

# Keep service records



Ralph Seekins

Back in, as my grandchildren say, the dark ages (really just my teen years) our family home was 45 miles from the nearest high school. That meant I had to live in town in order to participate in any after-school activities. One guy I lived with was a civil engineer for the Bureau of Reclamation – just like my dad. He drove a plain vanilla three speed stick shift sedan. I got to drive it occasionally – with the instruction that I had to log anything I did to the car. If I put in 5 gallons of gas (\$1.25 worth) I had to write it in the log book along with the mileage on the odometer. He did the same. Every oil change, tire rotation, lube job and gallon of gas was entered in that ledger book. He told me that, just like balancing your checkbook, a person should keep a record of what and when something was done to your vehicle.

That was good advice back then – even though I thought it was kind of over-the-top at the time.

Then, by pure accident, I got started in my automobile career in

what was to be a “temporary job” selling Ford cars and trucks to get my wife through nursing school in Seattle. (More than 42 years later I’m still doing that temporary job.)

Back then is when I began to realize the real value of keeping vehicle records. For example, I became the commercial sales manager at that downtown Seattle Ford dealership. There I saw how service records helped some of my customers get top dollar for their cars and trucks when they were ready to replace their fleet. And, since I also managed an in-house 2000 vehicle leasing company for the dealership, I also saw how comprehensive records helped us get better prices when cars and trucks were turned in at lease end. We could clearly show a potential buyer the vehicle’s fuel economy, the service intervals, repairs made and more.

If possible, every owner should keep at least preventative maintenance records from the day a vehicle is bought until the day it’s sold or traded. It only takes a few minutes a month to do so. And, if you haven’t been keeping a record, now is a really good time to start.

One good reason is that new vehicle manufacturers require an owner to keep service records in order to prove preventative maintenance has been performed according to the factory recommended intervals. Not having those records can be reason for a manufacturer to refuse to

perform warranty repairs to a vehicle. That’s particularly true for lubricated components.

And, when a vehicle is brought to us at the dealership with a comprehensive service record demonstrating proper care, we usually allow a higher trade allowance than for a vehicle without any such information. That difference can be substantial.

A small, lined ledger book is all someone needs in order to keep records. Keeping that ledger in the glove box where records can be easily entered is a good idea. Or, if you are one of those thousands of computer users, I recommend you check out Ownersite.com. It is a really neat site that allows users to customize their data for comprehensive entry and get detailed reports in just moments. This site even allows the user to be reminded when manufacturer recommended services should be performed and can interface with wireless devices so you can enter what’s done from just about anywhere. Believe me, it’s a neat program and well worth checking out.

Keeping a comprehensive record for your car or truck is a good tool to provide greater reliability, safety and value.

*Ralph Seekins has more than 42 years’ experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 36 years, has been the owner of Seekins Ford Lincoln.*