

# Elwood Files

by  
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## Elephant-size lesson can strike without warning

I am often looking out for life's big lessons, seeking the moral of the story.

It's not that I'm particularly contemplative. On the contrary, if you somehow could attach speaker wires to my brain, the soundtrack of my mind often would sound something along the lines of a mix between the bass line to *Roadhouse Blues* by the Doors and the fight song of my alma mater, the University of Nebraska.

(Lyrics: "We don't know the words, we don't know the words, we don't know the words, etc.")

The primary reason I attempt to distill everyday events in my life into broad truths is mostly selfish - it's so I'll have something to write about.

The alternative - me fumbling through my day-to-day without cognition, means I'd have to work much harder to fill this space, most likely through actual journalism.

Heaven forbid.

I bring this up because I

recently became without car. The transmission in the usually reliable family minivan went kaput. The operation to save her would've exceeded her value, so we had her put down. (Donated to Extended Hands Food Bank).

For more than two weeks, I did without wheels. Well, I did without motorized wheels.

My wife's bicycle became my primary mode of transportation. Many times, I simply walked to appointments around town.

No matter if I was pedaling along the streets, or hoofing down the sidewalk, I kept reminding myself to look for the big lesson in all of this.

It could be that the passing of the minivan held a greater purpose - that somehow my need for individuality in a car had finally surpassed my need for utility.

Nah.

Perhaps the big lesson could be found in the extra exercise I was getting. Maybe if we all rode a bike more often, we'd experience unbe-

lievable improvements in our lives.

Nope. That's not it. What about this extra quiet time? No radio to fiddle with. No cell phone attached to me ear when I'm pumping pedals. Certainly I can find a deeper meaning here.

Not really.

After a few weeks riding a bike, walking, begging rides from my business partner and rearranging schedules in order to get the kids where they needed to be, the only major conclusion I reached was this: Life without a car stinks.

I know, I know. Disappointing, isn't it?

The good news is, I found a replacement for the silver minivan, and as fortune would have it, I now enjoy individuality and utility.

I drive a 2006 Honda Element in color "Metallic Kiwi."

For those unaware, Honda Elements are apparently modeled after toasters from the 1950s. Add to its boxy shape my car's standout color, and I'm not one to blend in with the crowd.

I bought the "Green Elephant" (my kids' name for it) from a woman who lives in Tucson. We agreed to make the transaction in Casa Grande.

So once again, I bummed a ride from a friend. This time, Cecil Yates.

Cecil has been in the papers recently because of his political beliefs, which at almost every turn, I disagree with.

On the way to Casa Grande, we were halted on Interstate 10 because of an accident. Eventually, we took a long detour to our destination.

The extra time gave us a chance to discuss Fountain Hills, property taxes and economic development. Neither Cecil nor I budged from our positions. But (amazingly) we somehow remain good friends.

On the way back to the Valley - with me in the Green Elephant and Cecil close behind - we saw the reason for the detour. A silver SUV had slammed into a big rig.

If it weren't on a highway, you wouldn't have recognized the twisted chunks of metal as car parts.

Two people died.

And there it was. Life's big lesson hitting me square on the forehead when I wasn't even looking.

Life is short. Enjoy your friends.

Pretty big lesson, huh? Big like a green elephant.

To comment on this column, or to tell me what kind of man your mom is, click over to [TheElwoodFiles.com](http://TheElwoodFiles.com) online. Or e-mail [Todd@Take5AZ.com](mailto:Todd@Take5AZ.com).



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