

Reprinted from
October 1993

The

CHEVY'S BEST



CHEVROLETTER



Gordie MacLennan's Road Warrior
'56 Chevy 210 4 door Wagon

October 1993 _____ Vol. 19 No. 10

Car of the Month

By Gordie MacLennan

Hi, I'm a 1956 Chevy 210 4 door wagon. My power comes from a 307 cubic inch with power glide out of a 1968 Chevy Nova. I'm driven daily in the summer months, and besides hauling my owner's butt to and from work every weekday, I've been hauling this travel trailer all over the country. Last year, I made a couple of trips to BIR with the trailer, and a trip to Lake Vermillion pulling a 16 foot speed boat, all without trouble.

Well, this year started off normal I thought. My owner took me out of storage, washed me and took me out for a spin. Well, shortly after that he pulled me in the garage and proceeded to take off my left front fender and inner fender as well. I heard him tell a friend that manual steering just wouldn't cut it when pulling a trailer, sounds like more traveling. So, in went 606 power steering, a power brake booster and master cylinder out of a 1978 Pontiac Sunbird, a cross flow radiator from where my drive train came from, and a tilt column out of a Chevy van.

The first trip I pulled the trailer on this year was to Crosby, MN in June. No problem. The next trip I took was the following weekend on July 4 to Des Moines, IA for the Good Guys Meet. I got a little warm pulling the trailer, but not too bad.

I went on a couple relatively small trips pulling that trailer before the BIGGIE. By biggie, I mean out to the Black Hills and Yellowstone! We started July 31st, me, the trailer, my owner, and his family, for the west. The first day we went to Chamberlain, SD. We saw many smiles, waves, and thumbs up. I don't know if people thought it was a cool way to travel and camp with an old car, or did they think this poor guy was taking his family and all their worldly possessions in the old station wagon out west to find work?

The next day we took off for the Black Hills and everything seemed to go well until we got to Rapid City, SD. It was pretty warm that day and I was running a little warm but nothing unusual when pulling this trailer; I'm loaded down you know! Anyway, we started the long 20 mile drive up to Mount Rushmore. I guess they were going to camp five miles the other side of Mt. Rushmore, and I can't wait to get rid of this trailer. As I start to climb the long highway, I start to get hot. The longer we go, the hotter I get. It's a steady climb, but I don't know if I'm going to make it. I'm getting close to the Mount, but my temperature gauge is reading 245 and climbing. That's it, we're within a quarter mile but I just hit 250. I pull into Mount Rushmore just in time. I'm too hot and I start to get sick, how embarrassing. I puke right in front of Mount Rushmore. Oh well, my owner and his family decides to take in the sights at the monument, and let me cool down. Well, about an hour later they came back, put some fresh coolant in me, fired me up, and went to the campground to get rid of this trailer.

The next day I take the troops sightseeing without the trailer; feels great but at this altitude I just don't have the punch I used to. Well, I knew it was too good to last and after a couple of days they hook the trailer up to me and we start to head west. One thing I didn't realize was that the big bike rally in Sturgis, SD was about to start. There were motorcycles everywhere. I got along good with bikers because they really like old trucks, vans, panels, and wagons.

The first stop for the night after the Black Hills was Buffalo, WY. At the campground we stayed at there was a trike convention (not the kind kids ride). There were about 30 trikes with the average age of the owners to be about 50. The next day we hooked on the trailer and start to go through the Big Horn Mountains. It's a long steady climb, and I sure am glad it's morning and cool out. I sure wish my power glide had another gear. We make it to the top of the Big Horns and there's snow. Now it's time to go down the back side and to save on my brakes, I'm put into low gear (sure wish that power glide had another gear) for about a 10 mile decline down the mountain. I can sure snap and pop out those glass packs. I must hold the record for the longest muffler rap.

We continue on our journey to Yellowstone. Along the way we stop in Worland, WY for lunch. While there we meet Bud and Sherry who have a 1941 Ford Street Rod. Bud happens to be the northern area rep for the Wyoming Street Rod Association. They ask my owner where we're heading and they say Yellowstone. Then they ask if we're heading for the West Yellowstone Rod Run which is where they're going. My owner tells him he knows nothing about it, that we're just on vacation. They say that it's the following weekend and that we'll have to attend. They also invite us to follow them to Cody, WY. It's nice to follow a street rod for a while. We split up in Cody promising to meet again in West Yellowstone at a beautiful campsite. Ah! I finally get to dump off that trailer again for a while.

The next couple of days are spent taking in the sights, Old Faithful, Mammoth Springs, etc. West Yellowstone was a real neat town with a very nice rod run. They had about 225 registered cars with me registering at number 218. We also ran into Bud and Sherry again. They're glad to see that I didn't break down on the way because the roads in Yellowstone are in rough condition. If you ever drive through Yellowstone make sure your suspension and exhaust system are in good shape or you'll lose them.

Well it looks like it's time to put the trailer back on and head back to Minnesota. I'm glad to start heading home, but I keep thinking I'll have to cross those Big Horn Mountains again, this time going up the big decline that I came down before. Well we start up and I think here we go. The morning is cool but I'm starting to get warm again. I'm glad my owner bought a gallon of anti-freeze in Cody yesterday, I might need it. We're about three quarters of the way up and I've had it. We better pull over because I'm starting to boil. We pull over and my owner pops my hood and I'm steaming off like crazy, and my owner makes some crack like "who needs to go to Yellowstone to see Old Faithful". Very funny, I'm getting sick and he's making bad jokes. While we're waiting for me to settle down, other people are stopping to enjoy the scenery and commenting about how I'm pretty decent looking ride, even with my hood up and anti-freeze all over the ground. I do manage a slight smile through my bug laden grill (heh! No bra for this guy, I believe in the natural look). Anyway after I cool off, I'm loaded up with fresh coolant and away we go.

The rest of the trip was pretty uneventful. I made it all the way back to Plymouth, MN where I live. I logged a grand total of 3,050 miles in two weeks time. Not bad for a car that's 37 year old. If anybody else is considering a trip like this I have a few suggestions to make the trip less worrisome and some more comfortable. Always carry a full tool box if you can. Carry extra anti-freeze (not water, it will boil at a low temperature) tie wire or bailing wire, spare fuses, extra oil, fire extinguisher, and a spare tire full of air. Before you leave check your brakes and check and repack wheel bearings. Give every grease zerk on the car a shot or two. Carry some extra light bulbs, and if your car uses oil like mine carry a spare set of spark plugs or a least a wire brush to clean the ones you have. Check all fluid levels of transmission, rear end, etc.

Now for a few creature features: Air conditioning (we didn't need it, but if we had it, it would have been a lifesaver), cruise control would have been real nice. The power steering and tilt wheel were great. A decent stereo with adjustable front to back speakers, all I had was rear speakers and if I turned up the tunes loud enough so the driver could hear, the people in the back seat complained because it was too loud. Bring every cassette tape you have and then borrow some from your neighbor. There are stretches of highway out west where you can hit the "seek" button on the radio and the dial just moves from top to bottom and then starts all over again. Sure, listening to the tones of duel exhaust is fine, but that makes my owner sleepy after a while.

Well, I pulled that trailer out there and back without any major problems, hopefully I won't have to pull that thing for a while again. What's that? I hear my owner talking to Tom on the phone and he's saying something about pulling the trailer up to BIR this weekend for nationals. Oh well, after what I just been through that will be like a burger run to McDonald's. Meanwhile, the one car rod run goes on. See you on the road!

Author's Notes- Was I skeptical about pulling a trailer half way across the US with a 37 year old Chevy that needed refinements (after all I've got about \$2,500 in the whole car including the purchase price)? You bet I was. Would I do it again? In a minute! We had a great time on our trip, the people we met and the different experiences we had because of the car added a whole lot to the trip. So, if you're thinking of making a trip like this, go for it, and be prepared for a lot of thumbs up, and "hey, nice car", or my most often heard comment, "hey, nice Nomad". So, like my kids shirt says..."Just Do It"!



Article submitted by:

Gary

This is a reprint of an article in the
Chevroletter dated October 1993

Thank you Gary!!