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Closer Look: Chevrolet's 283 V8

Intermediate Shroud: Chevrolet's small-block V8 was introduced with the 1955 model year, and the 283 version appeared in 1957. One of the many unique aspects of this engine versus more modern small blocks that you may be used to is the intermediate shroud that bolts between the block and the bellhousing. This shroud can make things a bit tricky during teardown. It won't come off until you get the torque converter out of the way, and the torque converter is bolted to the flex plate from the back.

The Secret Window: The only way to access the bolts holding the torque converter in place is through this small window on the back side of the intermediate shroud. First, remove the starter and then use a large screwdriver to gain leverage against the teeth of the flex plate and spin it until one of the three bolts holding the torque converter to the flex plate is centered in the window. Be careful, the three bolts are the only things holding the torque converter in place. If you don't have a good grip on the converter when the last bolt comes out, it's a toe-breaker.

Squirrel House: This isn't a part of your typical teardown, but we still thought you might want to see it. When we pulled the intake manifold, we were surprised to find this mess you see here. Judging by the acorns, we assume it was a squirrel's nest. The engine was complete when we pulled it from the car, so how the critter got in and out is anybody's guess. Thankfully, we found no skeletons inside.

No Bolt: The harmonic balancer and main pulley are one unit, and they are pressed into place on the snout of the crank. There is no crankshaft bolt. If you are rebuilding your 283, it's not a bad idea to have the snout tapped so you can have the security of a crank bolt to keep the damper from flying off.

Slotted Bolts: Another quirk of early Chevy V8's is the slotted cap bolts used on the timing cover, valve covers and other places. If you are trying to keep a vintage look, then stick with the slotted bolts, but if not, conventional hex-cap bolts are a lot easier to work with.

See the complete video for this project at www.StreetMuscleAction.com/The-60-Second-Engine-Teardown/2008/10/

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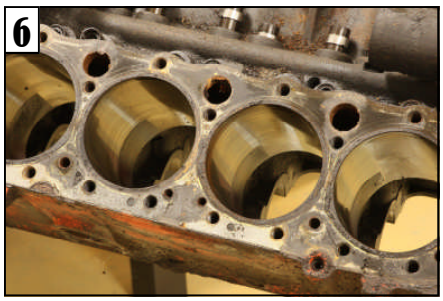
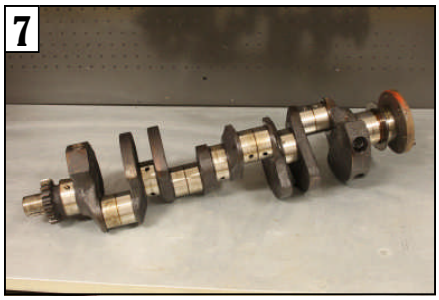
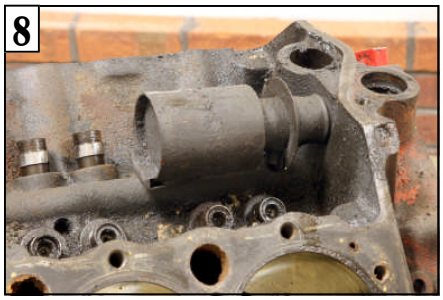


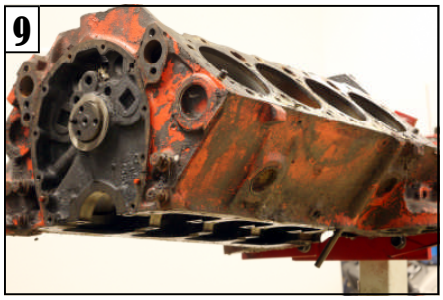
Bigger Bores: To get to 283 cubic inches in '57, Chevrolet punched out the 265 version's cylinder bores from 3.75 inches to 3.875. This helped bring the stated horsepower up to 185 horsepower (from 162) for the single carburetor version. Because of thicker cylinder walls, good 283 blocks from 1957 can be bored as much as 0.120 over. The bores are centered on the same 4.4-inch distance that has held true all the way through the LS engines.



The Crank: Stroke stayed the same at 3.00 inches when the displacement was upped in '57. Main journals are 2.298 inches, and rod journals are 2.00.



The Road Draft: This can inside the lifter valley is part of the road draft assembly, which also includes a tube that runs down the back of the block. The road draft allows engine ventilation but is notorious for smoking. If you aren't concerned with keeping everything period correct, blocking off the road draft port in the rear china wall and installing valve covers with a hole for a PCV valve can make your life easier.



Front-Mount Only: Notice the clean look on the side of the block? For 1957 the 283 was front-mount only. Some blocks have the bosses cast in, but none are drilled and tapped for engine mounts on the side of the block. You will need to take this into account if you plan to run this engine in a different chassis. By 1958 the V8 had provisions for both front and side mounts.

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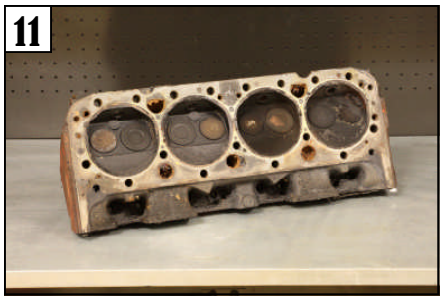
Improve the Seals: A rope seal in the rear main cap was the best technology Chevrolet had to offer back in the '50s. But today they are just aggravating and leak-prone. Replace it with a modern rubber seal.



Cylinder Heads: A closed-chamber design in the cylinder heads bumped compression up to 8.5:1. Intake valves measured 1.72 inches in diameter and the exhausts are 1.50 inches.