

I TELL YA, LIFE AIN'T EASY FOR AN 89-YEAR-OLD PACKARD!

Story told by **Phrendly Phaeton 443** owned by **Bill Burchett** driven by **Bob Burchett**

So here I am sitting quietly in the nice cool garage when my radiator cap gets jerked off, some cheap city water splashed in (getting all over my fenders, no less) and then my choke gets yanked out. To add insult to injury, a big foot stomps my starter button and forces me to life. For what, I ask you? To haul some people around that weren't even born yet when I was cruising the Christmas Parade with the likes of Bob Hope in my back seat and these kids don't even know who he was.

Being a 1928 Packard named Phrendly Phaeton I often get taken advantage of; what with my dual windshield and the ability to pack three (sometimes four or even five if they know each other real well) noisy seat-bouncing folk in my back seat. They should be in the trunk says I.

But I digress....back to the original issue I am complaining about. Glad you asked. It seems that Southern California has just no end of Chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Worse yet, there are just as many in the Sons of that same war who seem to just

hate to associate with them, so they have separate buildings to meet in. So the DAR calls up the SAR and probably says something like "Our cheap car broke down; can you haul some of our chicks in yours?" Okay, I am paraphrasing, but it is my story so put up with me. I am not as happy about this as they are and I bet you can figure that out. They even belong to the Laguna Beach DAR Patience Wright Chapter, too. Patience? Really? They made darn sure we arrived right on time for their silly parade, you can bet on that.

Anyway, somehow Robert Escalante (that jalopy-peddler guy) gets involved in this whole DAR mess and calls Bill Burchett, that reclusive CCCA owner of mine I can barely remember. I'm irritable because he NEVER seems to get around to double-clutching me anymore. Bill calls Bob Burchett (his cousin) and sets up this whole conspiracy to involve me doing the heavy lifting and I have nothing except the occasional backfire to say about it. Here Bill and I have known each other for northwards of 30 years and now I am

parked in his really distant cousin's garage. So Bob and I have to go get Bill and burn my expensive gas going all the way down to Laguna Beach for their annual Patriots Day Parade which is probably just another waste of tire tread. Here I am going like 60 and they haven't even put the lead in my octane yet. The nerve. I may detonate at any moment.

There we meet up with some guy named Jason Saarm who is with this DAR bunch and it's all arranged by that Escalante fellow who is too cheap to buy a new car. Makes me suspicious if you know what I mean. So this guy Jason, he's in tight with the girls see...and he comes out, pats my hood and says how cute I am, right? Baloney. He is there for the DAR ladies and I can see right through that haze of exhaust fumes. Speaking of chicks you should have seen them slap a magnetic

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DAR sign on my door (OUCH...watch that!) hop in my back seat like they belong there, waving American flags and all that, looking no end of cool and then I am idling for so long waiting for this parade to start that my radiator gets overheated. Bob had already propped my hood louvers wide open to help the heat escape not even thinking how embarrassing it is to have my undercoating exposed for all to see.

Finally we get underway and this genius parade director sends some slow-walking marching band barely 20 feet ahead of us and the entire parade route is downhill. Don't these people know anything? Haven't they heard that brakes on a 1928 Packard 443 were optional? Think about it lug nut—there's my three tons packed full, hell-bent for the bottom of the hill where I can peek over the Goddess on the radiator cap and see there is an abrupt right-hand turn in our future. Not happening today folks.

Well I can tell you if anyone can heat up brake linings in low gear it's me, trying to go downhill at .002 MPH to keep from totaling out all 76 trombones ahead of me, overloaded with a back seat full of cute chicks while I am following a zero-MPH marching band in 90 degree weather. My original owner must have been named Scrooge because he gave cheapskate a bad name when it came to buying accessories for me. To say I am doing "asbestos" I can is an understatement, so don't blame me if I drive over the last row of tubas to give my fading shoes a chance to cool off. Well, you should have seen the look in the crowd's eyes at the end when we headed straight their way after only a little brake-fade....now that was a Kodak moment!

No I don't have power steering, thanks for not asking. So this here lightweight Bob guy finally drags me back straight on to level ground when it is over and with some fiddling around is able to locate that forgotten third gear right about the time we hit the freeway. If you can't find it, grind it, as the saying goes. Now to celebrate I blew some wind up the skirt of the Goddess of Speed perched on my radiator cap while I cool down and haul Bill back to his house but the fun was short lived as we arrived and I saw it right there hiding in the carport. He thought I didn't see it but that lousy turn-coat had gone out and bought a Mercedes-Benz to replace me and I just

may well lock my door the next time he shows up for a ride. I will push a seat-spring up his exhaust manifold for that. I bet he has to put sauerkraut in the tank to make it run and I don't have to take that kind of noise. I am, after all, a Packard!

For all you people with a lousy attitude just in case you haven't figured it out by now I am not waiting until I get old to become irritable. Phrendly Phaeton my phoot; I have a 6-volt starter to get cranky with and my motor was recently rebuilt so I am good for another 100,000 miles; how about yours? With my eight cylinders I have 24 new rings and you could only afford one for your favorite back-seat partner.

I may be out of warranty but all of my parts are still available and I don't need to get my valves from pigs when my pump goes out....they come from a machine shop. My idea of having a triple bypass is going around the heater core or taking an alternate route on the highway; not by extracting a high-pressure line from just above my knee-action shocks, if you know what I mean.

Hey kid; that's what you get when you let an old car like me do the story about a driving event and I bet you don't do that again real soon, 'cause it puts a really different perspective on everything, right?

With apologies to the DAR, SAR and the motoring community, you can see more here: www.lagunabeachparade.org

