

Remembering the Life of Bob Wilcox



Many of us are lucky in life to meet that one great friend that impacts our lives, and actually stays in our lives over the long run. For me, one of those great friends is Bob Wilcox.

Our mutual interest in Chevelles was the common thread that brought us together. Back in 1984,

Don Ayers placed an ad in *The Chevelle Report*, the monthly publication of the now defunct National Chevelle Owners Association. Within a few weeks, about eight of us agreed to meet at Don's home in Middle River, MD. I can not remember everyone's name in attendance, but I do remember Don, Len Melpignano, Bob, and I met at Don's place.

We discussed quite a lot that night about forming the Maryland Chevelle Club, various upcoming activities, and attending an upcoming NCOA Chevelle Showdown. Everyone "assumed" various duties, of which Don became the first MCC President. Bob, being the visionary he was, laid a path on which we would take the MCC to become the official Chevelle Club of Maryland.

Although the MCC did not get off the ground on that first attempt, we did attend many local and regional car shows as a group. I must admit that Bob was the heart of the fun and camaraderie we had, whether it was bench racing or trying to keep up with him on the highways. He quite frequently drove substantially above the speed limit when driving on extended road trips to various shows. On a couple of occasions, he would blow by us and disappear many miles down the highway, only for us to catch up and pass him along the highway while a police officer was ticketing him.

Once we arrived at a show venue, I was amazed at just how many people Bob knew. It was akin to hanging out with a rock star, or a Chevelle Celebrity. But I quickly learned why, as Bob had a heart of gold and always lended a helping hand, no matter what was needed. Even I was the recipient of his extreme generosity in years to come, but I will save that for later.

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In 1986, it was my turn to post an ad in the Chevelle Report to call all those interested together to form the MCC again. Many of the previous enthusiasts met once again, including Bob. This time, Bob laid down the law and demanded we do not let the MCC die again. I don't remember how voting was cast this time, as Don Ayers was elected president again, while Bob was elected the defacto MCC Ambassador. And the MCC took off from there and never faltered.

Once the time arrived for Don to step down, the natural replacement was Bob. And in typical Bob form, he picked up where Don left off and honed all aspects of the MCC as perfectly as he could. He had a vision of what the MCC should be and didn't let anything stand in his way. I remember when I was the newsletter editor, we would talk for hours on the phone about the newsletter, but the conversations would always jump track to Chevelles or car shows.



Our road trip began with driving south on I-95 through Maryland, then through DC and Virginia. Once in Petersburg, VA, we jumped on I-85 and headed to North Carolina. Once we crossed into North Carolina, I began to hear an intermittent noise from my engine compartment. It would come and go, but the car was running fine. After a few miles, just outside Henderson, NC, the noise became very loud, forcing me to stop on the side of the interstate. After all of us heard the noise, it was determined I had spun a bearing and there was no use running the engine any longer. However, we had to get the car off the interstate, so we drove down to the next exit, found an Ambassador Inn Hotel and left my Chevelle on the parking lot.

Needless to say, the MCC grew, and so did “the gang” that would caravan to Chevelle Showdown, the All Chevy Show at Win Kelly Chevrolet, Supreme Chevy Sunday at 75-80 Drag-a-way, and our own MCC Show. Many of our current MCC Members joined because Bob insisted on it. He was very good at being insistent!

I enjoyed every one of the shows I attended with Bob, but there is one that stands out above all the rest. The year was 1993 and Chevelle Showdown was held at the Sheraton Greensboro Hotel at Four Seasons in Greensboro, NC. Our MCC caravan was the largest ever, as some cars were trailered, some were driven. However, Bob had left before all of us and arrived in Greensboro many hours before us.



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The engine noise was now VERY loud, and Bob knew exactly what the cause of the noise was, saying a rod bearing had spun.

We loaded up my Chevelle onto Bob's open trailer, secured it, and headed south to Greensboro. Along the way, in typical Bob Wilcox fashion, he got the urge to hit triple digits, and with my Chevelle in tow! I vehemently objected countless times, but Bob wore me down and I gave him the OK to blast down the highway. He assured me his rig was "dialed in" and there would be absolutely no problems. Plus we would arrive in Greensboro quicker.

He was right. We cruised in triple digits for what seemed many miles, an eternity to me. Upon our arrival at Chevelle Showdown, we unloaded the Chevelle and I

proceeded to drive it through tech check with the engine knocking loudly! After spending hours detailing it, I was ready for show competition along with my MCC friends. I don't know how many times I thanked Bob, but I could tell he was very happy that ALL of us were there WITH our Chevelles! His ever present smile was his trademark.

This was probably the most enjoyable Chevelle Showdown we ever experienced as a large group of MCCers. It was as if we were a bunch of high schoolers who escaped the confines of our parental control and took full advantage of our freedoms. There was even a "mischief" night involving a hotel wide battle using shaving cream. Many folks woke up the next morning to find the outside water fountain foaming. During the awards ceremony, I believe just about all of us won car show awards, including myself.

In subsequent years, I have passed through Henderson many times. I've also driven by the Sheraton Greensboro a few times and find myself smiling because of the fond memory of that special weekend. And before my recent move to Arizona, I disposed of many accumulated car show awards to lighten my load, except for a few "special" awards. That "Honorable Mention" I received that weekend proudly hangs in my garage here in Arizona as a happy reminder of my friend Bob and that fun-filled weekend. Without his generosity, that weekend had the potential to be the worst car-event weekend ever for me.



There are many other examples of Bob coming to someone's rescue because of a mechanical failure. He was the quintessential car guy with a heart of gold and our car enthusiast world will dearly miss him and his red '68 SS.

And another state trooper will be the denied pleasure of pulling Bob over and meeting him.