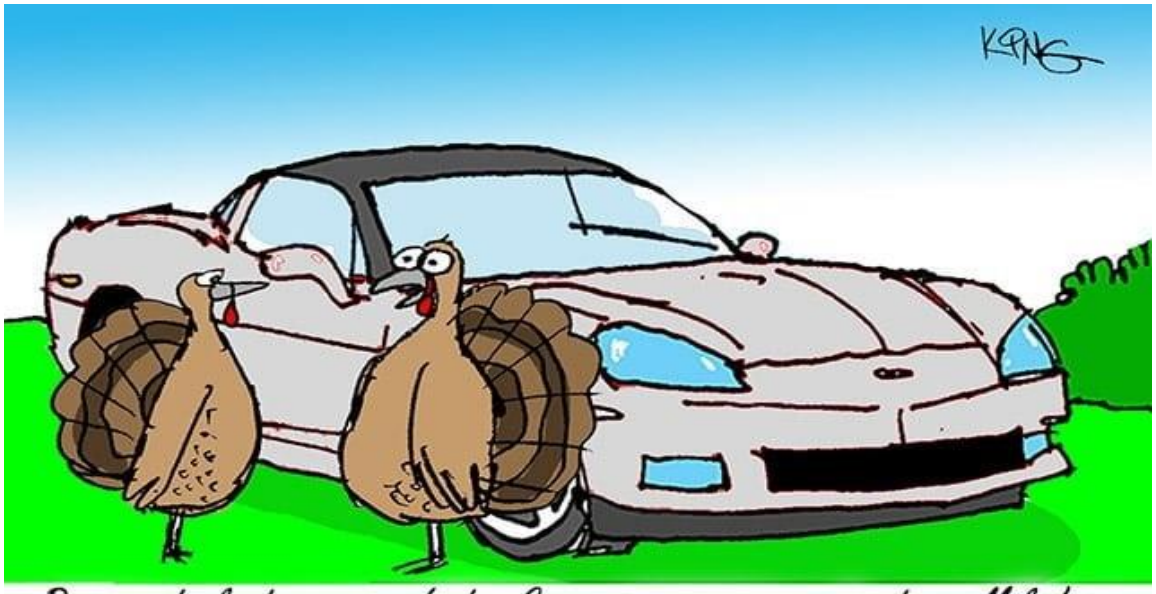
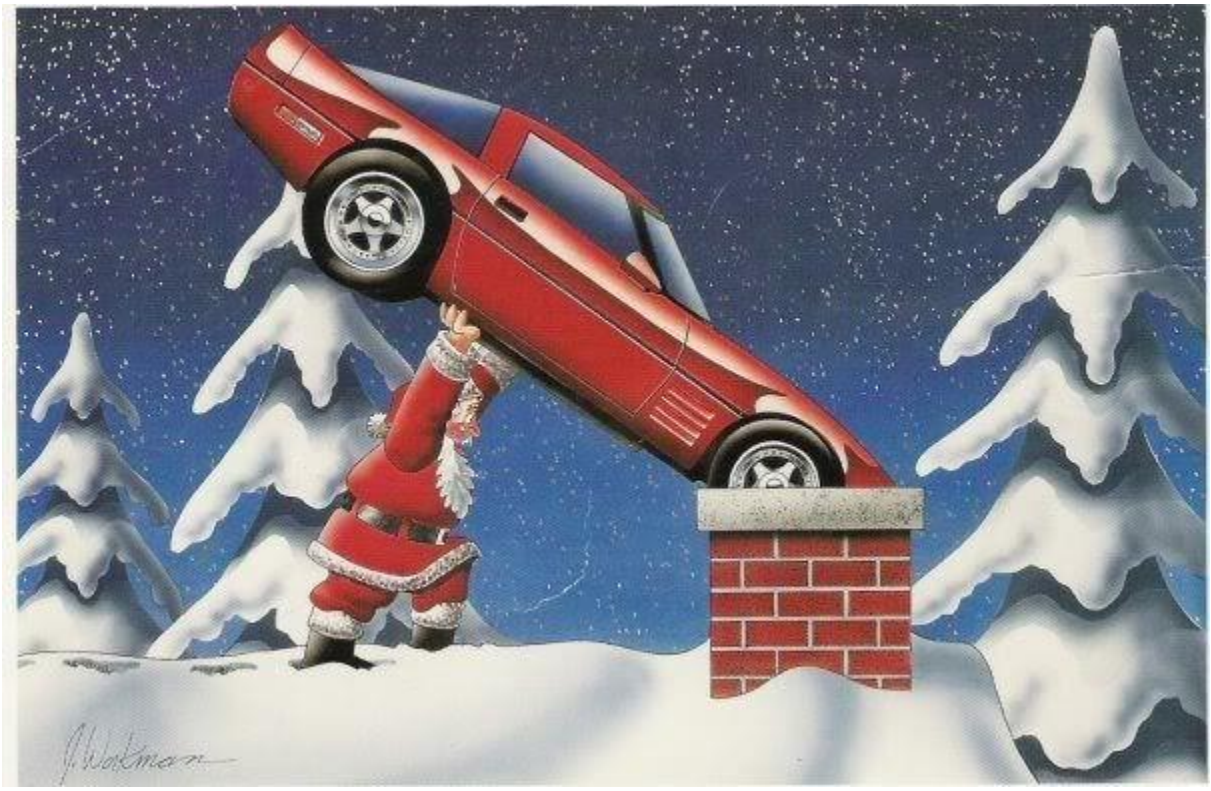
CORVETTES OF BAKERSFIELD

NEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020



Do you think the owner of this Corvette can give us a ride to Mike's house? He asked us to be there 10 hours early for Thanksgiving.



Well, it is time again for our bi-monthly newsletter. I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season. Looking forward to getting 2020 behind us and looking forward to 2021 as I am sure you are as well.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Veterans Day Cruise BCCC

Wednesday, November 11th at 11:11 a.m. We are going to participate in the BCCC Veterans Day Cruise. It will be similar to the Halloween one we just did with drive bys to the retirement homes. It will start in the parking lot of the AMtrak station across from the Beal Library and next to the Bakersfield Veterans memorial. Staging starts at 10:15 – 10:30, and we will leave there at 11:11Am sharp. We will drive by 6 senior living facilities.

There will be an optional flag raising ceremony at GreenLawn SW, on Panama Lane at 10:00 presented by the Mustang Club and also an optional drive by of the home of the only 100 year old WWII veteran living in Bakersfield presented by Honor Flight.

We are especially proud of all the veterans in our club and would like to see you there so that we can salute you for your service, which we are all very grateful for.

We need to get a count on how many cars will be participating, so PLEASE respond as soon as possible.

General Membership Meeting

Saturday, November 14th at 10:00 a.m. at Beach Park. We look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting!! Make sure to bring your chairs and masks and practice social distancing.

Gateway Restaurant Run

Saturday, November 28th.
TENTATIVE
We will keep you posted.

Christmas Party

Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, we will not be having a party this year.

Don't Forget if you Signed Up for "Giving Back at Christmas Time."

Pictures from Recent Events:

Optimal Hospice Drive-By Cruise to Assisted Living Facilities in Bakersfield
October 24, 2020

Trunk or Treat
October 2020


VOTE
FOR

AMAZING ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY KIM AND VIRGIL MILLER REGARDING THE HISTORY OF THEIR 1954 CORVETTE.

KIM'S 1954 CORVETTE

Here is a brief history of our 1954 Corvette.

It was originally purchased new in Pennsylvania by an undertaker. It was driven by the undertaker's wife, but she did not like that you had to manually put the top up, so it went up for sale. Kim's grandfather bought the corvette in 1956 and enjoyed it there in the Marianna, Pennsylvania area for years. In the early 1980's, the corvette was handed down to Kim's father. The corvette was transported to the high desert in California and was kept in a garage. The corvette was driven occasionally, usually in local parades and local high school homecomings, but it had just been sitting unused for several years. The corvette was passed down to Kim in 2017, thereby keeping it the family. The corvette was transported to Bakersfield. (It's the farthest West the corvette has ever been).

We plan on keeping the corvette as original as possible. We have been cleaning it up and returning it to good working order so we can enjoy it. The car received a new top in 2019. Eventually, we would like to pass it on to our daughters, making it a fourth-generation family owned corvette.

VIP Passenger

September 23, 2018. Daughter (3rd generation owner) taking Dad (2nd generation owner) out for a ride. Dad hadn't ridden in this car for about 15 years. Both returned with smiles from ear to ear.

Fifth Generation Trying Out Corvette

March 31, 2018. Our granddaughter trying out the corvette. She could be the fifth-generation family member to own this car.

EARLY CORVETTES

The Chevrolet Corvette (C1) is the first generation of the Corvette sports car produced by Chevrolet. It was introduced late in the 1953 model year and produced through 1962. It is commonly referred to as the "solid-axle" generation, as the independent rear suspension did not appear until the 1963 Sting Ray. The Corvette was rushed into production for its debut model year to capitalize on the enthusiastic public reaction to the concept vehicle, but expectations for the new model were largely unfulfilled. Reviews were mixed and sales fell far short of expectations through the car's early years. The program was nearly canceled, but Chevrolet would ultimately stay the course.

Origin 1951

In 1927, General Motors hired designer Harley Earl who loved sports cars. GIs returning after serving overseas in the years following World War II were bringing home MGs, Jaguars, Alfa Romeos, and the like. In 1951, Nash Motors began selling an expensive two-seat sports car, the Nash-Healey, that was made in partnership with the Italian designer Pinin Farina and British auto engineer Donald Healey, but there were few moderate-priced models. Earl convinced GM that they needed to build a two-seat sports car, and with his Special Projects crew began working on the new car, "Project Opel" in late 1951. The result was the hand-built, EX-122 pre-production Corvette prototype, which was first shown to the public at the 1953 General Motors Motorama at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City on January 17, 1953. Production began six months later. The car is now located at the Kerbeck Corvette museum in Atlantic City and is believed to be the oldest Corvette in existence.

Design and Engineering

To keep costs down, GM executive Robert F. McLean mandated off-the-shelf mechanical components, and used the chassis and suspension design from the 1949–1954 Chevrolet passenger vehicles. The drivetrain and passenger compartment were moved rearward to achieve a 53/47 front-to-rear weight distribution. It had a 102-inch wheelbase. The engine was a 235 cu in (3.85 L) inline six engine that was similar to the 235 engine that powered all other Chevrolet car models, but with a higher-compression ratio, three Carter side-draft carburetors, mechanical lifters, and a higher-lift camshaft. Output was 150 horsepower (110 kilowatts). Because there was currently no manual transmission available to Chevrolet rated to handle 150 HP, a two-speed Powerglide automatic was used. 0–60 mph (0–97 km/h) time was 11.5 seconds.

During the last half of 1953, 300 Corvettes were to a large degree, hand-built on a makeshift assembly line that was installed in an old truck plant in Flint, Michigan while a factory was being prepped for a full-scale 1954 production run. The outer body was made from then-revolutionary glass fiber reinforced plastic material. Although steel shortages or quotas are sometimes mentioned as a factor in the decision to use fiberglass, no evidence exists to support this. In calendar years 1952 and 1953 Chevrolet produced nearly 2 million steel bodied full-size passenger cars and the intended production volume of 10,000 Corvette for 1954 was only a small fraction of that.

The body engineer for the Corvette was Ellis James Premo. He presented a paper to the Society of Automotive Engineers in 1954 regarding the development of the body. Several excerpts highlight some of the key points in the body material choice:

The body on the show model was made of reinforced plastic purely as an expedient to get the job done quickly.

Although we were going ahead with the building of an experimental plastic body in order to get a car rolling for chassis development work – at the time of the Waldorf Show, we were actually concentrating body-design-wise on a steel body utilizing Kirksite tooling for the projected production of 10,000 units during the 1954 model year. It was sometime later that we decided to produce this quantity in reinforced plastic.

About this time, some doubt was expressed that we should build the 1954 model of steel. People seemed to be captivated by the idea of the fiberglass plastic body. Furthermore, information being given to us by the reinforced plastic industry seemed to indicate the practicality of fabricating plastic body parts for automobiles on a large scale.

A 55-degree raked windshield was made of safety glass, while the license plate holder was set back in the trunk, covered with a plastic window. Underneath the new body material were standard components from Chevrolet's regular car line, including the "Blue Flame" inline six-cylinder engine, two-speed Powerglide automatic transmission, and drum brakes. The engine's output, 136 hp (101 kW), was increased however from a Carter triple-carburetor system exclusive to the Corvette, but performance of the car was decidedly "lackluster". Compared to the British and Italian sports cars of the day, the Corvette lacked a manual transmission and required more effort to bring to a stop, but like their British competition, such as Morgan, was not fitted with roll-up windows; this would have to wait until sometime in the 1956 model year. A Paxton centrifugal supercharger became available in 1954 as a dealer-installed option, greatly improving the Corvette's straight-line performance, but sales continued to decline.

The Chevrolet division was GM's entry-level marque. Managers at GM were seriously considering shelving the project, leaving the Corvette to be little more than a footnote in automotive history, and would have done so if not for three important events. The first was the 1955 introduction of Chevrolet's first V8 engine since 1919. Late in the model year, the new 195 hp (145 kW) 265 small-block became available with a Powerglide automatic transmission, until the middle of the production year when a manual 3-speed became available, coupled to a 3.55:1 axle ratio, the only one offered. The engine was fitted with a single 2218S or 2351S WCFB four-barrel (four-choke) Carter carburetor. The combination turned the "rather anemic Corvette into a credible if not outstanding performer". The second was the influence of a Russian émigré (an emigrant, especially one who has fled their home country due to oppressive political conditions) in GM's engineering department, Zora Arkus-Duntov. The third factor in the Corvette's survival was Ford's introduction of the 1955 two-seat Thunderbird, which was billed as a "personal luxury car", not a sports car. Even so, the Ford-Chevrolet rivalry in those days demanded GM not appear to back down from the challenge. The original concept for the Corvette emblem incorporated an American flag into the design but was changed well before production since associating the flag with a product was frowned upon.

1953 Corvette

The 1953 model year was not only the Corvette's first production year but, at 300 produced, it was also the lowest-volume Corvette. The cars were essentially hand-built, and techniques evolved during the production cycle, so that each 1953 Corvette is slightly different. All 1953 models had Polo White exteriors, red interiors, and black canvas soft tops. Order guides showed heaters and AM radios as optional, but all 1953 models were equipped with both. Over two hundred 1953 Corvettes are known to exist today. They had independent front suspension, but featured a rigid axle supported by longitudinal leaf springs at the rear. The cost of the first production model Corvettes in 1953 was $3,490.

The quality of the fiberglass body, as well as its fit and finish, was lacking. Other problems, such as water leaks and doors that could open while the car was driven, were reported with the most severe errors corrected in subsequent units produced, but some shortcomings continued beyond the Corvette's inaugural year. By December 1953, Chevrolet had a newly equipped factory in St. Louis ready to build 10,000 Corvettes annually. However, negative customer reaction in 1953 and early 1954 models caused sales to plummet.

In 1954, only 3,640 of this model were built and nearly a third were unsold at year's end. New colors were available, but the six-cylinder engine and Powerglide automatic, the only engine and transmission available, were not what sports car enthusiasts expected. It is known that 1954 models were painted Pennant Blue, Sportsman Red, and Black, in addition to Polo White. All had red interiors, except for those finished in Pennant Blue which had a beige interior and beige canvas soft top. Order guides listed several options, but all options were "mandatory" and all 1954 Corvettes were equipped the same.

1954 Chevrolet Corvette.

In the October 1954 issue of Popular Mechanics there was an extensive survey of Corvette owners in America. The surprising finding was their opinions in comparison to foreign sports cars. It was found that 36% of those taking the survey had owned a foreign sports car, and of those, half of them rated the Corvette as better than their previous foreign sports car. Nineteen percent rated the Corvette as equal to their foreign sports car and 22% rated the Corvette as inferior. While many were well pleased with the Corvette, they did not consider it as a true sports

car. The principal complaint of the surveyed owners was the tendency of the body to leak extensively during rainstorms.

Chevrolet debuted its 265 cu in (4.34 L) small-block, 195 hp (145 kW) V8 in 1955 and the engine found its way into the Corvette. At first, the 1955 V8 Corvettes continued with the mandatory-option Powerglide automatic transmission (as did the few 6-cylinder models built), but a new three-speed manual transmission came along later in the year for V8 models only. Exterior color choices were expanded to at least five, combined with at least four interior colors. Even soft-tops came in three colors and different materials. Despite all this, only 700 1955 Corvettes were built, making it second only to 1953 in scarcity. Very few six-cylinder 1955 models were built, and all documented examples are equipped with automatic transmissions. The "V" in the Corvette emblem was enlarged and gold colored, signifying the V8 engine under the hood and 12-volt electrical systems, while 6-cylinder models retained the 6-volt systems used in 1953-54. Rare option estimate: Manual transmission (75).

Although not a part of the original Corvette project, Zora Arkus-Duntov was responsible for the addition of the V8 engine and three-speed manual transmission. Duntov improved the car's marketing and image and helped the car compete with the new V8-engined Ford Thunderbird and turned the Corvette from its lackluster performance into a credible performer. In 1956, Duntov became the director of high-performance vehicle design and development for Chevrolet helping him earn the nickname "Father of the Corvette."

Although the C1 Corvette chassis and suspension design were derived from Chevrolet's full-size cars, the same basic design was continued through the 1962 model even after the full-size cars were completely redesigned for the 1955 model year. This was due to the combined factors of the relatively high re-engineering and re-tooling costs for this low-volume production vehicle, the continued potential for cancellation of the car, and the increased size and weight of the all-new suspension design for the full-size cars, which made it unsuitable for use in the lighter weight Corvette.

A BIG THANKS TO KIM AND VIRGIL MILLER FOR PROVIDING OUR CLUB WITH THIS WONDERFUL ARTICLE.

WISHING ALL OUR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER MEMBERS A SAFE AND HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!

November	December
Dale Frye, 2nd	Lyle Joslin, 14th
Chevy Garza, 4th	Michael Rouw, 15th
Lou Ann Roux, 6th	Christine Medina, 24th
Myna Stewart, 7th	Terry Ricker, 24th
Henry Gallego, 8th	Susan Ricker, 28th
Marilyn Owen, 9th	Tina Pucilowski, 28th
Penny Young, 10th	Joseph Chesson, 29th
Melanie Mitchell, 11th	Donna Ellison, 29th
Linda McNitt, 13th	
Yolanda Atkinson, 15th	
Matt Collins, 16th	
Tom Jones, 23rd	
Von Schipper, 25th	

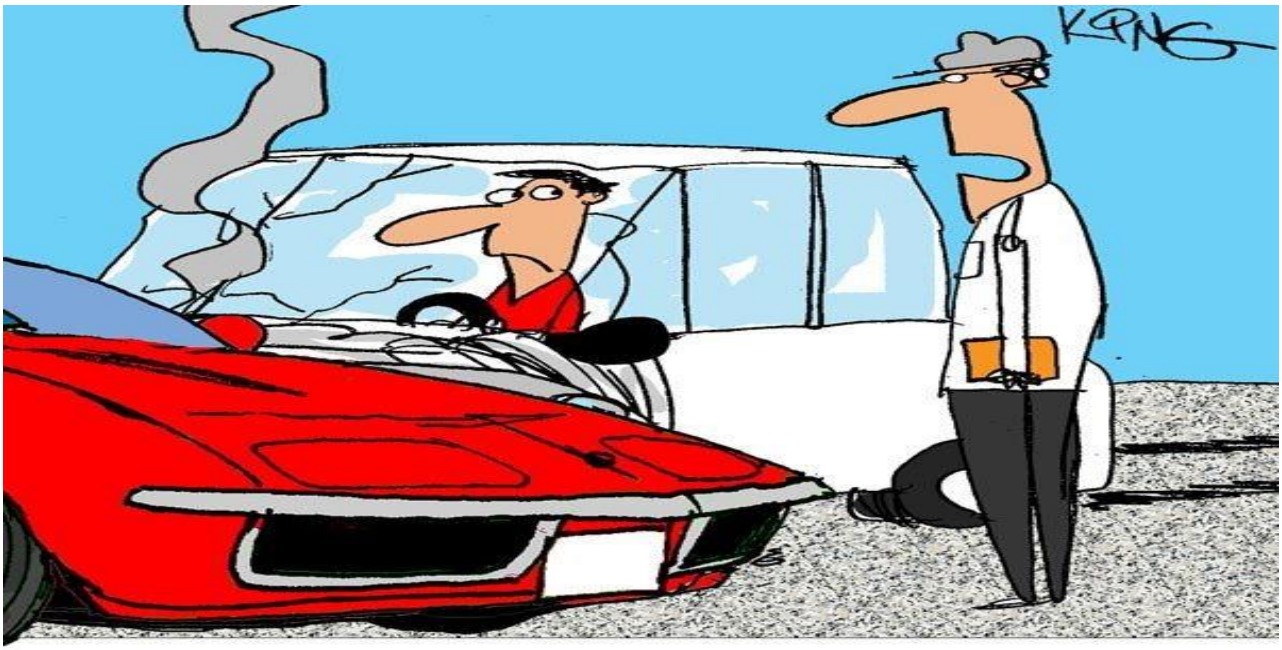
TIMELINE OF CORVETTE HISTORY

From the National Corvette Museum
C3 1968-1982

- 1968. The totally restyled Corvette features an industry first for production cars – “T-top” removable roof panels. Lines of the new Corvette closely resemble those of the Mako Shark II show car. Headlamps are now of the “pop-up” design, backlit.
- 1969. The 250,000th Corvette – a gold Convertible – comes off the St. Louis production line on November 19. “Stingray” script is added above the fender louvers.
- 1969. The ZR-1 optional factory-installed racing package is offered on Corvette for the first time.
- 1970. The new LT1 Small Block V8 engine option with solid lifters is introduced and rated at 370 HP.
- 1971. One of the least-changed models in appearance, Chevrolet essentially handled 1971 production as an extension of 1970.
- 1972. The last to feature both front and rear chrome bumpers, a bright egg-crate grill, side-fender grills.

- 1973. 4,000 serial numbers were never built, so the serial number ends with 34,464 but production totaled 30,464.
- 1977. The 500,000th Corvette – a white coupe with red interior – is produced in St. Louis on March 15.
- 1978. The fastback body style marks Corvette's 25th year of production. The traditional crossed-flag emblem is replaced with a special anniversary emblem. The special edition of the Corvette is the Indy 500 Pace Car replica – silver and black.
- 1981. Mid-year, production shifted from St. Louis, MO to Bowling Green, KY. This was the first time a model was built in two locations simultaneously.
- 1982. The first Corvette model year to feature the convenience of hatchback design (introduced with the Collector's Edition model). Four-speed automatic transmissions with overdrive is standard, with no manual transmission offered until well into the 1984 model.

If anyone is interested in writing a corvette related article, just let me know. I would be happy to add your article to the next newsletter. Deadline to submit an article is the 5th of the month. Newsletters are done bi-monthly so the next cutoff date will be February 5, 2021.



"If you would've hit a regular car I would've given you a ticket. Since you hit a Corvette, you'll get 10 years."

Signing off until next time. Have a happy Holiday Season *stuffed* full of fun!!!

Donnie Hansen
Newsletter Editor