

Motoring Memories

I spent my childhood looking at the parts and pieces of a 1923 Ford Model T Pick Up in my grandfather's garage lovingly referred to as "The Little Beer Truck". I was always told, "Don't touch Pops' truck." Ironically, I played a part in getting the truck back to driving condition. This is that story.

My grandfather, Bob Hughes, first saw the truck in the early 1960's in Inglewood, California. His high school friend, Don Warwick began assembling the Model T "Little Beer Truck" about the same time that my grandfather, Bob volunteered for the United States Air Force. In May 1964 when my grandfather was home on leave, Don was about to install a 283 Chevrolet V8 engine taken from a Corvette.

The truck was originally painted yellow and in 1969 Don painted it black and drove it around Inglewood, CA until 1970 when his interests shifted to building a Dune Buggy. Through the years my grandfather and Don lost touch. It was not until 2003 when they were reunited at the Inglewood High School Class of 1958 45th class reunion. My grandfather asked Don about the Model T truck. Don told him it had been in storage since 1970.

My grandfather arranged to buy the truck. In 2005, my grandfather and my father, (also named Bob) towed a flatbed trailer roundtrip from Kansas City to Los Angeles to retrieve the parts of the Little Beer Truck and brought

them back to my grandfather's garage.

My grandfather began reassembling the truck, but life events began to interfere. He moved several times and worked numerous jobs. In 2017, he lost his wife of 52 years to cancer. This is also when he began to suffer from dementia.

In 2020, grandpa suffered a stroke which further damaged his memory and ability to work. The truck sat dormant in his garage, collecting dust. "Don't touch Pops' truck" became a harsh reality. I thought the truck would never see the road again.

In late 2020, I asked my father and his friend Phil Fluty if they could help work on Pop's truck with the goal of making the truck drivable again. By late 2021, we needed fabrication and assembly beyond our abilities in a residential garage. With the help of Abel Perea and his crew they were able to get the truck running for the 2022 Kansas City World of Wheels Car Show. My grandfather shed a tear as we drove the truck onto the show floor at Bartle Hall. Our whole family attended the show with him and the truck won a class award for Vintage Traditional Rod.

Afterwards, grandpa handed me the keys and asked me to look after the truck for him. My childhood directive of "Don't touch Pops' truck" has become "Take care of Pops' truck."

We contacted grandpa's friend, Don Warwick and shared the good news about the truck and the car show. Don is currently living in Arizona and building another Model T.

My grandfather's association with this truck has lasted almost 60 years. He bravely continues to fight the debilitating effects of dementia and plans to attend the 2022 Turkey Creek Car Show in Merriam. I plan to be there with him surrounded by the family and friends that made this possible.