

THE CHESAPEAKE BULLETIN
CIRCULATION MANAGER
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OUR 55TH YEAR

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Flowermart Antique Car Show – May 7th
Sunshine Grille Car Show – May 22nd
B&O Railroad Museum Antique Car Show – June 27th

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1903 Ford Emblem

Beth Muscedere's 1916 Ford Model T Runabout at the Fire Museum – Read about this car on page 14

1916 Ford Model T Runabout Keeps On Running

By Beth Muscedere

My dad, Howard Snyder, liked the brass era cars. We didn't have any antique cars when I was real young, but when I got into my teens and close to starting college he decided to get into the hobby. His first automotive love was the Stanley Steamer, but the cost to get one even back then was beyond our family's budget

So, my dad began hunting for an antique car and soon found a 1916 Ford Model T Runabout in Harford County. It met some of his criteria – it had a brass radiator and it was affordable. But the Model T needed a complete restoration. To say it was a project car might be an understatement, because it had a sapling tree growing out of a fender well. The tree had to be cut away so that the car could be loaded for the move home.

My dad started the complete restoration hunting for NOS parts and ordering what he couldn't readily find from the Model T parts suppliers. A lot of labor hours went into the mechanical and body work on the '16 T to bring it back to a working, reliable car.

When he got to the interior restoration, he rented an industrial sewing machine and fabricated the seats, side curtains and top out of the correct material that he bought. I guess that he didn't want an interior kit, or maybe they weren't available yet.

When the restoration project was finished, my dad used his towing rig – a 1978 Thunderbird and trailer – to take the Model T to various car shows. I remember going to the Apple Blossom Meet in Winchester, VA with him. He received an AACA First Junior Award for the car, which was a compliment about his restoration work

Dad retired and decided to get another antique car, which was a 1909 Buick that also needed a complete restoration. However, he broke his arm while hand crank starting the Buick one day and decided that maybe it wasn't the car for him. So he sold the Buick, but that left an empty space in our garage.

Dad then began a project to create a Ford Model T speedster. The project included buying a Rootlieb body (a readymade reproduction) and parts from all over including many spare parts from the '16 T restoration project. The bright yellow speedster was titled as a 1913 because the key parts of the car were for that year.



Beth preparing her '16 Model T for the July 4th parade in Towson, a local event that she often participates in with one of her cars.

I learned to drive these Model Ts, because they were part of the family and got me involved in the hobby. Dad wanted me to keep practicing driving these Model Ts. Sometimes the timing of a run would conflict with my social life because I would come into the house smelling like an auto mechanic just before going out for the evening.

The T was an easy car to learn to drive. Since both cars had electric starters, they didn't require hand cranking, which probably would have made it difficult for me to be enthused about driving these Ts.

I drive the 1916 Ford Model T to car events that can be reached with a brass era car on surface streets around the Towson area. I decided to use the model Ts only locally, so the towing rig has been sold.

The 1913 Speedster has developed mechanical problems and has been

temporarily sidelined while my husband Michael (my mechanic) helps me keep the '16 maintained and on the road.

1916 was a transition year for the brass Model T. About half of the year's production was made with the brass shell radiator, which was changed to a black painted steel radiator shell later in the model year. Brass trim on side, tail, and head lamps was discontinued, also replaced by black painted steel early in the model year. The hood was changed from aluminum to steel. And, the turtle deck door handle was changed to a pressed-steel type.

Ford produced just over 501K vehicles in 1916, of which 98.6K were Runabouts and 363K were Touring cars – so more than 90% of '16 Fords were open cars.

Most of the 15 million Ford Model Ts were black. "A Ford buyer can have any color they want, as long as it's black" has been attributed to Henry Ford. Black didn't become the only color available until very late 1914.

It has often been said that the reason Ford changed to making only black cars was that the color dried faster creating cost efficiencies. The changeover to black coincided with the introduction of an improved black paint named Japan Black, which was formulated to allow for fast drying in paint shop ovens.

However, Japan Black was applied only to sheet metal parts like hoods and fenders. Ford vehicle bodies were framed in wood, which could not withstand oven-drying temperatures. While they were also painted black, it wasn't the fast drying Japan Black. Ford historians believe that Japan Black was introduced because it had superior durability to meet the road conditions of the early unpaved surfaces.

My 1913 Speedster is bright yellow. But, even back in the era these sporty car bodies were put on a Ford chassis post-production and could be any color.

I plan to keep driving and maintaining my Ford Model T cars, both to enjoy them and to keep Dad's legacy alive.