

CENTENNIAL NEWS FEATURE CLASSIC CARS

Cue up the Beach Boys, the old cars are out!

By Kathy McGrath

A sure sign of summer is the sight (and sound) of classic cars rumbling through the neighbourhood. The Centennial News asked you, our readers, to share your old cars with us and you delivered in a big way! Whether purchased for fun, nostalgia or “art” these vehicles are sure to prompt smiles when they cruise on by.

From a young age, Rick Callaghan loved Corvettes. In 1979, after saving a few paychecks, he was able to purchase this beauty, which hails from Florida. “This coupe is evocative of the best of an era,” explains Rick, who loves the style and body shape. “It’s nostalgic to drive because it’s reminiscent of the ‘60s.” To ensure a genuine experience, the Centennial resident only allows ‘60s music while driving.

Rick didn’t know much about mechanics when he purchased the car, but he now does most of the work himself—often with the help of Internet forums. Everything on the vehicle is original, meaning the parts match the car’s serial number. Years ago he stripped the car and had it repainted with the original colour. He recently had the seats reupholstered, purchasing the new leather and foam from Corvette America.

Although this is a fast car, Rick usually takes it to nearby haunts like the gym or Starbucks. He says the vehicle has been a lot of fun. “There are stories associated with this car, but I can’t tell them in present company,” he laughs.



The dashboard of Rick’s 1967 Corvette evokes a charm and glamour not found in today’s vehicles. Photos: Kathy McGrath

1967 Corvette



As the son of a mechanic and body shop owner, Jamie McGrath spent a lot of time around cars in his youth. This exposure taught him an appreciation for car design. “The old cars and trucks are works of art,” Jamie explains. “I think it’s important to keep them alive and moving.” For his part, Jamie purchased a 1966 Chevy II last year. He bought it in Chicago because there are not many of these cars available in Canada. Fortunately, it was already in good shape; the engine and many of the interior parts had been replaced and it had been repainted the original colour. This is Jamie’s second classic car. His first was a 1949 Chevy pickup truck, which he had for 11 years. While he loved the old truck, he decided he wanted something a little faster.

Jamie likes driving the Chevy II down Queen Street on a sunny day and has taken it to a few car meets (see sidebar). Last summer it was used as a prop in his son’s wedding photographs. He says people react very positively to the vehicle. “They’ll say they like the colour or want to take a look under the hood.”

1966 Chevy II



1931 Ford Model A Tudor



While this beauty of a car doesn’t move fast or far, it makes an impression wherever it goes! Owner Kevin Snow says drivers often honk or roll down their windows to ask him questions about the car. Not surprisingly, kids want him to honk the horn.

Kevin, who has always loved Model As, purchased the car in 2007 from an elderly man on Guildwood Parkway.

While he can’t be sure, Kevin thinks the car may have been manufactured at a Ford plant on Danforth Avenue. He knows it is a Canadian car because, unlike the American models, it was built with Robertson screws.

The car has a rebuilt four-cylinder engine and can go about 50 miles per hour. Although this model is started with a key, it also features a crank handle and has mechanical brakes with push rods. The fenders have been replaced with used ones from California.

While he thinks the car was originally blue, Kevin had the car repainted the same spiffy green chosen by the previous owner.

1978 MG Midget



Carl De Rocher’s classic vehicle is certainly distinctive! Not only is it bright orange (officially vermillion), it is also very compact and driven on the right-hand side.

The long-time Centennial resident purchased this sweet, soft-top convertible in 1998 when he and his wife Donna were living in England. They have fond memories of those days in Europe. “We would head out on a Sunday and find an old pub by a stream,” Donna remembers. “We could park it anywhere.” When the couple moved back to Canada in 2002, they had the car shipped back with them. While it was notable in England, the car became very distinctive in Canada. “I believe this is the only right-hand drive MG Midget in the area,” says Carl. While he calls himself “semi-mechanical,” Carl had someone else rebuild the engine and transmission to make it safe on the highway. The body is original and only has a few paint touch-ups. Carl put a lot of miles on the car in England, but these days he mainly cruises around the neighbourhood. “I have problems getting in and out of it because of sore joints,” he laments.

1975 Gremlin



Lorne Mann has built many hot rods in his day, but he refuses to modify his 1975 Gremlin, calling it a survivor. “There aren’t many of these left as they had a tendency to rust,” he explains.

Lorne purchased the car on a whim in 2008. “I was on my way to the LCBO when I saw a sign for a yard sale on Peppertree Drive, so I went,” he recalls. “I wasn’t interested in what was in the yard, but I was curious about what was under the tarp in the garage.” The owners showed Lorne the car and he made them an offer on the spot.

The car, which sat idle for almost 13 years, needed new tires, brakes, a tune-up and a lot of tender loving care. It had already been repainted in the original colour. Fortunately, Lorne, who used to own a service station, is mechanically inclined.

Don’t let the funky design fool you—this car won first prize at the Wheels on the Danforth Car Show last year, competing against sleek cars with expensive upgrades. “My car is not a princess. I like to let people sit in it and take pictures,” says Lorne. “I think the judges saw the smiles on the kids’ faces.”

1949 Chevy Truck



Classic Car Meetups

Looking for a fun summer activity for the family? How about a nostalgic date night? A couple of local car clubs hold shows, called cruise nights, which are open to the general public.

Back Alley Cruisers. The Scarborough Chapter meets on Tuesday evenings from May 14 to Sept. 24 between 6 – 9 p.m. Location is the Town Centre Plaza (Princess Auto parking lot) at McCowan Road and Milner Avenue. The lot is located at the first light north of the 401, off Milner. It is open to cars and trucks 1999 and older. Activities include 50/50 draw and gate prizes. For more information email: backalleycruisersscarborough@hotmail.com. You can also find them on Facebook or Instagram @eastendcruisenights.

Antique and Classic Car Club of Canada. The Rouge Valley Chapter meets every Wednesday from May 15 to Sept. 25 between 6 – 9 p.m. Location is Bridlewood Mall, 2900 Warden Avenue (at Finch Avenue). Activities include music, gate prizes and a 50/50 draw in support of Children’s Wish. It is open to vehicles 1995 and older. You can find the club on Facebook or email: accrrvr@hotmail.com. For information about becoming a club member, contact Lloyd Myers at 416-284-7448.