

President's Message

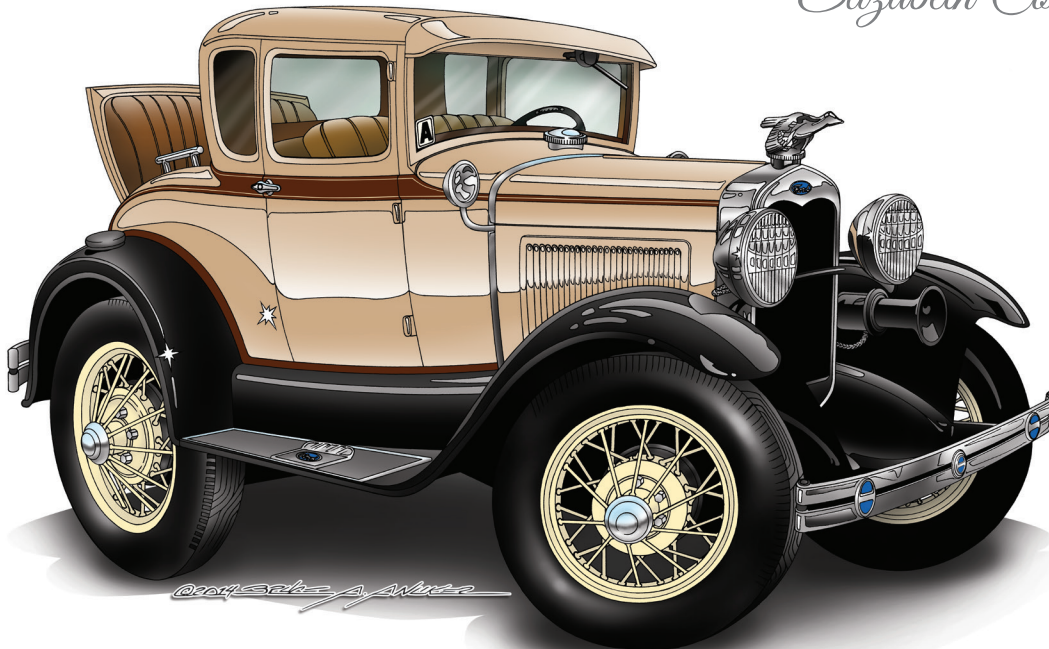
Many thanks to those of you who attended our meeting in January. Also, many thanks to Richard Holmes for use of his building and for providing the program on Model A brakes. Thanks to Rick Holmes for making the arrangements, providing the chairs and even the President's gavel. While the guys enjoyed the Model A demonstration, Judy Holmes shared her love of fabrics and sewing and shared some of her projects from quilts, a reticule and pillows. This was a win-win for everyone who attended. The space was large enough for social distancing and everyone wore a mask.

We will move forward with our plans to hold our May 15, 2021 Show in Downtown Burlington. We know that we may have to move our date further out but at least we can get everything lined up. Sponsors will need to be our main focus. Even if you aren't comfortable meeting with them in person, you may be able to just talk by telephone if this is someone you have dealt with before. Let Jeanne know if she needs to send an invoice. Otherwise, those with email, should have received a form that you can print off and take with you.

In February, we will meet on February 13, again at Richard Holmes' building at 1301 Belmont Street in Burlington at 3:00 pm. We will have a program in addition to our business meeting. Please bring your own chairs, wear a mask and bring a snack and something to drink if you wish.

Don't forget that February 14 is Valentine's Day and Tuesday, February 16 is Fat Tuesday and that means Mardi Gras! Find ways to celebrate.

Elizabeth Coble



February 2021 Treasurer's Report

There is very little to report from the Treasurer's Corner this month. Seven more members have paid their annual dues and we have paid the Duke Energy bill. We have just six more members who need to send in their dues. Thank you to Ray Fowler who has printed our membership cards again this year! We will be getting them out to everyone soon.

Jeannie Johnson

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Next Weak Spark Deadline

March Issue 2/20/21

Next Club Meeting

Saturday, February 13
3:00 PM
Richard Holmes' Building
1301 Belmont Street
Burlington, NC

Hosts

To Be Announced

Please Volunteer to Host a Meeting!

Stay tuned!

Ray Fowler's 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air



On April 15th of 1955, when Ray Fowler was 21 years old, he went down to Ernest Burwell Chevrolet in Spartanburg, South Carolina and took a look at the brand new 1955 Chevrolets. There were all body styles and colors available in a lot of about 75 cars and Ray looked over all of them. He had an interest in the Bel Air 2 door hardtop... Chevrolet's full-size yet sporty car that was built to resemble the convertible with no pillar at the rear of the door and chrome cross pieces on the headliner that resembled the retractable top of the convertible. The salesman wanted to steer Ray to the V8 engine that Chevrolet had just introduced for 1955. The extra \$75 to get the V8 was not in Ray's budget and he was more familiar

with the 6-cylinder engines since his dad had one, so he focused on that. Ray wanted a blue car and there were two blues available... the light blue with white accents and the darker Harbor blue which was in my opinion, the best color for the year. The salesman said there was a Harbor Blue over Shoreline Beige two-door hardtop with a 6 cylinder motor on the showroom floor, so they went to take a look. There sat Ray's car!

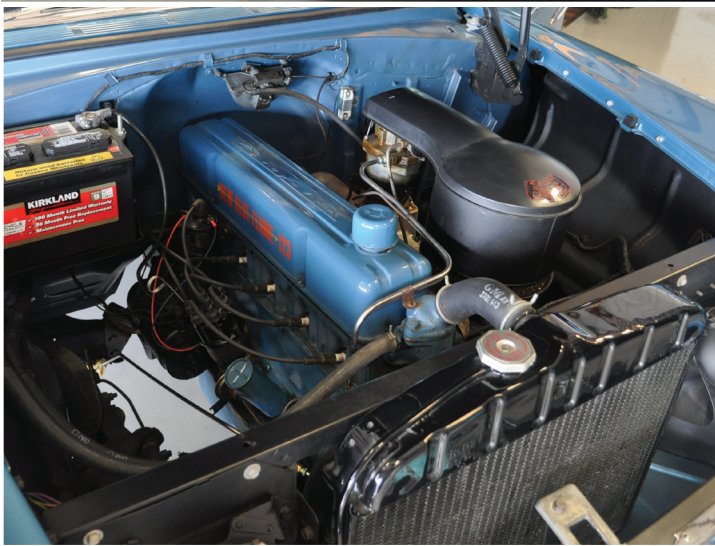
The car was just what Ray wanted, it came with a radio and the deluxe heater, and they worked out a deal for an even \$2100 dollars. Ray had a good friend in his neighborhood who managed a finance company in Spartanburg, so he took out a loan that put his payment at \$73.67 a month for 23 months with a \$500 dollar balloon payment at the end of the 23rd month.

Ray still had 6 weeks left until graduation from Clemson College. He drove the '55 Bel Air during his last few weeks at school and took it with him to a job at Western Electric in Burlington, North Carolina. Ray was due to serve in the military for two years after his education at Clemson, so in 1956 Ray entered the Signal Corps, the communications arm of the Army, at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Ray took his '55 Bel Air with him to New Jersey for 7 months and then he was assigned to Fort Gordon, Georgia for the next year and a half. At the end of his service, he had paid off the car, including the balloon payment and he was ready to return to civilian life.

At the completion of his obligation to the military, Ray was back home in Spartanburg, SC for a few months. At that



Ray Fowler's 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air



time the 1959 cars were on the show room floors and Ray was smitten with the style of the 1959 Chevrolets. Since the '55 was paid for, he decided to buy a '59 Impala and let his Dad have the '55 Bel Air. His Dad used the car for the next 10 years while Ray had moved on to Burlington and his job at Western Electric. His parents had the '55 until his Dad passed away in 1969. At that point, the car sat in their open tin roof garage with a gravel floor. There were not many weeks that his mother didn't get a visitor at the door wanting to buy the '55 Bel Air. Thankfully, it didn't get away!

In the late 1970's the car had been sitting in that garage for almost 10 years and it had a little over 140K miles on the odometer. Ray knew that it needed some attention, and knew a guy up in Winston-Salem that would replace

the rings, do a valve job on the motor, refresh the brakes, and complete enough maintenance to get the car back on the road. Ray used it sparingly here in North Carolina as a second car until the late '90's when Ray was finally ready to act upon his interest to do a more thorough restoration. He knew a local paint and body man that he trusted and felt like this was his opportunity to totally restore the car, including removing the engine and all the stainless and giving the body a full restoration. All the sheet metal is original as is all the stainless, except one piece and the exterior of the car is spectacular. Ray used a well-respected interior shop in Greer, SC to replace the entire interior, new carpet, headliner and all.

The total restoration took a little over 4 years and was completed around 2004. In the early 1990's Ray had become involved with the local chapter of the AACA which was the Alamance Chapter back when it was part of the NC Region. Being the original owner of the '55, Ray has enjoyed telling the full history of one of Chevrolet's most iconic cars to his friends and spectators at the local Region Meets and tours all around North Carolina. You don't meet many original owners showing their cars at our shows, but it's a real treat when you do. They usually have the most interesting stories to tell and they know so much of the history of their car. Ray and his 1955 Bel Air will be around at a show near you someday soon... if you see him, make sure to ask him about his beautiful '55 Bel Air!

Bill Cox, Jr.

Alamance Region Meeting January 8, 2021

The Alamance Region met at 3:00 PM Saturday January 8th at Richard Holmes' warehouse and garage, 1301 Belmont Street in Burlington. Seventeen members attended on a brisk winter afternoon. This was a different kind of meeting for the club because of state restrictions placed on the meeting of large groups caused by the extremely contagious Chinese virus plague.

President Elizabeth conducted a brief business meeting in one of the heated warehouse rooms:

- Thanked Richard and the Holmes family for hosting, providing a meeting location and arranging separate programs for the ladies and men.
- Thanked John Cox and Pat Zanolli for the 2020 virtual Christmas program.
- Jeannie Johnson gave a Treasurer's report. The club had to take money from one of the CD's to pay clubhouse expenses in 2020 since there was no car show. The Alamance Region roster of members is due March 1 at AACA headquarters in Hershey. This is an annual requirement of all Regions and Chapters.
- We remain hopeful that our downtown Alamance Car Show May 15th will go on; stressed the need for sponsors.
- The Hornet's Nest April 8-11 AutoFair and Show at the Charlotte/Concord Speedway are still scheduled.

Following the business meeting, the ladies stayed in the room for Judy Holmes' quilt display and discussion of quilts.

The men went to the adjacent room where Richard and Rick Holmes demonstrated the art of adjusting Ford Model A mechanical brakes. One of Richard's beautiful Model A Coupes was positioned on a lift for everyone to watch as these two skilled Model A mechanics performed an adjustment procedure on the front wheel brakes.



Some trivia about Ford's brakes - a bonus, not part of Richard's brake adjustment program above. By the time of the four-year 1928 through 1931 manufacturing run of the very advanced and affordable Ford Model A, most of the world's car makers had abandoned the mechanical brake system in favor of hydraulic brakes. Interestingly, it took most of the 1930's decade for Henry and Ford engineers to understand the clear advantages of hydraulic actuating for brakes, that hydraulics were superior to the mechanical systems Ford had used for almost thirty years and was reluctant to give up. Henry famously refused to equip his cars with hydraulic brakes up until the bitter end, which in Ford's case was the 1939 model year. Instead, he insisted on "the safety of steel, from pedal to wheel" as the ad copywriters wrote. The 1939 Fords were introduced with fanfare and boast of having four-wheel hydraulic brakes for improved braking power. Better late than never.

Ray Fowler

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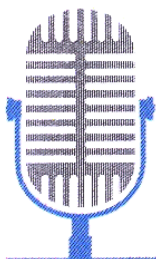
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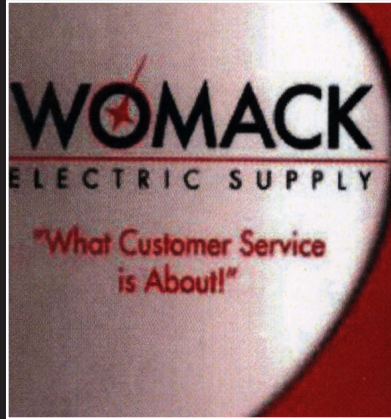
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