

## Chocolate Smooths out the Edges

Matt, my 12-year-old son and I packed our ski equipment and lunch in the little red Hyundai Excel. The roads were clear and the sun glistened off the snow-covered fields as we headed north on Highway 10 toward Perth. The little town of Westport on Big Rideau Lake was picturesque. As we passed we saw large maple trees that had shed their leaves and were covered with frost.

We talked in the car about school and hockey. Matt was my navigator with the map on his lap. As we turned to head north of Perth on Highway 511 toward Calabogie Ski Resort, I looked down at the dash and noticed the oil light on. This couldn't be. Something strange was happening.

Luckily we were only about five kilometres from Perth, so I chanced it and drove the car to a gas station. They told me I had to get my car towed to Smith Falls where there was a Hyundai dealer, do you have CAA? Luckily I did.

"We can fix the gasket for about \$400.00 if everything else is OK," the mechanic said.

This was \$400.00, which I didn't have. I had been living on a tight budget (except of course the odd ski trip) since I had changed jobs to a lower salary, with a longer distance to drive to work but the same mortgage. This was not good news.

As I was browsing through the brochures at the dealership while we were waiting I came across one that read: Hershey's Chocolate Factory - has tours.

"Do you want to go to a Chocolate Factory? It's close," I asked Matt.

When we walked into the Hershey's Plant, out of the cold winter air we were met with the smell of sweet chocolate and nuts. A sense of comfort came over me that helped the disappointment of not going skiing.

"Can I help you?" the store clerk asked.

"I was wondering if we could take a tour," I said.

"Of course, just follow me," she said.

We walked up some steel stairs to an observation deck where we saw large drums filled with chocolate. The tour guide explained the assembly line.

Matt enjoyed the tour as much as I did. He asked questions about the cocoa bean and what chocolate bars this factory made. We found out that this Hershey Factory specialized in Peanut Butter Cups, which we bought when we went back to the store.

I was struck with an idea (maybe it was when I had to pay for the chocolate). I thought about the car back in at the Hyundai dealer. If the gasket is going, what else would be going wrong with the car? I was running up the number of miles I was driving at my new job. The car might end up costing me more money later on.

“Matt let's hurry back, I want to get back before the banks close,” I said. “What do you think if we bought a new car? I am going to see if I can get a car loan?”

My little blonde-haired boy seemed to soak up everything that was going on around him but didn't overstep his boundaries. His Mom buying a new car just because of an oil leak was a bit much.

“Well, OK,” Matt said.

We had walked back from Hershey's in record time.

“How did it go?” the car dealer asked Matt as we walked in.

“It was fun,” Matt said.

I waited a minute, then asked. “Do you think I could make a deal on a car today?”

“I think we could do that. What are you looking for? We have this white Hyundai Elantra you might like,” he said.

Things seemed to fit into place, the financing, the insurance, and I would get it registered in Kingston next week. After retrieving our ski equipment and belongings we were on the road at 4:30. Matt still didn't say much. He seemed happy at the outcome.

We hadn't driven far when it started snowing heavily. The roads were getting slippery and it was getting dark. This was not the maiden trip I wanted for my new car. I was used to driving on bad roads, but it had been a long day. Matt's company was appreciated as he kept me on an even keel. As we pulled into our driveway, I was glad I was home and knew that my first job in the morning would be shovelling my driveway.