



At the December Christmas party Kirk Larson received the 2006 VLNAACF “Most Improved Vehicle” award for his hands-on restoration of a 1935 Ford Cabriolet. This award exemplifies our club’s mission statement “to further the preservation, restoration, and enjoyment of old automobiles.” There is often much more to our passion for old vehicles than just the love of a beautiful vehicle with unique or classic lines. Kirk’s wife, Cathy Larson, has written a story about their family Ford that demonstrates such a passion. Their story touched my heart and brought a tear to my eye. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have. Ron

## THE FAMILY FORD

By Cathy Larson

Car enthusiasts who attended the Vernon Nash annual car show at the Carlson Center June 3-4, 2006, may have noticed a new addition to the Fairbanks classic car scene. The car, a 1935 Ford Cabriolet, restored by my husband, Kirk Larson, is truly stunning. Its shiny black paint and chrome drew a lot of attention at the show. The real beauty of the car, however, lies in the story behind it.

Back in the mid 40’s Kirk’s father, Lyle, purchased the Cabriolet from a friend, and it became the family vehicle for many years after that. It was the daily-driver, the car Kirk’s mother drove to the supermarket. When the family needed

to tow a travel trailer on vacations, it was the old Ford that did the job. Many of Kirk’s stories and memories revolve around this car. I haven’t heard them all, but I do recall a story about his mother, not known for her skill behind the wheel or her intellectual prowess, driving the car with the trailer in tow. On that particular drive, Kirk’s mother did all she could to outrun the vehicle that was so rudely tailgating her. Only when she reached home did she realize the tailgater was actually attached.



Photo taken in October 1949 is of Kirk’s father, Lyle, Kirk’s mother, older baby brother and the family dog.

Kirk’s father taught him much of what he knows about engines and automobile mechanics on the Cabriolet. He fondly remembers working alongside his dad during numerous engine repairs and tune-ups. The car served as a connection for them, a way of communicating and staying close. Lyle was not the type to express his emotions, but



Photo taken in June 1956 is Kirk's father's college graduation.

allowing Kirk to help with the car was on way to show his love for his son.

After years as the main means of transportation, the Cabriolet was eventually stored in the family barn in Weed, California. It was placed in the barn in 1973 due to a blown engine. The car ended up sitting in that barn for nearly 30 years. Lyle eventually towed it to Portland, Oregon in 2000 and began a well-intentioned restoration process. Much needed to be done, and Lyle looked forward to getting the old girl back into tiptop shape.

Almost everyone can think of a family story or memory related to a vehicle. What makes Kirk's story more poignant is the fact that a fading

memory is what inspired him to restore the car. Around the time that his father towed the car to Portland, we started to notice some odd behaviors. His dad started calling quite often, and during his phone calls he would frequently ask the same questions several times. Kirk would patiently answer his questions, trying his best not to get annoyed when he had to give the same answer several times. His father, a man who had spent much of his career as the city manager in a variety of cities including Nome and Dillingham, seemed to be losing his ability to think clearly.



This October 1970 picture is how the car remained for many years.

Eventually, after much prodding and cajoling, Lyle went to a doctor for some tests. The test results confirmed our fears when Lyle was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's is a horrible disease for both the sufferer and his family. It is heart wrenching to watch someone you love lose his memories. For Kirk the decline of his father was particularly difficult. His father had never outwardly expressed his love for his son. He connected with Kirk through family stories and sharing memories. Gradually the stories faded from his mind, leaving Kirk a stranger to his own father.



Here the Family Ford is well on its way to being torn down all the way.

Thankfully, before Lyle's memory faded completely, he sent the old Ford up to Fairbanks. Kirk promised that he would restore the car and keep it in the family. Shortly after receiving the car in 2003, Kirk began the long process of restoration. Due to other projects, like building our home, Kirk did not get serious about the restoration until the fall of 2005.

Although the engine had been repaired and the car was in running condition when it arrived in Fairbanks, there was much to be done. Kirk stripped the car to pieces and began the time consuming task of putting it back together a little at a time. As those who know Kirk can attest, he takes on all his projects with gusto. He has an all or nothing mentality when it comes to building or restoring anything. Every waking moment from 2005 until April of 2006 was spent either physically working on, researching about, or searching for parts for the Ford. Kirk wanted to make it as original as possible, and he meticulously did all the work himself, including the painting and upholstery.

At times, Kirk's obsession with finishing the car was tiresome for our two children and me. After a while, the kids stopped asking where Daddy was; they knew he was in the shop working on the car. It took me a while to figure out what the rush was all about. Eventually Kirk confided that he was trying to complete the car before his father died. By 2006 his father could no longer remember Kirk. As it had when he was a boy, working on the car became Kirk's connection with his father. They weren't physically together, but the time and meticulous care Kirk put into the Cabriolet allowed him to be with his father again in a very special way.

Restoring the Ford was a loving tribute from a man to his father. People who see the car often applaud its beauty and the care with which it was restored, but they do not realize that Kirk's motivation was much deeper than having an eye-catching vehicle. In preserving the car, Kirk was also preserving a lifetime of memories.

As it turns out, Kirk finished the car just in time. It was displayed at the Carlson Center the first weekend in June. Kirk was proud to show the car and share a story or two with all who were



April 3, 2006: The day she rolled out of the garage after restoration.

interested. He had accomplished his goal. Maybe in some small way his father was waiting for Kirk to finish his tribute. Lyle Larson left this earth on the morning of June 13, 2006 just ten days after his son showed the world the car they built together.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

By Sherry Camarata

It's another busy and fun summer ahead. Our events help us to promote the mission of our club and allow each of us to participate in whatever we can and want to take part in. Join in and help with the events that interest you, and you will enjoy the camaraderie of other club members! There are lots of event varieties, many which are a "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 comes the variety of what we are interested in. So there is something for everyone!!

I've listed the usual events the club participates in and need someone to help with each one. If you can assist with one or two events it will all run so much more smoothly so that one person doesn't do everything and get burned out.

- Poker Run to Chena Hot Springs on June(?) No volunteers yet.

- Car Show at the Carlson Center on June 2 and 3. Will Vinton in charge. Need volunteers.
- Wednesday Runarounds starting June. Need volunteers.
- Summer Solstice on June 21 downtown Fairbanks. Car show and root beer stand. Need volunteers.
- Golden Days Parade on July(?). Volunteers needed.
- Joint meet with Anchorage in or near Fairbanks on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday August(?) We are hosting and need to plan. Volunteers needed.
- Delta Parade on Saturday August(?). Volunteer needed.
- Fall Jaunt on September(?). Volunteer needed.
- Other events: I know there are more.

## PLEASE HELP

By Ron Allen

Ray had to use club funds to pay for three dinners after our last club general meeting at the Mayflower in January. Willy reported he frequently paid for unpaid dinners at other past meetings held at the Mayflower out of his own pocket. This occurred under both sets of restaurant owners. I was one of the last ones leaving the restaurant after the last meeting. The restaurant staff showed us the three dinner receipt copies. Original receipts given customers were not left on the tables suggesting that customers took the receipts with them. Restaurant staff indicated that these receipts came from customers seated at tables on the south side of the room in the same general location. I find this very disturbing. If you come to the meeting and do not eat, please advise the host so that a dinner receipt is not written. If you are forgetful and find a receipt in your pocket, please let us know and reimburse the expense. The integrity of the members of our club is at stake if this practice continues.



## BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 12 Mebble Hansen
- 14 Richard Gresham
- 15 Gene Wescott
- 19 Ed Rouleau
- 21 Betty Carlson
- 27 Shirley Franklin

### FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 01 Ed & Laruel McLaughlin
- 02 Dick & Joni Ellsworth
- 12 Loran & Marion Benham
- 14 Ron & Carol Stevensen

## 2007 DUES

Your 2007 Dues is past due. If your address label is highlighted, your dues haven't been paid. Make check to: VLNAACF. If you have any questions, please call me at 474-4966.

Thanks, Marion



## CLASSIFIED ADS

**Model "A" Repairs.** Bill Wright, an active VLNAACF club member, does re-babbitt work on A's, B's, and T's. Call him at 479-8506 or his cell phone 388-2118.

**1973 Volvo project car:** \$700 obo. I'm selling it for a friend. Call Ron Allen 488-3965.

## **Most Improved Vehicle Committee**

Ron Stevenson requests that anyone interested to email him with ideas for the “Most Improved Vehicle” award as we talked about at the meeting. He would like your opinions. Should we have more categories, see the vehicle at several events, etc. etc. [roncar50@gci.net](mailto:roncar50@gci.net)

## OFFICERS:

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Events Coordinator			

### NEXT MEETINGS

The next general club meeting is Thursday, February 8 at the Mayflower. Dinner starts at 6:00 PM and the meeting is at 7:00.

The Board Meeting is at 6:30 at Denny's Tuesday February 6. Everyone is also welcome to attend Board Meetings.

### 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 907-488-3965. 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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