

Aging Lifestyles: Kate takes a spin at 70

by Joe_Volz

My beloved wife, Kate, has gone from 0 to 70 in what seems like breakneck speed.

Before you can say AARP, she will be 70 years old, a bona fide septuagenarian.

But I didn't want her to crawl into senior citizenry. I wanted her to arrive at that Golden Year milestone with a little oomph. So, I gave her a birthday present two years ago- a red Mercedes-Benz 320 SLK hardtop convertible, which matches her hair. She named it Carmen.

I reported at that time about the gift. I thought you might want to know how her experience as a fast woman has worked out. Kate went out and got a big straw hat, which she ties around her neck as she breezes around our small Maryland foothills city, Frederick, like a movie star.

Here is her report on her happy motoring:

"I discovered a curious phenomenon. My status has gone up remarkably among the male species, both young and old - especially when I drive with the top down.

"The first time we checked into an upscale inn, the teenager assigned to park the car whistled, telling me I had "a really hot car." He got into it reverently, and a little nervously, clearly delighted to be behind the wheel of the Mercedes.

"I also win a lot of respect from my teenage grandson, Stevie, when I wheel by his high school to pick him up. Stevie, it seems, basks in reflected glory when his pals see the red convertible. 'Wow, your grandmother owns a sports car?'"

"Then, there was the time I was stopped at a red light and the neighboring car's driver looked over at me and said, 'You're lucky your husband lets you drive his car.' Huffily, I replied, 'This is my car!'"

I have to confess, that my motives for buying Kate the car were mixed. I wanted to drive a Mercedes myself. But since I had spent my life deploring conspicuous consumption and decrying wasteful spending, I felt, well, a bit awkward buying myself one. However, driving my wife's car - now that's a different story.

After all, we elders owed ourselves a good time. Sports car driving is too important to be left to callow youth who would abuse the little vehicle by driving too fast and, maybe even running off the road.

Kate lets me drive it now and then but provides me with plenty of instructions. She warns me about upcoming stop signs, for example. I take her advice in good spirit, uttering some line like, "Thank you for sharing that thought with me."

And I must confess, she has every reason to warn me. I have had two accidents with the little beauty when Kate was not in the car. The first time around, a van driver ran through a red light downtown and I smashed into the sides of her van trying to avoid her. Her tank of a vehicle was undamaged but the front end of my car- Kate's car- was crumpled. Kate was out of town at the time and I phoned her to report cheerily that I was unhurt but there was a bit of damage to the car.

Not too long after, a 130-pound deer dashed out of the woods one night during mating season (hers not mine) right into the car as I drove down a major interstate, rumpling the same fender. Kate was forgiving once again.

Kate's seven brothers and sisters have mixed reactions to the purchase. For one thing, they are surprised that I could afford such a gem (wise investments, I tell them) and secondly, the wives wonder why their husbands are not so generous.

I hope this rolling display of ostentatious living doesn't warp our personalities. Already, I notice that we are sometimes deluded into thinking we have more money than we do. We tend to tip better when we go someplace in Carmen. Yet, we have not forgotten our frugal roots. We shop for the cheapest premium gas in town.

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