

Clifton: That old car was my love and independence

At what point can a person say he or she is independent or self-sufficient? Is it when he or she is totally free from the support, influence and control of others?

For many people like myself, a huge step toward a self-sufficient life is the day they can stop asking their parents for rides. We spend a whole childhood dreaming about this day, until one day we find ourselves driving in our own cars.

I had a job within walking distance from my home, and, while my mother insisted that I walked to this job, I thought that I seriously needed my own car.

For me, this job provided a reason to seek independence (even if it's only in driving my own car) from my parents.

After about a month of parading myself up the street every day to where I worked, I found my future car at the neighbor's house. Her name was Lucille and she cost me a whopping \$700!

I know you probably don't think that's befitting of the word "whopping," but remember, I was just 16 and in high school.

I knew that it was a deal that couldn't be passed up. She was a 1995 Honda Civic. I liked everything about this car. It was love at first sight, except for one problem—it was a stick shift.

At 16, I could barely figure out a four-way stop, let alone drive a manual car. But deep in my heart, I knew that this car was my one-way ticket to the freedom that I had dreamt of my entire childhood.

I knew my one choice was to learn to drive this shift stick—and I was determined.

I stalled that car repeatedly while listening to my dad irritably explaining for the 100th time how to shift into first gear. After a few tears and a couple skid marks, I did it.

I was finally free. No more asking Mom for rides. No more waiting around for forgotten pick-ups.

Sure, Lucille was older than me, and you could only faintly see her blue tint under the rust covering her body, but to me she was beautiful. She got me where I wanted to go, and that's all I could ever ask for.

A few weeks ago, however, Lucille died, and I mean that in the most personified way possible. Although it was just a car, Lucille and I had memories together, and she represented a major part of my life.

On the drive back from a day trip to Ann Arbor, she overheated and began smoking. I don't mean just a little exhaust either. I mean the type of smoking where you debate getting out of the car in hopes that you don't blow up with it.

She didn't go up in flames, but I knew at that moment she was a goner. My \$700 beauty was toast.

I wasn't upset; the car was 22 years old, and I knew this day would come eventually, but the car dying was nothing less of a heartbreak.

I've had breakups, and they hurt less than this expressway explosion. Not only did I not have my car, but I did not have a car, and just like that my independence was gone.

It felt as if I was in high school all over again, asking for rides to and from school. For the first time in what seemed like years, I was bored. I could no longer go where I wanted, when I wanted.

Who knew that a lack of mobility could make you feel so

subordinate? Thankfully, I now have a new car, but it will never be Lucille.

I learned a few lessons through all of this. I learned that you should never turn your cheek to a hooptie, because that rust bucket might be the best car that you ever own.

I also learned that one should never take his or her car for granted. I learned this the hard way this past few weeks. I realized how much I relied on those wheels to do just about everything in my life.

Although the Lucille is gone, she will never be forgotten. Rest in peace Lucille (Lucy). There's nothing like a first car kind of love.