



PRACTICAL Y OSPEAKING ...

ne of the most interesting observations I've made during my journey through life thus far is that old chestnut about not judging books by their covers. There's a saying I've heard bandied about from time to time, which goes something like: "There are those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened." Based on my experiences in life, particularly in my work environment. I'd alter that wording a little to: "There are those who make things happen, those who don't care what happens, and those who stop things from happening." Once upon a time, I used to be critical of the frighteningly large group of people who don't care what happens, but, in my world at least, I don't mind them so much these days as long as they stand back and keep out of the way of those who are trying to make a difference. The ones who really wind me up are those who constantly impede the progress of others by putting up unnecessary barriers that prevent something useful and worthwhile from happening, because they don't understand the situation, or they don't want to be the one to make the decision, or they're fearful of making a decision because it might be the wrong decision and that wrong decision could *have* an adverse impact on their career prospects. It's this latter reason that we're constantly confronted with when we find ourselves frustrated by government and local body people who put up road blocks in front of our

1 sensible and
1 reasonable ideas and intentions.

of motor mechanics who haven't got a clue and shouldn't be working in a practical man's world, and I'm sure there are also people working in academic roles who really suck at what they do - all because *they've* come to the wrong place. I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of people I know of who are truly good at both. Bruce McLaren was one of them. While I worked hard at being a practical guy for the first 15 years of my working life, I eventually conceded around 25 years ago that - probably thanks to my parents being a school teacher and a school inspector respectively - my natural abilities lie in academic areas. I was rubbish at schoolwork, but obviously something was there. The "academic curse" I call it. I've always been envious of the many brilliant and practical car builders and modifiers I've got to know well, such as Terry Bowden, Mike Roberts, and John Hinton, to the point at which I've many times joked with Terry *over* burgers in his workshop that I wish I could *have* his working life of practical genius instead of being cursed with my natural ability for academia. These days, my working life is all about a pen, a drawing board, and a computer, and developing documents that must make sense to the practical man yet must stand up in a court of law, and, sadly, I'm naturally able to do that in the same way as Terry can create a perfect join at *every* place where two pieces of tubing intersect. Often, if someone is truly gifted in either a practical way or an academic way,

WEARING MATCHING SOCKS WILL ADD LITTLE VALUE TO HIS SOCIAL LIFE NOR WILL IT GREATLY INCREASE HIS CHANCES OF GETTING LAID':

This sort of sentiment might seem a little ironic to some, given my day job of looking after the low volume vehicle certification system, which - *even* though LVVTA isn't a government department - is essentially a regulatory system that sometimes stops people from doing what they want to do. Sometimes there needs to be a moderator between the innovators and the road, because sometimes innovators don't innovate well - but the guiding principle behind the LW certification system is, as it always has been, to enable people to do the things that they want to do to their cars to make them better, unique, special. and individual, provided, quite simply, that the cars remain safe. I've always been about looking for ways to enable something to happen, rather than looking for ways to stop something from happening. I've never forgotten a statement made to me by a bloke who worked in a government department many years ago, in reference to some low volume vehicle certifiers whom I hold in very high regard. "Let's face it." said this chap, "these hot rodders really are a bit thick, aren't they?" This wanker had never *even* met the LW certifiers in question, let alone seen what they are capable of doing with their brilliant brains and hands. Instead, he formed his ignorant opinion of them entirely on the basis of seeing some handwriting on some certification paperwork that was a bit hard to read - not academically skilled; therefore, they must be thick. What a complete fucking prat. I've *!:*ever forgiven him. This ignorant judgmental twerp has achieved nothing in his life other than to attend work, fill in time, and piss people off. Even the government department had to "do a deal" with the prat to get rid of him. He's contributed nothing to anything, and when he falls off his perch few will *even* notice - except perhaps those to whom he owes money - and precious few will be any better off for his time spent on this planet. During the quarter of a century that I've been intimately involved in the modified vehicle scene, I've become a great believer that we guys (can't speak for the women; they all come from Venus, rernernberi') are born with an instinctive and intuitive bent towards either practical matters or academia. In other words, whether you're a practical bloke or an academic bloke is determined by genes or DNA. rather than what you do in life. I've met plenty

there can be a price to pay - like the world-renowned astronomy lecturer who is considered to be one of the great minds of all time in his field, yet struggles to put on a pair of matching socks when he gets dressed in the morning. But that really doesn't matter. Matching socks probably aren't going to be important to him. If he's in possession of such a phenomenal intellect, he's almost certain to be socially retarded, so wearing matching socks will add little value to his social life nor will it greatly increase his chances of getting laid. The socks don't matter. In exactly the same way, the brilliant car builders and modifiers of this world don't need to be academically brilliant. They are brilliant in a practical sense, and their contribution to others' *lives* through what they do is *every* bit as important as the contributions made to society by the academics of this world. Some people need to get their heads around that. For some pompous twit to say that someone is "a bit thick" because they are practically skilled rather than academically skilled is truly an irony of *massive* proportions. A few years ago a lady by the name of Lesley Emmett was leaving her job as an engineer at the Ministry of Transport - bloody good sort she is, too. When I sent her a message thanking her for her help and wishing her well. she sent me a reply that contained what I thought were some incredibly profound words. Lesley said, about the practical people she'd come to know and respect in our modified vehicle world, and the practical philosophy embedded within LVVTA, "There are few enough real. practical, and innovative people left in this world that we should cherish and encourage those we *have* got, rather than seek ways to restrict and inhibit them, since theirs is the true spirit of what has taken humanity through the 20th century, and helped to create the world we *have* today, in so many ways." I liked Lesley's words so much that I had them put on a plaque that *lives* in LVVTA's showroom. So, if you're a practical man, and you're good at what you do, never, *ever* let anyone make you feel like a second-rate citizen; hold your head high when you walk past a group of suits doing lunch; and never apologize for your crappy handwriting or bad spelling. You can do stuff that people who can write beautifully and spell perfectly could never achieve in *five* lifetimes. V8

