



A Pleasant Distraction

by Dave Doroghy

Ever have one of those days when everything is going wrong and you need a happy distraction to re-boot your “even-disposition compass”? I had just one of those challenging days last month during a road trip that my girlfriend and I took to San Francisco in my VW Camper Van. And the equilibrium reboot happened shortly after I spotted the top corner fender of a red Morgan, about 300 yards away, parked in a strip mall where I was lamenting my predicament.

Let me explain.....

Last month we took a ten-day road trip holiday, driving from Vancouver to California. A few hours after loading up the van and crossing the border, we stopped in Portland to buy brand new tires for the German hotel on wheels. It needed a new set and I figured I would save money on sales tax buying them in Oregon.

So with the finest brand-new road rubber money could buy we travelled further south, down the I-5, 300 miles to the Bay area. That's where, while slowly entering a state campsite near Oakland, California at midnight, I accidentally drove over one of those horrible spike belts. It was dark, I was tired, the sign into the campsite warning me of the imminent tire damage was in mice type, and OK, it was my fault. It was like a scene out of a cartoon as I opened the door of my modern hippie van only to hear the hsssssss sound of air escaping out of the deep gouges in the four new tire sidewalls, as the camper slowly, sadly, and softly, descended onto its metal rims.

THEN, the next morning, after sleeping on the side of the road in the immobilized van, I was embarrassingly visited by the camp ranger checking if I was OK.

THEN, after calling and waiting hours for AAA assistance, my lame rig was placed on the back of a flatbed truck and taken to the nearest repair place in the small Northern California bedroom suburb of Castro.



THEN, we were informed that no tire stores in this strip mall hamlet stocked the tires I needed.

THEN, we ran into problems finding a special food that our sick hungry dog needed.

THEN, while shopping for food for ourselves in the local strip mall Supermarket I accidentally dropped a big jar of Salsa on the floor and it exploded all over the aisle.

Then, then, then, then, ... you get the picture. I was just having a bad day; I'll spare you all the grim details.

It is always darkest before the dawn, because while standing in this supermarket strip mall parking lot, with salsa all over my pants, 300 yards away I spotted the unmistakable red fender of a Morgan. I smiled for the first time that day and said to my girlfriend Jeannie “Hey, look it's a Morgan, let's go over there and have a look.” Jeannie could not believe that from a distance equal to a par 4 golf course fairway, my eye sight was sharp enough to recognize the partially hidden, distinctive red fender. An untrained eye would have surely missed it.

The car's magnetic pulled drew us in. And soon after, in front of a bank where it was parked, while admiring the four-wheeled beauty, the owner emerged and we struck up a conversation. Our common interest in the cars we both owned fast-tracked us out of the uncomfortable stranger mode. Soon I had an interested fellow Morganster telling me the history of his car as I volleyed back stories about mine. In no time, the three different negative thoughts of the nine hundred dollar new tire bill showing up on my next month's Visa statement, a hungry sick dog in the back of my disabled van, and a messy patch of salsa splattered all over the supermarket floor (and on my pants and shoes), disappeared. I was transferred into a far more pleasant mind-set of Morgan paint colors, engine models and cool leather hood straps. For 20 minutes we stood in the sun and just talked about our cars. I completely forgot about everything else that had happened in the previous 12 hours.

But wait, it gets even better. Turns out that the bearded gentleman that I serendipitously ran into was none other than Gordon Craig and that he was the Editor, Web Guy and General Overseer of the Morgazette, the newsletter of the Morgan Sports Car Club of Northern California. He was like our version of Steve Hutchens. When I told him that I was the acclaimed and celebrated “Dorg” of Dorg's Morg he told me of course that he had never heard of me.

Craig offered to help us in any way he could. However, there was not much he could do - the tires I needed were on route from San Jose and wouldn't be there for at least a few more hours. But Craig had helped in a way that he didn't even know. For 20 minutes he took my mind off of the situation at hand and brought me to a better place. Aside from being a knowledgeable Morgan conversationalist he showed compassion and interest in my recent mishap, and we exchanged email addresses.

As our conversation slowly came to an end and we went our separate ways I sensed that there was a good story in here somewhere.

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