



CLASSIC HEARTBEAT

September 2005

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



PO Box 814642
Dallas, TX 75381

www.DallasClassicChevy.com
founded 1976
membership - 91

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Saturday - September 17th 2 - 4 PM

55', '56, '57 Chevy Show

3rd Quarter Meeting

RELIABLE CHEVROLET

NE Corner of Arapaho and Central Expressway in Richardson

Our club sponsor, Reliable Chevrolet is putting up cold hard cash for Best '55, Best '56, Best '57, Best Truck and Best Vette for the our fall Classic Chevy Show. The staff of Reliable will select a Favorite in each class worth \$100 and a runner up worth \$50. General Manager Dave Anderson and General Sales Manager Jeff Power will open up their dealership for our club to display our cars and inside we will have our 3^d Quarter Meeting. Please note this event is not just for 'show cars'. We want all of our members to attend with their car! Reliable is in their first year as a club sponsor and they have been very generous with their support, and we need YOU to attend with your car to show our support to them. There will be lots of story swapping so plan accordingly!



UPCOMING DACC EVENTS!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Saturday October 8th

DACC is hosting the 6th Annual Brazos Drive In Movie Night and Cruise

Greg Hedum for more info
972 539-9886 or email at
tex_hedums@verizon.net

Weekend of October 21-23

12th Annual Classic Chevy Fall Foliage Tour, Wagoner, OK hosted by the Central Classic Chevy Club of Tulsa, Oklahoma
Bill Preston for more info
home-972-691-4968
cell-405-412-0502
or email at
cdiane1957@aol.com

Sunday, November 13th

DACC 4th Quarter Meeting/Elections and Tech Session
Stoked Out Specialties
Rockwall, TX
LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED!
Courtesy of Stoked Out!



MEMBER'S PRIDE

ALAN AND JODI STRONG
'57 150 2 DOOR SEDAN
THE COLONY, TEXAS



Photos by Chris Graves

CAR CRAZY OR JUST CRAZY!

I, like many other car enthusiasts, have always remembered which cars made me excited and car crazy during my childhood. As you can guess, the start of my obsession with cars began with a 1957 Chevy. I grew up in a coral pink, 4 door hardtop 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air that my parents had from 1958 to 1972.

I can remember being 5 years old and saying "Put it into passing gear, Mama!" She would floor it and kick in the 4 barrel. To make it even better, we lived in Illinois where rust is a real problem, especially with the exhaust system. My Dad, a product of growing up during the Depression-era, would buy the least expensive mufflers, which were called, in those days, "Glass Packs", which made the 283's roar a very pleasing tune to my ears. Sadly, even though there was no body rust and the car looked brand new, my father sold it when I was 14 for \$150 to buy a truck camper. Back then, in his view, it was just an old car.

When I became interested in cars in 1963, there were several kids that were 10 or more years older than me in the neighborhood that were hot rodding '57

Chevys. I used to watch them tearing around the neighborhood in their '57's with reverse chrome wheels and no front bumper. I was so enamored I even made a plastic model of what my '57 would look like if I had one. Of course it had no front bumper, was painted yellow, with an off centered racing stripe and multiple "STP" and Moon stickers. Forty two years later, I still have that model.

By the time I turned 16 in 1974, most of the Tri-Fives in Illinois were pretty much rusted hulks. So I purchased a 1969 Chevelle. I drove the Chevelle throughout high school and college. When I was 25 in 1983, I went the Corvette route buying a 1978 pace car. I owned the Vette until 1988 when my first child was born.

Fast forward to 2000 and once again that strong desire to have a hot rod came over me. I didn't want to ride the same path again with a muscle car or a Vette so, I set my sights on my first car love and lust, a 1957 Chevy. When I started looking for a '57, of course I wanted a Bel Air hard top coupe. I looked in magazines and the newspapers and had no success with that search. As luck would have it, in The



Colony, Texas where I live there is a classic auto dealer called Pat's Auto Sales. I had been going there for years just to look at the cars, as if it were my own little car show. One night I found a dark blue 2 door Bel Air hard top. I thought about it for a couple of weeks and when I decided to buy the car it had a sold sign on it. Well, I moped around for a day or so and called Pat and said, "If for some reason the sale on the blue '57 doesn't go through, give me a call because I'm interested." Pat replied, "I am getting in a yellow and orange flamed candy apple red 57 today for a trade in so why don't you come on down and have a look?" Candy apple red, I thought, "I've always wanted a candy apple red car."

I went down to have a look and when I arrived at the car lot I immediately liked the flames and the red paint, but it was a post sedan and then I blurted, "What is wrong with the side of that thing?" Pat told me, "This car is a One-Fifty. She doesn't have the stainless diamonds on the side like the Bel Air or the painted diamonds like the 210. The chrome trim on the side looks somewhat like a 55 Chevy 210."

I had never seen a car like that before and a One-Fifty was not what I wanted. Even though I went for a test drive and even liked the look of the car's paint, I passed on buying that day. So, you could say it was not love at first sight. I went home that night with the intention of continuing my search but I started thinking. I love the flames. I love the

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HOW TO BUY A CLASSIC CHEVY



There are only a few cars that have achieved icon status among hot rods. The '32 Ford is one, and right behind it are the shoebox '55, '56 and '57 Chevys. All are immediately recognizable and enjoy immense popularity.

But when it's time to buy one of these icons, you're still buying an old car. You have to know what to look and watch out for. It helps to know which models are popular (or scarce) to guide you in finding one and paying a fair price. You must beware of the rust demon, and of scammers who may try to pass off a bread-and-butter car as a highly desirable (and expensive) model.

Buying an icon car has its advantages. There are large numbers of owners, books, clubs, restoration shops, and other resources that specialize in them, so you have a vast amount of information available when you begin your project-car search. Popularity also breeds reproduction; as with a '32, you can (almost) build a complete '57 Chevy from scratch with newly minted parts and pieces. You probably won't need to, though. While Ford built just over 250,000 '32s (including Model Bs), Chevrolet manufactured more than 4½ million 150s, 210s, and Bel Airs during the '55 through '57 model years. If you're looking for a tri-five Chevy, chances are good your dream car is still out there.

What Kind Of Car Do You Want?

Or, what do you want to do with your car? If you're looking for a complete, original, numbers-matching car to restore, get ready for a long search and be prepared to write a big check. On the other hand, if your goal is to find a decent car to modify, and you're not locked into any particular model, there's a world of shoeboxes to choose from.

During the three years these cars were produced, Chevrolet made a variety of body styles in all three of its models—the low-level 150, the mid-level 210, and the high-line Bel Air. So if you'd like a two-door sedan, but you plan on shaving most of the trim off of the car, don't waste your money on a chrome-laden Bel Air. A 210 or 150 would be a better and cheaper starting point.

The same holds true under the hood. If you're planning to ditch the original engine for a newer alternative, a six-cylinder car may be cheaper to buy than one with the original small-block V-8. (However, see "The Sum of the Parts" section for a second opinion.)

If your plan is to build a competition-oriented car, like a drag-race or NASCAR look-alike, your first choice should be a two-door sedan, called post cars after their fixed B-pillars. The post cars weighed less than the hardtops, and the lightest of the bunch was the 150 Utility Sedan. Also known as business coupes, these cars had no back seat, used cardboard for the rear interior panels and had fixed rear windows. Without most of the chrome and other gingerbread found on 210s and Bel Airs, the 150s were the cheapest in the line, too. They proved so popular with racers over the years that a real 150 Utility is tough to find these days. You can fake one by removing the back seat from a standard two-door sedan, but the window cranks and channels will give its origins away—if you care.

Where's the Best Place To Find One?

Shoebox Chevys are not hard to find. Check all of the usual resources: Hemmings, your local car-trader paper, ads thumbtacked to the walls of speed shops, and the tri-five specialty shops advertising in car magazines. Do some Internet browsing. Many of the specialty shops have Web sites, as do many Classic Chevy Club chapters with good leads on cars for sale, parts for sale, technical help, events, and more.

If you're hunting for the fabled "car in a barn," our sources tell us the best places to look are in the Southwest and the Midwest—the former because of its dry climate, the latter because these cars are just not all that popular with rodders and restorers in the center of the country.

What Should I Pay For One?

According to a recent Old Cars Price Guide, the Bel Air convertibles are the most dear, with '57s commanding the highest prices. A '57 in number-one condition (a professionally restored trailer queen) is worth \$59,000, while a '56 can bring \$54,000 and a '55, \$57,000. Results from the 2001 Barrett-Jackson auction in Scottsdale seem to support the '57 values, with Bel Air converts selling for between \$49,680 and \$82,080 (that for a car with original fuel injection, a three-speed manual trans, and Posi-traction axle).

But let's look down the condition ladder a rung or two to the potential project cars. These same Bel Air convertibles in good to very good condition still aren't cheap, according to Old Cars. The '57s are worth \$11,800 to \$23,600; \$10,800 to \$21,600 for the '56s; and \$11,400 to \$22,800 for the '55s.

What about the '55 150 Utility Sedan mentioned earlier? If you can find one, the Old Cars Price Guide says it'd be worth \$2,900 to \$5,800 in good to very good condition. Two-door hardtops in the same condition range from around \$5,000 to \$10,000 for the '56 210 (the cheapest), to \$6,600 to \$13,200 for the '57 Bel Air (the most expensive). Nomads, among the most collectible because of their rarity, surprisingly don't fetch anywhere near the money that Bel Air converts do. A mid-range '57 or '55 can be worth \$5,400 to \$10,800, while a '56 dips down to between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

Keep in mind that these prices are for unmodified cars. If you're looking to buy someone else's hot rod project, our experts said that modified tri-fives commonly sell for anywhere from \$25,000 to \$40,000. Very few hot-rodded tri-fives went across the block at the Barrett-Jackson sale, but those that did fell into that range. A '57 Nomad with a 350/350 swap and billet rims brought \$30,240; a street-rodded '57 Bel Air sold for \$25,920; a Pro Street '56 fetched \$38,880; and a wild '57 Bel Air custom, with a chopped Buick top and Chrysler front fenders, was a no-sale at \$65,000.

Looking For Trouble

Like any old car, tri-five Chevys rust. Take a close look at the sheetmetal anywhere water would pool, like the

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Alan Strong '57 Story continued

candy apple red paint. I love the price. And do I really need a Bel Air? With that much needed spark and my wife's two cents, "Oh, I like that red car much better than the blue one!" the car started growing on me more and more to the point that the next day I went back to Pat's and plopped down my money and drove her home.

I didn't do any restoration work on her for a year or more. I just wanted to enjoy driving her every chance I got.

After that first year I started working on upgrading the old girl by first putting in the poor man's power steering. That upgrade didn't help to make getting out of my garage much easier. To make steering the car easier, I put in a 605 steering box. Next I broke the original rear end - showing off - and had to replace it with a 10 bolt rear end. The trunk was junk so I



cut it out and replaced the sheet metal. The motor and transmission mounts were cracked and worn out and had to be replaced. The gas tank fell out after coming back from a GoodGuys Show after running over some rail road tracks. I stuck it back in well enough to get home. Later I had to replace the gas tank bands after one came loose again. Mostly I've done a great deal of scraping, sanding and sandblasting of old paint and rusted metal and repainting the cleaned metal like the rear seat area.

I like working on and upgrading the old girl, but my first love is driving her. I have made a deal with myself that I will only work on her for 4 months out of the year and drive her 8 months. When people ask me when I'll be done with her, I say "never". The driving part is much too fun!

*More on Alan's '57
on the club web site!*

August's Christian Classic Cruiser's Show RESULTS

On the DACC schedule for August was the monthly Christian Classic Cruisers show in North Richland Hills. A group of DACC members got to discussing on the club chat board about meeting before the show, and sure enough a great turnout made it out to Joe's Pasta & Pizza as one thing that DACC members like to do is EAT! Thanks to Neal Belamy for the idea and setting this up! The food was great and we all enjoyed the chance to visit. Meeting at Joe's Pizza were Don & Jo Andre, Greg Hedum, Neal & Jane Belamy, Jim & Debbie Conkle, Ralph & Barbara Ellis, John & Maggie Rush, Jim & Trish Sparrow, Larry & Jan Rollow, Joe & Cheryl Moore, and Bill Preston.

At the Christian Classic Cruisers' show, over 250 cars of just about every make and model was on display! DACC had a fantastic turn out of over 20 1955-57 Chevys!!! Our club won the Club Participation trophy by a big margin! Thanks to everyone in the club who support this activity and attended! In addition to the cars driven by members who went to the early dinner, more Classic Chevys were brought to the show by: Carl Mitcham, Bob Smolik, Mark Lamkin, Chuck Rader, Morris Stewart, George Johnson, Sharkey Nelson, Tom Blackburn, Stu Jacobs and Chad Reynolds along with several non members (who are soon to be hopefully!) Special Awards went to Greg Hedum who won Best Interior with his beautiful '55 2 door hardtop, and Tom Blackburn who won Ladies' Choice with his stunning black '57 Bel Air hardtop. Trophy winners from DACC were Neal Belamy's '56, John Rush's '56, Jim Sparrow's '56, Bill Preston's '56, Ron Davis' '55 and Marvin Johnson's '55 - who was showing his just recently completed ride for the first time locally! A few loyal members showed up just to give us moral support: David & Marlene Graves, Dan Bunch and the Chad Reynolds' entourage. Congrats to all the winners of awards and a big thank you to all that came out for a great Saturday evening of cars! A special thanks to Carl Mitcham, who is a member of both CCC and DACC, for arranging for all of our cars to be together. Be sure and check out the photos on the club website!!

Submitted by Bill Preston



**HOW TO BUY A CLASSIC CHEVY
...Continued from Page 3**

bottoms of doors, floors, and the trunk's tail pan (just below the trunk lid). Check the front fenders where they meet the rocker panels, as water would seep in through the cowl area. Check a convertible closely, since there are so many places water could leak in and puddle. When you're checking out the floor, be sure to look not only at the floorpan, but at the braces below. A rusted toe board is relatively easy to repair, but if the braces below it are rotten, that's a much more extensive (and expensive) repair job.

Some cars, especially those from the Northeast, get what California Street Rods' Chuck Lombardo Sr. calls the "circle of death": a ring of rust on the inside of the rear quarter-panels that's caused by water getting trapped behind a rubber seal. Northeastern cars are also prone to rust behind the headlight buckets, since snow, rain, salt, and other road debris gets pitched up in there by the front tires.

To check for accident damage, look for even door and trunk gaps. Sight down the sides of the car to make sure the panels are flat. The front fenders and rear quarters tend to bow outward if they've been hit. Look at the bumper brackets. There are six of them on each end of a '57 Chevy, and if they're not straight, the bumpers will never align.

The Sum Of The Parts

The good news about tri-five parts is that between swap meets and the reproduction houses, virtually any part you need is available, from hood birds to taillight lenses. Yet our experts recommended buying as complete a car as possible to save you the time and expense of rounding up missing parts.

Some complete cars will actually put you ahead financially. During a discussion of engine parts, restorer Art Fernandez punctured our "six-cylinder cars are cheaper" idea. In Art's experience, good-quality original V-8 parts are valuable. For example, air cleaners sell for \$400 to \$500, four-barrel carbs can get \$200, and original power-steering and power-brake units sell for \$300 to \$500. So by parting out that old small-block, you're well on your

way to paying for a late-model motor. Six-cylinder owners can't enjoy that kind of bonanza.

The Rare Ones

From a production standpoint, the rarest tri-five models are the Nomads. Only a little more than 8,000 were made in 1955; by 1957, the number had dropped to a tick over 6,000.

The rarest of the rare, however, are '57 Chevys originally fitted with factory fuel injection. Fuel injection was a \$501 option, which was pretty pricey given the fact that Bel Airs cost between \$2,700 and \$3,000 in 1957; few of the systems were ordered, and those that were didn't work very well.

We couldn't determine exactly how many fuel-injected cars were ordered in 1957, but our experts guessed that there are far more "original" fuelie cars on the road today than were originally built. Authenticating a fuel-injected car is tough. The option is not listed on either the VIN tag or the cowl tag, but a special suffix on the date code stamped into the block under the valve covers will denote a fuel-injected engine. Of course, stampings can be counterfeit, so it would be a good idea to get a couple of forms of ID—the block stamping plus original paperwork from the factory—to make sure you're getting a real original fuelie for your wads of cash.

Alternatives To The High-Priced Models

Are you dying for a Nomad or a Bel Air, but finding them a little beyond your financial reach? There are alternatives, as long as you're not a stickler for detail.

For example, if you want to approximate the look of a Nomad, you could buy a 150- or 210-series Handyman two-door wagon for a fraction of the cost. It won't have the Nomad's trademark roof ribs, tailgate bars, or curved rear glass, but it'll look a lot sportier than the family oriented Townsman or Beauville four-door wagons.

Also, it's easy to turn a '57 210 into a Bel Air look-alike by adding the Bel Air's aluminum side panel inserts to the 210's stainless rear-quarter trim spears. Your 210 won't have all the Bel Air's chrome and gold-look trim—unless you add that, too—but at a glance it'll look like the more expensive car.

So, Which Year Is Best?

That's a matter of personal taste, but there does seem to be some consensus with shoebox fans. According to the restorers, hot rod shops, and parts manufacturers we spoke with, the '57s are by far the most popular, followed by the '55s and then the '56s.

Why? "People just like 'em," was the typical answer. Something about the ornate grilles and the tail fins strike a chord. But you'll pay a price for popularity. Take another look at the values section and you'll see how the '57s tend to be the most expensive to buy, though prices for comparable '55s and even '56s aren't far behind.

There's no best shoebox, really. Pick a style that floats your boat and then go make one your own!

Upcoming Events of Interest

**Texas Muscle Car Club
Challenge Race # 7
Texas Raceway, Kennedale
Sunday Sept 18th
www.TMCCC.org**

**38th Southwest Swap Meet
September 23-25
Ameriquet Field
Arlington
www.SouthwestSwapMeet.com**

**13th Lone Star Goodguy
Nationals
Texas Motor Speedway
Ft Worth
Sept 30, Oct 1 -2
www.Good-Guys.com**

**Texas Muscle Car Club
Challenge Race # 8
Texas Motorplex, Ennis
Sunday Oct 16th
www.TMCCC.org**





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Host of the 2006 Lone Star
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2pm - 4pm

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*JOIN DACC on Sunday November 13th
at the heated and air conditioned
facilities of Stoked Out Specialties in
Rockwall for our 4th Quarter Meeting
and Elections along with a special
'Tech Session' by Stoked Out! Also
lunch will be provided by Stoked Out so
this should be a full day of voting,
learning and, well... eating!*