

Post Modern



Stiff and Light Equals Fast

By Richard Truesdell

Among muscle car aficionados, post cars hold a certain appeal and mystique. In the beginning, whether you consider the 1957 AMC Rebel or the 1964 Pontiac GTO as the first muscle car, both were in essence intermediate-sized cars with big engines stuffed under the hood, typically with something more than the base model trim.

As the muscle car market gained momentum from 1964 to 1967, a good number of the muscle cars offered by the Big Three were intermediate-sized two-door hardtops. There were exceptions, of course, but if you look at the production numbers you'll see few post cars and virtually no four-door sedans or station wagons, even though long roofs often offered better weight distribution than their two-door hardtop and sedan counterparts. Prior to 1968, big-engined four-door sedans and especially station wagons were the byproduct of well-informed buyers who knew how to tick all the right boxes for the drivetrain (the biggest V-8s matched with heavy-duty manual transmissions) on the option list.

All this changed in 1968 when Plymouth ushered in the era of the minimalist muscle car, the Road Runner. Instead of featuring

bucket seats, a center console, and something other than a base-model interior trim, the Road Runner featured a bench seat with durable yet plain taxi cab-level vinyl trim.

The Road Runner ads, instead of highlighting just the two-door hardtops, often showcased the ubiquitous two-door sedans, the ones with B-pillar posts, offering the lowest base price. Insiders who wanted to go fast knew two things. First, the two-door sedans were, more often than not, the lightest car in the line. Second, pillarless two-door hardtops, lacking the structural integrity of a B-pillar post, would be "flexible." When equipped with a torque-twisting big-block V-8, their bodies would flex, often noticeably. This was especially true with the Mopars, no matter how much they were reinforced, as they were built as unibodies rather than with the body-on-frame construction of Ford and GM intermediates.

When a manufacturer hits on a successful formula, like the original 1964 GTO or the 1968 Road Runner, it takes competitors a minimum of one model cycle to respond. But surprisingly, even with the success of the Road Runner, Chevrolet really didn't

respond formally to Plymouth's bare-bones muscle car. It would take individual buyers to figure it out and come up with Chevy's 1969 competitor to the Road Runner.

Looking at the 1969 Chevelle brochure, you would hardly know that Chevrolet even offered a stripped-down, two-door sedan. None were shown in the 300 Deluxe series, just a blue four-door sedan with a mention of a coupe on the back cover, not really indicating if it was a hardtop or sedan.

All this matters little to Dave Lindsley, who has owned quite a few Chevrolet muscle cars over the last five decades. Like many of us, Dave was bitten by the car bug young. Growing up in western Pennsylvania, Dave started out with slot cars and go-karts in the '60s, encouraged by his dad and several uncles. By the time he turned 16 in 1966, he bought his first car, a 1957 Chevy with no front clip and no engine. A few trips to a local junkyard provided the clip and a Pontiac 389 engine, and Dave was tearing up the local streets in no time.

Two years and six cars later, Dave bought his first real muscle car, a four-speed 1967 Chevelle SS396. Over the last five decades,

"Dave was tearing up the local streets in no time"

Dave has bought, restored, and owned dozens of classic muscle cars, his successful construction company giving him the means to acquire the best-of-the-best. Many of his cars have been featured in magazines over the past 15 years. With a current collection that includes a cross-ram 1969 Camaro Z/28, a stunning big-block L78 SS396 1969 Camaro, and a L78 SS396 1969 Nova, Dave recently sold a 1966 Chevelle SS396 to make way for his most recent acquisition, this 1969 Chevrolet Chevelle 300 Deluxe sedan. Dave explains its significance and why it was the logical addition to his collection.

"First off, I've been looking a long time for a 1969 Chevelle 300 Deluxe SS396," he says. "And while I've owned a number of muscle cars, especially Chevys, none were documented as having been originally delivered by any of the legendary Chevrolet dealers from the 1960s. This car was delivered by Berger Chevrolet, making it so special to me."

He goes on to say, "With the possible exception of Yenko Chevrolet—Berger actually ordered 45 of the legendary 1969 COPO 427 Camaros for its own dealership inventory—few Chevy dealers



■ Two-door sedans (or “post” cars) weren’t made in the same volume as hardtops back in the classic muscle era, but they were structurally stronger (and usually lighter), making them good platforms for performance. Dave Lindsley’s Chevelle, a base 300 Deluxe model with the Super Sport option, is rare still.



■ No bucket seats or even Astro ventilation here. The base 300 Deluxe Chevelles were equipped with bench seats like a taxi cab—Chevrolet even scrimped on the amount of foam in the seat cushion!—rubber floor mats, and vent windows.



■ The instrumentation, too, is in keeping with the car’s base-level equipment. There’s no console on the floor either, but that’s a Hurst shifter coming out of the hole in the floor, likely added when the original owner swapped transmissions.

■ Most base Chevelles were fitted with six-cylinder or economically minded V-8 engines. A handful, like this one, got a big-block V-8 backed by a three-speed heavy-duty manual transmission. The car’s original owner swapped the three-speed for a four-speed and took it drag racing.



AT A GLANCE

1969 CHEVELLE 300 DELUXE SS396

- Owned by:** Dave Lindsley, Orange County, CA
- Restored by:** G.S. Restorations, Joelton, TN
- Engine:** 396ci/325hp L35 V-8
- Transmission:** 4-speed manual
- Rearend:** 3.31 gears with Positraction
- Interior:** Black vinyl front bench seat
- Wheels:** 14x7 sport-styled
- Tires:** F70-14 Goodyear Wide Tread

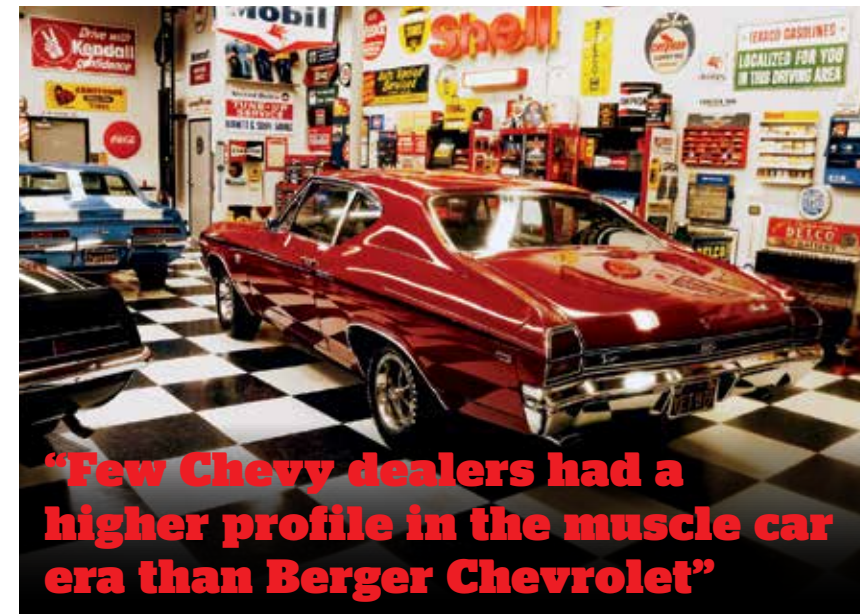


■ One of the reasons Dave wanted this particular 300 Deluxe was its provenance. It was originally sold by Berger Chevrolet, one of the leading performance dealerships of the era.

■ The Z25 Super Sport option did bring some flash to the otherwise bare-bones 300 Deluxe, including the special hood, badging, and Magnum 500 wheels.

had a higher profile in the muscle car era than Berger Chevrolet. Located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, it was the definitive high-performance Chevrolet dealer in the Midwest, heavily marketing performance parts through its ‘Prescribed Power’ performance catalogs.”

According to Dave, what made this particular Garnet Red 1969 Chevelle exceptionally rare is that 1969 was the only year when you could order the Z25 Super Sport 396 option for any Chevelle model, including the very basic, stripped-down 300 Deluxe post sedan. “The 300 Deluxe models came standard with a floor-mounted M13 three-speed heavy-duty manual transmission and a Spartan, ‘taxi cab’ all-vinyl interior with rubber mats instead of carpets,” says Dave. “The front bench seat had less foam than other 1969 Chevelles, it had a smaller rearview mirror, smaller sun visors, and no Astro ventilation, so it had front vent windows not typi-



“Few Chevy dealers had a higher profile in the muscle car era than Berger Chevrolet”

DAVE’S PETROLANIA COLLECTION

Dave Lindsley has a unique way to display and share his muscle car collection. He is able to store six cars in two rooms in his office facility. Over the past two decades, but especially over the last 10 years, Dave has assembled an impressive collection of original gas station memorabilia, mostly from the ‘50s through the ‘70s.

The expansive collection includes original car dealership and gas station signs, showroom displays that are stocked with mint-condition products, and gas station tools and displays. His library is extensive with original factory literature, service manuals, reference books, road maps, and other artifacts from when your local service station actually serviced your car. Dave even has the ubiquitous rubber hose that rings a bell alerting attendants that a car has arrived to get its tank filled, its windshield wiped, and the pressure in the tires checked.

While Dave has many rare items in his collection (the result of relentless searching online and at swap meets), one of his favorites is his fully operational Corvette pinball machine from the ‘80s, which was officially licensed by GM. It’s not unusual or unexpected for Dave to challenge visitors to a match. And what you need to know is that Dave almost always lets his friends win—except me.

To see more, log on to bit.ly/DavesAutomobilia.

cally seen on most other 1969 Chevelles.”

Dave notes that an extremely low number of 300 Deluxe two-door post cars were produced with the Super Sport option. Today there are only 55 documented in Dan Vasic’s 300 Deluxe Post Sedan Registry. Dan also helped Dave in his eight-year search for one of these unique cars. It was learned that this particular car was ordered by Berger Chevrolet as a “lot inventory” car that included a rare chambered exhaust system option (NC8), the standard M13 three-speed heavy-duty manual transmission, body accent stripe, chrome accent trim, and plastic inner fenders. It was built in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, on May 29, 1969. All of this is verified by documentation provided by GM Canada, the gold standard of factory-verified provenance.

In addition to its as-built status coming off the Oshawa, Ontario, assembly line, the original owner purchased and installed a

4-speed manual transmission. He also added some performance parts and raced the car at the local dragstrips. Jeff Latondress, who sold the car to Dave, commissioned a full frame-off, rotisserie restoration by George Steele at G.S. Restorations in Joelton, Tennessee. Steele is unique in that with a small shop, he restores only one car at a time. It took many years to acquire the best N.O.S., original and restored parts to complete the restoration, including many of the Chevelle 300 Deluxe-only parts such as the door trim panels re-created by SMS.

All the effort and hard work was rewarded when the car was invited to be a feature car at the Berger Chevrolet 2013 Reunion All Chevy Car Show in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In an outstanding field of more than 400 cars, this Chevelle won the Best Chevy award. Quite an honor. And now after its 2014 acquisition, it holds a cherished spot among Dave’s collection of 1969 Chevy muscle. **MCR**