

SPACE AGE STAR

APRIL 2019



**IN THIS ISSUE: 1969 50TH ANNIVERSARY
CONTINUES WITH CHEVELLE, EL CAMINO
AND CORVAIR. PLUS: REGION NEWS**



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Editor's Notes

Our region newsletter was again awarded a Certificate of Distinction from the AACA. Thanks to everyone in the region for their contributions. I enjoy writing the historical articles, but the member supplied stories really make the newsletter special.

I recently submitted the region roster to AACA headquarters. Since AACA counts spouses toward region membership, we have 99 members in the Space Age Chevrolet region. This is a slight increase from 2018 when we had 94 members. I've been told this is very good for a non-geographic region. We started out with around 20 members when we received our AACA charter five years ago. I think we all deserve a pat on the back.

I originally intended to spread the 1969 50th anniversary articles over more newsletters. I was going to save the Corvair for the December issue, but when I realized that May is the 50th anniversary of Corvair's discontinuation, I decided to include it in this newsletter.

I hope everyone is well. I'd like to see you either at the Grand National, the Eastern Spring National (I hope to enter my Skylark) or Hershey. Since I'm having back issues again, my attendance depends on an MRI, and how I react to any recommended treatment.

Russell Heim

Letter to the Editor:

Dear Russell,

Great issue of the Space Age Staras always. Thank you for continuing to be our editor.

I enjoyed the article on the Celebrity. It's fun to read about cars that are not typically considered "collector cars". Down the road I would love a follow up article on the Celebrity Eurosport. I always thought they were kind of cool, especially the station wagon version.

At the end of the Celebrity article you noted that the Celebrity replaced the Malibu and was then replaced by the Lumina. And now we're back to a Malibu. This got me thinking on how the Celebrity compares to the current Malibu. The 2019 Malibu sits on a 6.5 inch longer wheelbase, is 5.5 inches longer overall and is 5.2 inches wider. Interior dimensions are very similar with only an inch give or take between them. I unfortunately could not find the drag-coefficient of the Malibu, which would be interesting to know considering their very different shapes! 37 years later and a "mid-sized" family sedan is surprisingly still mid-sized!

I was also fond of the article on the 1969 full sized Chevrolets, of course I'm somewhat biased! Just FYI, you mention head restraints, but those were optional until January 1969 when they became federally mandated. Our '69 Kingswood Estate was built in November 1968 and the head restraints were a \$16.90 option.

Thanks again for a wonderful newsletter.

Sincerely,

Christopher Conway, Atlanta, Georgia

1969 Chevrolet Kingswood Estate

PS – Love the Buick, great color combination. Congratulations.

1969 CHEVELLE

BY RUSSELL HEIM

After 1968's massive restyling, the 1969 Chevelles received minor updates, most of them cosmetic. Other updates were made to comply with federal regulations. Regardless, the sales brochures proclaimed: "If our competition had one like this, we'd have a lot more competition."

The front end received a new grille and bumper. The new grille was made of plastic; the first use of this material on a Chevelle grille. A restyled Chevrolet bow-tie emblem appeared in the center of the updated grille along with a horizontal bright molding. Super Sport models received an SS396 grille emblem. 1969 front parking lights were relocated inboard from the 1968 location.

New larger taillights were the main rear revision. Chevrolet also restyled the rear emblems. Body-side moldings were also restyled for 1969. Coupes and convertibles now had full door glass. As on the full-size Chevrolets, ventipanes, or vent windows, no longer appeared on the Chevelle coupes and convertibles.

Chevelles received an updated instrument panel this year along with restyled interiors. The new

anti-theft lock system for ignition, steering wheel and transmission selector was now standard. Federally mandated headrests appeared on the tops of front seats. Chevrolet's Astro-ventilation was now standard on sport coupes and convertibles.

Chevrolet offered Chevelles in two series in 1969. The 300 Deluxe was the base model. The bare-bones 300 series wasn't offered this year. 300 Deluxe was available as a two-door pillared coupe, a sport coupe and a four-door sedan. Malibu was the fancier and most popular series. It was available as a sport coupe, convertible, sport sedan and four-door sedan. SS396 was now an option package on any coupe or convertible.

1969 was a very successful year for Chevelle. Sales improved by 45,000 cars over 1968. Chevrolet sold 42,000 cars in the 300 Deluxe series and 367,100 Malibus. Included in this figure were 86,307 SS396 optioned cars. Although a six-cylinder was the base engine for 1969 Chevelle, the vast majority of cars sold that year were equipped with a V8.



1969 Chevelle 300 Deluxe Sport Coupe. Chevelle offered 13 new exterior colors this year. Vinyl tops were available on coupes and sedans.



SS 396 Sport Coupe*



SS 396 Convertible*



Concours Sedan**



Malibu Sport Coupe



Malibu Convertible



Malibu Sport Sedan



Malibu 4-Door Sedan



300 Deluxe Sport Coupe



300 Deluxe Coupe



300 Deluxe 4-Door Sedan

*SS 396 available for Malibu Sport Coupe and Convertible; 300 Deluxe Sport Coupe and Coupe. **Concours available for Malibu Sport Sedan.

Pick your Chevelle... pick your features... discover the next fifty reasons for yourself.

1969 Chevelle models, power teams and interior availability, as well as many of the most popular Chevelle Options & Custom Features, are included on the convenient check list below. Use it to design the Chevelle you have in mind, then take it to your dealer. He'll gladly answer your questions on price, color and model/equipment availability.

INTERIORS (EXTRA COST)

- ☐ All-vinyl (standard for convertible)
- ☐ All-vinyl Strato-bucket seats (Malibu Sport Coupe and Convertible only)

ENGINES

- ☐ 140-hp Turbo-Thrift 230 Six (Standard)
- ☐ 200-hp Turbo-Fire 307 V8 (Standard)
- ☐ 155-hp Turbo-Thrift 250 Six
- ☐ 255-hp Turbo-Fire 350 V8
- ☐ 300-hp Turbo-Fire 350 V8
- ☐ 325-hp Turbo-Jet 396 V8 (For SS 396 only)
- ☐ 350-hp Turbo-Jet 396 V8 (For SS 396 only)

TRANSMISSIONS

- ☐ 3-Speed fully synchronized (Standard with standard engines)
- ☐ Special 3-Speed fully synchronized
- ☐ 4-Speed fully synchronized
- ☐ Powerglide automatic
- ☐ Turbo Hydra-Matic

POPULAR EXTRAS

- ☐ Power steering
- ☐ Power brakes
- ☐ Power convertible top (white or black)
- ☐ AM radio; AM/FM radio; AM/FM Stereo radio
- ☐ Stereo tape system
- ☐ Vinyl roof cover (parchment, black, dark brown, dark blue or midnight green)
- ☐ Soft-Ray tinted windows
- ☐ Rally wheels
- ☐ Wheel covers (Mag-style, Mag-spoke and others)
- ☐ White-lettered wide-oval tires
- ☐ Comfortilt steering wheel
- ☐ Cruise-Master speed control
- ☐ Custom deluxe seat and shoulder belts
- ☐ Speed warning indicator
- ☐ Center console (available with Strato-buckets only)
- ☐ Auxiliary lighting package (includes ashtray, courtesy, glove compartment, luggage compartment and underhood lights)

NEW OPTIONS FOR '69

- ☐ Headlight washer
- ☐ Child safety seat
- ☐ Engine block heater
- ☐ Power door lock system
- ☐ Power trunk opener
- ☐ Mirror maplight

All illustrations and specifications contained in this literature are based on the latest product information available at the time of publication approval. The right is reserved to make changes at any time without notice, in prices, colors, materials, equipment, specifications and models. Chevrolet Motor Division, General Motors Corp., Detroit, Mich. 48202.



Roto in U.S.A. D-67138



1969 Chevelle 300 Deluxe four-door sedan. The new for 1969 bumper and grille are clearly visible in this brochure photo. Rear-view mirrors were wider for 1969, as can also be seen in the photo. A Chevelle 300 Deluxe buyer got a lot of car for the money. Prices started at \$2,458 for the six-cylinder two-door pillared coupe and \$2,488 for a six-cylinder four-door sedan. Buyers could choose from a long list of available Chevelle options. The white-stripe tires and full wheel covers pictured above would have been extra cost items on the 300 Deluxe. See the illustration on page 4 for a list of popular 1969 Chevelle options.



1969 Malibu Convertible. Despite Chevelle's huge sales in 1969, Chevrolet sold only 8,927 Chevelle convertibles. It's unsure how many convertibles were Malibus and how many had the SS396 option package. Chevelle coupes and convertibles rode on a 112 inch wheelbase and were 197 inches long. Four-door cars had a 116 inch wheelbase and were 201 inches long.



1969 Malibu Sport Sedan with the Concours option package. Designated Regular Production Option (RPO) Z16, this package included luxury cloth seat and sidewall trim, special steering wheel emblem, panel trim plate, black-accented lower body side and wheel-opening moldings, Concours deck lid emblem and extra insulation. RPO Z16 added \$131.65 to a Malibu sport sedan's price. Choosing a sport sedan over a four-door sedan added \$105 to the price of a Malibu. Four-door sedans started at \$2,567 for a six-cylinder and \$2,657 for an eight-cylinder car. A Malibu sport sedan with a V8 had a listed curb weight of 3,340 pounds.



1969 Chevelle SS396 sport coupe. The SS396 badges on the grille and fender are clearly visible in this brochure photo. The red-line tires were part of the SS396 package, but the rally wheels shown were an extra cost item. 1969 Chevelle Super Sports are among the most sought after collectible Chevrolets of the 1960s. See the chart on page 7 for 1969 SS 396 power team choices.

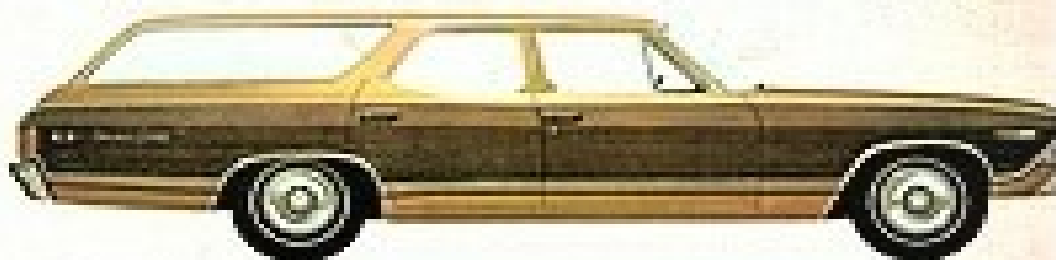
SS 396 POWER TEAMS

ENGINE	TRANSMISSION	REAR AXLE RATIO (:1)*			
		Std.	Optional		
			Econ.	Perf.	Spcl.
Turbo-Jet 396 396-Cu.-In. V8 325 HP @ 4800 4-bbl. carb. 10.25:1 C.R. Premium fuel	Special 3-Speed (2.42:1 Low)	3.31	3.07	3.55	3.73 4.10
	4-Speed (2.52:1 Low)	3.55	3.31	3.73	3.07 4.10
	Turbo Hydra-Matic	3.31	3.07		2.73
Turbo-Jet 396 396-Cu.-In. V8 350 HP @ 5200 4-bbl. carb.; 10.25:1 C.R. Premium fuel RPO L34	Special 3-Speed (2.42:1 Low)	3.55	3.31	3.73	4.10
	4-Speed (2.52:1 Low)				
	4-Speed (2.20:1 Low)				3.07 4.10
	Turbo Hydra-Matic				

* Without Air Conditioning. Positraction required for 3.73, 4.10 ratio; optional for all others.



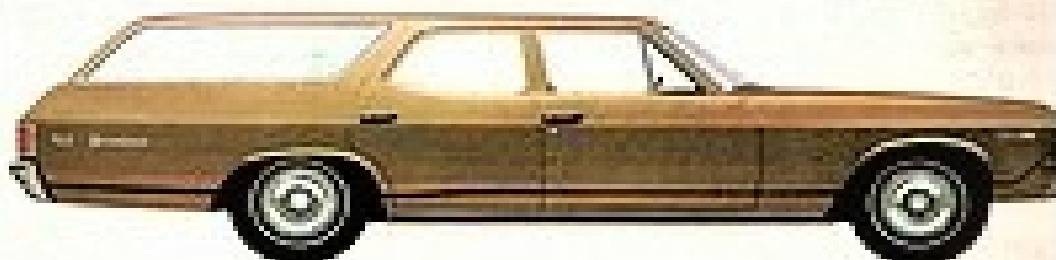
Clockwise from left, Chevelle Concours, Greenbrier and Nomad station wagons. 1969 Chevelle Station wagons shared their 116 inch wheelbase with the four-door sedans. The wagons were 208 inches long from bumper to bumper. Chevelle wagons were available with either two or three seats. The two seat wagons were considered six passenger cars while the three seat wagons were rated for nine passengers. Three seat wagons had a special two-way tailgate and step plate on the rear bumper to ease entry and exit for third seat passengers.



CONCO ESTATE
(2- and 3-seat models)



CONCO
(2- and 3-seat models)



GREENBRIER
(2- and 3-seat models)



NOMAD
(2-seat model)

1969 EL CAMINO “RARE BLEND OF BEAUTY AND BRAWN” - BY RUSSELL HEIM



Despite sharing the Chevelle station wagon's 116 inch wheelbase and featuring Chevelle front-end sheet metal, Chevrolet marketed the El Camino separately from the Chevelle. El Camino was marketed as a truck and received its own six-page brochure. As was typical of Chevrolet sales brochures, El Camino's brochure flowed with praise for the little truck: "El Camino reflects the style and grace of the beautiful Chevelle...and it offers the strength and versatility of a rugged pickup." The brochure stated that El Camino could carry objects longer than six feet in the bed and could handle loads up to a half-ton. It was also supposed to be an ideal vehicle for towing a boat or camper.

1969 El Camino came in three trim levels: standard, custom and SS396. The standard and custom models featured bench seats while the SS396 featured buckets.

El Camino was available with the same drive-trains and safety features as the Chevelle. Standard El Camino's base price was \$2,550. Chevrolet sold 48,400 El Caminos in 1969.

Specifications



Standard Equipment—

Front Suspension: IFS with coil springs; capacity 1900 lbs. Springs: Coil; capacity 950 lbs. Shock Absorbers: 1" diameter. Rear Suspension: Rear Axle capacity 2700 lbs.; ratios 3.36 (6-cylinder & 307 V8 models), 3.31 (350 V8 & 325-hp 396 V8 models), 3.55 (350-hp 396 V8). Springs: Coil; capacity 1100 lbs. Shock Absorbers: Air booster type; may be adjusted by varying air pressure to meet load requirements. Engine: 140-hp 230 Six standard on six-cylinder models; 200-hp 307 V8 standard on V8 models. Clutch: 9½" diameter (6-cylinder engines); 10" diameter (307 & 350 V8's); 11" diameter (396 V8). Transmission: 3-speed manual. Electrical: Battery; 44-amp.-hr. Direction Signals: Front and rear. Backup lights. Front and rear marker lights. Generator: 37-amp. Delcotron. Windshield Wipers: Dual electric with washers. Seat Belts: Three; driver, center and passenger. Shoulder Belts: Driver and passenger. Tires: Five tubeless 7.35-14 2-ply (4PR).

Optional Equipment—

Four-Season Air Conditioning • HD Battery • Deluxe Seat & Shoulder Belts • Positraction Rear Axle • Appearance Guard Group • Power Brakes • HD Clutch • Console • Power Door Locks • Temperature Controlled Radiator Fan • 42-amp. Delcotron Generator • Tinted Glass • Tri-Volume Horn • Special Instrumentation • Auxiliary Lighting • HD Radiator • AM Pushbutton Radio • AM-FM Pushbutton Radio • Vinyl Roof Cover • Strato-bucket Seat • Speed & Cruise Control • Speed Warning Indicator • Comfortilt Steering Wheel • Deluxe Steering Wheel • Sports-Styled Steering Wheel • Power Steering • Special Front and Rear Suspension • Wheel Covers • Mag-Style Wheel Covers • Simulated Wire Wheel Covers • Rally Wheels and Trim • Power Windows • Concealed Windshield Wipers • HD 3-Speed • Powerglide • Turbo Hydra-Matic • 4-Speed • 4-Speed Close-Ratio

El Camino Engines

	230 Six	250 Six	307 V8	350 V8	350 V8	396 V8	396 V8
Displacement (cu. in.)	230	250	307	350	350	396	396
Compression Ratio	8.5 to 1	8.5 to 1	9.00 to 1	9.00 to 1	10.25 to 1	10.25 to 1	10.25 to 1
Gross Horsepower @ rpm	140 @ 4400	155 @ 4200	200 @ 4600	255 @ 4800	300 @ 4800	325 @ 4800	350 @ 5200
Gross Torque ft.-lbs. @ rpm	220 @ 1600	235 @ 1600	300 @ 2400	365 @ 3200	380 @ 3200	410 @ 3200	415 @ 3400



1969 CORVAIR - THE LAST OF THE BREED

BY RUSSELL HEIM

Corvair seems to have been an afterthought in Chevrolet's 1969 line-up. The 1969 Corvair sales brochure was only four pages long. It touted the car as: "The car that has a little something for everybody and a great deal more for those who appreciate proven durability, practicality and economy."

Corvair's styling was the same as last year and had changed very little since the car's major restyling for 1965. Chevrolet only updated Corvair to meet 1969 federal requirements.

For 1969 Corvair was available in the plain 500 series and the fancier Monza. Sport coupe and convertible were the only available body styles. The 500 coupe listed for \$2,242 and the Monza coupe's list price was \$2,506. The Monza convertible started at \$2,641. Corvair 500s featured a bench front seat while Monzas came with bucket seats.

All 1969 Corvairs used the 164 cubic-inch air-cooled flat six-cylinder engine that had been around since 1964. The only appearance changes were a larger rearview mirror and amber front side marker lens.

Despite the lack of promotion, Corvair buyers could still dress up their purchases with a number of custom feature options such as wire wheel covers, AM or AM/FM radios, positraction rear ends, white wall tires, remote control outside rearview mirror, telescoping steering column and front and rear bumper guards.

Chevrolet announced the Corvair's demise on May 12, 1969 and built the last cars on May 14.

Total Corvair production for 1969 was 6,000 cars. 2,762 were model 500 coupes with 2,717 being Monza coupes. Chevrolet built only 521 Monza convertibles for the 1969 model year. The rarity of 1969 Corvairs makes them more collectible than other years, especially the convertibles. There's been a great mystery over the years regarding the fate of the last Corvair built. Chevrolet didn't seem to keep a record of this car, and no one knows what happened to it. Allegedly, it was last seen being loaded on a freight train behind the Willow Run assembly plant.

Beginning that May, Chevrolet offered Corvair buyers a \$150 discount coupon to use toward the purchase of a new Chevrolet from then until 1973. The idea of the coupon was to mitigate the lost resale value of a discontinued model.

If you want to read about the demise of the Corvair in detail, I recommend reading an article entitled "Requiem for a Lightweight" by noted automotive historian Karl Ludvigsen. Ludvigsen also wrote a book entitled "Corvair by Chevrolet" which traces the car's history. Another interesting book is a self-published tome called "Assassination of the Corvair" by Andrew J. White. The author was a noted researcher in automobile safety. The main focus of the book is debunking Ralph Nader's "Unsafe at Any Speed" and to stick up for the Corvair.

Personally, I think the Corvair didn't last because it didn't offer a V8. Horsepower was king for many buyers in the 1960s. There was a limit of 180 horsepower on the Corvair's engine in an era when you could buy a

similar-sized car such as a Chevy II or Camaro with over 300 horsepower. These cars didn't handle as well as a Corvair, but they were a lot faster, which had a greater appeal in those days.

I think competition, from within Chevrolet, as well as from competitors helped kill the Corvair. Ford's Falcon, AMC's Rambler, Studebaker's Lark and Chrysler's Valiant were Corvair's main competition. The Falcon outsold Corvair by a wide margin. Corvair sold well, but never as well as Chevrolet wanted.

Chevy II, Chevelle and Camaro were Corvair's competition from within Chevrolet. Corvair (and Chevy II) sales plummeted in 1964 when Chevelle was introduced. Corvair sales rebounded in 1965, due to the gorgeous restyling of the car, but declined drastically in 1966.

Many people like to blame Ralph Nader's book "Unsafe at Any Speed" as the main cause of the Corvair's demise, but it's only one factor. The book has long since been debunked (especially the Corvair section) as the work of someone who knew little about automobile engineering. I've read that Chevrolet actually produced the

Corvair through 1969 just to show that they weren't influenced or intimidated by Nader's book. Their original plans were to discontinue Corvair after the 1966 model year; the Camaro would replace it in the line-up.

While the Corvair never became the success Chevrolet hoped it would be, they still sold a lot of them, 1.7 million in ten model years. People who bought them new and who collect them now are often very enthusiastic about Corvairs. There's great club support and parts availability for them.

I've owned two Corvairs, a 1961 Monza coupe and a 1964 Monza convertible. The 1961 was mostly garage art, and I sold it to make room for another purchase. The 1964 convertible was a pleasure to drive. It was probably the best handling car I've owned.

Corvair was unfairly maligned. Despite being exonerated by the federal government, the car still makes the list of "worst cars" ever. I can think of a lot worse cars than a Corvair. I bet Corvair would have been a big seller had it still been around during the 1970's gas shortages.

ENGINE	TRANSMISSION	REAR AXLE RATIO (:1)*	
			Optional
		Std.	Perf.
Turbo-Air 164 164-Cu.-In. Six 95 HP @ 3600 2-1 bbl. carb. 8.25:1 C.R. Regular Fuel	3-Speed (3.11:1 Low)	3.55	—
	4-Speed (3.11:1 Low)		
	Powerglide	3.27	3.55
Turbo-Air 164 164-Cu.-In. Six 110 HP @ 4400 2-1 bbl. carb. 9.25:1 C.R. Premium Fuel RPO L62	3-Speed (3.11:1 Low)	3.27	3.55
	4-Speed (3.11:1 Low)		
	Powerglide	3.55	—
Turbo-Air 164 164-Cu.-In. Six 140 HP @ 5200 9.25:1 C.R. 4-1 bbl. carb. Premium Fuel RPO L63	3-Speed (3.11:1 Low)	3.55	—
	4-Speed (3.11:1 Low)		
	Powerglide		

*Positraction optional for all ratios.



The *Space Age Star* is the official publication of the Space Age Chevrolet region of the Antique Automobile Club of America. This is a non-geographic region dedicated to the enjoyment, restoration and history of 1955 and later AACA eligible Chevrolet cars and trucks. We publish the newsletter six times a year.

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