

CHAT ROOM



JONI HUBRED

Though a wreck, her loyal car is much beloved

Some people drive cars, trucks or vans. I drive a wreck. Actually, the word "wreck" doesn't quite encompass the sheer nastiness of this 11-year-old tank.

The once black finish on my Mercury Topaz is dotted with reddish-orange lesions, and a long, gnarled wound punctuates the rear bumper, which is made of not quite indestructible plastic.

Every time I start the engine, the dashboard lights up like a Christmas tree. "Service Engine Soon," it chides, as though I don't know it's been 20,000 miles since I changed the oil.

The emergency brake light has been on ever since the last time I used it, which was mid-1995, I think. And then there's the red "Amp" light. Whatever that is. The upholstery is permanently scarred. My trunk key is a screwdriver.

I have tripped the odometer into six digits, and The Beast simply refuses to die.

Over the past three years, she has carried me back and forth to Minnesota, a 1,400-mile round trip, west as far as Ann Arbor, south to Indianapolis and north along the shores of Lake Huron.

I've parked in downtown Detroit, leaving the doors unlocked in the hope someone would steal her. I came back to find not so much as a hubcap missing.

Locally, however, The Beast's been hit twice by thieves. The first time, I left a door unlocked and they made off with a reporter's notebook, a few cassette tapes and my wallet, which made for some uneasy moments.

The second time, after obliterating the passenger side door lock, the dim bulbs smashed the window and took my AM/FM radio/cassette player with its detachable face plate, which I'd forgotten to detach, and my Dixie Chicks Fly tape.

That really hurt. So why don't I just junk this aged monstrosity? Why don't I give it to Mother Waddles? I could even donate the body to science at this point.

Frankly, I've always wondered how a car can run so long on so little oil. For some reason, I can't let go. And the stubborn thing won't stop running.

At one point, I considered that a blessing. When a car roars to life on a cold, winter morning in Minnesota (where night-time temperatures dip to 30 degrees BELOW zero), you simply breathe a small prayer, thanking the God of Anti-freeze for yet another miracle.

Perhaps the serendipitous turn of events that made me her owner keeps me from abandoning ship. She was literally the first car I saw after an accident totaled an equally-ancient Ford. Her sporty luggage rack and sleek exterior convinced me even before the test drive.

Over the years, this love at first sight has grown into a depth of feeling I can only attribute to our years of solid friendship. The truth of the matter is, the only time this car let me down, I was to blame for not treating her with enough tender loving care.

Tough to find people who'll be that reliable, much less a car. I'd like to think there's some great cosmic force keeping us together, but the truth of the matter is...I'm cheap. I like not having a car payment, and I want this bias to last forever. Writing this column has probably sealed The Beast's fate, but sometimes I think she will transport me to my own final destination.

This warrior with a maiden's heart, this dauntless she-devil is driven hard and put away in the cold. And still, she springs to life with each new day.

Her hulking steel body has been bumped, smashed, hammered, spun about, rolled over curbs and treated like a trash bin. And still, she gleams in the sun after a hard rain.

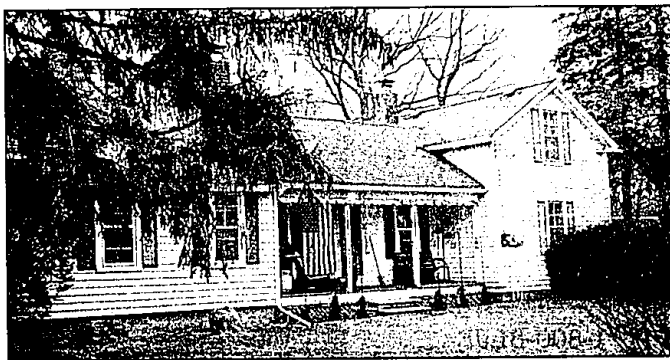
Her wheels turn unevenly for lack of balance and her belts scream in protest when I hit the gas. And still, her heart thrums true and strong.

The day will come when I turn the key and hear the heart-wrenching

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A house with HISTORY

Farmington founders helped fugitive slaves



Rich in history: The small Greek revival home sits at the eastern border of heritage park between the Longacre House and the park entrance.

BY RUTH MOEHLMAN
SPECIAL WRITER

The little Greek Revival house where Palmer Sherman lived when he sheltered escaping slaves on the Underground Railroad is in Heritage Park near the Spicer and Goodnough barns.

The Underground Railroad was not a railroad at all, but a network of abolitionists who helped escaping slaves reach freedom.

They proceeded from one hiding place to the next, called stations. Often they rode in farm wagons concealed under a load of hay or farm produce. Sometimes they walked at night hiding during the day in safe shelters. Members of the network fed them.

At first, the aim was just to get north of slave holding territory or states. After 1850 when the Fugitive Slave Law was passed the aim was to reach Canada. Slavery had been outlawed in Canada in 1833.

Palmer Sherman was not an actual conductor or member of the group that were primary participants, but he helped his friend Nathan Power, Nathan Power was vice president of the Michigan Anti-Slavery Society.

That society was organized in Ann Arbor in 1836, a year before Michigan was a state.

Nathan Power and his brothers Ira and Abram formed the local abolitionist group. His brother-in-law Ethan Lapham, George Wilber, Abram Moore and Elisha Roberts made up the rest of the group.

Many local people helped. The group was secret, because in 1850 the Fugitive Slave had severe penalties. It had been a compromise in order to help keep the southern states satisfied. Aiding fugitives could cost a farmer his entire property.

Consequently, participants kept their participation secret even from their own children.

It wasn't until a number of years after the Civil War that historians started documenting the history of the Underground Railroad. Most of the participants were already dead. However, by this time children of people who had helped, recalled the incidents that had been part of the activity.

In Farmington Lillian Drake Avery, who was secretary of the Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society, interviewed people and presented a paper to the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1923.

She was a Farmington person who grew up on Power Road. She taught school, married a doctor and moved to Pontiac to raise her family.

She had spoken to Palmer Sherman before his death in 1917. He related an incident that had occurred after the Civil War when frightened people still followed the old Underground Railroad route, even though by that time they were free.

One morning Palmer Sherman went to his barn and there were a group of former slaves who had spent the night there.

"Uncle Nathan," as they referred to Nathan Power, had not had room for all of them on his property on the current Grand River and Gill Road. He had sent them to other safe locations.

It was harvest time and Palmer Sherman related that he tried to get the travelers to stay and help with the haying. They were still frightened and continued on their way to Canada, even though they were free and there was no danger.

Actually Farmington had been an alternative route when slave catchers were along the main

route of the Underground Railroad. The main route was directly from Ann Arbor to Detroit along what is today U.S. 12. Then across the river.

The escaping slaves on the Palmer Sherman farm would have been in a barn located where the parking lot of the Longacre House is today.

Palmer Sherman built a brick house in 1869, four years after the Civil War. This house is the east wing of the Longacre House.

Palmer Sherman's little Greek Revival house had been purchased with his farm before 1860. Palmer Sherman of Southfield had married Loretta Ward of Farmington. They settled in Southfield, moved to Lansing and then settled in Farmington.

They had nine children so the house itself had to have been rather crowded. People they sheltered probably would have been in the barn or other farm buildings.

The Greek Revival House was originally in the current driveway of the Longacre House.

Luman Goodnough, a Detroit attorney, who purchased the Palmer Sherman farm in 1815 had the house after he made the farm into a country estate. It was used for servants' quarters.

There are about six or seven sites known in Farmington and Farmington Hills where people were sheltered during the days of the Underground Railroad.

It was a short but colorful time in Farmington history.

After the slavery issue was settled women's rights and abstinence from spirits became important issues. Prohibition eventually followed.

Palmer Sherman's house is a Farmington Hills historic site.

Lack of sun makes some people S.A.D.

OUR MENTAL HEALTH

Several years ago a popular TV sitcom, Northern Exposure, had an episode where people in a small community outside Anchorage discovered a device that could be worn around the forehead like a visor. It caused light to shine down into their eyes, and helped ward off fatigue, irritability, and the "winter blues."



LEN MCCULLOUGH

Similarly, many retirees head South for the winter for, among other reasons, sunlight.

During the winter some people suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder, and

the natural treatment is increased exposure to light. An "Affective Disorder" is a general term for mood disturbances which many people suffer from. As many as (20 percent) of the American population may suffer from a major depressive disorder at any given time.

Seasonal Affective Disorder or S.A.D. was first described in 1984 by Dr. Norman Rosenthal at the National Institute of Mental Health. Researchers there believe some 10 million Americans suffer from S.A.D. It is a major depressive disorder which has seasonal characteristics.

Symptoms

Symptoms can include - change of appetite or weight, trouble sleeping, lack of energy, lowered sex drive, mem-

ory inefficiency, attention and concentration problems, low self-esteem, lack of interest in or enjoyment of activities (sometimes called melancholia) and even suicidal thoughts. Typically, if an individual is exhibiting at least five of these symptoms and at least one symptom is either depressed mood, or loss of interest, a major depressive disorder is diagnosed. The condition must represent a change from previous functioning and cause significant distress or impair social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Treatment of S.A.D. is similar to other major types of depressive disorders which utilize anti-depressant medication and/or psychotherapy. In addition, exposure to bright light has been found to be an effective way to treat this disorder.

There are different kinds of light therapy boxes or light-emitting devices that give the user a measured amount of balanced spectrum light, which is said to be the equivalent of standing outdoors on a clear spring day. Amazingly, this has been shown to help regulate the body clock. Light is registered by the eyes through the retina and then electrical impulses are transferred to the hypothalamus in the brain which normalizes body functions.

A synchronization of the sleep/wake cycle is the key to treatment. The most common therapy devices are fluorescent light boxes ranging from \$250 to \$525. Light visors have a battery pack and are worn on the head allowing for mobility. Some say an inexpensive way

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