

What a Gas

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Classic car problems



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Every fall North Texas is blessed by having the annual Good Guys Rod and Custom Show held at the Texas Motor Speedway. The show is a must see for any car enthusiast. I have gone several times over the years and thoroughly enjoyed seeing over at each show 1500 rods, customs and classics, muscle cars in the infield of the Texas Motor Speedway. I also enjoyed checking out the vendors and manufacture exhibits along with the swap meet.

Back in the 2002 when I first bought my Chevy I showed my car at the show. The highlight of the event was being able to drive the Chevy three laps around the speedway.

Several years later, I decided I wanted to go to the show as a spectator. It was such a nice day; I decided to take the Chevy, even though I was not going to enter the show. The trip to the speedway was only thirty five miles. I had a half a tank of gas therefore; I decided instead of buying gas on the way, I would buy gas on the way back. If you are wondering, yes, I am more than a little paranoid about running out of gas while driving my Chevy. She only gets 10 miles to the gallon on a good day and the gas gage, while functional, has questionable accuracy. I have run out of gas when it was on an eighth of a tank. Therefore, when I am at a half a tank I wonder how much gas is really in the tank.

Being able to drive the Chevy on the trip to the speedway, in its self, was an enjoyable event. When I started I had to make a decision between two different routes to drive to the show. For fun of it, I chose going through Flower Mound, Texas driving on Farm to Market Road 1171. After you get out of the city limits of Flower Mound the road is some what of a pleasing two lane winding black top. With music blaring out the rear Jensen speakers over the roar of the dual exhausts, I am grinning ear to ear from my drive though the country in my Chevy. Mostly, I drive in the city so, getting out in the countryside at highway speeds is enjoyable. I looked at the usual sites, the "Tour 18" golf course, horse farms, lakes and trees as I navigated the road. One exceptionally fun activity is driving fast over a set of rail road tracks, jumping them, along the way. Every time I jump them, I swear I am lifting all four wheels off the pavement.

When I drive my Chevy anywhere it is always an adventure. I never know what is going to break or fall off. However, my trip to the track was uneventful and pleasurable. I found a great spot in the front row of the parking lot and made my own mini car show, rolled up the windows then walked into the speedway for several hours of contentment.

Having had all I could stand, I finally called it a day and headed out of the show. I must have walked five miles at least that day. I made an effort to see every row of show cars and vendor booths. Finally at my car, I jumped into the Chevy and headed for the house. I decided to take another route home because now my gas gage is just under a quarter of a tank, the danger zone! My route to the show however enjoyable was lacking in gas stations. Consequently, I decide to take Highway 114 through Grapevine, Texas. After crossing Highway 35W a nice large gas station loomed into view. Without enough gas to get home, I pulled into the station for some go juice.

Nonchalantly, I pulled up to the pumps and inserted the pump nozzle. I pumped in about ten gallons when a red Ford screeched to a halt behind my car. A man jumped out and yelled, "Stop! I was chasing you to tell you your gas tank is falling out. I tried to tell you sooner but, I got caught at the traffic light."

Immediately, I stopped the flow of gas to step back to look under my car. Sure enough, one of the tank straps was completely off the tank and dragging on the ground. The tank was, as we say in Texas catawampus or, hanging half out at a forty five degree angle. I can not tell you what first came out of my mouth but, I will say I thanked my Good Samaritan.

I pulled the car over to the side of the station lot to survey the situation. My first thought was what happened? It must have been the rail road tracks! My second thought was I can fix it.

I crawled under the rear of the Chevy. Luckily, I have air shocks and the car is jacked up in the rear making enough room for me without jacking the car up. Lying under the car I begin to start shoving the tank back into its proper position. The tank was hard to maneuver since it had at least twelve gallons of fuel in it. If you do not know, gas weighs around 6 pounds a gallon therefore, I am pushing around seventy pounds of gas

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tank. Even though I am at my bench press limit, I still managed to just get the tank almost back into position when, the whole thing comes crashing out to land on my chest with a thud.

You never know how fast you can move until seventy pounds of gas tank falls on you, as it is spewing flammable liquid out of the now exposed filler neck all over you. I wiggle out from under the tank and roll out from under the car to notice that gas is pouring every where. Without thinking about the danger, I drug the tank over the concrete parking lot to prop the tank up on a curb to keep the gas from pouring out.

I then just stood there panting, and staring in a daze at the train wreck that just happened. My car sat without a gas tank, the tank was out on the pavement propped up on a six inch curb, after spilling half its contents. A major gas spill covered the pavement, luckily spreading away from the Chevy. I was soaked with gas and could not move. I did not know what to do next. I guess the rush of adrenaline of having to speed crawl out from under the car with the possibility of burning to death had used me all up.

As I stood like a statue, a guy, I would later find was from Pennsylvania, came up to me saying, "Looks like you are having a little problem." Shaking out of my stupor, I said, "My gas tank just fell out." My guy said, "I'm a mechanic. My dad has had several old Chevys. Working on them with him was what got me interested in being a mechanic for a living." As I got out some tools we talked about how his wife was down in Dallas for training and he had tagged along. We lifted and strapped the tank back into place. Finished, we shook hands as I told him I could not have fixed my car without him.

To make a long story short, the tank came loose again the next day. I put new straps on to then find that the trunk deck was rusted out whereas; I had to replace much of the deck to strengthen the gas tank supports. Having a classic car gives me faith in humanity. My old Chevy has broken down several times. Each time I have had new friends stop by to help me out of my predicament. Classic cars have that effect on people.

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