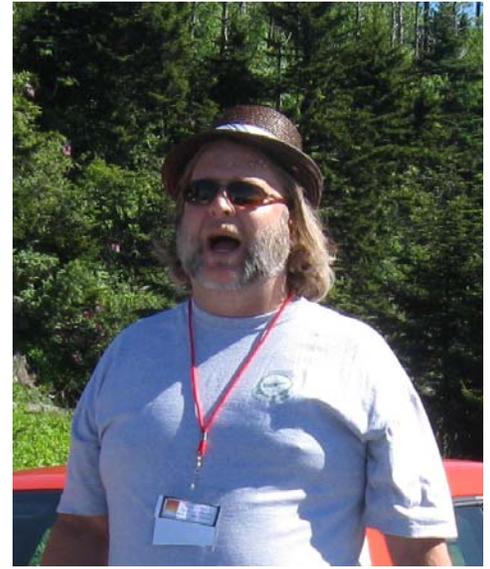


# A Good Nights Sleep

By *Scott Zaeske*

Us Americans love our cars, and for many of us, reminiscing about our first set of wheels brings back memories of freedom, fun, fast engines, and even faster times. I remember the sleepless nights prior to getting my first driver's license at age sixteen rolling over in bed and looking out the window and there she was the hottest car ever a 1955 Chevy 2 Door Coupe. The moonlight glistened off the metallic bronze paint job, the pin striping said "Let's Race", and I could imagine that 327 motor roaring when the lights change at the street corner.



This story begins back when I was first born in 54' my father Chuck Zaeske owned Zaeske's Auto Body Shop and Towing Service the largest towing service in the Chicago land area. He was born and raised into the body shop and towing from his father so needless to say my father was ecstatic when he heard those three words "It's a Boy" upon my arrival into this world. If I'm not mistaking he had a piece of 320 grit sandpaper folded ready to hand sand cars and placed it into my little hand and that oh so familiar phrase of his "Why aren't you working".

The memories of having a body shop and towing business in our family was the most thrilling thing for a little boy growing up all my bicycles, go carts, airplanes, etc. had the best paint jobs, flames, and logos such as "Wild Child" which turned out to be true. I think my dad was the smartest business man ever he would have "Ladies Day" every Tuesday at the body shop the ladies would bring by the family car and fix the little dents and scrapes that the little lady had happen. The towing business was unreal with my mother dispatching tow trucks from our home with the 60 ft. tower in the back yard sending trucks all over the mid-west. My mother's sister, my aunt, was the dispatcher for our city of Elgin, IL police department well that sure helps business. I can remember growing up at about seven or eight years old my father would have all police department officers over once a month for billiards, ping pong, poker, and drinks. The street would be lined up with 20 or more squad cars as we called them with our neighbors feeling like they lived in the safest neighborhood in Elgin. Well it was my job as a youngster to hand out envelopes to all the policemen with a "little gift" from Zaeske's Towing as many of the officers drove tow trucks for my dad when they were off duty.

My mother passed away way too young when I was 10 years old she liked cars too but would rather see me helping to dust the furniture every Saturday morning and helping with laundry and of course learning how to iron. As I got older I understood why she had taught me how to do the house keeping at a young age was because she knew she was dying of cancer and figured I needed to help my sister and dad when she was gone. Oh boy was she right after her passing they were in need of help, now I see why the little lady of most families has a thankless job.

In my early teens I started to get really interested in hot rods as many of my dad's friends had really cool cars such as a 1959 Corvette fuel injected painted purple with white and yellow flames I thought that car was so cool. Well in later years that man Mr. Hunley started the theme park in Orlando called Old Town which I highly recommend for the car crazy to see he owns over 200 hot rods himself.

So now I am 14 years old in 9th grade walking to and from junior high and I start to notice a guy about a block from our home working on a fifties model Chevy with the engine hanging from a chain wrapped over a tree limb. Every time I walk past this house I see he has done more to the engine and more chrome starting to shine and then one day it is sitting at the front of the driveway for sale. I knock on the door and ask if I can take it for a ride and the guy says your too young to drive and I tell him my experience at the body shop I can drive cars, tow trucks, semis, etc. He tosses me the keys and I start up the engine and it sounds sooo... cool... with the 327 motor, the cam loping along so nice, and the headers with cherry bomb mufflers roaring. So I drive about 4 blocks away and it's time to get serious and smoke them tires which burned down the street about a half block and losing 10,000 miles worth of rubber.

Well the seller of the car was a little upset as he said he could hear the tires screaming from that far away. I told him to chill that I wanted to buy the car which was at \$275.00 after tough negotiating we settled at \$250.00 with me literally running to the bank about 2 miles away and running back to buy the car. Now here I am a young teenager with no driver's license cruising from one end of the city to the other showing off my first car.

So it is evening dinnertime and my dad comes home from work and asks whose car that is in the driveway and I inform him that this is "MY first car" with his response being that the car is a rust bucket. Well daddy old boy if I am not mistaking our family is in the body shop business and has been for over 50 years? Well he just walked away shaking his head probably thinking why didn't I have two girls.

Oh the wonderful smells of your new car mmm... rear end fluid, transmission fluid, and oil oh yeah, they were all leaking on the driveway. Now I start working on my car every minute I can putting the best radio, antenna, and 8 track I can find into my new beauty. I worked 3 jobs at that time one at the ice company, gas station, and of course the body shop so many nights I was the last one home at 11:00 P.M. and my dad would ask "Why are'nt you working"? Well I thought I might rest a few minutes before it's time to go to school in the morning.



I'll tell you what I am so glad to have learned at that young age the value of a dollar and a work hard attitude for it has helped me throughout my life so God bless you pops.

So about a year later my car is about ready to paint and my sister calls me one weekend to come see her in Madison Wisconsin so my dad drops me off at the bus station. Well this is the beginning of that wild child I mentioned at the opening instead of the bus I walked about 200 yards to the interstate and hitch hiked to Wisconsin and getting there earlier than the bus would and my sister picking me up. Wow had that \$18.00 for the bus in cash in hand now I can get that new shifter linkage for the car. The weekend with my sister is always filled with shooting pool with me hustling her college schoolmates for beers, food, and of course cash. So I come home with a hundred dollars cool.

My father asks me to go get a step ladder out of the garage when I get home so I head out there ready to turn on the light and I can smell the new paint two steps from the door. I open the door and my eyes to see my first car painted in a beautiful bronze metallic with pin stripes just like I had it drawn on my sketches in my bedroom. I ran inside and jumped on my dad's lap and told him how much I loved him and my car. After 30 seconds of that he says "Why are'nt you working?"

Our family has always been musically inclined from my mother playing piano, my sister viola and she teaches orchestra, my father had a theatre organ in the basement, and me I had to play piano and organ. Well we had the best reel-to-reel recorder money could buy to record our many recitals, parties, etc. So one night I take the reel to reel outside and put it at the back of my car between those 3" exhaust pipes and start the car up and rev it up and down and up and down and let it idol. Well I now have a 30-minute tape of that wonderful sound that car crazy people love a sound of headers, cherry bombs, and cam to put me to sleep...

So Saturday October 21st 1972 finally comes around when I will be 16 years old and getting my driver's license. I drive to my father's body shop which is right across the street from the driver's license office and I am at their front door first in line to get in. I will never forget Mr. Lobianco going with me on the driving portion of the test he lived four doors away from us. He says Scott I thought you already had your license I have seen you driving for a year or so. Well sir that is a tough one to answer but I said you must not have seen my father with me while I had my learners permit...

It's time to party I'm 16 and I got a license and I got the best hot rod of anybody in the city so go pick up the girl friend and head to the sand pits for some swimming and life is good. Well I do have large feet and as I was cruising around in my car that foot got too heavy too many times and I was getting speeding tickets quite often. One night I am drag racing another car through the main street in town Rt.25 and I am beating him when I see a police car coming the other way and I am doing in excess of 100m.p.h. and look in the rear view mirror as his tires are smoking turning around in hot pursuit. Well I didn't slow down I took a right on another road and the cop pursued the other car...Shooowe that was close.

Well I came back into town about an hour later and wanted to get gas before school the next day and while they were pumping the gas my driver's door opens and a policeman pulls me out and assists me to the hood of my car. So downtown we go with 7 traffic offensives wreck less driving, speeding, eluding police, etc. etc. and call my father to get me out.

I was grounded but wishing I had been underground because the next month before my court date was not much fun. When I went to court it was in front of Judge Anderson one of my dad's good buddies. Well I sat there from 8:00a.m. Until the very last case was heard at 4:30p.m. and then they called me back to the judges chamber. Judge Anderson asked how's Chuck doing and I said just fine and he asked how my car was running and I said not real good right now. He cut to the chase and told me that my car was for sale at the body shop and I could not drive it again and he was dropping all charges against me.

That was the longest 3-mile walk of my life thinking about my first car and not being able to drive it again. Well it was about 3 days later a man wanted to look at the car so I let him drive it and he liked it and asked if I would take a trade and I asked what he had and pointed to a 1969 Plymouth Road Runner. I drove the car and it was fast and I liked it and asked what price difference he felt and he asked if the Road Runner and \$700.00 would be enough. WHAT? Did I just hear that right he's given me a two-year-old muscle car with 12,000 miles and the cash. Well o.k. I think we have a deal.

After the transaction my father saw the Road Runner with it's stock looking dog dish hub caps, bench seat, and automatic on the column and said now that's more like it along with saying "Why aren't you working".

I missed that 1955 Chevy with the 327 4-speed for a while until I put the headers, 1250 double pumper, cherry bombs, L-60 x 15 Mickey Thompsons, and 440 heads on the new Road Runner. Was that it for muscle cars? Heck no that was just the beginning of over 100 muscle cars over the years and probably tonight I'll dream about the 39' Ford with the 302 in the garage or maybe the 57' with the fuel injected 350 or possibly the Dodge Challenger with the Hemi or maybe...

**Goodnight and pleasant dreams,**

**Scott**