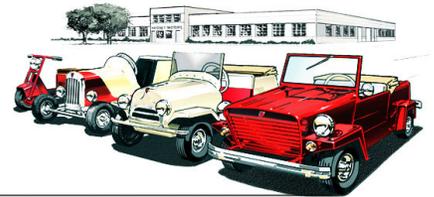




KING MIDGET NEWS

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Mother and Her Midge

MARY COLLINS, of Lillian, Alabama, shared this delightful story of her mother's first car – a 1968 King Midget. Mary also sent along a trove of documentation including letters between her father and Midget Motors relating to the purchase. These provide a valuable window into how such transactions were handled in the past, before email and the internet.

The owner of this particular Midget Motor car was my mother, Bonnie Hannaford Molnar. She was born in 1910 in Cincinnati, Ohio, a city with good public transportation – especially its trolley system.

When sixteen, my mother and a group of young people from her church traveled to a festival in a car driven by the rector. The car (make unknown) was in an accident and rolled several times before landing on its roof. Fortunately, no one was killed or even seriously hurt, but the “trauma” stayed with my mother *all* her life (she died at the age of 85).

Because of this event, Mother never attempted to get her driver's license. However, this did **not** stop her from being a terrible back seat driver. She'd “brake” whenever she thought someone was going to hit our car, or pull out in front of us, or or or! *And* she was always telling my father he was driving too fast, or in the wrong lane, or too close to the middle line, etc. Drove my very patient father nuts! She was so bad with the braking, she not only wore a hole through the car mats and carpeting, but in one car – a Ford Fairlane – actually wore a hole through the floor to the point you could see the road beneath. (Our family tended to drive a car until it dropped and the Fairlane *was* showing rust around and about, but it is an event that we never let my mother forget!)

Not driving in Cincinnati with its public transportation was one thing, but we moved in 1949 to Farmville, a small town in central Virginia when my father assumed a department head position at Longwood College (now Longwood University). My mother either walked or waited until my father could drive her to the store or appointments, or depended on my brother or me to drive her after we obtained our licenses.

It wasn't until 1967 – when I was a Senior at William and Mary and my brother was in graduate school at Ann Arbor, that she decided since she was facing the “empty nest,” she was “ready” to be independent!

My parents spent a great deal of time looking around for an appropriate car and settled on the King Midget.

It is in “Midge” that she learned to drive and obtained her driver's license. I had a picture of her behind the wheel with her temporary license held in her hand grinning from ear to ear, but it is long gone.

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Once "liberated" it was "WHERE is MOTHER now?" time! She scooted around town like an old pro thoroughly enjoying her freedom. She even got comfortable enough driving that she finally gave up driving up on the sidewalk in the face of on-coming cars. [And THAT is NOT made-up!!!]

However, sadly, it did not last. I have enclosed the correspondence my father sent the company over a number of niggling little issues and got either no answer or unsatisfactory responses. I believe I read on your site that at this time, Midget Motors was nearing the end of its existence. Perhaps that explains the poor response to these issues.

Between these issues and the reappearance of "Nervous Nelly" (my father's pet name for my mother while in a car), they sold "Midge" in 1969 or 1970 to a local farmer (Farmville was a tobacco hub, although by the 70s it was also a dairy center).

My mother made attempts to drive a mid-size Plymouth that my parents purchased (after the door fell off the Galaxie that followed the Fairlane!).

She was definitely a living caricature of the little old lady driver! Hunkered down in her seat, top of the head barely visible she drove very *slowly* with one foot always on the brake.

Last time I rode with her (praying all the way) she hugged the right hand side of the street so tightly I was sure she'd knock off rear view mirrors of parked cars. And, of course, we never got over 15 miles per hour.

My father finally took her keys away and rued the day that "Midge" hadn't lived up to early expectations. The car was great for her for a little while and was always remembered with wistful fondness.

