

A VENT WINDOW VIEW
"Trading Iron Horses"
March 2016

There have been a goodly number of autos in my life, so many in fact that some have faded from my memory. Some really lacked a standout reason to care, but most became unforgettable for reasons sometimes good, sometimes not. Many were purchased "used" before my income allowed me to consider new ones. Prior to those "moneyed" times I shopped the lots for low mileage used cars with prices or options that made them handy for family use, although sometimes my selections in those long ago days were "colored" by a desire for power. Nonetheless, convenience options, usually won out, especially those required by my growing family.

Quite often a vehicle ended up in my possession due to some prior owner's financial problems or his or her lack of satisfaction with the car's size and (or) options that suited me.

It was the bargain price that led to my choosing a used 1955 Ford sedan for my first car. Its V-8 engine mated to an automatic transmission offered plenty of boost for a lad who could not afford to pay speeding tickets. Also, its powertrain meant I was not wearing out my tires drag-racing at stoplights, a standard of entertainment enjoyed by most young males in South Texas during the mid-Fifties.

Later on, after wedding a girl from that area, a move to the Midwest that put us closer to her mother seemed wise when it became apparent that soon we'd need seats for three at our dinner table. I wasted no time; with every pound of household goods we could cram into the Ford we headed north to Missouri, utilizing a route that took us through the scenic mountains of Arkansas. This choice placed some serious stress on the car's transmission.

That eventually led me to swap the '55 for a '49 Mercury two-door, a fine machine that lasted until it became clear that teaching one's pregnant wife to operate a stick shift was stressing both student and teacher. Next up was another 1955 automatic, this one a 210 Chevy 4-door. Its transmission lasted only four months, but by then I was commuting 50 miles from St. Joseph to Kansas City to my new job with a major airline. Finally I was making money enough that when the Chevy began to fail I swapped it for a new, fire-engine red '63 Falcon. That little car was a stick-shift, but it also was easier for the household's chief grocery shopper to operate.

That machine lasted five years by which time the three kids had grown large enough for me to recognize that the Falcon was becoming a bit too small.

That led to a decision to exchange it for a new 1968 Fairlane wagon with a fake wood exterior; by then my wife was handling the larger car ably enough to drive it in big city traffic. Soon after that we became a two-car family when I purchased an Austin A-40 for the short commute to my airport job.

Someday soon I hope to compile a list titled "*Cars I Have Owned.*" The operative word in that line is soon because my memory is fading much like the paint on most of the vehicles that will show up on that list.