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June 2007



"MR. CHEVROLET" DICK HARRELL

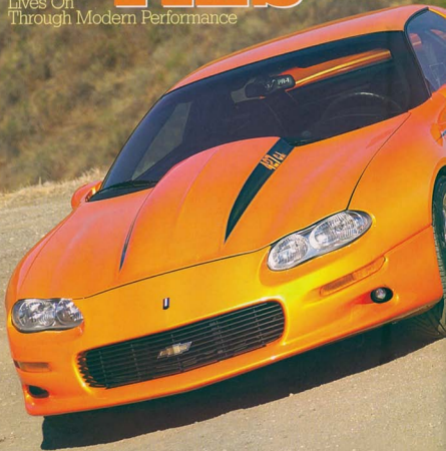
The Legend Lives On With This
LS6 427 Dick Harrell Camaro

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There's nothing quite like the love of a daughter for her father, and few relationships underline this point more than Valerie Harrell's support for her dad, Dick Harrell, who was one of the great racers of his time. While Harrell passed on back in 1971, the love of his life has been bringing attention to his efforts ever since.



As is often the case, there have been individuals who have done their best to unravel the history that Harrell was responsible for creating throughout his racing career, including some who have actually tried to secure rights to his very name. Thankfully, Valerie has spent a great deal of her life going to whatever lengths necessary to maintain a bond that existed from the day Valerie's daddy brought her into this world.

Back then, Harrell had not yet established his reputation as the original "Mr. Chevrolet," nor had he begun a string of relationships that brought his passion and expertise to a succession of special vehicles that today command six-figure prices. And then there's the adoration of millions of people who recall Harrell's place in racing history, not to mention his impact on automotive history. From the day he first ventured into motor sports, Harrell was all about making the most of an opportunity, as well as the vehicles that made him famous.

Having performed well in the amateur drag racing ranks, he dominated 90 percent of the races in which he competed, including wins in every race in a three-state area in 1961. Harrell moved into the pro ranks the following year. A quick review of history that year underlines the fact that he was just as competitive right off the trailer. Harrell had an impact on his counterparts that year with one win after another.

While Chevrolet provided sponsorship for a variety of drivers by 1963—an effort that allowed Harrell to bring plenty of attention to the company through his efforts—there was change in the wind. Like his competitors who had traded their full-sized cars for smaller models,

Harrell began running a 427-powered Chevelle in 1964, and as before, he kept his fellow racers at bay with consistent performances. The following year, Chevrolet pulled out of racing, and as a result just about everyone traded in their Bow Ties for Pentastars and Blue Orbs; that is, everyone but Harrell. Retaining all of his confidence in the mark, he continued to race Chevrolets despite the lack of funding that his decision ensured. Nevertheless, Harrell underlined his "Mr. Chevrolet" nickname more than ever, partly because he did it alone and also because he won a number of events based solely upon his diligence and tenacity. If you haven't figured it out by now, he earned his nickname and his stripes for staying with Chevy all along to keep the legend alive.

Fortunately, more than a few people noticed Harrell's unflinching resolve, including the crew at Nickey Chevrolet in Chicago, Illinois. Within a short time, they teamed with Harrell to build some of the most historic (not to mention quick) street cars of all time. Applying the lessons he learned at racetracks throughout the nation, Harrell and the development team from Nickey Chevrolet began to assemble a very limited number of highly specialized Camaros and other models fitted with big blocks and other hardware needed to plant that kind of power in the pavement. Needless to say, these cars performed as advertised, and while they accomplished their primary intent—drawing customers into the showroom to purchase other factory models—they also earned winning reputations.

With his previous endeavor up to speed, Harrell moved on to another his-

Coated in a lustreous blend of butterscotch pearl and sapphire paint and accented with the Dick Harrell stripe package and other special highlights across its heavily modified interior, this Dick Harrell Edition Camaro stands out in a crowd even before the engine fires.



toric dealership in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, known as Yenko Chevrolet, where he again worked his magic in transforming popular Chevs into frightening rides. Fitted with either small blocks or bigger blocks, these cars set their own history in motion, which was fine at the time. Then as before, Harrell grew restless and soon brought his understanding of all things mechanical to Fred Gibb Chevrolet in LaHarpe, Illinois, where a new series of Chevilles, Novas and Camaros was added to his previous accomplishments.

Not surprisingly, Harrell also lent a

hand developing the all-aluminum ZL-1 427 Chevy big blocks, which were very special engines in Chevy's history that would eventually make their way into racecars of all kinds, including Can-Am cars of the late '60s and early '70s.

Having been named the AHRA's Driver of the Year in 1969 following his successes in the newly developed Funny cars and the Driver of the Decade the following year, Harrell seemed to be headed for even greater prospects. Unfortunately, fate played into the equation as Harrell was killed in a racing accident in 1971.

Despite all of the loss and pain that would follow, daughter Valerie kept her dad's place in history in tact, and her efforts were eventually rewarded when she teamed with her longtime companion, drag racer Dale Pude, in recreating a series of cars that would carry on her dad's heritage. Soon Matt Murphy (770/592-6261), a well-known specialist in building performance cars at GM/C, was contacted to build these cars, and within a short time, this first example was completed for Valerie as a tribute to her father. From there, other examples were built for Vic Edelbrock, Dale



Earnhardt Jr. and other notable enthusiasts, and there are more to come.

While the name alone is reason enough to add one of these cars to any notable collection, it's the styling and performance of the Harrell Camaros that have proven to be equally rewarding aspects of the purchase. All you have to do is review the hardware incorporated into these cars and the way they've been wrapped within the stunning exterior to recognize the family resemblance to Dick Harrell's efforts from the past.

First is the heart and soul of this car, the Roberts Racing LS-series 427 engine

packed with the finest components, starting with the reciprocating hardware. A Callies crankshaft spins Oliver rods fitted with JE 12.5:1 pistons that are up to anything the right foot can create. A special Comp Cams grind applies a 0.612-inch lift at 244 degrees duration at 0.050 inch for the intake and a 0.615-inch lift at 248 degrees duration on the exhaust side. This maximizes the flow from the hand-built intake plenum sporting a special throttle body feeding independent runners fed by proprietary fuel injectors intended for this particular application. Once the ignition system firing Denso

Iridium spark plugs has spent the mixture, a pair of Kooks 1-7/8-inch stepped headers send the leftovers through a chambered exhaust system. Here, too, it's obvious that this isn't just another pair of pipes as the NASCAR-based system utilizes a widely flared, side-exiting exhaust, providing added ground clearance and a sound that tells of the power within. If that's not enough to impress, consider that the exhaust also incorporates an electric cutout to release additional ponies and decibels at the flick of a switch. Other high points include a variety of special components from the hand-



Built by Roberts Racing in Mooresville, North Carolina, this 427ci LS6 Chevy is nothing short of radical, producing 652 hp and 624 lb-ft of torque. Fitted with an impressive array of internal hardware, the external side of this powerplant is equally effective with a custom fuel injection system and manifold created especially for Dick Harrell super cars.

built carbon fiber air box down to a custom Roberts Racing oil pan.

Producing 652 hp and 624 lb-ft of torque, there's little question that this Camaro is truly in keeping with the capability of other Harrell creations of the past. Mated to a T56 fitted with a Z06 Corvette clutch assembly and Hurst Line-Loc shifter, this car is nothing short of amazing at only part throttle; we can only hope to experience the thrill of a pedal-to-the-metal blast.

To keep all of this power in check, the chassis has gone through its own mild transformation, and this was handled by the talented crew at GMMG as well, who worked closely with Pakke to maximize the driving experience. A Strange 12-bolt rear axle assembly replaces the original and brings with it a 4.11:1 ratio and Positraction. Managed by a pair of Eibach springs and Koni shocks, the ride height has been lowered about 2 inches when compared to original cars. In front, a pair of adjustable Koni drag shocks have been joined with Eibach coils while powerful Z06 Corvette calipers and rotors

ensure the speed reductions needed to keep this car in check; Z06 rear brakes have also been utilized. The final connection between the power and pavement comes by way of Fikse 18x12-inch rims with Michelin Pilot 335/30ZR18s in back and similarly sized 18x11s wrapped in sticky 295/35ZR18s in front.

Needless to say, with that kind of traction stuffed in the wheel wells, body modifications were a necessity, so GM's wide-body kit was fitted to provide necessary room beneath the beautifully sculptured fender flares. Like the hood, all of the other points of interest, including the front and rear spoilers and the valance, were specially created from those made for the Penske/Donahue Woodward Dream Cruise Camaro, built by General Motors with their blessings for these Dick Harrell Edition super cars.

Once all of the bodywork was blended into the surroundings, painting guru Bill Carter prepped the body before applying butterscotch pearl and tangerine coatings of RM Diamond paint. Add the Dick Harrell stripe package with carbon

fiber-style stripes on the hood and side stripe, the painted "Mr. Chevrolet" insignia, polished stainless "CAMARO" letters and a custom gold Bow Tie emblem in the grille, and there's no missing this amazing machine.

While most of this beauty is unseen from the interior, there are plenty of other unique touches that embrace the historic aspects of Dick Harrell and his place in automotive history. Add a set of special Dick Harrell Edition silver-faced gauges, doorills, headrests, floor mats, key fob, car cover emblazoned with the Dick Harrell logo and specially numbered dash plaques, and there's no question that you're sitting in a place of honor.

Considering all of the achievements that have come before and the challenges of maintaining the history of one of drag racing's more notable figures, it's nice to know that the love between a daughter and her father has overcome adversity and led to the creation of specialized vehicles that will make history of their own. **CR**