

Dither

For Apa-V 37
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A FEW MONTHS AGO my little Chevette decided it wasn't going to go. It came upon this decision gradually over a couple of days. I thought its battery was low, but we had it checked (before the car said *unh uh* for last time) and it was fine, so we decided it had something to do with the starter.

But Joy-Lynd and I were unusually tight on cash at that point. Registration renewal was due, with every costly thing that goes along with that—insurance, smog check, all that stuff. We decided we'd let the car sit in our driveway for a while.

So it did, gradually looking more and more forlorn as the summer wore into fall. The raised rubber detailing strip on the driver's side, already looking to go its own way, eventually joined the oil spots and unswept broken twigs that littered that end of the driveway. Dusty rains left a patchy film on the body and windows.

Meanwhile, Joy-Lynd and I were trading off driving her Ford Crown Victoria station wagon. It, too, was occasionally having its problems, some of which, it turned out, were due to our ignorance about

some aspects of maintenance. For a few weeks recently it was having what we thought were transmission problems—the gears would be loose, then catch suddenly, resulting in a lurch and squeal—and we were terrified of discovering that we were going to have to take it into the shop and face a horrendous transmission repair bill. Turned out it was just low on transmission fluid.

A couple of weeks ago, a friend of Joy-Lynd's, from her church, offered to help out, in recompense for Joy-Lynd's considerable volunteer work there, by paying for the new starter for my car. Our friend had it towed to a garage somewhere to the north of Lake Mead Blvd. and east of Las Vegas Blvd., and they began to work on it. Well, it seems there was more to it than the starter, though that was certainly part of the problem. A water pump had to be replaced, too, and there were a few more things that, when it all came together added up to more than \$600 worth of parts and labor.

Our friend took a big breath and decided that she'd cover it, along with the smog check and plate fee for registration, and she did. I drove the car home last Saturday. Uh, don't pass it around, but this was before the re-registration was accomplished. It did sit on our driveway again, looking a bit less forlorn—I'd hosed it off with the lawn hose and it seemed a bit more cheerful.

Friday morning Joy-Lynd picked up the registration and a new tag for the

plates, and we thought we were in business!

With great delight I got behind the wheel, ready to take off for my afternoon job at Williams-Sonoma in Summerlin. I was due at noon, and it was already quarter of, but it takes 15 minutes to get there (we've made it faster, but it is 7.5 miles away, and that's pushing it). Joy-Lynd drove away in the station wagon to take care of paying our rent. I turned the key in the ignition. It almost caught. I tried again. Sputter-pop-poppity-nothing....

There were some bad moments there for a while. I called Williams-Sonoma and told them I might not make it today or I might be late but I was working on it. I called our friend for the number at the repair shop. I called the repair shop. They said it sounded like my battery was low. It didn't look like I was going to make it to work at all that afternoon. I went outside and tried one more time. It caught!

Williams-Sonoma can be flexible; I got in three-quarters of an hour late, and they let me work the same time past my scheduled hours.

When I went outside, I couldn't even get the starter to *sound* like it wanted to turn the engine over.

I called Joy-Lynd and she came to pick me up. We tried our jumper cables, but her power didn't seem to make any difference.

This morning, we got the car towed back to the garage. They hooked up their power cables and boom! The car started up with no problem. Sheesh! We told the guy about it, and he said we probably didn't have it connected properly.

Could be.

Then as he checked my battery, he gave us the bad news. It wouldn't take a charge. We had to buy a new battery. He took our check. The tow and battery came to about what I get for a couple of book reviews...

The car drove beautifully on the way home. Well—a little sluggish, but I looked at the air filter. It's filthy. Easily fixed.

Well, that's my vehicular story...

Take care, all!

