

## *Feature Vehicle*

Bob and Joyce Inhoff, Jeanette, Pennsylvania

### **1971 SS Wagon**

Its 1955 and I just got my first car--A 48 Crosley Station Wagon. After my dad got it running, I painted it a 55 Ford Goldenrod- yellow and Regency purple. Will come back to this era later.

Fast forward to 1965. I have just bought a Willow Green 65 SS 4 Speed small block (full size) with gray interior. After a few weeks, I swapped the interior with a buddy who had white interior. A few months later I saw a blue 66 Chevelle with a 396 4 speed. I went to Baker Chevrolet in Beaver Pa. and left with a SS 396 Aztec Bronze 4 speed like Randy Kirkers.

I was playing in a band on weekends. My SS-396 was about 2-3 months old and I was coming home one night after playing at the All American Club in West Virginia. On old route18 at 3:30 AM, a man delivering Sunday papers to bulk stations was driving a 55 Ford Wagon. I T-boned him and had to get out through the windshield as no doors would open.

The Pennsylvania State police got involved. The guy in the Ford told the police I had no lights on. I told the police "I am a young guy with a nice car. Do you think I would drive a 3:30 AM without lights?" The police charged him for driving a car with his view blocked by too many papers in the car.

Back I went to Baker Chevrolet to get another 66. This time, due to insurance problems, I had to get a full size automatic. So, I got a 66 Caprice with a 396 and Strato Bucket seats and a Multiplex Stereo unit that when you hit a stereo station the little bow tie would light up Green.

Fast forward to 2000. A lot of folks know that I still have the 70 SS 454 M-22 that I ordered new. Yes, it's a trailer Queen. All of my life I have had cars, but never show cars. The show car arena is neat, but I have to have a driver. After a few years of showing the El Camino, I did an inventory of the 70 stuff that was in my possession. I said to myself, I think I have enough parts to build another ride. I decided on a wagon because over the years, playing in a band, I have had 6-8 wagons. Why not a big block sleeper? That would be E-Z. I decided to build a one of a kind with extreme detail, a factory looking SS wagon. I did a little research on the exterior; I wanted it to have the look of an SS Coupe. The front end was no problem. On the rear-end, I decided I would use the SS El Camino styling. The sides of a SS Coupe would have little or no trim. I wanted the factory look of the coupe. Coupes had trim only on the wheels, wheelhouses, gutter and SS badges. There were no rocker trim-body moldings.

Now I had a plan, and needed to find a wagon. I found a 1971 in Tennessee. Chuck Hanson checked it out and said "It isn't that bad". I went and picked it up. WOW. It had Power Brakes and Factory Air.



I brought it home. It was the most disgusting looking faded metallic green you ever saw. I stripped it down, and gave the front end to a friend of mine for parts. Now it was time to get the suspension and driveline together. After cleaning and painting the firewall, cleaning and replacing bad parts on the front end, adding new brake parts, calipers, pads and rotors, I removed all the doors, the sweep dash and did some floor work.

Installed the driveline. I have a 325-396 from a 67 Camaro, a MZ code engine. Now I went into my treasure chest of date-coded 70 parts. The front cross member engine mounts were installed. Bolted a 700R4 to the 396 and set it in the wagon. The rear cross member had to be moved back. I was able to use factory holes in the frame and bolt it in. Note! There are two metric bolts in the wagon; they are the two bolts that go into the transmission housing. They are painted "Pink". The Drive shaft was shortened about 2" and bolted in.

I wanted to use a column shifter to keep it simple. I took the shifter arm from the 350-T and bolted it on the 700R transmission and attached the stock shifter rods. I had to put a 1/8" dimple in the floor so the shifter would go down to 1st gear in the 700R. The stock original 350 cooler lines bolt right up. Inside I had to adjust the string so the needle was centered in the indicator. Driveline is done!!!!!!!!!!



Now it was time to mock up the front-end sheet metal to make sure I have everything. I started with a 70 El Camino big block radiator core support. Hung everything and dug up all the little brackets and stuff to complete the front end. The 1971 inner fenders wells were modified for 70 parking lights and turn signals. I made two road trips to the body shop, one trip for the wagon body, the next trip for doors and hood. I used my old original front fenders from my

1970 parts collection along with other assorted parts.

I asked Chuck what would be a good color? He said paint it red. So I went with 2002 Chevy "Victory Red" Why? E-Z color to get, non-metallic E-Z to match if needed. I told the body shop I was building a driver and not go overboard on bodywork. They used El Camino patch panels for rear quarters and filled the holes on the front fenders where it had said Custom El Camino.

While the wagon was turning red at the body shop, I got other parts ready. I



dug out an old under hood wiring harness from my black Camino. I had to make some needed repairs. Next the under dash harness from the El Camino. Now all wiring was ready to go.

Time for another road trip to my secret junkyard to get more parts. Found a 71 four-door with hidden wipers, four real nice black door panels, and other assorted stuff I needed. Back home I started cleaning parts

that would go on the wagon. The SS 1970 Dash from the El Camino was broken and had some cracks.

Being an ex-tool and die maker I started work to fabricate parts to rebuild the 70 dash. NOTE if you see the wagon or pictures of it, to the left and right of the radio you will see two gauges-Water and Oil. I drilled these when the dash was in the El Camino, in June of 1970. That is why it is not in the Camino today. I cleaned and painted the dash and a lady that works with my wife did the silver felt tip pen detail.



I had a spare green A/C control, got an AM/FM radio that was broken. AM radios have a short brass shaft volume control FM's are about 4" longer and are impossible to find. So I got a blue 71 am radio and removed the volume control then routed out the front of the 70 FM to get the am control to fit in the housing. I soldered on some wires and now had a good working AM/FM green radio. More stuff to get ready before the wagon's return home. I found a set of

"A" body bucket seats at a swap meet. They have the two-post headrest.

The wagon is finally home. Now lets start to bolt things together. All the sheet metal is together. Standard playing around to get it all lined up. Now using up more of my date-coded parts. A complete set of 70 OEM A/C brackets and 70





Hoses.--3947772 fan -Eaton clutch and 811 water pump--OEM BB fan shroud--71 4 core Caddy Radiator--Top Plate 70 BB with welded on tab on corner--70 OEM air cleaner base and original chrome lid with the black AC Delco writing on the inside of chrome lid.70 gold cad. water valve.

Now the wagon is ready to run, Lets fire the puppy up and go for a ride. Now the NIGHTMARE – I used a dummy

distributor to pre-oil the engine to 60 lbs. of pressure but had no oil at the rockers, drained the fresh oil and fill with ATF, still no oil to rockers, drain ATF fill with kerosene. STILL no oil to rockers. Pull the [D@m](#) engine out and start searching for the problem. 60 Lbs on gauge no oil to rockers what is your guess on the problem????????????? Bottom end has oil -- no oil on top -- Found the problem. The oil filter bypass has a spring and a little round piece of fiber type material about 3/8" Diameter and 3/32" thick. It is held in place by 4 flat punch hits. It came out and went up into an oil galley and blocked the oil from going to the top of the engine. Who ever had this happen to an engine? Put the engine



back in and let's go for a ride. Engine runs fine, no leaks, every thing is beautiful. Well not quite! The transmission is not shifting correct, then no 3rd and it will not stay in O.D. I got home and called the transmission shop. He asked if I had the TV cable attached to the throttle I said I thought it was the kick down cable. He stated you just made a \$900.00 mistake.

New transmission went into the wagon, got the TV cable measurements from an other GM unit. The TV cable on the intake has the old kick down bracket from the 350-T same size square hole. Now all systems are GO. The wagon runs fine and is a lot of fun. Now it is time to get the A/C working. I bolted on some new parts and used 134, did all the items to prep for charging from r12 to 134 including the so-called conversion, drained the condenser and pump, added 134 oil, vacuumed down the system and charged with 134. I could not get power to A/C. Turns out 70s have a different A/C harness than 71s. So now after the car is built and running I pulled the dash and

install the old 70 El Camino A/C harness. 1971s have a relay under dash that engages the compressor for a few seconds to help stop the engine diesel syndrome.

The wagon is rolling under its own power, But to make the fake complete we need more detail – I took a console from an S-10 and fabricated some brackets. Now the SS has another detail. Gathered up some 69-70 SS wheels, glass beaded them and did a three tone paint job. Now the 1970 trim rings and centers were good to go. Then mounted and balanced a set of white letter radials. The wagon came equipped with one horn; I dug up a harness for dual horns and ZAP, now it has two tooters, not hooters. New carpet front and back. What to do with the rear load area? Carpet would look good ----- Wal-Mart black indoor-outdoor carpet. What next? Polished most of the stainless, installed the hidden wipers, installed the little brackets to hold the left side plug wires (only on A/C cars). To feed the HEI, I went from the fuse box to the distributor under the dash and installed an inline on/off switch. If you look behind the distributor, you will see a big rubber plug about 1/2" diameter. This plug is hollow and holds the firewall insert. I cut the tip off and now I have a rubber-insulated tube to run my wire for the HEI. Just another wire you do not see.



When you trim the tailgate like an SS, you must use two top trim pieces. El Caminos have a long bottom and a short top trim piece. In order for the tailgate to open like a door, I use the two short trim pieces and offset them to the right. This allowed them to clear the body on the left side when you open the door. While doing my Christmas Shopping at a junkyard, I spotted a transmission cooler. It cost \$5.00 and came with all the metal brackets and hard

lines, too. I mounted it on the left side of radiator.

Interested in some Trivia --- Why did I order a SS 454 El Camino. Well in 1969, I still had my 66 396 and had won a 69 Camaro from Sunoco. Being the genius I was (?), I traded my free Camaro and my 66-396 for a 1969 El Dorado. The sticker price was \$8311.00 and I gave them money to boot. DO NOT say it! After 6 months of driving this barge, I wanted a 454. All my friends had

SS 2-Doors, so I went for the El Camino. I ordered an LS6 with the F-41. I could not get an LS6 with air and F-41. It was NOT an option for El Caminos.

I had been driving the wagon for 2-3 years when my ego took over; I wanted both of my cars 454s. So I build a 454 with TRW pistons, Eagle rods. Hindsight says I should have purchased a crate 454 for what it cost to build this 454. It is a fun car to drive and the looks you get going down the interstate are priceless.

One more tid-bit. When my ego took over and I built a 454 for the wagon to keep up with detailing, I used a LS5 fuel pump. Then I got a 6" piece of brake line and soldered the end shut. Now to really confuse people, I attached the piece of brake line to the vent line on the fuel pump and shoved the 6" line back in the frame. Now it has TWO lines like a real LS5. On the back of the wagon inside the frame rail, I built a bracket to hold a metal fuel filter with hoses on each end. This allows good filtering and easy access.



Once I started driving the wagon, I found the handling was very bad. At high speeds, it wandered all over. I added 1 1/4" sway bar, gas shocks, boxed rear lower control arms, a sway bar, and Delco air shocks in the back. Now the ride is excellent, cornering is even better. This wagon has been a work in progress and just plain FUN. When I installed the 454, I bought a 12-bolt to ratchet up the fake even more. For the most part it has a lot of SS items. Other than

the pressed-on rag joint, it is close to a real SS. I made a COPO front plate

- C hevelle
- O owners
- P providing
- O riginals

P.S. When the wagon is at a show or cruise, I do not pretend. I tell people it's a 71 Nomad and not a 70 SS. This is a home-built driver. In fact at Chevellabration 2 years ago guys were asking Chuck, "Why is that 70 wagon in with the 71s?" He explained it is a 71 and then they would look it over good and tell me it's a 70. LOL. My only way out is to say look at the VIN.

Additional pictures can be seen at:

[http://www.leverfamilysite.com/Bob\\_Inhofs\\_Car.htm](http://www.leverfamilysite.com/Bob_Inhofs_Car.htm)