

## Bill and Geri Eby's 1928 Franklin

By Bill Eby

My pride and joy is a 1928 Franklin model 12B with a body style called Victoria Brougham designed by Frank DeCausse. The engine has six cylinders. It is OHV and air cooled, displacing 236 cubic inches, and developing 46 horsepower. Aluminum is used extensively in the body, engine, and running gear for light weight. The frame is ash, 1928 being the last year that Franklin used wooden frames. Franklin introduced 4-wheel hydraulic brakes on this series. The Franklins of 1928 were capable of speeds exceeding 60 MPH but I find it's most comfortable to cruise around 45.

So why a Franklin? Have to blame dad for this fascination. This is our family's Franklin story: My grandfather was a dairy farmer and bought a new Franklin in 1919. Why he was willing to spend \$3,500 for a Franklin at that time when other options were so much cheaper was never answered. When my father was 13, my grandfather and the local junk dealer were haggling about how much the Franklin was worth as junk. Dad said that he wanted the car himself and so that was that. Grandpa gave dad the car, they put it in the chicken coop on blocks, and when dad turned 16 in 1943 he started driving it. When my brothers and sisters were growing up no Sunday was complete without a joyride in the Franklin.

In 1999 we discovered the H.H. Franklin club. We became avid members and began attending many of their meets. After many years riding in the passenger seat of Dad's car, I figured that if I were ever to spend any driver's seat time I'd need to get my own car. I was lucky enough to find a car in excellent shape that a Franklin Club member was selling, and Geri and I became Franklin owners in 2007.

Geri and I enjoy touring and joyriding in our Franklin. We have put over 20,000 miles on it since we took ownership. The Franklin club's annual 'Trek' is held in Cazenovia, NY. Most years we make the drive, taking two days of easy driving on some nice back roads. We enjoyed Fall touring the Skyline Drive the last few years. The northern Virginia wineries make nice destinations for Sunday drives when friends come to visit. Our Franklin rested up most of 2016, as family business kept us away from home a lot. But normally the Franklin doesn't get to rest much, even on a cold winter day if the destination sounds fun.

In 2012 we drove from Washington, D.C., our home at the time, to the Grand Canyon. It was 6,126 miles over the course of 33 days, 22 of which were driving and the others were stops to visit friends and relatives, and take advantage of their garages to do the 500 mile and 1,000 maintenance tasks. Risky trip? Well, I took much of my comfort from my father's experiences in his Franklin. Dad's car had been driven for years, including to California, Boston, and Canada. If Dad's car can do all that without fail, why wouldn't mine make this long trip (and mine is more modern by nine years!)?

My other technique to avoid any problems, which I believe helped us run trouble free, was the Eby corollary to Murphy's Law, which is "The thing that will break on your car is the thing for which you do not have tools to repair, nor the appropriate part." Hence, to prevent any breakdowns I carry what seems like loads of tools, oil, grease, pullers, spreaders, inner tubes, jacks, parts, rags, wires, tow straps, and an assortment of other stuff. Carrying a potential repair for every potential breakdown by law prevents said breakdowns. So far this philosophy has worked well - not empirical proof, but I'm sticking with it. On the suitcase front we pull a little fiberglass motorcycle trailer for the luggage on our long trips.

The interior is original, and other than the wear and tear of the driver's seat, it is in good shape. The Franklin company was competing in the higher end of the automotive market, so there are some nice features of the interior such as silk roller shades, cigar lighters, dome lights, and a pull-down arm rest in the rear. The Victoria Brougham is a close-coupled body style, so it has two doors with a folding passenger seat for rear passenger access. There is not much leg room in our Victoria Brougham compared with some other Franklin body styles, which seem cavernous by comparison. But I guess when you go for style, you give up convenience.

The Franklin company had a comprehensive research facility, and the mechanical designs were well-tested at the factory. One story is that Franklin customers complained about how low the oil pressure was in the early cars, so Franklin eliminated the gauge. The air cooling design proved itself in the day, as well as today. We drove across the desert and up to almost 10,000 feet on 100+ degree days in 2012 with no overheating or vapor lock problems. I can let the Franklin run at idle all day long and never overheat. And with air-cooling no need to worry about antifreeze, water pump, hoses, etc., to maintain. Mechanically I find that overall it is reliable and an easy car to maintain.

We don't do many car shows; however, the Franklin is always of interest to browsers when we do. As more of a driver it is a little rough around the edges. But the unique engineering aspects always intrigues show goers, and we have lots of fun talking about our car. Franklin's are fine, reliable, stylish classics. And the best part is that they are still fairly affordable. I hope you enjoyed reading our Franklin story.



Bill and Geri take a break for a photo op while on one of their many tours in the 1928 Franklin



A covered bridge always provides a nice backdrop for an antique car.



The Grand canyon all the way from D.C. The Franklin proves worthy of its owners trust



That Shell station has probably seen more than one Franklin. Note the car's close-coupled body style



Bill Eby poses with his pride and joy



This is the Eby family's Franklin inspiration. Bill's grandfather bought this car new in 1919 and passed it along to his son, Bill's father. The car was gifted by the father to Bill's brother and remains in the family.