



Grandma and Grandpa's 1921 Model T Speedster. The car is painted bright yellow with bold black striping.

GRANDMA AND GRANDPA'S \$281.78 MODEL T FORD!

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The venture of this story unfolds when a good friend called on the phone one Saturday morning and asked me if I knew where there were any T Fords around - available. I informed him of a 1921 touring in a local garage that I had had my eyes on for a few years but hadn't done anything about. He asked if I wanted it and I replied, "Not if you want it more! We drove over to the old garage, knocked on the door at the house in front, spoke to the man who owned the car, who assured us the car was available. He added that he felt he ought to have \$35 for it. My friend nearly broke his arm getting to his wallet! When we opened the door of the old garage and viewed the remains....well, I had forgotten how rough the old Ford was.

We loaded it on a trailer and my friend drove his rusty treasure to its new home. A week or two passed and I got a phone call. It was this same friend. He indicated that the restoration was a little more than he cared to tackle, asking me in the same breath if I wanted the car. I indicated I did. A few days later a pickup with trailer pulled up to our house with the T aboard. I asked what I owed for the old Ford and he said, "Nothin' - thanks for sharing it with me originally! I thanked my friend graciously. For the nearly three decades I had been "T-ing" this was the first time I had ever been given one. It was a good feeling - kind of like the stories you hear from older admirers on the street.

Well, to make a longer story shorter, "Grandpa, who lives next door. came over to admire the new arrival.

beginning almost immediately to tell me about his Model T when he was a youngster. He shared some downright "fun" stories of a time when a greater percentage of the original fifteen-plus million graced the streets. As we chatted I could almost detect a tone of yearning for another, together with a humorous tear forming in his eye. I was spontaneously compelled to utter the words, "Would you like it, Dad? He lit up like a newly polished brass radiator! With his immediate response of approval I knew it was the right thing to say. Besides, where would





Rakish, low steering with twin bucket seats, Dodge gas tank, and a tool box.



From every angle the little Ford looks "right."

we park another one with the other two already nestled in the overcrowded garage?

Anyway, to continue, a couple of good neighbors, together with another of Grandpa's sons, a grandson and myself, decided to fix up the old flivver for Grandpa and Grandma. It was unanimously agreed that the original touring body and fenders just had too much missing metal, plus a dozen or so too many hardhats. We suggested to Grandpa that a home made pickup "fire car" in bright red would be nice, especially since he was a retired city fireman. We told him we could detail it with a ladder, hose, brass fire extinguisher, complete with siren and bell! It didn't take long for us to notice the very obvious look of disinterest on his face.

We asked if there was anything wrong and he said, "Well, I just spent twenty-five years with the fire department, and my idea of retirement is not to drive a fire car around, even if it is an older model! He con-



tinued by adding, "Grandma and I were thinking of something a little more sporty, like a Model T bug.

We knew what he meant - on both accounts. I told him that today among old car folks, they referred to that type model as a speedster, then drew a quick sketch on the back of an envelope. Grandpa's eyes began to light up. He knew what he wanted.

We then began one of the most exciting old Ford fix-up campaigns of this era - a speedster for Grandpa and Grandma.

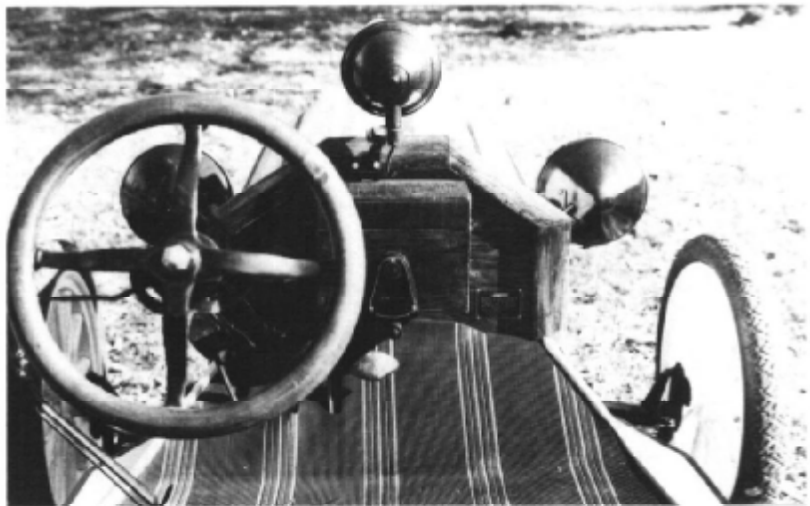
We pulled the old engine out, looked her over carefully, replaced the rod bearings, gave her some new rings and a valve job. We cleaned the old carb and timer, and adjusted the coils. Picked up an old Dodge touring car gas tank from a friendly neighbor and we were on our way. A section of the family's replaced Cadillac exhaust system served as a three-inch straight-through exhaust pipe for the project.



Three-inch pipe cap radiator cap with its moto-meter.

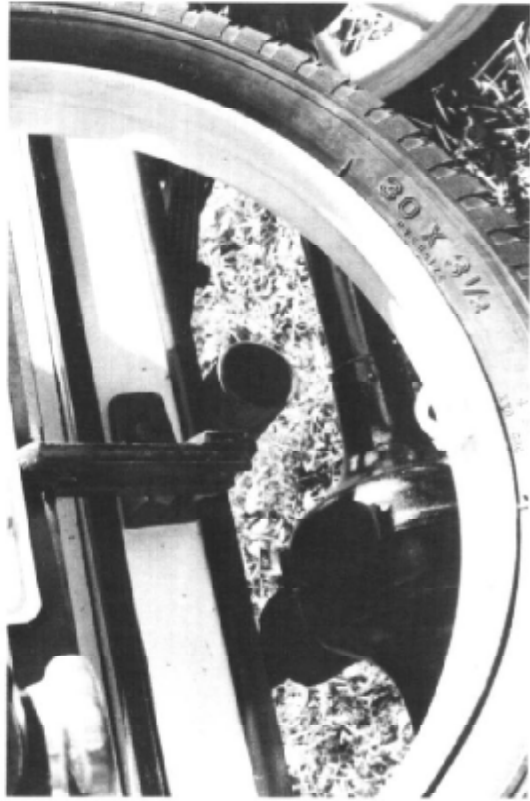


The mid-twenties Chevrolet headlights, \$50 special radiator shell and the lengthened hood.

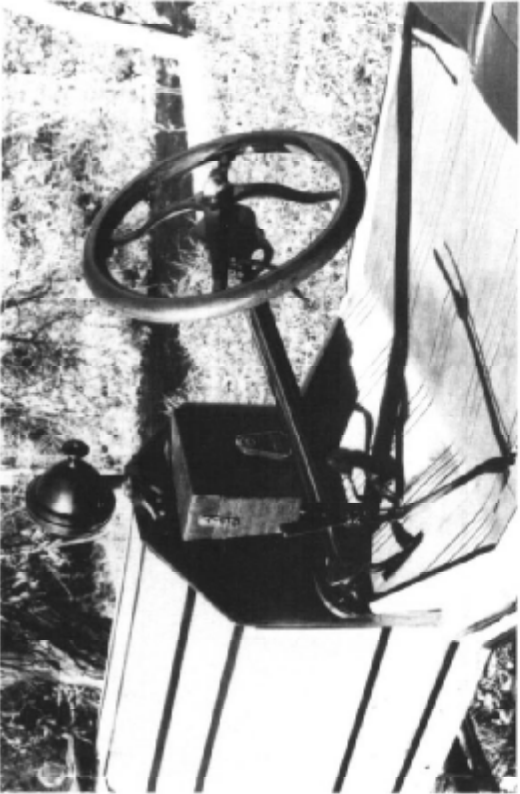




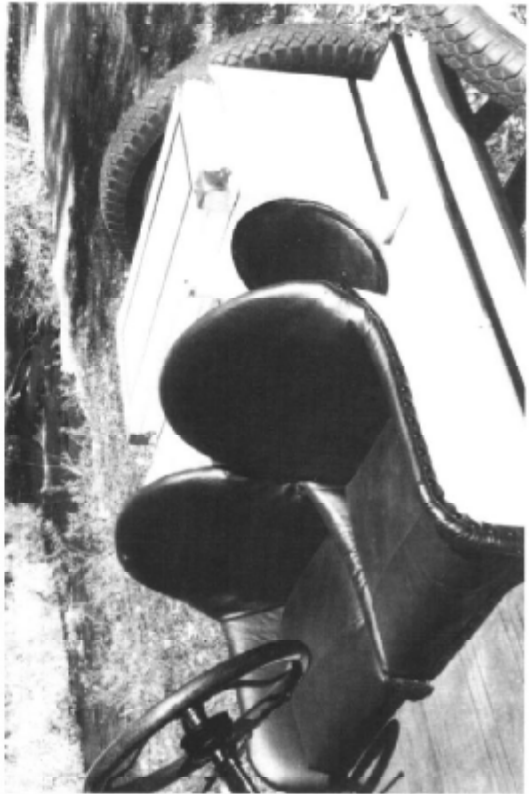
Close view of the modern, modified trailer hitch as the spare tire carrier. Note the \$3.99 mail order tail light!



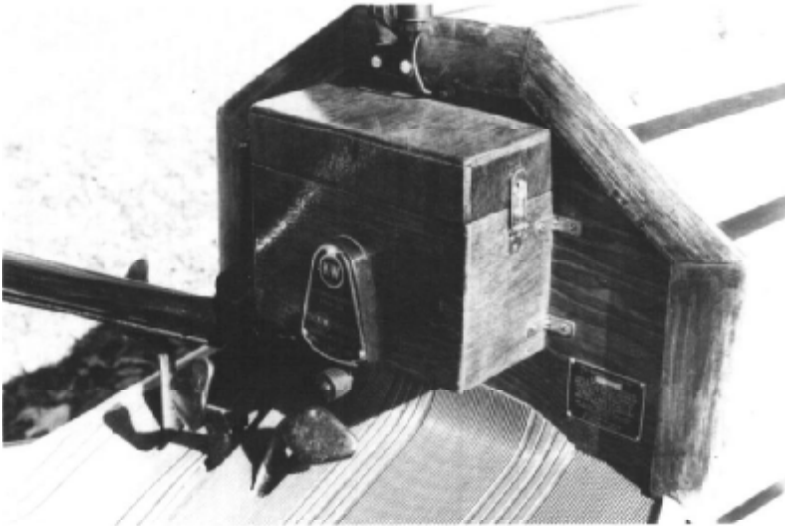
Three-inch Cadillac straight-thru tail pipe, giving a deep, powerful sound from the stock engine.



The pedals and hand brake lever are angled to clear the lowered steering column. A 1920's accessory spotlight is mounted on the dash.

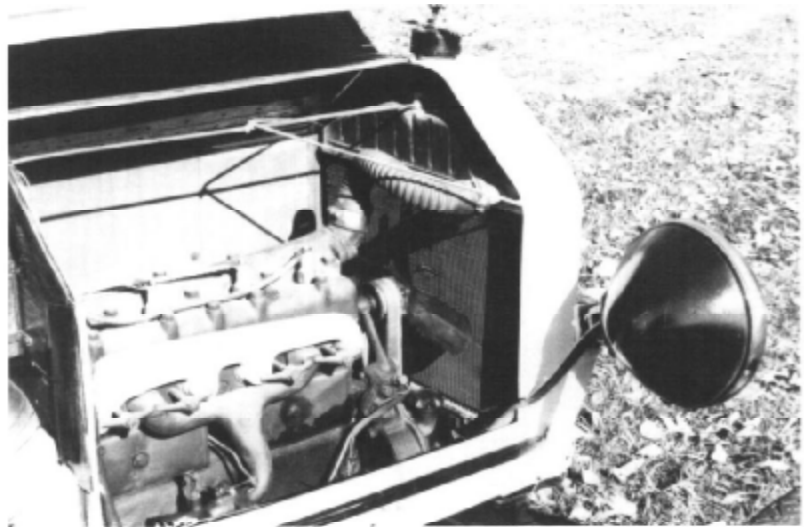


Squared one-inch pine bucket seats give the appearance of curved models.



Home-made coil box and ignition twitch. Note the angled brake pedal.

Note the covered and slightly modified sports car radiator under the custom shell. The engine is stock 1921 Ford with the generator removed.



Next we stopped at the local junkyard, spotted a little sport car (maybe an MG) radiator that looked mighty close to T width and height, paid the man \$20; and with slight water inlet modification we had ourselves a radiator for the project.

We made some tape measurements, then a couple of drawings for plans, and headed for the local sheet metal shop: Fifty bucks later we fitted the "powerful looking newly-created radiator shell to the little radiator. They matched like him and her hogs in the warm afternoon mire!

We put together a hood, using some extra sheet metal from the same metal shop and some long piano hinges obtained from the Army surplus store. The hood handles came from the hardware store at 69¢ each and look a lot like original equipment. The hood was made longer to add to the "power and "sporty look. I made up a wood box, with my special look-alike K-W kick ignition switch. (I've made about half-a-dozen for the local old-

car folks and they look pretty good with the new switch plates now available.)

Seats, floorboards and toolbox were formed from scrap wood found in the stack outside the garage. The spare tire carrier came from modern trailer hitch components. The headlights came with a phone call one night from our house-mover neighbor, who found them in an old garage he had purchased. They arrived at our doorstep complete with original lenses! (I think they are from a Twenties or early Thirties Chevrolet.) They have a nice appearance with the newly-shaped radiator - slightly larger than stock T, yet retaining feeling of the same type original light. The sidelights (not shown in the pictures) and tail light came from the mail order catalog at \$3.99 each, and the spotlight was found at a second-hand store for \$8. The hub caps are new.

We lowered the steering column near maximum! The main body frame is built on more-or-less a false body concept, which sets around the T frame, hanging even

lower than the original rails, thus the extra rakish and low appearance without touching or altering the springs, axle, etc.

The upholstery was hand-done with remnant material in black, and believe it or not, the paint was brushed on with high-quality, dime store variety bright yellow enamel, with pure bristle brush. (I might add that over the years I have read several accounts indicating that they used to do it that way years ago - on early, early automobiles.) Doesn't look bad either. Game out real smooth and without a run!

Well, needless to say, the whole project was a labor of fun and love - with no concern or pressures of total authenticity or judging. And Grandma and Grandpa's reaction to the finished project? They love it! (Incidentally, because of Grandpa's heavy foot, we installed heavy-duty transmission bands to match!)

Grandma and Grandpa proudly behind the wheel of their newly-finished 1921 Ford speedster.

TOTAL EXPENSES

Basic chassis (including wheels) . . .	No cost (donated)
Tires	No cost (donated)
Sheet metal (hood and radiator shell)	\$58.00
Wood	Back yard scrap pile
Wood trim	6.00
Paint	12.00
Engine "Overhaul (rods, rings, gaskets, wiring)	81.00
Valve job	Donated
Radiator motometer	32.00
Side and tail lamps	12.00
Spotlight	8.00
Ignition switch plate	3.50
Radiator	20.00
Hub caps	18.00
Tool box trim	8.00
Floor mat (Sears black hall runner)	7.00
Upholstery material (remnants)	4.00
Gauge (for appearance only)	1.75
Ford script	7.00
Hood handles	1.45
Hood hinges	2.78
Total	281.78

