

'57 FORDS

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In 1957, Ford out sold Chevrolet. But, the tide would later turn. Now the '57 Chevys are more popular than the '57 Fords. In fact today you can buy everything you need to build a '57 Chevy from the ground up, if you can afford it. However, in our area you rarely see a '57 Ford. Even though I do own a '57 Chevy I find it refreshing to see a nice '57 Ford. I suppose it's because I've owned a few of the '57 Fords, and still have fond memories of those days.

My first '57 Ford was a black, Custom 300, 2-dr sedan that I bought in 1962. The Custom 300 weighed less than the Fairlane models of that year, and its 116 inch wheel base was two inches shorter than the other Ford models of that year. My Ford had the 292 C.I V8 engine that I built up a little, and had a stick shift or what some call, three on the tree. That old Ford could hold its own!



Where I worked, a fellow worker had a '60 Chevy BelAir with the 283 V8 engine, and wanted to race my Ford. I'd been drag racing the Ford on a drag strip, but decided to make an exception with this guy. When I raced my fellow worker I laid off of the Ford. This was a mistake, as this only egged the fellow worker to put more money in his '60 Chevy. He had the cam changed, and then wanted another go at racing. Next, he added more carburetion, and dual exhaust. Each time I was still just beating him by a fender.

By now, both cars were starting to get a reputation as being fairly quick. One day we both left our cars at a local garage to have them washed, after which they would deliver the cars to us where we worked. However, on the way out to the plant, these guys decided to go ahead and drag race our cars for themselves.

Somehow my '57 Ford Custom got loose, and the driver ended up putting it into a tree sideways. When the garage owner came to tell me what had happened, he said that he'd make it up to me. He would pay for a rental car while my car was in the body shop being repaired. That's when I decided to have the '57 Ford customized. So I had the hood, and trunk shaved. Next, I tricked out the taillights. I replaced the stock lens with some lens I made out of dark red sheets of plexiglass, and then put a diamond shape mesh behind the lens. I thought the taillights looked pretty cool after dark. I ended up trading the '57 Ford Custom to someone I'd gone to school with.

A few years later, I bought another '57 Ford. This was a red and white Fairlane hardtop that had no engine. I would build another 292 C.I. V8, only this time I got a little carried away with the engine build. I had the engine bored, and had the heads milled. Next, was a 3/4 cam and dome racing pistons. When I first started the engine it was making a clinking sound. After removing the heads again, I soon found the problem. The dome pistons were hitting the heads. All it took to fix that problem was doubling up two sets of head gaskets! I also changed the rear end to have stronger axles and a lower gear for drag racing.

When finished, I decided to sell my work car, which was a 1961 Corvair coupe. I advertised the coupe in our local newspaper. But, when a young man came to look at the Corvair he fell in love with the '57 Ford Fairlane hard top. I told him it was not for sale, and it was not built for the street. That even made him want it more. He told me to add up all my receipts, plus labor, and he would pay whatever I came up with. Needless to say I never even got to break in the engine, let alone race it!