

It's all a matter of where you come from, where you're at, and where you're going. Working in the hinterland as I have recently, my eyes have beheld sights I never thought possible. On a glorious sunny Sunday in Brookville IN, my '95 993 Cab with roof down was parked at a restaurant for breakfast. I decided to move it when a guy in a Jeep CJ with overwide tires decided to see how close to my car he could get as he swung from the wrong side into a diagonal parking spot. Then I noticed that mine was the only vehicle in the lot actually within the prescribed paint lines. So I moved it to a less "risky" spot while the guy was still in his Jeep, which drew a puzzled look from him, but little else.

Along comes a couple in a '65 or so Dodge Coronet 440, who park alongside my 993. Stepping from their car, they don't even glance at the Porsche. The REST of the people who walk past, however, are VERY enlightening. You could basically separate them by age, with 25 being the midline. Below have no idea what the Coronet is except a wasteful, excessive, muscle car with tin-foil brakes and atrocious handling, but it will spin the tires on the wheels. And above that age are pickup truck drivers with pictures of Calvin showing his relative respect for other brands than those on their particular truck. Those drivers look longingly, and I am sure knowingly, at the 440, with its black vinyl bench seats and one-crash-will-kill-you dashboard, and barely recognize the Porsche's existence. Not a great ego inflator.

Mind you, none of these people is stupid nor ignorant; they simply have different aspirations. Out here, pure raw power is king, and handling is a complete non-issue if one can light up the tires down the center of town on a Friday night. Indiana is one of few states where you can legally still ride a motorcycle without a helmet. I won't even begin to review the bad odds of doing so; just keep in mind what a life member of the Harley Owners Group (HOG) told me; "If you haven't dumped a bike, you haven't rode a bike". Seems to cover it in a nutshell. And the funny thing is that there are basically only two bike types for miles around; Harley and BMW. Now, given the car status situation, the former was certainly expected, but the Beemers? And to quote the local vernacular; "rice burners, we don't need no stinkin' rice burners", despite the fact most of those Japanese crotch rockets can eat a Harley for lunch in terms of acceleration and handling.

And, like most of life, perceptions often don't square with facts. A casual glance at these guys (AND dolls) at first conjures up the stereotypical Hell's Angel, until you realize they have more invested in their bikes than I have in my Porsche, and their hair is as grey as mine. They aren't going through a second childhood, so much as a first adulthood. They can finally afford what they have pined for since they first heard the wail of a V Twin, and they want to live every bit of the experience. So they dress in leathers, always black, and wear provocative shirts proclaiming the marque to the world. Yet on weekends they hold HUGE rallies for HOBOS, Helpers On Bikes Organization, and raise funds for various charities in the area. They also are a great bunch of social people who have learned to laugh at themselves even more than others. I like to be with them a lot.

So what about the Beemers? They share the same beer and socializing, and are perfectly accepted because they are open air lovers; they just like it a little quieter. Unfortunately, neither group seems to know much about air cooled six cylinder boxer engines, nor the cars which carry them. Their kids, however, are another matter entirely. I had stopped at the local IGA (a LOT smaller than Wegman's) and noticed that two young boys were practically drooling in their pickup while their father seemed preoccupied elsewhere. So I casually asked if the boys knew what it was, and I was startled to hear the eldest say "993 Cabriolet". BANG! This is a kid with a soul! So I asked if he had ever been in one. He was really shy, but his dad said it would be OK for a "ride", so in my best Porsche Club ambassador behavior, I took him for what was never close to a "spin". Instead, I showed him the things I consider to be the hallmark of a Porsche; that you wear them rather than sit in them, that once having done so, they are almost directly wired to your synapses, so you merely need to think your actions to get their response, that they reward patience, and penalize impulse. And most importantly, they are one of very few automobiles with the capability to save my life by

avoidance INSTEAD of surviving a crash, even while they feel as solid as a bank vault. And the brakes... God, what brakes!

As any of you could attest in similar circumstances, which I would suggest at every opportunity as it will give you more personal pleasure than perhaps any activity you can name, the ride was a joyous celebration of life and engineering, and we were both grinning from ear to ear when I returned the son to the father. But I know where he's been. I know where I am, and I really like it. And I know where we are both going. It reminded me of a visit I made to the Avon CT Porsche dealer in 1976. With no possibility of buying such a car, I was nonetheless enchanted by the Signature Platinum Targa they had on display. And a very wise salesman came over and offered me the keys for a test drive. Of course, I declined and told him I was incapable of buying such a car. His response; "Someday You Will". I now have my second in a long list. That young boy will do the same.

And I get the sense that the bikers are in that same personal space; they know who they are and who they want to be. At once seemingly rebellious, while endlessly cooperative in approaching shared goals. And in thinking about that, I also understand the ogling of the 440. When THEY were growing up, that was the badass ride they lusted after, so it tugs at their heartstrings.

We in CNY have been blessed with a more cosmopolitan background, perhaps, but the emotions have exactly the same roots. Life is short. I'm not here for a long time, just a good one. And I am enjoying it.