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Passion for classic autos made Charlie a new man

By CHRIS GARBUTT

Charlie Tompkins leans into the back seat of his 1927 Model T Ford. The Markham resident has just brought it back from Vandorf's Antique and Classic Car Show, and he's making a few adjustments.

"I'm putting a new battery in—give it a little more power," he explains.

The Model T looks just like new, and it still runs smoothly at a brisk 30 miles per hour. He works on it in the garage of his Wellington St. East home, where he lives with his wife, Jean.

EARLY INTEREST

His interest in cars began early in life. He bought a car at age 16, as soon as he got his driver's license.

"It was from an old lady who was trying to sell her Model T to a dealer. The canvass cover was in ribbons, and the tires were all taped up. The dealer just laughed at her."

On seeing this, Mr. Tompkins offered to buy it from her, and a deal was made for \$25. He soon found the car to be in better shape than it looked.

"It was brand new. It was the classic story of a little old lady who just drove the car to church on Sundays," he laughed.

But it wasn't until much later on that he took a liking to restoring antique cars.

BAD TIME

"It was a bad time in my life. I was becoming a workaholic, and I was smoking like a furnace."

His wife was trying to get him involved in some sort of hobby, and one night she suggested restoring an old car.

"I said, 'you're crazy, but while I was driving, I found myself peeking into back yards to see if anyone had a relic hiding somewhere.'"

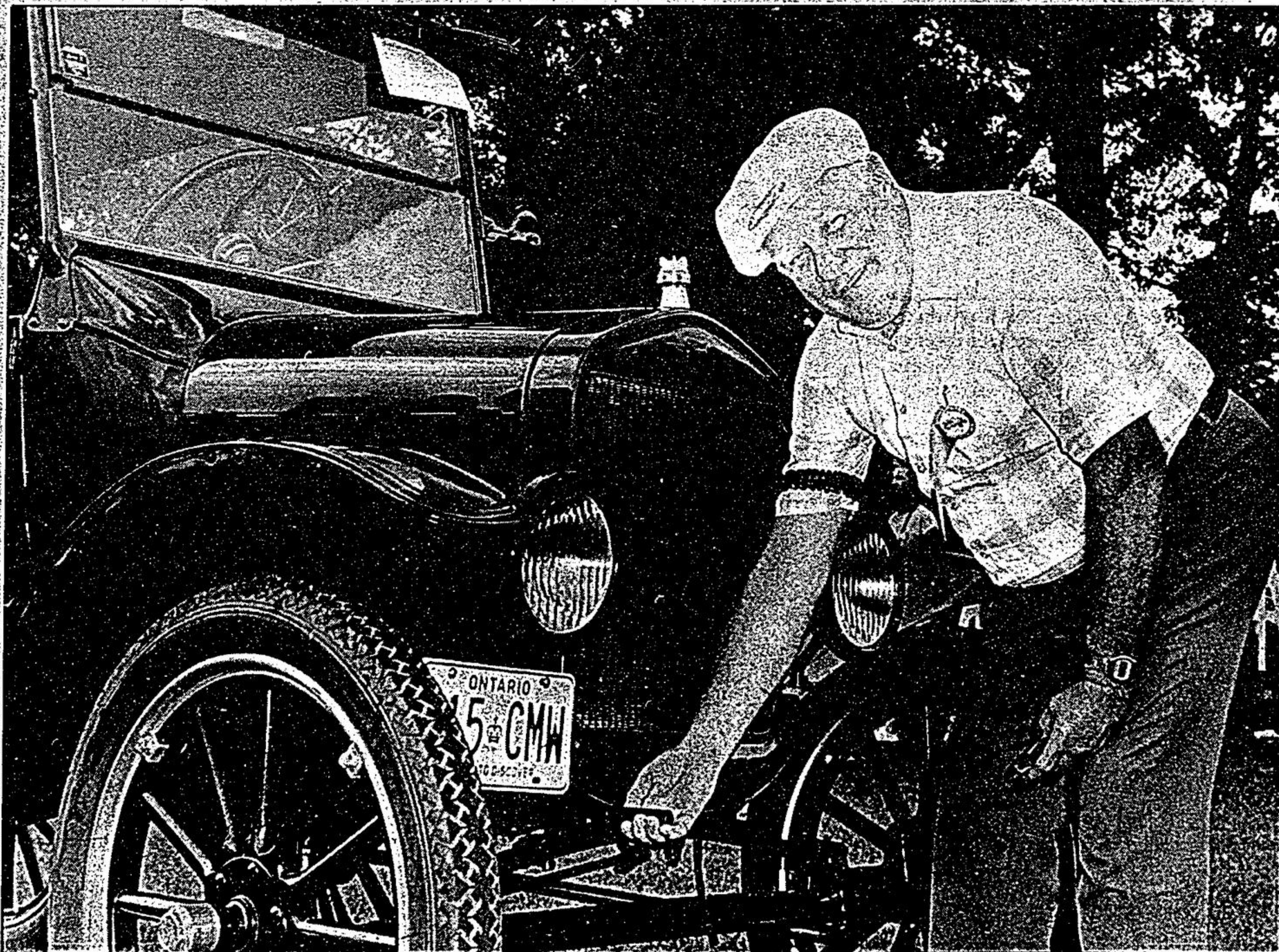
It was then Mr. Tompkins decided to get his life together. He quit smoking "about 25 times," but after three years of trying, he promised himself that with the money he could save on cigarettes, he would put into restoring cars.

He kept the promise.

"It got me off smoking, and my personal life got back on track. I just needed something to do with my time, and something to do with my hands."

MANY BENEFITS

Having had experience with



Charlie Tompkins says his interest in old cars straightened out his life. The Markham resident quit smoking to pay for the hobby. Here,

cars since he was 16, the mechanical part was easy. His first restoration job was a 1928 Model A Ford, a vehicle for which he still has a soft spot.

"Several people have asked to buy it, but I'm not ready to part with it yet," he said.

"I think this hobby has made me a better person. It certainly improved my health."

And the benefits go far beyond his own life. Mr. Tompkins began meeting new people. He claims most of the car buffs these days are young people, and the hobby helps bridge the generation gap.

"We get to know the kids, and they keep us very up to date."

COMMUNICATION TOOL

His daughter, Connie, who is now 27, took an early interest in her father's pastime.

"She always wanted to go for a ride in this old Model A that we had. It then became a good communication tool for us. If one of us had a problem, or if we just wanted to talk, we'd say, 'Let's go for a ride in the Model A.' We're very good friends today, and I blame that old car."

Mr. Tompkins says the people he meets through the hobby are top-notch.

"The calibre of the people in the classic car game is pretty high. They're an interesting group—

he shows off his Model T Ford which he displayed at Vandorf's Antique and Classic Automobile Show. Jim Thomas

we're enjoying ourselves so much, we don't have time to grow old."

DISTINCT PERSONALITY

He says not only the people have a distinct personality, the cars do as well.

"Each car develops its own personality in its customness and reliability to perform. And they're always requiring some work all the time, so they keep you busy."

The Vandorf show this year was a good time for everyone, Mr. Tompkins believes.

"I was impressed with the range of cars. It was hard to pick the driver's choice, because there were so many nice ones. To have a

community event dig up that many automobiles is commendable."

He says the enjoyment is the sole reason for his enthusiasm.

"What else do you get out of it? You don't make any money from it."

But Mr. Tompkins is living proof that there is more than just fun to be had.

"It changed my life. I can remember when I was smoking heavily my friends would be hanging out the windows gasping for air. The cars helped me change things like that."

"They're good for more than just looking at."

Campaign HQ opens

George Ashe, Progressive Conservative candidate in the Riding of Durham West, is opening a campaign headquarters in Clarendon.

The location is the west side of Brock Road, north of the The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

The dates and hours follow:
 Thurs., Sept. 3 from 5 to 7 p.m.
 Fri., Sept. 4 from 10:30 to 1 p.m.,

Tues., Sept. 8 from 10:30 to 1 p.m.,
 and Wed., Sept. 9 from 10:30 to 2 p.m.

Mr. Ashe, former mayor of Pickering, was first elected to provincial parliament in 1977. He's held several top government positions including Minister of Revenue.

George and Margo Ashe have four children, Steven, Cheryl, Kevin and Brian.

**Mick Slick
 is coming
 ...C/7**