

Red Roadster

Let's go back 40 years or so, around the time our oldest son was born.

Don't know just why I was over in our old neighborhood, The Block, Whitaker Street, well actually on 38th Street at Barnard across from the old number 3 fire station, and in front of a row of apartments that line the north side of the street I saw a car for sale and fell in love with it, red roadster, 135.00, a Singer, made in England, looked much like the classic MG or some of the American cars of the 30's.

Price was right, tires looked good, no business at all with such a car at that time of my life, but then I have always been car crazy, seemed like a good deal for the price, but unfortunately the motor had a rod knocking.

I thought I had to have it and went and bought it after work one evening and brought it home with the help of a friend and without even asking Maxine, bad move.

I guess I learned some things including that I was not a great mechanic or car salesman; looking back I was just a kid playing. If mama and daddy were not feeding and housing us we would have been hungry, I had not grown up enough to understand life at that time.

In my quest to get it running I found a second 1953 Singer at a junk yard on Ogeechee Road, about at the intersection of a cut-off road that went in the direction of the train station, I think. Paid 50.00 for this vehicle and hauled it home for spare parts, the main item in need being a crankshaft since the one in my red roadster had a worn place due to the rod knocking.

I think it was around this time that daddy rented the garage over in our old neighborhood on Desoto Avenue and 35th Street and suggested I could stay, but that my "junk" needed to leave home.



I ordered some parts out of Tampa, Florida and others from New York City. For a first attempt at rebuilding an engine guess I didn't do too badly but it was far from perfect. Guess one of the first jobs was to get the engine removed from the car, hard job when you don't have an engine hoist.

At some point the car was in the backyard of Aunt Doris and Uncle Herbert, Maxine's aunt and uncle, at the home down on Bolton Street where I gave her the engagement ring a few years earlier.

Anyway back to the story, without a lift I had removed many of the parts that just bolted on the engine and Uncle Herbert being a big husky fellow just reached in and lifted the remains of the engine out manually, by himself.

Did two things wrong that I remember, put the rear main bearing cap on backwards, found the problem but had damaged the bearing, also broke one piston ring and used an old one, as a result the roadster always used oil and fouled out that sparkplug.

It would have seemed simple to have just ordered additional replacement parts, but money was not available, and I was just an impatient kid not waiting to wait another month or so to reorder parts by snail mail.

After being painted white and the addition of a new top and interior it became a nice looking car, drove it a while but it was not a practical car for us and I really needed to get my money back out of it for other things. Sold it twice, but I don't believe I ever got much of my money back from the adventure.

Anyway the short fun story with this car was trying to get the engine started after the rebuild. Needed to pull the car to get the engine started that first time, remember the bearing was put in backwards, but I had not caught on to that problem at the time.

I asked Maxine to drive our other car, a big 1955 Packard Patrician, and pull the Singer so hopefully it would start.

Now you have to consider several things, Maxine had never really done much driving, may not even have had a license to drive at this time, but in those days streets in Oakdale were dirt and little traffic.

The cars were parked bumper to bumper in from of mama's house at 611 Johnston Street, connected by a long chain of Grandpa Wilson's, Maxine's dad.

This chain was likely over 50 feet long but Maxine not being a driver, did grasp the idea of moving slowly till the chain tightened, so she just stomped the gas on the Packard and was somewhere across in front of Betty White's house when the chain finally got tight, I'm sure it wasn't, but it seemed like she was going about 40 miles an hour when the chain reached its limit.

Bam, what a jolt, I had just wrapped the chain around the bumper of the Singer which was now pointed like the cow-catcher on an old steam engine, the bumper ends curved so far around that they cut into the front tires and just about sliced the top off of them, luckily it was rolling on the tires that came with the parts car from the junkyard.

Guess we did have some fun with the car; know I have pictures of us at Hilton Head in the car with Maxine's friend Paula and husband John. The picture shows the Singer at the edge of the dunes between a watermelon field and the beach, but today, or should I say 20 years ago this area was full if fine, high dollar homes instead of melons.

Might be fun to have it today, I've seen a few on e-Bay, but don't know that I have succeeded that well with the 1948 Packard that sits because I don't have time to tinker or enjoy playing, maybe one day, I hope.

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