

# JUST ONE OF THE GUYS

TV HOST GENEVIEVE CHAPPELL IS A MODEL WHEN IT COMES TO CAR LOVERS

“Car guys” are all around us, including some cleverly disguised as beautiful women.

To prove the point, and also have a little fun turning the tables on '50s-era hot-rod magazine tradition, it is the bright orange '56 Corvette, not the statuesque blonde, that serves as the “eye candy” in the accompanying photos. And while we don't normally post the contact information for good-looking models, we will make an exception in the case of the Corvette, which we borrowed from the showroom of Family Classic Cars in San Juan Capistrano.

Then again, most of you probably focused your attention on the lady, perhaps recognizing her as a “car guy” from her work on ESPN's “Bidding Wars” or the Mothers Polish series of car shows. For those who didn't, she is Genevieve Chappell, a

Huntington Beach local, which also explains the backdrop for our photo spread.

Genevieve notes that not only is Huntington Beach home to some of the “most talented car customizers” in the world, but that on weekends the Pacific Coast Highway along the beach provides a “big car show all year round where I can grab a frozen yogurt, sit on a beach chair, and every minute a hot rod, sweet custom car or exotic car will drive by.”

Like most car lovers, Genevieve first started noticing cars when she was a kid, in her case as a four-year-old riding in her dad's red '67 Camaro convertible.

“It was very fast, and people would give us a thumbs-up,” she recalls. Despite the Camaro, however, Genevieve feels her dad “wasn't much of a car guy because the car sat for

TV COMMENTATOR GENEVIEVE CHAPPELL CLAIMS TO BE A “50'S-ERA GIRL” WHICH IS WHY SHE LOOKS RIGHT AT HOME IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT OF THIS CLASSIC '56 CORVETTE.





**[ABOVE]** GENEVIEVE'S AUTOMOTIVE RELATED CAREER WORK BEGAN AS A SPOKES MODEL POSING WITH EVERYTHING FROM BRAKE PARTS TO SOUND SYSTEMS. WHEN PEOPLE BEGAN TO NOTICE THAT BESIDES BEING BEAUTIFUL SHE ACTUALLY KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT CARS, THEY HANDED HER A MICROPHONE TO EMCEE CAR SHOWS AND PRODUCT SEMINARS. **[OPPOSITE PAGE]** GENEVIEVE, HUSBAND MARK AND DAUGHTER KALELAI LIVE IN HUNTINGTON BEACH, WHICH MADE IT EASY TO DECIDE ON OUR PHOTO SHOOT LOCATION. AFTER ALL, ACCORDING TO BEACH BOY BRIAN WILSON, THE ULTIMATE CALIFORNIA CAR FANTASY REVOLVES AROUND THE BEACH, A BEAUTIFUL BLONDE AND A CORVETTE. EVEN THE FORD GUYS HAVE TO AGREE.

years needing an engine."

Her real indoctrination into car culture came after she moved to Whittier when she was 10. The area has been a cruising hot spot since the early '50s, and when Genevieve was living there in the '80s, the majority of the local cruisers were lowriders.

"All of my neighbors were customizers," she says. "I gained an appreciation for lowriders. The artwork, detail and mechanics that go into them are unbelievable. Watching how the cars looked as they came in and their transformation over three years blows your mind. It's like watching the creation of a work of art."

When asked if she ever got to ride in one, Genevieve laughs. "Oh yeah, once they finished the cars, they'd take all the kids in the

neighborhood for rides. In high school, my girlfriends' boyfriends would pick us up from school in cars with hydraulics. It seemed normal to me."

Things changed when she moved to the beach soon after high school, bought a used BMW with rusted-out floors and started a career in modeling with her eye on getting into television.

"I got into TV with sports programs covering NHL, NFL, almost any sport you can think of," she explains. "Then I went on to lifestyle shows - travel, beauty, fitness. But I was always being called to different car shows to be an emcee on stage or to be a spokesmodel. I would speak about products at conventions, anything from amps to brakes to spark plugs."





Her appearances at import car shows and the SEMA show led to a call from ESPN in 2006 to become a member of the Mothers Polish car shows, where she got to work with people such as customizers Chip Foose and Troy Trepanier, plus drag-racing legend Don Garlits.

"He's a trip," she says of the latter. "I worked with Don Garlits on three occasions and that was the highlight of my career."

Her work with Garlits included attending car shows across the country where they would select interesting cars and interview the owners. "You get the best stories from people about their cars," she says excitedly, recalling a few examples. "They'll tell you, 'It's the car I had in high school and I had a lot of girlfriends that year' or 'It's the car I dated my wife in during the '50s,' and then tell you all the places they went."

Her current television work takes her to classic car auctions such as the Russo and Steele Classic Car Auction in Arizona on ESPN/ESPN2 and Treasure HD, along with the second season of "Bidding Wars," which concentrates on the Kruse Fall Collector Car Auction, billed as the world's largest and oldest vintage and collector car auction.

"The auctions are both so different," she says, comparing the flashy Russo and Steele proceedings to the homey atmosphere at Kruse. "Russo and Steele reminded me of being at a craps table in Vegas, while Kruse International is like a country fair with something for everybody."

Working these fast-paced events means 12-hour days, plus studying the catalog and doing research on the cars going up for bid. Genevieve also reads a number of car magazines, including Hot Rod, to keep up on

the styling, latest trends and new products.

She draws inspiration from attending car shows and auctions in terms of the colors, interior fabrics and stitching, or even the hood ornaments.

"Women always ask me, 'Why do you like cars?' I tell them if you like interior design, if you like makeup, art, even clothing design, you can be inspired just by looking at what designers and customizers do with these cars. Plus, your husband will appreciate your interest, too."

As for her husband of 11 years (the couple have a daughter nearly 10 years old), Genevieve explains that while "I'm not twisting his arm to go," she spends far more time studying details of a show car than he does. "I keep a journal of cars that I like and take lots of notes and photos."

She says that someday soon she will put those notes to good use on a classic car of her own. And what type of car will that be?

"I'm a '50s-era girl," she declares, although she explains that the '56 Corvette posing with her is beautiful but "I tend to like a bigger car. I like a Cadillac because it's curvy and a bit tough-looking - classy but it also has flash and a bit of toughness, like an old-school gangster."

"In 2006 at the Fall Auction I saw a '52 Coupe de Ville, cream white with a dark red interior, dropped just a bit and chopped. I swear I still can't get that off my mind. I know what a guy must feel like when he sees a girl and says, 'That's my dream girl and I only saw her once.'"

Which proves our point: Being a car guy isn't about having the right chromosomes, but the proper state of mind. ■



**[FAR LEFT]** GENEVIEVE KEEPS A NOTEBOOK FILLED WITH DETAILS REGARDING COLOR SCHEMES, INTERIOR TRIM AND CUSTOM FEATURES SHE HAS SEEN AT ALL OF THE CAR SHOWS AND CLASSIC CAR AUCTIONS SHE HAS ATTENDED OVER THE YEARS. SHE PLANS TO PUT THOSE IDEAS TO USE IN BUILDING HER DREAM CAR, EITHER AN EARLY '50S CHEVY BELAIR OR CADILLAC. **[ABOVE]** HER FIRST RECOGNITION THAT CARS WERE SOMETHING COOL CAME WHEN SHE WAS FOUR-YEARS-OLD RIDING IN HER DAD'S CAMARO CONVERTIBLE.