

Cars on Call - Episode 4

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cars on call is a different car podcast, two car guy physicians, one of whom has been reviewing new cars for almost 30 years. That's me, Steve Schutz, and the other of whom is a trauma surgeon. That's my co host Vaughn Moran. Discuss car topics of the day from perspective you won't find anywhere else.

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Welcome to episode four of cars on call. I am Steve Schutz. And I'm here along with my co host to find Moran and we're going to talk cars again. As always, we've got a couple of topics we're gonna get to, but Stefan I got a couple of cars that I spotted, I don't want to do like, you know, car spotting. Thing I don't want to like have corresponding is like, the way we start this thing. But I saw a couple last weeks to find that I just was really excited is the right word. But I was really intrigued by these two cars, and I want to run them by you. And the first one driving down the interstate, you know, 75 miles an hour or something like that. A 1987 or 88/3 generation Honda Accord Sedan. That was the third generation I know you own the second generation. This is the third generation. It was the only a core generation with pop up headlights. And it occurred to me that I want to get your opinion since you were an accord owner. I know you had 85, which was gen two. But it occurred to me that the fact that it was on the road is it was remarkable for being unremarkable. And what I mean by that is that when you see a car like that, which is an 85 accord, or I'm sorry, 88 accord, driving down the road, it's at someone's daily driver. You don't even notice it, you see, you know 92 Camry or an 88 accord and they're just doing their thing. And if you think about us to find these cars are 34 years old, and the reason I mentioned it is it in 1988. To take 1988 and subtract 34 years you have 1954 and an Ita 1988 you would not see any 1954 cars as daily drivers you wouldn't see 1964 cars as drivers. And it's because these cars are built so much better now that these 1988 and 1992 and whatever cars are still on the road so what do you what do you think about that?

02:23

Elon had a preschooler has an 88 LX for door white with Berg interior automatic cord and I had the two door hatchback that I bought my senior year at college and 79 and then later on I had an accurate and they were you know back then when you bought a Honda or the Camry, let's say the maximum the maximum was also the very hot there. The four door sedans are hot maxima accord. Those are the three hot sedans. But the Honda and the Toyota clearly are at a separate level reliability. Accord was cooler than the Camry. The Camry was still not it was kind of like it is just a four door sedan that you know, it was kind of nerdy. It was nerdy. Yeah. But the Accord was cool is a cool car. It was a five minute I think it looked a lot better. Now the really cool car was the maxima though. And that's when

people got Maximus and you painted the rims back then to get a white maxima with white rooms on if you remember that friend of mine had one of those.

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What I remember about that is is on the back of the maxima. It said for D S C, which stood for four door sports car.

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And my father in law had a maximum and it was great. But overall, the fit and finish reliability did not match the Honda. The Honda clearly was a fabulous car. And yeah, we love it. And you're right. I mean, I don't even remember seeing 55 and 26. Chevy's as a young kid. I mean, yeah, you go to a car show, and people love those cars. But I mean, first of all, from a safety standpoint, as daily drivers, not a day drive, they fell apart. And they were from a safety standpoint, they're a complete nightmares, because that's when safety really progressed later on with seatbelts and airbags. And I mean, you just wouldn't want to be driving one of those cars. But you're right

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about other ways to find that a chord was driving next to a Ford Fusion, the first generation Ford Fusion, and the Ford was much bigger. And it occurred to me that that accord is around the same size as a current Civic.

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Yes, yeah. I mean, we all seen these cars get bigger. 911 complained about that. She's short. And when we bought her latest car, she's like, why don't they make cars like my original Honda? I mean, she says, that's the first car that she actually sat and fit in. And we'll talk about that later in the show about crash testing and crash dummies and how size matters in terms of the safety features in the crash or in the car and your chances of getting injured or dying, how you well you fit the car and the cars they've all gotten bigger and bigger and which is part and related to being safer. They need to be bigger and and you're out there battling the, you know, urban assault vehicles that you know, all the SUVs and all those away twice and three times you do and have four done the mega sedan anymore. So,

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right. Yeah, funny funny coincidence. Is that a 1988? Or cord? The cord is a little bit like its owner. Can you take someone class in 1988? They're bigger than they were back in 1988. So it's the same thing. The order is the orders are mirroring the cars. Yes, it's the SEC cars defined. And I think this is going to make you chuckle. It's something that you just never see. And I saw this and you wouldn't even see this as 1994 You wouldn't even see it then it's a 1994 Subaru S v x. Yeah, it's it's kind of a goofy car. And I remember at the time thinking, what are they doing and the current driver road and drag did not like it. And obviously Subaru was trying to expand their brand and they wanted to get out of what they were and they wanted to be kind of cool. My recollection, or my sense of of Subaru back in the 70s. And 80s was boxy kind of nerdy, utilitarian, almost agricultural, I mean, they were so just completely all about use and Thrift, and just getting you where you where you need to go for as little money as possible. And there was nothing at all cool about them. They had these four cylinder boxer engines that were just they sounded like a tractor and, and these cars just were not desirable in any way. And Subaru, of course, wanted to break out of that. And they they first had the x t, which was an angular kind of 80s sports car, but it had just the four cylinder no more power than a regular Subaru and that didn't that did okay, but

not great. And I think they said, Alright, we're going for it. So they had a boxer, six cylinder a little bit like the, the 911 That's literally the only thing the SPX had in common with the 911. And it was kind of round the X t was Angular, like the 80s or the SPX was round, like the Jelly Bean 90s. But when you think back to the SPX, you know, at the time was, what do you think about it?

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Well, you know, back then we didn't text but weta ah, you know what the hell, I mean, this thing came out. And I think it was about what 93 or so and I have a subscribe to Rodin track and read the thing religiously. And then I remember there being this article in the magazine that just allotted this car that was the greatest thing ever and all these features and had this crazy need to look it up listeners had a window in a window, which was the most bizarre thing. Kind of like a you know, pilot squeezing out too little in the left side. So you could reach out I mean, it wasn't even a row window. But I read all about I'm like, this car is not grayscale. He's weird features. Then I saw across the top and small print special advertising section. And that was the very first time that I can recall that a brochure by a manufacturer as an advertising piece being put into a periodical magazine. And I'm like, Well, of course is a special advertising session. Because this this cars just ridiculous. It makes no sense whatsoever. It's ugly, stupid, crazy features. That's what I remember about the SPX. And I saw one that road, I'm like, just No, no,

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it doesn't work. Yeah, that's what customers said,

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nobody really bought it. Nobody's buying that one year, one and done.

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I think it was more than one year, but it was, I think it was a couple years, but whatever, it doesn't matter. It was also expensive. And people said, you know, we can get a legit sports car, you know, you're talking about you could get a Miata back then you could get obviously a BMW three series, or there's a number, a Ford Mustang. There's a number of things you could do besides that, you know, it was also at the same time as Lexus, I think there was the Lexus coupe had come out by that time, the s. SC was more money, but it was much nicer. And the idea of this, this kind of sports car wanna be interestingly, around the same time Subaru, again, in an effort to be more legit and more mainstream decided to go with all wheel drive in all their cars. And that actually was a good idea. So that differentiated themselves they were kind of the Audi was the high end and Toyota or Subaru was sorry, was the was the low end all wheel drive. And that was something that you know, customers wanted that. But this thing with a weird window by the way, remember the window was a window in a window, right? Yeah, yeah.

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He's bigger two cups bigger correspond, I saw two cars that are worth mentioning. I saw the classic Alabama Fox bodied Safari Mustang.

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That is so red next upon

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it. You know, jacked up for old drive, Mustang coupe. Foxbody. And then today, I was driving to work and I'm like, I got it. And I said, I gotta have something for car spotting and I'm driving and I'm listening to a podcast, and I'm in it. rug, and I hear a rumble just but a very unusual bass rumble exhaust note that I have not heard in a long time. And I'm looking my look in my rearview mirror, don't say anything. I look in the left hand mirror. And I'm getting passed by a sedan, a small mid sized sedan from the early first decades out. 2008 And I'm like, What the hell is that? And it sounds amazing. And then I realized, oh my gosh, a Pontiac g8 And it was the GT which has got the six liter turned 60 horsepower of the Holden so for listeners, the Pontiac actually brought over some hot rods from Australia. Australians always had hot rods down there and it was a one year and done Bob Lutz project brought it over and but it sounded

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GTO, the GTO was earlier he had the Holden to door that they named GTO you know sacrilege

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but the GA it sounded really nice you know, I was expecting where's the tin can muffler on the usual and you see a you know JDM Japanese domestic manufacturer sedan that's lowered and slam you know, your some little tin can for cylinder noise coming back, but just had this fabulous. Rumble. That was a cool car hadn't seen that in forever.

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Yeah, we didn't so many of them. But it was a great car. I think if you have one hold on to it, it's, it's always gonna be desirable, a wonderful VA. A lot of those came with manual transmissions too. Alright, so our main topic today. Stefon, as you know, is car dealers. But before we do that, one thing occurred to me is that we live through a golden era of bumper stickers. And it sounds stupid to say that because now the average number of bumper stickers on a car in 2020 to zero. And you've got 99.9% of cars with no bumper stickers. And then you have point 1% of cars that are covered with bumper stickers is your Prius or, or something goofy and it's covered with with bumper stickers, it just kind of a joke. But back in the 70s and 80s people have bumper stickers to send a message. And they were very common. It was, I would say at least 50% Maybe 60% of cars had a bumper sticker and it wasn't 1000 it wasn't zero it'd be like two or three Marpa stickers and I was

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like part of the highway bingo thing you know, when you're driving if you didn't have kids didn't have car phones in the backseat and Game Boys and this. You were looking for stuff to do. And spotting car tags was something that we did routinely.

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People would put these bumper stickers on to send a message and a lot of them were whimsical, I

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would never have done that.

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Well, let's start with us to find your 95 Honda car. What was your What was your bumper sticker?

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I remember the seminar chord and in college, I had a bumper sticker on the back of my car and it said You're ugly and your mother dresses you funny. Yeah,

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I thought it was it was really funny. And it it's funny, I was actually thinking about your car and then the bumper sticker because of course I remember the bumper sticker and, and it just reminded me of a lot of those bumper stickers and they are gone. And that era is gone. And I'm sorry that it's so forgotten, and I want to do my part to make people remember it. I think I'm going to surprise you with my all time favorite. It's a little off color. But it's just one of those weird funny bumper stickers. But there's a lot

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of funny ones. Larry Flynt, for president

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that was a bumper sticker. I got it right that was not ah, no no, you're never gonna guess so. But but you know, there was some goofy ones like and I just remembered these off the top my head I did not Google this but one was God only created so many perfect heads. The rest he covered with hair. Of course is the all time classic. You know this one if you don't like my driving, get off the sidewalk. Yeah. This car makes many stops at your mom's house. On a back of a van like a seven isn't been like a 70s van where they have no windows, you know, a Ford econo line or something like that. Don't laugh your daughter might be in the back of this fan. The classic Of course, if this fans of rocket don't come a knockin, you can think of it as defined. Those are just a few I thought of

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one of my favorites was my kid beat up your honor student. I love that. But yeah, the bumper stickers or something else and now I think people just have vanity plates. But before you get to yours, so what today what vehicle do you think is most likely to be covered? bumper stickers? I'd say it's usually a phrase. I was gonna say a beetle thinking a beetle. How about what brand may be?

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Subaru? Subaru? Yeah, yeah, Subaru is oh my gosh, that's a classic one. Let me a couple more. This one is near and dear to both of our hearts to find out Yeah, Hawk if you pass PCAP Hong Kong baby, speak and both of us pass PCAP. And it was that was a very common bumper sticker. It's kind of weird to think that now, I'll just come with a couple more than I'll give you my favorite we'll move on because I don't want to spend too much time on this. But, you know, driver carries no cash. He's married. My other Car is a Mercedes. That was a classic don't allow it's paid for right? And there actually were some serious ones. And if you remember, AAA was like very mainstream. It became mainstream in the mid 80s. And Alcoholics Anonymous and they had their own BBs stickers. Easy does it was one live and let live. So they had their own. Easy does, it was the most common one. But you'd see that and it was a signal to other drivers that hey, I'm an AAA and if you didn't know what if you if you didn't know about it, you would just think oh, it's it's a nice little expression, but in fact was a signal to other drivers. Hey, I'm in the program, which I kind of thought was kind of was kind of cool.

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I have one more faired. My mind was changed by bumper sticker said no one ever.

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That's good. Yeah. For I Navy, and I'd rather be flying. Those are ones I put down as kind of, you know, humblebrag bumper stickers. The funniest one that's a humblebrag was my other car is a Porsche. And it was on a Porsche. Which I thought was very funny. All right, so that is fun. I know we gotta move on. But I will tell you my favorite one, which I probably saw in the 90s. And I just saw that I'm like, wow, I didn't think of that. It'd be on board. Now. That's dope. This one I didn't think of I never would have thought of this in a million years. But it's pretty funny. I don't drive in your toilet. Don't pee on my car. Crazy. But it's funny. All right. So that's it for bumper stickers. And I do want to, you know, just say to younger listeners out there that, that it was a funny era, most of them were funny, and a little wink and a nod and, and a little bit of a smile here and there. And I thought it was nice, and you just don't see that anymore. Unfortunately, the the year of of bumper stickers is over, and it probably will never come back. And it's not the same to have 100 on a Subaru.

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And two people or two people are too busy texting and driving to read bumper stickers. You know?

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Why? Why do you need a bumper sticker?

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When you look at your phone? Yeah.

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Oh my gosh, it's justified. It's so it's, it's gotten so crazy that it seems like everybody just drives down the road. And they have their phone right in front of and they're looking at it. And it's like, why is that become so mainstream? But it is it's scary, and I don't like it

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at all. I will definitely discuss distracted driving as part of the automotive safety. You know, talk though, talking that we'll do speaking. We'll get to that.

18:01

Okay, on to our next topic today, which is, I would say contentious, a little bit controversial, and it is, do we need new car dealers any more? And I think at the end of our conversations, divan, we will have agreed, maybe not completely, but mostly, and I know you've got a story. You told me and it's a really good story. And I think it's not wholly representative of people's experiences, but too many people that a story like that. So anyway, let me just ask you to find right out. I mean, do we need new car dealers

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are not? I think that they need to wake up and change. I think that on the current path that they're headed. They're not keeping up with society and how we have transactions when we buy things. And I think we all have stories about a car dealer. My dad had stories I want to coordinate with my dad saw witness what happened at the car dealer and, you know, frankly, you'd been a GI guy, I think I'd rather have a colonoscopy, then go to the car dealer. I'd say I'd rather go to the dentist and the car dealer, but then again, my wife's retired dentist, so I shouldn't probably say that.

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But I guess colonoscopy is better because you're sedated.

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Exactly. So I think overall, yes, there are good things that happens at dealers, but I think they have because they are a legally protected business. They have failed to evolve in there are too many bad stories because they're legally protected. And without those protections, they can't move in a rapidly changing business environment. So my story, this is when I bought my Bullitt Mustang just a little over two years ago. So like everybody, you know, I get on the internet and I searched all through the ads trying to find a car online I finally found the bullet out wanted to have just basically six months old had very low miles. It was on the dealer website, plus two other websites. And I found on one of the websites where they said no dock fees, which document fee, so they're called dock fees. And so basically, it was what I call the out the door price OTD. You know, which is what you like, that's, I know, I'm gonna have to pay tax on it. I know, I gotta pay a title fee on it. But a lot of dealers like to charge you anywhere from 500 to \$1,000 to do paperwork on the car. I mean, clearly, it's just it's a ridiculous fee, but I found one. So I called up the dealer. So it was there an IT person and said, Send me a bill, you know, Bill we can work on with the outdoor price. And she could send it back to me and it's got the \$1,000 Doc fee. Am I on No way? I said, she said, Well, that's what it says on the website. I said, Well, which website are you looking at? I said, you got your car advertised on multiple websites. So I had to send her a picture from my phone before she would believe me that they had advertised the duck fee. Come on. I mean, why would I lie about that? So this is a current on a Friday. This starts on a Thursday, Friday live out in the country. I can't go to my banks long was way I can't get a certified check on my car. Let me wire you the money. Nope, can't take a wire. Did you can't take wire money for a car purchase. He said no, we can't do that. I'm like, Okay. And then I said, How about if I bring a check, and then you call my bank can't take personal checks. It's got to be certified check. And I said, alright, well put the whole car on my credit card. I've got the limit. I'll just buy the whole current credit card. Well, I mean, that would be to my advantage and points but they don't want to do that because they lose you know, anywhere from three to 5%. She said why said but the max on the credit card then. So he said all right. Then I said well, I'll just I'll just always finance it when I get there. Because a friend of mine is dropping me off on his way up to Ohio. He dropped me off at the dealer. This is an up in Nashville and dropped me off. And I wasn't gonna have a car and there was no reason that my bank wasn't close by so I couldn't go to the bank get a certified checks. I show up at the dealer when they open at nine o'clock. I didn't get out of there until noon that day. Because first of all, the finance guy was busy, taken in cars that came out on Saturday. And then he gave me the bill of sale and it had \$500 on there for I think it's the car who GPS tracking. So we put that on all our cars, all of our cars come with cars, you'll get home and you'll register your car and you have GPS tracking for anti theft. I'm like, I live in the country. This is gonna be in the garage. I'm not worried about it. Take it off. Alright, we'll try to take it off. Then he comes back an hour and a half later. We can't take it off. You got it. You got to take the car with it. I'm like fine. You've kept me here all morning. We've already done the finance I know I don't want the warranty. No, I don't want the tire package. No, I don't want the seat. Leather coating. No, I don't the car's got ceramic coating. Don't put anything else on it. Do the whole rigmarole said I'm want what the cars advertised at no dock fees. And I said I'm tired of waiting here. Just I'll pay the 500 bucks to get out of here on the car with the car GPS. So I get home and had a wonderful drive. It's love that car and I get home and I go to register a car who and guess what? What do you think? Of course,

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the car didn't have it. Okay, so they sold me something that wasn't on the vehicle. So I'm furious. I call him back. I leave voicemails and I email I'll get back to you know, you got to call the accounting department. Oh no, we can't refund you because of Carson Lin. We overcharged you on state tax but

we can't refund that till the car comes out of land. I'm like, I paid the car off. Okay. The cars paid off. I got home. I literally paid it off five days later. So I don't have a lien on. Well, we haven't received the paperwork back. Well, when we get it when we get the paperwork, we'll send you your money back. Time goes on Another week, another two weeks. He didn't answer my call. So I leave a nasty review on social media. Basically, his car dealer tried to throw in dock fees that they said weren't on it. They put it something on the car that wasn't on it. And then they hassled me to get it and when the manager read the reviews is very large fancy dealership and national. He called me wanting me to change my review. I said absolutely not. I said I better get a check tomorrow. I'm gonna call the Nada. I said what you guys did was just flat out wrong. So in his like, change your post please on on social media. And I'm saying to myself, Oh, hell no, you know, there's no way in so, but I think what this takes Moses into is what I call the Tesla. I'm sure other people have called this but it's a Tesla furcation the Amazon Isaiah mission, but you know, because of Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, we have changed the way that we shop mean, you know, you can't I don't buy anything anymore without looking at reviews. What's the best price? You know, you look at Yelp for restaurants. So we research everything that we do and now the consumer has a tremendous amount of knowledge, you know, used to have to go to the library to get the little nada book to find that where your car is worth at a trade in, you know, because that the dealer has held that secret for years. And I think because it's such a protected industry, with their franchises, and that they have not evolved. Now there are some dealers which truly do advertise out the door prices. And we bought my wife's car from a local dealership bought a Hyundai. And on their website, they tell you what the car price is. Plus tax title and fees, no dock fees. That's it. We walked in there. And of course, you go to the finance guy, and I'm like, Nope, don't want that. Don't want that. And he's like, fine. He said, By the way, would you mind? Would you like to buy two cars? You know, it's a no one's good enough. So I did have had a good experience. But the dealers that have transitioned to understand the consumer, who's now well versed in prices, well versed in what it should cost, knows about these things, if they don't keep up with that, I think that they're doomed. And this This is a huge dealer in Nashville. And it was just a terrible experience. And you know, Elon Musk, you can buy your car over the phone, you know exactly what's gonna cause shows up at your house a week to two weeks later. Like you said, you know, and you don't like the car. What does he do?

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It takes it back. Yeah, I think I may have told this story before, maybe not actually. But a friend of mine bought a Tesla Model three. And he bought it on his phone. And it showed up, I think three weeks later, and it showed up. And you know, the classic story is you buy your car and it loses 20%, as soon as you drive it off the lot. Well, that wasn't the case for his Tesla, because he didn't like it, he actually thought the performance was less than he was going to get. So he, you want to upgrade to the performance. So he went back on his phone, went to the site, and said, Yeah, I want to send this back, I don't want to get the performance version. And they said, great, and his car held full value. And then they they actually, you know, showed up, I don't know like a week later with the new performance version on a flatbed and then they took his car and they put it on the flatbed. And they they left him with a performance version, which he still has, he's very happy with it. So it's a better way to go. I like the way you said Amazon positions to find. Because I think that's the key. You know, people feel comfortable buying things online, as long as they have the assurance that it's not going to lose value. And it's a very comfortable thing to buy online when you have that kind of that assurance. So I think that's kind of where we're headed. Oh, by the way, our kids who are you know, 20 to 30 years old, they would never put up with this kind of thing, because they're used to buying everything online. They're used to being being the way it's promised. And they're used to being able to send it back. And being able to send it back is a critical thing. It should be mentioned, by the way that it's not illegal to sell a new car in the United States,

unless you go through a franchise dealer. My sense is that Tesla is able, I'm not sure exactly how Tesla was able to do it. I think it's because states are just kind of letting it go and not enforcing the laws. But there are franchise laws in this country, state by state, that say you need a franchise dealer, which is independent from the manufacturer to sell a car. I read automotive news regularly, and they are kind of they reflect the voice or the perspective anyway of the dealer. And I know what the dealers would say that's a number one, a lot of tax revenues that states get come from us. We employ 1000s of employees, these are local employees, and they pay taxes and they they energize the economy, we're small business people and we we help our local communities we give to local charities, I think, ultimately is to find the most compelling argument in favor of a local franchise dealer has to do with profit. And that is, if you have, let's say, a company on store, and a good example is the Apple Store. So let's say you know, your Chevy dealer is now owned by Chevy. Well, if you look at the Apple Store, what happens when you buy an iPhone at the Apple Store? Here, they pay their employees and that sort of thing. But every single dollar of profit 100% of the profit that's made by the Apple Store goes back to Cupertino, presumably to buy jet fuel as they go on one more vacation, the executives at Apple. So the local dealers would say listen, we do make money, but we spend it at local restaurants, local businesses, we support your daughter's soccer team, we sponsor that you're not gonna see an Apple Store sponsoring a soccer team or literally. And that's what they're saying. They're saying, Yeah, you want to have a Chevy store. It's not going to buy Girl Scout cookies, and it's not going to sponsor local charity. So that is a pretty compelling argument. Oh, by the way, Stefan, I'd say this, as dealership consolidation happens, and right now there's maybe 15,000 car dealers, but it used to be a lot more as consolidation happens and you have these groups that you know, auto nation and sodic and group one As they gobble up these mom and pop shops, that argument kind of goes away to mean all donations based in Florida. I bet you they're not sponsoring. There's I don't think there's an auto donation US Soccer team.

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And I just think you know that if you look how Carvana and virium had taken off with the sale of used cars, if local dealers don't wake up and see that, how impressive their growth has been. And what that's telling you is they offer the buying experience that consumers have become used to consumers expect. And, you know, we basically in life, we all just want to be treated fairly. And there's just, we all have too many stories. There's a way there's some great dealers out there. But there's too many that still hold on to the past. And I think it's because of their legal protection. So yeah,

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I think we're in agreement on this. I do have my my misgivings about having company on stores, which I just described. But ultimately, there's too many stories like you're describing, and it all comes down to a lack of transparency. I mean, honestly, you know, this is a very expensive thing, what do you buy a house, you know, what the price is going to be, and there can be some haggling, but you know what the price is going to be? There's much less transparency with car sales that it shouldn't be that I'll just say very quickly, a friend of mine bought a two year old Porsche came in, and they said, Hey, we can put a ceramic coating on. And they were not able to put the ceramic coating on for a few days. So he took the car home and he found that it actually had ceramic coating already. It were trying to sell them ceramic coating. So you know, we'll we'll move on here. But I have to say, Stefan, the bad experiences like my friend and what you had, and, and what a lot of people experience that may be the minority of transactions. In fact, I'm sure it is. But it doesn't matter. It should never happen. And it's discouraging, and it does. So I guess we're gonna agree. We think dealers should, should go away. I don't think we

need them anymore. So, okay, let's, let's move on to our next topic. What do you have for the safety thing today,

32:09

we're gonna talk about crash testing kind of give you an overview of how cars are tested, and to make sure that we're safe as passengers when unfortunate events occur. And some of the research I did. The main thing is, is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has the what are called the FMVSS, the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. So anytime a car is designed and built by manufacturer, there are minimum requirements that it must have, in terms of safety features, everything from headlights, to brake lights to windshield wipers, as well as crash test, the cars get crashed with dummies and crash dummies inside and have to pass the minimum test. So of course, you don't want the car that gets the minimum score, you know, if you would get your loved ones in it. And then the NHTSA also has what's called the MCAT program, the new car assessment program. And this is slightly different tests. And this is where you can go online and see what kind of rating they get. And then the second testing that occurs in America is by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety is independent organization. They do their own specific tests. And what's interesting about IHS that I found fascinating and is more than dear to my heart was you'll see represent some studies I did is that they wanted their testing to be more like what happened in the real world. So like versus NHTSA, they raised the bumper on the vehicle that does a side impact to be more like SUVs and real world. These are deformable barriers of fixed barrier but more while I'm in the real world. But you know, the open secret is cars are engineered to basically pass the test. And it says modified cylinder tests a little bit over the years. But the thing that you need to understand about these crash tests done is they're done with the crash dummy the hybrid three crash dummy. So who is riding in this car when it gets tested to see if it passes? Well it's the 50th percentile male so the 50th percentile male dummy is five foot nine inches 171 pounds. That is what used to be the 50th percentile in America but you know with I don't know we have Alabama spin evolution and that's the fall. Yeah, and we call it Alabama biscuit toxicity down here, you know that? We have the American population has changed, say 171 or 271. A 171 pounds. Yeah. So the Alabama 50th percentile male would be

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71. Yeah.

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And then the 50th percentile side impact dummy weighs 160 pound and then they have the fifth percentile female who's for lovin 108 pounds, but the thing I understand about the female Dummies is they are downsized, male dumb. He's so they're not biologically modified with pelvis size, bone density and all that in terms of ash crushed me. So this got me thinking was back in Alabama back in 2000. And we were part of the Mercedes Benz crash Engineering Research Engineer network is your no crash dummy. That was the first thing that popped in my head. All these crash tests. I'm not a crashed I mean, I'm, I'm you know, right now I'm actually the closest I've ever been in my life to the 50th percentile male. It's still way less than he does. But it's the closest I've ever been. But then I look at my wife who's five feet tall. I won't disclose her way. But she weighs. You know, she weighed less than 100 pounds at the time. But her in a vehicle versus myself in a vehicle to different fits in a vehicle. And she hates driving my truck because she just doesn't fit it. So this got me thinking a long time ago. You know, after 40 years of designing cars around the 50 percentile male. You're out of luck. If you don't fit that car like the male in when did this when did this really go wrong? You remember about 1996 to 2000? What made the big news? Remember kids and women dying because airbags. So from 1996 to 2000 179 people

were killed by airbags. Now the thing to understand about airbags is when the airbag first came out, the safety design and the regulation at the time was the airbag had to be designed to protect the 50 percentile male who is unrestrained. That absolutely irritated me. Why would you add a safety feature to a vehicle that's designed to protect somebody who refuses to wear their seatbelt? That is counterintuitive to safety design.

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So there's trying to manage it your reward and augment someone who's reward and

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augment. So instead, it killed a bunch of people that didn't need to die. They broke their necks. Basically, what happened is the force of the airbag was so high. So this is going on. And when I got the UAB in 2000, NT 1000, when did this lead me thinking? Why is this happening? And then so I raised the question scientifically, how can we look to see if truly in the real world, if you don't match the cookie, call the if you don't match the round hole that to the percentile male, there's something different happened to you. So that was the kind of the intellectual spark that led to my studies, which have continued to evolve throughout the years, not my studies, but the research is carried on. And so I look back at what I did is basically, we went to a database, and I divided people into different height, weight and groups, and then you matched and then compare to what happened to the different height weight group people versus the hybrid crash three, and lo and behold, your chance of dawn, and your tant chance of getting injured, were much higher, in some cases, 2.3 times higher than the hybrid three, crash male. So that became part of my talk, when you buy a car, it's like buying a suit for the driver you need the driver needs to make sure that they fit that car. And Case in point my wife when she buys a car takes her a long time find one that she feels comfortable in the seating position. So our research at Alabama at the time, clearly showed this in the literature. And we went on to look at does age make a difference and some great research. Now we know that you know female drivers and right front seat passengers 17% more likely to be killed in a motor vehicle collision than a male of the same age. So now the data is clearly showing this. And then a recent study in 2019 by Jason Fuhrman, at University of Virginia and of course it is not off top of my head. I've looked this up because I want to tell you that the real data but he said any his study showed that any seatbelt wearing female occupant has a 73% greater odds of being seriously injured in a frontal collision than a male. I mean, think about that. 73 is unbelievable.

39:09

Alright. This is this is a question that you may not know the answer to. But it's occurred to me over the years that people sit at a different location some people like to sit really close to the steering wheel or if they're a passenger, really close to the dashboard. Some people like to sit far away there's a lot of variation in where people sit. That must make a difference.

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And as some people like to put their feet up on the desk I don't want to go through that again does not end well. But exactly so

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you know, what's the best place to sit what's the what's ideal.

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So you know, ideally if you're if you are the driver vehicle you need to be positioned in the vehicle so you have maximum control of vehicle, you know, when you went to driving school together, they taught us a driving position. Basically your leg should be slightly bent, and then when your leg is straight with your foot behind in the foot brake pedal that allows you to deliver maximum force to braking when you need it, and then your arm should be stretched out with the top of the steering wheel of your wrist that allows you maximum control of the vehicle. Because first of all, the more control you have, hopefully, the less likely you are to crash. That also puts you in the best position for the airbag and restraint systems. Something that I see people commonly doing is wearing a loose seatbelt, I'll take three point belt, fold the top, whatever, put a clip on it, so the so the shoulder portion is loose, that's bad, because you want that tight against you. You should always adjust the shoulder on the seat pillar. So it comes across your clavicle and shoulder so it's not riding on your neck, we clearly saw with high riding those especially those early shoulder belts that came up around the window, when they're up high that can actually give you blunt trauma that can hurt your carotid artery, which is already goes your brain. So you want to be positioned in the vehicle. You don't want your seat all the way to the back, because then there's going to be space between you and the seatbelt. So ideally, you're going to be about arms, extended length from the dashboard, which allows you because you do want to first ride down the seatbelt was it going to happen in your in a crash is that seatbelts got to pretend or it's going to blow. And Mercedes has active pre assist seatbelt and a lot of other vehicles do too. But

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before you go any farther, the presumably the reason that there's pretensioners is to tighten the seat belt, which they know is going to stretch.

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We discovered back in 2000, they were actually pretensioners weren't requiring a lot of vehicles, but they couldn't pass a test. So they put her pretensioner. And then they pass a test. So to save costs, if they didn't have to put them in, they wouldn't put them in. But clearly, it's all about passing the test. And even on a low end vehicle. They're trying to get it out. They're trying to save everywhere they can but safety should not be one from a societal standpoint. So yeah, you want that seatbelt tied up against you then you ride down the seat belt as it stretches as your body deforms. And then you hit the airbag and further decelerate. And then you fly back and hit the seat going backwards. That for every forces opposite and equal force. And that's why then when you get in a car in Illinois has my wife has a very difficult time with this is matching the headrest to her because she's so short. The headrest is typically above her head, and her head is cocked forward because of it. So when I get in the vehicle, I do my seating position like we're taught in Racing School for maximum control. And then I put the headrest, basically up against the back of my head. So I'm sitting upright, not slouched, because when you crash, you're going to flex at the hips. And if you're crouched, you'll submarine underneath your lap belt underneath your shoulder belt. And this is gonna lead to another discussion for another day of where to put kids in back seats. Because positioning is very important, and also changes the odds of injury and fatality, and rear seated passengers. So it's a fascinating stuff. And, you know, I would love you know, unfortunately, progress in automotive safety is regulatory. And, you know, in this country, anything regulatory is just not going to happen anytime soon. But ideally, I'd like you know, I would like to see more crash testing done with crash dummies that are to truly reflective of the American population. And I actually said it, when a couple of my meetings, the way a car should pass a test is the car comes up, and they go over to a racket dummies, and you get the random draw the dummy. It may be the Alabama hybrid three male, you know, it may be the skinny little South Florida, it may be the 50th

percentile male and maybe you don't know, but you're gonna get a spectrum abroad part of America who's riding in these vehicles, and it really make the vehicle safer for all not just for one.

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You know, the couple of the things that have happened over the years, you know, Volvo very famously came out with the three point seatbelt, I think in the Nils Bolin. Yeah, late 50s, early 60s, and then they, they waved their patent rights, and they said, This is too important. We want everyone to have access to this, they did not profit from it. They said everyone can use it, which I thought was great. And the airbag, of course, when it first came out in the late 80s was very controversial. People were not sure you know, just because the chemicals are in it. I mean, basically, you're carrying a bomb in your car. People are nervous about it. Now it's well accepted. And, and they're they're very, very life saving. They're wonderful, wonderful things. Hey, I got a question that I've always wondered. And you may not know the answer to this. But we all know that if you go to Japan and you drive a Japanese car, or if you go to France and you drive a French car, or if you go to Korea or if you go to the United States, based on regulations, you're going to be safe, right? Yes. Why aren't all those regulations the same? If you're a car manufacturer, you have to give the change. Because slightly for European versus Korea versus Japan versus United States and ultimately all the cars are very much the same safety. Why can't they just make it easier and make all the regulations the same?

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So the the United Nations of crashworthiness? Yeah, yeah. I mean, you know, the Europeans have their own set of standards, and they do their own independent crash testing. And, you know, but I think the one thing that we have seen is the International homologation, so to speak of the automobile, I mean, the French boys used to they used to have their yellow headlights than the English like to have the little side lights on the on the cars. And each country kind of had his own peculiarity. But over the years, as the automobile industry has become globalized, I'm sure the industry has pushed for regulatory changes to decrease their overhead costs. I mean, we don't need to make a Camry for Europe, a Camry for Japan. I can't We can't afford to do that. So we can make them all and you're right. But I think, but our cars that are over there are going to have to, I'm not sure exactly how it worked for an American manufacturer, it would sell cars in Europe. I know that the European manufacturers sell here is they have to pass our test. Or they have to get an exception from NITSA.

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Yeah, I think that's that's right. But you know, ultimately, it makes sense to me to make stringent emissions rules and make stringent safety rules and make them worldwide, it would save manufacturers a lot of money. And it would also result in nice clean cars, which they have everywhere. Everyone, the cars that you sell again, in Japan or Korea, are clean and they're safe. And it's to me if that's what you're after, it'd be nice to make it all the same. I know that there's different realities. And there may have to be some different rules. For example, there's so many more pickup trucks, United States, and I do understand that but boy, it'd be nice if we could have safe cars and cars with very low emissions, and make those rules as standardized as they possibly can around the world. It just, it seems like it would make a lot of sense. Probably too much sense for that ever happened.

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Right. But there are there are a lot of manufactured vehicles around the world that that don't have the safety standards are not important to America, especially in emerging countries like India, China,

there's vehicles that are made over there. And even in South America, that can't be important, as many vehicles sold this country because they don't pass. They don't pass. Just you're

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just looking at Mexico, you know, in I used to live in South Texas and San Antonio and you're actually allowed to drive your Mexican car over the border and you know, come shop and into in Texas, you're not allowed to register there, you're not allowed to keep it there. You're allowed to drive. So you'd see some, some pretty cheap cars in the parking lot with Mexican plates. And they didn't have to follow our laws, but they were allowed to drive on our roads, which you know, is probably fine. So anyway, it's an interesting world. And I as always define I love that you have so much experience and so much background. This is this is always cool to hear about what you're up to and the crash dummy thing I love. By the way, wouldn't that be great if they if they had a lineup of dummies, and then the manufacturer shows up with their, you know, their car, whatever it is. And then the computer screen says you have to pick crash dummy number what? And it doesn't matter which one it is your car has to pass. Wouldn't that be great?

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I think that I would think that'd be great. Because at the end, it's the greater good and clear, the data shows you know, the fatality and injury rate is higher for those that aren't like the the male dummy. And I think it'd be great will we ever get there had been taught to hope is by 2030 Something may happen. But the important part for someone who is buying a new vehicle is to make sure that the primary driver fits the vehicle or counter the vehicle fits the driver. And that was that gives you the greatest odd because you because the the systems in the vehicle are giving you the best odds of functioning in your benefit.

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Yeah, one thing we see with with ranchers here in Idaho is you'll see a you know Ram 3500 or HD Chevy pickup or a 350 Ford pickup and it pulls up to Costco and who gets out but this you know, this five two woman jumps out of this huge drug talk about talking about not fitting the car so yeah. All right. Well, we're out of time and let's wrap it up. I did. It's been another great discussion. And what I'd say to our listeners is, leave comments. Give us a thumbs up subscribe. We do read the comments and we're always trying to improve. Stefan and I are new at this podcast game and we want to make make this as good as it can be. So anyway, thanks for listening. And Stefan. Thank you and until next time, we will say goodbye