

This 4-door Ford and its owner were 'fast friends'

By Woody Stillman

My first and favorite car was a 1935 Deluxe four-door. I've never liked a car more than I liked that Ford because it was so fast.

Everybody knew I had a fast car, but they still claimed they could outrun me. It didn't matter what kind of car they had; nothing could touch that car, as its top speed was 95 mph.

We sat side by side in our cars in an open asphalt road and took off—what you weren't supposed to do. I only drag raced four or five times.

Once in a while, when I was challenged, I said, "There's no contest—I'll just walk away from you." I was a naughty boy, but no one ever beat me.

I bought the car from my friend Jack Cox's stepfather in May 1941, when I was 17 years old.

The car was already six years old, but it was just like new with only 47,000 miles on it. It was just sitting in his yard because he had purchased a brand-new 1940 Plymouth, and he wanted to sell his Ford.

"I'd sure like to have the car, Mr. McCarthy," I said. I had ridden in the Ford with Jack and I liked it a lot. He told me he wanted \$125 for the car. I told him I'd like to have it, but I only had \$50.

I asked him if he would accept my \$50 as a down payment and I explained that my dad might loan me the money.

I also suggested paying for the car in installments of \$10 a week. He frowned on that a little bit, but he agreed and let me take the car. He trusted me because I was Jack's friend.

When Jack's stepfather purchased the Plymouth, he wanted a set of General Tires on it, so he took the tires off the new Plymouth and put them on the Ford.

When I purchased the car, it had a brand new set of Goodyear tires on it.

About two weeks later, I was driving the car pretty fast and I heard a sound in the engine. I took it to my dad's mechanics, Gordon and Harry Hayes.

They told me I had a loose bearing in the car and they'd have it fixed by the next night.

They only charged me \$12 and I couldn't believe it. Even in those days, it was hard to believe. They were excellent mechanics and they were reasonable. After that, the car was smooth as silk—just beautiful.

I was pretty meticulous with the car, keeping it cleaned and greased and oiled. I had to go in the service in January 1943, so I sold the car to my father and brother.

I went to war and didn't return for three years. My car had almost 97,000 miles on it when I returned and I didn't want the car.

My dad had used it in the landscaping business and it was in pretty rough shape. I sold the car, although it was my first and favorite car.

I thought it was a good-looking car because it had fog lights in the front and the spare tire was visible in the back.

It had a lot more chrome than the standard version of the car, with two chrome-plated horns and a chrome-bordered windshield.

I still would have bought the car, if it had been just the standard version though; I wanted wheels.

Impressing the girls with my car was also part of the program—especially one girl.

A few days before I left for the service, I took one long trip with the car to Bryan, Ohio and eloped. My wife, Valma, and I celebrated our 54th wedding anniversary in January.

—As told to Tara Marion

Woody Stillman lives in Oshtemo and drives a 1991 Mercury Grand Marquis. His wife drives a 1991 Buick Roadmaster station wagon. He's a retired automobile salesman, but still works part-time at Stadium Motors Inc.