

How long is too long to keep your car?

By Neville Barlow

A prominent European car company has recently suggested that 'keeping your old car could be better for the environment, than buying a new one'. They say they could produce a completely new interior that could be slipped in easily, a quick upgrade of engine power by using modern chips, new wheels and paint jobs. We know for example that all electric cars pour massive tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere just in their production and that only adds to an already problematic climate.

In the 1980's I purchased a Nissan Fairlady 280Z. It was my sports car, my delivery car (with the back seats down I could squeeze in 200 dozen eggs) and I even at times had 4 adults aboard. In this car I managed to rack up over 200,000 Kms with very few problems. The only real attention it required was 2 new clutches. I wondered if it was the car or perhaps some vigorous driving! It could hit 180kph which my young son attested to one day.



Nissan Fairlady 280Z plus lots of eggs



Jaguar XJ6

I nearly said "I Know" but managed to quickly change the subject so he wouldn't know I had done that too. This car was sold to a young mechanic who prized it for several years. I realized that 300,000 Kms was well within the reach of many Japanese cars of that day.

In March 2018 our club visited a small collection of cars at Pirongia. Another of those people who loved cars and who had an amazing collection which included several Jaguars, Bentley's, Triumph's etc.

A young man arrived in a Jaguar XJ6 (a family friend) so I went to look at his car. At first, I thought it looked a little tired but when I looked inside, the driver's seat was well worn but the rest of the interior was almost unused. It transpired that this car had been his Father's, who had been a travelling salesman and who covered the whole of the North Island. It had covered a verified 750,000 miles and in its early days had been serviced by Sybil Lupp, "The Jaguar Lady" in Wellington.

Brian Devlin, (the author of "Tracking the Cats," a book about the Jaguars and Daimlers assembled in Nelson, N.Z.) tells me that this car was one of the first XJ6's to come to New Zealand.

I have often wondered if there was a record, perhaps recognised by the Guinness Book of records for the most miles driven by a single owner in the one car. I found there was a man called Irvin Gordon who lives in Long Island New York who has driven his 1966 Volvo P1800 more than 3 million miles. To put that in perspective, he drove the equivalent of 120 times around the World- six times to the Moon and back again!!



1966 Volvo P1800

Gordon cares for his car like a parent would for a new -born baby. Over the years he has had 857 oil changes, 30 drive belts and 120 bottles of transmission fluid- and thanks to all this maintenance, the car has never broken down. However, his boot is crammed with spare parts of all kinds.

His first million miles came up in 1987, the second million in 2002 and third million in 2013. He has driven his car in the USA, United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, Holland, and Mexico.

While on the subject of how long this or that will last, I am reminded of a visit I made to Los Angeles in 1982 when I took my two sons to see Disney Land. While in L A I was attracted to an Auto electrical shop that had a big sign outside proclaiming "Auto Batteries to last the life of your car".

I went in to see what these fabulous batteries were like and asked what is the life of a car? I really thought that this was a remarkable break through, and we would see them in New Zealand soon. They admitted it was a ploy to get customers into their shop and their batteries would probably last up to 5 years. In this world, can you believe anything you see in writing?

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