



Bill Balzer's Chopped Model A Coupe

Henry Ford built over four million Model A Fords from 1928 to 1931. This is the story of one of them, long after it left the factory and showroom.

Bill Balzer and a friend purchased a 1931 Model A Ford coupe from a farmer near Schomberg, Ont., in the late '50s for \$25. It wasn't running and the fabric insert roof had rotted away but the car itself was solid – an ideal candidate for building a hot rod.

Balzer and his friend towed it home behind Bill's 1950 Chevy pickup

truck using a Mercury outboard starter cord. The Model A had no brakes and whenever Balzer slowed down, it banged into the back of his truck. They were just entering the west end of Toronto when the cord broke. The Model A rolled on ahead, out of control, and began passing Balzer on the right. His friend was standing straight up with his head through the open roof and yelling: "No brakes!" Then the car rolled into a ditch.

Finally, with the Model A home in one piece,

Balzer began rebuilding it. He owned a 1941 Mercury coupe at the time, which he scrapped, then mounted the Merc dash in the Model A and welded the Merc roof to the roof of the Model A to cover up the rotted insert. He found it fit really well, then he smoothed it off till you'd swear it came that way from the factory.

He replaced the old four-banger with a 1941 Ford flathead V8 taken from a '37 Ford T-boned in an accident. For extra horsepower, Balzer replaced the single-carb manifold with a

dual carb setup. When he finished, he had more tools than when he started because he found a screw-driver lying in the valley of the block when he removed the single-carb manifold.

He chopped the top five inches. Then he installed a front leather seat from a Hillman because it was the only seat flat enough to fit. Whenever he went over a bump, his head hit the inside of the roof.

To pick up the rock 'n' roll tunes blasted out by CHUM Radio, he installed a radio from a Nash Metropolitan on the rear window shelf. Also, he cut

the bottom off the cowl-mounted gas tank and installed a Cadillac gas tank, which he jumped on to flatten it enough to fit.

In 1959, Balzer sold the coupe to Ron Pickford. For cold weather driving, Pickford installed a heater from a Cadillac hearse right behind the front seat.

Pickford finally sold the coupe to a fellow who came down from up north and took it home. He said he was going to put a Hemi

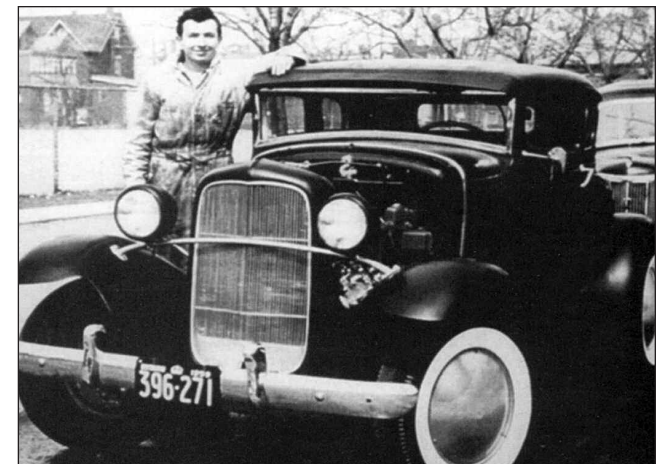
in it. Maybe he did. Do you have any old car stories to share with our readers?

Email: bill@carstory.com

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Ron Pickford stands beside the chopped coupe he bought from Bill Balzer in 1959.

Public input requested on new arena designs

BY FREE PRESS STAFF

Architects for the new arena in Essex have submitted a new design outline to the town's steering committee.

The committee requested a second design option

about two weeks ago as a point of comparison. The committee is making preliminary decisions about the details of the new arena.

On Sept. 5 Parks and Recreation Director Doug Sweet said the two submissions are similar, but one

includes designs for grandstand seating and the other design includes bowl seating. Several councillors have expressed their preference for bowl seating at the new facility.

Sweet said two public information sessions are

being scheduled. One session is set from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 19 at the Harrow Recreation Complex. A second meeting will take place in Essex on the same day from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Kinsmen Field House.

Sweet said the sessions will allow the public to speak with the architects and to look at the plans individually. Presentations are not scheduled. Anyone wanting information about the designs for the new arena can drop in during the

Harrow or Essex meetings any time, Sweet said.

The committee is made up of Sweet, Essex Chief Administrative Officer Wayne Miller, Treasurer Donna Hunter and Mayor Ron McDermott.

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