

A VENT WINDOW VIEW  
**REVIVING AN IMPALA**  
February 2016

The popularity of elderly, but eminently restorable convertibles continues to exist among collectors and lovers of automotive history. No doubt one major reason for this is purely commercial which explains why most of the new models produced by major American manufacturers include a few sporty machines such as the small convertibles produced by GM and Ford. While Mustangs and Camaros are fun, quick and agile machines they are a bit limited in utility for one- car families as well as a bit too expensive for the ones who need two cars.

Also, if one considers the outgo for insurance premiums the price of a new convertible rapidly begins to ratchet up premiums. And, while it is true that insurance costs for any car will take a jump if any teens exist among potential drivers, a family with a teen *and a new convertible* will elevate the family's transportation expenses due to their *double-jeopardy* insurance bills.

Are any of these factors likely to erase a car lover's desire to ramble around the community in a shiny ragtop with its top-down? In my opinion, that is quite unlikely!

As one who has owned and operated convertibles I can sympathize. That *need* for a ragtop overtook what little common sense existed in my brain shortly after I retired from the work force and began to look for something fun to occupy my energies.

That *something fun* appeared right before I retired in the mid-eighties when a fellow in need of cash asked if I knew anyone who might be interested in buying a couple 1963 Chevrolet Impala convertibles. He offered them at a price that seemed reasonable enough, but then he told me that one of them would start and run. That's when the *itch to own a ragtop* took over my common sense. Not only did I buy both cars but one of them ran well enough that I was able to drive it home where, after moving the wife's car to an outdoor parking pad, I eased the ragtop (*ragtop* is the operational word in this case) into our attached garage. The non-running machine was later towed to a storage area next to a friend's body shop. Aware that it would be a while before I could afford to get its 327 started up and running, I covered it with a tarp and went to work on the car occupying my garage.

Now, for those uninitiated individuals who have never dealt with an auto that has rested in a non-operative state for a long, long while, there is a smell that accrues as various items draw moisture and begin to age. One may encounter similar odors in attics and unused rooms in a dwelling, but a day or two with an open window will usually clear out those offensive smells.

In the case of a car that has been exposed to weather, insulation and other fabrics such as those in door panels and seats tend to hold moisture that too soon become gardens in which ugly smells thrive. Essentially, in mine, everything that could serve as a host for mildew had. Therefore, during the time the car had been stored outside under a tarp it had become a virtual garden for mold spores that grew behind the plasticized cloth that covered door panels; even the rubber cushioning in its seats offered areas in which mold spores could flourish.

Stale grease and oils layering the engine block and transmission housing had been absorbing road dust and odors during its years of use, much of it on county roads. Judging from the amount of road dirt that layered every spot where grease had accumulated and absorbed dust the Chevy had traveled most of its miles over dirt or graveled roads. There was as well some unidentifiable trash under the seats and in the trunk, all of it wearing the stench

that *perfumes* junkyards.

Nine months after I began the project (and just as the situation had become a point of contention with the lady of the house) I had the car disassembled enough for bodywork to begin. Seats and interior side panels were already in the hands of an interior specialist as I had by then opted to go with Chevy's red exterior paints as well as red seat coverings and door panels.

In the peace that followed my relocation of that machine to a body shop, I decided to leave the second '63 in the shop's storage lot in order to avoid jeopardizing meals at home again.

Husbands, like most pets, can be trained by feeding them when they obey.