



Shelby Life Article

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My First Ride in a Ford

by John Logan



The year was 1945 and the war with Germany had just ended. I was 11, my brother Ken was 17 and we lived in Topeka, Kansas. We had no family car during the war. Our father sold his 1938 Buick in 1942 because he couldn't get tires and assumed that with rationing it would get worse. We had a neighbor who worked on cars in his garage and I spent a lot of time watching, listening and fetching tools. Ken was not mechanical.

Our father taught Ken how to drive the Buick. Ken was determined to buy a car of his own, so after searching for several months, he found an ad in a Kansas City newspaper for a 1923 Ford Model "T" for \$50. The ad said it was in great shape!

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My First Ride *(Continued)*

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The next morning, we grabbed some sandwiches and headed to the nearby highway to hitchhike about 80 miles. We told our mother that we were going to look at a car, but didn't tell her where. Hitchhiking was common in those days because things were safer and there was a shortage of gasoline and running cars. Luckily, we were picked up in minutes. The driver was headed to Kansas City, so he dropped us off right at the Model "T".

When we approached the house, it was sitting in the driveway. The body was violet green with vivid yellow wheels. It looked as if it had been painted with a brush – or maybe a broom. It wouldn't have been out of place in a parade with clowns riding and dancing around it.



It was a touring car but the rear half of the body had been cut off and a box added. "T" touring cars had a fake driver's door so it had gone from a three-door touring to a one-door roadster.

After the owner showed us around the car and we honked the horn and kicked the tires a few times, he took Ken out for a driving lesson.

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in a Ford (Continued)

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"Ts" are different than the Buick Ken had briefly driven. In case you are not familiar with driving a "T," here is a short lesson. There are three pedals on the floor, a large lever next to the fake driver's door and two small levers on the steering column. Pushing the left pedal all the way down puts the transmission in low gear. Allowing the pedal to release to the top puts the transmission in high gear. Holding the pedal half way between low and high is neutral. The vehicle can also be placed in neutral while setting the parking brake. This feature allows manual cranking of the engine without running over the cranker. The center pedal is reverse. Holding the left pedal half-way down and pressing the reverse pedal, backs the car up. The right-hand pedal is the brake. Levers on the steering column are spark advance on the left and throttle on the right.



Ken had a 20-minute lesson on driving the "T" before he decided to buy it.

Not enough! After trading money and paperwork, we started home with no license plate, no insurance, no tools, no food and not enough driving experience, but plenty of youthful fearlessness.

While driving through Kansas City during the 5 p.m. rush hour, Ken struggled. He discovered that this "T" had a very large left hand turning circle after driving over a curb onto a sidewalk while randomly pressing pedals to stop.

When we got to the two-lane highway toward home it started to rain. That's when we realized there was no windshield wiper and no side curtains.

Ken drove off the highway and across a field to a farmer's shed until the rain stopped. By the time we got back on the highway, it was dark so Ken found the switch and turned on the lights. About a half-hour later the lights dimmed and went out. We didn't know why but the engine just purred along. Next, steam started coming out the radiator cap. There was a leak somewhere. We had to stop three times at large puddles to fill the radiator with a hubcap we found. Due to the low battery, the starter wouldn't work but the crank in front of the car did. The "T" had reliability through redundancy!

We got home at about 1 a.m. Of course, our parents were very concerned because they didn't know where we went. Since Ken was the oldest, he caught all the blame. Our father came out to see the car and said, "What are you going to do with that old thing?"

A couple of years later my brother went into the Air Force and gave me the Ford Model "T."
"Wow! My own car!"

John Logan,

Retired

Car Product Development



Shelby American Automobile Club—Motor City Region

Dedicated to the preservation, care, history and **ENJOYMENT** of the automobiles manufactured by Shelby American and Ford Motor Company, as well as all Ford Powered Vehicles

Monthly SAAC-MCR Meetings,
First Thursday of every month,
6:30 pm at;
Little Daddy's, 39500 Woodward Ave.,
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

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2020 Calendar of Events

November

5 Monthly SAAC-MCR Meeting 6:30 PM at Little Daddy's 39500 Woodward Ave. (South of Long Lake Rd.) Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

December

3 Monthly SAAC-MCR Meeting 6:30 PM at Little Daddy's 39500 Woodward Ave. (South of Long Lake Rd.) Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

