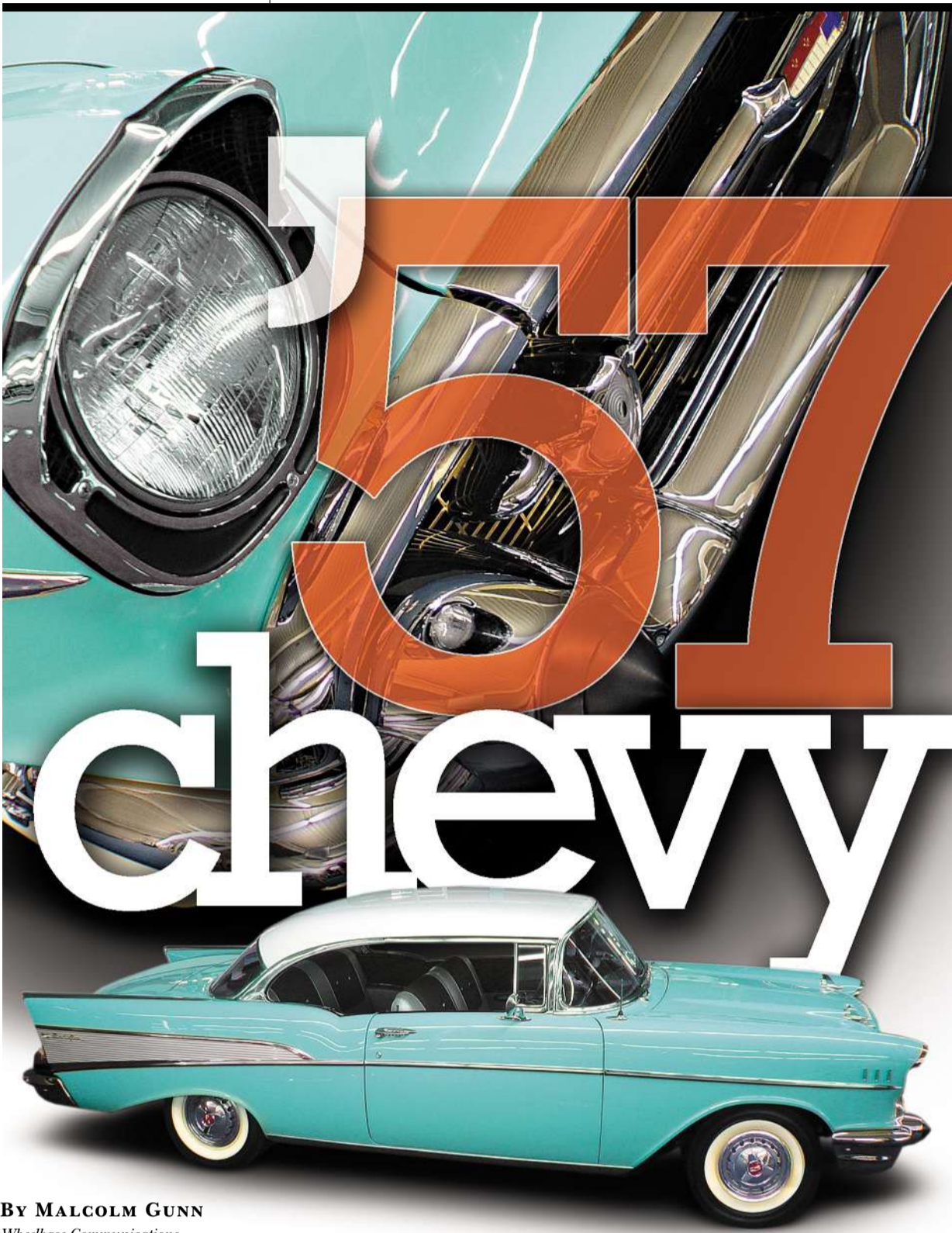


# Auto Sunday

**Car Club Calendar**  
Auto shows, monthly meetings — Page 2



BY MALCOLM GUNN  
Wheelbase Communications

It's the icon of all car icons. But the 1957 Chevrolet is also a car that charted a new performance course that forever changed the way the buying public perceived this General Motors division.

Until the '57's arrival, sportiness had been left to the Corvette, which, as you probably already know, could be enjoyed by only two people at a time.

With Corvette muscle made available to the everyday '57 Chevy and its buyers, performance could be enjoyed by the masses, if not you and four or five buddies.

Since those days, Chevrolet has banked plenty of success on the philosophy of the '57 Chevy (as seen in the Nova, Chevelle, etc.), even if it wasn't really apparent at the time.

But what about the '55 and '56 Chevrolets that seem to get lumped in with the '57? Although they share many of the same mechanical features and ride on similar chassis, the '57 is the visual standout with its wraparound grille/bumper combination, twin-rocket hood ornaments and deftly defined rear fins that are easily the car's most celebrated features. And since the '58 seemed to take a step backward, it only served to punctuate the '57's star-car status.

The designers could have taken the over-the-top approach, as did Chrysler stylists with the aircraft-influenced appendages of the Dodge/Plymouth/DeSoto/Chrysler lineup that year. But, they restrained themselves and rendered a set of rear fenders with a just-right amount of jet-age shape that made the '57 appear longer and

## Fine Lines

1957 Chevrolet

### Show off your classic

In coming weeks, Fine Lines will feature the late-1960s Ford Mustang GT series, 1980s Porsche 959 and early-1990s Nissan 300ZX. Have one? E-mail us a photo and details for Classic Recollections at [auto@dailyherald.com](mailto:auto@dailyherald.com).

lower while not looking trendy or controversial.

The Bel Air, Chevy's top-rung model in a trio that included the price-leader One-Fifty and mid-grade Two-Ten, came with a wide triangular band of stainless steel trim that made it instantly recognizable, then and now.

Although the '57 Chevy was only a couple of inches longer than the previous year's car, it was actually lower by 1½ inches. Part of the height reduction can be attributed to the 14-inch wheels (15s were on the 1956 cars), as well as modifications made to the car's suspension. The rear leaf springs were relocated closer to the rear wheels and the ladder-type frame was stiffened with additional cross-bracing. The net effect was a more controlled ride and improved handling.

With 19 separate models from which to choose, including coupes, sedans, hardtops, wagons (including the gorgeous and super-rare Nomad sport wagon) and convertibles, most buyers had no problem

finding a Chevy to fit their lifestyle or pocketbook.

Power sources were equally diverse. The starting point was a 235-cubic-inch 'Blue Flame' six-cylinder engine that generated 140 horsepower. The base V-8 was the 162-horsepower 265-cu. in. unit that was first developed for the 1955 Chevy.

The big news for '57 was the addition of a 283-cu.in. V-8 to the options list, similar to the one found in the Corvette. However, this motor, a mildly bored-out variant of the 265, could be ordered in one of six different horsepower ratings, ranging from 185 all the way up to 283. The latter, combined with a close-ratio, three-speed manual transmission, featured mechanical fuel-injection that was a whopping \$550 option.

Most of these low-volume, one-horsepower-per-cubic-inch engines found their way into factory and privately sponsored race cars where they easily outclassed most of the Ford and Plymouth competition. Still, it proved Chevrolet was intent on bringing performance — real performance — to more than just Corvette aficionados.

A still-potent 283 with dual four-barrel carbs that cranked out 270 horsepower was a slightly more common high-performance option. However, for most buyers, flat-out speed was less important than the Chevy's perfectly proportioned styling and affordable nature. Consequently, the 185-horsepower 283 motor coupled to the two-speed

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## Classic recollections



Dave and Shirley Stenzel decided to buy their '57 Chevy in 2005, and spent the next four years restoring it.

## Elgin couple's Bel Air hauls joyous memories

BY SHERRY GIEWALD  
Daily Herald Correspondent

When high school sweethearts Dave and Shirley Stenzel graduated in 1959, the average price of a car was \$2,200 and gas was 25 cents a gallon.

Now married for almost 50 years, the Elgin couple loves cruising around in their restored 1957 Chevy Bel Air.

"Driving the '57, listening to rock 'n roll with the windows down is like taking a walk back to the good ol' days," Shirley Stenzel said. "We sure enjoy the memories it brings back."

Dave Stenzel shares his wife's enthusiasm. "It's nostalgic for us," he said. "We drive it all over the place, and it's fun to put our minds back in that time."

Why a Chevy? Dave Stenzel drove Chevys back then, and when he was in high school, the '57 Chevy Bel Air was his dream car.

Dave and Shirley Stenzel happened upon the car parked alongside the road, and it was the body style Dave Stenzel liked. They looked at it on a Sunday and bought it Monday. That was Aug. 5, 2005.

The car sports a Cadillac red with a lot of metallic in it. "We used to call it candy apple red in the old days, and the top is a cream color, but it has so much metallic that when you take a picture of it, or it's sitting in the sun, it looks silver," Dave Stenzel said.

The car went through a restoration



The Stenzel's Bel Air has earned several car show honors.

by Midwest Hot Rods in Plainfield, which took more than four years to complete.

The car features a new frame, custom Corvette grill, 454 C.I. Chevy engine, 700R4 automatic transmission, ram jet fuel injection, four-wheel Baer disc brakes, front tubular suspension, four bar rear suspension and more.

"It's a head turner. When we drive it, all the cars are honking, giving us a thumbs-up and saying 'nice car,' and on and on," Shirley Stenzel said.

Their '57 Chevy made its auto show debut in January 2009 at the World of Wheels at McCormick Place in Chicago where it won "Outstanding in Class" and "Outstanding Paint." In July, it won first place at the 35th annual Ecklers Classic Chevy International in Arlington Heights.

With the warm months approaching, you may see the couple at car shows and cruises with their '57 Chevy, complete with Shirley in her poodle skirt and Dave wearing a car club shirt.



Rusty Rickart of Oak Park bought his first car, this '57 Chevy, in Pueblo, Colo., back in 1982 when he was just 16. "In 2010, I still own the car, but sadly it has not been driven since 1991," he writes. "I would love to go through it entirely some day and put it back on the road in a condition close to that nostalgic 70s street rod look it had when I first bought it (with some modern improvements)."

## Be safe and sure by having any strange vehicle noise checked out

The other day a friend of mine called to schedule a time to bring his car in to track down a strange noise he was hearing in the front of the vehicle. He explained that while turning and accelerating he was hearing a knocking sound coming from the right front of the car.

He drives a 2005 Cadillac SRX with all-wheel drive. In my mind I was thinking about all the possibilities.

The thing that came to me first was that it probably had a bad CV (constant velocity) joint in the right front and it was knocking on acceleration.



Doug McAllister  
Under the hood

The CV joint is what you find at both ends of the axle on either side of a front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive car.

According to Wikipedia, a CV joint allows a rotating shaft to transmit a power through a variable angle, at constant rotational speed, without an appreciable increase in friction or play. The CV joint is housed in a rubber

boot that keeps grease around the joint and water and dirt out. The most common reason for failure is the boot tears open and the grease comes out, allowing water and dirt in, wearing out the joint. The first clue is a knocking sound on turns. I was pretty confident that was what we were going to find. Boy was I way off target!

When my friend's car came into the shop we discovered that it was almost out of oil and the noise he was hearing was the engine starting to knock on acceleration. He was very lucky he did not delay getting

the car in because he was very close to ruining a very expensive engine.

The peculiar thing about this incident is there was no visible oil leak of any consequence. So where did the oil go? His last oil change was at a quick lube. Did they not put enough oil in the car? Is the engine burning the oil?

In order to find out, he will be monitoring the oil level very closely for the next month. In order to do this we set the oil level exactly at the full mark and then suggested he make note at what mileage it is a full quart low. Most manufacturers

agree that one quart every 1,000 miles is acceptable. This of course assumes there are no leaks. Personally I would prefer to see most cars use only one quart, or less, between oil changes.

So what's the moral of the story here? Actually, I think there are two. The first is for you, the car owner. If you hear a noise be sure to get it checked out pronto, it could save you some serious money. The second is a good reminder for me.

I am glad I did not tell my friend what I thought it was because this may have delayed

him bringing the car in. Many times I am asked what I think a problem is without seeing the car. I have to resist the temptation to make a diagnosis over the phone. In this case I am so glad I didn't give in to the temptation. I believe I served my friend well and saved him a lot of money!

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