

basically took a '67 Chevy pickup and shortened it. They reengineered it and that became the genre—not the Scout or the Bronco, but to take a pickup truck and shorten it. Because you've already got your frame, you just need to make it a little shorter, which is easily done in engineering. You've got your front and rear suspension, you've got your drivetrain, and you have the full width space in the cab. The whole idea of the Chevy Blazer was quite accidental in the way it was finally offered to the public. Suddenly the market exploded, and they [GM] didn't want to go back to the first design.

JA: The original Blazer didn't use any common truck parts?

HB: No. But let me tell you why this rendering was done. We thought that little thing was just glorious. It was a really beautiful, truck-like piece and then suddenly it was cancelled. I mean, the brochures were done. The tooling was finished. Pre-production prototypes were tested. It was like this far away from being at the Chevrolet showrooms in 1968. I was so disgusted when they scrapped it that I did that rendering just as a slam against corporate decision making. I drew it, and I put a big Chrysler Hemi in the back and turned it into a funny car. I threw in the Ford hot rod, and put in a van with an Allison V-12. We were also working on the redesigned '68 El Camino, so I threw that in there too. Then I took the all-new '67 truck design that the public hadn't even seen yet and I did that as a wild show version. The whole rendering was done exclusively to vent my anger. We were all so upset about it. Then I left GM a couple years later and while I was working at Mattel...BAM! I saw an ad in the newspaper that said "Chevy Blazer." The view was a front three-quarter and I said, "What the hell is that? That's a pickup truck!"

JA: Did you prefer the Chevy or the GMC grilles?

HB: I preferred the over/under slot motif of the Chevy, but the GMC had a more truck-like imagery. The Chevy was much too slick and car-like. Artistically, I liked the Chevy, but the GMC was more successful from a design perspective.

JA: Were there

any elements of the initial '67 design that you really liked that weren't used on the production vehicles?

HB: Yes, we did not want vent windows because at the time cars were getting rid of them. We were forced to use them, though, because the overwhelming consensus in those days was that you could crack the vent and get a little circulation through the cab.

One of the things I wanted to be sure I mentioned was that we had this thing ['67 design] fully mocked up in clay in the studio, and suddenly Chevrolet truck division said, "You know, we don't think we can afford a new truck. Take this design and put it on the existing truck." That would have been the '63, so I remember doing a series of renderings of this design applied to the architecture of the 1960 through 1966 pickup anatomy, and it looked so good in my renderings that my boss threw 'em away. He said, "We don't want management seeing this, because we want an all-new truck, and to the unschooled eye of the engineers, the cost analysis team, and the marketing people, if they see that we can take this all-new design and make it work on the current architecture, which means carrying over the roof and inner stampings, they'll never give us the go ahead for an all-new truck." So he just tossed them, allowing us to move ahead.

JA: Was the CST [Custom Sport Truck] option designating a fun truck, a performance truck, or a youthful truck?

HB: That's a good question. It's very hard to put this in the proper context because in those days, I was the only person on the GM design staff that drove a truck. Back then nobody bought a pickup truck for pleasure or sport. They bought them for utility. The idea of offering a sport truck came about because there were a few people at GM that thought trucks were just wonderful. So we offered the sport truck as sort of a trial balloon to see if anyone would buy it and sure enough in three states—Arizona, California, and Texas—people started buying them. Suddenly this cult



began to emerge of people owning trucks just because it was fun to own trucks. You can trace that back to hot rods with the roadster pickups and the closed cab pickups. Since the earliest days of hot rodding there has always been a pickup truck contingent.

JA: Do you look back and see what a great predication that was now?

HB: Oh yeah!

JA: Trucks are now more popular than cars.

HB: Yes, they are. And those were glorious days at GM design. **CT**

