

A Garage Car No Longer

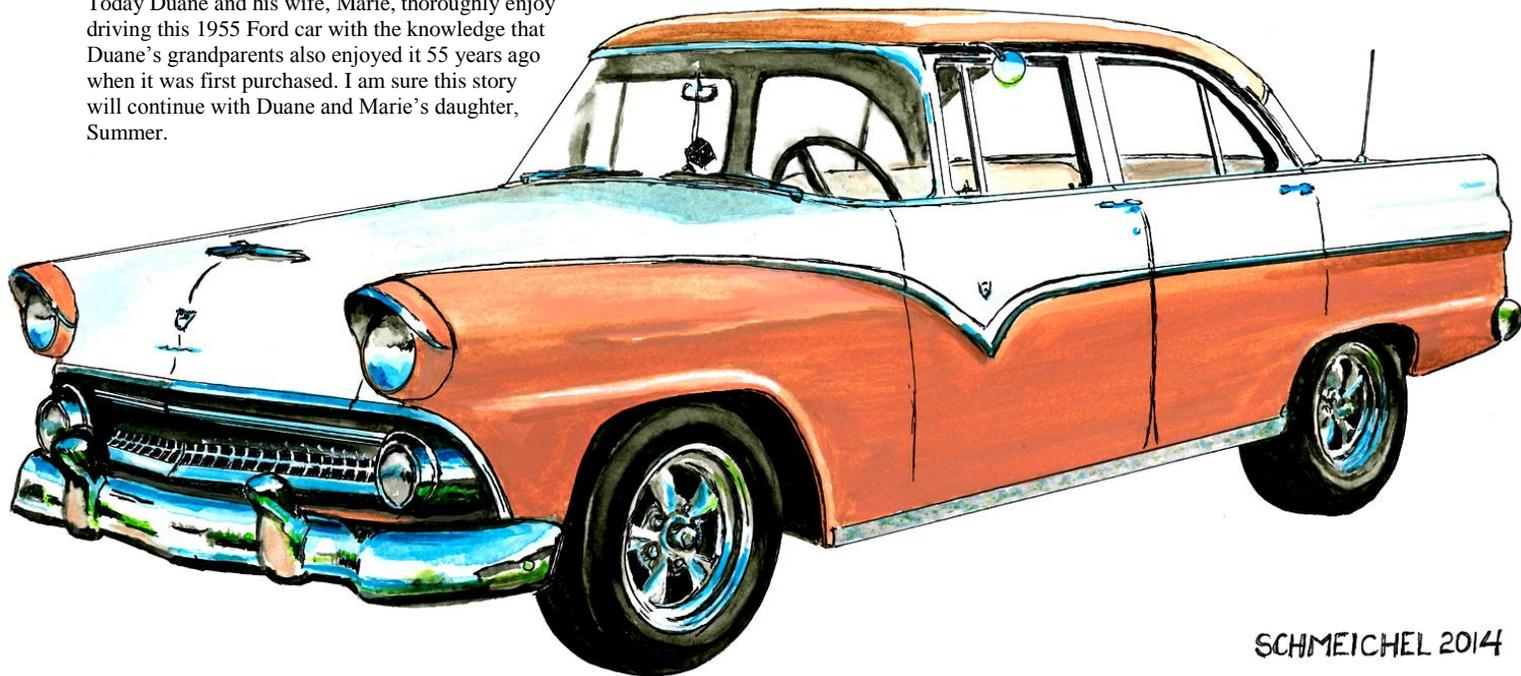
By Bob Schmeichel

Sometimes it seems kind of funny the small things we remember from our younger years in life. I relate to them in a “noun” sort of way, even in my older age, as being a person, place or thing with time relevance. Whatever it was that made an impression on us then, taught us life lessons while they happened and stuck with us forever. These remembered little things in life helped shape us into the driven individuals we are today. Myself being older, from the baby boomer generation, I can honestly say we learned to entertain ourselves with nothing compared to kids today who are bored if they don’t have a smartphone in their hands every moment. I find it kind of sad that there is always such narrow focus of attention constantly like a drug addiction given to something held in your hand that you text with your fingers instead of verbally talking through. Face-to-face social skills are being lost. I wonder how today’s kids would have handled waiting for an opening on a “party-line” phone to verbally talk to someone 50 years ago. I remember thinking my parents were old fashioned when I was a kid, but thinking back 50 to 60 years ago, we were more impressionable growing up with having less and the times being so much more innocent, which made the little things and moments more dear to our hearts. Because of today’s shift of attention and the abundance of information overload, I feel really good about the articles of car club members and the paintings of their rides that I do. I look at my challenge each month as putting down a little bit of history for the children and grandchildren, so their connection to the past is not forgotten in a small sort of way. There is kind of an under lying irony of the my older generation who grew up with very little, and now with some being looked at as borderline hoarders collecting things we would have liked when we were younger but couldn’t afford then. I used to hate history but now I can’t get enough of it, probably because of the freedom of information act followed by technology that is advancing faster than most can comprehend or care about. There is a sad side too because the science part of how we got this technology is not being understood along the way and being lost in the processes of advancements growing ever faster.

I might be narrow minded to say that cars and pickups were a big social connection of my generation, but they were and still are to us today. Back then boys learned at a young age how to work on and maintain whatever they chose to drive, which was projected as a part of their personality when cruising around in it. In high school, boys discovered girls about the same time as cars and the socializing began. The scene was cruising around listening to music on the radio and ending up at a malt shop, or any of the drive-ins to visit and eat something, to a sock hop at school or dance at the coliseum, or to a drive-in movie, to a roller skate or ice skate rink, riding bikes, football and basketball games, to the fair, to the beach or lake, or to a favorite quiet spot to make out for hours under the moon light. It was all pretty much face to face every place you went back then. Today it is the phones that make all the connections for the kids and cars are not a big whoop or as important. Because newer cars are getting more technically advanced all the time as well as being more costly, kids today are engrossed in technology more than four wheels. With things the way they are today and myself being in what I would call a dying breed of car lovers, I’ll cut to the chase and get to this month’s feature car story.

Duane Roger’s grandparents bought a 1955 Ford 4-door sedan in 1959. It was the last car they had and drove it until they both passed away. Duane’s uncle inherited the ‘55 Ford and stored it in a garage for 30 years until 1997. Duane’s uncle, realizing he wasn’t going to do anything with the ‘55 Ford, passed it on to Duane. After getting the car home, Duane tucked it away in the corner of his garage where it sat for another 2 ½ years until the fall of 1999. Duane decided it was finally time to do something with the car that had sat more in a garage than it was driven. He started by taking the interior out, doing some minor rust repair, and converting the car to 12 volts. Next came the removal of the old engine and transmission and the installation of a 351-cubic-inch Ford engine and a C-4 automatic transmission. After the engine and trans were dialed in, he drove the car for a couple years to make sure he had all the bugs out of the car. He found out that a car that has sat in garage for a long period of time can have more deterioration issues than one that is driven. The brake lines, fuel lines and gas tank were all replaced. Once Duane was finally satisfied with the way everything worked, it was taken to Greg’s Restoration in Ellsworth, Minn., for a repaint job of the original colors. After getting the car back home with the outside looking like new again, Duane decided to freshen up the interior. Finding original style and type of material for a 1955 Ford of that era proved to be fruitless, so using other material that was close in appearance and color, the car’s interior was finished soon thereafter.

Today Duane and his wife, Marie, thoroughly enjoy driving this 1955 Ford car with the knowledge that Duane’s grandparents also enjoyed it 55 years ago when it was first purchased. I am sure this story will continue with Duane and Marie’s daughter, Summer.



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