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**Son, Can I Use The Car Tonight?**

**By Douglas G. Burkland**

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I recall somewhere in the recesses of my aging brain a time past when kids actually asked to borrow the family car for the evening. Heck, I even recall myself uttering that request to my folks many times. In fact, it was a science. If you had a hot date (in my case that was more a generic term for any reason to get away) you waited all day for the right time to pop the request. Sometimes doing those little chores you normally avoided just to put the parental decision-maker (knowing which parent to ask was most important) in a good frame of mind. And then once you asked the question it was important that you grovel a bit and look sincere as the one granting your wish dangled the keys like a carrot on a stick while reciting the familiar drive-carefully-and-pay for the gas-you-use-and-I-want-you-back-by-eleven speech (sometimes with future 'chore' clauses you had to promise to accomplish). Without a doubt it was the artful application of psychology, persuasion, and negotiation, spawned by greed and selfishness, which in the end resulted in loving extortion. But it was the right of passage when you were a teenager.

Well, my friends, I am sorry to say that all that has passed into history like the Model T. Why, you ask? Well, for us it seemed to have all started when our three charming offspring entered high school. One of the 'advantages' to living in suburbia is that the school is generally on the other side of town. My wife and I hail from a large urban area and all the schools were within walking distance. We never complained about the walk because our parents had to walk 5 miles to school everyday butt naked in a blinding snowstorm during The Great Depression. But not our kids. They wouldn't even wait a block away for public transportation on a pleasant Summer's day (that's so un-cool). See, the problem is that thing in high school called 'extra-curricular activities'. It doesn't matter what sport, club, or activity it is, they all get out at different times. As a result my wife and I have spent our formative middle aged years schlepping our young not-so-innocents to and from the school.. sometimes multiple times a day. Couple that with catering to their social requirements of being dropped off or picked up at friends' homes (also across town)it's no wonder we were too weary to go to PTA meetings.

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So one day as I sat in front of the school on slow burn as the fencing club was again going into overtime I vowed that this would all stop when the kids got their licenses. We are far from rich but I decided there and then to make sure all three of them have a car even if it was just rust and duct tape. I had more important things I could be doing, like earning money and paying bills and other fun adult things. Since my kids are all close in age they all pretty much got their 'passes to freedom' at the same time and all three were chomping at the bit at the idea of their folks buying them each a car. They were even quite willing to provide their own input as to their preferred vehicle of choice, even if it was going to be something used.. oh, maybe a year or two old. But, much to their chagrin (and much to the ease of our budget) we managed to provide three 'wonderful' vehicles from the previous decade with mileage to match; basic transportation. Alas, I was free! Three vehicles for the kids and one for my wife and myself!

Life was wonderful. Oh, sure, trying to fit our family fleet of four vehicles in the driveway or on the street was a challenge, as well as the inconvenience of doing the car shuffle to 'unbury' someone who had to leave the driveway (always the buried one who has to leave right away).. but it was worth it. But then

one day the inevitable happened.. the parental vehicle broke down. This was not supposed to happen in my grand plan. I had a 'hot date' planned for that evening.. my wife and I were going to dinner and a movie. So I approached my oldest in some instinctive groveling manner, "Son, can I use your car this evening?"

I put on a face of empathy and sympathy as I listened to a tirade about how this was going to cramp his evening's social activities but in the end he dangled his keys on front of me and gave me the drive-carefully-and-make-sure-you-pay-me-for-the-gas-you-use speech, adding that I owed him big time for this 'favor'.

As I reached for the keys in his hand I found myself almost saying, "Thanks, dad!"

Doug Burkland is degreed in the behavioral sciences and writes articles regarding family life, parenting, human sexuality, entrepreneurship, and current events. An aging baby boomer raised in the Mid-West and having liberal-conservative attitudes, Doug is an admitted 'survivor' of public education who thinks he has something to say that people might like to read; sometimes using a bit of healthy satire, mixed with friendly sarcasm, and at times tempered with thought provoking common sense. Along with being an entrepreneur (having had three businesses of his own), Doug has a broad perspective on balancing life and family.

or email

## Thoughts On A Challenging Custom Car Audio Job

By Sebastian Schneider

Could a car owner have custom car audio added to a vehicle with "lambo doors"? That question has popped into the head of a freelance writer in California. The writer has previously witnessed all of the

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operations involved in the process of adding custom car audio to a Jeep Cherokee. Now she has learned that car owners are being encouraged to get Lamborghini-like doors.

That freelance writer hesitates to imagine what she may next find in her driveway. In November of 2005 the writer found two young adult males using her driveway as the site for the addition of custom car audio. One of those two lads had taken a course on auto mechanics with the former instructor at Culver City High School, a school close to Sony studios. He had agreed to share his knowledge with the writer's son. Hence, the two of them had commenced the long process required to complete a custom car audio job.

At one point the writer's son called to his mother and invited her to come outside and to see for herself what her son and his friend were doing. What that writer saw was two car doors with the "stuffing" pulled out of them. The quest for a custom car audio system had led those two young men to place speakers in the doors of the Jeep Cherokee.

The two "stereo specialists" did not show the writer how they had wired the speakers to the power source and to the amplifier. Their failure to grant the writer a look at their wiring operations has caused that writer to now ponder on a particular question: Could a vehicle with car speakers in the doors also have "lambo doors"? In other words, could a car owner who enjoyed the sound delivered by custom car audio logically expect to add "lambo doors" to that same car?

The writer has seen pictures that show how the "lambo doors" swing upward, instead of swinging out. Wiring speakers into such doors would seem to present a real challenge. Could one have custom car audio in a car with such doors? One writer in California wants to know.

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