

MY FIRST CARBy Jim the Caddyman

The fall of 1947 found me with a Kansas restricted driver's license at age 14, and a sophomore at my small Alma Kansas high school. Football season was in full swing and at my small height and weight (5ft/110lbs) even in this town, I was not getting much playing time. So, I managed to convince my parents, that I needed a car to keep me busy after school. I have always been a "car nut" and I had gained considerable knowledge by building a motorized bicycle in the spring of 1947 and which we took to Colorado U for summer-school for my parents, and for me to deliver auto parts to a small garage run by WW2 army vets.(another story). I learned by watching and doing and came home for the summer and began to lobby for a car.

Well, as luck would have it, the town's local "Bootlegger" (Kansas was a dry state then) had a '29 Chevy 4dr. sedan that was sitting near his house. (not running and a sad sight indeed) I managed to talk him out of it for a bargain of \$25. (He is laughing in his grave to this day) A fellow classmate of mine had his Father's farm truck and we used a logging chain to tow it home and park it next to our house, where I began my restoration process.

Well, as my funds were limited, I managed to find a battery at the local filling station where I worked part time, and of course, the car came with a crank. I soon had it running, complete with new plugs and points, also license tags and insurance.(tags and insurance, are you kidding me?). So, as some of our readers may remember, Chevys older than 1937s, had much wood in the doors, and roofs of their cars. This well used '29 had the doors that sagged so much that they had to be lifted at least 2" and held that way to be closed. So, as my Cousin had built a "strip-down" runabout out of a 28 Chevy during WW2, and it was a "wow" with his friends, and it had no body, merely the cowl to support the steering column and the hood, radiator, and a frame and 4 wheels and tires, I decided to tear the body off of my 29 and leave the rest including the front seat. I drove it about 8 miles to a nearby town named Paxico, Ks., home of Clark's Junk Yard, where several friends helped me to tear the body apart and leave it behind for scrap. I drove the rest of the car home and secured the seat to the frame retaining the floorboards. The car had mechanical brakes and even though it was now considerably lighter, it still took considerable pressure to stop it. Kansas had no inspection system required for vehicles, but the Kansas Highway Patrol officers would visit the small towns and pull inspections on vehicles that looked like they might be suspect as to safety. My moment of truth came one day, and I had a friend in the right seat. We were directed by the Officer to stop, and as he stood watching us approaching him, at about 25mph, we each reached down to a brake actuating rod running along each side of the frame while I'm pushing the brake pedal to the max, we slid both rear tires and impressed the officer, all the while he was doubled over with laughter as he watched. We passed!

I soon lost interest in the "car" and realized that wintertime would not be a kind to me driving that "thing" I sold it to a former friend and bought a neat little 31 Chevy coupe (movin' on up!). And those are the facts!