

ANNE MARIE AND SQUIRREL HUNTING INCLUDED!

Don Ramsburg Had A Love Affair With Late 1930's Ford V8's

By Don Ramsburg

It was 1961, and I was checking the Baltimore Sun classified ads for old Fords for sale, as I did every day in those days, when I spotted a '37 Ford two-door sedan listed for \$125 in Cockeysville. I rang the phone number and talked to the owner to verify it was still available, then Anne Marie and I drove to Cockeysville from Linthicum Heights to see the car. It was a '37 Standard flat-back with a V8-60 engine.

The black paint was pretty dull and looked to have been an amateur paint job. Otherwise, it appeared to be original right down to the 5.50 x 16 tires. The jack and tools were in the trunk with the spare, the owner's manual was in the glove compartment. The interior was not mohair but the cheaper alternative.

This was a nice running car, and the seller said he had purchased it from a farmer in Southern Maryland. The interior was in good shape, except the woodgrain had begun to craze from age, and there were a few tobacco juice stains that had blown back on the headliner. I couldn't leave without agreeing to buy it for \$125. After the sale, the seller asked me if I thought the price had been right. I told him that I thought it might have brought \$200 if it hadn't been so far out in the country (*a sign of the times!*). I guess I was right because, as soon as my best friend saw it, he offered me \$200 for the Ford. The car needed a tire, and I set out to try to find one. None of the tire stores had a 5.50 x 16 tire, and I was getting pretty discouraged. Then I noticed that a Harley Davidson had 5.50 x 16 tires. I bought a tire from a motorcycle shop and the tire problem was solved.

Hunting for squirrels...

The V8-60 ran okay but was a little slower than I was accustomed to. I remember driving it to the mountains in Allegheny County to go squirrel hunting. I drove down a dirt road to a valley that looked promising for squirrels. After the hunt, I loaded my shotgun and my game-jacket in the car for the trip back home. To my surprise, the '37 Ford was unable to climb back up that mountain in first gear. I had to put it in reverse, and back up the mountain to get out of there!

I was driving the '37 out of BWI Airport one evening at dusk. Most people already had their headlights on, but I did not because you know how dim they are at low speed. I don't remember what I was doing there, but I suddenly noticed an airport police car behind me with the lights flashing. I decided to ignore him since I was almost off of the airport property. We drove along until he realized that I wasn't going to stop, and he turned his siren on. I chickened out and pulled over to the side of the road. When I got out of my car, he said: "Your headlights aren't on! Give me your license and registration." After doing that, I reached in the open driver's side window and turned the light switch to low beam. I walked to the front of the car, to my surprise, the headlights were not on. I said: "How about that!" I proceeded to check the fuse under the dash. The fuse was blown, and I wouldn't have been able to turn on the headlights if I wanted to!

I reached in the glove compartment, pulled out a spare 30 amp fuse, and inserted the new fuse in the holder under the dash. I turned on the headlights, and said: "How's that?". The cop said: "You mean to tell me you didn't know your headlights weren't on?" I said: "Yes, that's right!" The cop said: "Why didn't you



Don Ramsburg's beloved 1937 Ford two-door slantback he purchased in 1961 for \$125.00, 'fused' headlights, mechanical brakes and all!

stop when you saw me behind you?" I said: "I thought you were a taxicab; I never saw a yellow police car before!" I could see his blood pressure rising right before my eyes. He gave me back my license and registration, and said: "Get out of here and don't come back on the airport property again!" I ignored that command because we both knew he didn't have the authority to do that.

Soon after the BWI incident, I was told by my landlord in Linthicum Heights that I would have to get my old Fords and parts off of the property or find another place to live...*great to be popular, isn't it?*

I had a 1939 Ford Deluxe two-door sedan, a 1939 Ford standard coupe, and the 1937 Ford standard two-door sedan. I also had the basement of that house pretty much full of used Ford parts, which the landlord had seen when he was down there checking the furnace.

Oh well, I was able to take over a garage rental in Irvington (near Westview) that a friend was giving up. The rent was a whopping \$3 per month. I moved the '39 Ford two-door and all my used Ford parts to the rented garage. Anne Marie and I moved to an apartment on Buckingham Road, near Liberty Road and the beltway. I had driven the '39 Ford coupe over there, but I then discovered that the engine was cracked, and I never drove it again.

The '37 Ford tudor slantback must have seen a lot of rough roads in southern Maryland, because the steering was loose as a goose...*anyone old enough to know what that means?* I bought a kingpin reamer for Fords from Montgomery Ward, and replaced the king pins and the tie rod ends in the driveway of our apartment. This was a big improvement but I suspected that the steering box needed to be rebuilt. That was more than I wanted to get into at that time, so I made myself satisfied with what I had.