

# MY FIRST V-8 FORD . . . (and best too!)

*50th Anniversary*

by Al Mozejewski

*Praises Sung For The '41*

The year was 1950. I was 20 years old and single. (Guess that sort of dates me.) It was spring time and I was still tooling around in a 1940 Studebaker 2-door. I was coming home from Chicago one weekend and got to about Racine and the engine started to knock. I thought, OH! there goes a rod. Well, with limited resources, I had to fix it myself. After dropping the pan and removing the offending rod cap, I discovered a badly scored crankshaft. Too much to fix myself, so I cut off a small piece of my belt, put it between the crank and rod, tightened the cap down and buttoned it up. I started it up and it ran nice and quiet. Shut her down immediately. A friend pushed me to within one block of a used-car dealer that bought old cars. I drove it gingerly into the lot and the dealer gave me \$200 for it. I grabbed it and ran. (I wonder how long that piece of leather held up.)

I needed another car. (Now comes the good part.) A mechanic friend of mine was selling his '41 Ford convertible, as he was buying a new car. He wanted \$400 for it. (Can you imagine, only \$400.) Boy, I snapped it right up.

As you probably know, in the 50's no sane fella wanted a stock automobile. He had to fix it up. I was no different. This is a little sad, but here's what I did.

1. Shaved the hood and deck and removed some chrome and stainless trim.
2. Installed inside trunk release.
3. Put on '50 Dodge bumpers (perfect fit, no drilling.)
4. Added replica full disc Cadillac hubcaps.
5. Installed lowering shackles on rear springs.

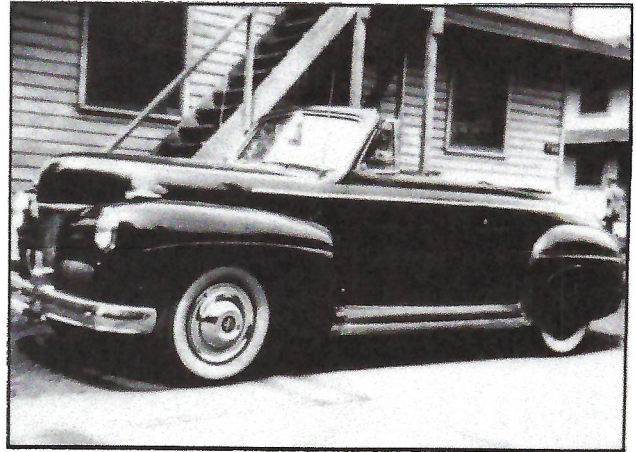
Later when I accrued more money:

6. Exchanged the Ford engine for a Merc and added to that:
  - a.  $\frac{3}{4}$  race cam
  - b. Edmunds heads
  - c. Dual carbs (troublesome things)
  - d. Dual exhausts

Oh! Yes, and one more neat little trick. Flipped the shift lever over from the right side of the steering wheel to the left side. The shifting pattern was upside down, but you got used to that in a hurry. Of course you must also know the reason behind that was it was so much handier for one-armed driving. (Ask my wife—she knows.)

That little convertible was one of the fastest in town. Didn't lose many races. I had a fabulous time with that car and with a minimum of break-downs. It was one of the most dependable cars I ever owned.

I did have my mishaps though. One time, in the middle of winter, my engine caught fire. Being a frugal person (that's cheap) I put ZERONE (alcohol) antifreeze in the radiator instead of the expensive



ethylene glycol stuff. Well! You guessed it, she boiled over and a spark set her on fire. I put it out with snow. Had a heck of a time getting home, as the insulation on the wiring was all burnt and everything was shorting out. Burned the paint off the side of the hood, too.

It was shortly after that I was drafted into the Army (1952). During boot camp cars weren't allowed, but as soon as I got assigned to station, I got my Ford and kept it with me all during the service.

A couple of buddies and I made a few trips home on leave. One of those furloughs was a disaster to my Ford. We were headed back to camp (Ft. Monmouth, NJ) and a buddy was driving. Another fella and I were sleeping. It was late at night and we were driving through Indiana countryside. I think the driver fell asleep because all of a sudden there was a screech of tires and a loud, hard crunch. Woke us up in a hurry. We were sideswiped pretty badly. When I got out and looked at my car, I could have cried. It looked terrible. The driver's side from front to rear—fender to fender was torn up pretty badly.

After the standard procedures, exchanging names and insurance, we taped the car together good enough to continue to camp. At camp I pounded it out as best as I could, and used it that way until my next leave. Next time I was home I scrounged junk yards and picked up good used front and rear fenders, driver's door, and a quarter panel. Took the car and parts to a body and paint shop located on 20th and Lincoln Avenue. They put it back together, painted it, and it came out looking better than new.

The old Ford stayed in very good shape for the rest of the time that I had it. When I got out of the service in 1954, I kept the car for one more year. About a month before I married my lovely wife (April 1955) I traded in the '41 Ford convertible on a 1951 Ford 2-door. At the time I naturally thought it was a great move, but now I'm crying in my soup and sure wish I had my old '41 Ford V-8 Convertible back again.