

Rich Clayton and his old road machines



I am a mechanical engineer by degree and just ended a 43 year career in the oil and gas industry. And now I have time to devote to all those projects I have been accumulating through all those years that the family took precedence over my hobbies...but

that didn't stop me from collecting "stuff" which my wife would roll her eyes every time the movers would come to pack us up. That, fortunately for me, only happened 4 times during our married life of 35 years. The 5th move to McKinney would have really been the 'icing on the cake' had she not lost her valiant fight with breast cancer a few years back.

My love for cars goes back to the 50's, the so-called post-war era where the major automakers joined in to the rebirth of a nation anxious to recover from WWII. Too young to have a license, I remember bugging the heck out of my mother to let me wash her '55 Ford Fairlane, just so I could start the engine and back it in and out of the driveway...even did the same for my dad's 50' Ford Custom on the weekends, just to move the cars around between the driveway and the street. As a freshman in high school, a big topic of discussion in the late 50's was what the next year's changes were going to be on each and every vehicle made. We would even take special trips to go around to the local dealers just to see the "new shiny chrome" on the showroom floor. We would discuss (for hours) the most subtle changes from one year to the next....attend the State Fair of Texas, just to tour the "Automobile" building and see all the new cars...go to a bookstand to see if there was a magazine with a glimpse of the "new models"...as a senior and associate editor of the annual, I plagiarized a phrase from Chrysler some may recall and themed our annual the "forward look".

With little spending money, and lots of ideas, I could spend hours going to junk yards finding accessories to add to my mom's '55 Ford. I eventually was given the car when I went to Texas Tech. When I graduated, got a job and put my funds together, I traded it off on a new '64 Chevy Impala 2 door hardtop. By that time, the major additions to the old Ford were power steering and replacement of the old "Clardy" hang-on, poor performing AC unit with a super cool GM amalgamation of parts from Buick's, Pontiac's, and Oldsmobile's. The Chevy dealership was fascinated with that hybrid AC unit (and it took their mind off the cracked head). Getting married and having kids absorbed most of our spending money but I still had "ideas" and could would take and occasional stroll through local junk yards. I might mention, my wife also had an Impala 2-door hardtop but the only accessories were an AM radio and a heater (if you remember, everything was "extra"). I drove her car to work so she could handle our two kids in an air conditioned vehicle with automatic transmission. But, by the time we could afford to trade

off her car for a new station wagon, the old Impala had factory air, power steering, and even power windows!

My wife wasn't too excited after our last kid flew the nest that I wanted to find a 50's model full size convertible. She would rather spend money on us traveling instead of me spending hours working under the hood of an old car. But she had sympathy for my yearning for an old convertible. So we satisfied both, we traveled AND I found a convertible. Her primary requirements were that it had to be running and looked halfway decent..i.e., no basket cases that would take my undivided attention...and she knew my love of junk yards or automobile recycling centers (to be politically correct). I found several but I wanted her "buy-in" as well since it would be there for her to see every day. We settled on our '59 Ford Skyliner after narrowing the list down from a '57 Buick Super, '58 Chevrolet Impala, and a '56 Cadillac Eldorado. The decision was tough but when you weighed the asking price, uniqueness, condition, location, etc., the Ford won out.

1959 Ford Skyliner

Purchased in August of 1996 from the son (Bruce Delling) of the owner who had bought the car in 1965 from the original owner. That makes me the fourth owner in its 48 year history. Bruce had the car for 17 years since he was the last of 3 children to go to USC and graduate. He kept it garaged and in running condition as the other two were not interested in the car. When his father died, the other two wanted their money out of it and Bruce, with a young family, could not afford to buy them out...so I happened to be one of the contenders and got the car. Bruce did not want to part with the car as it had much family history so he calls or emails on occasion and even made a trip to McKinney last November when in Texas on business.