

Back Where It Belongs

Tom and Joyce Olsen bought their 1969 Chevelle SS 396 new in September of 1969, right after starting their new life together.

Tom had returned from service in Viet Nam in January of that year, and the couple was married in July. Tom still had about 7 months of service in the Army left when the couple was married, and they moved back to Fort Monmouth, NJ, after the wedding. After a couple months back in New Jersey, the 1964 Chevy they were driving developed some serious engine issues, and the couple decided it was time for a new car.



Tom and Joyce visited Kitson Chevrolet, in nearby Eatontown, NJ, and found a couple likely prospects sitting on the showroom floor. One was a white '69 Camaro 427- 4 speed car (now known as a super rare "COPO" car), and the other was a Butternut Yellow 1969 Chevelle. The Chevelle was equipped with the (L-78) 375 horsepower/396 cubic inch engine, Turbo 400 transmission, and 4.10 positraction rear end. The car had black bench seats, AM radio, SS package options, and few other options. Somehow, Tom convinced Joyce that this would provide great, basic, everyday transportation! (The automatic equipped Chevelle did seem more reasonable than the "rock-crusher" 4-speed, 427 Camaro to all concerned.) Tom and Joyce traded off the tired 64 Chevy for the \$3800 brand new SS396 Chevelle and promptly began cruising the Jersey shore in their new daily driver!

In February of 1970, Tom's enlistment in the Army was up, and the couple headed back to Sioux Falls in the Chevelle. Short of a few items Uncle Sam shipped home for them, all of their worldly possessions were packed in the Chevelle. The drive home from New Jersey was a slow and costly one with the 4.10 gears. On the way home, logic again took over and the couple stopped at Couch Auto, then a famous speed shop in Des Moines, to pick up a set of Hooker Headers for the car. The car was so full, they had to un-box the headers and set them next to Joyce on the front floor/seat area.

After settling in back in Sioux Falls, the Chevelle was driven regularly and raced periodically at Thunder Valley and Empire Dragway. (Stories even seem to surface of an occasional contest on surrounding highways, although that's likely urban legend.)

Although Tom and Joyce own the Chevelle currently, and they are the original owners, this is the third time they've owned the car. When Joyce was expecting their first son in 1972, the couple had to make some adjustments in life and the Chevelle was sold. A few years later, they bought the Chevelle back from the same



party. They then sold the car back to the same fellow in 1978 when another son was on the way! The Chevelle then went through a succession of owners and they lost track of the car for many years.

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One evening in 1985, when Tom was just going on duty as a night shift patrolman for the Sioux Falls Police Department, Tom spotted what appeared to be “the Chevelle.” He followed the car a few blocks until it pulled into a convenience store lot. He got out and struck up a conversation with the owner, most likely scaring the young fellow half to death. Very quickly, Tom was able to identify the car as the original Chevelle. The car wasn’t for sale at the time, but Tom and the owner stayed in touch over the next several years. Each time they talked, Tom asked that if the owner ever thought about selling the car, that would he at least give Tom a call.

Out of the blue, in 2000, the same fellow called Tom and asked if he was still interested in the Chevelle. Tom assured him he was, checked with Joyce, and made the earliest date possible to look at the car. The Chevelle had been up on blocks in inside storage for about 13 years, and showed 68,000+ miles. The original Sun Super Tach and Stewart Warner gauges that Tom installed in the car in 1970 were still intact in the car! The parties quickly settled on a purchase price (around double what the car sold for new) and the Olsen’s bought the car immediately, before anyone changed their mind.

The Chevelle then underwent a complete frame-off restoration over the course of the next few years. Midwest Paint and Body in Hull, Iowa did the body and paint work. The engine work was done at J & L Precision Automotive near Tea, SD. Tom did the frame, suspension,

wiring, and most of the other detail work himself. While the restoration is generally to better-than-showroom-new standards, Tom elected to keep a few of the items “period correct”, such as Cragar SS wheels, Hooker Headers, vintage Sun Tach, etc.

The Chevelle now spends it’s time attending Wednesday and/or Saturday evening cruise nights and a few car shows a year. The Olsens are adamant that they won’t be letting go of it again; certainly no more family is planned, and they’re doubtful they’d ever be so lucky as to buy it back a fourth time.

Poker Run Winners

Our Annual Poker run, with stops taking us south, finished in Canton. Carlotta McKittrick won the hand with three Kings and received \$69. Dean Gough came in second with three 8’s. Dale Aurit won for having the worst hand of the evening with his highest card being a seven. Terry Jellis with his memorable fishing game was a huge hit.



August Anniversaries

Mike & Jean Tlustos	7
Darwin & Jane Sletten	8
Ron & Jackie Heemstra	14
Jules & Marilyn Haper	15
Doug & Laurie Van Noort	15
Ron & Karen Roe	23
Don & Carolyn Hood	29

August Birthdays

Joyce Olson	5
Owen McKittrick	6
Cheri Kappenman	6
Brian Lee	7
Darla Goebel	7
Terry Jellis	9
Laurie Van Noort	12
Jeanne Matthews	13
Dale Aurit	17
Betty Heidebrink	17
Judy Bentson	18
Jean Knowlton	18
Jeff Knowlton	19
Shirley Alby	19
Glenn Walker	20
Vicky Levene	20
Robin Miller	22
Erin Brunner	24
LaNette Gregersen	27
Terry Koch	28
Garry Remme	28
Buck Schrader, “Big 70”	31

September Anniversaries

Kevin & Cheri Kappenman	6
Kirk & Michelle Lee	7
Bones & Candi Hanson	11
Keith & Darla Schmuck	11
Jason & Christine Jellis	15
Terry & Kathy Koch	16
Garry & Audrey Remme	19
Jerry & Robin Miller	29

September Birthdays

Jayne DeBoer	1
Chuck Kellogg	2
Jeannine Ogle	4
David Frock	6
Marilyn Meyers	7
Julie Slumskie	10
Dianne Corkill	12
Sheila Miller	14
Audrey Remme	20
Kris Golden	21
Sherrey Kellogg	25
Dale Kiebach	26
Bill Kullander	30