

# CORNER CARVIN' FAMILY HAULER

NEWMAN CAR CREATIONS '57 210 WAGON.

By Patrick Hill

Photos by Team SUPER CHEVY

**W**hen you think of handling prowess and cornering ability, the last thing anyone thinks of is an old station wagon. But the crew at Newman Car Creations came to the 2009 Super Chevy Handling & Suspension Challenge with a shoebox wagon that would show just how well the original American SUV could be made to handle.

The Surf Green/Highland Green 210 Townsman came to the Newmans through a friend of a friend. Newman Car Creations founder/owner Paul Newman was talking to his wife's parents, and they told him about their friend Bob Krebs, who had just inherited a '57 Chevy. Bob had a week to pick the car up or it would be sold.

Bob went to San Gabriel and found an unmolested and excellent condition car that hadn't been driven since 1971, showing less than 60K on the odometer.

Bob knew the '57 needed to come home with him. After filling up the old tires with fresh air, he and a friend loaded the '57 on the trailer and made the harrying trip back to Paso Robles with Bob's '65 Ford pickup pulling the trailer.

Because of a transmission issue, he had to hold the shifter in second gear or it would pop out into neutral on its own. This was nerve racking when towing a trailer through curving California mountain roads.

Knowing Bob was right next to door to his in-laws, Paul and his wife Michelle had to meet him in person and see the '57. Bob was more than happy to oblige. Even though on the surface it needed a lot of scrubbing, Paul could tell the '57 was straight and virtually rust free, with all the hard to find wagon trim and glass in excellent shape. Bob asked if Paul could take the '57 to the Newman shop and get it running again.

After cleaning out the gas tank, a new fuel pump, rebuilt carb, and other basic tune-up items, the '57's original 265 (that's right, this car was one of the rare yellow painted, 2-bbl 265 equipped '57s) fired right up and ran like a top.

Since Bob had no use for the wagon, he offered it to Paul for the right price, and the car had a new home with the Newman clan. Paul still considers the '57 the best car purchase he ever made. For the first year the '57 was driven in bone stock form. After extensive driving, Paul came to two conclusions: 1) The '57 Chevys in stock form drive pretty good when



the car is in top shape, with speed, braking, and cornering limitations always right there, and 2) A lot of so called "enhancement kits" hurt the car's handling more than they helped, a "clash of engineering" as Paul puts it.

After a year of evaluations, Paul and crew modified the '57's frame to accept '96 Corvette all-aluminum independent front and rear suspension. Newman offers its own custom-designed Tri-Five chassis using C4 Corvette front and rear suspension, but for a stock frame, the Newman crew removes all unnecessary bracketry, completely sand blasts the frame, then installs a new rectangular rear cross member, along with aluminum torque arm, torque arm mount, Newman Car Creations' cast aluminum cross members, late-model motor mount system, and everything necessary to install the C4's independent front and rear suspension. Once everything is set, the frame is fully powder coated for protection and an eye appealing finish.

On the course, the car was absolutely fantastic, not only to watch, but to ride in. Going around the autocross course, I got to experience just what the wagon could do. But don't take my word for it, keep on reading to see what Mary Pozzi and Jim Campisano thought about driving the grocery getter.

## Driver's Impression—On the Autocross Course

Whoever said that a 52-year-old grocery getter couldn't handle an autocross course couldn't have gotten it more wrong. Both of the wagons (this one and the Hotchkis Sport Suspension entry) navigated the cones with minimal fuss and absolutely no drama, which pleased me to no end. You'd never expect this type of automobile to get good marks for



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my part of the testing, but the Newman Car Creations Chevy wagon sealed the deal—and how!

It was immediately apparent that Newman Car Creations came to the Shootout with their “A” game. This was a car that emphasized and rewarded “slow in, fast out” driving and made it look easy. The initial offset slalom element had me sliding into the entry slot, then quickly matting the accelerator pedal all the while looking for, and steering around, the next apex cone. Again, no fuss and no drama.

Directional lane changes to the crossover at the end got a little dicey as using the brakes found them good on initial bite but grabby under a hard pedal. Light but steady brake application worked best and made turn-in, mid-corner, and corner exit much smoother. Power was huge and got the car down the fast transitional left-right-left section quickly to the finish. What I liked best was the feedback this car offered and hard to believe this came from a two-ton station wagon! Looking ahead was easy.

I loved every minute behind the wheel of this car. The ride quality was great and the wagon felt like it had some body roll, but hell, it’s a friggin’ wagon! A compliant car should roll some and this obviously

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## NEWMAN CAR CREATIONS '57 210 WAGON SPECS

### ENGINE

Type: Corvette LT1 350 small-block  
Block: GM  
Fuel Delivery: Stock LT1 fuel injection

### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission: Tremec T56 six-speed  
Rearend: Newman Car Creations Dana 44 IRS

### CHASSIS SUSPENSION

Steering: Stock C4 Corvette rack-and-pinion  
Front Suspension: Newman Car Creations/C4 Corvette  
Spindles: Stock C4 Corvette  
Front Shocks: Bilstein '96 Corvette model  
Front Springs: Stock C4 Corvette composite  
Front Control Arms: C4 Corvette  
Front Sway bar: C4 Corvette  
Rear Suspension: Stock C4 IRS with Newman Car Creations Dana 44 replacement differential  
Rear Shocks: Bilstein '96 Corvette model  
Rear Springs: Stock C4 Corvette composite  
Rear Sway bar: C4 Corvette  
Front Brakes: Stock C4 '96 Grand Sport Corvette, 13-inch rotors  
Rear Brakes: Stock C4 '96 Grand Sport Corvette 12-inch rotors

### WHEELS & TIRES

Wheels: Stock C4 Corvette Grand Sport, 17x8.5 front/17x9.5 rear  
Tires: Nitto NT05 255/40ZR17 front - 275/45ZR17 rear

RESULTS	'57 210 Wagon	'10 Camaro
<b>Skidpad:</b>	0.85 g	0.85 g
<b>Sialom:</b>	46.56 mph	45.84 mph
<b>Autocross:</b>	46.72 sec.	46.32 sec.

## THE RIDE QUALITY WAS OUTSTANDING THANKS TO C4 CORVETTE UNDERPINNINGS. WHUDDA THINK IT?

... doesn't get any better than this, methinks.—  
**Mary Pozzi**

### Driver's Impression - On the Street

There was a lot to like about the Newman Car Creations' 210, but the fact that it put a smile on the face of everyone who came in contact with it was at the top of my list. Paul told me the car had keyless start. I got in looking for a button to push, but there

didn't affect the suspension or steering performance. Just think—this car, a couple of hours, Mulholland Drive, a GoPro camera pointed out the back capturing motorstuff getting downsized, and no

wasn't one. In this case, all you had to do was twist the ignition switch and the car would fire up. That made me grin even more.

But it was the actual driving of this Tri-Five that blew me away. The smaller-than-stock steering wheel really improved the ergonomics. The shifter was positioned perfectly and was the proverbial hot knife through T56 butter. The ride quality was outstanding thanks to C4 Corvette underpinnings. Whudda think it?

All in all, we'd say it drove like an oversized Vette. It was predictable, with amazing grip. Quick, accurate steering. Immediate turn-in. Excellent ride quality. The brakes were responsive, with no dead zone. Hit the pedal and the car stopped hard and straight. The LT1 engine from an Impala SS provided decent power and driveability, but we wouldn't have objected if it were making an additional 100 horsepower.

The crew at Paul Newman Car Creations should be proud of itself. It has turned out a world-class performance car that blends timeless styling with modern grip.—**Jim Campisano**