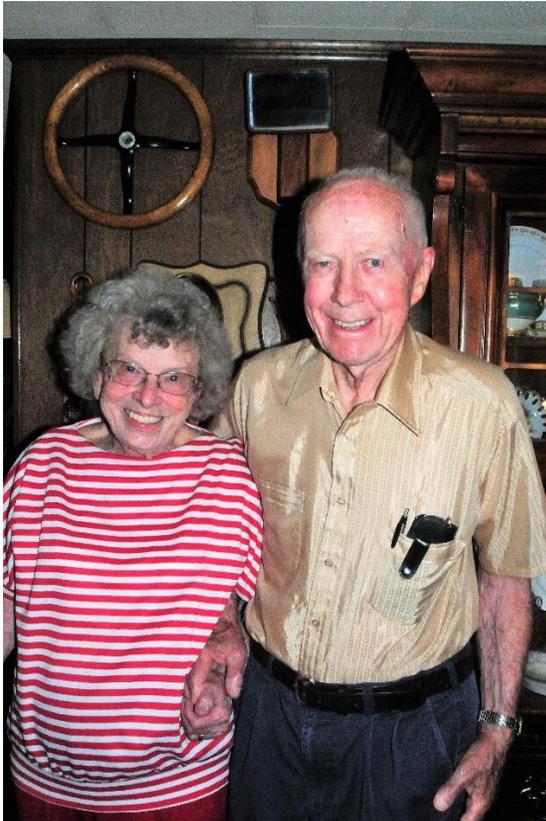


A Lifetime with the Model T

What were you doing 50 years ago? While some readers were not even born, some were still finding a path for their lives. In contrast, a couple from Independence, Missouri had been dabbling in Model T's for more than 50 years, and even joined a relatively new club dedicated to the preservation of the Model T. Yes, 50 years ago, Bill and June Kelly joined the Model T Ford Club International. They had been active in the Model T community for some time, but the MTFCI provided another valuable source of information and education.

Meet Bill and June Kelly-



In looking at their picture, it is hard to believe that both Bill and June are 95 years old. They still live in the same home that Bill built in 1950, and are surrounded by an extended loving family that all live nearby, consisting of a son, three grandchildren, and eight great-grandkids. Bill and June are also active in their church, the community, and of course the local Model T Chapter. Bill and June were both born in 1922... June was a 'city girl', and raised in Kansas City. Bill was the youngest of 12 children, born on a farm near Springfield, Missouri. Living on a farm in the 20's and 30's was tough. When Bill was 17, he came up with a clever idea to power machinery on the farm, even though the family couldn't afford a new gas powered engine. Bill simply found a discarded Model T block, absconded with six or eight of his fathers' hack saw blades, and proceeded to saw the back two cylinders from the block (try to that today with 8 blades from a Big Box store...). With his 'new' two cylinder engine, Bill had only to go into town and have the blacksmith cut the camshaft, since it was harder than the crankshaft. Bill used improvised 'U' bolts and wood blocks to secure the head for cooling, and base of the block for oil and oil pan (there was probably a few other steps, but Bill made it sound easy...). As Bill described it, the engine sounded like a John Deere "Johnny

Popper", hitting on two cylinders, coasting for two, and then hitting again, but it served its' purpose on the farm. As with many young men, in 1937 Bill bought the best, cheapest, transportation he could find. It was a 1926 Roadster that had been fitted with a homemade cargo bed. But for a price of five dollars, Bill drove it home, and used it until he could afford something better.

By December of 1941, Bill had moved to Kansas City, and was working in an ammunition factory, which was producing shells for the war effort. Armed conflict was looming, and in 1941, as did many other young men, Bill volunteered for military duty. Because of the large numbers of volunteers, Bill was told to keep working until he was called for active duty. Although being a direct, but soft spoken man, it is touching to hear him describe the general anger regarding the events of December 7th. Bill and June met in 1942 at the munitions factory where she also worked. June remembers working in the packing department with a bunch of other pretty young ladies. Bill always found reasons to stroll through the department, and from there a romance developed. A few months into their courtship, Bill received orders to report to the Navy for active duty. Bill became an officer and Naval Aviator, flying and instructing other pilots in the SNV, and the SNJ aircraft. He also flew the Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber in Arial photography training. Shortly after getting his wings, Bill and June were able to get married. Yes, back then, the Navy controlled everything, including Cupid!

After the war, it was off to college, but with so many veterans returning home and wanting to take advantage of the GI Bill for education, housing was scarce. Bill found a small lot near campus and built a 20 X 20 foot cottage. Although quite compact, it served the purpose and Bill was able to sell the house for a profit upon graduation. From there, Bill entered the work force with a Mechanical Engineering degree, a new son, and a successful career. Although Bill bought his first Model T in 1937, it was not until 1955 Bill developed a serious itch, which could only be scratched with a Model T. So Bill and June bought a 1917 Center Door, and their model T collecting started. But, it seems that the itch has never stopped.

Model T's came and Model T's went. Bill and June bought and sold Model T's based upon the simple principle of buying what they liked. In two previous issues of Model T Times, articles illustrated their restorations (No. 292-Nov/Dec 1997 and No. 324 March/Apr 2003). Below is shown some images from their 1912 restoration. It shows their level of dedication to authenticity. To this day, June still remembers how her fingers hurt from all of the upholstery and tops that she installed.

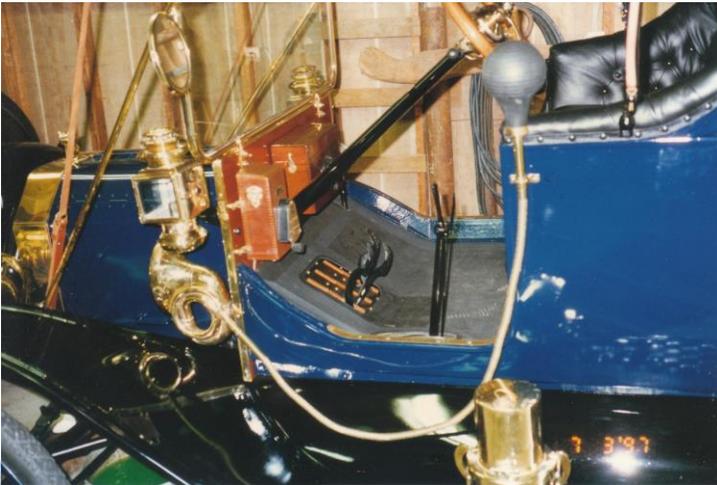
Their 1912 Touring before restoration. Most people will agree that the restoration required a bit more than JB Weld and some Duct Tape.



Sheet Metal Off- Down to the Bones...



Getting close to completing the restoration...



An amazing fact is that they did this restoration 20 years ago... when they were 75 years old. How many of us would consider and execute a total frame off restoration when we were 55... let alone being 75. Bill and June have continued to keep their 1912 Touring in pristine condition, as well as all of their other cars.



Bill and June have a number of cars that they have acquired because that car 'appealed' to them. The collection is eclectic, but the restorations are immaculate. But the important point for them, is that the cars are to be enjoyed.

The 1912 Today

The Magic Model T

What do you do with impish grandkids and great grandkids that would love to go out to the barn and play around with Grandpa's restored Model T's? Bill's innovative answer was to build them their own Model T. He took an old frame and various parts up to the loft of the barn and assembled a kid's Model T that they could play with anytime. But it was a special Model T... it was super-charged, and powered only by imagination. It could go a zillion miles an hour, fly, float, and always catch the 'bad guys'. You could drive it anywhere, honk the horn as much as you liked, and no-one ever told you that you had messed



something up. It has never run out of gas, never overheated, and never had a flat tire. It is magical. It sets in their loft today, waiting for the next generation of Kelly junior Model T drivers to create their own adventures.

The Pie Wagon

Although most of Bill and June's Model T collection has been faithfully restored in a meticulous correct fashion, Bill is not stogy about these old cars. As a case in point, Bill had a Pie Wagon that he recently sold to another club member. That club member calls it his "thirty foot car". From 30 feet, it appears authentic, but any closer and you begin to realize that this is not a standard 1912 Pie Wagon. Instead it has a 1912 body, but that body sits on the frame of a Triumph TR4 sports car. Who says Model T's can't be fun? Zoom! Zoom!

How to stay 95 years young...

Today, Bill and June have four Model T's and one Model A. All are kept in immaculate condition, and are periodically driven. So what is the answer to being so young and vibrant at 95? We suspect the answer is... each other...family...and God.

As June explained it, Proverbs Chapter 3, Verses 5 and 6 provides insight... “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”



Bill and June with their eclectic collection. Of special note is the roll top desk that Bill's father gave to him.

Note- Bill and June have no plans for slowing down, anytime soon. They ALWAYS attend every Model T Meeting (KC Chuggers), they often drive one of their cars to meetings and social events, and always make the best homemade ice cream for our ice cream socials!