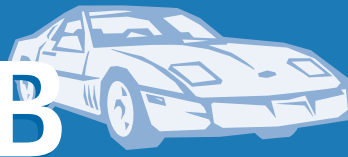




The CAR CLUB



BY **EVERETT BENNETT**

Assistant Inspector, Public Works/ Contract Administration

Born in Detroit

I'm not an avid watcher of television. I have been known to catch an episode of *American Pickers* or *Storage Wars* from time to time, but that's about it. In between those moments of so-called reality television, I've seen a commercial that I found rather exciting not just because it is on the subject of cars but because of its message. What I like about the Chrysler commercials is the message of revival they project. An American city – Detroit – that was once deemed the Paris of the West and which had changed the car industry forever, now had more crime and empty buildings than anywhere else on American soil. I see in those commercials – “Imported From Detroit” – a reminder of the American Dream. Whether it is trying to achieve it for the first time, or to get it back, Detroit will prevail. Detroit will be high and mighty once again and, with the car industry trickling back to Michigan, I can't wait to see what happens the second time around. Let's leave car building to those who know it best. Say hello to Motor City.

Harvey Nakamoto, a retired Sr. Inspector, Building and Safety, with 35 years of City service, has long been a fan of hot rods. He has had his fair share of dirt bikes, Baja bugs and Hallet boats, but what he wanted for his retirement days was something that was born in the design rooms of Michigan – the 1962 Chevrolet Impala. His quest led him to a Long Beach garage where he found a running Impala. That was a little more than nine years ago. Before he even got his new family member home, he had already constructed the crew that he would come to depend on to bring this dream to reality.

The first stop was to his friend Babe's shop. Babe is a man who builds award winning show cars. The car was stripped of everything, including all layers of primer and paint. Babe spent months making sure the body was just perfect. Once he was happy, the Impala was sent to George Gray in Van Nuys for one of his well-known paint jobs. After months and days of the Impala being sanded and prepped, it had final-



ly entered the spray booth where George does all his magic. What emerged a day later was an absolutely perfect '62 Impala Super Sport.

While the car was receiving its new outer glory in Van Nuys, Babe had been prepping the 350-cubic-inch ZZ4 crate motor for its new home between the frame rails. Harvey's friend, Sam Nakata, had rebuilt the 700 R4 transmission that would back the motor and ensure proper shifting. The Impala made its way back to Babe's lair, where everything was assembled. A Dynamax exhaust was bolted to the powerful ZZ4 motor so it would sound and breathe correctly. Before the project could go any further, the builders agreed that Harvey could not be seen in a car that sat so high, so two-inch dropped spindles were installed in front, and the rear received two-inch drop springs. To make sure Harvey can stop in L.A. traffic, a disc brake conversion was installed in front. Harvey knew he could not run the stock wheels on this masterpiece, so a set of 17-inch American Racing wheels wrapped in 235/50 series Goodyear tires came into the picture. The

3:73 gears in the rear end assure that this hunk of American steel can get out of the way of big rigs, while also keeping the RPMs low at highway speeds.

A long time later, the car made the trek to Albert Lara in North Hollywood. Albert is a master upholsterer who had the sewing machines running when the car arrived. The seats were wrapped in black leather with charcoal gray inserts while the floor was covered in black carpet. The dash received a set of Stewart Warner gauges and a reproduction steering wheel. Between the seats sits a 1962 Pontiac Grand Prix console that was sitting in the back of Albert's shop. After working out final touches, including the install of a Vintage Air conditioner unit, Harvey was finally ready to enjoy his new toy.

If the Impala isn't in the garage Harvey had specially built for the car or on any given road in Southern California, perhaps it is on its way back to Motor City to pay homage to the designers and builders that make this one of the most sought-after models in automotive history.



Send in a photo of you and your car, and we might publish it!

Send us your information, too – name, title and City department, a phone number (we won't print it) and a paragraph or two about why you love your car, what kind of car and year it is, and maybe some fun details of how you got it, how you restored it, etc. Send it all to: talkback@cityemployeesclub.com

PROUD OF
YOUR WHEELS?
SEND IN
A PHOTO!

THIS MONTH AT THE

Griffith Observatory

Jan. 28:

Public Star Party

This event gives a chance for the whole family to look at the sun, moon, visible planets, and other objects, to try out telescopes, and to chat with astronomers.

TIME: 2 – 9:45 p.m.

COST: Free!

Information:

www.griffithobservatory.org/pstarparties.html

