The Simple Rituals Of Married Life

BY TED KOOSER U.S. Poet Laureate

There's something wonderfully sweet about a wife cutting a husband's hair, and Bruce Guernsey, who lives in Illinois and Maine, captures it beautifully in this poem.

FOR MY WIFE CUTTING MY HAIR

You move around me expertly like the good, round Italian barber I went to in Florence, years before we met, his scissors a razor he sharpened on a belt. But at first when you were learning, I feared for my neck, saw my ears like sliced fruit on the newspapered floor. Taking us back in time, you cleverly clipped my head in a flat-top. The years in between were styles no one had ever seen, or should see again: when the wind rose half my hair floated off in feathers, the other half bristling, brief as a brush. In the chair, almost asleep, I hear the bright scissors dancing. Hear you hum, full-breasted as Aida, carefully trimming the white from my temples, so no one, not even I, will know.

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Listen To The Mechanic On This One

BY TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

Dear Tom and Rav:

Our 2001 Subaru Forester (93,000 miles, we're the only owner) has been an excellent, essentially maintenance-free vehicle. Recently, when a front axle was replaced for a torn CV joint boot, the garage owner recommended a pre-emptive replacement of the timing belt. He says we're entering a period of likely failure, which can be problematic when on the road (especially in remote places). He also may have been suggesting that this failure can cause attendant engine damage. I am of the "if it ain't broke, donfix it" school, especially on car repairs that will run several hundred dollars. Predictably, my wife took the mechanic's word as gospel. What do you think? – **Terry**

RAY: I think if your wife always takes the mechanic's word as gospel, it's probably because you've given her plenty of reasons to do so, Terry. And you're about to give her one more

TOM: Here's the story. There are two types of engines: interference engines and non-interference engines.

RAY: An interference engine is an engine whose pistons and valves share the same space inside the cylinders, but at different times. So when the valves are open, the piston is down and out of the way. And when the piston comes up, the valves are closed and out of the way. This is an efficient use of space, and gives the engine more power and better mileage.



CLICK & CLACK

TOM: But. And this is a big but – bigger than JLo's. If the timing belt breaks on an interference engine, then the pistons and valves can collide. What does that mean? It means you need at least a new cylinder head, and perhaps a new engine. In either case, you've got a repair bill in the thousands

RAY: And guess what, Terry? Your '01 Forester has an interference engine. Congratulations!

TOM: So if you opt for the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" approach in this case, when it IS broke, it could cost you \$25,000 for a new car instead of \$400 for a timing belt.

RAY: And statistically speaking, based on

the age and mileage of your car, your timing belt is ready to break any day now. **TOM**: If your car happened to have a non-

interference engine (where the pistons and valves don't cross over into each other's space), a broken timing belt would not be such a disaster. Your engine simply would stop running, and would leave you stranded. Although I'm not sure that would be popular with your wife, either.

RĂY: But in this case, because of the type of engine you have (and many other cars have interference engines, too), it's actually a much more urgent matter. In fact, we recommend that you not only change the timing belt now, but also change the timing-belt tensioner and the water pump, because if either of those fails, it could break the timing belt, with the same disastrous results.

TOM: So that's a lot of stuff that "ain't broke" that you're going to be fixing, Terry. But it's the wise – and the cheaper – thing to do in this case.

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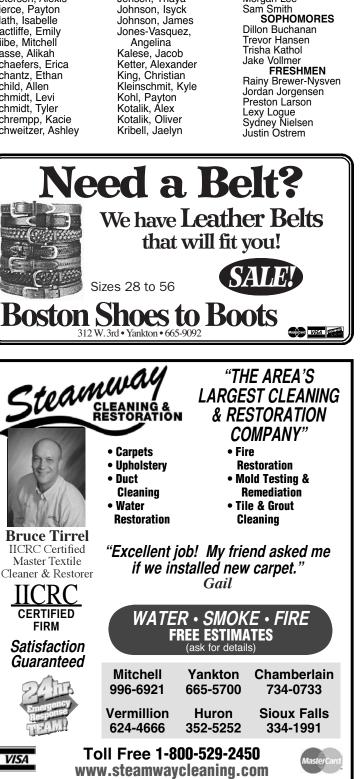
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