



Goose Bumps!

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My fondest memories as a child were visiting my grandfather in Fredonia, New York, each summer. Mom and Dad would put me on a train in Detroit and Grandpa would always be waiting patiently at the train station in Buffalo. Exciting for an eight-year-old? Definitely. Scary? Absolutely! My grandfather, Lewis S. Crocker, and I would spend two weeks together enjoying each other and the beauty of New York. It is here that we had great times, developed wonderful memories, and Grandpa gave me my first introduction to his world of antique collecting. Many lessons were learned during these brief summer visits – Grandpa taught me respect for others and the pride of family heritage.

It was a sad June day in 1974 when my grandfather passed away. I was only 25 at the time and lost not just a grandfather, but one of my best friends. Times like these are tough for all families. I am pleased to say that my grandfather's spirit still lives on in my family, for I was fortunate to obtain so many of his possessions. My grandfather's clock is, indeed, MY grandfather's clock. Our house is adorned with many pictures, antiques and memorabilia – I have Grandpa's pride when I share these items with visitors to our home.

My great aunt (Lewis' sister) died recently at the ripe old age of 104. Elizabeth Crocker lived in the same town of Fredonia and also was deeply embedded in the culture of New York. My wife and I enjoyed visiting with my great aunt before she passed away – this also allowed me to refresh my boyhood memories of this wonderful area. My great aunt was the last surviving relative in Fredonia. Following my great aunt's death, my wife and I have met with my mother multiple times in Fredonia. While having dinner with the executor of my great aunt's estate, I openly shared how proud I was of having many of my grandfather's possessions. The moment led to an admission on my part that one of my greatest regrets in life was that I could not afford to purchase my grandfather's 1916 Model T from his estate when he died 26 years ago. My grandfather and I worked on that car together – he was so proud of owning one of the very last Model Ts with a brass radiator and showed the car whenever he could (see the picture above with grandpa's County Fair trophy on front fender). Many great stories of my grandfather and his Model T were shared at the dinner table that evening.

My mother, Marguerite Shotwell, left that quaint dinner in Fredonia, New York, and drove back to Florida with a mission – she was determined to find Grandpa's Model T, and she definitely wasn't going to let anyone know what she was doing! One thing that you need to know about my mom – when she is on a mission, there isn't anything that will stop her. Phone call after phone call put her on the trail to finding Grandpa's Model T in Turtlepoint, Pennsylvania. Many people would say that this was an impossible task since the vehicle left our family 26 years ago. They don't know Mom! The current owner of the T, Byron Simar, confirmed that he had the car and many of my grandfather's possessions were still in the car – including the Model T duster, hat and gloves that Mom bought for Grandpa more than 30 years ago (see picture above). Unfortunately, Byron had no interest in selling the car – time for Mom to go into action again!

After a couple of weeks of phone calls from my mother, some shrewd negotiating, and a very kind-hearted gesture from Byron, a sales agreement was reached. Many mothers might be tempted to call their son at this point and proclaim their success. Not my mom – she had better plans! Mom orchestrated a family event. My Tampa mom, Orlando brother, and Dallas sister all met in Pennsylvania to pick up the car and bring it to Michigan – still not an inkling to me. My wife and I one Sunday evening answered a gentle knock on our front door. Why were my mother, brother and sister standing on my front porch in Troy, Michigan? The answer would soon unfold, for sitting in my driveway was Grandpa's Model T! With a loving hug and kiss, Mom told me that she always wanted me to have Grandpa's Model T.

Needless to say, Grandpa's 1916 Model T Roadster is now our most prized possession. My lifestyle has definitely changed now that his car is back in the family. My early lessons from grandpa in pride and family heritage now soar throughout our home.

This really isn't a story about a Model T – it is a story of family heritage and a great mom who really loves her father and her son. I have great pride in sharing with people that my grandfather is now much closer to me – we still work on his Model T together.

We now call Grandpa's Model T "Goose Bumps" because everyone who hears this story quickly rubs their arms and declares that the story caused their arms to tingle. I hope my story gave you a dose of goose bumps, too.