

Are lifetime fluids too good to be true?

Here is a message that was recently left on my answering machine from my friend K: “Jeana, we just had our car at the dealership and I’m calling to see if you could give us a second opinion. They said the tranny in our van is bad and needs to be replaced, along with other things. If you could call me back I’d appreciate it.”

So I called her back and listened to her story:

K and her husband bought their van new in 2006. It suited their family nicely, had the features they liked, and they desired to keep it for at least a few more years. Because of this, they had always authorized all maintenance and repairs that were recommended to them by the dealership. Being of the mindset that having it serviced there was best for their vehicle, they had always felt that their vehicle was in good hands. So when her van started making a terrible noise, she returned to the dealership.

Upon inspection, the dealership condemned the transmission and told her that since her van only had 130,000 miles on it, it was likely a “lemon” from the factory because a transmission should not fail so quickly and the best thing to do would be to



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trade it in for a new one. She told me that she’d never had any other big issues with the van since they bought it and she didn’t know what to do because she really liked her vehicle. She wondered if my technicians would give her a second opinion.

I told her that of course we could look at it for her. But first, I asked her if she’d been getting transmission fluid flushes as part of her maintenance program.

Let’s pause here for a moment. If you’ve read my past articles, you know how passionate I am about fluid maintenance. Dealerships are increasingly indicating that their fluids are “lifetime,” but whose lifetime are we talking about? The dealership wants to sell you a new car. Their intention is to get your car to 100K—this is often the number they use for lifetime.

Now then, have you ever seen the transmission fluid in a vehicle at 100K that has never been changed? Fresh fluid has a specific makeup of elements and conditioners designed to perform many duties. As fluid ages, it becomes dirty, loses the strength of its conditioning and cleaning abilities, and changes viscosity. As it breaks down and changes, it slowly loses

its ability to do the job it was intended for. Have you ever seen the nooks and crannies inside a transmission? There are a lot of places to clean every single time your vehicle is running. Running with old or insufficient levels of transmission fluid can cause the transmission to work harder, transferring engine power less effectively. Having your transmission fluid serviced regularly can substantially extend the life of your transmission ... so much so that fluid companies are putting their money on it.

This is where fluid programs come in. Reputable companies that provide high quality fluids know that even the best fluids break down and need to be changed regularly. If done at suggested intervals, they stand behind their products. For example, if you have your transmission fluid changed every 30,000 miles and the transmission fails at 130,000 miles, these companies are willing to then pay for your transmission’s replacement, which can be up to four grand. Wow!

I explained all of this to K and advised her that she should first call the dealership and inquire if her van was receiving regular transmission service. It would be wrong of me to take advantage of a situation and have her bring it to us if there was a possibility that it would be



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under a fluid warranty program.

I’d like to end my story by telling you that her beloved van was part of such a program, but this was not the case. Upon inquiry, she was told that her transmission fluid was fine and that because of the cost of the replacement of the transmission and some suspension issues they found, they again recommended that she trade her vehicle in for a newer model.

Meanwhile, after reviewing the estimate she was given for the transmission and suspension work, I found that we would have been able to perform the work for far less. After not hearing back from K that day, I called to share this good news with her. She had news of her own: they did what was recommended and traded the vehicle since they told her it was a lemon and it was easy to do while her van was

at the dealership. She now has a new car payment and a great transmission! Perhaps this was the best decision for K and her family, especially not knowing if the rest of her vehicle had been properly maintained.

Is your vehicle part of a fluid program? Do you do all maintenance required in a timely fashion? Do you get excited about maintenance and do you best to keep your vehicle running great as long as possible?

Or do you do minimal maintenance—trusting the “lifetime” fluids folks? And do you trade your vehicle in at the first sign of trouble? Are you well educated about the attention your vehicle requires? Or do you trust others to ensure its longevity?

No matter what your frame of mind, my intent in sharing

this story with you is this: Fluid education and helping you understand programs available to give you peace of mind and to get your vehicle to a ripe old age. But just how old am I speaking about here? Well, from the research I have done, 200K is the new norm. This is almost as exciting as when I heard 40 is the new 20!

So from this young woman to all of you, I encourage you to shoot for the stars. Don’t just get your vehicle to the norm, blast everyone away by surpassing them in mileage! I have a story about such a man that I will introduce you to next month.

As the weather starts to warm, I will share a story that will warm your heart and make your mouth drop—an incredible story about a man, his half-million mile car and his aspirations to extend the miles even longer!