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**MY EARLY EXPOSURE TO AUTOMOBILES**

I have always liked to see pictures of old vehicles and I have tried to keep a picture of all the vehicles I have owned. Sometimes when I look back at the old pictures, I wonder what possessed me to buy a certain vehicle. I thought they were pretty when I bought them, but now they look ugly. Vehicle styles change over the years.



I thought I would tell you about some of the early vehicles I remember. The first picture of me with a vehicle was taken in December, 1946 when I was three years old. At least they told me that was me in the picture. I think the truck is a 1938 Ford, but could be wrong.

Another picture was taken about 1948 showing me sitting on the fender of my dad's new GMC truck. I guess posing children on vehicles was a common thing in those days.

I grew up on a farm and our only vehicle for several years was a pickup truck. A car was not really needed, but that didn't keep us from wanting one. A car would be nice for a trip to town or to church on Sunday, so we finally convinced my dad to check into getting us a car.

A new car was not even considered. We figured a used one would do just as well. I remember about four used cars we had when I was growing up, but I am not exactly sure of the correct order. Any boy growing up on a farm learns to drive doing farm work such as hauling hay. A wide-open field is good place to practice. I was driving our little Farmall Cub tractor long before I had a driver's license.

I got my driver's license at Prescott when I was 14 years old. I remember being a little nervous taking the driving part of the test which included having to drive across the railroad tracks and parking. I remember being told to make believe I was parking on a hill when Prescott is flat as a pancake. I could barely see over the steering wheel.

The car we had then was a 1952 Studebaker. I don't have a complete picture of that car, but I remember it being a good car which got good gas mileage. I remember taking my great-aunts (Esther, Mattie, and Beulah) who lived together at Goose Ankle to Prescott one time to see their doctor for a checkup. We went through the Lackland Springs road. Taking three older women to town took about all day and was not a job I enjoyed, but I made the best of it. I remember listening to *The Yellow Rose of Texas* on the radio on our trip to town. Funny how you remember some insignificant thing like that.

## WAY BACK WHEN

Most of these early vehicles we owned had standard transmissions. Many of the older folks didn't want one with an automatic transmission because they wanted to be able to push the vehicle to start it if needed.

My dad was friends with a used car salesman at Hope and he talked my dad into trying out a Nash car. He told him he could keep it a week to see if he liked it. It was one of the ugliest cars I had ever seen and we finally convinced my dad that we needed to check out other options before getting stuck with that old ugly Nash.



Another used car we had was a black 1950 DeSoto my dad bought from Carl and Annie Mae Greer. It looked like this photo I found online. It was a fancier car than the Studebaker and had something called a fluid drive transmission (sort of a semi-automatic). It had a lot of chrome on the front bumper, but the thing I remember most about that car was the hood ornament. It had the face of Hernando DeSoto and his face would light up at night when the headlights were turned on. The DeSoto was pretty well worn out when we got it, so we didn't keep it very long.

About the time I graduated from high school in 1961, we had a 1946 Buick. It had been stored away in a garage for several years. It only had 27,000 miles on it and was a very fancy car in its day. The seats were very plush. The car was very heavy and had a very smooth ride.



I don't have a picture of our car, but it looked like this one I found online. Our car was green and had the whitewall tires. The engine was a "straight eight" which means it had eight spark plugs all in a row. The hood could be opened from either side. It had a good radio and the antenna was just above the windshield in the center. It had fender skirts on the rear wheels. The starter was beneath the accelerator. This was the car we ended up with when I started college in 1961. My parents let me drive the car back and forth to school, but I was supposed to leave it parked on campus during the week. I usually came home every weekend.

Needless to say, that car looked like an antique compared to some of the cars driven by other students. It served the purpose and furnished my transportation to college for the next few years. Everything was going well until one nice spring day when I and my roommate decided to go for a little drive out in the country. I was not familiar with the roads and was involved in an accident at an unmarked intersection in a rural area. I was almost through the intersection when the

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other car hit my right rear fender. There was some damage to both vehicles, but the only damage to the Buick was a bent fender. This was my first auto accident and I knew I would have some explaining to do since I had been instructed to leave the car on campus during the week. The police investigated the accident and said the other driver was at fault because at an unmarked intersection, the car already in the intersection has the right of way. On top of that, the other driver did not have any insurance.

We continued to drive the old Buick with the beat-up fender. The accident had messed up one of the coil rear springs and the car would tend to bounce when we hit a bump after that. By this time, the car had about 45,000 miles and had started to use a little oil.



We finally just parked the old Buick in the field behind the house and took the plush front seat out to take to a camp house we had. So, this old 1946 Buick was junked out at 45,000 miles. It was later towed further over in the woods and later sold for scrap. All I have left of this 1946 Buick is the Buick logo from the

front of the car and the horn button.



Our next car was a used 1960 Chevrolet that had come from the state of Ohio. We soon noticed some rusty patches caused by the salt they put on the roads in the northern states. I don't remember if the model we had was an Impala or a Biscayne. It was blue in color and had the distinctive tail lights and fins of that model year. It was a good car and I used it one summer driving all over Nevada County when I worked for the ASCS office checking to see if Nevada County farmers were following the guidelines for the farm programs they had signed up for.

All these old cars were family cars for our family, but I probably drove them more than anyone else in the family. It was nice to have a car and not have to rely on our pickup truck for everything. It was usually dirty from farm use and was a bit crowded with five of us riding in the cab. If more room was needed, two or three wooden straight chairs were brought out of the house and put in the bed of the truck behind the cab for the older folks and the children sat in the bed of the truck. None of these older vehicles had seat belts. Seat belts were required in all new cars beginning in 1968.

## WAY BACK WHEN

In some of the old TV shows, teenage boys had some type of old jalopy or old car. I never had that opportunity. Our vehicles were for the use of our family. If I wanted to go to Prescott to attend some event, I had to use our family car. We lived twenty miles from town, so those type trips were few and far between.



I had finally graduated from college and the next step was finding a job. I had studied to become a teacher and soon secured a teaching job in Missouri. I needed a dependable car, so I purchased my first new vehicle—a blue 1966 Ford Fairlane 500—from Prescott Motor Co. for \$2800. It was just a basic car with no frills. It was to be my transportation for the next three years.

After teaching three years in Missouri, I decided to return to Arkansas and got a job teaching at Cale near where I grew up. I taught at Cale for five years and then made a career change. I worked for International Paper Co. in the forestry department for the next 31 plus years. I traded the Ford Fairlane for a 1970 Oldsmobile Cutlass, my first vehicle with individual front seats. I remember having an eight track cassette player installed in that car by the dealer. From then on, I was able to keep a relatively new vehicle. I usually traded when my vehicle reached about 70,000 miles. The cost of new vehicles kept going up and I figured I could trade while my vehicle still had value left in it and that would be better than having to come up with all the money for a new car.



Many people go through life and never own a new vehicle. I have been blessed so far to be able to keep a good reliable vehicle. Many people have only one vehicle, but I always tried to have a pickup truck also. I bought several used trucks over the years including a 1969 GMC, a 1970 Ford (pictured at left), and a 1986 Chevrolet. Having two vehicles these days is becoming more difficult due to increased insurance costs, but it is nice to have a back-up vehicle in case one is in the shop or if I need to haul something. One solution is to have a nice car and an older model pickup truck with only basic liability insurance.

Most of the vehicles I have owned were General Motors products and a few Fords. I guess I have been lucky. I don't think I have ever had what I would call a "lemon". The days of being able to fix your own vehicle when something goes wrong are past. Modern vehicles are computerized and any repairs usually require a trip to the dealer.

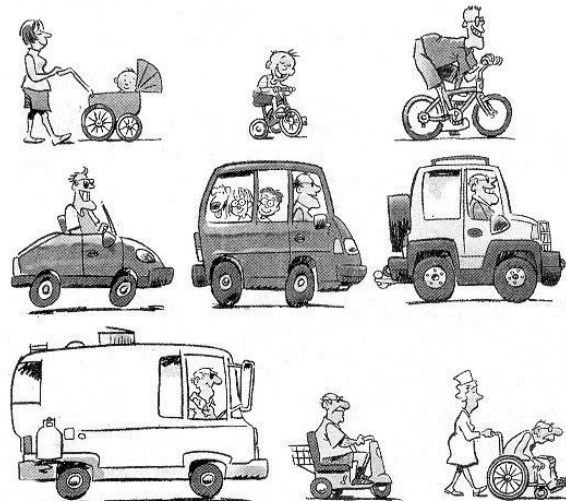
# WAY BACK WHEN

I like to see pictures of even older vehicles like my grandparents had. Each generation is stuck with whatever vehicles are available at that time. The automotive industry has come a long way in the last hundred years. About a hundred years ago, students at the Bluff City school were brought to school on a bus that looked like this:



This pretty well sums up transportation from birth to death

## The Wheels of Life



# WAY BACK WHEN

## (I received this in an email several years ago) FENDER SKIRTS

"Fender skirts!" What a great blast from the past! I hadn't thought about fender skirts in years. When I was a kid, I considered it such a funny term. Made me think of a car in a dress.

Thinking about fender skirts started me thinking about other words that quietly disappear from our language with hardly a notice.

Like "curb feelers" and "steering knobs." Since I'd been thinking of cars, my mind naturally went that direction first.

You kids will probably have to find some elderly person over 50 to explain some of these terms to you.

Remember "Continental kits?" They were rear bumper extenders and spare tire covers that were supposed to make any car as cool as a Lincoln Continental.

When did we quit calling them "emergency brakes?" At some point "parking brake" became the proper term. But I miss the hint of drama that went with "emergency brake."

I'm sad, too, that almost all the old folks are gone who would call the accelerator the "foot feed".

Here's a phrase I heard all the time in my youth but never anymore - "store-bought." Of course, just about everything is store-bought these days. But once it was bragging material to have a store-bought dress or a store-bought bag of candy.

"Coast to coast" is a phrase that once held all sorts of excitement and now means almost nothing. Now we take the term "worldwide" for granted. This floors me.

On a smaller scale, "wall-to-wall" was once a magical term in our homes. In the '50s, everyone covered their hardwood floors with, wow, wall-to-wall carpeting! Today, everyone replaces their wall-to-wall carpeting with hardwood floors. Go figure.

When's the last time you heard the quaint phrase "in a family way?" It's hard to imagine that the word "pregnant" was once considered a little too graphic, a little too clinical for use in polite company. So, we had all that talk about stork visits and "being in a family way" or simply "expecting."

Apparently "brassiere" is a word no longer in usage. I said it the other day and my friend cackled. I guess it's just "bra" now. "Unmentionables" probably wouldn't be understood at all.

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It's hard to recall that this word was once said in a whisper -"divorce. And no one is called a "divorcee" anymore. Come to think of it, "confirmed bachelors" and "career girls" are long gone, too.

Most of these words go back to the '50s, but here's a pure-'60s word I came across the other day - "rat fink." Ooh, what a nasty put-down!

Here's a word I miss - "percolator." That was just a fun word to say. And what was it replaced with? "Coffeemaker." How dull. Mr. Coffee, I blame you for this.

I miss those made-up marketing words that were meant to sound so modern and now sound so retro. Words like "DynaFlow" and "Electrolux." Introducing the 1963 Admiral TV, now with "SpectraVision!"

Food for thought - Was there a telethon that wiped out lumbago? Nobody complains of that anymore. Maybe that's what castor oil cured, because I never hear mothers threatening their kids with castor oil anymore. Some words aren't gone, but are definitely on the endangered list. The one that grieves me most - "supper."

Save a great word . . . invite someone to supper and discuss fender skirts!

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(according to <https://www.listofnationaldays.com/brothers-and-sisters-day/>)  
Brothers And Sisters Day is May 2, a time to celebrate the bond between siblings

### **My Big Brother, Jeff -- by Don Mathis**

When I was a kid, I wanted to do whatever my big brother did.

If Jeff and a neighborhood girl wanted to play doctor in the garage, I was the lab assistant. If Jeff wanted to ride bicycles for miles, swim in the creek, or leap off the high diving board, I was right there with him.

If he got in trouble, I got in trouble. Mom asked, "If Jeff jumped off a cliff, would you jump off a cliff too?" Yeah, I think I would.

Jeff taught me how to play marbles and I became the second best in the neighborhood (he was the first). Our friends were dependents of servicemen from all around the world. And after Jeff taught me how to play chess, we had an international tournament.

## WAY BACK WHEN

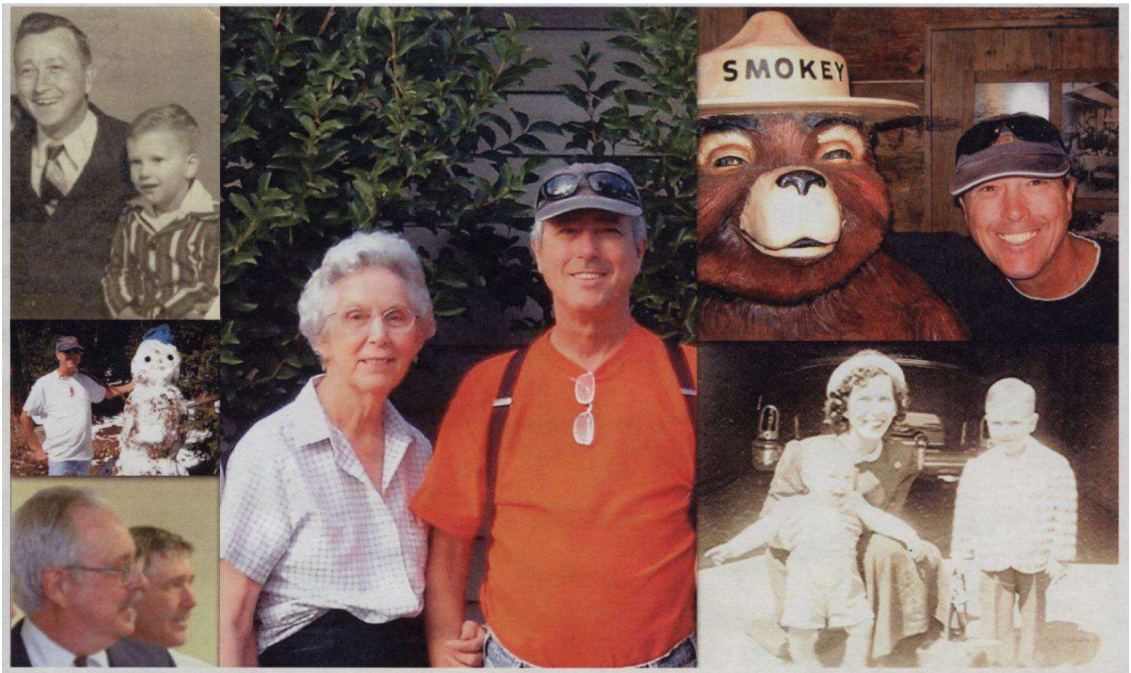
Jeff gave me all his old comic books and I would read *Casper*, *Hot Stuff*, and *Archie*, before graduating to *Batman* and *Superman*, then advancing to *Classics Illustrated*, and finally, *Mad Magazine*.

When Jeff left his newspaper route, I took it over. When he moved on from his high school job at the cafeteria, I was his replacement. Jeff's confidence in his abilities paved the way for me in so many endeavors.

Two years after he entered the Army, I was inducted. I knew I could handle it because Jeff showed me the way. After we got out, Jeff entered college full-time and got a part-time job. I found full-time work and enrolled in college part-time.

A few years later, Jeff bought a house. Because he proved that home-ownership could be a reality for a man in his twenties, I bought a house too; the wisest thing I've ever done!

I miss the days Jeff and I shared together. Even in memory, my brother still inspires me.



**Walter Jeff Mathis**  
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