

FAIRBANKS

Vernon L. Nash

ALASKA



Antique Automobile Club of America

Dear Antique car club members,

I was asked by Ron Allen of our Car Club to write the continued story about the restoration efforts of our 1952 Plymouth. This is Part 2 which will also appear in the Plymouth Club Bulletins January-February issue.

Joyce and I wrote this as we remembered it: the horrible feelings, sadness at the injury of a faithful friend, anger, remorse, self chastisement for stupid things, and lessons learned the hard way. This all makes a bitter pill to swallow. But I overcame this, since I had the expert help of Garry Farnham who said "it's no big deal" and I would be doing a lot of the work myself. It turns out I learned more than I bargained for. This leads me to the title so here is part 2.

### **THE PLYMOUTH INCIDENT AND A PROJECT FOR OUR WINTER OF DISCONTENT**

**By Bill and Joyce Chace at North Pole, Alaska**

The pastor of our church, an antique car fan, asked me to place our 1952 Plymouth Cranbrook on indoor display at the church along with a friend's '60 Falcon convertible. As an alternative to outdoor trick-or-treat where cold is a big consideration, the church was offering a 50-60's party and dance.

This would be a fine opportunity. The weather was good, the car was clean, I had just received my new original antique wide-whitewall tires, and it would keep children safe and warm.

Old car enthusiasts in Alaska usually secure their cars for winter by Sept 30. I was planning to store mine on the worn old tires and mount my new antique tires in the Spring. I had hoped the pastor had given up on the request, but no, he called again to ensure we were

coming, saying the roads were just fine, and if the weather turned bad he'd even spread gravel.

This is when our decisions became cloudy. Joyce and I did not want to disappoint the church, we wanted to be a help, and we were getting excited in creating a 50's display. We loaded the back seat with the appropriate period Tiny Tears dolls, travel games, toys and books.

A decision was needed as to when we would depart. We tried to stall by saying we'll see what the weather looked like. The weather turned cloudy, the temperature dropped and all indications of the stormy season were present, but still there was no snow or ice. We could get to the church in plenty of time, and I arranged for storage if a storm developed. We left early with plenty of daylight just to be safe.

The Fairbanks Church is just 20 miles from North Pole. Arriving in town we noticed snow flurries with no tracking or sticking. The old girl was purring, and as an added precaution, Joyce followed with our Yukon loaded with safety gear and items to enhance the display.

As we climbed the hill to the church I noticed the snow was sticking but the tires were still gripping. I slowed for a curve and accelerated, the car had good traction and was handling well. As I drove on ahead the church driveway appeared. It was now that the road turned slick with sleet and packed snow.

The Plymouth lost traction. I stopped, tried to back up several times and you know how it feels, the car slid sideways as I braked. We came to a stop.

Joyce passed me and backed up with a tow rope. We were prepared. I perceived she might have difficulty attaching the rope to the vehicles. (She, by the way

needed no help, and knows very well what to do, but I decided she needed help.)

So, I applied the emergency brake on the Plymouth, making sure nothing was sliding, not slamming the door or jarring the car when I got out, put a block under the tire, turned around to help Joyce attach the tow rope and she said oh! Bill.....I turned to look and the Plymouth was backing down the hill, sliding the wheel block with the emergency brake locked. The car went straight backwards 50 feet with me trying to run after it on the ice. It suddenly turned to the left and stopped, facing across both lanes.

I said, "please let her stop there". That's when she began to move again, rear end first, straight as an arrow down a 25 foot embankment toward the birch tree forest. Just as the front wheels met the edge of the ridge, I saw the steering wheel turn, the car lurched sideways, tipped to the left, the front door flew open, a gray streak sliding broadside down the bank into the trees, ripping the door fully around against the front fender, caving it in as she settled into the Birches. She came to rest with the trees rapping their little indentation messages, like Morse code, along the drip edge, the car top, the visor, both fenders, and the hood.

She did not settle there long however for the flexible trees were bent uncomfortably down hill, and to remove their load, they forced back against the car, pushing her up hill against the stumps she had successfully drifted over on the way down. Now the right front fender, doors and rocker panels were receiving the denting blows of the birch stumps. She finally did come to rest at a 40 degree angle, engine still running, drivers door wide open folded against the fender, looking sadly injured with her trim dented and chrome ornaments smashed.



I stumbled down to the car in shock, turned off the engine and head lights, retrieved my camera, then

climbed up to the road where Joyce comforted and helped soothe my anger. While waiting for the wrecker to arrive, I stood there taking photos as daylight faded, cursing myself for trying to extend the antique car season. Joyce, in the meantime, called the insurance company.



The retrieval by Rons Service was smooth and in record time. Using two tow trucks on the ice, one to winch and the other as a dead man, the 52 Plymouth was inched up the bank without causing any more damage.

This was not the end of events however. I had wrenched my back falling on the ice, it was snowing heavily, and I was getting cold. My loyal, trustworthy car was injured. She had 2 flats, busted chrome, dented parts, and it was getting dark. We tried but could not close the door and as we placed her on the rollback, the thought went through my head that the full blown storm would pack the car with sleet and snow. I worried that when it thawed, there would be even more interior damage.

When we arrived at the shop, we were warmed, the door opening was covered, and the tires were inflated. The adjustor assessed the damage the next morning. I drove the car home and later drove it to Garry's for the repair project.

Reflecting back on the incident, as I installed my newly acquired E bay Chrome, I am thankful care was taken while extracting the vehicle, and I had good insurance with a towing clause. Over the years, however, I had not increased the insured value of the car often enough. The insurance adjustor wanted to total the car, but after having the car insured by the same company for over 35 years with no claims, my North Pole agent worked with the adjustor so that I could receive the insurance payment.

Some of you may wonder why I feel it's so important to spend energy, time and money on an old four door

car. True! To some she is just an old car, but to us she is part of the family. This car represents over 50 years of our family memories. After the war, she was the first new vehicle my parents could afford. I grew up in this car and our life together, in addition to regular use and several drivers tests, consisted of many cross country trips, mountain and desert camping, ski trips, dating, and marriage. She has towed more Fords to safety than any other vehicle. She once even towed two fords (a motor home and a Model T in a trailer) at the same time to safety 8 miles away. Paul Camarata took the photos.

From 1945 to 1952 my Dad took precise detailed research notes on a pocket pad he kept in his shirt pocket. On this he noted every vehicle pulled off the road either from overheating or for repairs. On family outings, particularly while driving the historic California Grapevine and Tehachapis, he noted the makes and models that overheated. He was always saying he wanted a Plymouth because it was not on his list, ran like a Jeep and did not need babying.

Speaking of running like a jeep, I remember fording many streams on outings and on one particular trip, after getting stuck in the creek, water ran through the car at a depth higher than the driveline hump, across the floor, and my sister and I lifted our feet in the back seat as Mom, in white knuckle fright, screamed we were all going to drown. Dad smashed the pan and flywheel housing fording another stream in the high desert, pulled out of the stream, plugged the holes with pieces of cork from the picnic jug, pried the housing away, soothing the scream from the ring gear, and continued on to camp. Arriving at camp he drove the Plymouth onto a pile of rocks and he and an old blacksmith removed the oil pan, placed it in a campfire and with bellows and hammer forged five holes shut. The campers contributed 5 different quarts of oil which got us back on the road.

In spite of rough treatment by all of us during those years, she never let any of us down.

The Plymouth became my faithful everyday driver, In 1964 just before heading off to college, I treated her to a new \$39.95 Earl Scheibe paint special. This included primer which covered up all my chrome.

While in college my funds were sparse, and to defray the high cost of oil heat in the winter, I'd remove the back seat, drive to the lumber mill, load every inch of the car to the torn headliner with mill ends. My friend would then ride home on the fender holding on to the Mayflower ornament.

Several times the car was off the road, buried in snow up to the windshield, but with the help of tire chains she backed right out.

The girl I married in 1968, my present wife of 37 years, passed the Plymouth test when she said this is a really cool car. My son and daughter have fond memories of this car. The Plymouth was used in my Daughters wedding.

Over the years chromed parts broke and deteriorated, old war wounds opened up, and thinking positively, I found I needed to learn about e-bay parts.

At my families urging, and since the insurance company was not obligated to repair all 53 years of wear and tear, I began the shoulder wrenching, back breaking body repair. Of course I wanted a better than average restoration, so applying "if you want it done right do it yourself," philosophy I proceeded, literally plodding through the Winter making her beautiful once again. All the success is not totally because I am so gifted, but is more luck that I have Garry as mentor who is the expert in the art of body repair. I am the rookie in comparison.

I titled this article "**A Project For This Winter Of Discontent**" because I learned to appreciate the work that is involved in a project, I learned that I can forget important things, and I learned other lessons that I had no idea were there ready to surface. After last winter's project I can truly say that body work will never be listed on my resume.

After thinking long and hard about this incident and consequent repairs, I realize I may not be alone and others may benefit from these lessons prior to learning them the hard way.

- Keep insurance value of vehicle updated yearly.
- Regularly inspect your antique tires. New vintage style tires may be made using old style nylon tire principles.
- Nylon tires can wear out sooner than expected when compared to wear ability of steel belted tires.
- We haven't used Nylon tires in really bad weather for many years, we have been really spoiled by radials.
- I had forgotten my tires were worn.
- I had forgotten how fast a car with nylon tires can lose traction.
- I can still remember, vividly, how I hated to install tire chains in the snow on a hill. I knew the tire chains were in the trunk.
- I was counting on a rescue rope to do miracles if I got into trouble.
- I forgot that removing the foot from the brake pedal eliminated braking power to the front wheels.
- I was counting on the emergency brake (on drive shaft) to hold the car but forgot that only applied to the rear wheels.

I want to go on record in thanking Wayne Brandon, Chris Suminski, Jim Benjaminson and Neil Riddle from the Plymouth Club for furnishing technical information, parts locations, correct paint color research, and also general moral support to this project. To this I add the name of Garry Farnham from the V. L. Nash Antique Auto Club of Fairbanks, Ak who lent local expertise and support.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS** by Sherry Camarata

Our events help us to promote the mission of our club and allow us to each participate in whatever we can and want to participate in. No one has to do all of them but only those that interest us or that we enjoy with the camaraderie of other club members! There are lots of varieties, and there are many that are tradition of the club that we do from year to year. Some say we're involved in too many, but with the diversity of the club members come the diversity of what we are interested in. So there is something for everyone!!

I've listed the usual events the club traditionally participates in and need a coordinator for each one to help me in this coming season of fun. Each coordinator will have plenty of help but will be the contact person for the club and that event. If a few of us would step up to the job and a lot of us volunteer to help with just one or two events, it'll all run so much more smoothly so that one person doesn't do everything and get burned out.

At our meeting last week (Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>) several volunteers stepped up to the plate and we have a great start for what we need. I still would like some of the blanks and more volunteers to be filled in though so here goes – Give me a call at 488-4293 or send an email to [pscamarata@acsalsaka.net](mailto:pscamarata@acsalsaka.net) if you are willing to fill in one of the blanks.

**Poker Run** Sat. 6/3/06 Coordinators: Willie & Wilma Vinton. Volunteers: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Wednesday Night Run-Arounds** starting Wed. 6/7. Coordinators: Roy & Brenda Wilbur, Volunteers Bill, Joyce, and Klinton Chace, Willie & Wilma Vinton

**Summer Solstice Car show & Root Beer Stand** Wed. 6/21. Coordinators: \_\_\_\_\_. Volunteers: Robbie & Doris Casey, Denny & Rita Gallagher, Ron Stevenson

**Dawson/Eagle Trip** Leave before and return after Saturday 7/1-7/4. Coordinators: Loren & Marion Benham. Volunteers: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Golden Days Show 'N Shine** Wed. 7/19.  
NO COORDINATORS OR VOLUNTEERS YET

**Golden Days Parade** Sat. 7/22. Coordinators: Ray McLeod, Volunteers: Bill, Joyce & Klinton Chace, Shawn & Heather Rogers, Scott & Linda Grundy, Ron Stevenson.

**Joint meet with Anch Auto Musers** (they host) Fri – Sun. Aug. ??\_ Coordinators: \_\_\_\_\_. Volunteers: Bill & Joyce Chace, Scott Grundy.

**Delta Parade** Sat Aug ?? Coordinators: Loren & Marion Benham. Volunteers: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Fall Jaunt** Sat or Sun (Date undetermined) Coordinators: \_\_\_\_\_. Volunteers: Jonathan & Gregory Brolin.

**Annual VLNAACA Car show** Coordinators: Willie & Wilma Vinton. Volunteers: Dan Gullickson & Ron Stevenson

**Various car shows in FBKS/ANCH \***  
Coordinators and volunteers needed

**Other Local Events \***  
Coordinators and volunteers needed

\* Duties for these events include utilizing member lists to notify members about the event & coordinating their participation with information about the particulars of the event. (ie. Registration, just show up, etc.)

### **MAILING OF NEWSLETTERS**

Some of our members have elected to receive our newsletters electronically in order to save printing and postage costs for the club. The newsletter editor plans to send a monthly email to those members with both a reference to the club's website and an Adobe PDF copy as an attachment. This February edition is the last USPS mailing of newsletters to members who exercised that option. Please let Ron Allen know if you have any difficulties receiving your electronic copy or if you want to be added to or removed from the list of members who receive electronic copies.

### **CLUB DUES**

Marion Benham said at our last meeting that 42 members had not paid their dues yet for the year. If you have not done so yet, please send your check to our club's mailing address.

### **HEADLINER UPHOLSTERY PRESENTATION**

Willy and Wilma Vinton hosted a headliner upholstery presentation by John McFoul in their new garage on Sunday January 22. Although it was 20 below outside, it was tee-shirt weather in their large warm garage. Vinton's garage is ideal for workshops not only because of their nice facility, but they also provided treats, coffee and comfortable chairs for our pleasure.

John is an accomplished upholsterer having worked for his uncle Dan Foster at Jodie's Upholstery for several years. John is now working as a body man at Chaz, so has a wealth of useful information to share with us DIY

types. There are several members who are planning on doing their own headliners in the near future, so this presentation was well timed. Members got to assist John in installing a new headliner in Willy's 1953 Ford Wagon as you can see in the following photos.



### NEXT WORKSHOP

A hands-on seat upholstery presentation by John McFoul is tentatively planned for February 12 at the Vintons. You can bring your own seats to work on if you have them. Willy suggested a donation be collected from participants to compensate John for this particular workshop.



### CLASSIFIED ADS

Place your ad here at no charge.

**1976 Cadillac Coupe DeVille**, burgundy with white leather seats, 23,800 miles and 500 CID engine. Call 488-3055.

**1953 Jeep CJ3** with insulated cab. Frame-off restoration. Call Alva Ditch at 457-4788.

**Three medium sweatshirts @ \$10.00 each.** And there are **15 hats @ \$8.00 each** or 2 for \$15.00. If anyone is interested, call Marion at 474-4966.

**The Club needs your pictures!!** If you have pictures from events in 2001-2004, please share them with the club. We do not have photos albums from these years. For more information, please contact Bill Chace at 488-3805.



### BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

#### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

12 Mebble Hansen  
14 Richard Gresham  
15 Gene Wescott  
21 Betty Carlson  
27 Shirley Franklin  
27 Robert Hanson

#### FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

01 Ed & Loral McLaughlin  
02 Dick & Joni Ellsworth  
12 Loran & Marion Benham  
14 Ron & Carole Stevenson

#### CLUB JACKETS

Marion Benham is putting together an order of Club Jackets. If you want a Jacket please call her at 474-4966. We need to get an order for 20 jackets to get a price break. She will re-confirm your order and give you a price when she has received gotten enough orders.

**CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AT:**  
[www.fairbanksoldcars.org](http://www.fairbanksoldcars.org)

**OFFICERS**

President	Willy Vinton	<a href="mailto:Willy@ntc.fairbanks.ak.us">Willy@ntc.fairbanks.ak.us</a>	474-0939 day 456-2261 evn
Vice President	Ray McLeod	<a href="mailto:rmcleod@alaska.net">rmcleod@alaska.net</a>	347-4070
Secretary	Laurel McLaughlin	<a href="mailto:mcbug@gci.net">mcbug@gci.net</a>	452-5234
Treasurer	Ruth Hill		452-4510
Newsletter	Ron Allen	<a href="mailto:ronandnancy@gci.net">ronandnancy@gci.net</a>	488-3965
Webmaster	Wilma Vinton	<a href="mailto:wvinton@acsalaska.net">wvinton@acsalaska.net</a>	456-2261
Events Coordinator	Sherry Camarata	<a href="mailto:psscamarata@acsalaska.net">psscamarata@acsalaska.net</a>	488-4293
Roster/Membership	Marion Benham	<a href="mailto:Mvbenham1@yahoo.com">Mvbenham1@yahoo.com</a>	474-4966

**NEXT MEETING** is  
**Thursday, February 9, 6:00  
 PM at the Elks Club. Elks  
 management apologized for  
 the late service at the last  
 meeting and asked for another  
 chance.**

**Newsletter Deadline**

All materials for the newsletter should be in by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to be considered for the next newsletter. Email [ronandnancy@gci.net](mailto:ronandnancy@gci.net) or call 488-3965. Items can be mailed to Ron at his home address; 1288 Rangeview Dr, North Pole, AK 99705. *Have a story about how you got your car? A favorite trip? A real repair hassle? Send it in!*

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