

Choices

By Bob Schmeichel

Over the last six months after I get into my daily “walk about” power walk in the mall to lower my blood pressure, I find myself pondering about many different things I have done in my life time as well as things I still want to achieve. As I walked thru the mall this morning I saw an old farmer with new blue jeans held up by suspenders, and wearing a long sleeved flannel shirt with a green seed corn cap meandering along at a slower pace. I acknowledged his presence respectfully as I walked by as I am sure he may have felt somewhat out of place being there before the stores open. He was probably well over ninety years old which made me wonder about all the things he has seen in his life time. I am referring to changes or choices people continually make thru out their life. I think most people over 50 years of age today, grew up having less, or maybe were a little more frugal with spending, and took care of what they had to make it last. Seeing the technology growing at an explosive rate the last 30 years, you can't help but to notice the younger generations mind set has changed dramatically as far as what is important to them today. Everything today seems to be more throw away and if you want to keep up with the continuing latest technology keeping you in the loop, you have to spend more money. Does it really make your life any more meaningful other than a non verbal connection with no real talking involved?? It seems no one has to remember anything anymore, just look it up on your Smart phone in case you need to know an answer. I am not saying it is a bad thing, it just seems like a growing addiction like a drug and people in general not being able to function without it. I think it is kind of sad that most younger people (under 40) would rather have their face in a smart phone trying to look engrossed with what they are looking at than to make eye to eye contact with anyone in any situation. A few years ago a Catholic nun once expressed to me she felt people are becoming less human because of the focus on cell phones. I commented back to her I felt the same thing when it came to the car hobby as the majority of the younger generations only have interest in their phones. And with the lessening numbers of the younger people who really care about old cars, those of us who have always had interest in the car hobby feel like we are a dying breed. Even with that though there will always be someone with a statement saying, “I remember when---”, and yet the here and now is where we are at with nothing ever staying the same because of continuing changing life choices.

Jack Mills became enthralled with 1956 Ford pickups as a kid in the 50's and 60's after seeing a few at car shows in Rapid City with custom paint jobs. To Jack it was something he would dream of having from that time forward. He always had ideas of what he would do to a truck if he ever got one. Those ideas never went away but grew as time went on and the truck trends changed. After attending college and getting married in 1964 to his wife Jeannine, Jack taught American and world history at Washington High School for 14 years. Even though Jack loved teaching, it really wasn't getting him where he wanted to be at that point in his life. So one of those life choices was made and he went to work for Holcomb Freightliner as a salesperson. He laughingly told me he learned more at that job than all of his college years and teaching ever thought of teaching him. He smiled and said after a few years of the learning curve with “Holcomb University” as he put it, was complete, Jack decided in 1983 to start his own Golf Cart and Trailer businesses from scratch. Getting his feet on the ground while being consumed with running his own businesses, he never really lost the idea of having a 56 Ford pickup, which kind of kept him watching for one where ever his businesses took him. Finally in the mid 90's he found a complete, but fairly rough blue 56 Ford pickup at a Billions car lot on 41st street. He bought the truck and parked it for a few years at his business location while he collected parts that needed replacing and planned out the build process. Finally in 1998 he handed the truck off to Jim

Keyman to do the initial mock up of the drive train and suspension that Jack had chosen for the truck. Jim installed a mid 70's Plymouth Volare torsion bar front suspension to give it lowering abilities and a 350" Chevy engine and trans. The rear end was beefed up with a newer 9" Ford rear end. Jack noted saying he thought this might have been the last build Jim ever did for anyone before he passed away. After the mock up was done, the

rolling truck was handed off to Byron Dose to do all the major body work, final paint along with the total final assembly as still appears today- 18 years later and still looking great. Executive Touch did all the upholstery in the truck utilizing the rear seat out of a Suburban. Dakota Digital Gauges were installed to monitor the engine as well as Vintage Air & Heat to keep it comfortable while cruising down the road. Jack also pointed out that the truck has an original set of vintage Magnesium Halibrand wheels--a highly sought after item for cars no longer available. I guess some dreams or choices are better late than never. After all, the only ones we have to make happy is ourselves as long as it is agreeable with our other half.

