

The Real Reason Bessie is a "Wonder Car"

By Anna Von Reitz



All kidding from my husband and sons about my Ford "Exploder" not exploding aside, and even putting aside all the many adventures and challenges that Bessie and I have shared together, there is a deeper meaning to the little phrase "Wonder Car".

Bessie will be thirty years old in 2021. She, like her owner, has been semi-retired for about ten years. Somehow, when her second motor hit 150,000 miles (that was 516,000 miles lifetime for her at that point) I felt it was time for Bessie to have light duty--- not because she was not performing, but more in the spirit of giving an old horse some Golden Years and not having to work so hard.

During her actual working years, Bessie climbed mountains, forded rivers, and ate potholes the size of Denver. Since her semi-retirement, she has kept her wheels on actual pavement. Ironically, this is when her secret life as a true Wonder Car began.

My friend, "Cathy", had suffered for years as an abused wife living far out in the country. Her husband was good to her when he was sober, but as the years went by, his addiction to alcohol worsened and when he was drinking, he turned mean. He took a shovel to her and nearly killed her a couple months before she turned fifty ---and then she found out she was suffering from cancer.

There she was, getting older, alone except for a drunk who beat her, stuck forty miles from nowhere, fighting cancer. And no way out. To say her life and prognosis was grim, would be an understatement.

But love walked through the door when I came to her house that September, and spirited her away in an old Ford Explorer just before the winter weather closed down. Bessie was her car, enabling her to break free from her abusive husband, getting her back and forth to her doctor appointments, hauling home the groceries, and even giving her some fun -- trips to see her nieces and nephews.

A year later, she was cancer-free and beginning a new life. She got a job and her own newer car. She returned Bessie to me with a smile and a "pat" on the old car's hood as she walked away. Good things have continued to happen in her life. Two years ago, she remarried and is living her dream life.

She always gives me this wide-eyed look of amazement and squeezes my hand hard enough to hurt, shakes her head and whispers, "How did this happen?"

God happened. Friends happened. Her own will to live and to have a good life happened.

Over the years, Bessie has been part of a continuing saga of such "minor miracles", making vital transportation and carrying capacity available to people who desperately need it.

Right now, she has patch tape over her broken side light (transparent orange see-through tape) and is chugging along waiting for her new windshield, serving as a work truck for a young --by my standards-- plumber/heating technician.

He's a single father of four--- and that is already tough enough to manage, but last month he fell off a roof and injured his back.

He had been making do with a little subcompact car, but wearing a back brace meant that he could no longer drive that to get himself to and from his hospital visits, or to his worksites where he has continued to supervise jobs despite stiffness and pain. Friends had to take him everywhere, and at night he fretted--- what if one of the kids got sick?

Enter Bessie, the Wonder Truck. He can drive again, because Bessie is big enough to allow him to sit up in his back brace. And she can easily carry the bags of tools and saws and pipe to worksites. It's a whole new picture for him. His life is back. And it's because I loaned him an almost-thirty year-old Ford Explorer.

He doesn't care that her side light is taped or that her windshield still needs to be replaced. There were tears in his eyes as I gave him the keys. Bessie is working her magic again-- by making things possible that were impossible before. Gently, with her patient and indomitable spirit, that little SUV is still on the road, changing lives for the better.

And that, above all else, is why Bessie is a Wonder Car. I am not the only one who loves her, and not the only one she has saved. When one of my Readers found the phantom Fuel Pressure Regulator Return Hose and sent it to me, he gave her a new lease on life--- and also gave new life to an Iraqi War Veteran who can now independently care for himself and his four children again.

In between her duty stations away from home, Bessie delivers meals to the poor, the sick, and the elderly. She hauls food for the food bank, takes people back and forth to their medical and dental appointments, and hauls construction supplies. Bessie has helped rebuild homes damaged by earthquakes, access ramps for wheelchairs, and much, much more.

My husband calls Bessie a "Community Car" because she has had such a vital role in so many lives. I am her owner/caretaker, the one who pays for her insurance and upkeep, polishes her chrome and dusts her floorboards, but I have come to think that Bessie has a car-soul and destiny of her own. There is something above and beyond me that has kept a certain little SUV safe from all the perils of Alaska.

This afternoon, her windshield will be replaced and her new headlights are on the way. It won't be long before Bessie is back in trim and ready for another winter. God bless and keep her. She really is a "Wonder Car". I am sending my heart-felt thanks to all of you who have cared about her and thought about my repair dilemma, and helped to get the Old Girl back on track.

It means a lot, yes, more than anyone who thinks that she is "just an old car" can ever know.

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