

My Gloves, Sweater and Hat

By Dave Doroghy



When I used to watch television as a teenager (I have never owned a TV set and have only watched it rarely since then, usually when I am trapped in out of town hotel rooms) I loved tuning in to the Bob Newhart Show in which Newhart played a quirky, dry witted accountant. His beautiful wife in the series was the late Suzanne Pleshette. There was one memorable episode that began with the Newharts at home in their upscale Chicago apartment one evening with Bob about to sit down to pay some household bills. In the scene, in order to prepare for writing the cheques, he had to put on a particular special jacket that he always wore when he sat down to pay household bills. Remember, this was the 1970's before direct debit accounts and computer bill paying. The scene was quite funny because Newhart couldn't find his jacket and so he couldn't pay the bills. Naturally, Pleshette ridiculed him for his neurotic non-sensible ritualistic approach, and insisted that he pay the overdue bills without wearing the special jacket. Newhart refused and comic banter ensued. It must have been a memorable, well-acted scene because it has been etched into my creatively cluttered, trash-collecting mind for 30 years.

What strange creatures of habit we are. I can't go out for a drive in my Morgan without three essential pieces of clothing: my favorite driving gloves, my ratty old wool sweater, and my special hat.

My good friend Tom who lives in Olympia, Washington gave me the driving gloves. Tom is 15 years older than me, has had lots of cool cars and gave me the gloves as a gift after I visited him once. They have beautiful supple black leather on the front, and a kind of stringy flexible white netting on the back. I am not sure what the fabric on the back is but boy are they comfy. They fit just perfectly, like they were made for my hands. Sorry, I just can't resist this one – they fit like a glove. I am not sure what purpose they really serve, and by this I mean driving gloves in general, but I absolutely can't go for a drive without them. Like Suzanne Pleshette, my rational mind realizes they are totally non-essential from a practical driving point of view. I suppose they give you a bit more grip on the wheel, and may afford a modicum of warmth in the wintertime, but before Tom gave them to me I was perfectly capable of driving naked handed. As a matter of fact, I drove many different convertibles for decades without driving gloves. Then I got the Morgan, and later the gloves, and now they are a necessity. They are as important to me now as my car's keys; I can't even start the Morgan without them on my hands.

Tom told me that he had been hanging onto them for the last 40 years. That made them even more special to me. To help me prepare for this article I wanted to learn more about the gloves so I e-mailed Tom and asked him to give me a brief history. Here is his great reply:

So the driving gloves are of vintage that went with my '63 Austin-Healey 3000 Mk III. One of my early flames, Julie gave them to me. I used them while I had the Healey being careful not to get grease on them during any of the many breakdowns that beauty had: battery cable failure (somewhere - the battery was in the trunk so cables from there to way up front), smoke filling the cockpit one rainy night when I switched into overdrive and the solenoid burned up, etc. I kept them after that and they again wrapped wooden (faux this time) steering wheels in my '64 and '65 tri-power Pontiac GTOs as winter gloves, appropriately kept in the "glove box." They wound up in Washington behind the beautiful wooden doored glove box of the '72 4.5 liter Mercedes 280SE my dad bought for my mom and his driving pleasure. So you see they have been well broken in, used carefully in an appropriate class of vehicles. Perhaps that is why they feel so great when you slip them on. I passed them on to you as I knew you would appreciate them and put them to good

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use, plus they were feeling the need to grasp not only a steering wheel but the stick shift of an exciting ride. If I ever abandon my transition to motorcycling and get into another good stick shift, I might ask to borrow them back for a while, especially if it has a wooden steering wheel.

Thanks again Tom.

Then there is my old white (now grey) ratty wool sweater. It is full of holes where moths must have mistaken it for a soft, tasty bug smorgasbord. I have had the sweater for over 30 years and I love it. I did a favor my friend Jennifer's mum Ethel back in the late 70's and to thank me she knit me this sweater. I can't even remember what the favor was but it meant enough for her to sit down for a few hours and knit a sweater. Ethel isn't with us anymore but her sweater is. And every time I go out for spin in my Morgan in the late Fall, Winter or Early Spring I pull the sweater over my head, thumb my nose at the elements and stay toasty warm in my chariot's cockpit. My criteria for a Morgan sweater are three fold: warmth is first and foremost. The sweater must be very very loose fitting, seriously oversized and super comfy. Most importantly, it must be handmade by someone special.

And finally, there's my wonderful and special hat. It's tweed. It looks British. Need I say more?

The hat was given to me when I was a 12-year old. It might have been a birthday present, I can't remember. My head is much bigger now, both figuratively and literally. The hat, unlike the sweater, barely fits me; it's tight and uncomfortable. So I know what you're thinking: Why is this small hat an element in the Malvern Link wardrobe trio? Simply stated it's because the hat has to fit super tight so that it won't blow off of my head when I am blasting around in my Morgan with the top down. And it looks so great when I have it on. It loudly and proudly screams out "United Kingdom"!

For all his quirks Bob Newhart was a wise man. He understood that sometimes it's the small things in life that bring us happiness. Preparation for the event can bring almost as much joy as the event itself. And I'll tell you one thing, driving a Morgan is a lot more fun than paying household bills.

The only downside is that, like Bob Newhart, sometimes when I can't find my gloves, sweater, or hat it means I can't go out for a drive in my Morgan.



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