

## Meet Bessie, the Wonder Car



By Anna Von Reitz

Our family, like most American families, is divided by the perennial Ford versus Chevrolet argument. I never thought too much about it and have had both Fords and Chevrolet trucks over the years.

About twenty years ago, give or take a couple, I bought "Bessie", a used 1991 Ford Explorer, as a work truck..

Both my husband and older sons stared at me in disbelief.

"You bought a Ford Exploder?" They howled with laughter, shook their heads, and stamped their feet.

"You wanna go broke on car repairs, Mom?"

I think Bessie heard that remark. She promptly proved them wrong and year after year, she clicked along like a sewing machine, requiring little more than regular lube, oil, and wiper blades.

Minus fifty? Turn on the oil pan and head bolt heaters for an hour, and Bessie would start. Volcanic dust? She'd keep chugging.

My work took me deep into the hintermost portions of Alaska's road system, down the Alcan Highway, and up the Dalton Highway hundreds of miles above the Arctic Circle---- "up and over" some of the most remote country and roughest roads in America. Bessie rolled her way over the Denali Highway, which isn't really a highway as you all might understand it, and deep into the Denali National Park. She took ferry rides to places like Kodiak and seemed to enjoy the salt spray splashing over her nose.

Now, I will readily admit that my husband's Chevy Pick-Up is a very good truck and easy to keep in repair and a gallant hearted machine if ever there was one. Yes, I readily admit this, and yet....

When Bessie topped over 400,000 miles on her first engine, I said, "That sticks it." --- and I took a picture of her and wrote up and sent in a story about her to The Detroit Free Press, giving the UAW a resounding "Huzzah!" for a Job Well Done.

Proof's in the pudding. You can't argue about 400,000 miles on a single engine. You can't poo-poo entire years of service with no repairs at all.

Ford fans went crazy and soon there were more stories, "Still Rolling in Alaska!" got aired all around the globe. My ancient Ford Explorer basked in the well-deserved glory and we just kept on keeping on. 2021 will mark her 30th birthday.

But Bessie is on life-support now. She needs a part that we can't find anywhere. All you Ford Fanatics out there, all you boys who have a favorite junkyard just like you have a favorite fishing hole---- everyone, please help.

What we need is technically described as the "Fuel Pressure Regulator Return Line". It's a piece of braided steel hose with connectors on both ends, one metal connector feeding back to the fuel tank, and one snap-on plastic connector feeding into the Fuel Pressure Regulator itself.

Typical -- the plastic snap connection broke off.

This particular hose was standard issue from 1989 onward for a number of years, including 1991 from what we've been able to gather. The Parts Number for the hose is: FOTZ-9C968-A, and the whole Fuel Supply and Return System Parts Number (which would include the phantom hose) is: FZTZ-9J338-N.

Please scrounge around and see what you can find, guys.

Bessie is a living symbol of American know-how, American engineering, and American quality --- because she is all of that, and more. She's an American from the tip of her antenna to the rubber on her treads. Detroit might have built better cars, but I don't know how or when.

Bessie is the toughest, scrappiest, most enduring car I ever owned, and let's face it, she's a lot like her owner. It's only right and fitting that she should be wearing a set of our new Private Owner Plates and be part of the All-American Brass Tacks Tour, trundling from town to town and sharing our history with people across America.

So shake a leg, brothers and sisters. She's one of ours and she's down for the count. We've already scrounged through every junkyard in Alaska, and all the internet After Market sites we could find, but someone, somewhere has this part, either in a scrap yard or hiding in the back of their shop.

Either call me at (907) 250-5087, or email at: [avannavon@gmail.com](mailto:avannavon@gmail.com) with subject line: "Bessie".

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