

Fascination with new vehicles never loses its shine

I'm a car buff. Always have been. Always will be.

A truck buff, too, although this interest has waned since Ford sold out its heavy-haulers to Freightliner and changed the name to Sterling.

Regardless, anything on four wheels fascinates me, be it old, new or something in between.

Even as a teenager, my idea of an enjoyable Sunday afternoon was recording makes and models of every vehicle travelling Hwy 7.

Later, with sons Barry, Paul and Neil, we'd sit for hours on a mid-week afternoon in a coffee shop near Highland Creek and watch tractor-trailer drivers manoeuvre their big rigs in and out of a parking area barely large enough to accommodate one, let alone 10.

How one man could fit something so huge into a stall so small always amazed me. And still does.



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

To this day, whenever I see one of these diesel-powered juggernauts parked on the road shoulder, for whatever reason, I'll stop and take a look.

The same goes for cars. If someone in a brand new Corvette, Jaguar

or Mustang pulls into Jim Hortons, I'm out the door like a shot. Owners, for the most part, seem to appreciate the attention. They're more than willing to discuss the pros and cons of their investments.

Equally intriguing is trade-in time for my own vehicle. It's a kind of love-hate relationship. I love to dream but dislike decisions. Tire-kicking costs so little but finalizing a purchase is expensive. And the price escalates each year.

Since 1951, I've owned or leased 28 cars. With the exception of one Volkswagen, all have been Fords or GMs. No Chryslers, at least not yet. The best? A 1955 Ford, a 1958 Pontiac, a 1959 Chev and a 1997 Mercury. Truth is, I've never had a car I didn't like. But, as in all things new, some were better than others.

With the lease deadline on my 2000 Grand Am fast approaching, I

had to make a move. But a move to what? That was the question.

Yes, I did my homework, accepting the advice of those who know, or should know. I also established a target price, vowing not to go beyond. Last, but certainly not least, I took several for spins.

At the 11th hour, with my mind made up, I headed out to close the deal. In doing so I stopped for but a minute, to check the display at Giles Chev-Olds here in Stouffville. And there, before my very eyes, was the car I knew I had to have — a 2003 Oldsmobile Alero.

"Take it home and let Jean have a look," suggested salesperson Bob Davies.

I did and she loved it.

But I didn't sign on the dotted line, not immediately. I wanted to sleep on it. Next morning, I was more certain than ever this was the car for us. Yes, I dickered.

While the Oldsmobile line will soon, like the Hudson, Studebaker and DeSoto, cease to exist, I don't care. For I'm driving a car with

everything I want and need.

Others I talk to are equally pleased. Aleros are everywhere, popping off lots at a pace equal to Chevy Cavaliers and Ford Focus.

Equally satisfying to me is the fact I purchased where I live. These are the people who regularly support my endeavours. I should also support theirs.

Admittedly, there's something scary about buying a car today. Pushy salespeople have given the business a bad name.

"Just sign here so we can hold it for you," is a common expression.

"This car won't last long. Better buy it before someone else does," is another.

With Bob Davies, there was none of this.

All's well that ends well. We have the absolute car of our dreams and Bob has a buoyant Oldsmobile booster. Long may both last.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for local newspapers for more than 50 years.

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