Another Speedster Story

By Art Reichlin

Following retirement from farming a few years ago, I knew I would involve myself into something to do with cars, but was not sure what it would be. One day as I walked across the yard to my shop I suddenly had the answer. I would build a speedster and instantly I knew it would be a 1928 Chevrolet Speedster. My reasoning was that I am one who likes to change things, or if you prefer, one who can not leave things as they are. This project would fit into this category perfectly.

My reason for choosing a '28' Chevy was that Dad had purchased a buzz saw with a '28" Chevy engine when I was about sixteen years old. That engine thoroughly fascinated me. I was always ready to start it up when it was wood cutting time. This fascination never left me.

The first step was how do I find a Chevy chassis. I immediately went to see my nephew Paul and asked him if he might know of a Chevy chassis, and to my surprise he told me there was one at the Snohomish wrecking yard a few months ago as he was looking for some parts for his pickup. He also told me he already bought the Olds 3-part head and "27" Chevy spindles for his 'T.

After two days with the help of a friend and my brother Frank, we literally dragged out with a tractor, from the far corner the wrecking yard, going through deep mud, moving cars out the way etc. We managed to bring out a '28' Chevy truck, a "27" chassis, and a Chevy 490 chassis.

Now, I had never seen a Chevrolet speedster at that time so I was somewhat on my own, however Frank had given many ideas about Model "T' speedsters. He suggested I might consider lowering the chassis, which I did by placing the front axle over the springs. To lower the rear, I narrowed the frame at about the midway area to allow the front of the rear spring perches to be welded to the side of the frame rather than under the frame as it was stock. On the rear of the spring, the shackle was flipped over.

An earlier radiator was used, as they are not nearly as tall. Originally, stock steering was used until a friend suggested using '41" through "46' Chevy pickup steering which I readily changed. For me this had been the best part of driving my speedster's. I have used this steering on all four speedsters including the one I am building now.

The engine contains Egge high compression pistons, about 6 % to I ratio, a modified cam ground by Delta Cam at Portland which gives perfect idle with good low-end torque. The fly wheel was lightened about twelve pounds. For carburetor a Rochestor Dual Jet 2 barrel was mounted on self built water heated intake manifold and of course home made headers and a 'stink pipe" completed the exhaust system. –

Hydraulic brakes were added, the front axle parts were taken from "46' Chevy pickup axle as everything bolted right to the '28' axle. On the rear, "46" Chevy pickup back plates were adapted. This took a little trial and error until it worked properly. 1931 Chevy 19" wire spoke wheels are used.

Since the first two Chevy's have been built, a 30% overdrive unit was added, which gives the car an overall ratio of 2.87 and a direct drive ratio of 4.10. This arrangement has been very satisfactory for all around performance.

I helped Frank with the body and I try to be nice to him, as I never know when I might need him again.

The first Chevy speedster utilizes a "28' head, the second one an Olds 3 port. Both engines were built up the same except for the head. I can find no difference in power or speed on these two cars. Perhaps, for high speed racing the Olds head could make a difference.

My wife Helen and I have driven these cars all day long without tidng, partially due to upholstery and seats done by Reny Santiago and Paul Reichlin. These cars handle extremely well on tight corners as well as on strait roads. I do not claim to have the best car in the club, nor do I claim to have a fast car. How fast will my Chevy's go? I don't know. I do know they will maintain any legal speed. In summary, I will say these cars are fun to drive with Handling ease and comfort.

The Chevy speedster, which is under construction now, will be similar except a 25-pound flywheel with an updated clutch system and full pressure oil system. Would I ever build a "T' speedster?? Well, that thought has crossed my mind a few times. I wouldn't know how to improve on some "T's" speedsters I have seen in the club. I have great respect for you "T' people.