

## Trip to the Canadian West and return in seven days

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One does not have to be mad to leave on October 10<sup>th</sup> to travel to Medicine Hat, Alberta, for the purpose of taking a collection car back, a 1969 *Meteor Montcalm S33 V2!* Mercury made 163 of them in 1969 and we own two.

Eh well yes, my husband and I left with our 2008 F250 truck, a camper (in the truck) and a trailer to carry the desired car on. We already own a similar *Meteor*, but this new one did not live through the Quebec winters with the calcium and it had only one owner.

My daughter made a simple search on Google and found this vehicle, her father's car, which a young woman wanted to sell. Her father had passed away two and a half years ago. We contacted her via the net. We asked her to send more photos of the car. After several exchanges, we reached an agreement and we went to get the car in Alberta.

Therefore, I communicated by telephone with Tina, the seller, to check our timetable in comparison with hers. Indeed, she is a nurse in Calgary and works four days a week; then she has three days off. So, we must plan to be there while she is off duty. We check how long it takes to get there: three days driving more than 12 hours a day

Departure at 4 h 48 AM on Saturday October 10<sup>th</sup>. We drive through Montreal, Ottawa, Sault Sainte-Marie, stop in Wawa (more than 100 kilometres further away from Sault Sainte-Marie), all that in 14 hours and 24 minutes of driving. On this Saturday we "enjoyed" the sun, the rain, the hail and towards the last 80 kilometres some snow. We very often checked the gas level because it had become very low. We did not know if we could reach Wawa. The road was covered with snow and we followed semi trailers which had slowed down. Finally we arrived in Wawa at 8 h 30 PM, at the gas station, with a gas reserve allowing for three more kilometres of driving only. We filled up and we set up camp for the night in a "truck stop" in Wawa. For those who have never travelled

in Ontario, the roads are not a straight line all the time; there are many more up hills than down hills and there are curves, almost similar to those of Lac-Saint-Jean along the Saint-Maurice River. We drove 1297 km that day.

We turned the heat in the camper. It was not warm! I prepared sandwiches for the following day because we ate in the truck while driving. Imagine! We: lied down 10 - 15 minutes after getting into the camper. Sheets had had no time to warm up. As I had foreseen it, I had brought hot clothes in order to avoid getting sick during this trip to Alberta.

On Sunday, the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, we left at 6 h 50 AM. Rain alternated with the sun. Very tiring for the driver: turn the windshield wipers on, turn them off and on again. You most likely have lived such an experience. While stopping for gas in Marathon, Ontario, I smell the odour of propane gas outside. We check and find that one of our propane gas tanks is empty. We had to turn it off and turn the other tank on which was not full. We stop in Winnipeg, Manitoba at 18 h 40, after 11 hours and 17 minutes of driving. Getting into the camper, we find that our second propane tank is empty. We go to the "Truck Stop" emergency store and ask if there is a place where it is possible to fill our two tanks. They answer that they have full reservoirs at 24,09 \$ each in exchange for our old tanks. We install the new tanks and we turn the heat on in the camper because it is much colder over there than back home. We drove 1165 km during the day.

On Monday 12<sup>th</sup>, departure at 6 h 21 AM. We have a sunny day and the trip is very calm. We get to the end of our trip in the camping ground of the Cypress Hills National Park in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. There are three inches of snow on the ground at 6 h 30 PM, Quebec time, after 11 hours and 17 minutes of driving. We relax by solving *Sudokus*. Then Réal realises that there are some deers on the camping site. A hunting lover, he

*Before Marathon, Ont. October 11, 2009*

*Deux  
Rivieres, Ont.  
October 10,  
2009*





*Before Terrace Bay, Ont. Octobre 11, 2009*

works on his *Sudoku* but takes a quick look by the window from time to time. He tells me to take my head out through the head by the roof safety panel of the camper, above the bed, and to take photos. The my camera battery was flat so I used the comescope. I was able to save some on the film. We are all alone on the camping site with another caravan, but nobody in it. We saw eight deers and 13 wild turkeys. We drove 1074 km during the day.



*Parkbeg Man. Octobre 12, 2009*

On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup>, we leave at 6 h 07 AM to go and to see the car we wanted so "for real". Because we had not see it otherwise than on the 32 photos Tina had sent us via the net. I did not want to arrive too early, it was the day after Thanksgiving, and some people celebrate more than others. We take our time for our breakfast in the city of Medicine Hat. We enter a shopping centre parking lot and we see, you will not believe it, four deers right in the middle of the city, on a main road, eating from an apple tree. These deers are no like those we have in Quebec! Ours are more unsociable.

So, I call Tina on the telephone and tell her we have arrived in Medicine Hat. She needs thirty minutes to get ready, which we agree on. Arriving on the street, we catch a glimpse of the car in front of the house. We then get out of the truck and Réal starts a thorough check of the auto, verifies that the frame is straight and is not too



*After Morse Man. Octobre 12, 2009*

rusted. He goes around and more than 30 minutes have elapsed. We ring at the door and Tina opens it. We are warmly welcomed. Réal decides to load the car on the trailer, which had been borrowed from a client, even before I could give the certified cheque to Tina. We complete the installation of the car and we take the time to make photos. Tina wanted us to take photos in memory of this very unforgettable day for her. It is the car her father had purchased new, in 1969. She liked her father's Meteor very much, but she could not look after it. Tina even cajoled it before we left with the car, about noon. She confessed that the day before our arrival, she and her two sons went for a ride in the car for the last time.

We are now returning home. It was sunny all through the trip. We appreciate the decor of the prairies which we cross rather quickly. The way was very level, sometimes even boring. We arrive in Elkhorn, Manitoba at 9 h 30 PM, after 13 hours and four minutes of driving. We had traveled 811 km during the day.

On Wednesday, on October 14<sup>th</sup>, we leave at 5 h 48 AM the Elkhorn «truck stop» and we stop to have breakfast in Verdon. We leave again at about 9 h 48 PM to continue our long journey. We stop for 47 minutes to install a new wiring adapter for trailers in Kenora. The one we had did not work well. And, as in Ontario we now have to drive

*Réal, me and Tina with our purchase. Medicine Hat Alb. Octobre 13, 2009*



downhill where we had driven uphill at the beginning of our trip, it had to work well, otherwise we would be at risk to encounter bad surprises. We stop for gas in Dryden. Réal chooses to use the pump closer to the emergency store which is part of the service station. It so doing, we hit a corner of the building, near the roof, with the luggage stand. The lady who comes to see asks me to make a report. I gave her my co-ordinates, because we did not want to waste any time because of slight collision which seemed doubtful: we did not break anything, but something bulkier must have damaged the soffit. We then leave again to complete the itinerary for the day at 8 h 32 PM, in Pass Lake, near Thunder Bay, Ontario, after 12 hours and 35 minutes of driving. We traveled 1065 km during the day.

Departure at 6 h 20 PM, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>. Being in Ontario, I thought that Réal was driving too fast. I told him to slow down but nothing doing, he did not want to. As the landscape bored me a bit, I decided to take some rest. I lower the back of my seat close my eyes to music from a CD. Yes a CD, because the only French radio station, Radio-Canada, cannot be heard everywhere. It is therefore necessary to have some music to kill time, otherwise it is a long way home. Suddenly, Réal stops the truck and I ask him what is wrong. He tells me that the police has just signalled him to stop. It is 10 h 43 AM. The police officer is a woman and she says that the fine can be quite hefty. My husband was driving at 115 km in a 90 km zone. Phew! The agent comes back and says that she changed the speed to read 105 km, which means a 52,50\$ fine instead of 118\$ and 3 demerit points. She provides him with the procedure for the payment and tells him not to forget to attach the seat belts... We thank her and wish her a good day. We leave again at 10 h 54 AM to drive as long as possible for this day.

Réal finally slowed down thereafter. Farther, after the filling up in Wawa, towards Sault Sainte-Marie, the truck went from left to right and the on-board computer informed us that the tires air pressure was insufficient. He did not think that we had a flat tire. He thought that the wind from Lake Superior was behind it. But no, it is

indeed a flat tire, at the back passenger side. He goes out and lets out all the church words (some blasphemous) then decides on what to do. It is 12 h 28 PM. We take out the appropriate tools and we get set. Imagine a truck with a camper and a trailer carrying a car. Wow! How to proceed without unloading the trailer? I ask him if he wants me to call CAA, but the problem is that the cellular telephone is not in a satellites zone at our present location. Besides, we do not know how long it would take for them to get to us.



*Entering Sault Sainte-Marie, Ont.*

Réal is unable to reach the spare wheel which is under the loaded truck and he did not know where the key to unlock the spare wheel was located. After checking again in the gloves compartment, we find the key to unlock the spare wheel. Spare wheel? Do any of you check the air pressure in this tire from time to time? No, not really. Luck is with us, a truck driver stops in the belvedere where we are. Réal asks me to go and ask him if it is possible to get air to fill the tire enough to avoid the risk of bursting it. Of course, I am the one who must ask because my husband does not speak a word of English. Therefore we take the tire to the truck driver, Réal fills it and takes it back to our truck. He tries to remove the flat tire. Do you understand a "jack" which does not work properly? The end of the telescopic stick to push the jack up turns loose. It consists of a small tube with a metal part at its end but it is not tight and turns on itself. How can you want to raise a truck when this takes place? Réal takes out the big tools and he hits on the end trying to wedge the metal part. He succeeds in raising the truck. He tries to take the flat tire out but he fails. So, I go back to the truck driver asking him if he has a hammer or a mass. He kindly lends me his

*Trucks with trailers and VTT in Batchawana Bay, Ont.*



hammer and we try to take the rim away with some problem and finally we succeed. People are generous in Ontario. Réal got dirty, he changed trousers, I take his polar coat and take it back in the truck. We finish the job and leave looking for a gas station because we could only pump 65 pounds of air with the truck driver and we needed at least 75 pounds. We drove at least 40 kilometres before we found a gas station to pump the required air to continue on our trip, at last.

At the next stop for gas in McKernon, Ontario at 6 h 28 PM, Réal looks for his topcoat and he realises that he forgot it where we repaired the flat tire. In one of the pockets he had put the original keys for the Meteor! However, I recalled that the *War amputees* tag was attached to the keys. And by chance I had a double of the Meteor keys. We stop for the night at 6 h 47 PM after 10 hours and 10 minutes of driving. We have lunch in the restaurant located in the truck parking of McKernon, Ontario. We drove 904 km during the day.

Departure on Friday on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 5 h 30 AM. We are impatient to be back home, but there are several kilometres of road ahead and especially we want to pass through before rush hour. Because, as many people know, in Montreal, "traffic" starts being heavy at about 3 h 00 PM. We arrive at 1 h 45 PM facing a small traffic jam on Décarie boulevard, but all goes well. We got to the Garage Réal Lajoie, in Bedford, at 3 h 14 PM, after 9 hours and 4 minutes of driving. We traveled 810 km

during the day.

Happy to be home with 81 hours and 51 minutes on the road, and 7126 kilometres. Our employees did not expect us to arrive on Friday, they thought that we would arrive on Saturday or Sunday. Both employees went around the Meteor more than once. They were impressed by the good condition the car was in as compared with the one that we own since 2004.

During our trip we witnessed three semi-trailer trucks accidents and more than 300 trucks with trailers carrying VTT (all grounds vehicles, commonly called "4 wheels drives") on their truck and / or their trailer. It is because the hunting season is on in Ontario ...

As I had to leave a message to Tina to inform her that we were back home, I told her about the loss of the original keys. She told me that she was going to contact the *War amputees* to inform them of the new coordinates should they receive the keys by mail.

To conclude, I hope that the story of our "small adventure" which lasted almost a week pleased you! So far as we are concerned, this trip was worth the pain because this vehicle reminds us of our wedding day: Yes, we got married in a similar vehicle, in 1973. See the enclosed photo of our marriage.

*Réal and Marie-Claire Lajoie, July 28, 1973*

