

Born and Raised in California

Gary and Audrey Jorgenson's 1957 Chevy Belair hardtop at one point in its long life had spent its entire life in California. We should thank the Jorgensons that this is no longer the case.

They bought the car in 1990 while they were living in California as Gary was stationed there at the time in the United States Air Force. Gary served in the Air Force for 26 years as a pilot before retiring.

He had a 1957 Ford but sold it before moving to California, so he was wanting another old car.

"I always wanted a '57 Chevy," Gary explains. "They're the cars we always drove in high school."

It was a pristine show car when he bought it, and has won several trophies since. But he drives it a lot, and it has received a few nicks and scratches as a result. But he has no regrets, as it is driving the car that he likes most. He doesn't even bother with car shows much anymore, he said.

One of the features of the car is its one-piece bumper. Most 1957 Chevrolets were built with three-piece bumpers, but a small number that were built in the Van Nuys, CA, factory received single-piece bumpers for reasons that have been lost to time. Called the California bumper, the Jorgensons' car exhibits this.

The car is powered by a 1969 300 hp 350 c.i. engine with the 350 automatic transmission. All of the stainless trim and chrome are original.

Gary did swap out the original wheels and wheel covers for some chrome mag wheels soon after he got it.



"I've had Cragar wheels ever since the '60s. I've had Cragar wheels on every old car I've owned," he said.

Until Gary purchased the car, it had never been registered outside of California. It spent its first 33 years entirely in the Los Angeles area, where snow and salt never assaulted it. And likewise, Gary spent the beginning of his life in California as well, possibly having crossed paths with this very car.

"I grew up in southern California," he said. "I used to go to all the car scenes."

Now both Gary and his '57 Chevy are South Dakota residents. And South Dakota is better for it.

