

Grandpa's Chevy

My Grandfather bought this car brand new from Harbor Chevrolet, then in downtown Long Beach. In those pre-WWII days, the base price for a 1938 Master Deluxe 4-door Sport Sedan was around \$800, but by ordering just about every option available, Grandpa Walt managed to boost the price to over \$1200....tax and license included! It had fender skirts, fog lights, push-button radio, a spotlight, deluxe heater, banjo steering wheel, 'town & country' horns, and a rubber-bladed fan on the dash. Also, custom chrome trim on all four fenders. The paint job was also special...Robin's-egg Blue lacquer, with cream striping on the body & wheels. As Grandpa said, "This is the last car I'm ever going to buy, so I want it just right."

Fast forward to 1967...at nearly 90, Grandpa went into a hospital in Redlands for the last time. One of his main concerns was that he would be able to get the pink slip signed over to me. By that time I was married with five kids, and in the process of building a weekend cabin in Big Bear Lake, so, that's where the Chevy ended up, rather than being subjected to the smog and salt air in San Pedro, where we lived full time. Our building budget didn't allow for a garage at that time, so for the next 16 years, the old car sat outside year-round, covered in the winter with a tarp, and with it's battery stashed inside the cabin. Every spring, like the lilacs by the cabin, it would come to life again. When school let out, my wife Betty and the kids would be mountain residents for the whole summer, while I commuted to work at Los Angeles harbor. The old Chevy was their only transportation while I was 'down the hill'. I was able to keep it running, but never had the time or money to do any serious restoration. As the weather took it's toll on the lacquer paint job, deep cracks started to appear, which we covered with "Ricky Ticky Stickers" ...large, brightly colored flower decals popular at the time. Many times, on the way to the market or gas station, Betty would get a "eve" sign from some bearded kid in Levi's and leather, sporting a headband. At this time the car was referred to by some of the locals as "the heavy Chevy."



We did a cabin remodel in 1985. Item #1 was a garage for the old Chevy. Though now protected from the weather, it was obvious that at the rate I was going, it would never be properly restored in my lifetime. In 1992, I decided to down the hill to a professional restorer, and 13 months and many \$\$\$ later, it was finished. So, now the Chevy is a permanent Big Bear resident, driven a little when we are in town, and cleaned up a bit for the Memorial Day show, and Fun Run!

Thanks to Ron Tobin for this month's "CAR STORY." You're very lucky Ron!
Loved the story, and your 1938 Chevy!