." If you have a standard, place the vehicle in gear. This will make it difficult for a thief to tow your car.

■ Activate any theft deterrent devices you may have.

■ Put packages or valuables out of sight.

■ Park in a well-lighted area.

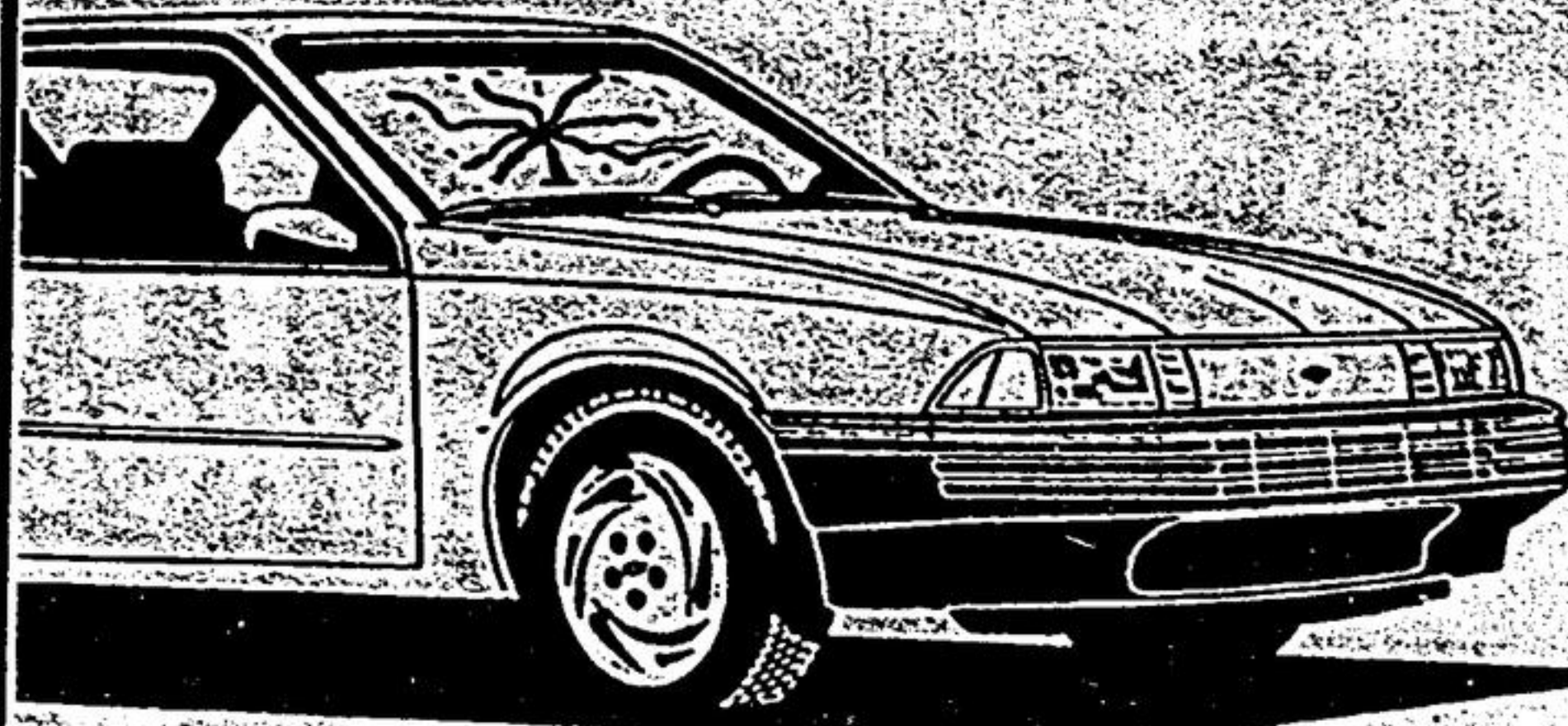
■ If you leave your car in a parking lot or garage, leave only the ignition key with the attendant. Retain all others. Make sure your key number does not appear in the key you leave.

■ Keep license and registration in your wallet or purse. If left in the car, these documents can be used by thieves to sell your car or to impersonate you when challenged by police.

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