GEARBOX

HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB

FEBRUARY 2024

CONTACT: Bill Kenchington on Ph (02) 4945 4830 OR Andrew Vile on (02) 4933 5607 in business hours only.

Some of the HMAC members at the Frontline private opening in January 2024.

HUNTER MODEL AUTO CLUB – SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR MONTH OF JANUARY 2024

Last Meeting

Our first "get together" meeting for 2024 was on Tuesday 9 January when our Club was once again invited to a Private Opening of The Frontline Hobbies Store, Broadmeadow.
A total of 23 members were in attendance and 3 apologies were received.
Drinks and nibbles were provided throughout the evening, courtesy of Frontline Hobbies.
Frontline Hobbies staff members, Ryan and Adam were available on the night to serve us, as well as answer any questions on the various models that were on display and to take orders for any future model releases.
We were able to wander through the store and browse the shelves of the many plastic kits and diecast model cars, trucks, buses and equipment and even planes and trains and select our purchases at our leisure.
Members enjoyed discounts on their model purchases, for which our Club thanks the Frontline Hobbies management.
Being an informal meeting, there were no minutes for January as has been the practice in past years.

Model Competition

We received 7 entries for the January "Virtual" Model Competition, which is on par with the average numbers throughout 2023 (see results below). We will continue to hold the "Virtual" Model Competition throughout 2024.
We would encourage those of you who have not already joined the Hunter Model Auto Club Group on Facebook to do so. To date we have 30 members and associates in this Group.
If you have any questions in this regard, please don't hesitate to contact Paul Campbell or myself.

40th Anniversary Club Model

We now have 40 wooden plinths made and lacquered for the mounting of the FJ Holden model van with badges and stickers to complete the Anniversary model and ready to be available at our February meeting. A special thanks goes to Paul, Scott, Brian, Mark and Ken for assisting in the making this 40th Anniversary Club Model.

Agenda for February Meeting

Being our first normal meeting since November 2023 we thought it would be a good idea to have a general discussion on a number of proposals that we have in mind for 2024.
The following items are up for discussion: -
i) Vintage Day (Nostalgia Festival) - Model display at Kurri Kurri Public School – Sunday 24 March 2024.
ii) Plans for celebrating our 40th Anniversary in 2024.
iii) Hunter Toy and Hobby Fair for 2024 - Nominations to form a Sub-Committee and setting the date.
iv) Club Visit to "Show Us Ya Slotz" at Lemon Tree Passage – Suggestions for possible dates.
v) Proposed Club Model Display at "Newcastle Museum". Members update.
vi) Club Visit to "Sydney Tramway Museum" at Loftus – Suggestions for possible dates.
vii) Trax models from a deceased estate for sale.
viii) Any other items.

Virtual Model Competition (Overall Winners for 2023)

1st ..... Matt Campbell.....165 Points
2nd.....Mark Jenkins.....159 Points
3rd......Bill Kenchington.....148 Points
(First place Winner, Matt Campbell received a $25 Voucher from Frontline Hobbies, Broadmeadow).

Virtual Model Competition (Winners for January 2024)

Category: "Family Owned Vehicle"
1st ..... Bill Kenchington.....EH Holden Sedan.....16 Points
2nd..... Matt Campbell.....Morris Major.....14 Points
3rd..... Paul Campbell.....FB Holden Sedan.....9 Points
Photos of all the entries can be seen on our Club Facebook page.

Next "Real" Model Category (February 2024)

"Open" – Any scale up to five (5) vehicles.

Next "Virtual" Model Category (February 2024)

"Open" – Any scale and number of vehicles and ONE (1) PHOTO ONLY.

The deadlines for this competition are as follows: -

1) ENTRY – Email Paul Campbell campbellp1969@gmail.com your model photo (suitably described) by 9.00 pm Sunday 11 February 2024. *Please include your name in your message to Paul but not in the photo itself and ensure your entry is not lost in the background of your photo.*
2) VOTING – Email/text Shane Neems at email skneems@westnet.com.au or at mobile 0407 950 030 your preferences (1st, 2nd, and 3rd against the letter of the displayed model) by 9.00 pm Tuesday 13 February 2023 (our meeting night and at which a ballot box will be available also for voting).

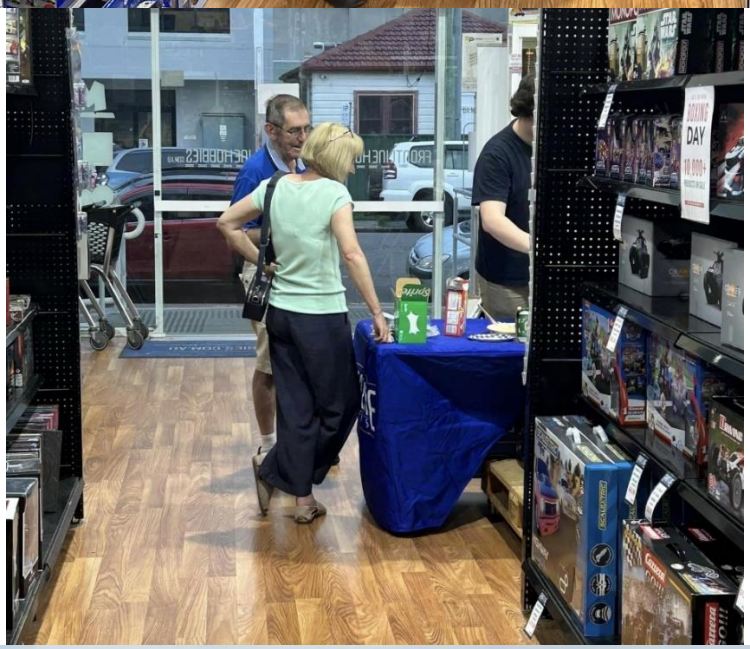
- Meeting Night Dinner

A few of us have been getting together in the Club Restaurant before our meeting. Why not join us from 6.00pm for dinner and a chat.

- Next Meeting-

Tuesday 13 February 2024 at 7.00 for 7.30 pm at Edgeworth Sport and Rec Club (1A Park Street, Edgeworth).
Bill Kenchington, Secretary.

Pic at left above. Following on from our visit to Frontline Hobbies is the presentation to Pieter Z for 3rd prize in the 2023 actual model competition. Pieter was absent from our Christmas dinner. First place Winner for the Virtual model comp was Matt Campbell who received a $25 Voucher from Frontline Hobbies, Broadmeadow. The voucher was received by Paul C as Matt was working. ***Pic at right above.*** Checking out the goodies in the ***three pics below.***



And now for something different – The view from our back verandah here in Paynesville.

-----PLACEGETTERS FOR THE JANUARY `VIRTUAL' MODEL COMP----

1ST – Bill's EH Holden Special Sedan.

2ND – Matt's Morris Major sedan.

3RD – Paul's FB Holden sedan.

- A FEW SPECIAL CAR BIRTHDAYS IN 2024 -

To start with, there are many iconic models from various automakers having a birthday this year and there are three sports cars turning ***sixty*** this year that I have selected for this article. Two have been featured in the Gearbox previously, but these two are like chalk and cheese as far as motoring types go in relation to my third choice. This trio**,** *the Ford Mustang, the Sunbeam Tiger and the little Honda S600,* were all ***`born'*** in 1964 and have their own little story to tell that most of us know, perhaps with the exception of the Honda S600. However they are very different to each other in how they came into being and how they turned out over their production life.

As written in a previous ***Gearbox*** article, the ***Mustang,*** derived from Ford's second generation 1963 Falcon model, started life in hardtop, convertible and fastback form and was powered by either a six or eight cylinder engine. Though based on the Falcon, it was actually slightly longer, lower and wider and the Mustang project didn't just happen overnight. The initial idea, the planning, and finally the approval documents from Henry Ford II to build the Mustang, had to take place first. So, it was in August 1962 that with a set of specifications, a base model price, a budget of US $40 million and a time frame of eighteen months, Lee Iacocca received the go-ahead to produce a totally new Ford model that was aimed specifically at the 18 to 34 year olds.

Two factories were set up to produce the Mustang, one in San Jose, California and the other in Dearborn, Michigan. Ford's marketing arm arranged to have a Mustang model at each of their 8,000 odd dealers to coincide with the cars release at the New York World Fair on 17 April 1964. The aim was to ensure that potential buyers would be able to view the Mustang at the very time it was to be introduced at the World Fair. Just prior to the World Fair release date, Ford organized a huge amount of TV commercial time, full page newspaper ads and displays of various models at selected hotels and airports.

This considerable and very expensive marketing program proved very successful and Ford took over 20,000 orders across the country on the first day the Mustang went on sale. Ford had not been prepared for this and had a sales projection calculated at around 100,000 per year, yet by years end they had already sold more than this yearly projected figure. Then, at the twelve month mark, Ford had sold 419,000 models which represented the best first twelve months sale figures ever in the U.S.

As was their disposition, Ford were not content to sit on their laurels and management decided to push harder to achieve an even bigger market for the Mustang. They decided to expand the performance image that the new 289 V8 engines had generated throughout the country and elected to compete in SCCA [Sports Car Club of America] racing. Carroll Shelby was appointed to bring the Mustang up to scratch for this project and his Shelby GT 350 models won their class in the championship in 1965, 1966, and 1967.

Lane Exact Detail 1:18 scale diecast model of the Shelby GT350 as raced in the SCCA series.

Besides the AC Ace that morphed into Carrol Shelby's AC Cobra, there was another British sports car that had a Ford V8 dropped into the engine bay courtesy of Shelby. This became the ***Sunbeam Tiger***. Again, born in 1964, this was a snazzy little sports car us oldies would have seen featured in early episodes of that great TV show `Get Smart' and this story has also featured in the ***Gearbox.*** This was not a new category of motor car and there was no over the top American wide advertising campaign for the Sunbeam Tiger, just an essential progression in power output from its four cylinder cousin, the Sunbeam Alpine.

The very British Rootes Group's original `Alpine' sports car was discontinued in 1955 as the company commenced a revamp of their passenger car range. Having finalized this task, they decided to produce a new sports car with the design being kept in house and the engineering and early assembly being handled by Armstrong-Siddeley. The new Alpine was released in 1959 as an open two-seater but with modern styling that included a curved windscreen and trendy tail fins. It came with wind-up windows, a heater, a well prepared dash with appropriate gauges and switch gear, an easily raised soft top and powered a 1.5 litre OHV four.

Well before the Alpine's demise, the Rootes Group had pursued the idea of powering up the Alpine with a V8 engine and had approached Ferrari with a related proposal that eventually fell through. Jack Brabham and Stirling Moss had co-driven an Alpine to second place in a `Production Car Class' race at Riverside in California. The story goes that it was he that had suggested a small V8 could be installed into the little sports car by Carroll Shelby as he had done with the British AC Ace roadster. Both Carroll Shelby and Ken Miles produced prototypes for the Rootes Group with Miles initial example, though not fully sorted out and handling poorly, proving that a V8 could be fitted into the car and be very effective with a suitable gearbox. When tested in 1963, Shelby's later version proved a much better proposition as he had spent more time on its development at his Shelby America's Engineering and testing facilities.

As it turned out, Lord Rootes was not aware of this *`behind the scenes'* development of a V8 powered Alpine sports car till the prototype arrived in England for evaluation and possible approval for production. Though not a happy chappy at first, he ended up accepting that it was a great drive and so quickly gave approval for it to go into production with the Rootes Group ordering 3,000 260 cubic inch V8 engines from Ford US.

Automodello 1:43 scale resin model of the Sunbeam Tiger Mk 1

The Sunbeam Tiger was displayed in 1964 at the New York Motor Show. It was similar to the Alpine with a few small body changes involved due to the fitting of a V8 engine. The Ford 260 cubic inch V8, mated to a Ford gearbox and rear axle, was slightly detuned, yet was twice as powerful as the Alpine's four. The rest was all Alpine but with modifications to the suspension by Shelby and with front discs and rear drum brakes. It also had a rack and pinion steering assembly rather than the Alpine's recirculating ball setup. Interestingly, all the early production models were to be sold in North America.

A series II Tiger would come along with the Ford 289 cu ins V8 in early 1967, but with the Rootes Group having been taken over by Chrysler in 1964, it stood to reason that they did not appreciate seeing the Tiger fitted with the opposition's V8 engines. Everyone knew that eventually things would have to change as far as engine brand went and Chrysler even contemplated fitting the Chrysler 273 cu ins V8 engine to the Tiger, but it just wouldn't fit. So, rather than continue to sell a car with a competitor's power plant, they halted production when the supply of Ford's 289 V8 engines finished in June 1967.

Now compare the previous two models to the diminutive ***Honda S600,*** also turning ***sixty*** this year. The S600 became Honda's first mass-marketed car and was derived from Honda's first passenger car, the S500. Upon release in 1964, it was judged as having plenty of driving enjoyment with excellent steering by motoring journalists. The S600 was produced in both right and left hand drive for export, and the whole purpose for the creation of this little sports car was to bring attention to Honda as a viable automaker.

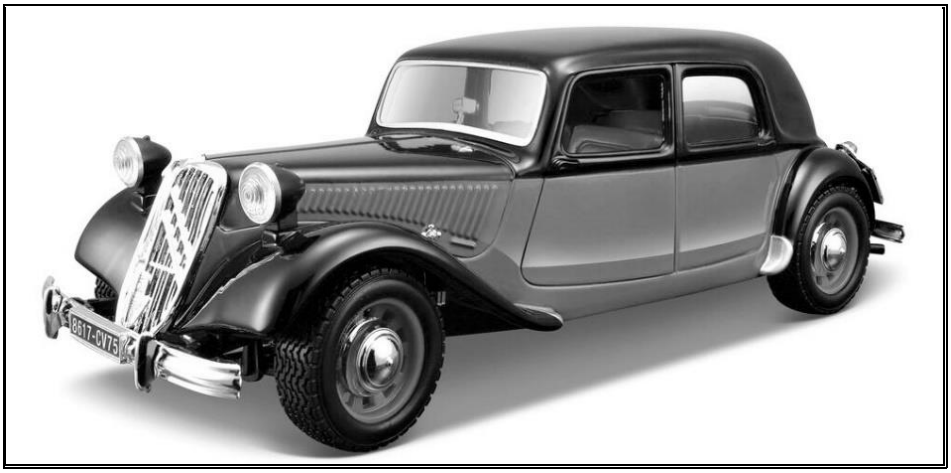
The S600 engine, like the typical Honda motorcycle of that era, made all its power in the very high rev range with their own water-cooled, four Keihin carbies, 606cc (*only 36 cubic inches*) dual overhead cam, straight four cylinder engine, giving the S600 a top speed of 90 mph or 145 kph and it could rev up to 9,500 rpm. Power was driven through a four-speed close-ratio manual gearbox, but an unusual part of the S600's mechanicals was that two chains were used from the differential to drive the rear wheels. You could say it was actually a four wheel motorcycle, but a conventional rear axle appeared in 1966 with an upgrade to the S800 models. And it was definitely small being just under 11 feet long, 4.5 feet wide and it was a very lightweight sports car, weighing in at just 700kg.

The S600 was Initially available as a roadster or convertible with a hardtop coupe offered in 1965. Just over 11,000 S600 models were produced before the introduction of the S800 models, and today, unlike the 1964 Mustang and Sunbeam Tiger, they are an ultra-rare Honda model, even in Japan.

The Honda S600 courtesy of Torque GT UK.

Another iconic automobile worth a mention here, and because it is having a ***90th*** birthday, is the amazing ***Citroen Traction Avant*** which was featured in a recent ***Gearbox***. For that article, I wrote that the Traction Avant made its debut in March 1934 and Citroen dealers were not only amazed by its appearance, but also by the new automotive ideas linked to the new model. Citroen had made a vehicle that was different and with a body style that was like no other European sourced sedan on the road at that point. The new Traction Avant was driven through the front wheels and that resulted in a cabin with a flat floor and a body without running boards and it came with independent suspension and hydraulic brakes. The floor plan and chassis were formed into a single structure known as unibody construction. Interestingly, with the gearbox being located in front of the engine and being front wheel drive, the drive section was separate to the passenger capsule.

As I said in the ***Gearbox*** article, it certainly `stands out' when seen driven by the stars, or as part of the background in so many television shows and movies, especially in any *`Maigret'* based films. Maigret, as a BBC television series, was first seen in 1960 to 1963 and later from 1992 to 1993. My favourite is the more recent series from 2016 and 2017 that starred Rowan Atkinson and I think he was brilliant as Maigret. Over the years, many British Police television shows have highlighted their own iconic vehicles such as the Ford Zephyrs in `Z Cars' and the Ford Consul GT in `The Sweeney.' But Maigret was different as it was based in France and Maigret used a black Citroen Traction Avant with the model used in the original series being a 1954 `Light 15/6H.' Think about it, this Citroen is now 90 years old and there are plenty owned by collectors still on the roads. Time sure does fly. *Terry.*



Model of the Citroen Traction Avant in 1:24 scale diecast by Burago.

~ A little snippet ~ SIMCA 1000 COUPE ~

Simca 1000 coupe in 1:43 scale diecast by Norev.

Another nice little model spotted on eBay that I knew little about and sometimes referred to with the full title of a ***Simca 1000 Coupe Bertone.*** It started life being intended as a project to produce a coupe based on the popular Fiat 850, but that project never saw the light of day. But the original idea would eventually play into the hands of Simca a few years later with their own little coupe that was based on their popular *Simca 1000* sedan.

Simca, having been tied up with Fiat through having first produced their cars under licence in 1934, asked Fiat for design ideas on building a `baby' Simca. But Fiat soon commenced work on its own mini car project and Simca decided to give it a miss and concentrate on their own version. The new car's design and development work was rapid, and by 1960, prototypes were up and running and being tested under different mechanical set-ups. At Simca's request, Mario Boano, formerly the owner of Carrozzeria Boano and now a stylist at Fiat, re-designed the body at the last minute to make it more attractive. The end result would be the *Simca 1000*, a rear wheel drive, rear engined little saloon (sedan) that was released to the press in October 1961 and became an instant success. The long-running boxy little four-door Simca 1000 was produced from 1961 to 1978.

Simca then looked at a coupe project with the infrastructure of the Simca 1000 prototypes just sitting there ready to be utilised. The proposed coupe would share the chassis and mechanicals of the 1000 Saloon, and for the body design, Simca approached the body builders, Facel, who had had started life supplying special bodies for many automakers including Simca. Though it was intended that Facel should make the bodies, Simca soon cancelled this part of the project, not only due to their dislike of Facel's proposed design, but they also were wary of Facel's financial position at the time. Simca then turned to the Italian Carrozzeria Bertone for a suitable body and interior to be designed for the project. Giorgetto Giugiaro, a young designer not long at Bertone, and who would later be nominated as the greatest car designer of the 20th Century, became the designer of the little Simca coupe body.

Factory pic of a 1962 Simca 1000 Coupe.

Giugiaro styled a slender body profile with clean lines that appealed to European tastes. With a well fitted out interior, it was easily seen as a small GT type and this would prove advantageous for Simca in producing their new ***Simca 1000 Coupe*** at this point in time, because it was entering a market that was new and expanding in Europe.

The bodies were made in Bertone's Turin workshops in Italy and shipped to the Simca factory in Poissy, France, where they finished assembly on a line adjacent to that used for the Simca 1000 sedans. Mechanical changes from the Simca 1000 sedan's running gear were limited and were mainly the fitting of disc brakes all round. Simca's tough little 38kw 944 cc engine and four-speed all synchromesh gearbox set-up, were carried over to the coupe, as was the front and rear independent suspension arrangement with telescopic shock-absorbers.

The ride could be a little dusty in windy conditions, but it had a top speed of 140 kph. So, not exactly exciting as far as performance went, but it wasn't bad for the small Simca power plant and did handle much better than the sedan. Upon release, the ***Simca 1000 Coupe*** was described as being a sensational Giugiaro styled, rear-engined little coupe with an interior equivalent to any custom built small GT. It had excellent instrumentation, a two-speed heater blower control, two-speed wipers and didn't skimp on anything a sports car driver would require, including a handsome wood-rimmed alloy steering wheel. To top it off, there was a divided back in the rear so you could use one side for luggage and still have a seat available for a third person. The interior had doors and windows that closed properly and there was little wind noise in the interior when driven at cruising speeds.

Unique Cars and Part, Australia said that it *`had the potential of being one of the fastest, safest one-litre GT machines on the road'* and added that *`while the 1000 Coupe made no pretence of being anything but a two-seater with occasional space behind, it could in fact transport four adults around town without breaking any backs.'*

With a good overall finish to the body that included excellent paint and chrome trims, it was well received by the public when first shown in 1962. Simca had always planned the coupe to go up against Renault's Floride and, as it turned out, it also went up against Fiat's 850 Coupe released in 1965. Even so, the majority of the *Simca 1000 coupe* sales, commencing upon release in early 1963, would be to the French market.

IXO's version of the Simca 1000 Coupe in 1:43 scale diecast.

Simca upgraded their four-door sedan to a *`1100'* model in 1967 and then asked Bertone to upgrade the body shell of the coupe. As well, it would now have a 61 kw 1204 cc engine that gave the coupe a top speed of 165 kph and was re-named as the ***Simca 1200S. See next pic courtesy of Carrozzerie Italian.*** There was one more small upgrade in 1970 before production ceased. The two-door Simca Coupes were sold between 1963 and 1971 with around 10,600 of the *1000 coupe* models and 25,000 of the *1200S coupe* models being turned out over their eight years of production. *Terry.*

- FOR THE CHEV CAMARO FANS – How the first gen Camaros developed.

The 2023 Supercar season is over and the best race of the year, the Bathurst 1000 race at Mount Panorama, was won by a Red Bull Team Chevrolet Camaro. Of course, this specially built racing machine is nothing like the American sedan, converted to right hand drive and now driven on our roads. That is if you can afford one. The ***Gearbox*** has featured many articles about the first generation, or 1967 to 1969, Chevrolet Camaro in the past and that included their domination of the U.S. *`Trans Am'* motor racing series over this period by the Penske Sunoco team. Over there, decades of motor racing involved battles between the various divisions of General Motors, Ford and the Chrysler Corporations and the public loved it.

Since the Aussie *Supercars* competition has ruled our motor racing scene, it has been mostly Ford Falcon versus Holden Commodore till the current `Gen 3' Ford Mustang versus Chev Camaro has taken over with the demise of Holden. *Supercars Australia* explained that the new Gen 3 Camaro and Mustang for 2023 are very different to the previous Gen 2 machines and were to be more *`similar'* to their road-going counterparts. They claimed that downforce would be reduced by around 65 per cent in order to make the cars behave more like a road going car and this was to ensure the drivers skills were thoroughly tested, and at the same time, creating more overtaking opportunities. Funny, plenty of Mustangs, but extremely rare to see the so-called road-going Camaro on our streets.

By now, those interested in Aussie motor racing will have made up their minds about the 2023 Supercars season and the impact the Gen 3 cars have had. I have to ask though, where are the personalities like Moffat, Perkins and Ingall?

But I want to go back to how the Chevrolet Camaro came into being in the first place. Let's face it, released half way through 1964, the Ford Mustang became an American motoring icon in a very short time and General Motors had absolutely nothing of similar ilk available to compete against it. In fact, even Ford underestimated the immense response to the Mustang, a car that soon *`owned the roads'* according to one journalist.

Those who know about Chev's rear-engined Corvair would understand why it couldn't compete. 1964 saw the release of Ralph Nader's book, `Unsafe at Any Speed' where he was critical of the Corvair. Motoring historians say it wasn't till 1965 that the Corvair could be considered a well-engineered high-performance automobile, but the damage had been done, and it stood no chance against the new Mustangs. ***Next pics – 1965 Corvair models.***

It takes time to develop a new motor vehicle and after the release of Ford's Mustang, GM knew it would not have anything ready to compete with it till at least 1967. However, that may have been a blessing for the General as they were then able to design the Camaro with a big emphasis on performance from the very beginning. Around this time Bunkie Knudsen was Chevrolet's General Manager and, as he had done previously at Pontiac, always made the availability of a `high performance' model a prerequisite for any new car design. As a result of this attitude, Knudsen, together with the GM design studios, were quite ready to embark on the development of the 1967 Camaro, a lightweight and compact 2 + 2 [4 seater] sports coupe that would be designed to handle the most powerful Chev V8 engines and, importantly, have a version that would carry the famous Chevrolet ***Super Sport*** or ***`SS'*** badging.

Also, GM's Vice President of Design, Bill Mitchell, loved sports cars. He saw them as having `sexy, curvy' lines with two seats, a performance engine, a floor shifter and he couldn't wait to be able to produce one for Chevrolet. The Camaro would be built on GM's `F' body platform derived from their `X' body structure that was used from 1962 for compact and rear wheel drive vehicles. The `F' body platform was only ever used for the Camaro and its sister, the Pontiac Firebird. From their design studios and under Bill Mitchell's influence, GM had now built an attractive show car that was unveiled at the 1964 New York Auto Show and was known as the ***`Super Nova.'*** ***See next pic.*** It remained a concept car, never going into production, but was influential in GM design cues in the coming years.

Interestingly, the *Super Nova* was designed in Henry Haga's Chevrolet Studio Two, and that studio would be heavily involved in the final shape of the Camaro. They had already been involved in the attractive re-design of the Corvair for the 1965 iteration, as well as the final styling for the proposed 1968 3rd generation Chevrolet Corvette.

Henry Haga would be the chief designer of the Camaro under Bill Mitchell. Though some motoring historians say that Mitchell's Super Nova styling cues haven't influenced the Camaro's body shape, Haga has said that it did give slight design cues for the Camaro. However, you can see that its sharp lines have inspired many of GM's creations well into the late 1960's, including the newly designed 1968 Chevy II. And here was a dilemma for Chevrolet as GM management would also have the issue of designing and producing the 1968 Chevy II alongside the proposed Camaro, but the Chevy II was designated to be the ***`volume'*** seller of the two for Chevrolet.

In this regard, an article in ***Hemmings*** quoted Bill Mitchell saying *`Certain specifications for the 1967 Camaro were laid down early by Chevrolet engineers and management to accommodate the practicality of the 1968 Chevy II. While the Camaro came first and did get the major styling and engineering emphasis, everyone realized that the Camaro had to be the* ***`specialty'*** *car, and the Chevy II had to be the* ***volume*** *seller. Thus the new 1968 Chevy II could, and did dictate certain terms and conditions to the Camaro design team.'*

Haga ensured that their Corvette and Corvair styling would be reflected in the Camaro, though some design cues and dimensions, because they were shared with the 1968 Chevy II, were not how Haga wanted them. He felt it made the Camaro look more like a conventional hardtop of the era, rather than an exotic sports car. However, that had to be expected due to the fact that urgency, costs and tooling were factors in the design and development of the Camaro.

The final design was more rounded in comparison to the Mustang's boxy profile and used only one peak down each body side with this straight line only interrupted by the accented wheel arches. It also had slim, no nonsense bumper bars and was a simple design with no superfluous detail according Mitchell. ***See next GM factory pic.*** The Camaro was also slightly longer, wider and lower than the Mustang and had a bit more passenger room. It was of unibody construction, and whereas the Mustang was fully unitised with stamped steel sections welded onto the body up front to carry the engine and suspension, the Camaro had a strong ladder type front subframe that bolted onto the body to house the engine, front suspension and the drivetrain. The rear suspension was similarly set up.

Lane Exact detail brand 1:18 scale diecast model of a 1967 Chev Camaro `Z/28' version.

GM claimed it was a vehicle designed to be a different car for different drivers and, though it started with a budget conscious six-cylinder model, it was quickly noted for its wide ranging sporting potential. One model, the ***Z/28*** shown in ***the above pic,*** was fitted with a specially developed 5 litre V8 engine in order for the Camaro to be homologated into the Trans Am racing series. In 1967, **Car Life** said, *`The problem is not whether to buy the Camaro, but what kind of Camaro, for this model probably wears more faces than any other single car now made.'*

Chev offered the Camaro as a coupe and convertible only. The base model was powered by either 230 cu inch or 250 cu in six Cylinder engines. One of two V8 engines available was their 327 cu inch 210 hp [154 kw] version or a 275 hp [202 kw] version. But the big news was Chev's new small block 350 cu inch V8 available in the Camaro ***`SS'*** only. It wasn't fitted to other Chev vehicles till 1968. For Aussie motor racing fans, a 350 cu inch V8 was fitted to the 1969 HT Monaro that won at Bathurst. You could have a three speed manual gearbox with either a steering column shifter or floor shifter as well as two four speed gearboxes and a Powerglide auto. Braking was by way of drums all round initially, but front discs were soon an option. To top it off, Chev introduced their big block 396 cu inch V8 as an option before the 1966 year was out, and no Mustang was a match for it. This standard 325 hp [240 kw] 396 V8 was also available with a 375 hp [275 kw] L78 option for the Camaro.

This leads to the ***`SS'*** models. In his book ***Chevrolet SS***, Robert Genet wrote that, *`The `SS' emblem on the side of a Chev gave notice to the world that this car had the right stuff.'* It would be this so-called `blood pumping' model designation, first seen badged on the 1961 Impala, that turned this pony car into a genuine muscle car according to one journalist. ***Next pic is a Lane Exact Detail brand 1:18 scale diecast model of a 1968 Chev Camaro `SS'***

The Super Sport or ***`SS'*** Camaro models were intended to be high-volume, high-profile, moneymakers for Chevrolet. Interestingly, for the life of the first gen Camaro, 1967 to 1969, Chevrolet built nearly 100,000 `SS' models and this was out of a total of nearly 700,000 overall Camaro sales. Though Ford sold almost twice as many Mustangs in all model variations compared to all versions of the Camaro, it should be noted however, that in the same period, Chevrolet also sold the *sports* trim models as ***`SS'*** versions in their Impala, Chevelle and Nova range. They also had the asphalt burning 427 cu inch V8 version of the Corvette and all these Chev sports models nearly always led the sales charts in designated vehicle size categories. The Camaro ***`SS'*** was chosen to be the Pace Car at the Indianapolis 500 race in 1967, ***see next pic,*** and again in 1969.

In researching this story, I also used books from my own automobile library and picked up some interesting snippets as I delved into the Camaro story. One was that a few years before a decision was made to build the Camaro, Bunkie Knudsen had been handed a proposal from Irv Rybicki who was chief designer of the Chevrolet studio. It was for a personal 2+2 coupe with similar dimensions to the future Mustang and well before anyone at GM knew about Ford's proposed Mustang.

In an interview years later, Rybicki said they had a warehouse across the street from the main studio which unfortunately, was *`jammed with production work.'* So in 1963 he and a few fellow designers set up in the warehouse designing and creating a full clay mock-up of a luxury sports Chevrolet, similar to a 2+2 coupe and, ironically, actually included much of the future Mustang's make-up. He said it developed nicely and turned out to be *`a hell of a good-looking package.'* Rybicki showed Bill Mitchell who immediately said *'it's `a dramatic car'* and said he would have to show Bunkie Knudsen. Apparently Knudsen looked at the proposal and exclaimed, *`Damned good-looking car, fellows, but I want to tell you something, the last thing Chevrolet needs is another car.'* Almost a year later Ford announced the Mustang at the New York World fair. **Rybicki said that Chevrolet should have had it the first time out and may have *`beaten those other fellows to the punch, but we didn't.'***

Another interesting snippet I touched on previously, was that both Haga and Mitchell were never fully happy with the final design of the first generation Camaro. Reduced engineering time and costs meant much of the gen 1 Camaro used parts of the 1968 Chevy II structure including the `cowl,' the area between the bottom of the windscreen and the bonnet. It appeared too high to Mitchell and affected the centre of the body's profile. As well, Haga wanted the front wheels to be stretched out further. However, it has been recorded that Chevrolet designers, without having to share any parts with the Chevy II, had a blank page in designing the *gen 2 Camaro* which was released in February 1970, and was exactly the style that Mitchell wanted it to be in the first place. ***See next pic.***
Terry.