

Let 'Er Buck

By Bob Schmeichel

Don Reichert grew up on the wide open spaces of a ranch in western South Dakota. Because of the life style there in the late 50s of what was cool, Don got enamored with bull riding and started learning the skill at the young age of 14. I have always said I think most kids growing up on a farm or ranch then, grew up tougher than most and Don was no exception. While working on the ranch, he honed his skills for the next few years while attending high school in Sturgis, which led him to his senior year winning second in bare backs at the Buffalo Regional High School Rodeo. That same year he placed second in bull riding at the Tarkio, Missouri National High School Rodeo. From that point on it was full force with the idea of riding bulls. In order to get himself around the country to compete where ever he could, Don bought a 1958 Chevy in the fall of 1962. Little did he realize that the time he spent behind the wheel

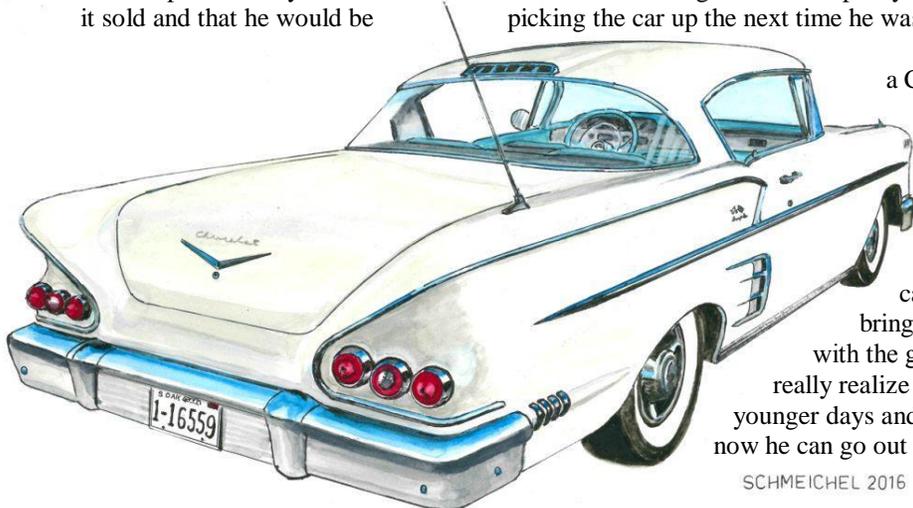


of the '58 Chevy would become as precious to him as riding bulls. Pushing himself to get around the country to as many events as he could was high on his priority list. I am sure the time behind the wheel gave him some solitude to focus and figure out how he was going to ride a bull that may have been considered unrideable up to that point in time. Don rode and stayed on quite a few bulls that had that kind of pedigree. He also competed in bare backs, saddle broncs and steer wrestling. Anyone who has ever been to a rodeo knows none of these are ever easy. But Don persevered with pushing himself, gathering up a bunch of wins including the regional college All Round in 1966 and 1967 and National Bull Riding Champion in 1966 and 1968. Soon he was doing it all over the Midwest and winning on the weekends or summer when not in college.

Kind of in the beginning of Don's rodeo career and while attending SDSU, he and his girlfriend "Pat" were married in 1967. She was very supportive of his rodeo career idea as it took them all over the Midwest, but I am sure they both realized a steady income was needed to help a family happen. So after Don graduated from SDSU in 1968, he began teaching vocational agriculture at Geddes, South Dakota. Teaching was very gratifying for Don, but he said he always liked uncertain challenges, which later led him to going to work for Land O'Lakes. Don still played around doing the rodeo thing for quite a few years, which led to other types of involvement in and around rodeo broadcasting. He sold his '58 Chevy in 1971 after putting 100,000 miles on it chasing around the country (get this) for \$100. Both Don and Pat felt they needed a newer car and forgot about the '58. Don being very driven by his job and liking challenges at Land O'Lakes, soon became their national account sales manager for calf milk replacer in 1982. Life was good and fast forward from that point on. Four children came along, and now six grandchildren are in the picture to take priority of Don and Pat's time today. Kids are very precious and are actually with us for a very short time, so it is understandable to want to share the time and watch them evolve into adults.

Over the years Don and Pat had reminisced about the '58, or maybe I should say Don did a little more than Pat did! Don admitted to me trying to trace his old '58 Chevy down years ago with where it wound up after the third or fourth owner and then lost the connection. Memories of the old Chevy taking him down the road always kind of haunted him and more so after realizing he had sold it for \$100. He regrettably told me the car was actually quite nice looking yet as it drove away and not thinking any more about it at the time. Because of that lost connection, Don decided to try to find another '58 Chevy. Don thought with being out on the road with new job, it might be easier to find one. The search seemed kind of fruitless for years until 1991 when he had a late overnight stay in Des Moines. He grabbed a local paper and headed to his room only to find pretty much what he was looking for advertised not too far away from his hotel. It was late so he opted to call the owner early in the morning. Don connected with the owner at 7:00 a.m., but he was going off to work telling Don the car was on the street for him to look at. Don was pleasantly surprised with first seeing the car as it appeared as a fresh restoration. Before leaving Don called Pat to get her approval. After talking to Pat, Don left a \$500 down payment with a note saying he would call back later after he got home. After Don called back, the owner explained it was his mother's car that they were restoring, but that she had passed away and he had lost interest. Don knowing the car was pretty much what he was looking for told him consider it sold and that he would be

picking the car up the next time he was in Des Moines.



After getting the car, Don had it checked out at a Chevy dealership in Des Moines for the trip home. All seemed quite sound mechanically, so the rest of the trip home was pure enjoyment. The car had only 72,000 miles on it when they bought it and today with 106,000 actual miles on it and the only thing they have done to it is put new tires on it. The old 283, 2-barrel carb, power glide trans, with air conditioning car brings back old memories while creating new ones with the grandchildren. Don now at 71, told me he didn't really realize how good a rodeo/ bull rider he was in his younger days and is grateful he never really got hurt seriously, but now he can go out in the garage and touch a memory that got them there and back safely.