



# CLASSIC HEARTBEAT

August 2005  
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NEWS OF '55, '56 AND '57 CHEVYS IN NORTH TEXAS AND BEYOND



PO Box 814642  
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[www.DallasClassicChevy.com](http://www.DallasClassicChevy.com)  
founded 1976  
membership - 87

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## Saturday Evening - AUGUST 20<sup>th</sup> DACC at the Christian Classic Cruisers Monthly Car Show!

Our August event is attending the huge monthly car show known as the Christian Classic Cruisers car show in the North Richland Hills/Haltom City area. Registration is from 5-7 PM, \$10 registration fee. The show is held in the Birdville ISD parking lot located off Precinct Line Road and Mid Cities Blvd. Each month this show attracts 200-300 cars and in August we want each and every 55-57 Chevy in our club to turnout for this event! There are many, many different cars to check out and it will be a great way to spend a summer evening with the club! For more info on this event go to [www.ChristianClassicCruisers.com](http://www.ChristianClassicCruisers.com), there you will find a map and all the details on this monthly event.



SATURDAY - Sept 17<sup>th</sup>, 2-4P M  
Reliable Chevrolet in Richardson  
DACC 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Meeting  
and '55-'57 Chevy Show!

**CASH AWARDS FOR EACH YEAR  
And TRUCK and CORVETTE!**

**Saturday Night, October 8<sup>th</sup>  
DACC DRIVE IN MOVIE NIGHT!**

All car clubs/cars welcomed  
Plan to join us for the cruise to Granbury and  
the Brazos Drive In for a night of nostalgia!

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**Sonny and Nancy Poteet**  
**1955 Bel Air 2dr Hardtop**  
**Pasadena, Texas**

*I wasn't even looking* for a classic car but noticed a '55 Chevy Bel Air that was being stored in a friend's warehouse. Once I learned it was for sale, I couldn't get it off my mind. A few days later, I went back only to learn the owner was interested in buying some jet skis. I had two new Kawasaki 1100 jet skis with a custom trailer and yes, we traded toys.

When I first got the '55, I wanted it to be a "driver" and just cruise around town. Later, I decided to build a show car. The more I drove it and regularly participated in street races with Mustangs and Cobras, I decided I wanted a race car. Nine years later, I have them all!



As with all classics, it's a work in progress. I'm constantly thinking of different things to do with the car, often while sitting at a car show for hours. You have the opportunity to get so many great ideas to improve upon your own vehicle. One of my latest additions to the car was a custom designed (Bow Tie) fuel cell made out of polished stainless steel. As I proudly removed the old red plastic fuel cell to install this beauty, I never would have guessed what a fire hazard I was creating. Several weeks later at a car show, the sun's reflection off of the fuel cell proceeded to burn one of the leather inserts inside the deck lid. I continued to watch the smoke for a minute



before I knew what the problem was. Needless to say, I have replaced several panels as they will burn in a matter of seconds if the sun shines directly on this (very polished stainless steel) fuel cell. Although it's a minor design flaw it could end up in a disaster real quick. I have since made a leather cover for the fuel tank to use at car shows on sunny days.

I have always wanted a car or truck with a blower. A couple of years after I got the '55, I replaced the 454 with a Chevy 502 big block and cut the hole in the hood (you should have seen my wife's face when she saw that hole) for the blower. Later, I added the roll cage, just in case I ended up at the drag strip. It's always a lot of fun to take off my helmet at the drag strip and watch the facial expressions of the younger generation. They can't believe a 63 year old man is still drag racing and they'll often apologize if they beat me. I made a bracket that attaches to the roll cage to



mount a small camcorder for the racetrack. I'll keep this footage and replay it when I'm too old to race.

Needless to say, I thoroughly enjoy this '55. My best memories would have to be the 2003 Hot Rod Power Tour (from start to finish) and the three Cruisin' the Coast tours to Mississippi. I also enjoy spending time with my '55 with members of the Houston Classic Chevy Club and Dallas Area Classic Chevys. I have no immediate plans to change anything on my '55 but I'm sure something will come up when I least expect it! See you at Lone Star XXIV in 2006!



**Look for more photos of this month's feature car on our website. Click on the Feature Cars link to see this and past feature cars**

## WELCOME TO DACC

The newest members to join the club are ....

#709

Neal and Jane Bellamy  
3314 Burninglog Dr  
Grapevine, TX 76051  
'56 2dr Bel Air Sedan

#710

Tom and Doryne Castro  
900 Clinton Dr  
Plano, TX 75075  
'55 Bel Air Hardtop

## July Texoma Cruise Highlights!



We had a great turn out Sunday, July 10th for our cruise to Lake Texoma for lunch. Old Chevys started filling the parking lot at Braums on I-35 in Lewisville about 9:45 a.m. Mark Lamkin & Allan Garonzik in Mark's '55 red & white 2 door and Don & Jo Andre in their Corvair arrived early enough to have breakfast first. Bill & Diane Preston, John & Maggie Rush and Greg & Nick Hedum greeted and checked in the rest of the cars as they arrived. George Johnson surprised us by showing up for the cruise in his '56 Nomad instead of going to Las Vegas as planned.

We welcomed visitors Neal Bellamy in his '56 red & white 2 door sedan and Chad Reynolds in his Trusty Rusty '56 Station Wagon of Power Tour fame. Members Ralph & Barbara Ellis braved the Texas heat in their baby blue '57 Convertible with the top down. Alan Strong in his maroon '57, Stu & Sharon Jacobs in their turquoise & white '55, and Ron Davis in his beautiful red '55 filled out the string of Classics. Several members who live on the far north or

east side of the metroplex joined the caravan along the way. Dennis Gormley caught us at the rest stop in Sanger driving his black '55 with a radically blown engine. As we turned from FM 455 onto U.S. 377 Dennis & Phyllis Lind in their late model red Corvette and Dan Bunch & Vickie Penny in a gray '57 2dr. sedan fell into line at the end of the caravan for the last leg of our trip. Waiting for us at the marina were Ray & Vala Langford, Ken & Sue Taylor and club founder Greg & Frances Easley. The marina had blocked off a section of road for us to park on.

Shortly after our caravan arrived at Pelican's Landing, several cars representing the Central Oklahoma Classic Chevy Club arrived: Larry & Annette Myers in their cloissone blue '57 Nomad, Rudy & Gloria Escalara in their '54 green & beige station wagon, Otis Welch and his family in a black 2dr '54 and Curtis & Kay Welch.

Pelican's Landing served almost 40 in all in our group. We enjoyed visiting and looking at all the cars and seeing some new faces in the club. Everyone chose their own time to leave the marina.

Six or seven cars followed Dennis Gormley back to his garage in rural Pilot Point. He's built a new metal building to store and work on his TOYS. Many motorcycles and several interesting cars in there plus a few normal ones. Lots of neon signs and other memorabilia for the auto enthusiast. The Jordans and Prestons followed Dennis & Phyllis Lind home to look at their fantastic 6-car detached garage at their new house in Aubrey. Here again a lot of great auto memorabilia, juke box, slot machine, a lift for his car and ONE motorcycle. That's because Dennis' Classic Chevy is in "Paint Prison" and he was driving the late model Corvette. He's looking for a '59 or '60 Corvette to fill one of the other empty spaces.

It was a great day of fun, driving, visiting and sight-seeing. Be sure to check out the photos on the club website!

Reported by Diane Preston



## Birth of the Nomad

50 years ago a station wagon was born that lived a short life but it achieved cult status

From Autoswalk.com

Imagine a time when things were going so well for the American car manufacturers that one of them could create a new model based on what many might view as a practical joke. And then imagine that the model that resulted from that joke -- the Chevrolet Nomad -- would go on to be acclaimed by legions of fans around the world as the ultimate station wagon, a car that turned the station wagon stereotype on its ear because it was so utterly cool.

If you can't imagine just such a thing, let us turn back the clock to about 1952 when Chevrolet's reputation was, well, pretty much like Chevrolet's reputation right now -- a leading manufacturer of dull cars for the masses. The only difference, then and now, is that the Chevrolet of the early Fifties was America's sales leader, a position the brand would dearly love to have today. And, perhaps another difference -- in '52 General Motors had a vision for its number one brand, a multi-faceted plan that hung its hat on two things that American cars seem to lack these days -- great engineering and great styling. Like having great pitching and great hitting, that combination is going to win you a lot of ballgames. So it would be with Chevrolet.

As 1952 dawned, and sensing that Ford was creeping up on his number one ranking, GM president Charlie Wilson asked Chevrolet division head Tom Keating what he needed to hold

off the Dearborn charge, and Keating's answer was simple, "Give me Ed Cole." Cole was the genius behind Cadillac's high-compression V-8 engine, but somehow he had been assigned to running, of all things, a tank plant in Cleveland. Cole was quickly moved into the Chevrolet chief engineer post, and before he left Cleveland he was already plotting a new, high-compression 265 cubic inch V-8 for his new division.

Of equal importance was the ascension of Clare MacKichan to head of Chevrolet design. Now there was nothing wrong with predecessor Ed Glowacke's work -- the 1949-54 Chevies were attractive cars, if a bit conservative -- but MacKichan was charged with turning out new designs that would place stodgy Chevrolet high on the list of a young man's car -- a big departure.

Finally, one other piece of the puzzle was a full-size clay model that was languishing in legendary stylist Harley Earl's studio. No GM division head seemed to want to take a chance on the two-seat roadster that had been penned with an eye on the British sports cars that had crept into the post-war U.S. market. Without niceties like rollup windows, the two-seater appeared to be too big a gamble, at least until Ed Cole saw it. He flipped, persuaded Keating to get on board, and the next thing we knew a show car called the Chevrolet Corvette was being exhibited at the 1953 GM



Motorama at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York.

The Corvette produced shockwaves, especially when it was broadly hinted that the little car would go into production instead of remaining as eye candy. It was as if Boeing had announced that it was going to build lawn tractors. What next? Lions sleeping with water buffalo? But Chevrolet management held true to its vision, and the Corvette did go into production, helping to remove the word "stodgy" from any sentence that contained Chevrolet.

Then, for the following year's Motorama, the question became, "Okay, so how do we top the Corvette?" This is where the practical joke came in. GM stylists decided to follow the original 'vette show car with three (count 'em, three) Corvette show cars for the '54 Motorama. One was essentially a prettied up version of the production Corvette but with real roll-up windows and exterior door locks. The second was a striking fastback coupe version that bore the soon-to-be-legendary name, Corvair. And the third was GM's Styling's inside joke on their buddies at Ford. It was a station wagon version of the Corvette that was dubbed Nomad.

The joke was almost too perfect. Chevy stylists knew that Ford was right on their tail with the Thunderbird two-seater, so they threw down the gauntlet -- "Match this station wagon, guys!" The joke got even funnier when it turned out that the T-Bird would be built on the Ford station wagon chassis. Funniest of all, Chevrolet's practical joke concept car was an immediate hit with the show audience. Harley Earl, seeing public reaction to the Nomad prototype, sent a frantic message

Continued on Page 5 ...



# Dallas Area Classic Chevys 2005 Schedule of Events

February 11-13 \* Dallas Autorama, Market Hall - Dallas, TX

March 4-6 \* Ft Worth Rod and Custom Show, Will Rogers Complex, Ft Worth, TX

March 12 Saturday 2PM \* DACC 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Meeting and 55-57 Chevy Show at Reliable Chevrolet, Richardson, TX

April 10 Sunday \* DACC Drag Racing, Tx Muscle Car Club Challenge, Texas Motorplex,

May 1 Sunday \* DACC Spring Cruise, Dr Pepper Tour, Dublin, TX

May 13-15 \* Lone Star XXIV Classic Chevy Convention, Victoria, TX

June 11 Saturday \* DACC Dyno Challenge and 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Meeting, Speedtek, Haltom City, TX

July 10 Sunday \* DACC Summer Cruise, Pelican's Landing at Lake Texoma, meet with the Central Ok Classic Chevy Club

**August 20 Saturday \***  
DACC Event, Christian Classic Cruisers Car Show, Precinct Line Road @ Mid Cities Blvd, 5 pm till 9, Birdville ISD Parking Lot, N Richland Hills, TX

**September 17 Saturday \*** DACC 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Meeting and '55-'57 Classic Chevy Show, Reliable Chevrolet, Richardson

**October 8 Saturday Night \*** DACC Drive In Movie Night, Brazos Drive In, Granbury, TX

**October 21-23 Fri-Sun \*** 12<sup>th</sup> Classic Chevy Fall Foliage Tour, Wagoner, OK hosted by CCC of Okla info Gary Baergen 918 369-3337

**November 13 Sunday \*** DACC 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Meeting, Annual Elections and Tech Session, Stoked Out Specialties, Rockwall

**December 10 Saturday Night \*** DACC Christmas Party, Dean and Audrey Schmidt's home in Plano

## The Chevrolet Nomad continued from Page 4

to the brass at Chevrolet -- "Get the Nomad into production!"

And, quicker than you could imagine, it was so. When MacKichan got the word from Earl, he immediately set Carl Renner, who had been involved in the original Nomad sketches, to work on fitting the unique two-door station wagon body to the new chassis, which would also carry the division's all-new V-8 engine. The "Corvette Nomad" show car wasn't built on a Corvette chassis, but instead on a standard 115-inch wheelbase '53 Chevy chassis, so the proportions were right to build the production vehicle on the upcoming '55 Chevrolet chassis. Further, aside from the Corvette front end and taillights, the car was fitted out with all the accoutrements of a stylish coupe rather than the barebones '54 Corvette. Talk about all the planets aligning!

Happily, the Nomad styling worked exceptionally well with the new design of the 1955 Chevrolet Bel-Air. With its slightly bulbous hood and single, "eyebrowed" headlights flanking a Ferrari-inspired grille, the '55 Chevy is one of the classics of the era. And the signature Nomad touches -- wrap-around rear glass, forward-slanting tailgate with vertical chrome strakes

and the fluted rear roof section -- harmonize beautifully with the clean '55 styling. While all the '55 Chevys are attractive, even the low-line models, the Bel-Air Nomad is, arguably, the prettiest of the bunch.

That's as it should be, because the Nomad was also the costliest of the bunch. At \$2,571 the Nomad was \$300 more than the Bel-Air convertible and the conventional Bel-Air Beauville four-door station wagon. The unheralded and now forgotten Two-Ten Handyman two-door wagon was \$500 less. Sadly, pricing would help spell the end of the Nomad era sooner than was expected.

But the first Nomad was a revelation. Not only did it offer leading-edge styling, it also offered mechanical excellence -- 1955 marked the introduction of the soon-to-be-legendary small-block V-8 engine. In base trim it generated 162 horsepower from its 265 cubic inches, and when equipped with an inexpensive factory "power pack" of dual exhaust and four-barrel carburetor, horsepower production rose to 180. All this magnificence rode on the virtually all-new 1955 chassis with much longer rear leaf springs and a significantly upgraded front suspension that featured ball joints, coil springs and unequal-length A-arms.

The '55 marked a sea of change in

Chevrolet, and it vaulted the marque into a performance leadership position it would hold for two more decades. Unfortunately, largely because of its high price and the limited utility of its two-door wagon body style, the Nomad was left in the division's wake. Despite warm reviews, only 8,386 '55 Nomads were sold, a tiny percentage of overall Chevy sales that year. The Nomad was updated to keep in step with the attractive '56 and '57 models, but sales of just 7,886 for the 1956 model year and 6,103 for 1957 doomed the Nomad to a quick cancellation. After that four-door wagons would carry the Nomad name, but while they were more commercially successful, they never achieved the cult status of the practical joke that became one of the greatest cars of all time.





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