

Better Than the Original

When Don Mertons decided to get a 1969 Chevy Chevelle like the one of his youth, his wife LaDell thought he could do better. And they ended up being the second owners of the 1971 Chevelle they own today.

They bought their Chevelle about 5 years ago out of the Davenport, Iowa area.

“Actually, I was looking for a '69 Chevelle, but LaDell, she wanted a '71,” Don explained.

LaDell likes the styling of the front end and the taillights in 1971 better than what was worn by the 1969 models.

When they found this car for sale in Davenport, it appeared to be the right one. They found it on the Internet, offered by a broker who was selling it for an estate. The original owner had apparently purchased it new in Davenport and kept it to the day he died. It still has the original 350 c.i. V-8, plus factory air conditioning and the original AM/FM 8-track stereo. The car was gold, but the paint was very dull and oxidized, so Don had it painted black.

He was drawn towards this generation of Chevelles because he had enjoyed his 1969 Chevelle so much.

“I used to race my '69 back in the '70s and I thought, oh, I'd like to get another 350 with 300 horse (Chevelle),” he said. “I didn't win a lot of races, but had a lot of fun.”

The one he has now isn't quite as stout, being two-bolt instead of the four-bolt 350 his '69 Chevelle had. And by 1971 Chevrolet was putting a few less horses under the hood, especially with the two-barrel carburetor. But that's OK, because he didn't buy it to race anyway. He bought it for the memories, and this car not only brings back memories, it's making new ones.

“We had it in our daughter's wedding,” Don said. “A lot of friends of ours have classic cars so we had a classic car wedding.”

It helped that their daughter Brianna was marrying a car guy who had his own 1968 Camaro. As part of the wedding ceremony, they cruised in their classic cars with Brianna riding with her parents in the '71 Chevelle until they got to a point where she was transferred to the Camaro of her husband-to-be.

Memories like that will likely last longer than races not won anyway. And the Mertons' plan to take good care of this Chevelle so there'll be many more memories made.



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