

## Memories of Yesteryear: Rotten Wood

*Story and Photos by Bob Hughes*

*I am going to write a few short stories about some of my experiences during my 84 years of life. Here is the first, ~Bob Hughes*

### *Rotten Wood*

I became interested in antique cars during the 60's. I was working at JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory) and at that time I was making several trips a month to Motorola in Phoenix, Arizona. They had an employee newsletter with items for sale. A 1926 Chevy caught my eye. I called and went to look at the car. It was in pieces, everything was apart but the engine. Transmission and rear end were still together. I asked the owner why he was selling it—he said he was getting a divorce—I hoped it was not because of the car.

I called a friend who was into old cars and he told me that was what I wanted, so being a very naive person I purchased it and piled it into a U-Haul truck and took it to California. The owner told me that there was some wood that was part of the car but it was rotten. I thought why would I want a bunch of rotten wood so I declined to take it (huge mistake—I needed it for patterns). I told my wife Michelle (who passed about 10 years ago from Alzheimer's) I had purchased a '26 Chevy touring but it needed a little work and I was bringing it home in the U-Haul. I am sure that she expected the car to be drivable—I wish that it was. I opened the truck door and she was amazed that I paid good money for a pile of junk, and the more I looked at a pile of parts, the more I agreed with her. Henry Ford had a better idea for cars than did Chevy—use wood to build houses and steel for cars.

It took me a long time to find the patterns I needed to complete the car. Also, the engine was determined to be cracked. So, I purchased another one that was also determined to be cracked. I was getting discouraged and could remember Michelle saying “What!! You paid money for that pile of junk.” Then I saw an engine at the Rose Bowl Swap Meet so I bought it. It turned out to be okay. Also, there were no seats nor top irons that came with the '26. I finally found some top irons, purchased a used upholstery sewing machine and learned to do upholstery, paint and body work. My work was not the best but if you got far enough away it looked okay. After the car was finally finished, we went to several tours in the western states and met a lot nice folks—I have found that old car folks are very nice.

An early tour was to the antique auto run at the Imperial Palace in Las Vegas in 1986. We trailered the car there, then drove about 145 miles around the area. It was a good time and we were able to talk to the many of the celebrity impersonators, eat plenty of great food, and see many shows. I talked to one person that had a car similar to mine. He asked if I was using the original vacuum tank—I said I was—he suggested that I get rid of it—too many problems and suggested that I put on an electric fuel pump like he did—it was much more reliable. (The vacuum tank is mounted on the firewall and sucks gas from the gas tank and delivers it to the carburetor.) The next day I noticed he did not go on the tour—I asked him why and guess what—he said his electric fuel pump had failed. I think I chuckled, at least a little bit. So sometimes old technology beats the new stuff. I elected to keep the vacuum tank, it still works today.



Bob's 1926 Chevy at the 1986 antique auto run, Imperial Palace, Las Vegas



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*Cont'd—Story and Photos by Bob Hughes*



Bob and Michelle dressed for the occasion in their era fashions, 1986 Imperial Palace, Las Vegas



Michelle with 'Elvis'—lucky girl!  
1986, Imperial Palace

These were good times to remember. The experience was worthwhile!!! I still have this car! Barbara and I have been now been married for eight years, we dated in high school, and will continue to have fun with the '26 Chevy for many years.



Bob and the '26 Chevy on tour in Washington state

