

He gave life to old Ford truck and many other vehicles

By Bert Johnson

My favorite car is a 1929 Ford Roadster pickup truck.

It was in bad condition when I bought it at Lake Cloverdale in 1960 for \$150, which is a far cry from the \$15,000 to \$18,000 it is worth today.

Over the course of almost 40 years, I have rebuilt and repaired the pickup truck to what it is now.

The original cab did not have two doors on it, so I put on a cab that did, but kept the original bench seat.

Another interesting feature about the cab is that it is open all the way through.

The top is like a convertible, but it doesn't fold down; it's either on or off like a Jeep.

The cargo bed is open too and everything is cream colored.

I've also added wire-spoke hubcaps, whitewall tires, bumperettes and cowl lights.

A bumperette is one-quarter of a bumper and I have one on each side right behind the fender. They were originally on a sedan, but they fit on here.

As for the cowl lights, they are like little parking lights on the body where the windshield and dashboard are attached.

The gas tank is also in front of the truck by the windshield.

On the dashboard itself is a diamond-shaped grouping of gauges, which includes an animator, gas gauge, speedometer and ignition—but not a heat gauge; they didn't exist in the olden days.

Therefore, I installed a hood ornament that has a moto-meter. The ornament itself is shaped like a bird and even has wings and a beak.

When the beak is down, it conceals the moto-meter, but when you pull the beak back, you can put water in it and it measures how hot the motor is running.

Speaking of motors, this truck has a four-cylinder engine with 39 horsepower.

Since I rebuilt the engine, I've put approximately 2,500 miles on it.

I just don't use it that much. I don't drive it in the winter or in bad weather.

I do drive in Richland's Fourth of July parade though.

Vandersalm's flower shop fills the cargo bed with flowers. My wife used to work there, which is how I got involved in doing this.

I also belong to the Antique Auto Restorers Club, but my real reason for owning this vehicle is that I love cars: I just love them!

This probably goes without saying since I own several other vehicles.

These include a 1926 Model T coupe; a 1926 Model T sedan; a 1931 Ford stake truck; a 1940 Chevy pickup; a 1968 Mustang convertible; a 1970 Chrysler four-door hardtop, which was recently involved in an accident at an intersection; and a 1976 Chrysler New Yorker.

All of these are in addition to my 1929 Ford roadster pickup truck and two vehicles I use for everyday driving.

If you're wondering why I've accumulated all of these cars it's because I'm a pack rat.

When people want to get rid of old junk, I latch onto it and turn it into something valuable.

—As told to Tara Marion

Bert Johnson lives in Kalamazoo and works as a salesman for Hydrotex Custom Lubricants. He drives a 1995 Ford Windstar and a 1987 Dodge van.