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SF CHRONICLE CARS



PHOTO BY RACHEL STYER

Jan Gersonde has been driving her Volvo 1800ES Sports Wagon for more than 30 years. It caught her attention on a used car lot at the corner of 14th and South Van Ness and she was hooked from the test drive: "While I was shifting through the gears on Highway 280, I knew that this car would be mine," she says.

A classic Volvo 1800ES Sports Wagon still gets the job done

My Ride Contributed by Jan Gersonde

Jan Gersonde is a registered nurse who lives in San Francisco and works at Skyline College in San Bruno.

I love my car! It's the only car I have driven since Halloween 1977. When I bought the car that day, I didn't think I would be driving it more than 30 years later, but here I

am. Something happened along the way — I discovered that I could never find a car to replace it.

My car is a 1973 Volvo 1800ES. On Halloween 1977, I was driving a 1973 Plymouth Duster that I bought from a friend's husband who was selling cars for the Chrysler dealership in San Francisco. On that fateful day, I was driving past Royal Volvo on the corner of 14th and South Van Ness when I saw this beautiful car sitting on the used car lot. At that time, there were no "pre-owned cars," only used cars. I thought I would stop just to look at the car because I had never seen a car like this. I saw what I now know are the 1800 series coupes, but I had never seen the Sports

Wagon. As I looked at the car, a salesman appeared from out of nowhere and suggested that we take a test drive, which we did. While I was shifting through the gears on Highway 280, I knew that this car would be mine. And that is indeed what happened. About three hours later, I drove away from Royal Volvo in this fabulous car, leaving my Plymouth Duster far behind. And I never looked back!

It was, however, with some trepidation that I bought this Volvo. I grew up in Wisconsin, and if there were any Volvos there, I certainly do not remember them. Everyone I knew (or was related to) drove an American car. I even had a friend in high school whose parents went to Detroit once a year to pick up

their new Oldsmobile at the factory. Foreign cars had a bad reputation: they weren't built in the "American" way. I was told they broke down a lot, needed repair often and mechanics to repair them were hard to find. How naive I was! Little did I know that there are probably more Volvos per square mile in San Francisco and the Bay Area than any other place on earth (except Sweden) and that Volvos last forever. My concern at the time was so great that I took a beginner Volvo mechanics course through an extended learning program. The class was held in Berkeley — of course — and the man teach-

My Ride: See Page 12

DOWN THE ROAD

2010 Fusion Hybrid is America's most fuel-efficient midsize car

By Dave Van Sickle

Just before Christmas, the all-new Ford Fusion Hybrid officially became America's most fuel efficient midsize car with a certified 41 mpg city and 36 mpg highway rating. The Fusion Hybrid can travel more than 700 miles on a single tank of gas.

"The Ford team set the bar high — to develop America's most fuel efficient midsize sedan — and that's what they delivered," said Derrick Kuzak, group vice president, Global Product Development.

To deliver that kind of fuel economy, Ford's engineers spent the past three years developing in-house, the vehicle's next-generation hybrid drivetrain. It allows the Fusion and Mercury Milan hybrid to travel up to 47 miles per hour in pure electric mode, faster than all other hybrids currently on the road.

"The Fusion Hybrid's ability to run at a much higher speed in electric mode allows drivers to maximize fuel efficiency in many driving situations," said Praveen Cherian, Fusion Hybrid program leader. "For example, this would allow drivers to travel around their subdivision and parking areas in all-electric mode."

Fusion's advanced hybrid system features a smaller, lighter nickel-metal hydride battery, which produces 20 percent more power than Ford's previous hybrid system. The battery's improved chemistry allows it to be run at a higher temperature so now it can be cooled using cabin air.

A new 2.5-liter four-cylinder, 155-horsepower engine is mated to an electronically controlled continuously variable transmission. A specially-designed electronic throttle control reduces airflow on shutdowns, thereby reducing fueling needs on restarts.

A smart climate control system monitors cabin temperature and runs the gas engine only as needed to heat the cabin. It also includes an electric air conditioning compressor to further minimize engine use. The enhanced regenerative brake system captures as much as 94 percent of the energy that would normally

Down the Road: See Page 12