

Crash Survivor

By Bob Schmeichel

Soon after World War 1 ended, America became a nation of wealth and excess for anyone who was willing to physically work for it. The era became known as “The Roaring Twenties” and lasted for a little more than 10 years. It was a time of a great industrial revolution in manufacturing, which caused much of the rural population migrating to large cities causing them to grow and boom with success for almost any business. Over those years, Henry Ford’s “Model T” success drew fierce competition from other auto makers, so in May of 1927, he closed all his plants all over the world to spend six months retooling for a new car he called the “Model A” It would wind up costing anyone who wanted one around \$500. The average person in a good job in 1927 worked 9 hour days and 54 hour weeks for a \$24 a week pay check. Who would be willing to do that today which has always underlined that a dollar was worth a

dollar then. The down fall of the dollar more apparent in the late twenties when American farmers were over producing crops for the general need or demand in the market place for exporting which drove the prices down. Even with huge manufacturing success, the general overabundance of everything had a ripple effect in America’s stock market values causing careless unwatched selling of stocks till it crashed in October 1929. Auto sales remained strong up thru this event until 1931 when the orders for new Fords dropped below half of previous years demands. Beginning in the 1930’s because of bad farm practices and a drought, the jet stream across America created an unnatural Dust Bowl blowing top soil dirt high into the skies up thru middle America north into Canada. This on top of stock market crash left multitudes of businesses closing leaving millions without jobs pushing America into the great depression. This forced countless families to venture out to other parts of the country to try to gain back the dignity they had worked so hard to achieve. Many drove their Model A’s loaded down with everything precious they could haul or tie on the outside to take with them. Some left with no more than an old wooden wagon loaded with what worldly things they had pulled by a horse even when it was all they had other than the cloths on their backs. Most of the people from that hard time in America are not with us anymore, but a lot of those old Model A’s are still rolling among us. This short version of a piece of history brings me up to a story of Charlie Dickman and two Model A’s. As I visited with Charlie, it was evident his love for cars and what he did with them over his life was as strong as anyone I have ever interviewed for a story. In his college days he circle track raced and drag raced doing most of the work himself to gain the knowledge as most farm kids do. Today besides farming, he continues to have his fingers in more than one drivable project no matter how long it takes. A few years ago Charlie and his brother inherited a 1930 Model A that their mother had driven in high school. Because of their fond memories of their mom and her car, they couldn’t agree what to do with the car. His brother wanted to restore it to original and Charlie had other ideas of building a street rod out of it. Since Charlie had the experience with building and knowing the cost to do so, he decided to leave mom’s car in its original condition keeping his brother happy and seek one out the same year possible already done as a street rod on the internet. After browsing for a few months Charlie finally connected and visited quite extensively with a guy on E-Bay who was non-committal about telling the selling price. As it turned out Charlie lost with his last minute bid, but only to be called back the next day and have the car offered to him at Charlie’s original bid price. So later that week in 2008 he made the 1000 mile trip south of Nashville, Tennessee to pick up the car. He could not have been more pleasantly surprised as the car was way better quality than the pictures on the internet had

shown. But the best part was that he bought the car for about half what it would have cost to build his mom’s original car the same way as a street rod. When Charlie isn’t busy as he usually is with his farm, he is truly enjoying driving the 1930 Model A as much as he can since the day he brought it home. With Charlie being the fifth owner of the car since it was new, here is a list of what was done to the car before he bought it. The top was chopped 3” and the roof opening filled with a ribbed station wagon roof insert along with the windshield is flushed into the body eliminating a lot of wind noise usually associated with Model A’s. The drive train is a 350 Corvette engine with 350 turbo trans and a mid-80s Corvette rear end. That combined with a complete Pete and Jake 4-bar front end and a heavy 32 Ford front axle make the car a dream to drive down the road. The tilt wheel, heat and air conditioning, along with power brakes only make it better. In order to make the car Charlie’s own style he installed larger 32 Ford head lights and pulled the hood off to show the bling all under. Here’s a question, “How many new cars of today will anyone care about or see 87 years from now? So is this a survivor from a tuff time? I’d say yes, and in a good and enjoyable way for all to see of what once was in a simpler time in *America !!*

