

The Lesson of the Driving Lesson by David Seidel

In the early 1960s I had just bought a beautiful Jaguar Mk IV 3½ litre with all the books, full tool kit and Adelaide history. It even had "Ace" wheel covers. It was my Sunday driver and I used it only sparingly. My parents wanted me to buy an everyday car that was more practical for me to take to work in Adelaide.

Dad had heard of a new XL deluxe Falcon sedan that Dalgety & Co wanted to sell urgently as the new XM model was to be released the very next day. Their offer also had a very generous discount, but the deal had to be settled pronto. Without being able to think too much, I said, "OK I'll do it" to my dad, not giving much thought to our large backyard which was starting to fill up with old Jaguars and parts. And so, the deal was done. This meant that now I owned a beautiful Jaguar and a new car, a 1963 Falcon deluxe sedan. This eventful time in my life I choose to call my Falconian Period.

Although I had owned my new Ford Falcon for approximately six months, I still had to ride my trusty BSA pushbike into work at Duncan & Co. simply because I couldn't afford the petrol bill as well as the car payments. My parents also helped me by letting me off from paying board for one year. Gradually, I had started driving my car to work in Halifax Street in the city, where I could get all day parking close by. Quite often I parked in front of a business called 16mm Company who specialised in renting movies to station properties up north for the station hands to watch. I discovered that a teenage girl who lived only six houses away from me worked at this company and was catching the bus to work. She asked if I could take her



to work and back and we agreed that she would share petrol expenses and we would both save some money. This arrangement continued to work out well for both of us until one fateful series of unforgettable events took place.

As she had her "Learn to Drive" booklet, she asked if I could give her some lessons in the Falcon on the weekend when we were both free. OK, I agreed. Next Sunday was good for both of us. At Golden Grove near the sand quarries there was a quiet gravel road which I thought would be suitable for the purpose. The general store was the only business nearby but it was closed on Sunday. As the Falcon was a 3-speed manual, she took no time in mastering the smooth use of the clutch. Up and down the road we went until the car suddenly stopped. No amount of cranking, pushing or coaxing helped, it just refused to go. Then I looked at the fuel gauge. It was that empty that the needle nearly fell off. There was nothing else for us to do but get some petrol – even though the store was shut – and as I reached for my wallet, I discovered that I

had left it at home. She said that she had some money in her purse that I could borrow, so we set off to walk the half mile to the store and get the proprietor to open up. We could hear the cricket on his TV as we approached. Being his day off, he was not very sympathetic to our plight, nor was he very cheerful. He looked like he had been eating vinegar off a fork. To make my plight worse, I also had to purchase a petrol can and a funnel with the borrowed funds. After walking back to the Falcon and putting in the petrol, the car started and we set off for home.

The next morning, I settled up with her but not before her worldly, street-wise mother had told her that this was "the oldest trick in the book". I quickly reached for my road traffic instruction booklet and told Roslyn that I could not find any reference at all to yesterday's situation or anything similar. What trick?

The driving lesson had gone very well (or so I thought) but her mother not only stopped any future lessons but insisted that Roslyn go back to catching the bus to work. I was crushed. Not only was my dreamed of love life now in tatters, but I now had no passenger to contribute to my fuel bills to travel to and from work. I consoled myself with the other beauty waiting for me at home – my light green Jaguar Mk IV. You might say that I learned a lesson from the driving lesson.

David Seidel

