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Two for the road to Detroit

It's not always easy to share a long drive, especially when your passenger is your editor

While several of my wiser colleagues decided to take the train to the Detroit auto show, I opted to tag along with my delightful editor, Mark Richardson.

I figured that would mean a relaxing drive in some great car, lulled inside a cocoon of his dulcet British tones. When he finally pulled a black Mercedes ML320 into my driveway a half-hour late, I decided even his tardiness couldn't dull this moment.

"I'm not bloody well driving. You are," he announced as he jammed my suitcase into the back. With that, he hopped into the passenger seat and waited for me to recalibrate.

It seems Richardson had had a rather rocky start to the day. He was late because he'd spent the past 24 hours searching for his glasses. Without success. He only had a pair from when he was 18 with him, and decided he would wear his prescription sunglasses for squinting at the press conferences. And for the entire drive.

On his way to get me, as he repeatedly pointed out, he'd received a speeding ticket. This did not make him happy, but as he pulled away from the officer and his phone rang, it got better. It was his 8-year-old son.

"Daddy, Mommy won't explain something. She said to ask you. What's a tampon?"

Ending up with me in the car as we drove into the jaws of a storm on the 401 was just the cherry on top.

"Now, I won't tell you how to drive, I know you're good — THAT ISN'T OUR EXIT, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? — I haven't eaten, can we get a burger? Oh, are these the expensive houses in this part of town? Heh, they're not worth so



Lorraine Sommerfeld was pleased to have her photo taken while driving.



LORRAINE SOMMERFELD

much now then, are they? I'll have a Number Two with an iced tea," he said. As we left the parking lot, he announced he probably should have had a pee.

As I navigated for the highway, I kept hitting the cruise control speed setting instead of the turn signal. After the third time, Richardson leaned over, whapped the proper wand and rolled his eyes. "Want a fry?" he asked.

A few minutes later, I realized my butt was on fire. He'd pushed the seat warmer button to "broil."

The only thing worse than an auto journalist at the wheel? One in the passenger seat.

Nika Rolczewski was a half hour ahead, and called back with reports of cars in the ditch and slowing conditions. The Bluetooth connection was lousy, so Richardson just yelled louder.

"We'll stop to pee up here," he announced. We followed a fishtailing car into the near-empty centre,

which had only washrooms. No coffee, no fuel. When Richardson returned to the vehicle, I pointed at the dash.

"Uhm, I think we're out of gas," I informed him. I'd been concentrating on the slippery roads.

"Well, we can't be," he said.

"But look," I replied, pointing to the gauge.

"No, we can be out of diesel, but not gas," he said rather smugly.

We were in the middle of nowhere, snow was piling up, and I was trapped in a Mercedes with John Cleese.

As he jabbed away at the GPS searching for a diesel station within inches, I told him I didn't have my CAA card, and I wasn't getting out to push.

"Well, do you at least have some chocolate?" he asked.

One more exit and we found fuel. Ten more minutes and my butt was again aflame. Windsor, where we would stay, shone like the Emerald City.

I flagged a ride home with Nika, and last I heard Richardson was conning Kathy Renwald into driving back with him.

Take some chocolate, Kathy.

Lorraine Sommerfeld's column appears Saturday in Wheels and Mondays in Living. www.lorraineonline.ca



PHOTOS COURTESY HONDA CANADA

The rear shock is hidden on the Honda Fury for a hardtail chopper effect.

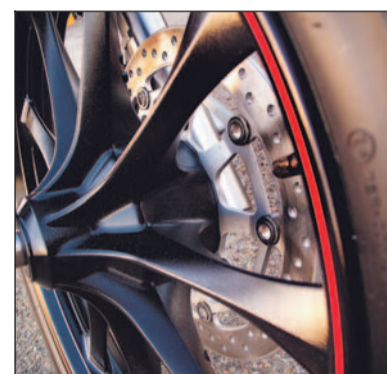
Honda's new Fury

It's not only cars that were unveiled at shows this week. The new Honda Fury cruiser made its world debut yesterday at the New York and Edmonton motorcycle shows.

The chopper-styled Fury has the longest wheelbase of any Honda production motorcycle, at 71.2 inches (1,808 mm).

There are no horsepower or torque claims, but it's powered by a 1,312 cc, liquid-cooled 52-degree V-Twin that spins a shaft drive to the wide 200-series rear tire.

The single-shock rear suspension hides the shock absorber to give a hard-tail look. Its curb weight is 301 kg, and its seat height 26.7 inches (68 cm).



"It's the chopper you would build for yourself — if you had a factory instead of a garage," says Honda in its press release.

Villeneuve in GTA today

NORRIS MCDONALD
MOTORSPORT WRITER

Canada's only world driving champion, Jacques Villeneuve, will be in Toronto this weekend appearing at the Canadian Motorsport Expo being held at the International Centre in Mississauga.

Villeneuve, who won his championship while driving for the Williams-Renault Formula One team in 1997, will be at the Expo on Saturday between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The 1995 CART champion and Indianapolis 500 winner will be available for an autograph session on the main stage between 11 a.m. and noon.

At 2 p.m., Villeneuve will hold a public news conference, also on the main stage, to discuss his plans for the 2009 racing season and answer questions from fans.

The Canadian Motorsports Expo is a three-day celebration of Canadian racing that will run from Friday until Sunday at the International Centre.

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