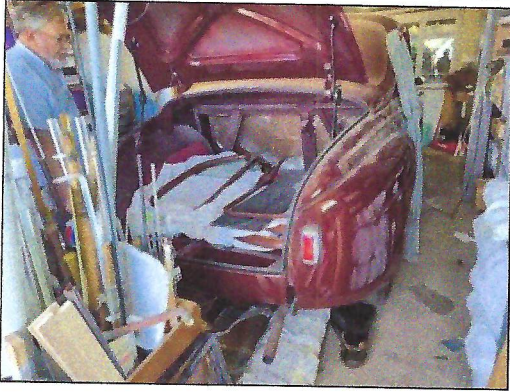


Member Car of the Month

1941 Ford Opera Coupe

Jim Bynum, Donelson, TN



My 1941 Flathead V-8 Ford Journey

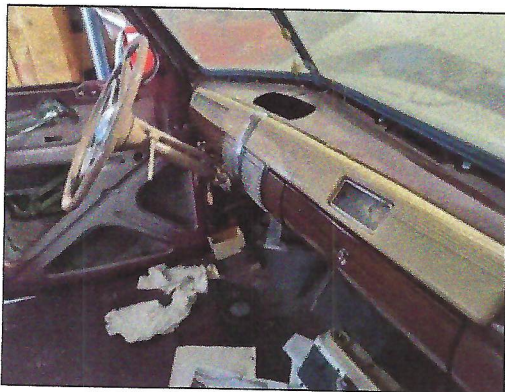
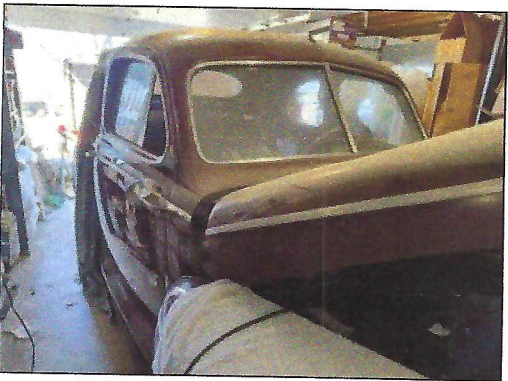
This story is 53 years in the making even though on many occasions there was serious consideration, especially in the last 15 years, to sell my car, but I've held on through thick and thin, good times and bad. The journey started in the fall of 1970, my senior high school year in Chattanooga, TN. A family friend, Raymond Leonard, had two 1946 Ford coupes and being 'old at birth' according to Mom, I was instantly in love. Mr. Leonard owned a business that sent him all around Hamilton County, Chattanooga, TN and surrounding counties including north Georgia.

One day in late winter 1971, Mr. Leonard called to say he had found my 'old Ford' in a junkyard just south of the Chickamauga Civil War Battlefield in Rock Spring, Georgia. It was a 1941 Ford Super Deluxe Opera (or Auxiliary Seat) Coupe.

Dad and I drove down on a Saturday to look at my prize and found it was in less of a condition than I had hoped for but it seemed doable to a dreamer 17 years old. It had been repainted robin egg blue...how unfortunate! Old cars are a disease! When someone can only see how a junkyard or fence row vehicle can be fixed up instead of what it is, the disease is incurable!

I told Mr. R.C Kay that I would take it; the price was \$100 + \$3 for GA sales tax. We came back the next Saturday to tow it home.

My prize was sitting in the junkyard with four flat tires, a dented in roof where kids had been jumping on it and surrounded by four other cars and numerous small trees. Mr. Kay pulled the cars away from the '41 Ford with a big McCormick tractor. The '41s tires were aired up with a hand pump. Since the rear bumper was missing, a chain was wrapped around one of the bumper irons which promptly collapsed the curved bumper iron halves together and slid off shooting back to the tractor. A different grip

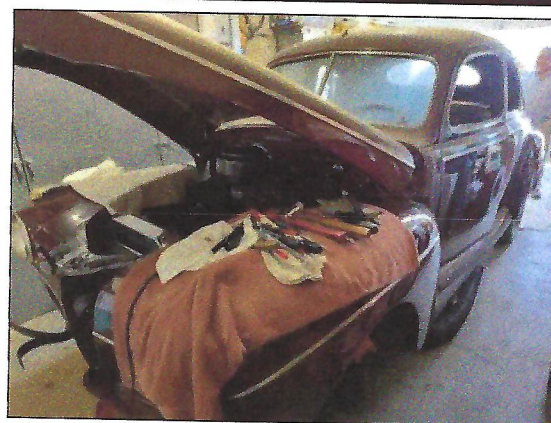


place was found for the chain around the rear axle. The tires scooted across the deep grass but when the car was clear of the small trees and other cars we could get around it. Dad jacked up each wheel and pounded the brake drums with a heavy hammer until the wheels would roll. After two hours for this exercise the '41 Ford would roll. Dad hooked his 1960 Chevy Kingswood wagon with a heavy chain fed through a 2 in pipe since the '41 Ford brakes didn't work. All I had to do was steer my prize, the rest was up to Dad to start and stop slowly.

We started the 26-mile trip home via the back roads so we could drive slowly. About 3 miles down the road one of the tires went flat and a light drizzle rain began. We pulled off at a country gas station and Dad repaired the tube leak. I could tell Dad was about out of patience. The rest of the trip went well not having any more flats or any police questions.

A place was prepared for my prize in an large, old, chicken barn with a rough concrete floor and lights. The '41 was backed into covered storage with room to work on it. I was ecstatic and told Dad I was going to drive it to college in the fall, Oh, the dreams of the uninformed! Dad laughed for years. Work on the '41 started immediately. The radiator, carburetor, rear bumper, radio, heater, starter, and generator were missing at the junkyard.

The fenders, hood, trunk lid, doors, and all the attaching parts were removed and sandblasted using a small vacuum pot blaster and primed. This took many hours mostly in the hot sun waiting for the compressor to build up plus recovering and sifting sand. The engine was removed and disassembly began in the large basement of our house. The whole engine was locked up and the pistons had to be driven out of the block with a block of wood and large hammer after soaking in penetrating oil for a week. The engine had already been bored .060+, so it became scrap. During a trip to visit my grandmother in Murfreesboro, TN, Dad and I visited a junkyard on Halls Hill Pike. Old Fords were stacked on top of each other as much as 3 cars high. Any car was for sale for \$100 or \$200 if it would run or any part off of a non-running car. We filled up Dad's 1969 Chevy wagon with



Jim's "cleaned up" '41 Ford



running boards, bumpers, and numerous other parts for \$42....Jackpot!

It was time to go to college so the work stopped for about 5 years. While at college, Dad's cows ate the cotton batting completely clean off all the seats reaching through one of the windows in the chicken coup where the seats had been removed and were sitting. Without going into that college journey, work resumed after two unrealized majors and having returned home with an Airframe & Powerplant Mechanics license in March of 1977. A pressure pot sandblaster was purchased and a Sulair diesel powered compressor (100 cu. ft./min. @150 psi) was rented for a week. The frame was blasted, primed and painted, then the same for all the attaching chassis parts. The chassis became a rolling chassis but without the flathead or body.

In 1980, my first home was purchased and the '41 Ford chassis was moved to the garage. The chassis was without an engine so an overhauled engine was purchased and placed into the frame. Sometime later during replacement of the oil pan gasket the piston rings were discovered in the oil pan, scammed...engine #2 scrapped. Chassis work continued by hand forming stainless steel double flared brake and fuel lines.

In 1982 another move was made in job and location to a rental house in Tullahoma, TN. My dad and brother moved the chassis and body to Tullahoma where it was at least in a tiny, detached, open front garage. In 1983 a house was purchased in Manchester, TN and the '41 Ford was moved to a dry, closed, garage. It was about this time Everett's Body Shop in McMinnville, TN, was found to sandblast, prime, and paint the body, and then paint the fenders, doors, hood, and trunk lid. It was a great paint job with materials and parts available in 1984. About this time a used 8AB flathead engine was found at a reasonable price which was determined to be good enough for overhaul. It was overhauled by a racecar engine guy, Gary Clower, with all stock parts. The body was completed before the engine arrived and the before the steering column was installed. Therefore it was relative-

ly easy for 6 guys to carry the body and sit it on the frame. The 41' Ford was finally beginning to look like a car.

In 1986 another move was made to a field management position with the same company and the '41 Ford was moved again, this time to Greenville, SC, into the garage of yet another home. Meetings sent me to Nashville, TN, monthly and allowed be to pick up the hood, fenders, doors, and trunk lid as they were completed by the painter in McMinnville, TN. All aforementioned parts were installed and the car began looking whole. Now work started on the windows which were installed new with original Ford etching by Sanders Reproduction Glass in Hillsboro, OR, except the rear oval window which is original to the car.

In 1992 another job was started, this time in Nashville, TN. I moved to a new house in 1993 with the '41 Ford into a two-car garage. Lots of progress was made here. The brakes were completely bled with silicone brake fluid. The dash clock was repaired by Ken Brown in Monteagle, TN. The radio was repaired by Bill Russell in Sewanee, TN. A new wiring harness was installed, a used radiator was purchased, and the engine was started. It was about this time I found out these old Fords had a positive ground. It runs better with a positive ground! During the move to Nashville, there was damage to the '41 Ford paint job. The movers insurance company settled for a reasonable amount but the paint had not been repaired. A repair and paint person was hard to find. Finally, Paul Herman of Gallatin, TN was located. I removed the doors, hood, trunk lid, fenders, steering wheel and windows. Paul sanded and repainted the car after repairing several items. There were numerous small repairs but also included a new reproduction tail pan and removing about 25 lbs. of lead from the trunk lid which he did by working the metal and using only about 1 tablespoon of filler.

When the '41 paint and body work were completed, I installed the freshly painted fenders, doors, hood, trunk lid, and steering wheel. A used dashboard with instruments was purchased and the woodgrain paint was redone by Don Cornell in Clarksville, GA. An original hot water heater kit was purchased from Larry Chapman in Northridge, CA. New running boards and covers were purchased and installed. A new, complete LeBaron-Bonney interior was purchased but *has not been installed yet*. The shocks were overhauled by Antique Ford Parts in Union, CT. About this time the '41 Ford was titled, registered and driven in the neighborhood. Not long after this progress, in 2008, I remarried and in the fall of 2009 we moved to our home in Donelson, a suburb of Nashville, TN. The house was a foreclosure and pretty torn up. Repairing and updating this home has taken several years. The '41 Ford is in a closed, heated and cooled garage but it has been neglected with little progress.

Since 2001 I have been a member of the Early V8 Ford Club of America and since 2019 a member of the Volunteer Regional Group #97. The group is pretty amazing and diverse with many cars, regular meetings and tours. This group celebrated its 45th Anniversary this year and its leadership and membership has inspired me to 'keep going' and 'get going' to get this 1941 Ford back in drivable condition. With Danny Driskell and Mickey Holton as mentors it's starting the final stages of completion.

Please wish me luck and there should be updates coming in the near future.

Jim Bynum

(Editor's note: This article has been submitted to the V8 TIMES and will appear in a future issue)