

2002 - Our Freshman Year

by Thomas Bates

It has been just over a year since our black 1999 followed me home. To say that I enjoy our Miata would be sadly understating the obvious. The car, the motoring experience and the people we have met over the past year have all combined to make it memorable, to say the least.

The story that has brought us to this point is the subject of this article. It begins with a desire, admittedly one not initially shared with my spouse, to purchase a "fun" vehicle of some type. I had heard all the snide remarks before. A mid-life crisis was just one of the least objectionable, unsolicited suggestions for my single-minded quest.

The desire was really just a dream, nothing I was seriously pursuing, at least until my brother-in-law found it necessary to "store" his large, American-made motorcycle (brand name withheld) in my garage. During its stay I was given free reign to operate it at will. It was in those months that my desire for a "fun" vehicle mutated into a need and eventually a full-blown craving. The motorcycle was offered for sale and, although I secretly planned all sorts of scenarios where I could justify its purchase, I could never persuade myself with enough conviction that I felt I could take my case to a higher authority. The motorcycle was mercifully sold and removed from my grasp.

But, indeed, the fire still burned inside me. I was driven (no pun intended) to come across the perfect "fun" vehicle. One that would satisfy my desires, yet still be practical enough that its purchase would not be seen as totally frivolous. So began my quest. I started small enough. Once a week I would shop around the local car lots looking for a vehicle that fit my narrow specifications. I would weasel the salesman out of a promising machine and off I would go, often times on an overnight or even weekend-long test drive.

This pattern, some might say obsession, continued on for months and months. In fact, I spent the whole summer of 2001 going from lot to lot until I had exhausted every potential candidate. I tried PT Cruisers, Mustangs, Camaros, Firebirds, Jeeps, pick-up trucks and many others that now have become a blur. I was certain that salesman in every dealership were avoiding me as if I had the Plague. I was beginning to feel that my search would never end. I could not locate the "fun" vehicle that my inner desire pushed me to discover.

On my way to work one day in late October – the actual date was October 30, 2001 at 8:15 AM – I passed by a dealership I had driven by a hundred times before. There it was. Arranged on the lot like it had been specially positioned for my approach was a vehicle, a make I had not even considered before. An inner force caused me to pull onto the lot. As luck would have it, the dealership was closed until 9:00 AM. I took the time to look over the little black car and note its name – Miata. I had only seen a handful of these cars in my life and knew no one who owned one.

I went on to work, acting as if nothing was wrong. But I could not wait until the dealership opened up. I was on the telephone several times before I was able to speak with the salesman. I arranged to see the car at noon. I was there by 11:00. I was driving it by 11:02. I did not want to take it back. But I did. I was afraid to push my luck with this guy, probably the sole remaining dealer who wasn't fed up with my quest.

I went back the next day after work to pick up the car – the Miata. It was Halloween and it was a beautifully warm afternoon. I knew that the car was what I wanted, but there were other hurdles to cross before I could put it in my garage. So, I decided to pull out all the stops. I drove the car – the Miata – to my wife's workplace and placed it strategically in front of the building, top down and parked jauntily near the curb. I secretly handed the keys to the

receptionist and drove away in my wife's SUV, leaving her no choice but drive the car – the Miata – home.

Well, the rest of the story needs no further embellishment. My quest is over and the dealers in my community have returned to a normal business outlook. We now have what my granddaughter, Sydney, refers to as the "fun car". Through its ownership we have met new friends and had some very enjoyable times. We look forward to building on our relationships formed throughout this, our freshman year, and we wish to thank those of you who have made us feel welcome in your – and now our – club.

Open Call For Nominations

Nominations are now being accepted for all club office positions. If you wish to become more involved with the club, please contact Chuck Wills or Rick Morris. Nominations will also be accepted at the Holiday party.

It's Membership Renewal Time!

Notice something different about your mailing label on this issue of the Open Road?

We've encoded your membership status on it and an "N" means it's time to renew.

Renewal forms will be available at the Holiday Party.

Also, if you are attending the Holiday gathering, please RSVP to Chuck so he can give an accurate headcount to the caterers.

Chuck can be contacted at 317-291-5563 or by e-mail chuckwills@comcast.net.

Please contact him by December 5th.