

Two sides to every story

Petrina Gentile Zucco . The Globe and Mail ; Toronto, Ont. [Toronto, Ont]29 Dec 2005: G.6.

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

The person behind me started to get upset, thinking I should have gone a long time ago so they started to honk. I was so upset. I literally turned off the ignition, holding the keys in a rage, I went up to her and then told her off. "I have a newborn in the car so I'm being a little extra cautious, if you don't mind!" she says, the tone of her voice escalating. "The poor woman looked so scared.

FULL TEXT

Canada AM anchor Marci Ien's BMW is a stable family car, but its metallic-blue paint also says she's fun-loving and funky

You wake up with her every morning. Half asleep and armed with a cup of java, you watch her deliver the daily news.

Five days a week, Canada AM News anchor Marci Ien is bright-eyed and upbeat even though she drags herself out of bed at 3:30 a.m. to start her day. By the time you catch a glimpse of Ien, her shift is almost over.

Luckily, the new mom has the luxury of a car and driver to take her to work in the wee hours of the morning. The rest of the time, she's behind the wheel of a 2002 BMW 320i four-door sedan.

Ien has shifted gears with her vehicles since launching her journalism career at CHCH-TV in Hamilton in 1991. That's when she bought her first car -- a red Hyundai Pony. She splurged on what she "lovingly called the death trap" at the age of 20. Back then, she paid \$2,500 and admits "I got ripped off."

"The doors never closed properly. So when it rained, there were leaks and water would come through the doors. The handle was really shaky -- I remember that coming off a couple of times, too.

"And there was a problem with the gas gauge. When it was full it didn't necessarily read it was full and when it was empty it didn't necessarily read empty. There were some close calls where I almost ran out of gas and didn't realize it because the gauge said otherwise.

"It was crazy -- it was really, really bad. Really the thing was a death trap but you know it got me through," she says lightheartedly, barely able to control her laughter. "It's very interesting to see Hyundai is now getting some respect because back then it was brutal."

A few years later, she joined CTV's news team in Atlantic Canada. That's when her taste in cars turned to German. "I was living in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for work. I would often come home to see my family and I would borrow my

dad's car, a BMW 318. I don't think they exist any more. I loved it. I really got used to it, but I always thought, 'Oh there's no way I could afford this. It's too much.'

"Then I ended up moving back home and I needed a car. I found a dealership that had a car a manager had driven with low kilometres. It was the now-defunct hatchback 318ti. It was so cute. I bought the car and I loved it. And then upgraded to the 320 because we needed more space," says len, whose hands are full with her 18-month-old daughter, Blaize.

len's favourite feature on the 320i is the seat warmers. "I like a warm butt," she says with a laugh. "Sometimes the heat takes a while to kick in, but those seat warmers, within 20 seconds, they're good to go."

"My car is safe, stable and family-oriented. But I think the colour of my BMW, metallic blue, says I'm a little funky, a little bit splashy. I like that – it sums me up in a nutshell. You got the conservative and then you have the funky. You have the family side and then you have the girl that still has the single edge to her.

"Others have said, 'Ewww, BMW is pretentious,' but I don't think it's that for me," says len, whose down-to-earth disposition is even more prominent in person than on the screen.

"[On television] you've got to shine. You've got to be bright. You've got to have guts on the inside to be able to ask the tough questions, yet still look good. It's television – it's about appearances, too. In a way, I think we have a lot in common, my car and I."

len confesses she likes speed sometimes. She has been stopped by police a few times, but nailed only once. Her secret: "I flash them a smile. I don't know if it's the Marci len thing, but it's like, 'Did you know you were going . . .?'" Yes, I did. I won't do it again. 'Okay, that's fine.'

"My husband always makes fun of me because he goes, 'I can't get away with that. Guys don't get away with that!' But women, you know, sometimes you have to do what you have to do," she says, flashing her trademark pearly whites.

After Blaize was born, len temporarily adopted a new driving style.

"I was travelling with my little girl and she was in her car seat and I was coming out of a strip mall and waiting to make a left turn. There was a car behind me and I was being extra cautious. I had a newborn in the car. Traffic was heavy and I was probably waiting a good two minutes.

"The person behind me started to get upset, thinking I should have gone a long time ago so they started to honk. I was so upset. I literally turned off the ignition, holding the keys in a rage, I went up to her and then told her off. " 'I have a newborn in the car so I'm being a little extra cautious, if you don't mind!' " she says, the tone of her voice escalating. "The poor woman looked so scared. And then she said to me, 'I'm so sorry, of course you should.' And then said, 'Aren't you Marci len? I watch you every morning.'

"It was awful. I was so upset. It was really embarrassing," says len who works with World Vision, having recently travelled to Sri Lanka to report on the aftermath of the tsunami.

len, likely the Toronto Raptors' biggest fan, loves listening to tunes in her Bimmer. Hip-hop, R&B, rock, jazz and gospel top her list. But you won't find any kid's music in her CD player.

"You know there's that theory if you play classical music for your kids, they can hear it. Poor Blaize, I played rap music 24 hours a day. When I was pregnant with Blaize the big CD at the time was Usher's CD. I listened to it all the time. I also played Kanye West and Tupac even though I probably shouldn't have, but I did.

"When Blaize was born that music would put her to sleep in the car. It totally soothes her. My child loves music, but it's hilarious what type of music she likes. While most kids are learning lullabies, my kid's got basketball and rap down," says Ien, who also sits on the board of the Canadian Pediatrics Foundation and on the advisory board for Centennial College's journalism program.

But there is one downside to her 320i – there's not enough trunk space to lug around a stroller, baby supply bag, and groceries. So, she's thinking of moving up the BMW ladder to an X5.

Although some day, she'd love to have an Aston Martin parked in her Toronto driveway. With her career in high gear these days, the dream will likely become a reality soon.

pzucco@globeandmail.com

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