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You Auto Know column

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A car like the Beach Boys song

What you see here is a really bright red 1962 Chevy Impala, fully restored and built to specs described in a very popular song of its time by owner Rich Fagan of Port Charlotte. This "ragtop" has it all, dual quad, four speed, positraction 409 -- just like the words used in their record. Very good, but there is much more, such as a 425 h.p., four-wheel disc brakes, digital dash, air conditioning, 10 bolt rear, etc. The interior is almost SS style. However, Fagan says, "This is my special baby, so lots of things are not stock, including suspension, wheels and tires."

Nor has his life been a "cookie cutter" design. The interest in cars goes back to when he was 10 years old and hanging around a body shop helping out as a cleanup boy, followed by learning the trade. At age 14, a job pumping gas (at \$0.21 9/10 per gallon) kept this young man busy when not in school. Quickly, two years went by, and there was enough money to get that first automobile of his very own, a 1957 Chevrolet CV with a fast 283-cubic-inch engine, plus a floor shifter. It stayed with him through high school, up to graduation.

Shortly after all that studying and part-time work, into the Navy he went. An assignment to the Jacksonville Naval Base changed his mind about life in Western Pennsylvania, with its bitter cold weather. Nevertheless, in 1968 when discharged, he moved back, bought a 1962 Chevy with a powerful 327 engine, painted it gold, and added chrome rims. All the time, he stayed in the body/fender line of work, settling down as a married man with wife, Kathy, who gave him two children: Mandi and Brian.

That warm Florida came into his mind each winter, enough so to convince the wife to pack up and move to Charlotte County in 1976. Palm Chevrolet hired him as their body shop manager. (They had only one dealership at that time.) Seeing the need for a paint supplier, Rich and store owner Bill Wetzel of Fort Myers teamed up to start B&R color and supply in 1979. Raising a family and running a new business left little time to play with fancy cars.

About 1990, his longtime friend Rick Treworgy talked him into doing body work and paint on a 1967 Corvette, which turned out to be the first Vette in his collection. It still looks good and is on display at the new Muscle Car City Museum in Punta Gorda. You guessed it, this rekindled the desire to own a special vehicle again: a 1978 El Camino, in which a "454" with a turbo 400 tranny, very quality paint job and lots of detail items resulted in its being a show winner twice in its class at Super Chevy Shows, even getting a photo in a magazine.

The time had come to move on to getting an auto he really wanted, a 1962 Chevrolet Impala. Thus the El Camino was taken to a "Turkey Run" event at Daytona Raceway and sold. A friend who bought and sold cars found the car that appears in today's column. One thing led to another and a full restoration took place, plus much more, as

described in the paragraph at the start of today's column.

B&R Color is still going strong in Whidden Industrial Park, along with their other successful business -- Glass Doctor. Kathy runs B&R while Rich oversees the glass operation. They have many employees, but I only met Hal, Larry, Brian and Wayne. I believe it's safe to say their paint products are on at least 95 percent of all cars, trucks and motorcycles that have been repaired or customized from Fort Myers up past North Port. This couple also owns a 1967 M.G.B. roadster he restored, and now is rebuilding a rare 1953 Ferguson Tractor. You can see this red Chevy tomorrow during the grand opening show of the Muscle Car City Museum in Punt Gorda. This will be the place to be if you are interested in the old car hobby. For more information, call 941-575-5959.

* * *

Two businesses I missed in the Port Charlotte area listing who are interested in serving collector car owners are:

* Stockbarger Glass Inc., located off Kings Highway, near Peachland Boulevard. Anything automotive, residential or commercial, except windshields. Ms. Jackie, owner, 941-629-4333.

* B's Auto Body & Custom Painting, Whidden Industrial Park. 941-661-9582.

Also, Coral Ridge RV & Auto Repair is now doing full restorations. For more information, call 941-661-0110.

* * *

Some known cruise-ins:

* Friday, 4-7 p.m., Punta Gorda Home Depot.

* Friday, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Gasparilla Car Cruise. 941-828-0070.

* Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Muscle Car City Museum. 941-575-5959.

* Sunday, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Sonic Drive-in, North Port. 941-429-6629.

Due to space limitations, I'm unable to list all cruise-ins. Please phone the following DJs for current info of their events:

* Herman and the Cruisers, 941-426-7887.

* Tom's Traveling Tunes, 941-240-5799.

* Lance's Cruzin to the Hop, 941-371-1061.

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