

CHEVY TALK

Cameo Appearance

by Michael E. Kisber

Most guys my age are interested in the cars or trucks they remember as kids, so you might ask why a 39 year old would be interested in a 1957 Cameo. The answer lies in the fact the Cameo made automotive history. It was the first major effort in pickup truck design to emphasize style over utility. Before the Cameo, truck design was based on form following function. The Cameo changed all that and revolutionized the way the big three designed trucks. The Dodge D-100 Sweptside and Ford Fleetside and Ranchero are all results of this new design philosophy. The beautifully styled Cameo is one of the most sought after trucks by collectors today. Only 2,244 were made in 1957, and it is estimated that only 201 are left in existence today.

The Cameo was designed by Charles "Chuck" Jordan. He began as a designer with General Motors in 1949, but was called to active duty in the USAF in 1952. There he worked in a military art studio. You can definitely see the influences of his exposure to aircraft in the Cameo's sleek design.

The Cameo was produced from 1955 to 1958. 1955 was the most successful year. Even though it was offered in only one color scheme—Bombay Ivory Trimmed in Cardinal Red—5,220 units sold. In 1956 very few design changes were made. Seven new color schemes were added, which brought the total to eight. This did not help sales, however, and only 1452 were produced.

The 1957 Cameo is by far the prettiest. That year stylists added a contrasting color stripe down the side of the bed with trimmed chrome strips outlining it. In the stripe a chrome script "CAMEO" appears next to the Chevrolet bowtie. Chevy offered optional chrome bombsight ornaments for the twin fins on the hood. The 1957 model was the only one where the actual model number, 3124, is displayed on the front fender emblems. In 1957, 2,244 units were produced. The truck came with 15" wheels painted the body color and sporting caps and trim rings. The rear bumper was painted and trimmed in chrome. The center of the rear bumper had a hidden compartment for the spare tire. The standard color scheme was





Cardinal Red/Bombay Ivory; however, Chevy offered nine, two-tone color combinations: Cardinal Red/Bombay Ivory, Bombay Ivory/Cardinal Red, Sand Stone Beige/Bombay Ivory, Indian Turquoise/Bombay Ivory, Golden Yellow/Jet Black, Granite Gray/Bombay Ivory, Ocean Green/Bombay Ivory, Alpine Blue/Bombay Ivory, Sand Beige/Bombay Ivory.

When I was a teenager, my father owned an auto parts store. There was a gentleman named Doc Clark who collected Cameos. I admired them then but could not afford to have one. So, Mr. Clark sold me the Cameo's Dodge counterpart, a 1958 D100 Sweptside, which I restored. That truck was unfortunately destroyed in a fire when I was in college. After many years of waiting and looking, I found my Cameo in California. I am a purist and was very careful to see that it was 100% original. My truck was restored by Charles Bixler of Lake Eisnore,

California, one of the best and most knowledgeable Cameo enthusiasts.

My truck is equipped with the Trademaster, 155 hp. 265 ci V8 powerplant. It has a 3-speed heavy duty manual transmission with column shift. I was concerned about the color as, in my search for a Cameo, I had seen the more common colors like Cardinal Red and Ivory, but had never seen a Yellow and Black one. I wanted to be sure it was right. I took the

paint code off the specification panel riveted to the inside of the drivers side door jam. It read Color Code 785A. After some research, I determined the 785A was a two-tone combination Golden Yellow and Jet black. I then ordered original paint chips to be 100% sure. I was very pleased to discover that the color matched exactly. It was so beautiful and perfect, I bought it! 🚚

