

MY FIRST CAR – by Art Midgetteat the age of 17 - 1963 Chevy II- 4 door, 6 cylinder with 2 speed Powerglide

At the age of 17 and a junior in high school, I continued to nag my father about getting a car. The family only had one car, a 1964 Ford Galaxy that my father used every day to get to work. He eventually called a friend of his that managed a grocery store in Norfolk and I was hired as a bag boy. For those of you who have no idea what a bag boy is, it was the person that was stationed at the end of the checkout conveyer belt who was actually trained to put your purchased items in (yes – doubled paper bags) so nothing was crushed or broken and the bags were easy to handle and then YES – we took it to your car and put it in the car for you. It is a job that became extinct many years ago.

Enough of that - SO, I saved my meager \$1.25 an hour wages from working after school and weekends and eventually had \$700 dollars saved. My father took me to the Cadillac dealer on Monticello Avenue in Norfolk where one of his brothers worked part time selling used cars. My uncle gave my father the keys and I was introduced to a gently used 1963 Chevy II, 4 door sedan with bench seats, bronze with cream top, 194ci/6 cylinder with 'Hi-Thrift Powerglide' 2 speed automatic and a little over 30,000 miles on the odometer.



Not the actual car but same colors

Now as a 17 year old, I was not terribly impressed since I had hoped for something a bit more sporty but my father paid half of the \$650 cost of the car, title, taxes and all of the insurance so it was really hard to complain since it left me with money for gas and to make those special modifications that I was already planning. So I motored off with my new used Chevy II – 4 door, 6 cylinder 2 speed Powerglide, with grand plans for cruising and adding things to the

car as my 'bag boy' pay would allow over time.

There was the one repaint at Earl Scheib on 21st street in Norfolk where I selected the color ruby maroon from the next level up color options at \$49.95 instead of the standard \$29.95 colors. I dropped the car off one morning, took a bus home, walked to school then caught the bus the next morning at 6:30am, picked up the car at 8am and was on to school again in time for home room.

Then came the addition of chrome wheels at Pep Boys on Little Creek road in Norfolk and of course, I had them reverse the tires so the white walls were on the inside to be completely cool. Later with the help of my father, we went to what was then called an auto junk yard on military highway where we found two black vinyl bucket seats from a 1963 Buick skylark that had caught fire, but no damage was done to the seats. So for \$50 we took them home in the trunk of the 64 Galaxy. One Saturday afternoon later and we had them cleaned up and installed in the Chevy II followed by my new black shag carpet remnant from Sears & Roebuck that I had cut to fit. Later came the black vinyl dye for the back seat and vinyl door panels, wood grained adhesive backed vinyl sheets that I added as inserts on the dash board and doors, the fake wooden steering wheel and of course the new wonder of the times, the 8 Track Tape Player installed for \$29.95 at Tape City on Granby Street. All set and now too broke to actually go anywhere, but still having lots of fun.

I kept that car until I got my first real full time job and traded it in on a new 1970 Nova. The very next day, someone ran a stop sign and we crashed into each other. When they towed the car to the Chevrolet dealer, I saw the old 1963 sitting on the lot for sale with no dents.





Not the actual engine, but the same type

Hindsight is useless, but at that moment I really missed that ruby maroon 1963 Chevy II, 194ci/6 cylinder with 'Hi-Thrift Powerglide' 2 speed automatic.

As a matter of fact, I still do.