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Buying new car is a family affair

By LISA LUCKOW-HEALY Special Writer

As a sixth grader, one of the few things I ever had to worry about was what the other girls in school were wearing. I viewed the world around me in utter amazement. My wow factor was astonishingly high.

I recall sitting in the rear seat of a

I recall sitting in the rear seat of a friend's family luxury car as her mother cranked open the sunroof. My lower jaw dropped to the floor board as I gazed into the clear blue sky. I thought to myself, Wore, how neat.

Once I received my driver's license, I didn't fully appreciate the Green Gator's (a.k.a. 1971 Cadillac Sedan DeVille) luxury features as much as I did its cavernous interior. It became host to many boat parties – the phrase my peers and I coined when we stuffed eight or more of us inside on our way to a basketball game.

Today I have different impressions of the vehicles that shuttled me around as a child.

Luxury features boggled my mind as an 11-year-old. As a parent, I now look at luxury features as how they influence my family's comfort and convenience. At 16, the idea of simply having a car at my disposal was more than enough to suffice. As an adult, the question now becomes, Which vehicle is right for my family lifestyle and my family budget?

Many things have changed in the automotive industry since my child-hood.

Nowadays, we place a major emphasis on buzzwords such as safety, comfort and convenience, performance, appearance and ease of ownership. Automotive manufacturers offer customers vehicles to suit just about every lifestyle, from the sub-compact to the full-size sport utility and beyond.

But how often do we, as parents, stop

to ask our children for their input on what vehicle features they like and why?

Have you put your 3- or 4-year-old into an integrated child safety seat while visiting a new vehicle showroom? Did you ask your child if it feels better than sitting in their portable child seat? Maybe your child will influence your decision to buy that new vehicle.

Could your teenager know more about a vehicle's ownership

Could your teenager know more about a vehicle's ownership program than you do? Your son may have heard a friend's parents discussing the road-side assistance they received when their vehicle ran out of gas or the free service loaner they took advantage of when the family car went in for overnight warranty repairs.

Did you ever stop to ask your teenagers what they feel are important features of a new family vehicle (aside from an awesome sound system and 0 to 60 mph in 5.2 seconds)?

To make the most informed new vehicle buying decision you possibly can, it is a good idea to gather input from other family members.

Does your 5-year-old like to watch your sunroof open, feel the fresh air on her face and look up into the sky? Does your 8-year-old feel "cool" knowing your vehicle is large enough to transport all his buddies home after hockey practice? Does your 10-year-old feel safe in the right front passenger seat because she knows that the front passenger air bag, with wearing her seat belt, will help protect her a frontal collision?

Just as you have wants and needs that justify your pleasant driving experience, so do your family members.

As the primary driver of your vehicle, pleasant passengers help alleviate the stresses of being the family chauffeur. Maybe it is time to consider making the new vehicle buying decision a family affair.

Gagnon

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to frost on my eyebrows, my finger tingling as I slap my hands to keep my body warm. I remember my mother allowing me to put on toe rubbers over my dress shoes which I wore on my uptown visits with the guys. My feet might have frozen before I would admit they were even cold. It was so nice to look grown up like the adults.

Now, my dear friends, if something happened to me while this column went to press, there won't be one next week. That means you'll have to think of me in the past and that thought alone is enough to make sure that my Guardian Angel stays close to my side. I'll be back,

with a feeling of yesteryear embedded deep inside my soul which keeps the energy burning. I've gone to the land where my Indian grandmother would say, "this is where the rivers turn and run the other way, and everyday is a good day to die."

Joe Gagnon, the Appliance Doctor, will answer your questions about maintaining and repairing large appliances. Gagnon is president of Carmack Appliances in Garden City and does a weekly radia program on W.R.-M. He is author of "First Aid from the Appliance Doctor," available at area bookstores.