

# Tech Topics



DELUXE GREENBRIER SPARE TIRE COVER originally came in vinyl colors to match interior colors. Looked great when new, but quite rapidly the volatiles in the tire rubber compound turned the colors to a cruddy brown. This was especially true where the cover fit tightly against the rubber. Rather than continue with that situation, the cover was changed to a charcoal color for all deluxe models. It still stained but was less objectionable in appearance. I don't really recall if the other colors were actually used in production vehicles, but I believe they were for at least 1961 models.

THE CARDBOARD PANELS IN THE REAR CORNERS, rearward of the quarter windows had a tendency to buckle and pucker between screw attachments due to humidity. A running change was made in their material and also in the heavy "cardboard" backing of all the side and door trim panels to improve their stability with respect to humidity. This probably happened around 1962 models. The trim panels were made by, as I recall, Mitchell-Bentley Co., up in the western part of Michigan's lower peninsula. M/B was also big (at least back then) with Corvette trim for Chevrolet.

ALL SEAT TRIM was cut and sewn by Chevrolet Indianapolis (Indiana). Otherwise Chevrolet Indianapolis was a sheet metal stamping plant. Chevrolet Engineering had an experimental "trim shop" that made patterns for all the seat trim. These went to Indianapolis and they, in turn, re-did them. I think there were always some hard feelings between those two groups. Indianapolis felt Engineering didn't know how to properly make sewing allowances, and lay out for minimum material usage, etc. Indianapolis sent sewn seat trim to the assembly plants, who in turn did their own thing concerning how tight or loose or crooked the trim and padding were installed to the framework. I couldn't see it at the time, and certainly the engineers and staff at Chevrolet could not see that the product would have been MUCH better if the trim design and construction and control would have been the Fisher Body type. It wasn't, because the FC people were "truck" people, and trucks were not done like passenger cars. Truck and FC seat trim had raw edges that could be wrapped  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch, or 1 inch, or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches around the frame wires and secured with clips or hog rings. This affected tightness and the feel of the seat. Fisher Body Trim had "envelopes" (I don't know the proper term) sewn into the edge ends of the trim, and some form of a "wire" slipped into it. This then was attached by hog rings to the seat frame. You couldn't do too much or too little, as there was only one place where it fit. The seat trim didn't kill the FC, but in retrospect I wish we had instigated a move toward the Fisher Body style of design.

Bob Kirkman

## A SHIFTY SUBJECT

I have been asked in the past about FC manual transmission shifters and always replied that the ones we know of on our vehicles were the only ones. There was the under-the-seat-shift-up & down type of 1961-62-63, and the floor shifter of 1963-64-65. Of course! But what's that FLOOR SHIFTER doing in the 1961 Shop Manual back in the Body Section? A copy of the illustration is included here for most of our members that do not have a shop manual. Did someone just set "something" down on the floor for an early picture? How could there be such a thing? 'Cause there never was a floor shifter that early. Or was there? The 1961 Shop Manual picture was a mystery just asking for a solution.

I obtained shift lever drawings for both the systems we know about, and from them obtained reference to the original design layout drawings, and then obtained them. The floor shifter layout had recorded that the design work was STARTED on 7-23-62 and completed on 8-16-62. This, then, proved it had nothing to do with the 1961 Shop Manual picture (which really can be seen to not have the same appearance). Then the under-seat layout was observed and it recorded that the design work was started 5-9-60. What?!? 5-9-60? The 1961 model went into production in late summer/early fall of 1960. Do you mean the under-the-seat shifter was STARTED in design only 4-5 months before production started? Talk about a rush job to complete design - test - tooling. Well if all that was as stated, what was used in the prototype vehicles before that time? The under-the-floor design layout also had several references to other, earlier layouts. So, out came those from Archives and, wonder of wonders, there was the early floor shifter as seen in the 1961 Shop Manual. Seems it was designed, some parts made, photographed, tested and rejected before production began. This early floor shifter design was started in January of 1960 by my friend Dan Crawford, who is still with CPC Engineering (previously of Chevrolet Engineering). He was later design engineer on many chassis components for modern Corvettes and continues to be a manager in CPC's Chassis Technology Center. His dad, by the way, lives up in the thumb area of Michigan, and owns two Rampsides and a Corvan. One rampside he is rebuilding and the other is kind of going back to nature. But back to the subject. There is no further reference to any yet earlier shifters. Although it seems something must have been used in the early prototypes. Whatever, that trail is stone cold.

Looking at the early floor shifter design it's easy to see why it was abandoned. The shift tube was under the gas tank (not through it) and there was another long wiggle/woggle part to connect it to the floor shifter lever, machined guides, castings, grease fittings, boots forks and roll pins. Quite a piece of machinery. I believe tolerances, deflections, dirt and water did it in.

So I believe the mystery is solved; put to bed. We end our shifty story.

Bob Kirkman