

# BitChin' & Moaning

## Surviving your teen's first car.

By Judith A. Habert

The time has come once again to admit that my kids are getting older and another milestone must occur: My number two child needs a car. Starting college in September means many things, primarily that she no longer needs me to drive her to high school with her brother every morning. Hurrah I thought, no more fighting over who was making who late, or intentional slowness in getting ready to get even when one of the two had a later start. Then I realized what this meant- another car in the house. This meant another one to pay for, to deal with repairs on, and to try and find a place to park. But life must move on, so now the headache of picking out the car was upon us.

Of course this meant trying to please an 18 year olds desire to have a cool car, versus the parent's need to purchase a safe, reliable, and inexpensive vehicle. Unfortunately, these two points of view rarely end in the same choice. We did

26 it. She wasn't happy, but she was safe and I tried to explain that your first car is rarely your dream car. This gives you a legitimate reason to get a good job so you can one day afford that car of your dreams. Of course as any good mother, when she started to bitch and moan about the car we had bought her that wasn't perfect I had to share my experience when I got my first car. It happened when

I turned 17 Mom and Dad managed to gather up what small savings they had to buy my first car. It was yellow (and I can't tell you how much I hate yellow), but getting a car far outweighed the putrid color it was in. I was an independent free spirit now, I could drive. The car owner lived way out on Long Island and Mom and Dad did not feel comfortable letting me drive it home, so there I sat in the backseat of my new car. I was dying to get behind the wheel, but as Mom said, "What are you thinking? You can't drive the car, it hasn't been blessed." I looked at her and said "It has to be blessed? Who made that rule?" My mother looked at me very calmly, even though I know she was getting angry, and as calm as can be she uttered the one word answer, "God." When we were a few miles from home Dad made a stop and told us to wait in the car. In about fifteen minutes he showed back up with a brown bag in his arms and handed it

to my mother, who turned to him and said, "Honey, did you get it all?" "Of course", he responded, "and thank God they had red!" I was quite perplexed by now and calmly asked Dad, "What's in the bag?" "Necessities" he mumbled. And that was all he said. I simply sighed and sat back in my seat knowing that when my parents got like this there was no cracking through the barrier. When we arrived home, Mom went directly into the kitchen picked up the phone and dialed. When I came back into the kitchen Mom was just hanging up

the phone promising to be there in 15 minutes. "Where are you going," I asked, "don't you want to take a ride with me in my new car?" "We are going in your new car" she said. "We are all going in your car." She handed me my jacket and said, "Let's go, or we'll be late" "Late for what?" I questioned, noticing that Dad was nowhere to be found. When we got downstairs to the car I understood why. Dad was attending to necessities: He had tied a big red bow around the rearview mirror, placed a Saint Christopher medal prominently on the front of the glove compartment and was in the process of throwing change into the backseat of the car. It was at that moment I realized where we were headed. The

integral element in the preparation of the car was the blessing. We were on our way to St. Michael's church to have Father Sullivan bless my car. And bless it he did. Father Sullivan exited the church office, bible and holy water in hand, and said a few words in Latin, sprinkled the car with holy water, made the sign of the cross and smiled letting us know it was now safe to get back into our new vehicle. Mom and Dad finally let me drive it. At the end of my story my daughter looked up at me with that quizzical look wondering what my point was. I just looked over at her and said...you better be happy with your car or I will buy that red bow, the Saint Christopher medal, and we can take a ride to go get it blessed. She grabbed the keys from my hand and never uttered another word of discontent. See, those old stories do come in handy sometimes.

