

Automotive News

Commemorative Edition

October 31, 2011



A CENTURY OF CHEVROLET: THE STORIES THAT SHAPED AN ICON

10 CHEVY CLASSICS

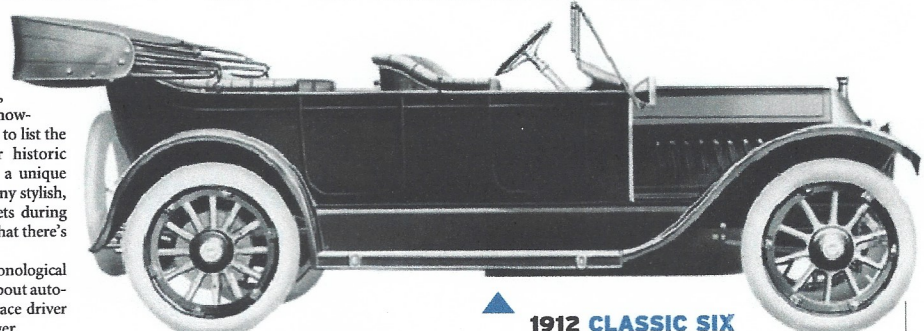
Here's our list; what's on yours?



WITZENBURG

Ask any Chevy collector, enthusiast, historian or knowledgeable auto journalist to list the top 10 collectible or historic Chevrolets, and you'll likely get a unique selection. There have been so many stylish, significant and historic Chevrolets during the brand's century of existence that there's a lot of room for variety.

Here's a top 10 list, in chronological order, from Gary Witzenburg, who has been writing about automobiles for 23 years. He is a former auto engineer, race driver and advanced technology vehicle development manager.

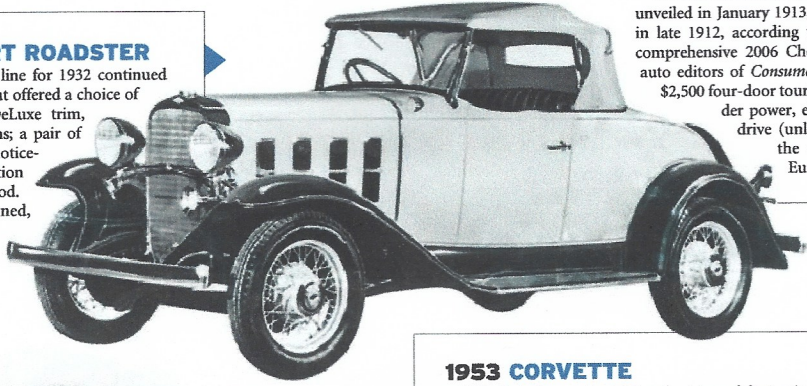


1912 CLASSIC SIX

The first Chevrolet was formally unveiled in January 1913, though a few were built in late 1912, according to *Chevrolet Chronicle*, a comprehensive 2006 Chevy history book by the auto editors of *Consumer Guide*. This handsome \$2,500 four-door touring car featured six-cylinder power, electric lighting, left-hand drive (unlike many competitors at the time) and a low-slung European look.

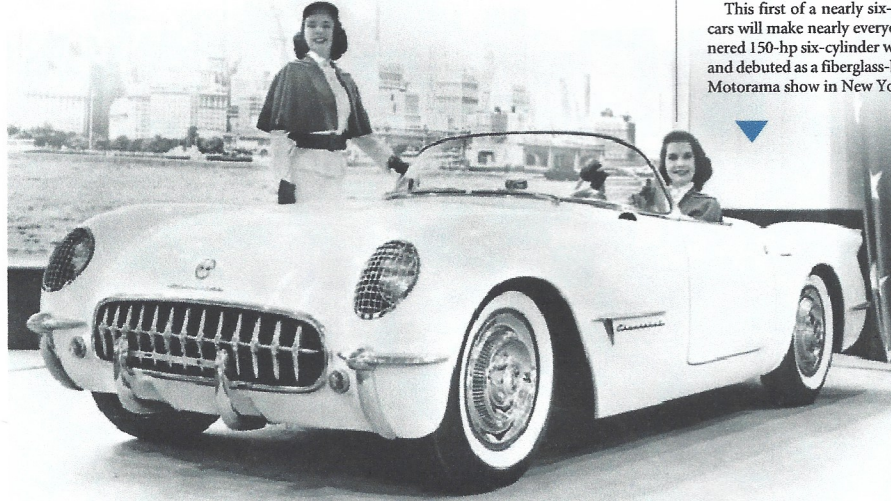
1932 DELUXE SPORT ROADSTER

Chevy's "Confederate Series" line for 1932 continued the previous year's body styles but offered a choice of Standard or, for \$15 more, DeLuxe trim, which added twin trumpet horns; a pair of chrome cowl lamps; and, most noticeably, chrome on the four ventilation doors along each side of the hood. These handsomely proportioned, bright-trimmed DeLuxe models were acclaimed for "Cadillac like" styling.



1953 CORVETTE

This first of a nearly six-decade string of distinctive Chevy sports cars will make nearly everyone's list. It was powered by a mild-mannered 150-hp six-cylinder with a two-speed Powerglide transmission, and debuted as a fiberglass-bodied "dream car" at GM's January 1953 Motorama show in New York.



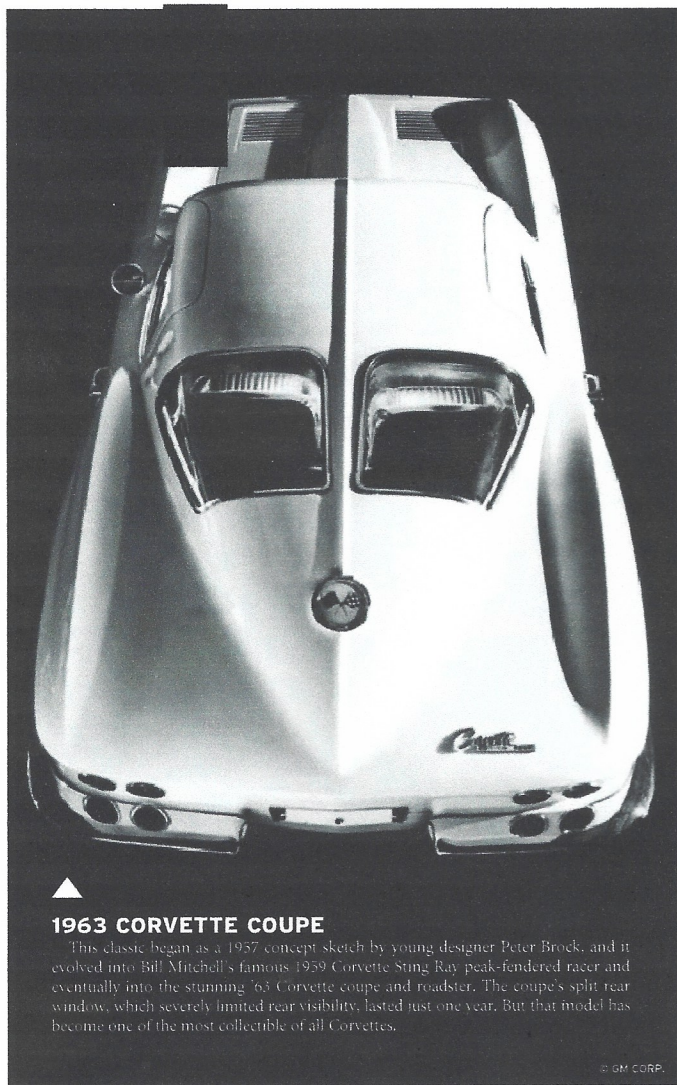
1955 BEL AIR CONVERTIBLE

Chevy's 1955 line shines not only for its clean, classic styling but for the debut of its small-block V-8, which would become a classic in its own right. I love the looks of the sexy but impractical Nomad two-door wagon (the highest-priced '55, at \$2,571, and one of the rarest). But the top-trim \$2,206 Bel Air convertible, especially in two-tone paint, is probably the most desired.

1955 CAMEO CARRIER

Also debuting for 1955 were trend-setting pickups designed by Chuck Jordan aimed at the growing number of people who used pickups for personal transportation as well as for hauling cargo. The trucks had egg-crate grilles, wrap-around windshields and headlamp visors. At the top of the line was the Cameo Carrier, with its fiberglass cargo box, chrome bumpers, two-tone interior and optional V-8.





1963 CORVETTE COUPE

This classic began as a 1957 concept sketch by young designer Peter Brock, and it evolved into Bill Mitchell's famous 1959 Corvette Sting Ray peak-fendered racer and eventually into the stunning '63 Corvette coupe and roadster. The coupe's split rear window, which severely limited rear visibility, lasted just one year. But that model has become one of the most collectible of all Corvettes.

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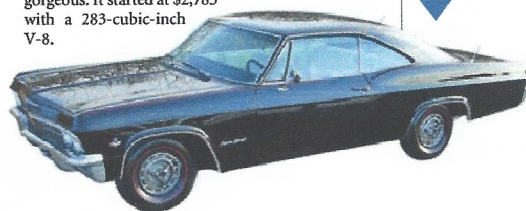
1964 CHEVELLE MALIBU

This first "intermediate" Chevy may not make everyone's list. It followed the radical rear-engine Corvair by four years and the conventional compact Chevy II by two, and it's the only one of the three that sold well and remains popular today, as the mid-sized Malibu. Its most coveted collectible versions are the powerful muscle car models that began with the late-'65 SS 396.



1965 IMPALA SPORT COUPE

The year 1965 was a great one for Chevy design. The Corvair got a new look, and the new longer, lower, wider, roomier regular Chevys may be — along with the slightly cleaner '66 versions that followed — the best-looking full-sized cars ever built. The sedans and wagons looked good, the convertible better, and the semifastback coupe downright gorgeous. It started at \$2,785 with a 283-cubic-inch V-8.



1970 1/2 CAMARO

It's not Chevy's first Mustang-fighter Camaro — the first arrived for '67 — but the second-generation '70½ (its debut was delayed until late February by a UAW strike) is arguably the prettiest, and one of the best-looking American cars ever. The high-performance Z28s are most desirable to collectors, but my favorite is the mini-bumpered Rally Sport with Jaguar-like park lamps inboard of its headlamps.



1970 MONTE CARLO

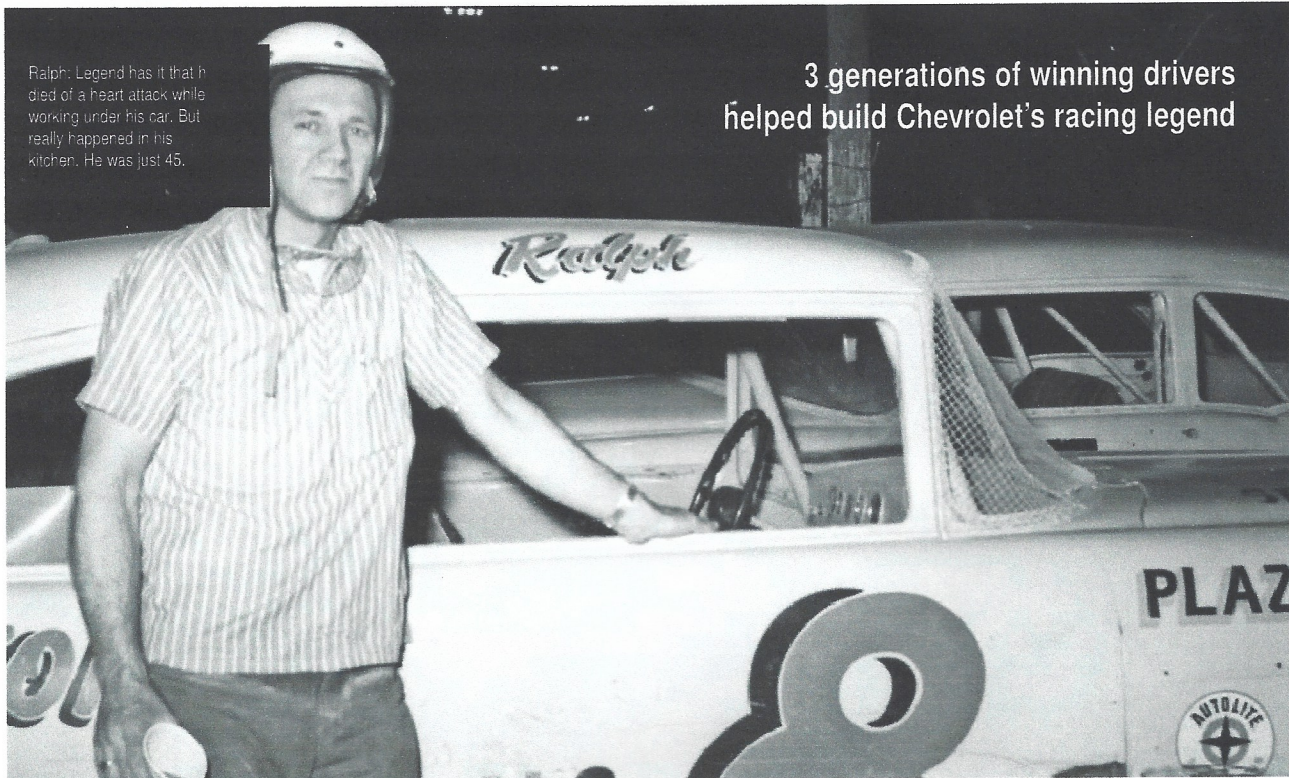
Chevy's first "personal luxury" coupe (along with Pontiac's Grand Prix) completed GM's response to Ford's popular Thunderbird. It was based on the mid-sized Chevelle, and, like other Bill Mitchell-era Chevys, it was beautifully proportioned and styled, with a long hood, a short deck and a gracefully sweeping roof. It offered a lower-priced luxury alternative to the Buick Riviera, Oldsmobile Toronado and Cadillac Eldorado luxury coupes.



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TURN TO PAGE 72 FOR MORE OPINIONS
ON THE BEST OF CHEVROLET >>

Ralph: Legend has it that he died of a heart attack while working under his car. But it really happened in his kitchen. He was just 45.



3 generations of winning drivers helped build Chevrolet's racing legend

The racing Earnhardts

STORY
43/100

BY GARY WITZENBURG

Dale Earnhardt had won Winston Cup Championships in 1980, 1986 and 1987 but never NASCAR's biggest race, the Daytona 500. When he found himself leading the 1990 500 on the final lap, it looked as if he finally would.

But as he rocketed down the back straight and into the last high-banked turn, his black No. 3 Goodwrench Chevy suddenly slowed. Second-running Derricke Cope swept past for the win, while Earnhardt limped home to fifth. He had run over a piece of metal debris and cut a tire.

When the Goodwrench car unexpectedly faltered on that final lap, the air went out of the rowdy gaggle of Chevy dealers and employees sharing Buick's suite as fast as it had from Earnhardt's cut tire, while the Buick bunch pumped their fists and cheered.

Few drivers in NASCAR history generated such mixed emotions as Earnhardt. Virtually worshiped by legions of fans, Earnhardt was hated by nearly everyone else for his aggressive driving tactics. He was known for bumping, even crashing, anyone, including GM competitors, out of his way to win. That reputation earned him the nickname "The Intimidator." Other nicknames: "The Man in Black" and "Darth Vader." Thousands of nonfans wore "Anyone but Earnhardt" T-shirts.

Ralph

Yet almost no one knew that off the track Earnhardt was gentle, kind and generous and a loving family man, cut from the same tough cloth as his champion racer father, Ralph. "The most important things in my life are God, my family and that black No. 3 Goodwrench car, in that order," Dale said in 1998.

Both were born in Kannapolis, N.C. — the father, in 1928; the son (Ralph Dale), in 1951. The elder Earnhardt began racing in 1949, won NASCAR's Sportsman Championship in 1956 and more than 350 (mostly short-track), races — often in Chevys — in his 23-year career.

He was also an innovator who tuned "bite" into his cars and used tire stagger (larger tires on the outside) before anyone else. Son Dale recalled racing against him once early in his own career when Ralph came up behind him, physically pushed him past the competitor he was battling, then



Dale Sr.: "Darth Vader" was one of his nicknames, and many nonfans wore shirts that read "Anyone but Earnhardt."

pulled away to win the race.

Ralph's legend has him dying of a heart attack in 1973 while working under his car, but it really happened in his kitchen. He was just 45. "I would give it all back if I could have my Dad back," Dale said afterward. Both were named among NASCAR's "50 Greatest Drivers" in 1998.

Dale Sr.

Dale's racing career began, against his parents' wishes, when he dropped out of school at 16. He made his first top-rung Winston Cup start in 1975 and landed a full-time ride in 1979. He won one race that year, earned four poles (as fastest qualifier), scored 17 top-10s, finished seventh in points and was Rookie of the Year despite missing four races with a broken collarbone. The following year, he won six times to become the first and only Winston Cup driver to follow a Rookie of the Year season back-to-back with a championship.

He went on to win 76 Winston Cup races and seven championships — all in Chevys — tying "The King" Richard Petty's championship record total. In 1998, he finally won the Daytona 500, on his 19th attempt, and every crew member of every team lined the pit road to shake his hand in respect. He was tragically killed in a last-lap crash in

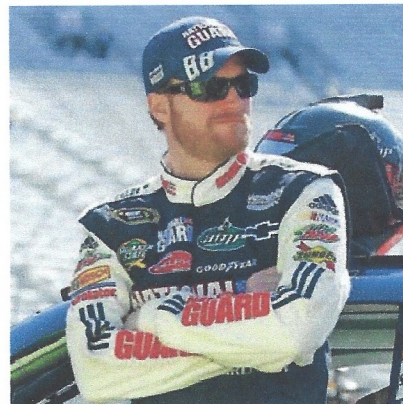
the same race three years later while running interference in third for teammates Michael Waltrip and son Dale Jr.

Dale Jr.

Unlike his famous father, Ralph Dale Earnhardt Jr. began racing go-karts as a preteen with his father's full support.

"I suppose growing up with the Earnhardt name, I could have been a spoiled brat, but I wasn't," Dale Jr. said in 1998. "You start at Dale Earnhardt Inc. by sweeping floors and shoveling out the horse barn. I was no exception."

Third-generation Chevy-driver "Junior" went on to win two straight NASCAR (second-tier) Busch Series championships in 1998 and 1999 before moving up to full-time Winston Cup competition in 2000. He scored his first win (of two) that year in just his 12th start and finished a strong second at the 2001 Daytona 500, unaware that his father had not survived the crash behind him. Since then, he has scored 16 more top-tier NASCAR (now Sprint Cup) wins — though only one since 2005 — and has been NASCAR's Most Popular Driver eight consecutive years since 2003.



Dale Jr.: "You start at Dale Earnhardt Inc. by sweeping floors and shoveling out the horse barn. I was no exception."

Bill Mitchell's design vision shapes 5 decades of GM vehicles

Harley Earl's demanding, strong-willed successor railed against styling cars by committee

BY GARY WITZENBURG

Bill Mitchell was just 24 when General Motors design boss Harley Earl made him Cadillac chief designer. The first car done under Mitchell's leadership was the trend-setting 1938 Sixty Special; next he knocked it out of the park again with his bold and beautiful 1941 Cadillac.

Then the 1948 Cadillac sprang tail fins on an unsuspecting automotive world. Earl and Mitchell, inspired by the shape of the graceful P-38 fighter plane, sculpted the car's rear fenders to resemble the P-38, complete with gentle bumps at the tips representing the plane's tail. But conservative buyers didn't appreciate the fins at first. So Cadillac General Manager Jack Gordon had Mitchell working on the 1951 model with instructions to shave down the fins.

"Designing a car by committee is like 10 guys doing a painting."

BILL MITCHELL

"Cadillac chief engineer Ed Cole and I didn't share Jack's conservatism, so we played a little trick on him," Mitchell related later. "Each day we would raise the fin opposite the one we were supposed to be working on, so it would look like we were lowering the other one. The result was that the '51 ended up with higher and more prominent fins than the '48-'50. I later confided to Gordon what we had done, and he got a chuckle out of it, because by that time the fins had really caught the public's eye. But he'd have raised hell if he'd caught on at the time."

Difficult genius

Few who knew Mitchell are likely to forget him. His presence was at once energizing and intimidating. Not a tall man like Earl, Mitchell nevertheless filled a room with an aura of command and confidence. But along with his genius came a difficult personality. On the job, he was tough, demanding, vain and profane, ruling his fiefdom with fear and intimidation. Away from the job, he was a flamboyant skirt-chaser who often drank to excess. Yet he knew what buyers wanted. And he knew how to motivate and inspire his people to bring out their best.

The son of a car dealer and a natural car fanatic, Mitchell was born in Cleveland in 1912 and grew up in Greenville, Pa., and New York City. After studying at the Art Students League of New York and the Carnegie Institute of Technology, he took a job in New York as an illustrator and layout specialist for the Barron Collier advertising agency. There, he befriended the three Collier brothers — Miles, Sam and Barron Jr. — who founded the Automobile Racing Club of America, predecessor of today's Sports Car Club of America. Soon their racing clubhouse was decorated with Mitchell's race-car sketches and drawings.

When a Detroit industrialist saw them there, he suggested that Mitchell send a portfolio to Earl at GM. Mitchell did, and Earl liked what he saw. The young designer was hired in 1935 to work on the 1937 Cadillacs and LaSalles.

Through the fabulous '50s and sexy '60s, at the forefront of the mysterious art of auto design, where every decision has profound influence on the financial welfare of major corporations and their employees, Mitchell was arguably the most successful, productive and widely imitated leader. While he lavished attention on Cadillac and took excellent care of Pontiac, Oldsmobile and Buick, he had a special place in his heart for Chevrolet, from his beloved Corvettes down to the brand's most affordable cars.

Remarkable Chevs

From December 1958, when he succeeded Earl as design boss, to his 1977 retirement, he presided over the appearance of some 72 million cars and a few million trucks — a



Mitchell made his mark with the 1938 Cadillac — and the hits kept coming.
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great many of them remarkable Chevrolets of all types and sizes.

The first thing Mitchell did after taking the top job was have his studios tone down the flamboyantly finned 1959s for the 1960 model year, and most will agree that the '60 Chevys were the more appealing execution of the same basic shape. Then he had the studios set to work on less flashy, fin-free (except for Cadillacs) designs across the board for 1961.

The cleanly styled compact Chevy II debuted for 1962, followed by the stunning '63 Corvette Stingray, the handsome '64 Chevelle and both a sporty Corvair remake (some called it a poor man's Corvette) and beautifully sleek, new full-sized Chevys for 1965. The first Ford Mustang-fighter 1967 Camaro drew accolades and sales, while 1968 ushered in an attractive new Chevy II and the radically restyled third-generation "Coke-bottle" Corvette.

New for 1970 were the brilliant second-generation Camaro and the elegant Monte Carlo "personal luxury" coupe, and for 1971 the Vega subcompact (bad car, great small-car design). And the federal-bumper GM cars mandated for '73 were mostly better than rivals.

Mitchell complained that the growing burden of federal crash regulations and relentless pressure to downsize were making customer-pleasing designs increasingly tough. Yet two of the sharpest mid-1970s cars on the road were the Ferrari-inspired Monza coupe and an attractive Nova that debuted for 1975.

Hot sellers

Not long before Mitchell's 1977 retirement came one of his finest achievements: substantially downsized "full-sized" cars for all five divisions. All were excellent and solid sellers, but the handsomely proportioned '77 Chevy Impalas and Caprices were arguably the best. The downsized "mid-sized" Malibus and Monte Carlos that followed for 1978 were also very well accepted. And GM's first fuel-efficient front-drive X-car compacts for 1980 were nicely styled and packaged and hugely popular at first, especially the Chevrolet Citation versions.

Mitchell said his greatest frustration in 42 years of auto design was putting up with managers, salespeople, marketers, financial people, engineers and product planners who thought they were designers: "I wouldn't think of trying to tell them how to write an ad or build a transmission or organize a production line, because I'm not trained or experienced in those fields. For the same reason, I think they should keep their noses out of my business."

"Designing a car by committee is like 10 guys doing a painting," he continued. "I can show you every good-looking car that was done without the committee, usually so damned fast they didn't have time to get their fingers in it, and I can show you cars that were hurt by committees. Every time you see one that looks like five different people did it, figure it out."



Bill Mitchell explains the fine points of the 1938 Cadillac's design while touring a vintage car show in 1964.

MITCHELL MILESTONES

- | 1912: Born in Cleveland
- | 1935: Joined GM, assigned to Cadillac studio
- | 1958: Named GM styling vice president
- | 1977: Retired from GM
- | 1988: Died at age 76

Chevy II challenged popular Ford Falcon

CHEVY II
100
Series



By GARY WITZENBURG

Soon after launching the radical rear-engine 1960 Corvair as General Motors' compact import fighter, Chevrolet decided it also would need a conventional compact car line to counter Ford's fast-selling Falcon and Chrysler's funky Plymouth Valiant. Hence the 1962 Chevy II.

In a system that designated full-sized models "B-cars" and mid-sizers

"A-cars," what would become the Chevy II for some reason was dubbed the "X-car." With one key exception, it was very conventional, with a choice of body styles — coupe, convertible, sedan and wagon — and engines ranging from a base four to two sixes and, in later years, V-8s. Available transmissions were a three-speed manual, a four-speed manual and a two-speed Powerglide automatic.

That major exception was the architecture: unibody from firewall back, with a front stub frame sup-

porting the front suspension and powertrain. That gave it a structural advantage over the rival Falcon. It was offered in three series: 100, 300 and top-of-the-line Nova 400.

The Chevy II was one of GM's fastest new-car programs — just 18 months from green light to production for its Sept. 29, 1961, introduction. When Chevrolet General Manager Ed Cole announced it to the press, he described it as "maximum functionalism with thrift."

Model-year production (and therefore sales) was good that first year, nearly 293,000. The Falcon had been selling 400,000 to 500,000 units since its 1960 introduction. But if you add in 1962's 293,000 Corvairs, the two Chevy compacts together beat the Falcon by 171,000 units.

The first high-performance SS models were added for 1963; the first factory V-8 came the following year; and the first Chevy II muscle car, for 1965 with the arrival of a 300-hp 327-cid V-8. A handsome restyle came for 1966; and a complete redesign, for 1968.

The Chevy II name was retired the following year when the entire line became Novas. In 1973 there was a face-lift to accommodate federal bumpers, and there was a new three-door hatchback body style, along with an Arab oil embargo that revived interest in small U.S. cars. The next year, Pontiac, Buick and Oldsmobile launched Nova-based compacts.

The restyled and improved new-generation Novas were introduced for 1975 and ran five years before being replaced by new 1980 Citations, Chevy's versions of GM's first volume front-wheel-drive compacts, which assumed the "X-car" internal designation.

Chevy II production peaked at more than 375,000 in 1963, beating the Falcon by about 30,000, then fell off from 1964 through 1967. But so did the Falcon, as it aged and demand for compact cars waned.

The 1968 restyle revived interest in what was now named the Nova, to the point that production reached 307,000 for 1970, the same year Ford phased out the Falcon and replaced it with a much nicer new compact called the Maverick, which tallied production of nearly 580,000 units that first year. After that it was a fairly close competition, with the Nova beating the Maverick every year beginning in 1972.

The Nova name returned for 1984 on a Toyota Corolla-based fwd subcompact built in Fremont, Calif., by a GM/Toyota joint venture, then expired with that car's 1988 demise. ■

*Celebrating the Classics
of Yesterday and Building
the Classics of the Future*

100 YEARS OF CHEVROLET



PENSKE
Automotive

Chevrolet Camaro: From challenger to champion

BY GARY WITZENBURG

General Motors was caught flat-footed by Ford's Falcon-based Mustang "pony car" when it debuted in April 1964 to thunderous applause. The rear-engine Chevy Corvair, though restyled and upgraded for 1965, could not compete. GM desperately needed a sexy sport coupe with V-8 power — and fast.

Chevrolet had a good platform under the compact Chevy II/Nova and a range of excellent engines, and when the Mustang challenger was approved in August 1964, it was given just two years before it would have to be introduced. Its mission was to outgun the Mustang in every way: longer, lower, wider, roomier, faster, smoother, better-handling.

The 1967 Camaro coupe and convertible were launched on Sept. 12, 1966, with competitive advantages over '67 Mustangs that included a stiffer front structure, a wider track and more safety features. But the Mustang offered coupe, convertible and fastback body styles, and its 390 GT models outpowered Camaro's SS-350. Before that year was out, two new Camaro engines were in: a high-revving 290-hp, 302-cubic-inch V-8 in the low-production race-tuned Z-28; and a 325-hp, 396-cubic-inch big-block V-8 in new SS-396 models.

There were evolutionary engineering and cosmetic changes for 1968, then a bolder look and more powertrain options for 1969.

The second-generation Camaro was part Jaguar, part Ferrari, all gorgeous.

Generation 2: 1970-1981

The 1970½ second-generation Camaro was delayed until February 1970 by a UAW strike, but it proved worth the wait. Tired of playing catch-up, Chevy set out to make the Camaro a true four-seat sports car and the most beautiful Chevrolet had ever designed.

The only body style was a semi-fastback coupe with a choice of two front ends. The standard face wore a full-width bumper; the striking Rally Sport had two slim partial bumpers flanking a protruding grille surround of damage-resistant, body color-urethane and round park lamps inboard of the headlamps. Around back, four round tail-lamps restored the Chevrolet family resemblance. It was part Jaguar, part Ferrari, all gorgeous.

"We said that this second Camaro has to be the ultimate, a baby Corvette," Chevy General Manager Pete Estes said. "We put our best chassis guys on it and made it lower ... put a new stub frame



under it, changed the front suspension, improved the rear suspension and widened the tread."

The Z-28 had a new high-performance 360-hp, 350-cubic-inch V-8, plus special suspension, larger wheels and tires, hood and decklid striping and a rear spoiler, plus the RS appearance option.

Other than steady evolution in powertrain and details, second-generation Camaros changed little through the 1970s except to accommodate new safety, bumper and emissions standards.

Generation 3: 1982-1992

The third-generation Camaro design began in 1975 in Bill Porter's Advanced studio and Jerry Palmer's Chevrolet studio. It was seen at first as a front-drive sporty coupe spun off new compact X cars being developed for 1980, since that was industry direction.

But when Design Vice President Bill Mitchell retired, successor Irv Rybicki ordered a redirection. Among the engineering objectives were significantly reduced weight and improved fuel economy, plus true sports car handling.

It debuted late in 1981, and the Z-28 version graced the covers of nearly every auto magazine, paced the 1982 Indy 500 and was *Motor Trend's* car of the year for 1982. A 90-hp four-cylinder engine powered the base coupe, a 102-hp V-6 and a 145-hp V-8 were optional, and the Z-28 offered a new throttle-body injected V-8 rated at 165 hp.

Evolutionary styling and powertrain improvements kept the third-generation Camaro going for a decade.



Generation 4: 1993-2002

The most remarkable thing about the fourth-generation Camaro was that it happened at all. Approval was a long, hard struggle for Chevrolet General Manager Jim Perkins and everyone else who believed in it. Also remarkable: All of its exterior panels except hoods and rear quarters were plastic — seven different composites in all. Compared to stamped steel, the advantages included lower tooling cost; more design freedom; dent-resistance; and quicker, cheaper styling changes. The disadvantages were slower part production, higher piece cost, and expanding body gaps as adjacent parts contract in cool temperatures.

The car's low, pointy nose and swoopy roofline brought challenges, including getting the hoodline down and the powertrain packaged beneath it. Another was fitting a proper Camaro face ("a sneering quarterback look with black under the eyes," as chief designer John Cafaro called it) onto the vertically narrow nose.

The fourth-generation Camaro debuted in standard and Z-28 coupe versions. It was longer, lower and wider but retained the 101.1-inch wheelbase. A 160-hp V-6 was standard while a 275-hp version of the Corvette's 5.7-liter V-8 powered the Z-28.

The convertible returned for '94, and a modest face-lift gave it a Ferrari-like face for '98. But sport coupe sales continued to slip as truck sales mushroomed, and despite Corvette-like performance and handling, the Camaro was outsold by archrival Mustang. The Camaro, along with its Pontiac Firebird sibling, was canceled after the 2002 model year. The press release announcing that decision said it was "on hiatus," implying a potential return.



Jim Perkins:
Fought for Gen 4



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CAMARO CONTINUED ON PAGE 154 >>

CHEVROLET 100 | AUTOMOTIVE NEWS

The Blazer was preview of SUV era

By MARK STREIBER

The Chevrolet Blazer was GM's delayed reaction to competitors' entries into what would become the booming SUV market.

Initially niche offerings, the rugged Jeep CJ and International Harvester Scout began to grab the attention of 1960s buyers interested in recreational off-roading. The segment became competitive in late 1965, when Ford introduced the Bronco, an open-air off-roader.

Rather than dedicate a unique platform, Chevrolet merely shortened its existing full-sized pickup platform, which was shared with the Suburban — at the time just an enormous station wagon. That saved on R&D and amortization costs. The result, which arrived in 1969, also was a more spacious and comfortable vehicle that boasted such amenities as air conditioning and an automatic transmission.

Chevrolet's marketing gurus pictured the open-air Blazer in rustic settings such as hunting or camping, but also pursued the urban market with advertisements picturing the vehicle on the beach.

In 1970 the Blazer quickly led the segment in sales — even at just over 12,000 units of production. By 1974 sales exceeded 50,000 units. That led Jeep to introduce the Cherokee in an effort to keep up.

The Blazer evolved over the years. In 1976 a half-cab body style was introduced, and a complete steel top was unveiled in 1992. Sales continued to rise, to 85,880 in 1978, before starting a slow decent to less than half that volume.

In 1983 Chevrolet introduced a smaller Blazer based on the S-10 compact pickup, again offered only with two doors. The full-sized Blazer nameplate was replaced by the Tahoe in 1995.



1969



1974




1983



1994

The Chevrolet Blazer arrived in 1969 and evolved over the years until it was replaced by the Tahoe in 1995.

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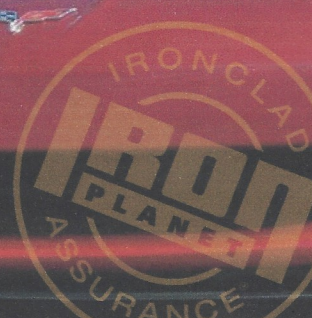


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CAMARO CONTINUED FROM PAGE 152 >>

Generation 5: 2010?

The revived fifth-generation Camaro rolled into Chevy showrooms as a 2010 model in April 2009. Not exactly a "retro" design, its styling bowed to the first-generation version. A 304-hp, 3.6-liter direct-injection V-6 with variable valve timing was standard while SS models offered a 426-hp, 6.2-liter V-8 with a six-speed manual transmission.

The 400-hp version in automatic-equipped SS models uses Active Fuel Management to save fuel by shutting down four cylinders during light-load conditions. Its new independent rear suspension was a Camaro first.

A convertible followed the reborn coupe, which was already out-selling the Mustang, and the base V-6 was up to 312 hp. "Our goal in development was to make the convertible match the coupe as closely as possible in ride quality, handling and overall performance," says Al Oppenheimer, the Camaro's chief engineer.

Evolutionary improvements and a high-performance ZL1 model are on the way for 2012.



2010

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CAMARO VS. MUSTANG

Annual sales winner

1967-70Mustang	1982-85Camaro
1971Camaro	1986-04Mustang
1972-75Mustang	2005-08*
1976-78Camaro	2009Mustang
1979-81Mustang	2010Camaro

*Camaros were not sold

TOTAL SCORE: Mustang 31, Camaro 9

Source: Automotive News Data Center and company sources

Chevy needed a small-car hit in the early 1980s, and what it got was the Cavalier

Cavalier was to be import-fighter

BY RYAN

The Chevrolet Cavalier was the workhorse of General Motors' J-car platform developed in the late 1970s to battle the smartly packaged, well-made small cars from Japan and Europe that were making a serious dent in the U.S. market.

By the 1980 model year, sales of subcompact cars had grown to more than 3.5 million, from a little more than 2 million five years earlier.

Chevy's previous small car, the Vega, had earned a bad reputation for shoddy quality and engine problems. The Chevette was Chevrolet's main entry in the subcompact segment in the early 1980s, accounting for 12 percent of subcompact car sales in the 1980 model year, according to Bob Lund, Chevrolet's general manager at the time.

"More than three dozen other cars — most of them Japanese cars — are battling for the rest" of the segment, Lund said in a 1981 press presentation. "And make no mistake about it: This is a battle."

Chevy needed a hit. What it got was the Cavalier.

The Cavalier debuted in the 1982 model year. It was offered as a sedan, coupe, station wagon and three-door sporty hatchback. Under the hood was a 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine producing 88 hp, teamed with a four-speed manual transmission. An automatic transmission was an option.

The car sat on the new J-car platform, which also underpinned the Pontiac Sunbird and Cadillac Cimarron. Engineers from Chevrolet and Opel worked to develop a platform that would work in Europe and the United States.

At another 1981 press briefing, Lund said the Cavalier was intended to be a high-content, bigger brother to the Chevette

designed to target import-brand shoppers.

Roger Masch, lead engineer on the J-car platform, said: "It was really more competitive in the compact car segment than the Chevette or the Nova or anything else" Chevrolet had.

But the market didn't bite as GM had hoped. Roughly 121,000 units were sold in 1982, the Cavalier's first full year of sales.

After a slow start, the Cavalier gained steam. In 1985 an optional V-6 engine was offered, and sales topped 431,000 units, the Cavalier's sales record.

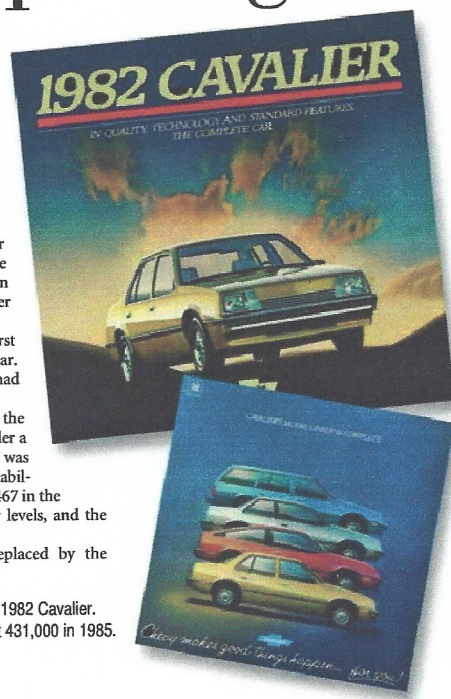
Little attention was paid to the car's styling over the course of its more than 20-year lifespan. While Japanese small cars were being redesigned or given new sheet metal every four or five years, the Cavalier had just two major styling updates.

It was reskinned in the late 1980s, but its first complete redesign wasn't until the 1995 model year. By that point the Cavalier hatchback and wagon had been dropped, and a convertible had been added.

Toyota dealerships in Japan began selling the Cavalier with a Toyota badge starting in 1996 under a deal signed in 1993 by GM and Toyota. The goal was to sell 20,000 Cavaliers in Japan annually, but availability and marketing hiccups limited sales to just 11,467 in the first year of sales. Sales never reached hoped-for levels, and the Toyota Cavalier was scrapped in 2000.

The Cavalier was dropped in 2005 and replaced by the Chevrolet Cobalt.

Information from the launch of the 1982 Cavalier. Sales started slow, then peaked at 431,000 in 1985.



Stempel: The engineer's engineer

Future CEO had the 3 skills crucial to an auto exec: Business, product and people

BY GARY WITZENBURG

One muggy August morning on the giant asphalt pad known as "Black Lake" at GM's Milford, Mich., proving grounds, a group of journalists gathered to see and drive the 1976 Chevrolets that would be unveiled that fall. Some were still munching doughnuts and sipping coffee in front of a stage with ramps at both ends.

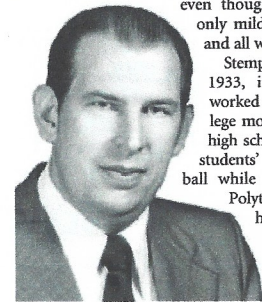
Chevy's PR guy introduced the division's new engineering director, Bob Stempel. He strode to the podium, smiled and began to speak. Tall and lanky, he seemed a bit awkward at first, but everyone soon realized that he was someone special.

A strong presentation

A driver piloted the first '76 Chevy up onto the stage, and Stempel covered its pertinent details in a strong, booming voice. That was followed by the next, and the next — full-sized, mid-sized, compact, subcompact, Camaro, Corvette, trucks, and finally the new Chevette, an Americanized Opel Kadette small car. His performance lasted over an hour — highly informative, never boring, even though most Chevys were only mildly updated that year, and all without a note.

Stempel was born July 15, 1933, in Trenton, N.J. He worked as a mechanic for college money before graduating high school in 1951 and fixed students' cars and played football while attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute, where he earned a mechanical engineering degree in 1955.

After two years in the U.S. Army



BOB STEMPEL

- | 1933: Born in Trenton, N.J.
- | 1955: B.S., mechanical engineering, from Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- | 1958: Joined Oldsmobile as chassis detailer
- | 1970: MBA from Michigan State University
- | 1973: Led development of catalytic converter
- | 1975: Chevrolet engineering director
- | 1978: Pontiac general manager and GM vice president
- | 1980: Opel managing director
- | 1982: Chevrolet general manager
- | 1984: Buick-Oldsmobile-Cadillac vice president and group executive
- | 1986: Executive vice president and member of GM board
- | 1987: GM president and COO
- | 1990: GM chairman and CEO
- | 1992: Resigned from GM
- | 1995: CEO, Energy Conversion Devices
- | 2007: Retired, died 4 years later

Corps of Engineers, he joined Oldsmobile as a chassis detailer in 1958 and by 1972 was assistant chief engineer. Along the way he designed the front suspension and power-train mounting systems for the 1966 Oldsmobile Toronado, the first modern American front-wheel-drive car, and earned an MBA from Michigan State University.

In 1973, GM President Ed Cole put Stempel in charge of a task force working on emission-control technologies, which led to development of the catalytic converter. Stempel moved to Chevrolet the next year and was named director of engineering in 1975.

Stempel was the rare executive with all three critical skills: business, product and people. His strong product leadership soon showed up in new products — downsized big cars for 1977 and Malibus and Monte Carlos for '78 — and significant improvements to other models. Promotions fol-

lowed: Pontiac general manager in 1978, Opel managing director in 1980, back to Chevrolet as general manager in 1982.

He returned just as Chevy was launching a range of new and improved vehicles, including a third-generation Camaro, two all-new series of fwd cars — mid-sized Celebrities and subcompact Cavaliers — and GM's first compact S-10 pickups.

The next year brought the first sporty S-10 Blazer SUVs and a slope-nosed Monte Carlo SS for Chevy's return to NASCAR competition.

Promoted in 1984

Then, in 1984, just as Stempel-influenced new Chevrolets were coming to market, CEO Roger Smith launched a massive reorganization of GM's product divisions and promoted Stempel to vice president and group executive over the new Buick-Oldsmobile-Cadillac Group.

Important among those new products were a fourth-generation Corvette for 1984 and, for 1985, a hot IROC-Z Camaro and a trio of low-cost joint-venture small cars: a Toyota Corolla-based Nova, an Isuzu I-Mark-based Spectrum and a Chevy Sprint derived from the Suzuki Cultus.

Smith's reorganization created a chaotic mess, but Stempel performed well under difficult conditions. He advanced to executive vice president and a member of the board in 1986 and GM president in 1987 before succeeding Smith as CEO in 1990.

He labored for two years to fix Smith's mess and stave off bankruptcy, but GM's board decided that it wasn't going quickly enough and forced him out in October 1992.

A lesser man might have slunk away into oblivion, but not Bob Stempel. He re-surfaced three years later as CEO of EV battery maker Energy Conversion Devices, ran that until he retired in 2007, and continued to consult with EV and battery companies until he died at age 77 in May 2011.