

MEMBER CAR OF THE MONTH

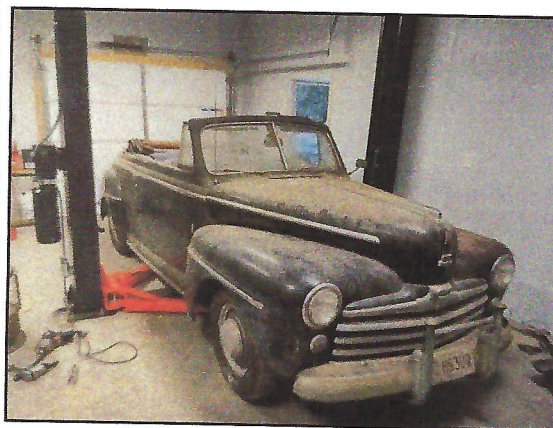
1948 Ford Convertible
Chris and Rhonda Roush
Woodlawn , TN

Please forgive me if this seems like a family story of my dad, but the two stories are so intertwined that the lines can become a little blurred. You see, my dad graduated from Hillsboro High School, in Ohio, in 1955. He had been saving, literally, all of his life for college and now he needed a way to get there. He found a Barcelona Blue, 1948 Ford Super Deluxe Convertible for \$250, the going rate for a good used car at that time. As it turned out, the car wasn't as good as it appeared; in addition to the obvious bent rear bumper and broken trunk handle, the seller had apparently turned the tires around on the rims, so that the "blow-out" patches, on the sidewalls, wouldn't show: within six months, on top of other college expenses, he had to buy four new tires!

As most of us who have gone away to college know, finances tend to get a little tight. The gas required to make the occasional 70-mile trip home could be a little much. At the time, as I recall him saying, gas was 25 cents per gallon but, since his father was a farmer, they could get kerosene at the discounted price of 10 cents. The car wasn't crazy about it, but he discovered that he could use up to 5 gallons of kerosene in the 17.5-gallon gas tank and she'd still get him from point A to point B (try that with a modern car)!



April 1, 2022: Bessie finally reached her new home



Time for 20+ years' worth of maintenance

I don't know the exact story but, at some point, when she was acting up a bit, Dad started saying "come on, Bessie..." and, thus, she became "Bessie."

My parents were married in 1962 right after Dad graduated from Ohio State University. My mother had graduated the previous year, gotten a good job, and bought herself a new Chevy. He had been drafted into the Army and left for training not long afterward. In the meantime, Bessie had developed a serious issue: Dad was driving down the road and, out of nowhere, the oil pressure gauge dropped to zero! After a new rear main seal, it seemed to be fixed; then it happened again. A

new oil pump; same result. He threw several parts at the problem but nothing seemed to fix it for long so, with no real need for two cars, the problem car was put into storage in his grandmother's garage.

Judging by the service sticker on the doorjamb, it was 1970 the next time Bessie saw the light of day (I would have been about four years old). I remember pulling huge mouse nests out of the glovebox, among other places. Unfortunately, she'd been stored with gasoline in the tank, so there was an abundance of "crud" in the tank. Dad's answer was to just drive it and, eventually, the crud would work it's way out. When driving, you had to keep the usual wrenches but, added to the list: a length of ¼" rubber hose and a gas can. Periodically, the car would start to sputter and then die. This is when you had to disconnect the fuel line at the firewall, attach the afore mentioned rubber hose to the line leading to the tank, blow into the hose until the blockage cleared, reassemble the line, pour a little gas into the carburetor to prime it, start the engine and continue on your way. Oh, by the way, of course the oil pressure problem came back almost immediately. Dad took the car to a friend he had met while Bessie was in storage an excellent mechanic who had cut his teeth on flat-heads). Charley replaced the oil sending unit and the problem was solved!

Bessie was one of the first manual transmissions I ever drove. My dad taught me to double clutch in her. As a kid, I remember going to Dairy Queen and United Dairy Farmers (awesome ice cream place that never made it to Tennessee, as far as I know) in Bessie. As kids, my sisters and I conducted "physics experiments" in the back seat: throw a paper wad (likely a Dairy Queen or UDF wrapper) out the back and watch it end up in the front seat; that one never seemed to get old. Dad and I have both driven her in parades. When I was in college, and even after I joined the Army, I used to take her for drives when I was home. Before we were married, my wife and I went for a few rides in Bessie. The car was always part of our family.

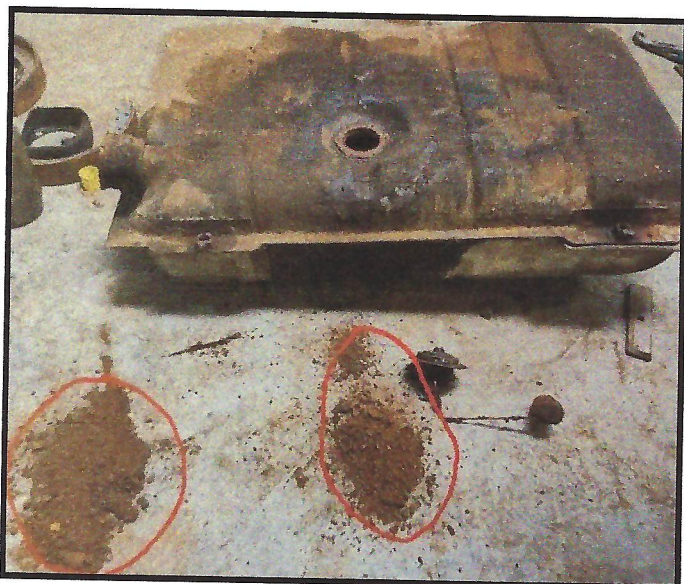
As time went by Rhonda and I were married and started a family of our own and Uncle Sam just seemed to always want me in places far away from Ohio. Bessie was occasionally a topic of telephone conversations but I never seemed to get to drive her anymore. Dad told me once that the radio wasn't working and I searched the internet for the required part (try googling "Malory Vibrator" and see what you come up with!!) I did find it, but not without having to weed out some... interesting... results. Once, I recall my dad saying the car wasn't currently running, but he was pretty sure he knew what the problem was. Once Mother got sick, he seemed to lose interest in getting Bessie back on the road, even though my mother would lament that she'd like to go riding again.

After my mother's death, Bessie became one more item, collecting dust, out in the metal garage, behind their home. The gravel floor made it nearly impossible to keep animals out. At some point a cat (?) decided the rotten old convertible top made a comfortable bed, until the top gave way, opening up a new sunroof that couldn't be closed. After my dad passed away, in November, 2017, the car became mine and it was left to me to find a place for her and a way to get her here. With a combination of some of Dad's life insurance, my

own funds and a bit of sweat equity, I was able to have Bessie's new garage built.

Is there a car story in our EFV8CA regional group that Danny Driskell doesn't have some part in? Early on Friday, April 1st, 2022, Danny and I headed north for the 6-hour drive to get Bessie. By the time we got there, my brother-in-law had already aired up the tires and, after coaxing her out of the gravel that she had settled into (apparently quite comfortably) over the past 20+ years it was just a matter of getting her through the grass, to the pavement, into Danny's trailer and down the road. Danny dropped us off at home, in Woodlawn, late that night. It was the first night in a long time that she'd spent under the stars and the next day, another friend of mine came over to help me get her up to, and into, the garage (with the help of Bessie's new friend, and occasional garage mate, Della, the Ford 8N tractor, just 3 years Bessie's junior).

When we pulled Bessie into my repair bay, using a chain and a come-along, 14 months ago, I said the only way she would leave would be under her own power. Since then, she's gotten a new gas tank, with fuel level sending unit and fuel lines, new master brake cylinder and all four wheel cylinders, all new wiring, new front marker lights rebuilt tail lights, rebuilt fuel pump (with ethanol-proof kit), and rebuilt/updated coil (by Skip Haney). She also has a new rear spring and the rear end and distributor rebuilt thanks to Michael Driskell, not to mention cleaned and gapped spark plugs and, of course, all new fluids. Finally, this past Friday, June 9th, was a big day for Bessie: the first time in over 20 years that her engine roared to life (trust me, with the state her exhaust system is in, "roared" is a suitable term, but what a beautiful roar it was)! The short time she



It would take a LOOONG time for this much "crud" to work it's way through!

was running, and the work it took to get her started, showed me she needs some carburetor work and, given the putty-like substance I found in the bottom of the engine oil filter housing, I've decided it best to drop the oil pan for a bit of cleaning and inspection but it's becoming more and more evident that Bessie will soon be ready to back out, get a long needed bath, and then return to the road!



Bessie's new friend, Della (only 3 years her junior), bringing her rearend over for installation.