

Always Liked Old Cars

By Bob Schmeichel

Anyone who likes old cars, in my opinion, is kind of a dying breed as you really don't see too many young kids having any real interest in the hobby today. For those of us who grew up in the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s, cars were the common thread that connected everyone to everything sociable. Car choices were made then to haul all your friends around in, cruise the loop, to go fast in or just sit in at your favorite eatery watching cars cruise by while getting waited on by car hops. Other social spots were the outdoor drive-in theaters, roller skating rinks and bowling alleys that are slowly disappearing today. Those times were real face-to-face socializing that pretty much everyone looked forward to be in the middle of every weekend with getting together, talking, teasing and cars getting everyone there. The cars

people chose to have then and how they took care of them, I always thought, were a direct reflection of their personality and how they would act with the car. Smoking then among young people was pretty much common place, while drinking beer was the other social choice some got in trouble with even though it was nothing like the drugs being introduced to the younger generations today. Don't get me wrong as people still died back then from over consumption combined with crazy stupid car accidents as happens today. Not being totally in control or distracted driving, as it is being recognized today, has always been a problem no matter the drug being used, and today is abused knowingly more so than ever by all ages who think they have to text while driving. It is against the law. A recent study at the University of Utah found that drivers using mobile phones had slower reaction times than drivers with a .08 percent blood alcohol content, which is the legal intoxication limit in many states. This new ever-growing social connection is distracting many drivers' attention until there is an accident or someone is killed to get the point across. The scene remains hypocritical with many thinking the law doesn't apply to them and they are in control. For those of us who don't text while driving, it gets annoying and kind of takes the fun out of driving when you have to drive for someone texting on the road near you to be safe with their lane wandering. With all the factual information out there about the downside issues of texting while driving, WHY are new car manufactures building cars with hands-free cell phone connections in them? I don't think it's helping the problem with still focusing away from the needed driving attention. With cars getting more technologically advanced with driving, stopping and turning themselves without human assistance, the enjoyment of old, actual hands-on driving experiences may soon disappear. And because cars are getting so expensive, along with the push of electric cars coming strong into the picture, people may eventually just pay to have a car take them from point A to point B, kind of like a taxi but without a driver. How fast the world could change, sound crazy? Watch!!!

When I asked Sandy Gunderson why she bought an old car, she responded by saying, "Because even at the age of 73, she has always liked old cars." She grew up and worked in those earlier times I mentioned in the beginning of this story and kind of missed those earlier old car social connections. With her son and brothers having old cars and always talking about going to the "Back to the 50s" event in St. Paul, Sandy's desire grew. So after saving for a long time, Sandy decided she wanted to have an old car for herself while getting kind of a second childhood feeling of driving back again as she put it. So in the spring of 2015, she started looking on craigslist at car sale ads. She found a few and had her son go along with her to check out and give his approval before she would think seriously about buying anything. After a few weeks of test driving cars, one in Dell Rapids finally got their attention. After Sandy's son drove this car a couple miles, he said, "Mom you have to get behind the wheel of this car." Because of the wonderful inside and outside appearance and the car being totally original with 73,000 miles on it, Sandy was soon the new owner of this 1955 Chevrolet Bel Aire. Being only the fourth owner, she received a bunch of original paperwork related to the car along with interesting history she is still trying to get more information on to verify. So far she has had it clarified the car was used in its earlier years to do live remote radio broadcast for KELO AM radio while pulling a trailer behind it with all the connections to the station. The trailer was in the shape of a big microphone and called "Big Mic." This fact was still evident because of the big wire connections in the car trunk still present today that powered the unit as well as the big speakers on the trailer. It was used for quite a few years around the area to promote new business locations and grand opening sales, even at the original Barrell Drive-In. Sandy has recently connected with a person who has original license plates

used on the car that read "KELO-AM." She's hoping to at least get a picture of those. Sandy joined the Great Plains Street Rodders as soon as she got the car and has driven it over a thousand miles in the last year. She said she thoroughly enjoys her '55 Chevy and her easy, new-found camaraderie with new friends within the club while creating new memories. She commented she has even reconnected with people from 50 years ago who she didn't realize were into cars too, making our world become smaller every day. How fun is that??



SCHMEICHEL 2016