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Please contact Gretchen Adams (gretchen@vcoa.org) for all magazine subscription and membership issues. Send all correspondence to VCOA, Box 16, Afton, NY 13730.

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deadlines

Classified ads for the January-February 2020 issue must be received by December 20.

Display ads for the January-February 2020 issue must be received by December 1.

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Becoming a Parts Guy



BY MATT LEROUX

I've been a Volvo fan since I bought my 1984 245 in 1994. Before that I had owned a 1984 VW and a 1985 Saab—the 240 seemed impressive in comparison. As the years went on, I traded in the '84 for a 1992 245 with an M47 transmission. By 2001, I traded that in for a 1998 V70 T5M. Four years later, I had a chance to buy my beloved 1992 245 back.

Owning the two cars proved to be a financial struggle with my income at the time. Also, the folks who had owned the '92 had smoked in it and neglected it, so a full interior swap, plus some other work, was needed. My wife was not thrilled to see me pouring money into the cars.

Necessity is the mother of invention, and this is how I became a "parts guy." I learned that I could buy good used parts from sellers on eBay. But where did they get these parts? Next, I learned about the existence of pick-n-pull junkyards. I began to source junkyard parts that were nicer than mine and soon discovered that I, too, could sell on eBay. So, in 2006, during a period of unemployment, I became an eBay seller, mainly selling good used parts that I took off my own cars as I upgraded with nicer parts found in the junkyards.

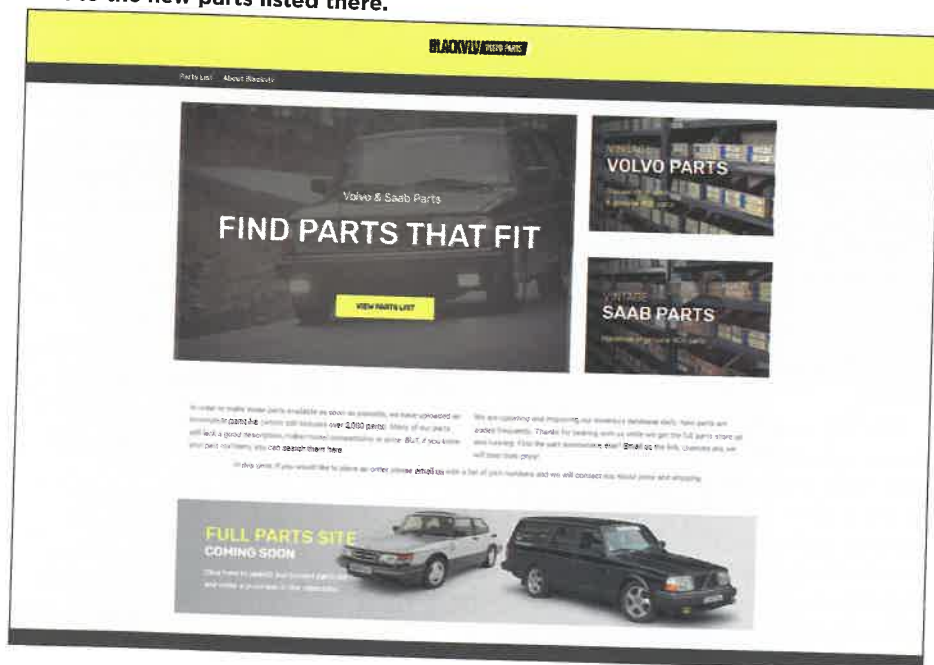
This evolved into my "side hustle" of going to yards opportunistically to find nice parts to sell. I stuck to mainly 240 and P80 (850 and 98-00 70 series) cars and the parts

that are upgrades, rare, or commonly worn or faded. For several years this was a great business for a little extra cash. Later on, in 2007 when I was in grad school, expecting our first child, and broke, I stepped it up a bit to provide for the household.

Anyone can do this. It is fun and you learn a lot by disassembling cars at the junkyard. I encourage any enthusiast to spend a little time picking parts.

In 2014, a big change came to my business. I got a mysterious voicemail on my

My website www.blackvlvparts.com allows you to search my inventory of new parts. Soon, it will feature a shopping cart, but in the meantime, you can email me if you want to buy something. I also have 1,000s of used parts, mainly for 240s, in addition to the new parts listed there.



phone from vintage Volvo legend, Jack Klix. The call was the funniest thing. First of all, I didn't know Jack at the time. Second, Jack's message stated, firmly, that Larry wanted me to go to his shop in Utica and buy all his parts. It went something like, "Hey Matt, this is Jack Klix. I was talking to Larry and he wants you to come up and buy all his parts."

Laugh out loud. Who are these guys? Well, I got curious, so I called Jack, and then Larry Cookinham, to learn that Larry was closing his Volvo repair shop after over 30 years in business. Larry had accumulated a huge collection of used parts covering every model from the 544 through the 850. I ended up buying everything that Larry had for the 140, 164, 240, 700/900, and 850. Joe Lazenby, Susquehanna Spares, and Jack Klix bought the older stuff.

Something I really like about selling parts, particularly the rare, NOS (new old stock), and NLA (no longer available), is that I get to enjoy a part, hold it in my hands, and then pass it on. Instead of keeping it, I sell it off and help get another enthusiast's car into tip-top shape or make it distinct with that rare part.

The inventory from Larry boosted my eBay business significantly and led me to open an eBay store, which you can visit at www.eBay.com/str/blackvlvovopartsstore. It was also the jumping off point where I began to turn my hobby into more of a business. I gained a lot of confidence, knowing my parts, pricing, and having a broad inventory for customers.

Next, a New England guy, who would go on to become a friend, contacted me about a large lot of NOS parts he had been gifted. He was interested in selling the parts for 240 and older models as one lot. I drove up and bought it all. There were some great parts in that lot, like a brand new 122 dash pad and an early 240 coin tray. Then, an old friend who ran a shop in Massachusetts called, same deal, followed by a parts lot in N.J. People were finding me, and I could now offer my customers NOS in addition to good used parts.

Along the way, customers and suppliers have become friends. One is a graphic designer who designed my logo and made a postcard to insert with eBay orders. He also designed T-shirts, stickers, and my ad for *Rolling*.

The "big score" came in June this year. I had an acquaintance tell me that his dad had a few parts cars in the Hudson Valley. When I made it out to see them, his dad told me about a friend of his, who had a large storage unit filled with new Saab and Volvo parts. This fellow had worked for VCNA, then run his own shop for many years, but had to close it abruptly. He moved his inventory



I rented two RAM cargo vans to bring home everything I bought from a fellow who had run his own Volvo shop for many years. It took five of us three hours to unload the parts from his storage. They were all in labelled bins, neatly arranged on the original shelves. We completely filled the two vans.

into storage, where it had been sitting for over 10 years.

I called him and by June we had an agreement. I rented two large cargo vans and drove down to empty the storage unit. I was sweating on the long drive there. Would the parts still be there? Were they in good shape? Had everything rusted, been water or mouse damaged?

When I got there, he had already opened the storage unit and begun to check the parts. It turns out, the storage unit was indoors in a climate-controlled facility. The parts were neatly organized in bins on the original shelves. Everything was in perfect condition, like the day they were put away. What a treasure trove!

The load of 2,000+ different parts is fantastic and exciting—lots of genuine Volvo and Saab parts, many NLA. They fit Volvo models from the 100 series up to the P2 chassis cars, with a concentration on 240 and 700/900 cars. Unloading the parts from

storage took five people about three hours, and we completely filled those cargo vans.

Since June, I've been inventorying the parts and populating my new website, built by friends. You can already search the parts list at www.blackvlvparts.com. I am constantly making improvements to the list and adding more items from the inventory. Soon, the site will have a shopping cart, but in the meantime, you can email me at matt@blackvlvparts.com if you see something you want. In addition to the new parts listed on the site, I have 1,000s of used parts, mainly for 240s.

Am I ready to quit my day job and become a full-time parts guy? I am not quite sure. I'd at least like to try it for a while and see where it leads. But it is easy to imagine that the customers and the excitement will keep me busy full time. ■

Matt LeRoux lives in Ithaca, N.Y. and can be reached at matt@blackvlvparts.com.