

Like Fine Wine

This '57 Chevrolet Bel Air Convertible
Only Gets Better with Age!

By Bob McClurg





When automatic transmission specialist Henry Springer set out to build his idea of the ultimate '57 Chevrolet Bel Air convertible, he didn't start out with some junkyard-dog-kind of reject that would require a miracle from God, a fistful of dead presidents, and an army of expert mechanics and body men to resurrect it. No, not Henry; he started at the top! According to him, "The better the car, the better the results!"

In Henry's case, that "better car" was found through his extensive connections with the movie studios. Believe it or not, this is the same matador red, '57 Chevrolet Bel Air convertible used as the feature car in the mid-80s lost weekend/road trip flick *Lasie! It* starring Tom Cruise and Shelley Long. "We completely disassembled the entire car, stripping it down to the very last nut and bolt," commented Pro Tech Performance's Mike Astamende.

Then "Big Mikey" and his crew at Pro Tech squared up the frame, and welded up all the superfluous holes. After that, they installed a Pro Tech-fabricated crossmember. Once back from a quick trip over to Powder Craft, the all-black '57 frame was equipped with a Heidt's Hot Rod Shop chromed tubular IFS complete with a pair of Heidt's 2-inch-dropped front spindles, Air Ride Technologies air bags, and ART "Shockwave" shock absorbers. The front brakes on Springer's Tri-Five consist of a pair of Baer Claw 13-inch four-piston discs; and steering is a McLaughly's GM 605 power steering box hooked up to a GM six-way tilt steering column.

Out back, Henry's '57 was outfitted with a 3.73:1-geared, Currie Enterprises-polished Ford 9-inch rear end, sporting a set of Currie 28-spline rear axles, and Wilwood Engineering six-piston disc brakes.

Actual suspension consists of an Air Ride Technologies/ Pro Tech Performance four-bar setup, again featuring Air Ride Technologies air bags and ART "Shockwave" shocks. Also along for the ride is a 22-gallon Rock Valley polished stainless gas tank.



TECH SPECS

Name: Henry and Madeline Springer
City, State: Nevada, CA
Year, Make, Model: 1967 Chevrolet Bel Air convertible
Price: \$45,000
Frame/Manufacturer: Highly modified 1967 Chevrolet
Wheelbase: Stock
Modifications: Custom crossmember, holes welded up in frame by Pro Tech Performance, Burbank, CA.
Chassis/Plumbing: Pro Tech Performance (painted) axles and steering shaft ties.
Rear End Ratio: 3.75:1 Dana Enterprises, 8-inch polished aluminum.
Rear Suspension: Air Ride Technologies/Pro Tech Performance bar bar with Air Ride Technologies "choosers" shocks and ARF air bags.
Rear Brakes: Advanced Engineering 11-600-46 piston.
Front Suspension: Hells Hot Rod Shop tubular upper and lower control arm with Hells 2-inch dropped front spindles, Air Ride Technologies air bags, and ARF "choosers" shock absorbers.
Front Brakes: Four Spring "Four Star" 11-inch four piston.
Master Cylinder: GM dual-chamber, steel.
Steering Gear: GM/Gear's 300 1000 power steering.
Front Wheel Hubs: Size: Billet Specialties 7000 7.137
Rear Wheel Hubs: Size: Billet Specialties 7000 7.137
Front Tire Hubs: Size: 72555-426117 Bridgestone Potenza
Rear Tire Hubs: Size: 72555-426117 Bridgestone Potenza
Leaf Hubs: 22-pilfer Rock bolts welded on rear axle.
Other Chassis Features: Frame positioned on a geo. block by Pro Tech Perf.

Engine:
Year and Make: 2003 GM Performance Parts 4-cyl. 250
Displacement: 250-cu. 250 hp @ 5,200 rpm and 400 lb-ft @ 3,500 rpm
Manufacturing/Assembly: GM Performance Parts
Crankshaft: Forged steel 250
Connecting Rods: GM Forged Steel
Pistons: 3.4-inch compression high-aluminum with offset wedges.
Camshaft: GM Performance Parts hydraulic roller, 6.027 intake/4.01 exhaust
Water Pump: GM Performance Parts polished aluminum
Cooling Fan: Motor Reducer
Radiator: Custom

Alternator: 100 AMP MS&C Pulser
Oil Filter Holes: Cast into GM Performance Parts 640 cylinder chamber
Valves/Springs: 1.54-inch intake, and 1.53-inch exhaust with GM Performance Parts valve springs.
Rocker Arms: GM Performance Parts 1.617 7-inch aluminum roller type
Valve Covers: Chrome plated GM Performance Parts
Manifold/Intake: Modified GM Performance Parts Ram Jet 250 port fuel injector
Ignition/Wires: GM HEI with MS&C Pro Wires and AC Delco Spark Plug
Headers/Exhaust: Williams Headers and Dyno Mite mufflers welded together into a 2.24-inch system by Mose Muffler in Burbank, CA
Other Engine Parts: Engine equipped with a Street & Performance 5000 aluminum pulley set, Pro Tech Performance motor mounts, Southern Hot-Air Conditioning System.

Transmission:
Year and Make: 2003 GM 4L60-E prepared by Leon's Transmission, Nevada, CA
Year, Make: is fully polished
Torque Converter: GM 1800 stall speed
Transmission Mounts: Equipped with Leon's Transmission 490-41
Electronics: HGM Automotive Electronics equipped with Comp-u-Shift stand alone computer.
Shifter: Lokar
Driveshaft: Heavy Duty, polished aluminum

Body:
Body Style/Manufacturer: 1967 Chevrolet Bel Air body by Fisher, a Division of General Motors
Body Work: Stock
Hood: Stock
Grille: Darchuck
Bodywork: Stephen Cognata
Paint Type/Color: PPG 2002 Cadillac Red with Chevrolet
Fenders: Stephen Cognata, buffing by Bill Corbett, Classic Motor Cars
Bumpers: 1967 Chevrolet re-created by Bill Corbett, Polishing
Other Body Work: Hagan halogen headlights

Interior:
Dashboard: 1967 Chevrolet
Instrument Gauges: Classic Instruments
Stereo/Speakers: Custom Auto Sound MPF400
Wiring: Pro Tech Performance
Steering Column: GM
Steering Wheel: Billet Specialties
Interior Mirror: Darchuck
Seats: Toyota MR2 front, '57 Chevrolet rear equipped with 2000 Cadillac armrest, sewn up in tan leather
Upholstering: Zuni's Auto Upholstery, Burbank, CA
Carpet: Mercedes Nera tan wool
Seatbelts: Jordan's

Wheels and tires on this little beauty come in the form of 17x7-inch Billet Specialties in the front (rolling on a set of P225/70ZR-17 Bridgestone Potenza radials), and 17x8-inch Billet Specialties in the rear on a set of P255/45ZR-17 Bridgestones.

Of course, that fully detailed 2003 GM Performance Parts Ram Jet 350 looks right at home inside the fully detailed engine room of this ragtop. This 350 small-block pumps out an honest-to-gosh 350 hp at 5,200 rpm and 400 lb-ft of torque at 3,500 rpm straight out of the box.

While the engine is mostly stock, it does feature Street & Performance billet pulleys, Southern Rods climate control, a set of thermal-coated Williams Headers dumping into a Mose Muffler system with Dyna Max mufflers, and a Matson polished four-core aluminum radiator and fan.

Backing all of this up is a Leon's Transmissions-prepared 2003 GM 460-E outfitted with a Leon's shift kit, 1800 stall-speed GM Performance Torque Converter, and HGM Auto Electronics Comp-u-shift stand-alone computer. The final link in the Bel Air's powertrain is an Inland Empire polished-aluminum driveshaft.

Bodyman par excellence Stephen Cognata (Steve Cognata's Paint Shop) gets the credit for massaging the Tri-Five's 48-year-old sheetmetal, then Cognata sprayed the Chevy in PPG 2002 Cadillac Red covered by a ton of clearcoat. Once cured, Classic Motor Cars Bill Corbett color-sanded and buffed the body to perfection. Upon re-assembly, the '57 was equipped with a new set of Hagan halogen headlights, Darchuck body trim, and a set of V&C Polishing '57 front and rear bumpers.

On the inside, you'll find a Zuniga's-fabricated custom console (with Lokar shifter) sandwiched by a pair of Toyota MR2 front bucket seats lavished in Zuniga's tan leather with Mercedes Benz tan wool carpeting. The back seat is a modified '57 outfitted with a 2003 Cadillac armrest. Also along for the ride is a Billet Specialties steering wheel, Classic Instruments gauges, and a Custom Auto Sound audio system. Out back in the trunk area you'll find more of Zuniga's handiwork.

Completed in the spring of '05 at a cost of \$120,000+, Henry Springer's awesome open-air Bel Air is ready to make its public debut. That is, after we feature it in *Super Chevy* magazine! ●

