

# Their 1957 Chevrolet Is One For The Road

By Mildred & Al Lawson

Al and I have always enjoyed driving our antique cars while touring the United States, especially our 1957 Chevrolet four-door hardtop sedan.

Our interest in the hobby began when we joined Chesapeake Region in 1979. We searched for an antique car so that we could take part in all the local meets. After looking at many potential cars, we found a fairly good 1940 Packard in Chambersburg, PA. We attended several local events in our Packard, but then Al decided that it needed a complete restoration and began dismantling the car. While we looked for a second antique car that was more roadworthy, Al and I attended local events in modern iron or we rode with friends.

In 1985 the club took a tour to Strasburg, PA to visit a car collection at the small Gast Museum. In the museum we saw a very pretty turquoise and ivory 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air four-door hardtop, similar to the two-door hardtop that I owned from '57 to '62. The car was for sale, but we were not quite ready to buy at that time.

We kept looking for a car, but I couldn't get that '57 Chevy off my mind. One day I was glancing through *Hemmings* and I saw a picture of a '57 Chevy. The ad read in part, "Remember the first car you ever owned? . . . The car you wish you still had? Well here it is! 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air, four-door hardtop, restored in gleaming Tropical Turquoise with white roof. . . ." I eagerly showed the ad to Al. Then we telephoned the Cadillac dealer in Pittsburgh that placed the ad. Luckily the car had not been sold, so I told the dealer that we would be there the next day to look at the car. I packed a lunch and we took a Sunday drive to Pittsburgh. The Chevy was parked in a large storage garage all by itself. It appeared to be in excellent condition and had only 52K miles on the odometer.

After a test drive, we became the proud owners and drove the car home. I couldn't believe my good fortune to find a '57 Chevy in the exact color

combination that I wanted. Checking the trunk after our return home, we found a Gast Museum sign – this was the same car that we had seen and admired the year before!



*Shown from the top: Mildred and Al at the 2011 AACA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia; and a '57 Chevrolet ad.*

We had the transmission rebuilt and made several minor repairs before we started driving our prize to local meets. The comments were very favorable and we captured several trophies.

Al and I decided that we were more interested in driving the Chevy than collecting trophies. We drove it to two AACA Eastern Spring Meets where we received Third Junior Awards.

Then we learned that AACA had a new National tour for vehicles up to the current antique qualifying year – named the Founders Tour. In 1988 we drove the Chevy to the first Founders Tour in Huntsville, AL. The tour attracted 75 cars and we met several AACA members from around the country. Everybody had a great time, despite the hot August weather. We waited for the announcement of the next Founders Tour, which was held in 1990 in Charlotte, NC and hosted by the

Hornets Nest Region. We renewed our acquaintances from the first tour and made new friends. We became hooked on these great National tours held in many interesting locations and have attended every Founders Tour through 2010 – nine of them with the '57 Chevy, our tried and true first antique road car.

At the 1991 Annual Meeting in Philadelphia we were honored and excited when the '57 Chevy received the Thomas McKean Tour Trophy, which is awarded on the basis of age, authenticity, appearance, condition and distance traveled to and from the tour. The selection is made from participating cars on all the National tours.

In 1993 we decided to try a cross-country road trip with our Chevy to attend the AACA Western Spring Meet in Tucson, AZ. Al's brother lived only 20 miles away, so it was a dual-purpose trip. We planned to leave March 14<sup>th</sup>, which turned out to be the day after the big blizzard on March 13, 1993 that paralyzed much of the eastern part of the country.

Needless to say the blizzard delayed our departure for a few days, but we were able to get out on the main roads. The Chevy's vacuum wipers didn't work well enough to keep the windshield clean, so we made many stops to clean it. But we made the meet on time and still got some sight-seeing done. We drove more than 2,300 miles over five days, and were grateful that the weather in southern Arizona was warm. The Chevy, however, was filthy from the unexpected road conditions and a long trip, so Al had to spend some time washing and detailing the car before the meet.

After twenty-five years of owning the '57 Chevy it still runs strong and looks good, even though it has 92K miles on it. As Dinah Shore used to say on her TV show "See the USA in your Chevrolet", which certainly was good advice.

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THE CHESAPEAKE BULLETIN  
CIRCULATION MANAGER  
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OUR 56<sup>TH</sup> YEAR



FIRST CLASS MAIL

Volunteer for the Flea Market – see page 7

Antique Auto Flea Market & Car Corral – March 12<sup>th</sup>  
Tucker Museum Caravan Trip – March 19<sup>th</sup>  
Streetcar Museum Antique Car Show – April 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Spring Tour – April 16<sup>th</sup> – See page 2  
Judging Seminar – April 30<sup>th</sup> – see page 10

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Excellent Philadelphia Meeting  
2010 AACA Annual Report  
Motor Trend Car Display  
A Car for the Road  
Help Needed at the Flea Market  
What's Going On at the Museum?  
Coming Events in March & April

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*Mildred & Al Lawson's 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air hardtop  
at the 2010 Flowermart. Read about this car on page 13.*