

Cleaning car interior a real treasure hunt

One of the less jolly aspects of life is that as you get older, so do your appliances, cats, children and cars.



Kate Gilderdale

Kate's Corner

Take my trusty, rusty Tercel, now into its twelfth year. I rarely lock it these days unless Mr. Wallethead is about, and then only because he is into security. I point out that the cost of the wire and the time it would take to break in, amortized over five minutes, would probably be of greater worth than the car itself, but as he rightly counters, there is the radio to consider.

He is kind enough not to mention the raft of other stuff (movies, books, pine needles, election pamphlets) which gets transported far and wide because no one thinks to remove it after its inaugural journey. And while much of it would never be missed, one can hardly expect a burglar to remove the detritus and overlook the occasional gem.

So the other day I cleaned out the interior while ignoring the exterior, which is held together mostly by dirt. Any efforts to render it clean would likely result in its total disintegration. My initial inspiration for the inside job came from the fact that I was driving into the sun and was barely able to see through the windshield.

I turned on the wipers and they smeared the grime outside more evenly across its surface, which did little to improve the overall picture. My daughter - the Einstein of the family - wiped the interior passenger side with a Kleenex and Eureka! - an identifiable streetscape.

Filled with evangelical zeal, I brought out the heavy artillery: cloths, paper towel, window washer and major league cleaners. Within half an hour, the boot prints were gone from the dashboard, the instrument panels were gleaming and the mud-coloured mats were restored to pristine black.

I was reunited with one earring, three cassette tapes, The Hippopotamus by Stephen Fry and a long-lost glove. It was an emotional moment and one which led me to lock the car once too often. As I have said, the car is old and although it is in fine fettle mechanically - thanks entirely to Mr. Wallethead - other parts of it are going into the same inevitable decline as parts of its owner.

When I tried to gain legal entrance with my key, the lock stubbornly refused to yield to my advances and I was obliged to let myself in on the passenger side and sidle across. This manoeuvre is okay if undertaken after dark, but should never be attempted in broad daylight on Main Street.

My tribulations put me in mind of the time my mother met us at the airport in London a few years ago. Before we arrived, she wrote advising me that she now had a two-door car. I stupidly assumed, having read her letter, that she had bought a replacement

for her previous, four-door model.

When we staggered into the parking lot, she waved us all to the passenger side - the car was the same, but the doors on the driver's side were hopelessly buckled

as the result of an accident, effectively reducing the overall number by half.

They say that when one door closes, another opens. Too bad it's always on the wrong side.

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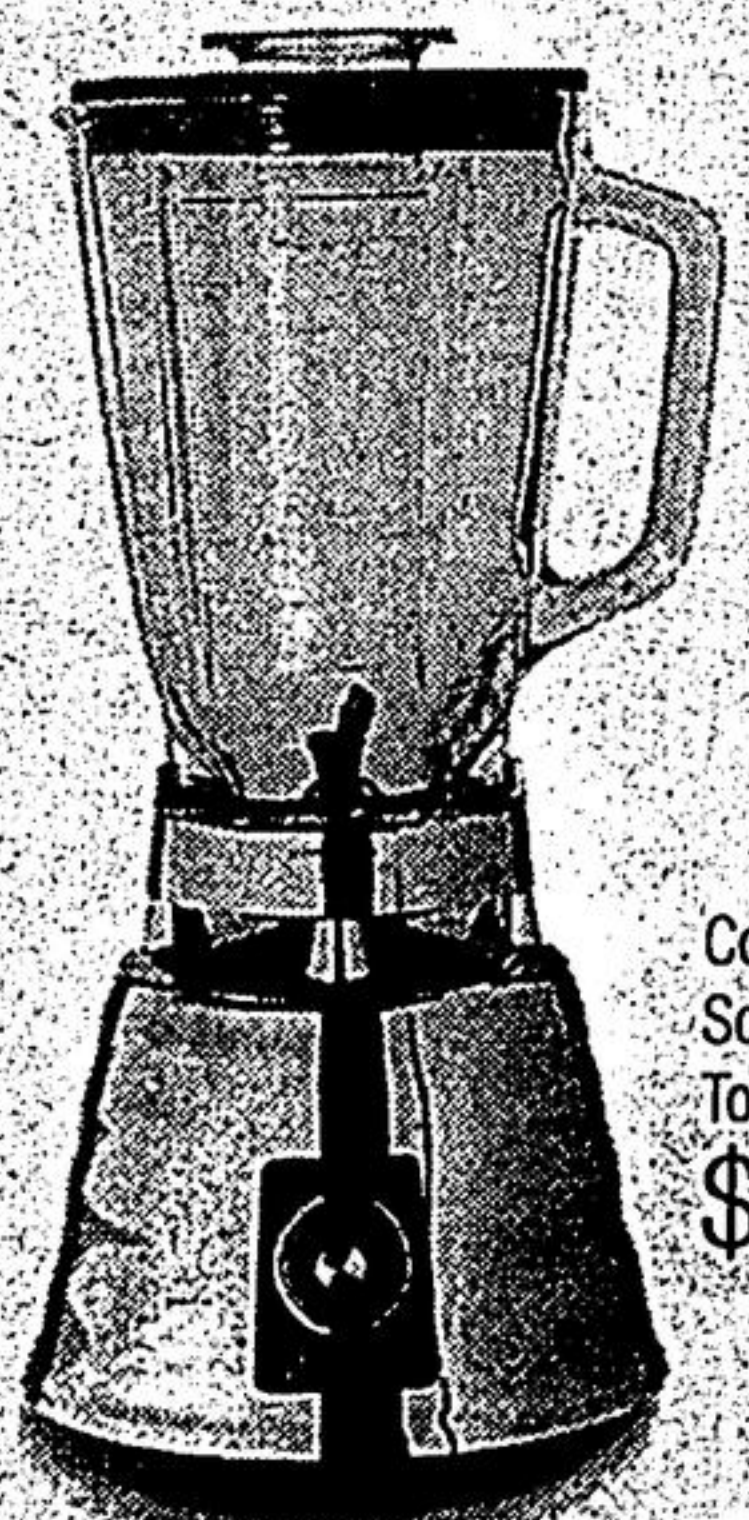
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