

## A VENT WINDOW VIEW – *HENRY and ME*

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A friend's request to have a non-operative rust bucket sedan removed from his property led to a "Show-and-Tell moment of the kind car buffs love. It followed after I arranged for another friend to haul the old junker to a wrecking yard.

A week or so later when I went to make sure all had gone as planned, I was given a close up look at another car, one dating from my teen years as a reward for my part in setting up the old car pickup. I am not interested in beginning another project, but a look at someone else's work adds spice to one's day, especially when the restoration is well done. Over the years restoration projects have cost me a whole lot of work and time as limited funds meant a huge commitment to avoid losing money on my investments.

On this occasion, however, there was no risk in taking a close look at one of Ford's handsome Fairlanes from 1956. Its dark blue and white outlined with chrome suggests an aircraft aiming for the sky as it reaches takeoff speed.

Fortunately, this Ford sedan was not for sale because the restored Detroit beauty from the Fifties had me licking my lips for I adore the automotive styling of that era.

After thirty minutes of lascivious looks and covetous caresses of the car's "full-sized" steering wheel, I tore myself away and headed for home. En route, I began to think about all the other Fords I have known and realized that over the course of 75 years as an enthusiastic road warrior, I've ridden in or driven most models of Henry Ford's passenger vehicles since my first day of life. (That event came after Dad's '37 two-door sedan flew over a roller-coaster bump that led to my arrival a week earlier than expected.)

Naturally, in the immediate years that followed, my memory of family vehicles was limited, but when the '41 Fords came out Dad bought one; it was barely "broken-in" when WW II essentially ended car production for civilians until 1946.

My first experience "behind the wheel" came in that car. I was ten when I fired up the V-8 flathead, shifted into low and promptly ran the Ford into a gate. Fortunately, that first solo failed to damage car or gate. That was the day when I began to worship cars—girls failed to catch my eye until much later!

My car choices and experiences usually involved Fords, largely because of the disappointing Chevrolets (a '47, '49, and a '53) that Dad drove after the '41 Ford became history. Things improved a bit when he brought home a brand new '55 Chevy six-cylinder two-door with an overdrive. That was a nice ride, but I'd hoped for *anything* with a V-8 under its hood.

In 1958, I acquired *my* first car, a '55 Ford with a 272-cid V-8. That machine served me much longer than it should have considering the stress I applied to its automatic transmission; in Houston during 1957 and '58 every street with a stoplight was a drag strip. That Ford served me so well it is a wonder I ever bought and drove any other make ... but I did! In fact, I owned several Chevys, including a '75 Nova and a '79 El Camino; both failed to hold up and, in the case of my El Camino (which was a nice ride) I learned that if a car is a lemon no amount of sugar will make it palatable.

Years later, I drove an '85 Impala powered by a six that lasted halfway through its second 100,000 before giving up the ghost. That one encouraged me to buy another used Impala, a 1989 ex-highway patrol car. That unit was easily GM's best product ever! I've mentioned those Chevrolets to show that while I do lean toward FoMoCo's products, I don't want Henry and his minions to take me for granted.