



CLASSIC HEARTBEAT

February 2008
Volume 32, Issue 2

NEWS OF '55, '56 AND '57 CHEVYS IN NORTH TEXAS AND BEYOND



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DALLAS AND FT WORTH INDOOR SHOWS HIGHLIGHT THIS MONTH'S CLUB EVENTS!

48th DALLAS AUTORAMA MARKET HALL

February 15-17, 2008

This year, DACC will feature *EIGHT*
Tri Five Chevys of
Marvin Johnson - '55 Bel Air Hardtop
Rodney Nevils - '56 Corvette
Mike Watters - '57 Bel Air Hardtop
Bob Caruth - '56 Bel Air Sedan
Bob Smolik - '57 Bel Air Hardtop
Dan Bunch - '57 Bel Air Sedan
Bill Preston - '56 Nomad
Carl Mitcham - '57 Convertible

Show Hours

Friday Feb 15th - 3pm to 10:30pm
Saturday Feb 16th - 10am to 10pm
Sunday Feb 17th - 11am to 7pm
Admission \$13 or save \$2 at
Oreilly Auto Part stores
Special guests include the King of
Customizers - George Barris



34th FT WORTH ROD & CUSTOM SHOW

Will Rogers Complex
Feb 29 - March 2, 2008

A nine car display from DACC at this event
will feature the following club members

Mike Dodson - '56 Nomad
Tom Blackburn - '57 Bel Air Hardtop
Jim Conkle - '55 Bel Air Sedan
George Johnson - '56 Nomad
Carl Mitcham - '57 Convertible
Joe Gaikoski - '56 Convertible
Ben Weehunt - '57 Bel Air Hardtop
Ron Davis - '55 Bel Air Hardtop
Chuck Rader - '57 Bel Air Hardtop

Show Hours

Friday Feb 29th - 4pm to 10pm
Saturday March 1st - 10am to 10:30pm
Sunday March 2nd - 11am to 7:00pm

Adults - \$12.00
Children 6-12 yrs - \$5.00
Children 5 & Under - Free Admission

Amon Carter Exhibit Hall
Will Rogers Memorial Center.
3401 W. Lancaster Ave.
Ft. Worth, TX 76107

DACC's SPRING '55, '56, '57 CHEVY SHOW COMING IN MARCH!

Always a big turnout of the area's finest Chevys
from the mid fifties, this year's event is
Saturday March 15th from noon to 3pm and as
always this is a no fee, display only show and
we want to see ALL club members at
Reliable Chevrolet in Richardson!
NO JUDGING! Door Prizes!
NO ENTRY FEE!

Tri Five Collectibles to be auctioned!
ONLY TRI FIVE CHEVYS!

*Put it on your calendar - YOU DON'T WANT TO
MISS IT!*

Inside Highlights

February Feature Car	2
Reliable Continues	4
DACC drag racing	4
January Denton event	4
'Other Car' Feature	5



"the best way to stave off fast women, drugs and alcohol is to rebuild a car"

Tim Page
Corinth, TX



Who restores station wagons? No one does! That's what I tell people who ask about my '57 Chevy. So, let me tell you what I know about this one and where it came from.

My 1957 Chevy wagon was built in August of that year. It was built in the St. Louis factory according to the research I did through Chevrolet's customer service. Yes, they actually had some information about the production of this car. The car was delivered to Western Chevrolet of Abilene, Texas. Who it was sold to there no one could tell me as registration records don't go back that far. I did contact a General Motors dealer in Abilene and asked if they have ever heard of Western Chevrolet and yes it was a well known Chevy dealer for many years. Though now it is a Ford dealership on the property! I called that dealership next and asked if anyone had any information about the Western Chevrolet that I could add to my car's history book. I was hoping to find some old local advertisements I could copy and show with the car. Not much luck. Even the local paper couldn't help me. I did get to talk to a man who worked for Western back then, and still works part time for the Ford dealer that is there now. I had a long chat with him and I told him what I had done with the car that started there new and would like anything he could send me such as pictures or letters about the dealership from those days, but there wasn't much luck there either.

From there I don't know what or where this car came from

until the later '70's. It ended up being owned by a woman named Toye (toy) through a divorce settlement. Toye kept the car, remarried and her new husband, Myron and her kept the car for many years. Myron would become a very close friend of mine some years later when we were paired up together in training at Braniff Airlines in 1987. That's when I first became aware of the cars existence. I was meeting him at his house one day and saw this rusted and worn out old car sitting in his garage. "Wow, you still drive this thing?" is all I could say. As a matter of fact he did all the time. Myron doesn't do much mechanical work himself and from time to time he would get me to help him do a few odds and ends on the car between regular maintenance work. I remember one day he was having carburetor trouble when he asked if I could take a look at it. There we were standing in the street of this very nice neighborhood with an old wagon that was dripping oil at one end, transmission fluid at the other and a two-by-four holding up the hood. And when riding around in it, you had to keep your feet up or you'd be like Fred Flintstone dragging them along the ground. The floor pans were completely gone! But the radio worked - a little. Myron even went to the trouble of touching up the door dings with a small bottle of touch-up paint he had mixed. To me this is akin to touching up the USS ARIZONA resting at the bottom of Pearl Harbor. It's a nice thought, but it doesn't really do a

Continued on Page 3



whole lot. I suggested to him that this car really needs a complete restoration.

Well, some more years went by and his desire to keep an extra car was lessening. I myself was just coming out of a divorce and needed something to occupy my time. I tell people "the best way to stave off fast women, drugs and alcohol is to rebuild a car". So my friend told me what he wanted for the car and I agreed. I gave him a check, shook hands and drove it home. The next seven years, me and my two sons and this old car were all living together in a small house and a two car garage. The house I was remodeling myself at the same time and their school was thirty miles away - a 120-mile round trip we made each day.

It didn't take long to tear down the big pieces. The hardest part was deciding on how far to go with restoring this thing. Each time I dug into an area and I thought this was far enough, but only I would go a little farther. So the whole car ended up being disassembled for a total frame-off. Soon my son and I were taking the engine and transmission out (as a complete unit). By that time I had already removed the front clip, so that made it a lot easier. I was loosening the engine mounts, my oldest was on the hoist while his brother was underneath undoing the transmission and u-joints. What a day! I got the kids home from school, took the engine out of the car, cooked dinner and watched a little T.V. after they did home work. It made for a fun evening. A week or two after the engine came out I decided to take the front suspension off. I can say with authority that you never want to remove the A-frames with the engine out and the springs still in. I didn't really know how big those front springs are until I did the last turn on the last bolt of the lower control arm and a spring went flying across my drive way with a load clang. My youngest son came running out of the house yelling, "what was that?" -- "What was what?" Like I would actually admit to doing something like that?

I was pretty careful about all the pieces. I photographed everything I could, both before removing a part and then again before the part was bagged or boxed for storage. Everything was cleaned and stored until needed. Stuff like the bumper re-chroming was farmed out obviously. I used Sentential Plating in Dallas to do all the cadmium plated hardware. That was easy, just put every loose piece, screw, spring or clip into a large bucket and take it to them. One piece cost the same as a thousand to plate. Eighty five bucks later everything looked brand new.



The paint and body work was yet another adventure for me and my kids. In removing and cleaning the doors, fenders, hood and every other paintable surface I simply had every piece sand-blasted and then I immediately primed with an epoxy/sealer, wrapped for storage so I send all the paintable to a shop when I was ready. The problem was nobody wanted to paint a restoration project. Except one guy who wouldn't touch it for less than ten grand even after I did all the filling, priming and sanding. "Never mind, I'll do it myself!" And that's what I did. I built a paint booth in my garage, talked to a lot of paint supply people and body shop types and learned how to paint a car. There is definitely a learning curve there, but I usually become an expert about the third time I try something new. And that's how it went with the paint.

So, I got the body painted. The drive train installed. Wiring all redone. The stainless polished out. Now, I started getting everything back together. I had the engine running before the front clip, doors, glass or interior were reassembled. So, my son and I took it for a ride around the neighborhood just like that. No doors, hood, fender or even seats, just a big box on it. It sure was nice to see everything working like new. I even added air-conditioning and power steering, though I was not sure of how everything would work together. The test drive was a great way to find out. Putting the front end back together was still to come and a learning experience at that. I thought it would be fairly simple. Just attach the fender skirts, radiator support grill, fenders and the hood, right? I must have spent two weeks and a whole new vocabulary in cuss words to get the thing lined up. If the hood was straight, then the fenders were off. If the fenders were straight, then the bumper needed moving. If the bumper was moved, then the radiator support was loosened and re-aligned. Now back to the hood. So I meet this fellow through my upholstery man, John, who collected a few of these cars. He was a retired postman who kept everything he ever owned in his back yard. Including a '57 chevy, a '56 chevy, a '55 chevy and enough parts to build a few more. By the time I meet him I had already completed my re-assembly of the body and got past the fender problems. I was looking for an original radio, that he had, and some seat springs. Both we sold to me. John is a quit man and does not speak unless spoken to. He politely showed me around his cars and some other things I took interest in. I asked if I could look at his '57 from underneath to make sure I had put some of the small hardware on my car correctly, using his car as the example. He agreed, and I mentioned the trouble I had with the fenders. He laughed a little and asked me the process I went through to put the front clip together. I told him, doors first, fenders second then the hood! Just like the manual said. He laughed a little more and said "you did it backwards". Where was he before I did all of that? John, I found out, has done a lot of chevys in his day. You can never underestimate age and experience.

So I finished the car and got it on the road. I found this wonderful car club that I am now a part of and have enjoyed it, the car shows and all the people I meet that just walk up and share some of their own memories. Like the man at my local car wash who came up and stood for a long time watching my dry the car before I noticed him. He politely asked if you could look inside. I never say no. Then I hear the story: "my mom and dad owned one of these when I was a kid. They drove us all across the U.S. and me and my brother slept in the back on a mattress. Man that was a trip. I'll never forget that car, just like



Reliable Chevrolet signs for another year as a DACC Sponsor!

DACC and Reliable Chevrolet will continue for another year as partners - bringing the best of the old and new in Chevrolet to Dallas/Ft Worth! Reliable Chevrolet's General Sales Manager Jeff Power states that 'being associated with the largest Chevy car club in DFW just emphasizes Reliable Chevrolet's commitment to being the leading Chevy dealership in DFW and supporting the members of DACC seems a natural'. David Graves, President of DACC commented 'To have the support of Reliable Chevrolet has been a tremendous boost to establishing DACC as the largest club for '55-'57 Chevys in the southwest and I am thrilled to be able to continue this great relationship'. Remember that Reliable offers great discounts on new and used vehicles, aggressive GM parts discounts and service for DACC members only! Reliable's Jeff Power is our club contact for the best deals in new Chevrolets!

Attn: DACC Racers!

The Texas Muscle Car Club Challenge will run twice in March! The year's series kicks off on March 9th Sunday at Kennedale's Texas Raceway followed on Sunday March 30th at Denton's North Star Dragway, both 1/8 mile venues. ANYONE can run, there are classes for all! 6 cylinder daily drivers to full race cars are all split into various classes making this truly a unique series for us to showcase our Tri Five Chevys! April finds the series at the Texas Motorplex in Ennis and then picking up in again locally at the Motorplex in September. Last year DACC had the best year yet in the series with great turnouts that got our club lots of points! For additional info go to www.TMCCC.org. Also watch the club chat board for current news and plan to join the fun!



Kennedale - Sunday March 9th
Denton - Sunday March 30th
Ennis - Sunday April 27th



this one!" Even more recently, David Graves (club president) had arranged an event that my car was part of. The people at the Holiday Inn Corporation were having a convention for their executives from all over the world to meet here in Dallas. They had constructed a "walk of time" theme for their main show to promote the history, and eventually the new image and logo of the hotel chain that is coming out next year. This show was truly a production on a large scale showing the changes and evolution of the hotel's image over the past fifty years. And the starting point, was my chevy poised before a fifties era Holiday Inn facade with a cast of actors portraying a family unpacking their car and checking into "The World's Innkeeper". It looked really good. It's to bad the public wasn't invited.

Well, that's my story! - Tim Page

BIG TURNOUT AT FROSTY'S ***Denton 50's restaurant parking lot filled with Tri Five Chevys in January!***

Traditionally a slow month, January's DACC club event in Denton had a big turnout of club members to Frosty's in spite of cold but dry weather. Before long the entire parking lot of Frosty's was filled with '55, '56 and '57 Chevys making a time warp to the past. Frosty's has been in operation since 1954 and has been owned and operated by the same family during all these years. It was special to be able to take our cars and surround such a unique place and only dream of how it was 'back in the day'. The top notch burgers and frosted mugs of homemade root beer just made the whole experience that



much better. With such a great turnout of DACC members to our first event of the year, we hope this trend continues and we have great turnouts to our other events this year! Be sure to check the website to see just some of the sights from our trip to Frosty's in Denton last month for our trip back to the 50's!



'ANOTHER CAR' Feature

Bill and Diane Preston's 'Other Car' or in this case 'Another Car' is a Classic Tri Five, a '57 Fuelie Corvette that shares garage space in Flower Mound with their '56 Chevy Nomad wagon

Bill Preston bought this 1957 Corvette in 1969 as their first "second car". He got it for \$1,000 from a college student, who wanted money to get married. The Vette had a well-worn medium blue paint job, with a carbureted 283 engine, Muncie 4-speed transmission and the removable hard top.

Acquisition of this first Corvette started Bill and Diane and their three small children on an automotive adventure that continues almost 40 years later. Immediately, they became involved with the Oklahoma City Corvette Club to learn about the old car and enjoy the social and auto-related activities. Weekly activities were road rallies, poker runs, parking lot solo autocrosses, road trips to other Corvette clubs' events, and an endless array of parties... it was the 60's.

Within a year, Bill began "working on" the '57 and eventually did a complete frame-on restoration in his one-car garage. He'd always done mechanics, but learned to do the fiberglass body work from the local Corvette guru, Jimmy Jorski. He also picked up everything there was to know about Corvettes from the local club members. By then the "late models" (now called C3) were what everyone wanted. The '57 was considered old, but many parts were still available from GM. One by one as the budget allowed, Bill bought new pieces--tail light housings for \$18 each, chrome grill ring for \$40 and replacement convertible top for \$40. Any bad grill teeth were replaced one by one as he found good used ones.

Bill was at work 12 hours a day 6 or 7 days a week, then came home to work on the Corvette. Diane became involved with the renovation, so they could spend some time together. Her dad had been a mechanic, so it she wasn't new to a garage. Bill once commented that she did a much better job detailing her first engine compartment, than she had done ironing her first shirt!

That first restoration was painted black and white by Mike Estlack. New door panels were done by Skip Rowland and the Prestons replaced the carpet themselves. Then Bill started showing off his "ugly duckling" at car shows.

One Corvette somehow spawns another. Over the next 10 years Bill and Diane bought, renovated and sold 20 or 30 1956-66 Corvettes. The first was a 1961 bought for \$300. It was the first car Bill painted and he had to get lessons over the phone from a friend in Tulsa. Soon they added a three-car garage/paint shop to the house for their expanding hobby.

The current complete frame-off restoration of this first 1957 Corvette was done in six months in 1975. Bill and friend, Tom Parsons, did extensive polishing and chrome work at night on the '57 parts. Bill also did paint and body work to restore Tom's '56 that same year.



Zora Arkus Duntov with Bill Preston's Corvette in 1980

Bill rebuilt the engine, transmission, front end and suspension. He also spliced in a new section of frame to repair damage done by an exploding clutch while a previous owner was drag racing. The frame, suspension parts, undercarriage and engine compartment were painted with black Imron epoxy, which has proven its durability the past 30+ years.

Bill did all the paint and body work in his own garage. The seats were covered with waffle-patterned vinyl covers from Al Knoch and new interior and trunk carpet was professionally installed.

The big change during this restoration was replacing the carburetor with a stock fuel injection system. The Prestons bought a '56 Corvette for \$1200 that had a '58 Corvette fuel injection system, stored in a chicken house with all its exterior chrome parts. They loaded up all the loose parts that day, later Bill returned to Manitou, Oklahoma later to trailer home the car itself. At that time fuel injection cost \$500, but only a couple of years earlier they had only been \$100. The injector was rebuilt by a specialist in Wichita. Then the chromed and rebuilt unit went on the 1957 under construction. The donor '56 proved to be a reliable daily driver for many years and was eventually sold unrestored.

Bill and Diane Preston's 1957 Fuel Injected Corvette has not changed much in the last 30 years. It shows hail damage from a storm at a Corvette Club event in Kansas City in 1978. It has a damaged front right fender from a steel radial tire separating in 1989. The old lacquer paint is still shiny, but shows the fiberglass age cracks. Since moving to Texas in 2004, Bill's replaced the old points in the distributor with a new Pertronix electronic ignition. He has to use premium gas and a splash of 114 octane racing fuel now, because of the additives in Dallas gas. They've also traded the stock seats and frames with the old vinyl covers to Al Knoch for new-style black leather waffle pattern seats.

It's still a fun car to drive... as long as it's not raining! Bill and Diane drive it regularly and enjoy taking it to car events around the DFW metroplex. Bill had planned another restoration in 2005, but has been side tracked by his current frame off project, his daughter's 1966 Pontiac Lemans Convertible.



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Dallas Autorama Feb 15-17
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repair suggestions and more on the 'MOTORMEN' radio hour!