

## CAR STORY - My First Car by Michael Horan

When my older sister needed a car to use for college, the folks purchased a rather dilapidated 1952 Chevrolet Deluxe, 4 door sedan. She used it primarily to go between home (central MN) and Mankato State College, Mankato, MN. Once in Mankato, she used it to get between the two campus locations, which were "connected" by a very steep and winding street. As I remember, her brakes failed going down that steep hill one day, was scared to death, and did not want anything more to do with that car. I do not remember the details of how the car got back to our farm, but it basically sat there, once parked.

I had already started college at the time, and so when I returned home for the summer months and started a job in the adjoining town, my folks told me I might just as well take the old Chevy and use it to go to and from my summer job.

Because the car bounced like a bronco and trying to keep it going down the road in a controlled manner was a real challenge, I crawled under it and found that the front shocks had pulled through the bottom mounts. After checking to be sure the shocks actually had some usable life, I pulled them down and by using some large, heavy duty washers, I re-anchored them. The top anchors were fine. So the ride and control were greatly improved!

Because the rocker panels were very badly rusted, virtually non-existent (remember, I grew up in Minnesota), I went out to our machine shed and pulled together some rough 1" x 6" boards to make a trough. Once the trough was done, I filled it with used motor oil and placed some rough cut 2" x 4"s into that oil to soak.

Then I stopped by a local junk yard and found some chrome rocker panel trim pieces off an early 50's Chrysler or DeSoto that turned out to be about 3.5 or 4 inches wide and pretty darned close to the length of the Chevy rocker panels.

So with the Chrysler or DeSoto pieces in hand, I went home and pulled the soaked boards out of the oil. I let them drip for a couple of days and then, using some stainless steel stove bolts and washers, I attached the boards to the underside of what was left of the very rusted rocker panels. Once properly attached, I drilled some holes through the acquired trim pieces and attached them to those oil soaked boards using stainless steel wood screws. So, all of a sudden, I went from a really rusty car that one might be embarrassed to drive or be seen in, to something much better (still not a show car...it was still an old '52 Chevy 4 door sedan).

I drove that car until, because of major injuries from an auto accident, I was no longer able to drive a car with a clutch. It was sold at my parent's auction sale several years later, but it caused a lot of chuckles and comments because of the way the shocks and the rust problems were handled.