



How I Got My First Model A and Why I Wanted One

By: John E. Young, Jr.

I grew up in a three-room shack in the middle of the woods in rural NE Alabama. We didn't have electricity or plumbing but we had lots of kids including my four older sisters. My dad had a friend, Gordon Cook, who had a son, Ted, whose age was somewhere in the middle of my four older sisters. At some time in the early 1950's Ted got old enough to drive and his dad bought him a used car, a Model A. The car was red, had no top and no fenders or running boards; a speedster.

Ted liked girls and my family had plenty of them so on several occasions he drove his Model A to our house to show off his new car and to impress my sisters. I don't know if my sisters were impressed, but I sure was. From that day on I wanted a Model A Ford.

It took me lots of years but I finished high school, served four years in the navy, worked my way through college and by 1970 had a pretty good job as a superintendent for a construction company in Jackson, Mississippi. I had met a cute little girl while attending college at Auburn University and working in the Women's dining hall and shortly after graduating from college I convinced her to marry me.

After marriage I was still thinking about that Model A but other things got in the way, a baby, a house, cars and general household expenses. I continued to think

about my Model A until I retired in 2008 then I got real serious about it. At that time, Anna and I lived in New Jersey not too far from Hershey, Pennsylvania. Most old car enthusiasts are well aware that each year Hershey holds a big old-car event and there are lots of antique cars for sale at this event.

With my Model A fever increasing I began attending these events in Hershey for a few years and looking at the Model A cars that were on display there. At that time, I had never driven a Model A; in fact, I had never even sat in one.

I have extra long legs for a person of my height. I also had a problem with my left knee as a result of an incident when I was a kid. In 1999 I had that knee replaced with an artificial mechanical knee and along with the new knee and the scar tissue from several operations I cannot bend my left leg more than about 90 degrees. These two conditions make sitting in a Model A somewhat difficult but I still wanted one even after I struggled to sit in one in Hershey.

At sometime around 2010 Anna and I decided to move to the Seattle area. Our son had taken a job there and since I was retired and Anna was considering retirement we determined that soon we would make that move so I stopped looking for my Model A in New Jersey and Hershey and decided that it would be best to buy it in my new home state of Washington so I wouldn't have to tow it across the country when we moved.

Anna and I visited our son a few times and on one of the visits decided to start the search for our new home. In the course of our searching we found one that we liked and very much and especially liked the location so we bought it even though we were still a few years from making the move. We bought it and just rented it out.

In 2012 we finally made the big move and lived with our son while we did a total renovation on our house. While we lived with our son I would get up early every morning and go to the local McDonalds at Fairwood, get and read the local paper and sip a couple of cups of coffee. At that same McDonalds there was always a group of "old" men sitting in the back telling tall tales and playing cards. I often greeted these old fogies and one of them chatted with me a few times. One morning the conversation got into Model A's and I told him that I was interested in buying one. He said, "I can help you do that." I asked how he could do that and he cleared his throat and said, "I am a member and past president of the local Model A Club." His name is Mike Kelley and, as it turns out, he lives just around the corner from the house Anna and I had purchased and currently live in.

In my conversation with Mike I told him about my long legs and artificial knee problem. He told me that some of the A's could have the seat moved back for more leg room. Then one morning he came in and told me that he had found my car!

Mike scheduled a visit with the car owner in Lacey and one morning after coffee he took me there. On the way he explained that the owner had purchased the car down in Big Pine, California in 2008 and tried to piece meal restore it then finally he got one of the club members, John Hash, to do the full restoration. John is very good at restoring these cars and had done his usual excellent job on this one. In the process of an off-body restoration he added signal lights, changed to a 12-volt system with an alternator, changed to an EZ-Steer steering column, installed all new shocks, New tires, completely new paint job, completely new upholstery, changed to a 1932 transmission with 1939 gears and added a new overdrive. And; the owner of the car was 6' 2" tall and had two artificial hips so John had moved the seat back providing very good leg room! And, that is just a partial list of all that John did to the car.

Rich was a member of the Evergreen Club as well as the Galloping Gerties. He also had another collector car, a PT Cruiser with high performance turbo engine. He kept both his collector cars in the family two-car garage and he and his wife had to park outside. This arrangement did not sit well with his wife and apparently, she had finally laid down her decree: Rich could get rid of that Model A or she was leaving. One of them had to go. Rich made a bad decision and sold the A to me. Mike and I still chuckle about that decision today.

One of the fun things that Mike and I still laugh about today is that we visited Rich twice to look at the car before I decided to buy it and each time we looked at it, as we were starting to open one of the doors, he would always promptly say, "you don't have to slam the door!"

Rich was going to advertise the A for sale and ask \$25,000 for it so I thought he might just take a little less if he could sell it to me without having to go through the advertising process so I offered him \$22,000. He immediately said "no, the price is \$25,000." I had been in sells for many years and had read a lot about it. One of the things I had read and strongly believed in was that when things were offered for sale neither the buyer or seller should agree on the initial offered price without some negotiating. If the asking price was accepted without any negotiating both parties would always regret the decision. The buyer would forever be reminding himself that he likely could have paid less if only he had asked and negotiated. The seller would always be thinking that since the buyer accepted his price without any

questions then he likely could have gotten more if only he had asked for more up front. The bottom line is, always negotiate!

After Rich refused my first offer I told him that I would think about it and on the way home Mike and I stopped at a restaurant for lunch. At lunch he asked me what I would do if Rich refused to take less than \$25,000. I smiled and told him that I would pay the \$25,000.

The next day I called Rich and made another offer of \$23,000 and with a little more sternness in his voice he said, “the price is \$25,000!” I paid \$25,000 and have been very happy that I did rather than let the car slip away to someone else. The likelihood of my finding such a restored car that fit my needs as well at this price is very small.