

I'm walkin', yes indeed...

By Jeffrey Fields

Oh, man is it nice to be back racing with EESCC. It's been a few long seasons away, but it feels like we haven't been gone at all. Everyone is so kind and welcoming. It continues to be one of the most caring and considerate places you can find yourself. It's a pleasure to see all the familiar faces as well as the new. We've been talking to and building relationships with people we never really spoke with before and it's really been a joy. Sarah and I didn't want to stay away, but sometimes things happen in your life and the unexpected pops up where you really didn't expect it to. If you're lucky, it's an easy recovery but sometimes the road's a bit longer. For us, it took about three years. We always kept our eyes on the end, so we knew it would all work out to be a blessing. In truth, through some of the darkest times of my life, it's all been a blessing.

So here we are. Back racing that same old car that I brought to the club back in 2008. It's grown up a bit since then. Like me, maybe a bit grayer and worn at the edges. She's no spring chicken with almost 16 years on the clock since leaving the factory. No garage queen, either, but still able to turn heads; much like me.

I don't envy the young. I like being an old guy. It's easy. I slip under the radar. For the most part, if you've been around the sun more than 60 times, you're ready for obsolescence and counted out of the party. That being said, it's interesting that the fastest folks are usually the older guys (I'm using "guys" generically for all the possible permutations, so please, no protests). The elderly don't really get the credit they deserve for working it all out for the younger folks. If they saw us on the street in our road car, they'd probably think we're on our way to WinCo for constipation meds and mothballs for our hopes and dreams. At an event, we bring our wisdom and skills while demonstrating a social aplomb that escapes anyone who is still concerned with pimples. Patrick O' strolls past on a course walk wearing a Pink Floyd T-Shirt and he and I laugh and acknowledge a joke no one under 50 could understand. Being an archeological living dinosaur has its benefits. Seeing the world through old eyes isn't just a recipe for cataracts. For most of us, we've become encyclopedic test pilots who can drive at the edge while explaining suspension geometry. It's why we make good mentors. I get a thrill out of walking with a novice and explaining the intricacies of the course. It's relatively easy to walk around and follow the map, but to really grasp the flow and nuances of a course takes focus and attention. I enjoy a nice social stroll as much as the next octogenarian, but a course walk is mostly business if you're looking to put down a decent time. We old codgers have done it all wrong, done it all right, and made our peace with doing it somewhere in the middle. We're wonderful at being supportive and thrilled when you want to share in something we love and care deeply about. If we can help you be faster by getting a few pointers, it makes our entire race.

So now I've taken on the co-role of novice course walk instructor, with a head nod to Licia for giving me a supportive bow and indulging my ego. I want more people to grasp the wonders of driving a car at its limit, and seeing what you're made of when everything is happening at speed. It's empowering in a way unlike anything else. It's a confidence-builder for the rest of your life. It's you and only you at the extreme with no one else to take the credit or blame. It's 100% focus that makes the rest of the world and all its beauties and nightmares disappear. There's a calming, Zen-like satisfaction in being able to focus on something with 100% of your attention,

even if it's only for a minute. If we old guys can help anyone see or reach that, we've done our job in furthering the species. I never wanted to be a parent, but I always wanted to be a mentor. Antiques have their value to the discerning eye, and quality construction, whether in your favorite vehicle or person, never goes out of style. Let's take a walk...remember to swing wide and cut back in tight so you get a good apex for the slalom.