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(1) The classic '67 Camaro of Dan and Pegge Chaplin looks even better with the lowered suspension and Hotchkis handling improvements. Low profile BF Goodrich tires and Billet Specialties wheels are a nice touch.



Dan & Pegge  
Chaplin's  
1967  
Camaro  
Convertible

STORY & PHOTOS BY DAN KAHN

# LONG TERM INVESTMENT

**THERE'S AN OLD ADAGE THAT STATES,** "How do you make a small fortune collecting cars? Start with a large fortune." While collecting classic Detroit iron for profit is never a good idea, thousands of members of the "baby boomer" generation have recently discovered the joys of owning and driving their high school dream cars. Such is the case for St. Charles, Miss. residents Dan and Pegge Chaplin.

Back in 2002, Dan decided it was finally time to start looking for a sports car, preferably a new or slightly used C5 Corvette. One sunny Saturday in June, he decided to swing by a classic car showroom on his way to the Chevy dealership, just in case they had any new Corvettes on the lot. There weren't, but there was a shiny red 1967 Camaro convertible on a turntable, spinning round and round and calling Dan's name. It was love at first sight, and he quickly asked for a closer look. After feeling the car's soft vinyl and hearing the muscular burble of a classic V-8 trumpeting through dual exhaust, he had to have it.

Dan decided that buying an old Camaro could potentially be a solid investment, since it was less money than a new Corvette and would be cheaper to insure and maintain than a new car. We all know where the story is going from here. After a quick call home to wife Pegge, who thought he was crazy for wanting an old car but supportive nonetheless, Dan emptied out a shrinking 401K account and reinvested his hard-earned cash in his high school dream car.

At first the Chaplins took their new ride to local cruise nights and occasional car shows. After a few months of cruising and making friends, they quickly grew to love the camaraderie and activities associated

with the car show scene and started traveling to shows a bit further away, even entering the Camaro in larger national events. Then the bug to start making improvements took hold.

### DIGGING IN

The first big change was a heart transplant, with the Camaro receiving a new GM Performance Parts 330hp 350 crate engine. The stock GM mill didn't make enough power for Dan and wasn't pretty enough for Pegge, so he had it completely polished and chromed, and added a bevy of performance parts to the mix as well. A Comp Cams 270 Magnum Hydraulic camshaft adds a little thump to the exhaust note, which is channeled through chrome plated Hedman headers and Jet Hot coated Flowmaster American Thunder exhaust capped with stainless steel exhaust tips. An Edelbrock Endurashine water pump and intake manifold add further sparkle and performance to the package, as does a chrome plated Holley 650 double pumper. MSD ignition lights the fire and a polished Be Cool radiator keeps temperature under control on steamy Missouri summer days.

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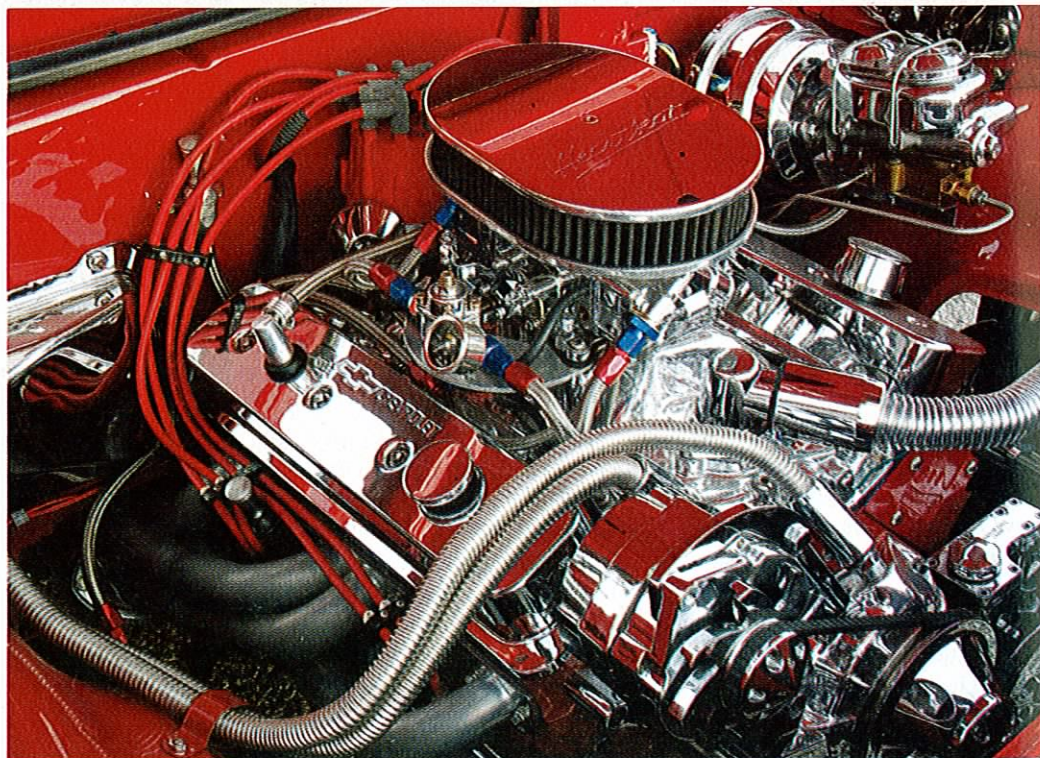


(2) Is there anything prettier than a '67 Camaro with the top down?

With the engine out of the car, the Chaplins decided to replace the tired old Powerglide with a new TH350 automatic, fortified with a B&M Shift Kit and B&M 2,400-rpm high-stall torque converter. The only other modifications made at the time were a new set of ProCar by Scat sport bucket seats, which were much more comfortable and supportive than the stock Camaro pieces, but still looked period-correct in the otherwise stock interior. However, it didn't stay stock for long.

In 2004, Dan and Pegge had become completely hooked on the car show scene, and decided to totally disassemble the car and bring it up to their exacting standards. After removing the drivetrain and interior, the car was delivered to JB Auto Body in St. Charles, where it was stripped down to bare metal for a complete repaint. JB smoothed the firewall, and ordered a new hood, core support, inner fenders, bumpers, front and rear spoilers, and grille from Goodmark Industries. After the body was straightened out it was slathered in DuPont Victory Red—a late model GM color—with several coats of two-stage clear for the extra wet look.

After the car left the body shop, it was delivered to Auto Tailors for a new top and interior, which includes all-new hardware and custom seat covers



(3) The 330hp, 350-cid GM crate engine has been enhanced with a host of high performance goodies including a COMP Cams 270 Magnum hydraulic camshaft, Holley 650-cfm carb and Hedman headers. In case you hadn't noticed, there's lots of non-original chrome in there as well.



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embroidered with the iconic Super Sport logo. Finally Old Dog's Street Rods in Maryland Heights, Miss., took delivery of the Camaro for final assembly and finishing touches. The Old Dog crew installed a new Painless 18-circuit wiring harness, as well as new AutoMeter gauges that fill the stock dash holes, a Lokar billet shifter, and a slick center console pirated from a 1998 Camaro that looks like it was made for the vintage drop top.

With the cosmetics out of the way, the drivetrain was reinstalled in the freshly detailed body color engine bay, along with a new 10-bolt rear end that was painted and detailed to perfection. Stainless Steel Brakes two- and four-piston binders were added to all four corners for added stopping power. As a finishing touch, Billet Specialties "Rebel" wheels were added, measuring 17-inch x 7-inch in front and 18-inch x 8-inch in the rear. BF Goodrich G-Force KDA rubber was utilized on all four corners.

#### HANDLING THE CURVES

Last but not least, the car was delivered to Hotchkis Performance in Santa Fe Springs, Calif., for a complete suspension rebuild. The car already sported a set of Hotchkis sport springs and sway bars, which gave it a killer stance, but after meeting company founder John Hotchkis on the Hot Rod Power Tour, Dan and Pegge decided to take advantage of the new Hotchkis installation center and have a full compliment of F-Body suspension added to their ragtop.

The Hotchkis tech crew fortified the flexible Camaro platform with sub frame connectors and a laser cut and tig-welded ChassisMax X-brace, the latest in F-body chassis stiffening technology from Hotchkis. The tired old A-arms were discarded in favor of new adjustable tubular upper and lower A-arms. To achieve the perfect balance of ride and handling, Hotchkis added 2-inch drop coil springs in front and 1.5-inch drop leaf springs in the rear, along with specially tuned Bilstein shocks. Finally a set of Hotchkis sway bars and polyurethane bushings were added to control body roll. The end result is a car that looks great, handles like the modern sports car Dan always wanted, and rides like a dream.

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(4) The Billet Specialties "Rebel" wheels measure 17-inch x 7-inch in front and 18-inch x 8-inch in the rear. BF Goodrich G-Force KDA rubber was utilized on all four corners.

(5) The interior of the Camaro received a host of upgrades including most noticeably the ProCar by Scat sport bucket seats. They are much more comfortable and supportive than the factory seating system.



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"This is the **best** investment we have ever made," Camaro owner, Dan Chaplin

The Hotchkis crew liked Dan and Pegge's Camaro so much they featured the car in their booth at the 2006 SEMA show. Other honors include several trophies from local car shows and "Best Engine" and "Photographer's Choice" selections at the 2006 Street Machine Nationals.

So after five years, thousands of hours of work, and untold fortunes spent on the little red Camaro, do the Chaplins still consider it a wise 401K replacement? "This is the best investment we have ever made," Dan says. "There is no price tag you can put on the friendships, fun, and excitement this car as given us. We have a great time planning our winter projects in preparation for the next spring car show, and we have a blast every time we go for a drive and get a thumbs-up. It gives me a taste of youth, since nobody I knew could afford a car like this in the '60s. There is nothing more fun my wife and I could do together than own this car. We love it." And that, folks, is the sign of a truly valuable investment. **D**



(6) Upgrades to the interior include a new Painless 18-circuit wiring harness, AutoMeter gauges, a Lokar billet shifter and a slick center console pirated from a 1998 Camaro.

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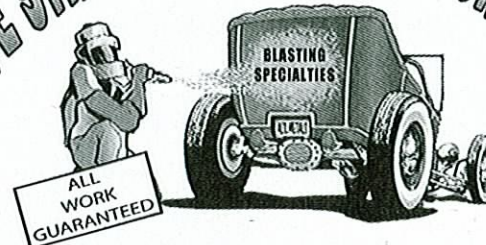
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