

Your favorite vehicles and those unforgettable rides

CAR TALK

Well, my favorite transporter was a 1968 VW Bus. It carried a wall-mounted, formica-topped writing table that I could prop up in front of the naugahyde-covered rear seat which itself pulled out flat to a sleeper. The rear windows slid open to screens. I mounted a peace symbol on the bow and a 2-by-8 plank on the stern. That plank bolted on and off easily, allowing me to pull out the rear engine, which I did twice in order to rebuild it in my kitchen with John Muir's "How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive," a guide for the "compleat idiot." I'm not allowed to tell anymore stories about it.

We received lots of great stories about your cars and wish we could publish more here. You can see lots more with photos on our Web site. Next month we'll publish students' ideas on "If Students Ran the School." [Deadline was June 15.] For more themes and the rules of our Nothing Could Be Finer series, see page 20.

—Michael E.C. Gery



THE 1933 FORD ROADSTER

My husband owned this wonderful 1933 Ford Roadster convertible with a rumble seat during his years at Windsor High School in Bertie County. After graduation in 1959, he joined the Army. The car was sold to a Marine who was stationed in Elizabeth City for the grand sum of \$200. The Marine drove it home to West Virginia.

The photo still shows the smudges of the tape used to hold it in his locker during his years in Germany as a soldier. We have spent hours online trying to find photos of a car like this one that has not been made into a hot rod.

I love to hear him talk about the fun times, such as trips to Nags Head. The car leaked oil so badly that he kept a tin can hanging under the engine to catch the leaking oil so it could be poured back through the engine.

Judy and Bill Lawrence,
Scranton, Tideland EMC



THE CUTLASS LIFESAVER

A 1967 Cutlass Oldsmobile station wagon saved my life. Coming home very late one night on a country road in Scotland County, my headlights beamed through the bottom of a train that had parked, in the middle of the night, across the road. There were no train lights blinking, no warning signals, no forewarning of what was parked ahead of me on that dark country road.

By the time I realized it was a train, I slammed on my brakes and skidded straight into it. Cars back then were built with solid metal, and the front of that Oldsmobile took the train on like a heavyweight. I was hurt, knocked unconscious, but recovered completely. And the Cutlass station wagon was totaled, but served in the highest possible way for me.

Janeen Lee, Stantonburg, Pitt & Greene EMC



MODEL A MEMORIES

Several years ago, my husband, Richard Jenkins Jr., restored this 1931 Ford A Model Coupe. It has been used to transport brides and grooms, and has been taken to class reunions, church gatherings and Sunday afternoon rides.

Every now and again we use it to update the pictures of our grandchildren.

Even though my husband passed away in 2003, this car provides many happy memories for all.

Polly Jenkins, Statesville, EnergyUnited



ARMED PERSONNEL CARRIER

My favorite car is my parents' 1930-something Ford. I thought it was a 1939, my birth-year, but a friend assures me it's a 1936. It was the only automobile my folks owned until 1953 and is the first vehicle in my memory.

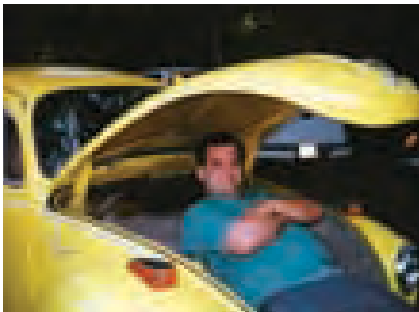
The Ford had "suicide" doors—the front doors opened as they still do, but the back doors opened out in the oppo-

site direction. When both were open they made a perfect screen for tots to pee, before the state thought of "Rest Areas."

On trips from Norfolk, where my dad was stationed during WWII, to visit grandparents in North Carolina, Mama would stop for servicemen "thumbing" for rides home. I remember sailors riding the running board when the Ford was already full. They balanced on the board running between front and back fenders with arms wrapped through both windows around the middle support hanging on for dear life. Cold winds blew in as my sisters were squished by two or three scratchy navy or olive drab uniforms with two more on a sofa-style seat beside Mama up front.

Prominent in my memory of the old Ford is the sprinting Greyhound hood ornament, which forged our way for all those years. He survives still as a keepsake of safer times.

Linda Edwards, Morganton, Rutherford EMC



MY BUG

I got a 1972 VW Bug on March 11, 2000, just a month after having fairly major surgery. I had always wanted a Bug. I saw it in a yard and just had to have it, so I bought it.

The Bug was running but needed some body work, paint, a tune up, new exhaust system and seats recovered. With the wisdom of my mother and help from a few friends, we got started. I personally did the motor work. With all the help, I had it on the road in three weeks.

After all the satisfaction of owning my Bug, I sold it in the fall of 2001 to help pay for my land where I now live.

Kelly Stanley, Roaring River, Surry-Yadkin EMC



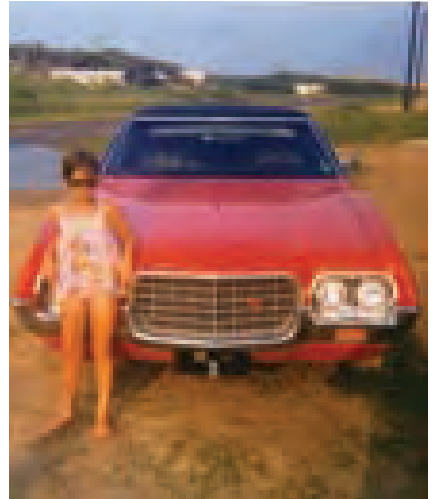
MY LITTLE GTO

My first car was a 1967 GTO. My dad gave it to me when I was only 14 years old. He let me drive it around the house until I got my license.

When I got a job, I really fixed it up. I had it painted black and put crushed velvet red button tuck inside with red carpet. I also put in air conditioning and a new am/fm cassette radio with nice speakers.

In 1990, I had it painted its original color, white. I kept that car until 1993. So I had it for about 15 years. I regret letting it go. My dad and I had a lot of good times fixing it up and driving it fast!

Sharon Hardin, Rutherfordton, Rutherford EMC



THE RUNAWAY TORINO

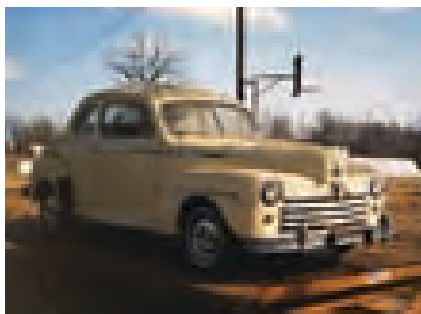
When I rode to work in a carpool, we all met to park the other vehicles in the parking lot of my husband's barber shop.

One day I drove my husband's 1972 Ford Torino to meet my ride. The only man who rode with us was sitting in his vehicle waiting, and I decided to pull up and back in next to him. I just forgot that the back of the seats were so high and I misjudged my distance and WHAM—I hit him. He jumped from his car as I pulled up and exited, leaving my car door open. We were observing the damage done to his vehicle when we realized the Torino was coming toward it again! I ran and jumped in but could not stop in time and I hit him again!

As the man stood there in disbelief, I stomped on the accelerator to get out of there and it stuck! So like a bat out of Georgia, I went across the yard of the barber shop, and in order to avoid the shop I threw a tailspin in the yard and headed back into the parking lot before I finally got the car stopped.

I stifled my laughter all the way to work, but the guy did not find it very amusing. This laugh cost me several hundred dollars. We still have the car but my husband took a Sawzall and made it into a convertible, so we can only drive it on sunny days.

Joann Whitley, Oakboro, Union Power Cooperative



THE 1947 FORD COUPE

In 1964, my wife, Mary, was teaching school at Aurelian Springs High about a mile from where we lived. I was working in Roanoke Rapids at J.P. Stevens Textile Company. She needed something to drive to school. I was coming home from work one day when I saw a 1947 Ford Coupe “For Sale.” I stopped and asked about the car. It ran and stopped and was priced at \$100. I bought it and drove it home. It was black then, and Mary made some seat covers for it. Mary had a car to drive to school.

In the middle 1970s I painted it yellow and redid the inside. I drove it until 1992 and then had it redone from top to bottom. Later, I put in a 1995 Pontiac LT1 motor with a 700 R transmission, a Mustang II front end, a new rear end, air conditioning, power steering, power brakes and leather interior. The 1947 Ford five-passenger coupe will run at interstate speed and get 22 miles per gallon. My wife and I have driven it to Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia, Virginia and South Carolina. It is part of the family, and we will keep it to the end.

Ronald Keeter, Littleton, Roanoke Electric



THE DANGER RANGER

My 1987 red Ford Ranger, 4x4, wasn't much to look at with her dents and dings, but she was all mine and my pride and joy. We went through even more of those bumps together: one in the school parking lot, another in my work parking lot. Her gas mileage wasn't much to speak of, and we had a case of oil in the tool box at all times right beside the roll of duct tape. But when you're 16, it's getting where you need to go that's important. Sometimes we would make it, and other times we would have to call for help.

I still look back at those times with a smile. I remember having my prom picture taken with her and learning to “do a donut” in the fields with my Dad (until the steam rolled out from under the hood). I'd take a break and clean her up, then we would be ready to let the good times roll again.

Then one day someone ran a stop sign, and we had to pick her up in pieces. That's the night the “Danger Ranger” died. But I hold dear these memories of my favorite truck and my 16th year.

Stephanie Lewis, Mt. Olive, Tri-County EMC




THE SPIDER MAN I LOVED

My favorite car was a 1973 Fiat Spider that actually belonged to my boyfriend. It was a creamy butter yellow color with a black cloth top.

I had never driven a convertible before, and to my joy he let me borrow it for months at a time. We drove this car on countless adventures—to the mountains, the beach and the parkway. Just cruising around town with the wind blowing in my hair I felt like “one hot chick.”

He decided to have it repainted, and it came back a screaming bright yellow. Although he is a frequent car trader, he kept the Fiat longer than any car he ever had. It began to give him some problems and was expensive to fix.

One day he told me he had sold the car to a local dealer. I was crushed. The car was tied to so many fond memories and sentimental moments it was like losing a good friend. The tears began to flow.

The following day the car reappeared! Seeing how upset I was he had bought the Fiat back. I don't know who I loved more—the man or the car! 

Lila Buchanan, Morganton, Rutherford EMC

send us your best **EARN \$50**

Here are the themes in our “Nothing Could Be Finer” series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

September 2008

My Favorite Photo

Our annual photo gallery of N.C. people and places.

Deadline: July 15

October 2008

Celebrity Presidents

What celebrity—human or cartoon—would make the best President, & why?

Deadline: August 15

November 2008

The Techno Whiz

Your craziest experience with home electronics.

Deadline: September 15

December 2008

Holiday Recipes

Recipes for your favorite holiday meals.

Deadline: October 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos should be a minimum of 1200 by 800 pixels.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
E-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com Online: www.carolinacountry.com