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## Bio Bling

### Road Sage Merges Guilty Pleasures with Good Environmental Practices

by Liz Finch

Admit it. You've done it.

You've passed a 1960s-era Cadillac cruising down the freeway, belching black diesel fumes and you've cursed the driver for blatant environmental irresponsibility.

Next time, you might want to check that urge. Because if Colette Brooks has anything to do with it, those gas-guzzling behemoths will soon be the epitome of ecologically correct vehicles.

Brooks is the owner of the 18-year-old advertising and marketing company Big Imagination Group (BIG) in Culver City, which is committed to working with companies that support "lifestyles of health and sustainability." Brooks sets an example with her own company, which three years ago became the first private corporation to own a fleet of hybrid vehicles.

But Brooks has a few dirty little secrets that don't exactly square with her public image, including a 1961 Ford Econoline pickup and a 1966 Toronado.

"The Toronado is in pristine museum condition—and it is also the biggest gas guzzler ever," she confesses.

Ever on the lookout for less-intrusive ways to live—yet still indulge her love of all cars big and beautiful—Brooks discovered *From the Fryer to the Fuel Tank* author Joshua Tickell, who educated her about the virtues of filling up with biodiesel fuel made from soy. Shortly thereafter, she found a 1971 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz for sale on the streets of LA and something clicked.

"Here was a way to go completely off fossil fuels and rely only on sustainable substances," she gushes.

Brooks not only bought the car (and spent \$15 to replace the fuel lines so they wouldn't disintegrate from the biodiesel fuel), she has since added a 1983 Cadillac Seville, a Mercedes 300SD and a Chevy Tahoe with monster tires to her collection of bio-vehicles. The mileage varies of course, but the Tahoe gets about 22 miles to the gallon and the Caddy clocks in at an impressive 30 mpg.

Now Brooks is spreading the word through BioBling, an offshoot of BIG that is helping people find their own diesel-burning vehicles in the \$5,000 to \$25,000 range and converting them to run on biodiesel. If there is a hang-up, it is in easily accessing sustainable fuel to fill up the tank. There are only two such fueling stations in Southern California—neither very convenient to LA—so Brooks has her fuel home-delivered.

"It's inert so it's completely safe—it's like storing olive oil," she says. "It's very convenient for me, but it's also \$4 a gallon delivered, with tax."

To alleviate some of this pocket pain, BioBling is forming a co-op to purchase its own 1,000-gallon tank and bring the cost down to about \$3 a gallon. A single tank will last 15 people one month, and so far Brooks has a list of 30 who are interested. That's impressive considering she's not even aggressively marketing BioBling.

"This has really turned out to be an organic movement, where people begin seeking answers and discover us and come around. Then they become huge advocates and spread the gospel to others."

*Liz Finch is an LA-based freelancer who is seriously regretting her recent purchase of a boring economy car.*



Colette Brooks

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