

*Founded 1957*

# *The Plymouth Bulletin*

*22-time Old Cars Weekly Golden Quill Award winner*

March - April 2014

325

Volume 55 Number 3



PHOTO BY RITA GYOMBER

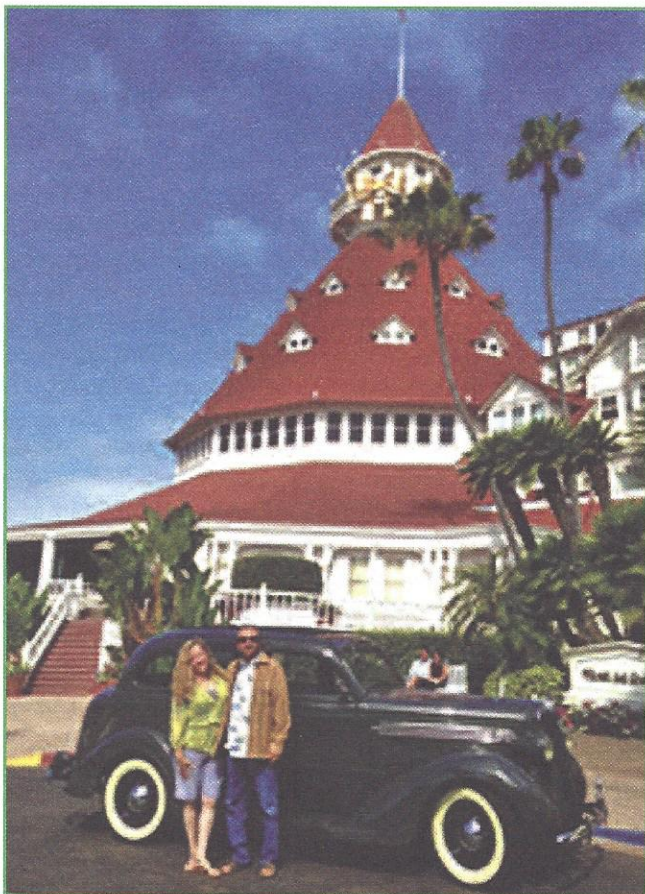
Rita Gyomber's 1936 P2 sedan near Tucson, Arizona

# Fred

by Rita Gyomber  
La Mesa, California

**I**t was many years ago—when I was a teen in high school—that I first fell in love with antique cars. The year was 1974. On my daily walk to school, I would pass by a home that had a 1930's black Ford sedan sitting in the driveway. I didn't know the exact year or make the car but, for me, all I could see was the design of the car. I was in love with the running boards!

It was a time when I was counting down the days until I was able to obtain my driver's license. Every dollar I earned at



*The Hotel Del: Rita and Joe Gyomber with Fred in Coronado, California*

small jobs during those years was set aside for the day I would be able to purchase my first car.

During that time, in New Jersey, there was a publication called the *Antique Auto Trader*. I began browsing through the publication, having decided that I would look at a few cars with running boards. For some reason, an ad for a 1936 Plymouth sedan caught my eye. I thought, "1936? There must be running boards on it!"

So, I convinced my dad to take me to see the car. It was a trip we would have to make in the evening and West Orange is a quite a drive from Plainfield through some very busy areas of New Jersey, but I remember begging Dad to take me out to see the car. Being the only daughter, I was undoubtedly a little bit spoiled. Otherwise, I'm sure that trip would never have happened. When we arrived at the home of the owner, it was dark and the car was in a garage. The seller, in his late 20s, informed me that the car belonged to his wife. She was a young nurse who had inherited the car from an elderly relative and wanted to let it go. He started it up and backed the car out. That was it! Even in the dark, barely able to discern every flaw on the body, or all the cracked windows, I was in love! All I could see was the outline of the car and those beautiful running boards!

When you are seventeen and have stars in your eyes, your enthusiasm becomes infectious. I am now sure that Dad must have been saying to himself, "No, please! Not this clunker!" But he caved in, as I was overwhelmed with joy. After bargaining on the price very briefly, we settled on \$ 1,100. As the owner's first name was Fred, I then decided that would be a perfect name for the car.

Bringing Fred home was not an easy task. Although the car had a functioning engine and brakes, it was not roadworthy.

The side windows were all cracked. The car had the original safety glass, which naturally yellowed and broke with time. Although the car had been in a garage for many years, it was in original unrestored condition. Fred was a barn find! The seller assisted my dad and me in hooking the car up with a tow bar to a driveable vehicle to bring it home. I remember Dad driving in the towing car, while the seller and I were in Fred as it was being towed back to Plainfield. I don't think that is actually legal now.

After bringing the car home, I was faced with a great deal of disbelief in my purchase, starting with the rest of my family. My mother was shocked that I had selected a car that was 43 years old and in need of so much work. My grandparents were doubtful, but appreciated the car as it was from their era. My friends were in total disbelief, especially my best friend, Becky. She was sure that reliability and speed were not involved in the purchase at all. My brothers just decided that it was a crazy girl idea and left it at that.

I remember the early years of Fred's ownership very fondly. Being unrestored, and slightly dinged, the car could be parked and driven anywhere with no fear. As a new driver, I drove Fred everywhere. He went back and forth to Plainfield High School (where I



*Elliot Ness: A young Rita, early 20s, in costume with an unrestored Fred in 1978 joins good friend Cathy on the way to a Halloween party.*



earned the nickname Elliot Ness), down to the Jersey Shore and even on several trips into Manhattan—all those miles in a car I was driving at thirty-five miles an hour! My friends loved it! Fred was the cool car to be in! What other teenager received a ticket for having a friend ride on her running boards or a warning for backing up traffic, driving too slow on the New Jersey Turnpike?

Times changed, as did I. As I studied, completed college, and began my nursing career, I found driving Fred becoming impractical. He was left to reside in my parents' garage in Plainfield, New Jersey. My father would take him out on brief Sunday drives, and I would drive him briefly during my visits back home. My dream to restore him to his original splendor was postponed indefinitely as I relocated to California, raised a family and enjoyed a career in nursing.

When my father passed away in 2009, I resolved to restore Fred. This meant shipping him to California in June of 2009 and undertaking a three-year restoration process. Many, many

thanks go to everyone at SoCal Paint Works owned by Bob Lubke in Santee, California, DRW Transmissions of Santee, George Tusane of Street Rod Specialties, El Cajon, for wiring, Greg Scott Racing Engines, Rob Miller's Custom Pinstriping and Benny Gonzalez for his exquisite work on Fred's upholstery.

Fred is now beautifully restored to a 99% original condition and is residing comfortably in my garage. He is a joy to bring to local as well as distant car shows. He took third place in his class in the 2013 Plymouth Owners Club meet at Tucson, Arizona.

It is still a pleasure and adventure to drive him! Fred is and always will be, a head turner and heart stealer!

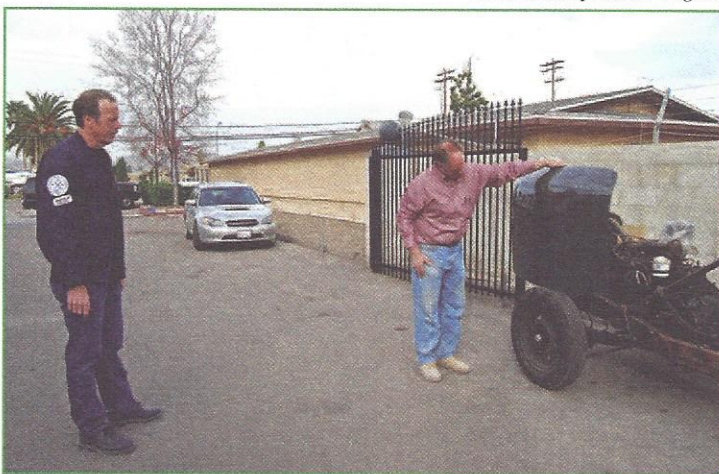
**PB**



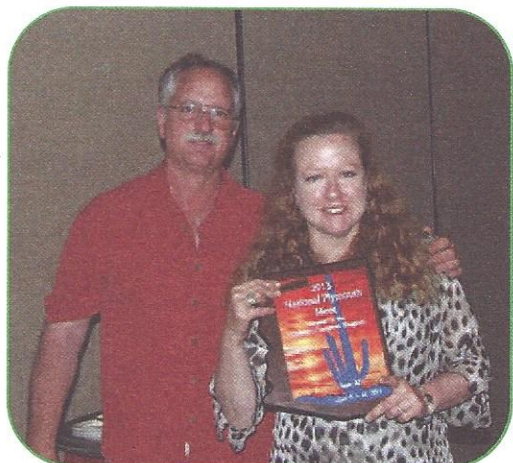
*Tucson: On the showfield at the 2013 POC National Spring Meet where Fred captured a third-in-class trophy*



*California: Fred arrived in the Golden State in June, 2009, and the restoration process began.*

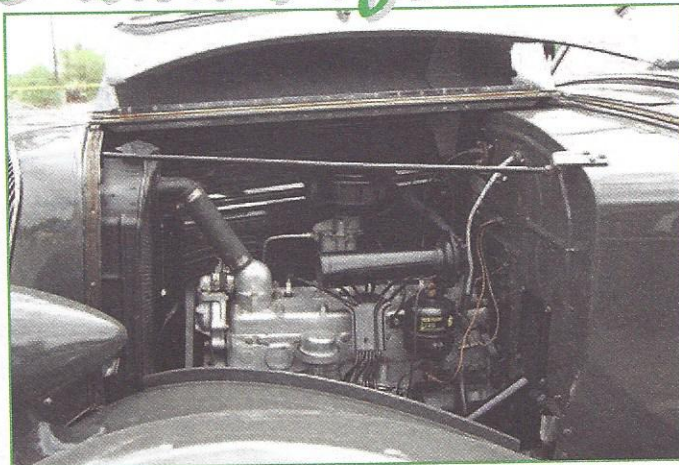


*Together again: Rita and Fred after restoration, 2012*



*Tucson trophy: Rita with Fred's restorer, Bob Lubke*

# Fred: Before and After



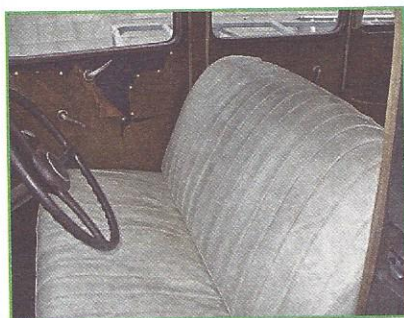
*The engine: restored, rebuilt*



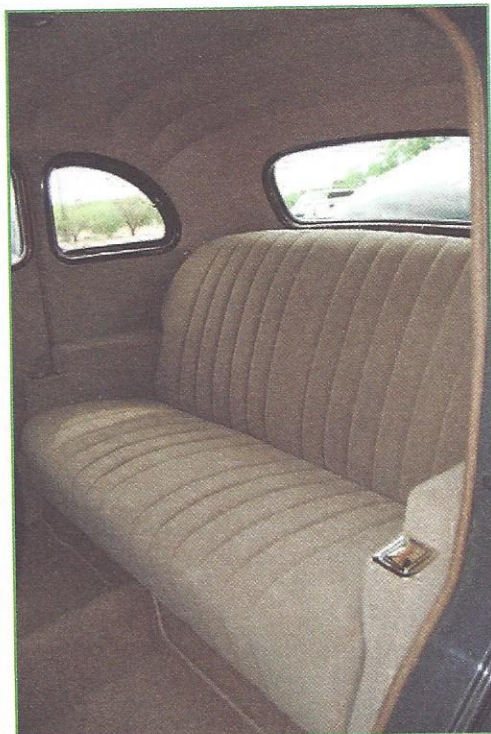
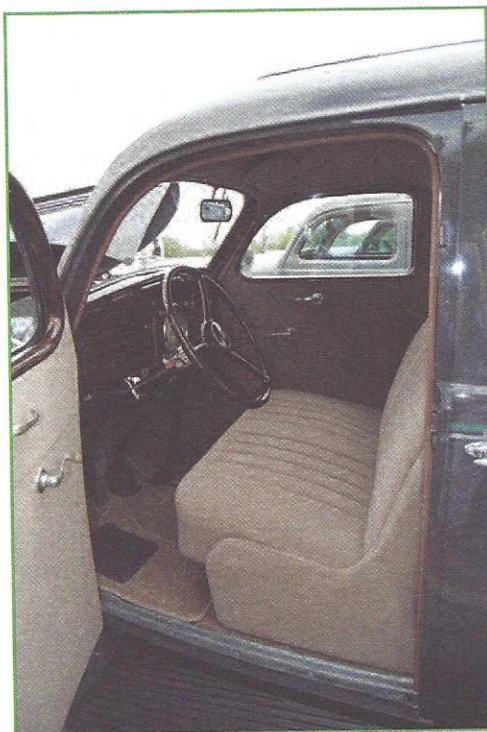
*Old dash: Rolled-on parquet effect*



*New dash: Painted woodgrain.*



*Interior: Restored mohair*



*Good Guys Show: Rita and Joe,  
Del Mar, California, 2012*