My First Car
By George Turkovic

My first car was a 1951 Chevy 2-door sedan. My grandfather bought it new and it was the first new car ever in our family.   Grandpa was uneasy about driving his gem home so my mom was the first to drive it. This was five years before I was even born. Grandpa and Granny were from "the Old Country" (Croatia) and they never referred to it as a car. It was called "the machine." Grandpa kept cardboard sheets on the floor of The Machine and carefully caulked along the weather stripping along the windows. He did a good job and it was still in place 60 years later. After each monthly drive to town he wiped The Machine down with an oily rag as if it were a carefully maintained lathe.

In the early 1970s it was a carefully maintained but "old car" and it was passed on to my mom as a daily driver. At that time it only had 18K miles. I was nuts about anything old and mom promised me that I could have the "'ol Chevy" when I was old enough to drive. I remember her taking all four of us kids to the Drive-In movie. It was a car full of people but quite a treat. Because of the rear wheel wells the rear window would only roll down about 6 inches and of course my little brother got his head stuck out of the rear window but couldn't get it back in. Mom was not very happy and retorted "YOU got it out, YOU can get it back in." I remember we actually drove away from the Drive-In with my little brother crying and his head still stuck out the window.

Later when I was the not-so mature driver I had a newly installed set of Wards cord tires and was feeling pretty zippy. I thought that she would never be newer or more healthy and decided to see how fast the 'ol Chevy would go. The stove bolt six was geared pretty low and the speedo only went to 90. (Seatbelts? What are seat belts?) As she bounced and screamed down a country road the speedo was bouncing from 85 to 95 so I guess I'd call that 90.

About that same period I got a ticket for a person "clinging to a moving vehicle." It cost me $15. But that's another story.

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