

THE 3 R FUTURE OF OLD TRUCKS

TODAY'S TRUCKS FACE A FUTURE OF THE 3RS: RECYCLE, REUSE & REPURPOSE



By **Kenneth E. Seaton**

IT WASN'T THAT LONG AGO THAT WHEN YOUR LOYAL TRUCK DECIDED TO TURN ITSELF INTO A CLUNKER AND QUIT RUNNING, YOU HAD SEVERAL RELATIVELY EASY THINGS THAT YOU COULD DO ABOUT IT.

YOU COULD: give it to your teenager and say "It's yours if you can get it up and running", take it to the local auto junkyard and walk away with a cool 25 or 50 bucks, or you could drive it, push/pull it into the field behind the house and leave it.

However, that was a while ago; these days when your vehicle dies it becomes officially classified as an "End of Life Vehicle" (ELV). ELV vehicles are defined as: "stripped, wrecked or otherwise inoperable

due to mechanical failure." Leaving your vehicle in the back forty in the dead of night is no longer considered a viable option.

In Canada, it's estimated that annually about 1.6 million vehicles become ELV and are taken off the road. Canadians – and most first world nations – are now facing stringent new rules and regulations on just how they can rid themselves of their old friends and workhorses.

The controlled disposal of ELVs is because it's been discovered that they pose a threat to the environment. The main reason is the hazardous materials that the vehicles carry inside them.

For most people, who are trying to live greener, being a conscientious recycler is now part of their daily routines. Protecting the earth and its environment is a great way of trying to ensure that our children's future will be bright, clean and is an obligation that everyone should take seriously.

YOU CAN RECYCLE YOUR VEHICLE

If your vehicle is now ready to be put

down, there are several practical options open to you. If you just want to scrap your ELV, you should be aware that the majority of the weight in your vehicle is composed of steel. At your local recycling yards scrap steel should run for around \$150 per ton and on average a vehicle is usually worth around \$300 to a scrapyards.

Some auto recycling statistics that you didn't perhaps know:

- Every year, over 25 million tons of materials are recycled from old vehicles;
- * That with current technology around 75 to 80 % of a vehicle can be recycled;
- Each year, the automobile recycling industry in USA and Canada provides sufficient steel to produce roughly 13 million new vehicles;
- According to reports, the gross annual revenue in 1997 in the USA was \$7.05 billion and in Canada was \$1.15 billion. In the same year, auto recyclers in the USA and Canada acquired approximately 4.7 million vehicles for recycling;
- Ninety-eight percent of every car battery





can be recycled.

From 2009 till 2011 the Canadian National Vehicle Scrappage Program (NVSP)¹ – known as Retire Your Ride / Adieu Bazou – was one of a range of clean transportation initiatives undertaken by our government that partnered with various federal departments as part of its Clean Air Agenda. The program encouraged owners of 1995 and older model-year cars to retire their vehicles in exchange for an offered incentive.

The NVSP's primary goal was to reduce air pollutants by removing these older vehicles from the road; its secondary goals were to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) by promoting sustainable transportation alternatives and to prevent the release of toxic substances through responsible vehicle recycling.

Across Canada the program offered cash incentives of \$300. Non-cash incentives varied depending on where the program recipient resided. These incentives ranged from rebates on newer vehicles, transit passes, discounts on bicycles and e-bikes, and memberships in car-sharing programs.

The NVSP report documented that, "Most of the participants (93%) preferred the cash incentive. More than 75% of participants replaced or indicated they would replace their vehicles with another one. The auto manufacturer rebates had a direct impact on the type of replacement

vehicle purchased, as most program users opted for larger vehicles due to their coming with the biggest incentives and discounts."

Over the life of the program, approximately 138,600 vehicles were retired. The NVSP final report quantified that "As the full national program was implemented 21 months after program inception, it was unable to reach its initial target. Some regions had difficulties reaching their targets due to the lack of recycling infrastructure and other logistical issues."

YOU CAN REUSE YOUR VEHICLE

So Old Betsy is officially an ELV parked in the back yard and you can't bring yourself to junk her. And you can't face chopping her up and turning her into some form of Yuppie art. You're wondering what to do – that's until you see a customized classic vehicle with a gleaming set of wheels role by – and a star is born. Of-course not all old vehicles are considered classics, but she will always be a lady in your eyes.

Customizing or "tricking" trucks is a genuine pastime and many vehicle owners are putting new outfits on old dolls. With some cost and lots of loving work, once what was ELV can be uniquely retooled to roll again. She can go from a broken down eyesore to eye candy as you restore her to more than her former glory.

From pick up to big rig numerous owners are going this route and having lots of fun doing it. In-fact, there are many trade and vehicle shows held across the country that are strictly devoted to The Look! Being practical and serviceable are notions that these tricked out rides just leave in their dust.

There is way more to it than just putting on some new rims, wheels and/or a flashy new paint job. From the front grille to the rear bumper, pretty much the only things limiting owners is their imagination and having the funds to devote to their ride. Costing from hundreds to many thousands of the dollars, the amount spent seems to only depend on just how deep an owner's pockets are.

Some customizing schemes may run old school. Doing something like; painting and pin stripping, mounting new rims/wheels & mud flaps, custom leather seats – including installing seat heaters to kick it up a notch – with matching embroidered trim, tinted windows with graphics on the rear window, flipping the tailgate handle to accommodate cool paintwork or artwork, doing grille work that makes people see you coming, lighting it up with new high-intensity (HID) headlights & stylish fog lights, running lights that travel down your truck and end with the new taillights that say Whoa!

You can also go real new agey by



installing; an in-dash or in-vehicle gaming system complete with Wi-Fi and fully functional tablet PC that comes complete with matching trim & carpeting. Airbrushing your vehicle's interior, including the door/dash panels and even the engine cover. Toss in some in-car LEDs that highlight your vehicles stylish new interior.

Also, you can swap out your door & tailgate handles for electrically activated

ones; add power steps & running bars to both sides and back of your vehicle. The rear steps will allow easier access to your weatherproofed custom enclosed truck bed that comes complete with its own giant audio speaker box.

Or, perhaps you are feeling a little retro; you can tune it up and convert your truck into a funky RV or Motorhome. Back in the 70s everyone wanted a VW

campervan. With a little ingenuity and out of the box thinking you can change your pickup, work truck, step van and even transport truck into a rolling home away from home. A little electricity here and plumbing there and you're ready to hit the road.

If you are thinking of converting your vehicle but are mechanically challenged, you may want to consider visiting your local high or trade school. You could ask them if they might be interested in doing the conversion work as part of a school project. Hiring professionals to do the work for you might also be another way to go.

Design the interior to fit your wants and needs and for around \$200,000 or so, you could have a fully equipped and fun RV to spend your vacation and down time in. Installing solar panels on the roof will also make your RV not only a money saver, but you would also be doing your bit to help save the environment.

OR YOU CAN REPRUPOSE YOUR VEHICLE

So what can you do if your ELV is really not salvageable and there is really nothing that can be done to resurrect it. But, with all the emotional baggage that you have been toting around in the truck bed, there's just no way that you are ready to part with her. Maybe there is another way to go. You could always put a piece of your beloved vehicle into your man cave, basement, kids' bedroom, etc.

That's right – with a little creativity, cash and elbow grease – owners just like you are turning their old clunkers into innovative, imaginative & functional pieces of furniture, etc.! Recycling turns into up-cycling and your memoirs can “Keep on Truckin’”. This way, not only can you keep your vehicle near you – or parts thereof – but, there's also a good chance that you can make your spouse and kids happy too.

Some savvy entrepreneurs have even taken to parking their old junker outside of their businesses with the expectations that they'll be enticing car buffs to stop by and take a look. One company in the UK – whose business is converting retro vehicles into motorhomes – have even turned an old Volkswagen van into a three person work area, complete with fully functioning headlights.

From inside to outside, from modest too large, there are many ways to repurpose your vehicle:

In the Office – Make office furniture utilising vehicle front & rear ends, coil spring rings can become funky desk top paper holders, bench seats can become



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sofas, your old bucket seat is now your comfy desk chair, old headlights can become new retro looking desk lamps, your old licence plate transforms into a timely clock, engine blocks can be transformed into coffee makers that will drive the conversation;

In the House – Old vehicle seats become cool couches and armchairs, old truck beds turn into one of a kind beds, convert old vehicle hoods into functional bed headboards, four springs and a glass top equals coffee table, engine & vehicle parts can be shaped into lamps or chess sets, coat hooks, toilet paper holders, the front end of your pick up becomes a basement bar complete with upholstered wheel rim stools & engine block wine rack, or even a fireplace;

In the Yard – Your old vehicle's front end is now a yummy BBQ, the rear end stores all your tools in one spot, tailgates become bench seats and fold down workbenches, engine & vehicle parts transform into piston candle holders, wind chimes, bird feeders, old headlights can easily light up your yard at night, tire rims turn into fire pits, old tires are easily converted into swings, seats and if all else fails, the whole vehicle can be transformed into an awesome flower or plant holder.

Or, perhaps while looking at your old truck you thought "I should at-least do something with the cargo box." Apparently U-Haul had that same thought and has rehabilitated more than 5,200 of their old rental truck boxes into sustainable modular self-storage units. By repurposing their old trucks they are now delivering more than 640,000 square feet of practical self-storage.

And finally, let's not forget going the charitable route

If your truck is ELV and you still can't figure out what to do with it. You might consider donating it to a worthy charity. If you are not sure how to go about it, there are organizations like Donate a Car who you can contact and they will handle all the details for you. Individual charities are usually not set up to directly receive vehicles as a form of donation.

Whoever you choose to handle your vehicle donation, make sure that they won't charge you any handling or processing fees. Ask them if they guarantee that 100% percent of the vehicle proceeds will go directly to the charity of your choice. Additionally, make sure to request a tax donation receipt.

Normally, most vehicle charity organizations will provide free towing in

many areas across Canada. Or they may increase the amount of the donation paid to you if you deliver the vehicle to them. Depending on where you live, most donated vehicles – conditional on its age and condition – will either be recycled or sold for scrap metal.

Some people have also donated their ELVs to their old alma maters. Again, look around your neighbourhood for any local high, trade school or college auto program that might be interested in acquiring your vehicle for its aspiring mechanics to practice on. Also, query the school to ensure that they can issue you a receipt for tax purposes.

If you have found a little-known charity that you are interested in donating your vehicle to – but are unsure if they are a scam – you can always investigate them online or through your local Better Business Bureau offices.

Be wise and be aware that the Canada Revenue Agency maintains a pretty simple rule relating to charitable donations; the receipt amount that you claim on your taxes can't be for more than the actual value of your gift!

¹ *Evaluation of the National Vehicle Scrapage Program Final Report July 12, 2011* 