This part of the site is dedicated to cars that I've either owned, driven, or otherwise had some type of interest in.

Absolute Automotive Abomination

I remember it like it was yesterday. It was 1988, and I was 11 years old in the sixth grade. My dad had been mentioning for a while about how he really wanted to get a new car. Now, if you're around my dad long enough, he'll inevitably launch into a rambling soliloquy about his 1973 Charger with the 440 Magnum, or his 1966 Mustang that was so fast it could shear the lugs off, or any other of his "3/4 race cammed" muscle cars (virtually all of them). Knowing this, I just knew that we were going to get a 1988 Mustang GT, which I had been silently lusting for. However, he decided to buy a freaking Hyundai. This car was about half as exciting as a House of Representatives Agriculture Subcommittee meeting. To this day, I'm still upset. However, to his credit, no one knew then that Hyundais were all flaming pieces of crap. I think we had ours for about two weeks before parts of it actually started to disintegrate. Anyway, although I never owned this
car, it's still special to me because it's the car I learned to drive on when I turned 15. (Yes, we still had it). The seating position was awkward, and it had a tendency to want to spin out if it was hammered too hard by any gentle breezes or errant pebbles. None of that matters when you're a 15 year old kid impatiently waiting to turn old enough to get a driver's license, because as far as I was concerned, it was a Bentley when I was driving it. I lived for the moment where Dad would let me back the car out the driveway, or let me practice driving in an empty parking lot. However, all bad things must come to an end, and this car was finally euthanized by a drunk driver who hit it hard enough to bend the frame (which isn't very hard, btw). Recycling aluminum cans would have made you a millionaire far, far faster then the settlement check from the insurance company; therefore, we were forced to get another car.

The Envy of Rasputin

I actually liked our next car, which was a 1994 Dodge Spirit. Compared to the Hyundai, it was a luxury liner. Except for the 4-banger and u-crank-'em windows, it was fully optioned, even having styled aluminum wheels, faux velour seats, and a decent radio. I never owned this car either, but it's the one I got my first speeding ticket in, and the first car I locked the keys in (not at the same time). Unfortunately, this car led a hard life, and met an untimely death. We owned this car right about when I was a junior in high school, and I wanted to go out all the time. We must have put 10,000 miles on this car in the first 3 months of owning it,
and it rewarded us by puking out its first transmission at 30,000 miles. Other than that, though, it was pretty much reliable to a fault. It even survived a massive and unfortunate crash with a Jetta. When I got to the scene of that particular accident, I thought that the car was gone for good. the entire left side of the car looked like the hull of the Titanic. The left wheel was contorted in a way that defies description, and it's a miracle that the driver (who shall remain nameless, (not me)) wasn't injured. However, my dad found a body shop that was able to unbend the frame and give it a botox injection, so we eventually got it back. Then, one night while it was parked right outside the driveway, minding its own business, it was stolen. A day later, the police called to say that they had recovered the car, but it had been in a high speed chase. When we went to the police station, we discovered that the thieves couldn't get into the trunk, so they ripped the back seat off (I guess to get to the stash of gold bullion that we kept in the trunk). It's unfortunate that Dodge didn't use the same type of lock on the doors as they did the trunk, but I digress. The driver and passenger side front wheels were facing directly opposite each other, and the car was just a general mess. It's pretty much cliché to even say this, but of course the criminals who stole the car were 14 and 15 years old. However, this resilient piece of transportation had a never-say-die attitude, and the insurance company again came to our rescue and managed to repair the car. This stand would unfortunately be its last. Not too long after we got it back, some friends of the original group of criminals decided to exact vengeance for my father having the nerve to press charges against them, and stole it again. A few days later, we get a call at about 3:00 a.m. This is how the call went:

Dad: Hello.
Police: Did someone report a 1994 Dodge stolen from this residence?
Dad: Yes. Great. Where can I pick it up?
Police: The Fire Department is putting it out right now.

There would be no resurrection from this incident, but by this time, I had my own car.
All The Girls I've Loved Before

The One That Got Away

You know how everyone has that one car that they wished they had never sold? Well, this is mine. I know it doesn't look like much, but to me it was probably my favorite car. To everyone who has ever complained about getting a used car, or were upset that they had to get a car that was over a year old, sit back and let me tell you a story about building character. The year was 1997, and since we had been putting so many miles on the aforementioned Dodge, it was time that I got a vehicle of my own. Unfortunately, being a poor college student at the time (who wasn't?), I couldn't afford to finance a vehicle; therefore, I knew I had to buy a car with cash only. My dad originally found me an early model Nissan Pulsar. No offense to Pulsar owners worldwide (both of you), but I really did not want this car, being that I thought it was just plain dorky. Several admonishments later, followed by my dad's "When I was your age, I had to drive a Model T with crank-start, blah, blah, blah," he found a non-running 1985 30th Anniversary Edition Ford Thunderbird. Asking Price: $400.00. It's the first car I had ever seen where the hinges on the hood had more wear than the hinges on the driver's side door. The owners of the car were using it to tow their boat (which was fairly large), and managed to overheat the car and caused the engine to burst into flames. I opened the hood to find a large black lump, and nasty yellow caked-on fire extinguisher residue on the firewall. However, acquiring a car like this is akin to buying expensive shampoo or dating a stripper: all that matters is the body. Needless to say, the body and interior were in good shape, and it was fully optioned with the 5-liter engine, digital dash (which I hated), power windows,
locks, and 8-way power seats. The owners assured us that other than the engine, the car was in mint condition, and that the transmission, power accessories and the a/c worked perfectly. Four Ben Franklins later, I was the proud owner of this fine vehicle. We towed it home, and it languished in the yard for a week or so, until one day, while scouring the junkyard, we came upon a 5-oh engine from a wrecked 93 Mustang. They sold it to us without transmission (it was a manual and the T-bird was auto, so I couldn't use it anyway) alternator, starter, and flywheel for $300.00. Sold. The engine ran like a champ once we finally swapped it, but the same could not be said for the rest of the car. Of course, none of the electronics worked, and since the a/c didn't either, we had to improvise. We managed to clean and rewire all the connections and voila, functioning windows. We even managed to get the power seats to work. Less than two months later, the transmission dies, and the estimate to rebuild it was several times the price of the car. The first junkyard we went to had an AOD transmission from a Lincoln that we bought and swapped ourselves, but the gear ratios turned out to be different, and the speedometer never read the correct speed. Six months later, that transmission died a grotesque death, making the loudest banshee screeching sound when driven. So, I took the original trans, threw it in the trunk and drove to the transmission repair place (in 1, the only gear the car would drive in) where they charged me $700 to rebuild it if we installed it ourselves, or $1300 for rebuild and install. You know which one we chose. After that, the car was virtually maintenance free, except for a wicked vacuum leak, and a persistent power steering leak. One day while I was flipping through the local fishwrap, I noticed that Earl Scheib was offering 40% off all paint jobs, so I took the blue-and-primer Bird down to Earl and got their Pro 3 paint job, normally $500, but after all the add-on crap they hit you with to make their money back, I paid just less than $400. My money would have been better spent on lawn gnomes. It turned out to be a 20-20 paint job (looked good from 20 ft. away or at 20 miles per hour), because when you got up close, it hadn't been sanded properly, and looked more like a cheapie respray than a top-of-the-line job. It didn't matter, because due to the straight body, new black paint, and factory 10-hole wheels, it looked like it rolled right out of the showroom. Every rare now and then, someone would stop and ask me if I wanted to sell it. I drove it for a few years, and wound up selling it for $400 to someone who removed the factory 10-hole wheels and replaced them with chrome wheel covers. Moron.
Neck-Snapping Acceleration

When it comes to hurricane-flooded cars, you're in one of two camps: "Well just take the insurance check and buy a new car" or "Great, now there will be lots of available $100.00 cars that we can buy and fix up". Using the latter reasoning, my dad found this 1988 Nissan Stanza with about 200k miles that had taken water up to the headlights. The drivers side window was nonexistent when we received it, due to some enterprising thief and future brain surgeon who decided to rob the car by breaking the window, failing to notice that all the doors were unlocked. I won't even go into detail about the smell. Unfortunately, it wasn't waterlogged all that bad, and it just needed a new computer and some minor repairs. The transmission had taken water and had some rough engagement, but it worked well enough. The main reason why I didn't like it was that it was designed for people no taller than 5'5". Being 6'+, when I was driving, I had to be in this splayed-leg position where my left knee was on the door, and my right was practically on the shifter. Since it was a four door, the front seats didn't slide back nearly far enough. My dad made a passing comment about unbolting the seat, and relocating it farther back to give me more legroom, but it never happened. It was also the slowest internal-combustion powered vehicle I had ever driven, except for maybe the Hyundai. And the Hyundai would have given it all it could handle. I once got smoked by a Le Car. Flooring the Stanza meant that you would be violently thrust forward with almost a tenth of the acceleration of a bowling ball thrown by a third grader. Neither of these problems bothered me as much as the fact that we could never get the radiator fan switch to work. We tried new switches, splicing the wire into other connections, but it never seemed to work right. Every time I wanted to go somewhere, I would have to take the loose wire and wedge it under the battery terminal, and then remove it when I arrived at my destination as to not drain the battery. Now, if you've read this far, you know I
have absolutely no shame when it comes to cars, but even I was embarrassed by having to open the hood twice every single time I went somewhere. My dad offered to run a toggle switch for the fan to the interior, but I refused, because I knew that I would probably have forgotten every time and have had to get a jump every day. Besides, I still needed as flimsy as an excuse possible to get rid of it. Finally, in June 1999, I traded it in on the Mustang, getting $1000 trade-in value for it.

The sepulcher in which I am to be buried

I never intended to buy this particular car. In 1999, I knew I wanted a hatchback GT, but I pretty much resigned myself to the fact that I would be in the Stanza for a while. One day while I was at work, one of my friends (who had recently bought another car), found this particular 1991 model with power accessories and an automatic for $5000. It wasn't exactly what I wanted, but I agreed to go and check it out, but I hadn't planned to actually buy it. When we got there, I knew it was The One. The two-tone paint was good, the a/c worked, the interior still had the trademark "Ford Smell", it only had 114k mi, and the body was straighter than an orthodontist's teeth. Then we took it for a test drive. Compared to the Stanza, it was a Top-Fueler. Plus, they told me that they would offer me $1000 for my Stanza. Considering that I would have traded it for two buttons and a rubber grommet, I was sold. It was the first car I had ever financed, with life-altering payments of $129.00/mo., which I paid for about a year until I saved up enough to pay the balance off. Anyway, when I blissfully drove off the dealership grounds and onto the highway, I noticed that the car was smoking.
somewhat, and the AOD wasn't shifting properly. Also, there was a distinct metal-on-metal burning smell (that I'm all too familiar with). Next, the smoke reached Chernobyl-level proportions, until I was finally forced to pull into a gas station and find a pay phone to call my dad. When he arrived, he told me that I couldn't tell that the trans was blown when I test-drove it because I only took around the block a few times, but once it got to the highway, the trans finally got hot enough for the problem to show itself. Being scolded at a Chevron during the evening on a busy street on a Friday ten minutes after I had just bought a lemon was not one of the higher points of my life. We towed it home, and the next day, my dad called the dealership (ironically enough named "Integrity") and some choice words were exchanged which are inappropriate for a family-oriented site such as this. Suffice it to say we brought it back and they told us to bring it to a transmission repair place at their expense. That trans lasted about a year, and then I replaced it with a hi-po one. Since then, it's been stone reliable, and I have relegated it from daily driver to project car status.

Indestructible

I had wanted a truck for some while, since everybody on earth needs one. The mustang really wasn't designed to carry much, and I didn't like dirtying the hatch after making trips to the junkyard. After my dad bought his hoity-toity Excursion, I thought he would give me his straight-six '94 F-150. Since it has a dead cylinder and a once blown oil pump, I was going to swap a 5-liter in it. However, he didn't, since he claims he still uses it (I guess being driveway decoration technically constitutes use). Well, lo and behold, someone he works with was selling his '91 F-150 (also with a blown piston) for the low, low price of $1500. It started up, ran, and drove perfectly, and the interior was clean. Sold.
All The Girls I've Loved Before

Apparently, the guy had a problem with restraint, because he cut the entire seat belt off. I'm still wondering if it was that much of a nuisance that he couldn't just not put it on. Unfortunately, when I went to get one, there were no red trucks in the junkyard that weren't Frontiers or Mazda B2000's. Ever seen a big red truck with one blue seatbelt? If you've been reading about my other vehicles (and I don't know why you would), give yourself 10 points if you realized that this is the first vehicle I've ever owned that made it home under its own power. At first, I didn't want the long bed, because I thought it would be hard to park, but since then I've grown quite fond of it. It has 175k on the clock, and is still ten times more reliable than death and taxes. Its more useful than you can imagine, and traffic pretty much moves out of your way when you're driving it. However, due to the fact that I have a spare engine, the truck will be getting an engine swap in the near future (as soon as I stop wrenching on my car long enough to drive it for a week).

The ones that got away:

Here are 2 cars that I missed out on, one by chance and one by choice. You'll either think I'm an idiot or a genius for passing on the first one.

The Holy Grail

There is a dealership in my area that specializes in classic and late model muscle cars, and every now and then, I'll go and take a look at what's on the lot. When I was in the hated Stanza, I passed by and there was a '73 Mustang
Mach 1, some ‘80s era Vettes, and two absolutely immaculate Grand Nationals on the lot. I went inside, but no one was at the front desk. This was on a beautiful Saturday, during the late afternoon, so I knew someone had to be there. I walked in the garage area, and there was a Monte SS in a state of disrepair, and a few other nondescript cars. I saw someone toward the back of the garage, and he came walking toward me; however, the ultra pungent marijuana smell made it way before he did. I inquired about the GNs and he told me that one, an '86, was $12,000 and the other, an '87, was $15,000. He grabbed the keys to the '86, and let me take a look. Words cannot describe this car. The interior apparently never been sat in, the body was in superior condition, you could see yourself in the black paint, and you could literally eat off the engine. I checked the odometer, and the guy verified what it said: 23,000 original miles. He asked if I wanted to drive it. To this day, I still have flashbacks about that test drive. However, I didn't buy it. You're probably calling me an idiot right now, but something inside told me that it wasn't right. The car was just too good to be true. A 23k mile, all original GN for only $12,000? A dealership that specializes in that kind of car should know that a GN in that condition could have gone for at least $17,000. Also, I didn't have a covered parking area for it, and GM G-bodies are not exactly known for their theft resistance. I also didn't want to buy a car like this to be my daily driver. Besides, the guy really didn't want my Stanza as a trade (I didn't want it either) because there was nothing he could do with it. Although I have nothing against recreational drug users, I was still turned off by the fact that this guy smelled like a pound of weed. I mean, can't you wait until you get home? It's not like I came on a Tuesday in the rain. Finally, I wound up passing on it and just think that whoever bought it is now the proud owner of a Bondo bandit.

1967 Lincoln Continental

Once, just for comic relief, I decided to go to a Police auction (a legit auction, not one of those "Seized by the IRS: Porsches, Lamborghiniis, Stealth Bombers, Yachts, Foreclosed Homes all for pennies on the dollar!!" auctions that you see on TV at 2:00a.m. and in the back of less-than-savory periodicals). The only cars at this auction were everyday basic Point-A-to-Point-B transportation. Either that, or there are some really broke drug dealers in my area. Anyway, I went to pick up the list a day before the auction, and amidst the ocean of Camrys, Accords, Civics, and the like, there was one that stood out: a 1967 suicide door Continental. I could practically hear Frank Sinatra singing in the background. I was ready to mortgage my apartment. Even my dad was stoked, and we were almost certain that no one but us wanted the car. I knew that I would have to have
somewhere to store it, so I decided that I would bid no more than $2000 for it. Now, I'm the type of person who could by a dealership's worth of cars for that kind of cash, so you know it must have been really special. Anyway, when we got to the auction, I decided to take a preliminary look at it. Other than the fact that it was on blocks, the car was in pretty decent shape, with only minor surface rust along the doors, and a few dings and dents that were to be expected in a car of this vintage. It was also fully optioned, with power windows, locks, and a/c; no doubt a big deal back then. It was white with a blue pleather interior, and the coupe de grace, a big honkin' FE motor. I started to get a bit nervous when a '96 Impala SS (the ones people actually wanted) went for the rather sizable sum of $16,000. When the auctioneers finally got to the Continental, they started the bidding at $1500(!), so I placed the first bid. Then it went to $2000, then $2500, all the way until someone bought it for a little more than $5000. I was devastated. In hindsight, I guess I would have paid that much if I was going to fix it up and then sell it to make a profit, as I'm sure the winners did. Virtually every bid that day was higher than the actual price of the car being bid on. Many of the people there were from junkyards, and could afford to place higher bids since they knew they would eventually get their money back. However, Joe Average just looking for basic transportation had no chance of bidding successfully against the financial might of the junkyards. I haven't been to one since, mainly because there aren't '67 Continentals available every week; however; if something even remotely as captivating makes the auction list, maybe I'll consider going back.