

Car Enthusiast Finds Big Red in Canada's Maritime Provinces

By Joe Luber

I'm a car enthusiast and also no stranger to the 1975 Chevrolet Caprice Classic convertible. I bought a used one in 1988 and sold it five years later after the rust monster made a serious attack on it. Most mid-1970s Chevrolets had rust problems, which explains their relative rarity today.

In July 2006, my wife Sharon and I were visiting friends in Halifax, Nova Scotia when our host, also a car enthusiast, told me about a pristine 1975 Chevrolet Caprice Classic convertible that was only 350 miles away in New Brunswick. For car enthusiasts, 350 miles isn't very far. The next day, with both wives out sightseeing and shopping, my friend Gary and I rented a car and drove to St. John, New Brunswick to see the car. I waited in the driveway as the Chevy's owner opened the garage to reveal a beautiful red convertible with a white top and interior. "Sold," I exclaimed. It was almost a twin to my previous navy blue '75 Caprice convertible, but in like-new condition without a speck of rust. The car had been rustproofed by Ziebart.

Gary and I drove back to Halifax where I broke the news to Sharon that we were the proud owners of a 1975 Chevrolet Caprice Classic convertible. I named Big Red.

We returned home to Potomac, Maryland, and waited for Intercity Lines to deliver our new old-car. Cross-border car transactions are always a headache, but eventually all of the bureaucratic paperwork was completed. On July 29th, the 18-wheel rig with an enclosed car carrier pulled up in front of our home and unloaded Big Red. Soon, my beautiful red convertible became the star of the neighborhood.

Documentation indicates that the vehicle sold new for a base price of \$5,113, with extras totaling \$998, and a destination charge of \$212; bringing the total sticker price to \$6,323. 1975 was the last year for full-size Chevrolet

convertibles – there were 8,349 built.

Big Red's pristine condition is the result of its unusual history. The original dealer, McDonald Chevrolet & Oldsmobile in Halifax, kept the car for approximately twenty-three years in their showroom, using it only occasionally as a parade car. Built in St. Louis, Missouri, it was one of 420 shipped to Canada (without air conditioning). Another clue that it was destined for Canada is the bi-lingual decal on the rear bumper by the gasoline cap with two warnings: UNLEADED FUEL ONLY in English, followed by the French ESSENCE SANS PLOMB SEULEMENT.



Big Red posing for another photo in the Potomac neighborhood.

In 1998 the car went to MotorMart, a dealer in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, who kept it for two years, then sold it to a developer in Halifax. Then in 2004 the car was sold to the last Canadian owner in St. John.

MotorMart repainted Big Red the original color due to some paint cracking issues (per a formal appraisal report written in April 2000). The shop did a remarkable job with even the inside of the trunk lid finished, as well as every exterior body panel. There is no visible over spray indicating that all moldings, lights, etc., were removed.

The 400 cubic inch V-8 is equipped with a 4-barrel carburetor. It develops only 175 horsepower due to the era's emission controls.

In 1975, the United States Government mandated emission restrictions and General Motors introduced the

groundbreaking catalytic converter technology on its vehicles. During the era when Big Red was new, the government was also encouraging economy and safety, so the numbers on the speedometer only go 100 mph. The car has a fuel economy gauge built into the dash.

When I purchased Big Red, the odometer showed only 17,060 miles, which is documented by Canadian inspection receipts. Since 2006, I've added another 1,450 miles using the car only for local shows in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, where it has won numerous awards.

There is a sense of luxury and spaciousness when sitting behind the large steering wheel because the car is 18 feet 7 inches long and 6 feet 6 inches wide. It's the last of the big ones! The twin exterior remote mirrors help when parallel parking. The car is about 2 ½ feet wider than it is tall, which is one reason that I never drive it into downtown Washington, DC. Today's parking spaces don't accommodate full-size 1975 Chevrolets! Opening the trunk lid exposes a gargantuan space (15.9 cubic feet) for luggage and a full-size spare tire, plus tire changing tools.

Since owning the car, I've enjoyed searching the Internet for NOS parts to replace aftermarket parts that had been used during the car's thirty-six year life. Some of the chrome had begun to deteriorate, so I removed the bumpers and had them re-chromed. The engine was cleaned and repainted Chevrolet Orange and the exhaust manifolds were media blasted and refinished. Since I want to keep the car all GM, the brake system was completely overhauled using NOS brake cylinders, hoses, brake pads and brake shoes.

In 2009 Big Red won an AACA First Junior at Gettysburg, PA and a Senior award at Hershey, PA.

I have no intention of ever parting with Big Red. While it's not a muscle car, it's certainly a great example of the big cars that traveled the roads of that era.

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AACA Eastern National Spring Meet – May 19th to 21st
Arts in the Park Car Show – May 21st & 22nd
B & O Railroad Museum Antique Car Show – June 26th

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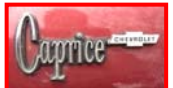
Grand Slam Flea Market
Streetcar Museum Revisited
Bylaws Revisions
April Showers Bring May Flowers
REO History
Jeff Bridges at the Tucker Museum
Activities for Youth Members
Big Red Found in the Maritimes

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Joe Lubber's 1975 Chevrolet Caprice Classic convertible. Read about this car on page 13.