



My Model A Story

By Gary Price

The year was 2013 and my wife, Diane, and I had been empty nesters for a couple of years. We had successfully raised four daughters and seen them all through high school and on to college. Everyone was “launched”! We had also purchased a vacation home in the town of Roslyn, WA and had begun to make improvements to it in order to make it a better vacation rental so that we could enjoy some extra income.

In August 2013, we were spending the late summer at our Roslyn home decorating the garage, hanging garage door openers and so forth. Along the way that week, Diane mentioned that she thought it would be a good idea for me to get a hobby and find a group to spend some time with. I had been working at Microsoft for about 20 years at that point and didn’t have a lot of social connections outside of work. She is usually right when she suggests something, so I started to give it some thought that week.

While we were in Roslyn, I noticed an “old car” with a For Sale sign in one of the yards of the town. It intrigued me and I got to thinking about restoring an old car and becoming part of a car club. After driving by the car several times during the week, I sprung the idea on Diane. She first had a good laugh as she viewed me more as a software engineer rather than a car enthusiast. Eventually she came around to the idea. Turns out, that “old car” was a 1931 Model a Slant Windshield Town Sedan that belonged to the owner of the local towing company.

The good news is that the car did run although it had lots of “non-factory” parts (Chevy horn, unknown vintage carburetor) and had a lot of rust, bald tires, a very worn interior and hood liner, a dilapidated radiator etc.) But it came at a really good price and the owner was happy to tow it over to my driveway in Bellevue at no charge!

[As a side note, I was drawn to a 1931 Model A because my father, Jim Price, owned a '31 Coupe for a very short time in the mid-1930s. My father was in his early 20s and still lived with his parents and sisters at their home in Erlanger, KY. He was manager of the local A&P store and beginning to earn a living, so he bought a used '31 Model A coupe. He proudly drove it home to show it off. My Grandpa took a look and asked if he could take it for a spin. My Dad threw him the key and off Grandpa went down the road to return about an hour later tugging on a cow. “Where’s the car?”, Dad asked. “Traded for this fine cow which we need far more than a car!”, replied Grandpa. Friction ensued! Grandma was furious and asked for the return of the Model A. It was not to be. I understand the cow was a big hit, though, for the next several years]

Once the Model A arrived from Roslyn and was unceremoniously dropped off at our home in Bellevue, Diane and I took it for a spin. Diane, gifted in operating standard transmissions, took the wheel and off we went.... And went... and went! We lived on a pretty good-sized hill, the hand brake was completely seized, and even standing on the foot brake didn’t really slow us down much. She finally did get it to a stop by the local Shell station. After our hearts slowed down, we thought it best to go home. Too bad, it didn’t restart Eventually we did get it to turn over once again and made it back up the hill to our house with chock blocks firmly planted behind the rear wheels. It was about then that I realized I needed to find someone to help me restore the Model A and a quick web search led me to the Evergreen A’s!

Once I joined the club, I had a visit from the Model A Doctors who gave me a list of issues that needed to be addressed and wished me well! After I started on the list, they visited again to help me change out a very old, leaky water pump. This involved a benzene torch and a lot of twisting and turning on some very old studs. We did finally get the water pump changed and the only real damage was burning off about half of Lee Thomas’s mustache with the torch. “Yeah, it’s lit”, I remember Lee saying ...

I decided that I had a bigger job than I could handle to restore the car with occasional visits from the Model A Doctors and others from the Evergreen A’s so I called in professional help using services from local mechanics, painters, glass shops, brake shops, Snyder’s, Bratton’s, Bert’s Antique Auto Parts, Lebaron Bonney Upholstery, Discount Tire, among others. I also had a few more visits from the Model A Doctors and other club members to help correct issues that I had either caused or created. All in all, it took about 5 years from when we bought the car in 2013 to 2018 to get the car on the road and “fairly” reliable.

I enjoyed the restoration process although it was a long one as I was working full-time and my wife and I moved about half-way through the process. In 2018, I was proud to have won the award for “Timeless Classic” at the Microsoft Car Show which was one of the first places that I took it when it was “finished”. I also received a “Bronze Award” for the work when I participated in the Restorer’s Class at the Northwest Regional Meet in 2019. I look forward to keeping it on the road, or at least by the side of it, for years to come. Many thanks to all my Evergreen A friends for their encouragement and assistance to restore this 1931 Ford Model A Town Sedan!