



Cars

by Jim Willis

My

My Cars

By Jim Willis circa 1929
Written June/July 2006

Introduction.

Should I call a team of horses and wagon a car? Probably not, but it is almost certain it was the first type of transportation ever given to me. In 1929 my parents did not have a car and I don't think my grandparents did either. Our cars really help to memorialize our lives. Early cars were only looked on as old clunkers that furnished transportation. Little did we think that some of them would really become classics. When researching old photo albums to look for pictures, it became apparent that none were available for some. For example, the 1931 Model A Ford that Larry Sandifer and I bought was never put into a picture. Others did not show up either. But in doing research, some photos were borrowed from others to show what kind of a car it was. This age of digital photography makes this possible. I will try to give photo credit. In the thirties and forties, most of my friends knew the make, model and year of every car around. And most models changed every year. And with every car there will be some kind of story to be told. I never worked on cars to the point of changing oil, but I did like to tinker. Because of this liking, I decided to take Mechanical Engineering in college. This later changed to Civil. Looking and thinking about each car brings up all kinds of memories. All of this story is taken from memory. Come take this drive with me down memory lane.

My Parents cars.

The first car I remember was jacked up on blocks in the garage where we were living in Paonia. I was probably four or five. I never rode in the car, but I do remember that one time some people came and took the car away. Only a few years before my Mother passed away did I ask her about that car. I think it was about a 1928 or 29 Chevrolet. She told me that the car was in the garage. It could not be driven and she thought the people had come to take it because it was being repossessed. Other cars owned that I drove a lot when visiting and not otherwise described here, were their 1946 Chevrolet, their 1959 Dodge (picture included) and their 1972 Chevrolet. An interesting thing about the Dodge was that the selection of gears was done by push buttons in the middle of the steering wheel. It was convenient, but that device did not last. The 1972 Chevrolet was the last they owned and Mom sold that car in 1993. They kept their cars for a long time.

1934 Four Door Chevrolet

My parents bought this car in 1936 or 37. It was black. There are a couple of black and white photos that do not clearly show the car, so here also is a photo that shows what this car was like. We took that car a few places. The one photo shows us camping or picnicking at Curecanti Creek with the Prontos. The two girls are my sister Muriel (or Fern) and the Pronto girl. The other photos shows Dad with Fern standing on the running board. We went all the way to Yellowstone Park in this car. My two sisters and I occupied the back seat and when we weren't behaving properly we were fighting. It must have driven our folks crazy. I believe it was in this car that we returned through Denver and bought our dog Mitzi on that trip. We returned home over Kebler Pass. Kebler was a dirt road of clay. And it was raining and we slid all



1934 Chevrolet, Dad and Fern



34 Chev with Muriel and Pronto girl at Curicanti



1934 Chevrolet-Photo from San Diego Auto Museum



1938 Chevrolet-Photo from San Diego Auto Museum

over the road. I believe that Dad even got a big blister on his rear end from that.

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1938 Four Door Chevrolet

This car was purchased in 1939. It was Green. Cars came in about three colors then. Black, Green and Blue. This was the car we went all the way to Wisconsin in, in 1939. My mom had grown up in Butternut and had not been back to see her mother. We visited all the relatives along the way, staying with uncles, aunts and cousins through Kansas and Illinois. We went through the Badlands of South Dakota and through Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Boy do I remember going over the big Mississippi River at Hannibal, Missouri. Again we fought a bit as kids, but we probably got along ok.

The photos show the car as it was in 1946 when we again drove it to Wisconsin. The one photo, dark green, is not the car, but it is what the car was like. This time was right after WWII and tires were very scarce, so we tied old ones onto the trunk just in case. Muriel and I were both 16 now and could drive so we took turns. Dad did not go with us, but later met us in Chicago. One night we could not find a motel. It was raining pretty hard, so we pulled under the canopy of a gas station and tried to sleep. Four of us had a hard time.

This is the car I learned to drive. My dad started teaching me at about age 14 or 15. I got my drivers license on my birthday the day I was 16. It was a very special time. The experience and joy you get when you get your drivers license has not changed. Kids still get a special feeling of freedom or something. Dad used the car to deliver groceries at the store and I was delivering before I ever had a license. I also played football and basketball. When I was a junior, our team had to go to Gunnison to play. That was about 100 miles through mountain country with narrow crooked roads. I was only 15. But some ones car broke down and the six expected to ride together did not have a ride. I asked dad if I could take the car. After all the coach would be riding with us. He reluctantly said yes. I will never forget at one point on the trip, I must have scared Coach Ike Woods pretty good, because he said, "Where did you get your drivers license, Montgomery Ward?" I did not tell him I did not have one yet.

I really used the car a lot. I even rigged a spotlight for it that could be plugged into the cubby hole. After all it was fun to go "bushwacking", a term used to turn on the light when you found young couples smooching.

Another time in winter 1946, I took the car to Crawford with five of the basketball team. I did have a license. On the way home on this very narrow road a car was stopped on the top of a small incline. There was not enough room for two cars, The crash bent the left front end pretty good. I had put a steering knob on the wheel that cut my face under my eye. Those are not used anymore. Since it was right after the war, parts were very hard to find. The car sat for several months before enough parts could be found to fix it. But in the town of Paonia, one could do pretty well without a car.

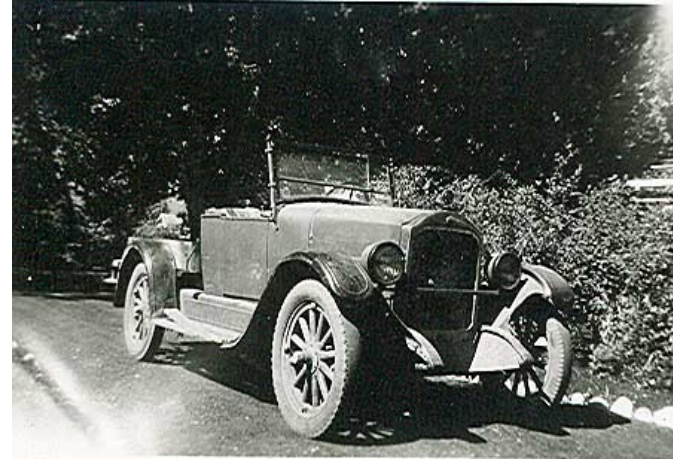
When I graduated from High school in 1947, I took the car to Fort Collins with Harold "Fig" Newton and Homer Griffin. We were looking for a place to stay and to look at school at Colorado A&M.

1927 Star

Dad bought this old pickup truck from Frank Allen. Frank was the school janitor. The purchase was probably made in 1946. Dad then modified the pickup to construct a bed that was good for setting boxes of groceries on and to use for delivery. Since I was also the delivery boy, I got to use the car. We would get friends together, take the car to a steep hill and then get out and push the car up the hill to help



38 Chev and cousins Bill, Jim, Bob, Jack in 1939



1927 Star



38 Chev, Wisconsin 1946, me and Uncle Arnie Timm



1927 Star-Grille

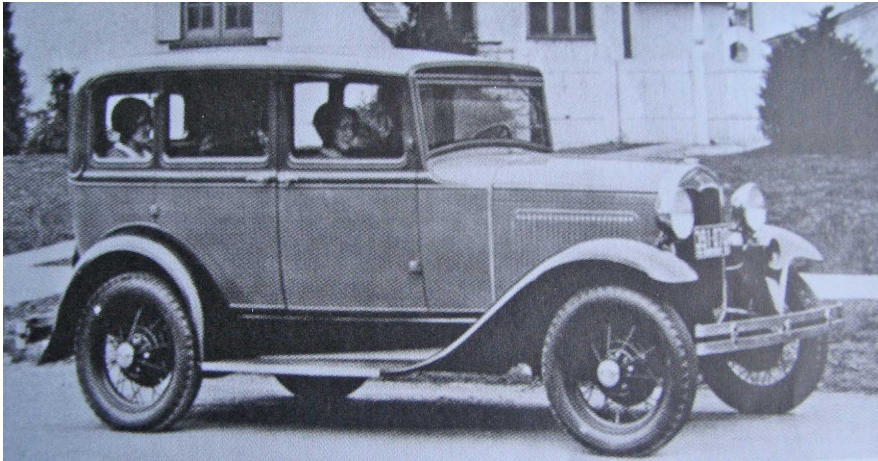
strengthen our legs for the upcoming football season. It is a wonder it⁶ at one time did not roll backwards over us. It was a pretty steep hill. This car was manufactured for only a couple years as were cars like the Durrant. Many only were in business for two or three years. This car had a funny problem. There is a gear on the bottom of the distributor that keeps the timing in sync. But this gear would wear the mesh on the gears so it would not function. Out of sync meant the engine would not start. Only one person in town knew this car well enough to fix it and he had to have the proper gear part. I am pretty sure his name was Duberely and one of my classmates, Bob Duberely's, uncle. This car would be a classic today. Not too many were manufactured. The photos do not show the car as it originally was. The top over the cab was a soft top. But this was the car.

1931 Model A Fordor Ford

The word fordor was used for these cars. Fig Newton had a 1930 Model A Ford. He was a year older and had this for his car in college. This is a photo of his car taken on one of our Sunday outings to Kebler Pass. Homer Griffin had the old family 1929 Chevrolet. We spent many times in these cars. We would typically help with gas. But it was nice to have friends with cars. Ernie Fluallen and his brother also had a Model A. I believe it was 1930. When we were sophomores, Ernie took three of us to the Basketball championship games in Delta. Ernie did not have a license then, and when he rolled through a stop sign he got a ticket. We slept in his car rather than going all the 30 miles back to Paonia for the night. At the championship game (Paonia won) Larry Sandifer was not feeling well and in fact was very sick. Then next day I went to see him and there was a sign on the door "Scarlet Fever". I had already had that malady, but I always wondered who else might have contacted it that night.

Larry Sandifer and I had our bicycles at school in Fort Collins. At vacation time we would catch a ride home with someone. Most of the time it was with Fig in his Model A. The ride was about 400 miles and in the winter it was pretty cold. We would have five in that little car. There was not much room for luggage and it was normal to wear most of the clothes we had with us both because of space and to keep warm. To conserve gas, it was typical to kick the car out of gear and coast down hills. One time going down Monarch Pass with lots of snow on the ground, we were catching up with the highway patrol. Boy, they barely got the car back in gear and slowed enough to keep from running into that patrolman. Also on one of these trips we had a friend from Hotchkiss, Jimmie Beal. He was a very good Piano player. We stopped at Fairplay for food on our way back to school after New Years. It was a pretty quiet day. The town was probably hung over from New Years eve. We did have a beer and Jimmie started playing the piano. Before long the locals were showing up, buying us all the drinks you can imagine. How we ever got the last 150 miles to school I don't know, but I was not driving and I doubt if anyone was.

When we were Juniors, we did not have a ride home for Thanksgiving, so Larry and I decided to buy our own car. We bought a 4 door 1931 Model A ford. It was gray and had 16 inch wheels. It also had a few holes in the wooden floorboards, so it was cool. It cost us \$75 , and we sold our bicycles and did what we could to scrape enough money together to buy the car. I never took a photo of this car. It was just an old one that was transportation. But here is a photo of a similar car. The photo shows wheels that were original size. Ours had the modified 16 inch ones. They rode better and were cheaper to buy. We found out this car had three teeth missing on the flywheel. So when it was cold, and it was most of this time around Thanksgiving, the car would slowly turn over when starting until the three teeth lined up with the starter and then all the starter would do was whir. We would have to put the car in gear, push it to get it to turn over so the teeth were where the car would start. Just a little momentum would carry it past this spot. We only took two long trips in this car. It was to go home Thanksgiving and at Christmas. We had six in this car, but we did ok and we got home for vacation.



1931 Model A Ford-Photo Model A Buyers Guide



Mom and Dad in front of their 1959 Dodge



Fig Newton's M1930 Model A on Kebler Pass

1938 Two Door Chevrolet

In early 1949 we had returned to Fort Collins to start the winter quarter. But we had a very good time over Christmas. We had driven the Model A home to Paonia and now were back. While relaxing on Sunday afternoon, I said to Larry, "Let's quit school and go to California". It was just a thought, but he said "ok lets do that". So we talked and the next day decided to withdraw from school. But we needed a different car. We traded the Model A in on a Blue 1938 Chevrolet. The chevy probably was because of my parents experience with theirs. It cost \$350.00. We did not have enough to pay cash so we financed it. Neither Larry or I were 21, so we had to get someone to sign for us. John Probasco from Olathe did that. We made the payments on time so it was never a problem. Our parents were disappointed. Mine did not say anything, but later they said how upset they were. We were in our Junior year.

We drove through the Colorado mountains, through Utah and through Nevada in January 1950. It was snow, cold and not really very nice. We stayed for a time in Reno and then left for California towards the end of the day. It was still snowing. We went up over Donner Pass, still snowing, the snow turned to rain on top, and we went in to Auburn, California and stayed for the night. It was raining when we went to bed, but in the morning the sun was out. It had suddenly turned into springtime. Grass was green, flowers and trees were in bloom and I saw orange trees for the first time ever. I had heard about summer in California in the winter, but only on the news. There was no TV in color. This was possibly the most impressive thing that has ever happened to me.

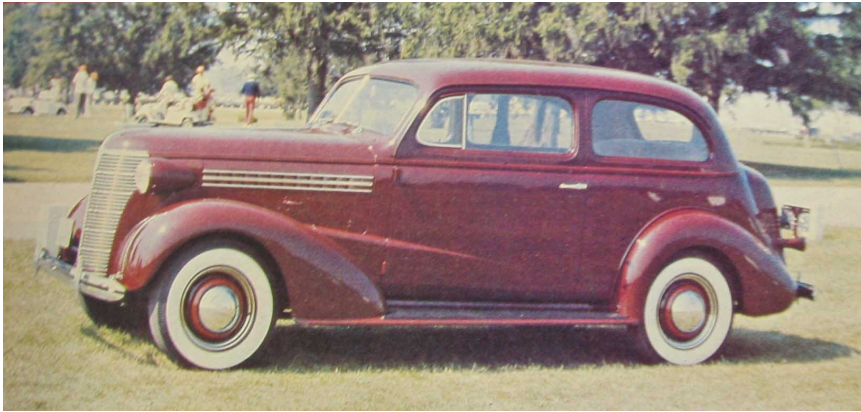
We went on into San Francisco. We thought we were good drivers, but we got on the north side of Market street. For the first time ever we saw street stop and go signs that a loud bell clanged and a big sign moved up or down on a post that said "STOP or GO". But that wasn't the worst. Half of the streets had no traffic control and it was a panic to try to maneuver around those busy streets. We made it to Redwood City to find Larry's brother Roe. He took us in. We then looked for jobs, Larry finding one as an apprentice plumber, and me tying bundles of cardboard boxes in Burlingame. We drove that 38 Chevrolet all around the San Francisco and bay area. Paul Tegrotenhuis came to visit. .

1934 Ford V-8 Roadster

While both working, we needed another car for transportation to work. We (Larry and I) found this 34 Ford Roadster. It was a neat car, not very nice, but neat. It was a faded blue and the top was terrible. It also burned a lot of oil. But it did the job. We bought some canvas and actually made a top. That helped on those rainy days. I personally used this car to drive to work. Little did we know the value of this roadster. It probably cost us about \$100. It became a car highly used for hotrods. We knew nothing of that. The only picture of that car shows the 38 Chevrolet with Larry Sandifer and Paul TeGrotenhuis shaking hands. You only see the radiator grill on the 34 Roadster. Here also though, is a picture of a restored Roadster and what ours might have looked like when new. Just imagine a nice shiny blue one. We owned this car in 1950.

1947 Buick

As Christmas time approached in 1950, we got anxious to go back to Colorado to visit family. By now we thought we needed a better car to make the trip, so we traded in the 38 Chev and the 34 Roadster and bought a rather nice 47 Buick. I believe it was a two door Roadmaster



1938 Chevrolet, but Faded Light Blue



Paul TeGrotenhuis and Larry Sandifer in front of 1938 Chev and 1934 Ford Roadster



1934 Ford Roadster-Photo SD Auto Museum(faded blue)



1947 Buick

We drove back to Colorado for Christmas. Bob Read was going to be¹⁰ drafted. He wanted to visit his brother in Berkeley so we offered him a ride. Soon out of Colorado, we got the idea that we should visit Mexico, so we turned directly south and down through El Paso Texas. We had very little money, so when it came to renting a motel room, we took the cheapest we could find, and then all three of us slept in the same double bed. Damn, some of the things that pop up when you are remembering cars. We went on into Mexico and to the town of Chihuahua. None could speak Spanish, but we got by by pointing. We drove back through Los Angeles and visited Larry's sister. Finally we were back to work in Northern California. Bob Read visited with us a while and with his brother. He was drafted and went into the army and to Korea where unfortunately he was killed in action. Larry and I both applied to go to flight school in the Air Force, were accepted and put on a waiting list. We were never called.

Larry and I had helped his brother Roe build a new home in Menlo Park. This house had an extra bedroom, so they rented it to us. We did pay nominal room and board. This was ok until they needed the room for another baby. We moved to another place in Menlo Park. Larry then needed to go back to Colorado. His girlfriend, Helen, was the influence. He married her later that year in Colorado. At that time I moved to a room and board place in Burlingame. I lived at a place where a young Civil Engineer was living. I saw what he was doing, going to work, and doing the type of work I wanted to do. So it was time to go back to college. I had the Buick myself now; it was sold and a ride back to Colorado was caught with this Engineer. He owned a 38 Chevrolet. So when it was making a lot of noise, I offered to help him adjust the tappets. It worked fine, but he later told me we probably tightened them too much because the valves got burned and he had to have a major overhaul of the engine.

1949 Pontiac

I never owned another car through college. After graduation, I got a short time contract driving a brand new 52 Chevrolet to California. New cars would be driven from Detroit, partway across the country to Denver, and then on to California. It was cheap transportation costs for those that owned the car, and it was also cheap transportation for me to my new job in San Francisco at the Naval Shipyard at Hunter's point. Then I went to Navy OCS in Rhode Island, and to be stationed at the shipyard in Long Beach. It was time to get married and again a car was needed. I was getting married in Denver and I bought the first car of my own. But even then, I had to borrow money. This 49 Pontiac was a nice car, but on my pay it was hard to come up with a down payment. A fellow officer, Jack Lynch, had some savings and was able to make me a loan for the down payment. That was so helpful and it is something I never forgot. This was the car we moved to Long Beach with. All of our belongings fit. Two years later when I got out of the Navy, they still fit. We loaded everything into the car, and went to Colorado to visit family. On the way across Arizona, we hit a wind storm. At one spot the road was covered with dirt and snow. You could not see the snow, but it spun us around, off the road and into the ditch. I thought we were stuck, but the wind was blowing so hard, I put it into reverse and backed right up onto the highway and were able to continue on our way. We spent a year in Berkeley where I attended graduate college, then took a job in San Diego. By now we had to have a trailer to help us move. The only photo of the 49 Pontiac shows it with the trailer and our move to San Diego. We kept this car until the late 50's.

1951 Hillman Minx Convertible.

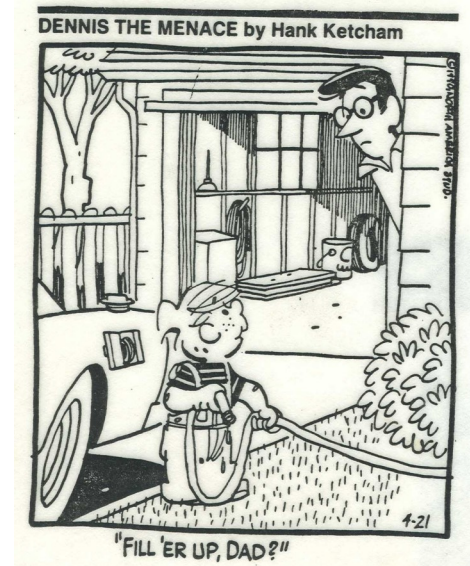
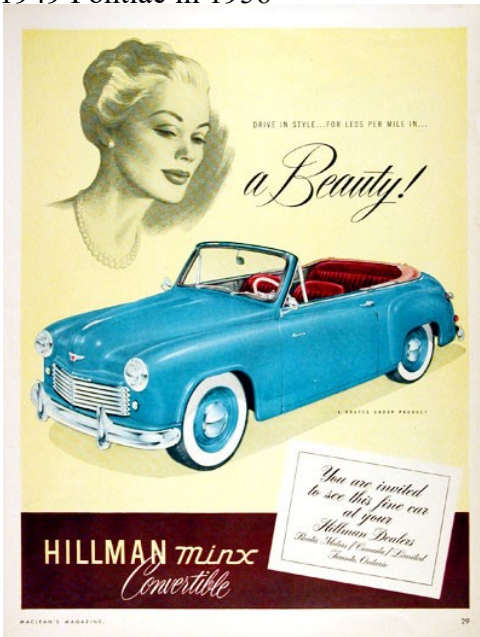
When Mark was born in 1957 and we moved to a new home in early 1958, another car was needed. We found this Red convertible Hillman



1949 Pontiac in 1956



!951 Hillman Minx-Photo SD Auto Museum(like ours)



Minx. It became our beach car. At that time we were going to the beach¹² quite a bit. You could throw all kinds of beach gear in the car with the top down. And I used it to drive to work in downtown San Diego. I worked for Tom Atkinson in the Spreckels Building. There are a couple pictures of a Hillman Minx like ours, but neither is. Ours was red and not quite as shiny as this one.

One Saturday evening we were going to dinner with friends. We all still wore coat and ties to this type of dinner. When we walked out the door, Mark (three or four) and his friend John Stevenson were busy filling the gas tank of the Hillman with the garden hose. They were playing "Filling Station". Boy was I exasperated. To keep the car from damage, I had to get into old clothes, get underneath the gas tank, undo the plug and drain the tank. That took a lot of containers. We were about an hour late for dinner. We did not laugh then, but we do now. Mark, many years later, gave me a print of a Dennis The Menace cartoon that shows Dennis filling up his Dad's car with the garden hose and the caption "Fill er up, Dad?". That cartoon is included .

1959 Chevrolet Bel Air (brown and white)

In 1960 I took a job with the Portland Cement Association as a field representative. The company furnished me a car and it was this 59 Chevrolet. This car was distinctive because of the wide flat fins over the rear wheels. They served no purpose except for looks. We still had the Hillman, but this became the main family car. I could drive it as my own and drove it to Colorado a couple of times for vacation around the 4th of July. The car did not yet have air conditioning. So when we drove through the desert, Las Vegas and all that hot country, we suffered. We bought coolers that you filled with ice and water and the fan helped. But mostly we sucked on ice to help us keep cool. The windows were down.

We would also drive to Fallbrook to see the kids Grandmother, Lottie Schell. On one trip, an elderly couple cut across the highway 395 in front of us. They were on 76. It was a divided two lane each direction road. The freeway did not exist. I think they drove across the south bound lanes going east thinking it was clear and proceed right in front of us going north. The only picture of this car was taken right after the crash. The car had a padded dashboard and we were thankful. Mark bumped his head on it and we thought he was spared some injury because of this new type of dash.

1959 Chevrolet Bel Air (white)

After leaving PCA, we needed another car. Ross Adams, PCA employee, was getting a new company car, so I was able to purchase his old one. It was a good car. We drove it to Colorado a few times. It was identical to the last car except it was white. The two pictures of this car show Mark with two different expressions sitting on those fins.. One is grim, the other cheery. I know the sun was in his eyes.

1962 Triumph Spitfire

I had always wanted a boat, but Joe Wolfe convinced me that you could "use a boat only on the weekends sometimes, but you could enjoy driving a sports car to work everyday". The car was the first new car I owned. It was only the second spitfire delivered in San Diego and it cost about \$3000. It had space for only two except a little one like Mark could be squeezed behind the seat. That would definitely not be allowed today. There were no seat belts either. But it was a fun car. This version did not have first and second gear synchronized so shifting



1959 Chevrolet Bel Air— after Accident



Mark on our White 1959 Chev Bel Air



1959 Chev Bel Air-Photo from SD auto Museum



was not the greatest. We kept the car until we moved to Hawaii in 1967. I drove it to work. For the family we used a bigger car.

1963 or 64 Ford Station wagon (light Brown)(no picture)

After Cheryl was born in 1964, we knew we needed another car. This was our first experience with a station wagon. It was also the first car with air conditioning. Boy what a change it was to make that trip to Colorado with Air. It was still a long journey, but it was comfortable. I cannot remember the year of this car. Perhaps it was one of those cars that are nondescript. At any rate this one was good transportation and I remember we got it at a very good price. It served us well. I believe we had this car and sold it when we moved to Hawaii.

1967 Ford Country Squire Station Wagon (off white and fake wood paneling)

In 1967 I took a position in Hawaii with BG Marine. This was a combination of Blaylock and Genge and was a special corporation to do naval architecture for the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. As such, the company rented this new station wagon. It was a very nice means of transportation. Of course it was used for company business, but evenings and weekends it was our personal auto. We drove it all over the island of Oahu. It is the only car we used in the islands other than rentals when we visited the other islands. We rented a camper for the island of Hawaii and stayed at unbelievable beaches with no one around. The copy photos has the car blue with wood paneling. Ours was white.

1967 Ford Station wagon (Light Blue)

On our return to San Diego in 1969, the first car was this 1967 Ford Station wagon. We took trips to Colorado and it really became the family car. It was the first car with air conditioning. However at the same time, I rented, through the office, a 1969 Ford Mustang. These cars were owned at the same time so I will talk about them both. We kept the Ford Station wagon around for quite awhile.

1969 Ford Mustang

The mustang was a very desirable car, so it was my pleasure to rent one of these for my "Company Car" It was very useful and it was nice. But it had an automatic transmission, and believe it or not it became boring to drive. Yes it was good transportation, but still there was something lacking. Maybe my interest in cars was changing. We took the big car, the Ford Station Wagon, on family trips because of the comfort.

1972 BMW 2002 Tii (Red)

This car was the most special I ever owned. It cost the sum of \$5600 and when I sold it ten years later I got \$5600 for it. Two things were happening. Prices were rising rapidly and this car held its price. It had a 5 speed manual transmission that was really smooth and fun to drive. One time on a trip to Las Vegas, I drove it at about 108 miles an hour just to see if it would go that fast. It did. I never did that again



1962 Triumph Spitfire



1969 Ford Mustang



1967 Ford Country Squire but Our Was White



1967 Ford Station Wagon

and not for long either. This car was small so passenger comfort was compromised. About that time personalized license plates were being marketed, so I got the PAONIA plates. I still have them on my car today, the 2004 PT Cruiser. They are a different color and type. We drove this car back to Paonia for my 40th high school reunion.. The local newspaper saw the plate, took a photo and put it in the newspaper.

When Mark was 16, we hooked a small camper trailer to the BMW and took off camping through Colorado. This trailer folded up for traveling, so every night we would have to set it up. But we camped in some very beautiful spots and did some fishing too. We visited such places as Telluride, Grand Mesa, and the fishing camp of the kids grandfather Schell near Granby. We also drove over the pass at Rocky Mountain National Park which is about 11,000 ft. Here the car did not to run very well. It had a mechanical fuel injection system, a forerunner to the electronic injection systems of today. So with the thin air (shortage of Oxygen) the car barely made it. After, it really ran poorly. I had seen Bill Brecht's people adjust this feature so had an idea what to do. I could not find a mechanic anywhere that knew anything about this car. But I got it to run ok, even if the gas millage dropped down to about 11 mpg. It got us home and then Bill's mechanics tuned it up again.

I always liked having a stick shift. I taught all the kids to drive with one and they all had trouble at the same spot. I would have them kill the engine at the bottom of our hill, a 16% grade, start the car, then let out the clutch and go up the Hill. Not easy. They all had problems but they all passed. It is interesting, because all of the early cars had stick shifts. We didn't even call them stick shifts. They just were. In about 1939, someone came up with the idea of putting the shift lever on the side of the steering wheel. This was great because it got it off the floor and freed up some leg space. And then finally the automatic transmission showed up shortly after the War. (1946) Now everyone had to have that type. But as the auto developed, sports cars came in to favor and the stick shift came back into peoples lives. "Four on The Floor" meant a four speed manual transmission with the lever to change gears on the floor.

1975 Dodge Station Wagon(Brown)

By this time about 1976, another car was needed, so the Dodge wagon was bought. By now we had gotten accustomed to having a car such as a wagon around. It could haul kids and all sorts of things. It had air and was comfortable. I kept this car even after I became single, because it could haul things the BMW could not. When Cheryl became 16 and ready to drive, this became her first means of transportation. I should of course say that her first powered means was her moped. She was able to get around to dance classes etc when she was 15.. But when drivers licenses are available, a moped is no longer in.

1972 Triumph TR6 (Blue)

I was always interested in having a TR 4 or 6. Now I could afford such a thing. This was about 1980. Cheryl was just beginning to drive . We had the Dodge Station wagon for her to use. This Triumph was really a pretty good car. It was the same year as my BMW, but a totally different car. This is one that I would work on as much as possible. I did not do a lot, but did have it repainted. It was fun to drive the car to the desert along the crooked roads.

As soon as Cheryl was able, she would come home from school and take the car for a drive. One day she did, and when she came home, noticed something strange in the neighbors driveway. Someone had backed a car into the driveway and was loading goods into it. Cheryl bee-lined to Julian's house to call the police. When she returned they were gone, but her call was timely and the crooks were caught near the



1972 BMW Tii



Cheryl's
197?
Honda Civic



1973 Dodge Station Wagon



Cheryl's 1975 Triumph Spitfire

border. It turned out that the young man alone in the house at the time (Ron) had been tied up and a gun put to his head to keep him quiet. Cheryl later had to testify in court. As it turned out the defense asked her to testify, but that backfired because she was able to identify the rather distinct car that was used for the robbery. Ron then got a dog (Weimaraner) for protection.

I kept the car to toy with until it was time to get a new car. I sold it when I purchased my next BMW, because I needed the cash.

Cheryl's Cars

1977-- Honda Civic (Orange)

When Cheryl first learned to drive, she used the Dodge. After all it was a big car and offered protection. At least that is what Father's think. But then she did want a more economical car. My deal with her was that I would buy half and she would need to finance the rest (through Dad of course) So I helped find this Orange Honda Civic. I thought it was a good little car. I think fathers would be best to let their kids pick out their own cars (within reason). Mark certainly thought that before when he wanted a Karmen Ghia and I led him to a Bug. But she drove this Honda for a while, but then she got this craving for a Triumph Spitfire like dad used to own.

1975 Triumph Spitfire (Yellow)

Again she really wanted this car, so the deal was that I would help her finance it. I am not sure where she found it but it showed up at our house. The one I had in 1962 had no smog controls. By 1975 cars were becoming loaded with smog devices. And this really made the car perform badly. I think smog requirements is what made Triumph go out of business a few years later after their TR8 model. But Cheryl enjoyed this car. At one time we had both the blue TR6 and the yellow Spitfire at home as evidenced by the photos.

1982 BMW 528e

The e stood for efficiency. This car was designed to have the engine essentially cut off when coasting. Because of this, the car got about 28 mpg. It's cost was about \$21,000 so it was not possible to keep the TR6. For its efficiency, the 528 was a very good car. It was responsive, had a great 5 speed manual transmission, was very smooth and generally a great car. This was the car I owned when Vici and I got married and it served us well. However, where the 2002Tii was a car that did not need much maintenance, the 528 was different. It had much more need and it was also expensive to fix.

One night on the way home from work, I got rear ended by a big truck. The truck also forced me into a car in front so there was damage both front and rear. No one was hurt. After all the damage was repaired, I took the car to the BMW service place to have the car routinely serviced. When I got the bill for \$950, it was time to get something less expensive to maintain. So the car was traded in in 1989.

1948 Willys Jeepster

Again my interest in cars led me to purchasing a classic 48 Jeepster. This car was manufactured for only three years and was the front runner of the sports wagon. It was manufactured by the company that made jeeps during WWII. Some of them had four wheel drive, but mostly



1972 Triumph TR6 and 1975 Triumph Spitfire



1972 Triumph TR 6



1982 BMW 528e



1948 Willys Jeepster with Soroptimists

they were intended for the camping and picnic crowd. I worked on this car some, but did not have the time or the know how. Vici used the car for her Soroptimist club in the La Jolla Christmas parade a couple of years. The picture shows her friends in the car. One of our high-lights with the car was to go to our train station in downtown San Diego to pick up the Richter family. Harry Sue and Mike. They had taken the train down. Harry was into cars too and he really got a kick out of being picked up in this car. Again it was too much for me to work on, so sold it to someone that wanted to restore it more. .

1989 Ford Aerostar

When the 528e was finished being serviced and I had paid the bill, I drove it straight to Ford and traded it in for a 1989 Ford Aerostar. I was now into bicycling and the idea of having a car that I could put the bike into and take it to meet friends for a ride was appealing. No more would it be necessary to put the rack on the back of the car. This car was considered to be a van, The mini van had not yet appeared on the market. This was a good car. The ford had very few problems. It was nice to be able to carry more than just five people too. In fact it was called on often to carry 7 or 8. We could all go together in one car.

1971 Triumph TR6 (Red)

The appeal of the TR6 was with me again. This time I wanted to be able to work on it and to learn more about cars. This one needed a lot of work. I bought it from a young man that had it from his dad. His dad had gotten it from a woman in Reno that could not pay her bill when he had overhauled the engine. So the engine was good, but the rest of the car needed help. The transmission was the first need. The next was the dashboard. Someone had put a homemade plywood one in, and the wiring was a big mess. It took me a long time to straighten that out. But I learned how to read wiring diagrams and how to improvise. There were several other items to be fixed, but cosmetically, the paint job was most important. At this writing, I still own the car. It is fun, and it also is not complete. The transmission turned out to not have been done properly, so it had to be reworked. This job is not what I was capable of doing. It is pretty good now, but it does not down-shift easily from 4th to 3rd. I feel good about taking the car to shows now. It does not win prizes but it is ok. Oh yes, the license plate is the Olympic plate with PEONY.

1994 Pontiac Transport(white)

Time for a new car, so I choose the Pontiac minivan. This was a good choice, because if I left the second row of seats out, my bike would fit in without taking the front wheel off. And for trips, we could get three bicycles, three people and suitcases in it for bike rides. We took it all the way to the Napa valley. I also drove it to Colorado to scope out my bike ride there for the 50th high school reunion. Mark went with me on this trip. But mostly this car was transportation for me. Vici had her own car. Her first was about a 1979 Chevrolet. It was not a good car. The next that she was very fond of was her Chrysler Lebaron. And now she has her Chrysler Cirrus. So she has had three cars, and I don't know much about them.



1989 Ford Aerostar



1971 Triumph TR6 (before restore)



Personal License Plate



1971 Triumph TR6 (after restore)

1999 Chevrolet Venture(White)

Another minivan was next because they perform so well. This time the choice was made to Chevy because the seats behind the driver (5 of them) were small individual seats and could easily be taken out by one person. For me this was a real appeal. The car was useful for a lot of functions. It was comfortable, quiet, and was very economical. Millage on the road was about 25 and for that type of car was excellent. When I sold the car, a young marine's wife bought it. She had 5 kids and was just what she needed. I had driven this car to Colorado too.

1983 Mercedes Benz 380SLC

I had a crazy notion that this would be a really classic car. If it had been the SL it would have been. The difference is that the SL was a convertible and the SLC was the coupe. This was a very nice car in looks. We had purchased it from a friend that was moving and needed to sell the car. It needed some work such as air conditioning. And then I found out it was expensive to have it worked on. Any way we decided to sell it and could not do that either. So it was appraised and donated to Charity. This was a good lesson not to buy a car on a whim. Lots of people do.

2004 Chrysler PT Cruiser (Inferno Red)

Again this type of car appealed to me. It seemed to be a takeoff of about a 1936 Ford. I got the one with the Turbo engine for performance. That make the car a lot more responsive. But it came with a sacrifice of gas millage. For the car's size it only get about 20 miles to the gallon around town and maybe up to 25 on the road. But this car is a hatch back and can handle my bicycle easily. To put two bikes in it requires taking the seats out. This is not too tough a job. I still have PAONIA as my personal license plate.

My Next Car

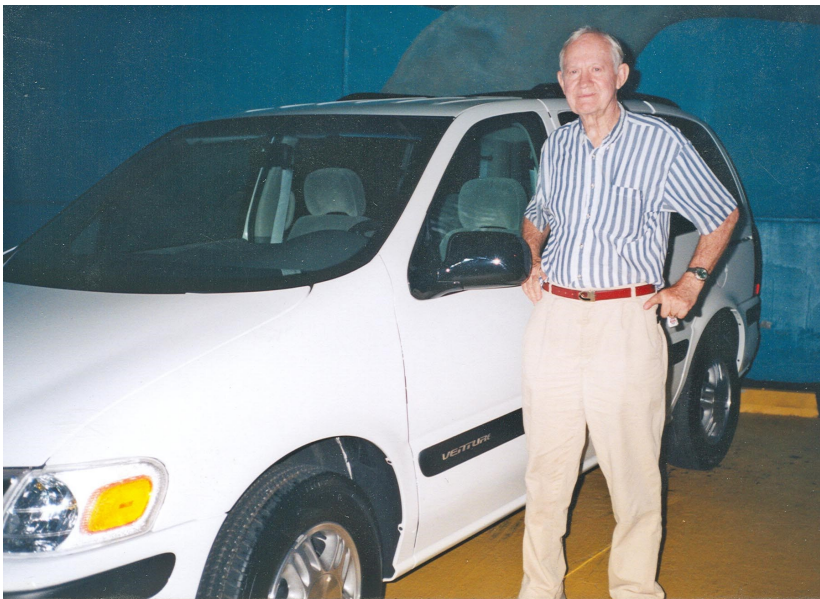
What will it be? Maybe an electric? Or maybe a hybrid? For now, I am happy with the PT. Vici will probably get a new one soon. While assembling information about "My Cars", a lot of memories seemed to flow. So in a way it is a telling a part of your life story. But there are many other stories that are tied to the cars. I never got car sick, but knew those that did. Nothing stands out that was drastic about any one car in that regard. Did my cars change my life? No. But they did help make new friends. My membership in the Triumph Sports Car Club of San Diego is a good example.



1994 Pontiac Transport Minivan



1983 Mercedes 380 SLC



1999 Chevrolet Venture Minivan



2004 Chrysler PT Cruiser