Sunday, June 03, 2007 c:/wklylt7.7wc10

2007 NHN&WR letter/story #07

**Requiem for a Ghia.**

In 1976 a second hand 1973 Volkswagon Karmann Ghia was purshased from Chuck Lineberger, a fellow worker at Coastal States Life Insurance Company in Atlanta, Georgia. It was bright yellow with a black stripe around the body. The odometer read about 20,000 miles. It is still bright yellow with a black stripe. The odometer now reads 343,000 miles on its 4th time around. It was the CB era and because of the distinctive exterior its handle was "The Yellow Skunk". Save for power this has been an amazing car. Ken counted one morning driving to work down Peachtree Street. He shifted 77 times. But hey, ... it still starts right up! The body is in fair shape for a 34 year old car. The hood is a little worse for wear, but we attribute that to aggressive Atlanta hookers. If one, in response to a late night/early morning panic call from the "SunCoast" data center, one stopped at a Peachtree Street traffic light, they would run out into the street and jump on the hood. Learned behavior, ... don’t stop. The Ghia’s career runs parallel with that of a few Insurance Companys located in places like: Atlanta, Baltimore, Columbus, Phoenix, Denver, L.A. (never got there) and Lansing. Like most of these companies, the Ghia will soon be gone.

One of the Ghia’s first ‘trips’ was from Atlanta to Montreal in 1976. Ken drove, Phil Jefferson handled the CB. Lasting result: Lucile & Ken married in July of the following year. Good Grief, ... almost 30 years ago! The combined family set up housekeeping in Atlanta, the newlyweds with eight of their nine children from time to time. Usually dinner was for about eight. The Ghia stayed outside. Meanwhile, Coastal States had been purchased by Sun Life of Baltimore. Did the Ghia get to Baltimore? Yes. Unfortunately, Ken did not relate to some of the new management and in 1980 took a job with Anchor National in Phoenix, Arizona. Lucile was convinced she’d be scalped by Apaches en route west so we had to personally say farewell to all her French Canadian relatives. This was a considerable increment to the Ghia’s odometer. En caravan with the family sedan the Ghia made Phoenix with no problems. One fiendish mind was tempted to smuggle along some of those arrows with rubber suction cups. He would then sneak out of the motel at night and strategically implant them on the cars. Fortunately, this was never carried out.

Family and Ghia resided comfortably in Phoenix for four years. Then Sun Life, which was now SunAmerica, made overtures to Ken to return. Ken was receptive and it was back to Atlanta in 1983. The Ghia was spared the trip and returned in the moving van. Over the years there have been many notable Ghia events, a few:

A sojurn in north Georgia with the Matt & Heidi Jeffersons.

Ken & Lucile racing a Hippy Van across southern Mississippi.

A trip north up 85/95 during the first gasoline crisis carrying extra gas in gerry cans.

An Atlanta backyard paint job courtesy Danny Hooke.

Mardi Gras weekend in New Orleans.

Visiting relatives in: Connecticut, Florida, South Carolina, & Texas.

Late 90’s relocation from Georgia to Vermont, Ken took bus down and drove Ghia back. (Think there was a letter re that bus trip, but not sure.)

2000 stint in Canada with Ghia shared in Ottawa by Marc Bennett and Norm McDevitt.

Recent semi-retirement in the Carriage House in North Hero. The Ghia is still registered, but now a bit odoriferous as it is stuffed with moth balls. (The greasy old wiring seems to have a great appeal to the local field mice.)

So many memories, ... but sad to say we have decided to bite the bullet and part with our old Ghia friend. Somewhat like parting with a faithful dog, however economics are economics. Our Saturn is a much safer and more comfortable ride and the FX150 has a plow, the Ghia doesn’t.

Anyone want a 1973 Volkswagon Karmann Ghia?

Lucile, Bailey & Ken.

North Hero, Vermont.