

A Trip To Remember, And Valuable Lessons Learned

By Gary Wilmer, Past President

On May 4, 2016 my fellow Chesapeake Region member, Norm Heathcote and I left for Auburn, Indiana in Norm's 2002 Chevrolet Avalanche 3/4 ton pickup truck. We were pulling an open car trailer loaded with a 1950 Ford frame that Norm had sold to a buyer from Indianapolis. Plan was to meet the buyer in Auburn to deliver the frame. After about six hours of driving we noticed that the battery indicator light was flashing and the voltmeter was fluctuating between 12 and 14 plus volts. I was sure the alternator was the problem. Norm searched his phone for a Chevrolet dealer nearby and found one in Northfield, Ohio. It was about 4:30 in the afternoon when we arrived at Spitzer Chevrolet. They tested the electrical system and found the alternator to be the problem. They replaced the alternator and we were back on the highway around 6 pm.

About an hour and a half later, I was behind the wheel and cruising at about 65 when the left rear tire on the truck exploded, sending rubber and tread flying! Fortunately, it was not a front tire and I had no trouble steering the truck to the shoulder. There was some damage to the rear bed panel and some plastic trim items. Norm has AAA emergency road service and he called them. While waiting for AAA to arrive, we unhooked the trailer so that we could get to the spare located under the rear of the truck. Surprisingly, the spare had air and was easy to remove from its carrier. In about one and half hours we were back on the road!

Norm is behind the wheel, after about only twelve miles, Norm said, "something feels funny" and almost immediately the same tire that was just changed decided to come off. It's twilight and Norm, managed to get off to the shoulder without any problems, riding on the brake rotor. As Norm was fighting to control the truck I noticed the loose wheel pass us long the center jersey wall and crash into the guard rail approximately 100 feet ahead of us. I walked down the shoulder for a couple hundred feet looking for the wheel but never found it. Norm called the same company that had changed the flat tire and shortly thereafter the same operator arrived that had helped us before. Norm also called AAA to let them know of our dilemma.

The operator loaded the truck on his rollback and hooked up the trailer behind and towed us to their shop, Madison Motors in Fremont, Ohio. He told us they would have us back on the road the next day and then took us to a nearby hotel. The next morning at 11 am the truck was repaired and as promised, they came and picked us up at the hotel and drove us to the shop. We discovered they had mounted a nearly new looking tire on the original rim, located a replacement spare tire and wheel, replaced the parking brake shoes, rotor, all eight studs and lug nuts and charged us nothing! The owner told us that it was only the second time that he had seen this situation occur and explained that on a spare (wheel) that is exposed to the elements, rust forms on the inside of the wheel and when mounting the wheel on the truck the rust is compressed while tightening the lug nuts. Upon driving the vehicle, the rust is further compressed causing

the lug nuts to loosen. We planned on checking the lug nuts in about fifty miles, but certainly didn't expect them to loosen in only 12 miles.

We continued on to Auburn where we visited the 'Early Ford V8 Museum' adjacent to the large 'Auctions America' complex. Over 700 cars were scheduled to be auctioned over the course of three days. On Saturday the AACA National meet was held. Sometime during this part of the trip I noticed the taillights on the left side of the truck didn't work; apparently the exploding tire damaged the wiring and also broke the gas cap. I borrowed some wire from the folks at the Ford V8 Museum and repaired the lights and replaced the gas cap. Norm decided to replace all the tires on his truck; a local tire shop installed a new set in just over an hour.

Early Sunday morning we left for home. I'm driving on the Pennsylvania Turnpike near Breezewood when someone passing me is pointing down at our vehicle. I felt nothing, but in the rearview mirror I could see the left front tire on the trailer had blown and rubber was flying everywhere. I pulled off to

the shoulder which was not much wider than the trailer. Norm walked down the highway about 100 feet and motioned oncoming traffic to move over while I changed the tire.

This was definitely the most problem filled trip I have ever been on, but as they say, 'it could have been worse.' No one was injured, nobody's vehicle or equipment was damaged other than Norm's truck, and the cost for all this trouble was not that bad. Norm's Chevrolet Avalanche was in need of the alternator and tires anyway.

A couple things to keep in mind if you play with old (or newer) vehicles and haul a trailer.

1. Be sure you have AAA or similar emergency road service if you have a problem on the road.
2. Check the condition and age of your tires, both trailer and tow vehicle.

Other than the problems getting there and home, the National Meet and Auction were great. The people we met were very nice, and in spite of the problems, Norm and I had a pleasant time. I would definitely (well, probably) do it again.

Dan Materazzi Reminiscences About Driving, College and Terry!

By Dan Materazzi, Membership Chairman

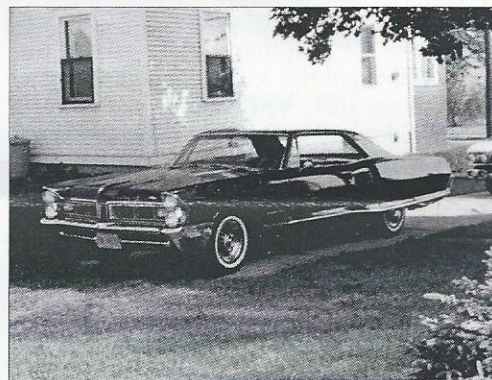
I began driving at an early age, but never owned a car. I couldn't even afford a clunker until after graduation from college. When Terry and I were dating, one evening in 1963, while driving on a deserted back country road with my father's 1951 Chevrolet, six cylinder, 'three-on-the-tree', Terry asked me to teach her how to drive a stick shift.

She was anxious to learn but didn't even have a learner's permit. So, being the accommodating guy I am, with no one on this deserted country road, I pulled over and let her get behind the wheel. She did very well as we started to drive through a one lane tunnel, then behind us, out of nowhere came a flashing light and siren. We pulled over on the side of the road, and unsuccessfully tried to switch seats. We had just been stopped by a Pennsylvania State Trooper, horrors! The trooper was very nice, and wrote us a warning ticket for driving without a license.

The kindly trooper said he was letting us off easy, and to keep this quiet. By the time I dropped Terry off later that evening we had agreed to keep this 'minor' lapse in judgment to ourselves. Unknown to the two of us, and much to our surprise both our families already knew what happened before we arrived at our respective homes.

Apparently the state trooper stopped off at the local Italian Club where both of our fathers happened to be earlier that evening and related the story of stopping this young couple on the back country road. The trooper knew both of our fathers, the rest can be left to your imagination. It was embarrassing at the time.

Fast forward a couple of years and add up all the money earned from the various summer and night jobs went towards college expenses. With graduation approaching at the Universi-



Dan & Terry's 1965 Pontiac Grand Prix hardtop

ty of Detroit, and a good job waiting, a brand new dream car was in the cards. At that time cars could be purchased for significantly less in Detroit than anywhere in the country. In fact during semester breaks when students would go across the country to their respective cooperative engineering jobs, notices would be posted on the bulletin boards looking for drivers to take newly purchased automobiles to locations throughout the country. This was a great way to earn a few dollars and get free transportation to your new job or destination.

During homecoming at college, new convertibles would be loaned to student organizations for the homecoming parade from the auto manufacturers to promote their new models. I can remember vividly picking up Terry at the airport for homecoming in a brand new 1965 Ford Galaxie 500 Convertible loaned to us from Ford Motor Company.

After saving enough for a down payment on a car, and about six months prior to graduation, three college friends and I went to Royal Pontiac owned by racing legend 'Ace Wilson'

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