



by Jim Youngs

HEAD CLEARING MAGIC

At my first magazine job, before we started using computers full time, I had a boss, an older fellow, who often wished out loud that there were some way to get some useless information out of his brain to make room for new stuff or more interesting stuff. Head clearing was what he was talking about, getting rid of the kind of stuff that wakes us up in the middle of the night thinking about, or the kind of inane junk that just keeps going round and round in our restless dreams. Well, we don't have a painless method of downloading such stuff like we do on these damn computers. Purging useless stuff that's been collecting in the corners of the LCD for unknown reasons or lurking in hundreds of digital folders, or in my case scattered across my office floor or in huge piles in my supply closet. We use all sorts of things to help us forget or shove things into the backs of our minds, but it always seems to find its way forward, doesn't it?

Well, last Saturday I rediscovered about the best head clearing exercise I've ever experienced, and I'd really forgotten how effective it is, if temporary. We're so busy these days that we've apparently forgotten the simple joy of taking a drive just for the sake of driving. No real itinerary. No real destination. Just driving for the sake of driving. It doesn't hurt either to make the trip in something that's most enjoyable to drive and not simply one of our conveyances we use to get us from point A to point B in absolute comfort.

I didn't even consider recording my mileage. I got up two hours earlier than I normally do and even woke up before the alarm sounded due to silent anticipation of what the day promised. No list of errands. Cell phone purposely powered off and bluetooth headset left on the bureau. The only real itinerary was breakfast with a bunch of friends, a drive to somewhere cool I'd never been before, then a bar-beque amid some cool cars and motorcycles. Given that I had a little over a week left to get this issue of the magazine put together, that sounded like just the kind of procrastination... I mean, head clearing diversion that I needed.

My good buddies Mark and Kent Wiley, always up for a great car adventure, came up with this simple thought; let's get

a bunch of our car buds together for a fun tour and show and raise a little money for a most worthwhile effort we all support—His Hands Christian Ministry in Littleton, Colorado.

It's usually not too difficult to decide which of our specialty cars to drive as typically there are only two that are at the ready without any fiddling, fixing, or finishing and they're both typically clean—the Rodster sedan delivery and the Regal T-Bird, not so curiously both Carolyn's. She's told you before that my car projects tend to languish in the shop, (because I want them to) while hers are always ready to ride. I suppose I could have driven my pickup or rented a new Camaro like Dan



MONICA BENDER PHOTO

Fat Boy checking out the new Everett-Morrison seats. Very comfy.

Cox did. But, since Carolyn had a prior commitment and wouldn't be accompanying me, and the fact that we really had yet to wring out the Bird on anything other than seven-mile jaunts down to our favorite Union Bistro restaurant, and back, I thought the '57 seemed the logical choice. I don't exactly recollect what argument or fuzzy logic I used to get permission to take the Bird, but vaguely recall some whispered admonition about cleaning the whitewalls or something upon my return.

I debated a moment about swapping out the hardtop for the convertible soft top or leaving both at home, but thought better of it as I was reminded it's still springtime in the Rockies. Like that "You know you're a Coloradoan if..." email that circulates regularly, I can now report that both the heater and A/C seem to work okay, the hardtop keeps the cockpit dry and the wipers are effective, all utilized on the same day.

The day's plan was to drive up into the mountains via several routes that included parts of the twisty Peak to Peak Highway, to a quaint little berg named Nederland, known for being the home of Frozen Dead Guy, Joe Cocker and the famed Caribou Ranch recording studio where many rock luminaries laid down music back in the day. From our start-

ing point it's only a 59-mile drive, but the scenery and our eclectic caravan was working well at clearing my head.

At one point I even turned off the oldies station the Bird's radio seems to be locked into so I could listen to the wind whistling through a corner of the weather stripping of the lift-off top and hear the pleasing rumble of the exhaust echoing off the rock canyon walls. We took a leisurely pace uphill, me in third place to start behind Mark's screamin' yellow Super Bee Hemi setting the pace followed by his wife, Kathy's new Jag convertible. At one point that new Camaro SS, blasted past dropping me to fourth followed by Mark Wallis in his red NSX and Scott McGowan in his raven Mustang vert. It was a glorious parade on a beautiful day. Head clearing working well.

We took a break in Nederland, had some more coffee and watched a cold rain pour over a group of vintage Morgans pulling into the Visitor Center parking lot, that apparently had the same idea about head clearing.

The motorcycle guys decided to wait out the wet stuff for a bit before returning for the BBQ. Tops up, the cars headed back toward Denver where it was sunny and dry, but in less than parade formation. Since I didn't have a navigator and hadn't studied the route beforehand, I decided to fall in behind the NSX for the downhill portion. That Mark was wearing a Skip Barber polo didn't intimidate me. Hey, I just didn't buy a shirt after completing the Start Racing gokart program in Orlando. I was up for the unspoken challenge of keeping up with him though I was half way expecting squealing tires and plenty of yaw and roll on my part, being a fan of cars of the fifties.

What I hadn't really considered is that this Bird only *looks* like a car from the '50s but has modern Mustang suspension, great disc brakes and radial tires. There was no tire squealing and the car stayed flat even when I went into a corner a little too hot trying to stick with the NSX. Mark's navigator, Darrel Vanhooser, told me later that they were sure they could loose me several times but were surprised they couldn't.

Kudos to the Regal Roadsters guys for the car's set-up. It was impressive and felt balanced. I admit I hadn't expected a leaf-sprung live-axle car to exhibit the kind of nimble handling I was experiencing until later when I considered late-model Mustangs and the similarity to this solid performer. I guess I just hadn't spent enough time at the wheel. It's Carolyn's car after all. It's also pretty efficient at head clearing.

KCB