



Many of **GREG BROWN'S** most memorable flight missions have been in pursuit of other passions such as automobiles.
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SPORTS CAR FOR A DAY

Unlike most teens of my era, I favored old automobiles and sports cars over tire-squealing muscle cars. So I bought a 1939 Chevy before heading off to the University of Wisconsin.

After two years of worthy adventures, however, the old car's 55-mph maximum speed became tiresome. Then one day the rear axle bearings seized in a cloud of smoke on Interstate 94, and finding replacements took weeks. So I sold my beloved Chevy and set my heart on the idiosyncratic Volvo P1800S sports car like the one driven by Roger Moore in the television show *The Saint*. After much searching I found a fire-engine-red '67 coupe in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, with

four-speed transmission, overdrive, and a claimed 60,000 miles.

My younger brother Alan and his high school buddy Paul Cowdrey were already private pilots, so I hitchhiked home to Chicago and Paul flew me to Sheboygan in a Grumman Traveler. This was my first time sharing a cockpit with a peer. I'd aviated since childhood with my dad,



but although I enjoyed our destinations, I had developed little piloting passion since we kids were mostly relegated to the back seat. And while I had recently earned my own pilot wings, I'd barely begun overcoming the training traumas to appreciate future aerial adventure. But tracing the sparkling Lake Michigan shoreline under Paul's command on such an exciting mission changed all that.

My young friend executed a picture-perfect landing at Sheboygan County Memorial Airport (SBM), where the Volvo's seller awaited us in the parking lot. The car appeared to be a creampuff, so I sent Paul home, wrote a check for every penny I had, and took the wheel for Madison.

The fun lasted all of 38 miles to Fond du Lac, where upon refueling I found no engine oil on the dipstick. Alarmed, I phoned the seller, who claimed the car had never leaked nor burned oil. I added several quarts and continued 75 miles to Madison. There, the dipstick was again dry. With no obvious engine leaks, this suggested worn piston rings or other expensive problems.

Devoid of repair money after my purchase, I stopped payment on the check and phoned the seller to retrieve the car. So after savoring that red sports car for just one day, I inherited my mom's well-worn '65 Chrysler convertible. Although briefly disappointed, I'd subconsciously experienced an epiphany—the joy of skimming silvery sand and azure waters with my friend, and the associated sense of mission had opened my mind to the possibilities of piloting. Yes, I learned to appreciate the Chrysler, but more important, the money saved by not buying the Volvo would now finance flying adventures.

Recently I asked Paul, now an American Airlines captain, to scan his logbook for our long-ago flight. Amazingly, he remembered it.

"It was some kind of Swedish car, right? And it had fins.... This must be it! March 25th, 1973, DPA-SBM-DPA, 2.5 hours logged, for a total of 62.1 hours. Now I've got 20,103!" As we fondly relived that youthful adventure, I was reminded of its lasting lesson: Who needs a sports car when we get to fly airplanes? **FT**