

## My First Car and Getting a Driver's License

*by Mike Harris*

I graduated high school in 1935. I didn't start to make meaningful money until the middle of 1936. Meaningful money back in those days meant \$18.00 a week, top pay for a shipping clerk in the clothing and manufacturing industry in New York City, and enough money after a few months of savings to buy a car.

My first car was a second-hand 1929 Model A Ford, with a rumble seat instead of a trunk. The gas tank was mounted in front of the windshield, it had no fuel pump as it was a gravity feed, and it had a wishbone front end that always needed new bushings. Since I had a car, I needed a driver's license. I was already a competent horse and wagon driver, but for that, one did not need to pass a driver's test. A little networking turned up a twenty-year old, named Freddy, who had a driver's license and agreed to prepare me for my driver's test. This turned out to be quite an experience, because Freddy stammered ... but only when we were driving! As long as we were parked he had no trouble talking, but the moment we started to move, it always came out like this: "t-t-t-turn ... t-t-t-too late," on the busy streets in the Bronx! If you are wondering, yes I did pass my test and I got my driver's license.

It was also the custom to give your car a pet name. Being bi-lingual, after due deliberation I named my Ford "Tummeril," roughly translated as "perhaps or maybe." Why this name? Well it was appropriate. Sometimes it went and sometimes it didn't. It took me quite a while to learn the moods of my Ford.

With my new license and wheels, and summer in full swing, I acquired lots of "friends." Weekends at Orchard Beach and Jones Beach always beckoned. I became a quite a fat-headed, overbearing, stupid individual because of that Ford. It wasn't until a true friend sat me down and told me what I had become that the light dawned. So, in a way I owe that Ford and my friend a debt that cannot be repaid.

All's well that ends well. Happy memories ...