

FALCON FLYER

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NORTHLAND CHAPTER OF THE FALCON CLUB OF AMERICA

It's Great To Be Alive...Doing The Dearborn Splashdown In A '61 Falcon

One of the best parts about being involved in a club such as this, is listening to and sharing our Falcon related and life experiences. I feel that this story is important enough to share in that it prevents just one person from taking the risks that I took during the 2010 FCA Dearborn Nationals, that it was well worth the effort.

My name is Scot Thayer, a FCA member since approximately 1992 and currently Vice President of the Northland Chapter based in Minnesota. I live in Cottage Grove, MN and the father of two wonderful grown daughters, and am blessed with employment in equipment design for 3M Company. On a personal note, I have been experiencing a painful separation and divorce, but my strong Faith has very thankfully been carrying me thru to healing. This said, an escape to the 2010 FCA

Dearborn Nationals was exactly what the doctor had ordered. My present Falcon is a baby blue 1961 Two Door Deluxe Sedan, restored and modified by FCA member Ron Bon-

nell of Decatur, AL. Modifications include a "Sleeper" theme (stock looking with subtle performance related visual changes), modified 300 inline six with RayJay turbocharger, toploader 4 speed, 9 inch rear end, V8 suspension and Granada disc brakes. Ron builds a very robust car; I purchased it from him in May of 2008 and drove it home 950 miles trouble free. This car is FUN (with capitol letters) to drive. Routine maintenance and winter storage have been all that is needed.

Not wanting to take credit for Ron's fine work, I registered it for the 2010 Nationals in the "Show Only" class...and having aquired the itch for a new Falcon project, the car was put up for sale. Transportation intent was to team up with my brother Mark, rent a trailer, and use his O.J. Simpson white '95 Bronco to pull the car to Dearborn in relative comfort. About a week before it was time to hit the road, Mark had some hot job prospects appear and he decided to back out from the trip. The car had been used very little over two years of ownership so I was a bit hesitant; but decided to give the car a mechanical once over and drive it to Dearborn. Money saved from no longer needing a trailer was applied to a special treat....a ferry boat ride across Lake Michigan.

The pre-trip mechanical once over was routine; it included flushing the antifreeze, changing the oil, checking lube levels, packing wheel



bearings, checking the brakes, and rotating the tires. The tires were well beyond expert recommended replacement age, but there wasn't time to research, locate and buy new white wall tires....so I decided to throw caution to the wind and drive on the old tires....after all, this was a round trip of only 1300 miles, certainly those old tires would be okay....or so I thought.

The first day of the trip to Dearborn was very relaxing and uneventful. Meeting up with the Northland Chapter's "Dash To Dearborn" cara-



TURBO-CHARGED

van (Mike, Toni & Zach Sullivan, Roger & Marva Rae Parks, Bob & Patti Cajune, Mike Conmy, Ralph & Amy Marquardt, Roy & Kathy Lange, Troy, Barb & Cory Witt) we drove together to a point in Wisconsin where they headed north to meet up with additional members (Bill & Carol Bell, Randy Rowell & daughter Signey). They took the route via the Upper Peninsula while I headed to Milwaukee to catch the ferry across the big pond.

Beginning my second day of the trip, it started out very well. The ferry boat ride across Lake Michigan was very fun and relaxing. As the heat of the day kicked in, the final run from Muskegon to Dearborn was not without problems for me as well as for my U.P. caravan comrades (via the magic of texting I learned that Mike Conmy's car wasn't running well). Just west of Lansing along eastbound I-96 my right rear tire failed. It delaminated but held air

and did not come apart, so I was able to exit safely into the small town of Eagle, MI. My spare tire consisted of a period correct F78-14 bias ply tire. It was considerably taller than the radials being run on the car and figuring

that the diameter difference might raise havoc on the Traction-Loc differential, I was directed to a small tire shop in town. There, I had the car outfitted with a new blackwall radial tire of the correct size, plus a new spare...just in case of another tire failure. I was good to go for tires....or so I thought. Upon my arrival at Dearborn, the car emitted a slight puff of white

smoke while idling, so I monitored the cooling system over the next couple of days while enjoying the Nationals.

The Nationals were nothing short of spectacular....meeting people, walking the show field endless times, visiting the Henry Ford Estate (Fair Lane), and the Henry Ford Museum. The best part of the Nationals was the parade to and driving on the Ford Proving Grounds. Northland Chapter member Allen Wehr was my passenger, we had a good time and I discovered a new brother in Christ while filling him in about my pending divorce.

The only decent ferry boat opening available for my return trip was at 1:45pm on Saturday of that weekend, so unfortunately it was time to get moving on Saturday morning. I was concerned about the car's minor cooling system issue, so checked with Ron Bonnell for ideas. He suggested that any time he builds an engine he uses Bars-Leak in the cooling system. I had flushed the cooling system prior to the trip, so it made sense that perhaps I had flushed out any traces of remaining Bars-Leak from the original build. That known, I procured a fresh bottle of Bars-Leak and spent a good part of Saturday morning siphoning the radiator to make room to add it to the cooling system. After taking care of that task, I can recall looking at the left rear tire, wondering if it should be changed it before the trip home. Figuring 'what are the chances of another blowout'....I decided to head home without changing the tire.

I hit the road around 10:30am Saturday... planning to arrive in Muskegon with plenty of time to spare for catching the boat back across



2011 EVENTS

JANUARY 2011

— ELLINGSON'S CAR MUSEUM

MARCH 2011

— 26TH: SPRING MEETING-EAU CLAIRE, WI

APRIL 2011

— 9TH: GSTA CAR SHOW

— 10TH: ONALASKA SWAP MEET

— 16TH: CARS & COFFEE-ALL FORD SHOW

MAY 2011

— 1ST: SPRING CARSHOW & SWAP

— 21ST: TUNE UP DAY-SEASON OPENER

— 22ND: DAIRY INN-CANNON FALLS

the big pond. The first 40 miles or so were nerve wracking....it was going to be a hot day and I was concerned about the cooling system holding together. By around mile 45 the engine temp stabilized...the Bars-Leak had done its job and I was feeling confident about finishing the trip without a problem.



What happened next was very fast and nothing short of a God Given Miracle. Around mile 50 of the trip, westbound on I-96 about 15 miles east of Lansing (at

Nicholson Road) another tire failed. Travelling at approximately 65 mph, I can recall hearing a fast and wild flapping noise, followed by the car going into an uncontrollable fishtail. My Minnesota winter driving instincts kicked in and I threw the car into neutral, hoping to aid in stabilizing the fishtailing. ***It didn't help!*** What had happened was the left rear tire failed (the one I did not to change just an hour prior), this time delaminating and flying apart...the flaps binding up in the wheel well and causing a braking action that also transferred into the right rear tire due to the Traction-Loc differential. As the car hit the ditch (missing a guard rail by about 20 feet) I prayed to God, telling Him that I was prepared for any outcome, including joining Him. As the car rumbled over tall grass it stabilized, and my next flashing thought was "a tow, a new tire, and I'll be on my way"....that's when splashdown occurred. The car went nose first about four feet deep into a drainage pond, the engine squealed & died and the hood flew open

simultaneously. There I sat without a scratch...God had bigger plans than for me to die in a senseless wreck that day. A witness ran down to where the car and I had come to rest. I handed him my suitcases and climbed out of the car as it filled with water.

A very kind Fed-Ex employee who had witnessed the whole thing stayed with me until someone from the county Sheriff's department was able to arrive for the accident investigation and towing assist. Before the Sheriff's Deputy arrived I put a call in to Toni Sullivan, who was still in Dearborn with the majority of the Northland Chapter. She put out word of my misfortune, and Cliff McKay kindly offered use of his F150 to Troy Witt and Mike Sullivan for a rescue. When the car was pulled from the mud it appeared remarkably straight... and "project" entered my mind. It was then towed to an impound lot in Fowlerville, where Mike and Troy rescued me and took a bunch of pictures. The car has the battery and solenoid mounted in the trunk and that had remained dry, so just before our departure I decided to throw caution to the wind and try to start the car. It fired right up....so I shut it down right away to prevent any further damage. "Definite project material", I thought.

Back in Dearborn I was greeted with many kind words from my Northland friends, Ron and Sandy Bonnell, and Cliff McKay, who I thanked for so kindly lending the use of his truck. After the banquet Troy introduced me to Steve Springer, who offered kind words and shared a death defying tire failure experience of his own.

Thank you to everyone for your kind words

and encouragement. Special thanks to Roger & Marva Rae Parks, Mike & Toni Sullivan, and Ralph and Amy Marquardt in making room for a ride home with the Dash To Dearborn caravan. Most of all, I thank my Creator for allowing me to walk away from a potentially fatal wreck without a scratch and not a care in the world. It could have been so much worse in so many different ways. If I can offer any advice at all from this experience, it would be to replace your old tires...no matter how good they look. The time and money invested could save your life.

Stay tuned for a future article on my new project....

"The recovery and repair plan for a waterlogged '61 Falcon".

Article by Scot Thayer



2011 FCA NATIONAL - STAMPEDE TO STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO

For those planning to attend the FCA National Convention in Colorado this July, these events require a reservation:

- * "Ladies Western and Red Hat Tea" on Thursday, July 14th @2 PM requires you submit a check for \$12.00 per attendee to the Mile High Chapter. This will include entertainment, light lunch and Door Prizes!!
- * "Falcon Night at the Rodeo" on Friday evening, July 15th. Please call Jan Brown @ 303-857-9360 for your reservation and number of people. A discounted ticket voucher will be added to your Registration packet upon arrival, then you will pay at the gate.



WRENCH IT TIPZ

Our Falcons sit a lot of the time in Minnesota due to weather conditions. If you haven't flushed your radiator in a while, it is probably due or past due.

Here are the step to do it properly:

Start with a cool engine

Open the radiator pressure cap (carefully, if the engine is still warm). It's not a bad idea to put a towel over the opening and cap as you open it, if it is still warm.

Place a drain pan under the radiator petcock. Open the petcock on the bottom tank of the radiator. Inside the car slide your heater control to maximum hot position. Let the system drain completely.

After emptying your radiator, close the petcock and empty the drain pan contents.

Dispose of the antifreeze appropriately; it is hazardous to pets and ground water.

Fill up your radiator with water. (Not coolant-water mix, just plain water) Don't replace the cap yet.

Start your engine and let it idle as you add a coolant cleanser or cleaning fluid into your radiator.

Follow the directions on the cleanser container. You may have to let it idle for 20-30 minutes

Shut off engine, open petcock (after installing drain pan) and let system drain completely. Close petcock. Empty the drain pan.

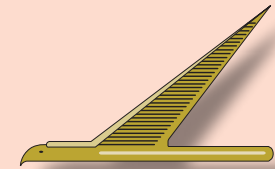
Add water (not coolant) one more time and start engine to let idle for about 5 minutes. Open petcock and drain system. Note: repeat this last process until water draining out of system is free of "gunk".

After closing the petcock for the last time, add a 50-50 mix of appropriate coolant and water.

Replace your radiator cap, you have a "flushed" cooling system. Take your Falcon for a test drive. When you return, and you have let your engine cool Down. Check the coolant level one more time to make sure it is at the proper level.



Denny Martin



March 2011 Meeting Minutes

- * We had an excellent turnout at Pizza del Re in Eau Claire, WI. This was our first meeting outside of the Twin Cities and it was a huge success
- * We are looking for ideas for upcoming issues of the Falcon Flyer. Please submit them to Mike Sullivan
- * This year we are planning on more cruising get togethers.
- * Rock Falls Speedway event is being researched for this summer
- * Members are in control of the events this year.
- * New Members are Bill & Laura Karker, Donald & Sharyl Hornbuckle and Vince Voigt.
- * We agreed to donate \$150 to the Mile-Hi Chapter for the 2011 FCA Convention.

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