



Stress Kracks

Gate City Corvette Club

MACMULKIN CHEVROLET
3 Marmon Drive
New England Auto Village
Nashua, NH 03060

Sponsor of
Gate City Corvette Club

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<https://www.facebook.com/GateCityCorvetteClub>

DECEMBER 2019

First Word

Well, it's another year under our belt, and what a year it was! We had a great season getting together for many fun cruises and events. Fortunately, there are already plans in the works for future activities to help get us through the long winter months.

We had a huge turnout at our November meeting for the election of Board of Directors for 2020. Thank you to Larry Shields, Dean Gagne, Dave Hill, and Tony Centrella for continuing in their positions for a second term. Also, thank you to Dave Osgood for joining the board as secretary. I have been very proud to serve as your president and look forward to another year in this role.

I want to wish everyone and their families a Happy Thanksgiving. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Hope to see you all at our holiday party on January 18th.

Best wishes,

Dennis Corrigan



I'd like to thank all of our members for a great 2019 Corvette season. I know it hasn't snowed yet and with some of the temps occasionally rising up, there are a few folks that are probably still looking to grab any final runs we can sneak in before we have to put them away for good until spring. But just because the cars are getting their Stabil and getting their power tenders hooked up, and the club meetings are over for the year, doesn't mean that we're done being active!

We've got an upcoming club trip to see Ford vs. Ferrari in theaters after a group dinner on Friday. We've got our club Adopt-a-Family shopping trip coming up shortly where we can help make 10 kids' Christmas a whole lot brighter. We've got the Ice Cream Social at the Veterans Home in Tilton (come and dance & sing along – don't make me the only club member up there doing the 12 Days of Christmas again). Plus, our Club Holiday Party in January is coming up sooner than you'd think.

We'll try to get more fun stuff on the calendar to keep us entertained and having fun through the late fall, winter, and early spring period until we can get the cars back on the road. I'd like to take one more opportunity here to specially thank all the club members who have helped organize club events this year. While I am always ready to thank Dean and the others who help make Spring Fling happen each year, some other folks like Norm & Sue Wood, Claudia Feidler, Alan Factor, and Kevin & Georgia LeBlond and others I'm sure that are escaping my mind this moment... you all are awesome. All of you who help think of fun things to do, get the word out, and help organize the event as it is happening... you are instrumental to the success & fun of the club. My hat is off to all of you.

So, here's to another great year drawing to a close, but I still hope to see many of you in the weeks we still have left this year.

-Larry "The Veep" Shields



That Poor Vette...

Larry Shields



This month's poor Vette is going to take a step back from all the complete wrecks that have dominated the recent months. This month's entry reminds us all that there's a good reason many of us don't drive our Vettes in the winter. The black 2020 C8 was observed after having a bit of an issue on the snow-covered roads in Detroit. It looks like this might have been a Z51 which would have come with the Pilot Sport 4S summer tires, which may have also been a factor in the loss of control.

Sourced from: <https://www.corvetteblogger.com/2019/11/12/accident-black-2020-corvette-stingray-stuck-on-snow-covered-highway/>

President: Dennis Corrigan began the November 8, 2019 meeting at 7:06. He took a head count for dinner at Shorty's. **Please note: There is no meeting in December.** There will be a very brief business meeting at the holiday party in January.

Membership Director: Tony Centrella reported there were no potential new members present. He announced the November/December birthdays. He provided new business cards for the club and said that window decals are coming.

Officer at Large: Dave Hill reviewed upcoming events. He reminded everyone of the Ice Cream Social at the Tilton Veteran's Home planned for December 1st. (Please see flyer and information in this newsletter.) Also, the GCCC Holiday Party is planned for January 18th at the Puritan Event Center in Manchester, NH.

The membership voted to fund the purchase of ice cream for the Ice Cream Social at the Tilton Veteran's Home in December.

Treasurer: Dean Gagne presented the treasurer's report. The report was accepted by the membership. All bills have been paid and the proceeds from the monthly 50/50 raffle have been added, as well as payments for annual dues and the holiday party. (Dean will send out an email with details of amounts due for annual dues and holiday party.) Donations are being dispersed to the Nashua Soup Kitchen and Adopt-a-Family as agreed upon by the membership. This year we have earmarked a total of \$1000 for donation - \$200 per child for clothing and other gifts. Individual donations are also accepted. Heather Shields will coordinate an evening of shopping at the Walmart in Amherst.

Secretary: Allie DeCampo posted minutes from the last meeting in the newsletter. The minutes were accepted by the membership. Allie thanked everyone who took time to write articles and send photos for the November newsletter. She asked that members please continue to submit news items over the winter months.

Election of the Board of Directors for 2020: There was only one candidate nominated for each office so the nominees were elected by unanimous consent. The membership also voted to allow Dean to continue for another consecutive year as treasurer. The officers elected are as follows:

President: Dennis Corrigan
Vice President: Larry Shields
Secretary: David Osgood

Treasurer: Dean Gagne
Officer-at- Large: Dave Hill
Membership Director: Tony Centrella

Vice President/Activities Director: Larry Shields was unable to attend the meeting.

Georgia and Kevin LeBlond have been thinking up ideas for activities now that the cars are tucked away for the winter. They have planned a fun evening of dinner and a movie for Friday, November 22nd. They are currently researching restaurants convenient to the theater. The movie is "Ford vs. Ferrari" at the theater in

Tyngsboro. Also, they suggested an evening of dinner and bowling at Leda Lanes in Nashua for January or February.

Holiday Party: The reservation for the GCCC Holiday Party has been made for January 18th at the Puritan Event Center. The cost is \$50.00 per person...half will be returned the night of the event to those who attend. Payment is due by December 15th. If you wish to participate in the Yankee Swap, please bring one gift per person valued at around \$25.00 - \$30.00 wrapped and marked for man, woman or either.

Spring Fling: There was a discussion about how to increase Spring Fling participation. A suggestion was made to promote on a variety of car enthusiast internet sites. Dean suggested a committee be formed for this purpose. In response to which components of the show might generate more revenue, Allie suggested expanding and promoting the coral parking. Dave Osgood suggested a silent auction in addition to the raffle table. The items on the silent auction would be of greater value than the items on the raffle table. The discussion switched to changing the branding of the show to an "all car" show. Dean made it clear that if we were to host this type of show, judging would only include Corvettes. Dave Osgood asked members to ponder what the end goal would be for making changes to an already successful show.

The winner of the 50/50 raffle was Allie DeCampo. The winner of the membership raffle was not present.

Dennis adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.

Allie

Congrats to Carla & Moe on the purchase of their new Corvette!



Carla and Moe Lussier

We bid a fond farewell to our 1981 and welcome to our 2013 Grand Sport.

Although storage is our best option for the next few months...we're already looking forward to the upcoming Corvette season!



GCCC Membership Report

By: Tony Centrella

To Join Gate City Corvette Club, visit our website

<http://www.gatecitycorvetteclub.com/>

and click on the Membership Info Link

For more information, please contact: Tony Centrella (Membership Director) at

603-321-7546 or allertnec@gmail.com

75 Members – 4 Honored – 4 Honorary

Join us in Celebrating the December Birthdays



Bob DeMeo 12/04

Georgia LeBlond 12/12

Dan Feidler 12/13

Dave Osgood 12/17

Mariane Gearin 12/20

Richard Pratt 12/31

If you do not see your birthday listed and want it to be included next year, please send it to Tony Centrella.

Hints and Tips:

- If you are an Amazon shopper, use the <https://smile.amazon.com> URL to have Amazon donate a portion of your purchase price to your favorite charity, and we hope that you will select the National Corvette Museum! Every little bit helps to preserve the Corvette treasures at the museum.
- And let's not forget to become a member of the National Corvette Museum as well!
- Save the Wave

Embroidered club clothing: Maverick's Stitch and Screen, 522 Amherst Street, Unit 28, Nashua, NH
Contact Norma or Nathan 603-521-8358 Mavericksstitchandscreen.com

END OF AN ERA:

LAST C7 STINGRAY CORVETTE DELIVERED TO MUSEUM

<https://www.corvettemuseum.org/final-c7-stingray-corvette-delivered-at-museum/>



Last C7 Stingray Corvette delivered to National Corvette Museum after rolling off the assembly line at the GM Plant across the street in Bowling Green 11-20-19

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. (WTVQ) – The National Corvette Museum was created as a facility to house the history of the iconic American sports car, and a part of the car’s recent history has joined the Museum’s collections. On Wednesday, November 20, the final C7 Stingray to roll off the GM Bowling Green Assembly line was officially delivered at the Museum.

“As a company, from General Motors, the Plant and the Museum – we all try to work together to do everything we can to preserve the history of this car,” said Kai Spande, GM Bowling Green Assembly Plant Manager. “During the planning of the final production units, GM and Harlan Charles asked if there was an interest from the Museum in getting one of the last cars.”

Museum President and CEO Dr. Sean Preston was thrilled to have the opportunity for the Museum to own such an important piece of history. “GM offered the opportunity to purchase the car to us. The Corvette is an iconic car in and of itself, and the last Stingray Coupe with front engine and manual transmission is an iconic car itself as well.”

The car was spec’d out with a purpose – a white exterior and red interior just like the very first 1953 Corvettes. “I think it’s important that the Museum have the last front engine Stingray in the collection because it’s truly a milestone in Corvette history,” said Derek E. Moore, Director of Collections / Curator for the Museum. “The Stingray nameplate holds such significance in Corvette history with the first Stingray Racer, followed by the first production Stingray in the second generation, and though we still see the Stingray nameplate in the eighth generation cars, it’s a momentous time where we are moving from the front engine design to a much more advanced design of a mid-engine. We at the Museum want to capture that history when such a significant change happens.”

The Museum owns several Stingrays, from early models to the more modern generation, but Moore said having this one as a ‘bookend’ to that collection is important history. The next step for the Museum was raising funds to purchase the Corvette.

“We have many Museum supporters and donors, but one came to mind with regard to passion for Corvette history, education and the Museum,” said Moore.

Ivan Schrodt began his relationship with the Museum as a regular member, and like many others, began attending events and getting to know people at the Museum and other enthusiasts. Eventually he became a Lifetime Member and was later asked to join the Museum’s Board of Directors, serving a five-year term. “I really believe in the Museum and what it does to preserve the history of the Corvette, and serve the enthusiasts of the Corvette,” said Schrodt. “I became a supporter and donor over the years because I think it is important to preserve historic cars. It’s nice when the Museum can have some of those one-of-a-kind cars in their collection. This is the last front engine Stingray Corvette with manual transmission that will ever be made. It’s a lot of lasts of its kind.”

Schrodt shared what an amazing car the C7 is, owning a 2016 Z06 himself. “It’s an incredible car. Having a car that’s an absolutely fantastic car, but the last of its kind, I think that’s a great thing to have in the Museum.”

“I personally believe that this is just another example of the symbiotic relationship we have between the factory, the program team and the Museum,” added Spande. “We work together for the benefit of our customers, the benefit of the Museum and the overall history of the car, which is what the Museum is here for. We’re very excited that this car will stay in Bowling Green and it will be in the Museum forever.”

The ‘bookend’ to the seventh generation Corvette was presented in a ceremony at the Museum on Corvette Boulevard, which included a finishing touch of autographs on the engine cover by representatives of GM Corvette Assembly and Schrodt. The car was driven down the Boulevard and Victory Lane by Preston and Schrodt before being placed on display as part of the ‘Generations’ exhibit in the Museum’s Skydome. Thank to Ivan and his wife, Mary, for their continued support of the Museum, history and education of Corvette!

Visitors to the Museum can see the car on display seven days a week, from 8am until 5pm CT. The Museum is located at I-65, Exit 28 in Bowling Green. More information is available at corvettemuseum.org.



Christmas Giving - Adopt-a-Family

by Heather Shields

Reprinted from February 2019

One of the many things our club prides itself on, is the various charities we're able to help each year. By far my favorite since joining the club has been the Adopt-A-Family program we do over the holiday season. While it has changed drastically from the early days of the club, years before I joined, the spirit of it still holds a warm spot for many club members who've been there since its inception. While we can no longer have a hands on approach as in past years, there is something just overwhelmingly wonderful in being able to insure that kids have a wonderful Christmas.

This year made me especially proud to be part of the club due to the overwhelming support that was given by our members. Due to the more than generous donations and a surprise matching donation, we were able to 'adopt' a total of eleven children and make sure they had not only gifts under the tree but plenty of warm clothing for this winter. In addition to that, we were able to make sure ten families were able to have a fantastic Christmas dinner as well.

Beyond the donations, what always is special about helping this charity is getting together with various club members and doing the actual shopping. It's always a fun and often amusing time as we try and navigate how to wrangle bicycles and carts full of clothes and toys. (Jim solves this by just riding his bike down the aisle.). Even more amusing is when those of us shopping are stumped by whatever the latest 'in thing' all the kids must have and none of us have ever heard about. (All I can say is thank goodness for smart phones!) The smiles and laughs we have while mingling back and forth as highlighted by the deer in headlights looks on the cashiers' faces when we roll up with our line of carts and bikes and say, yes, it's all one order.

So thank you Gate City for helping such a great charity. For all the extra donations we are given every year to allow us to exceed the number of kids we adopt every year. And especially to those members who come out and brave the Holiday Shopping season to bring a little extra joy to the world.



Photo Provided by Tom Stewart



Gate City Corvette Club

Holiday Party

January 18, 2020

*Puritan Conference Center
245 Hooksett Road
Manchester, NH*

6:00 – 11:00 pm

Cost: \$50.00 per person

Delicious Buffet, Cash Bar, Yankee Swap

*If you wish to participate in the Yankee Swap,
please bring one gift per person valued at \$25.00
wrapped and marked for man, woman or either.*

*Please submit payment by December 15, 2019
to Dean Gagne, 11 Blackbird Dr., Bedford, NH, 03110
(Half of your payment will be refunded to you the
evening of the party if you attend.)*

Hope to see you there!!!



Save the Dates

- ✚ Tilton Veteran's Home – December 1st 2:30

See the Flyer and Sunshine Cart information below

- ✚ GCCC Holiday Party – Jan 18th 6:00 Puritan Backroom

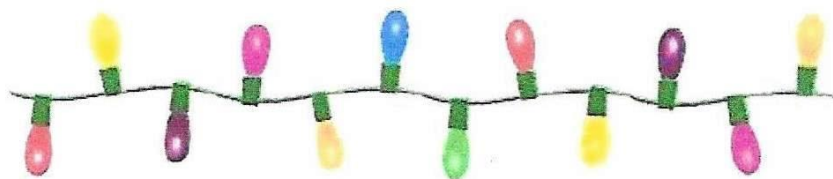
Checks for Dues and Holiday Party are due to Dean Gagne by December 15th

These dates are for club events where we want to ensure as many members as possible are available to participate. Please keep these in mind when making your Corvette season plans.

The season is winding down, but there are still plenty of things to do, some are listed here. If you need more, be sure to check out the club's event listing in [Facebook](#).



Figure 1 Calendar courtesy of The National Corvette Museum



JOHN and CAROL SLAVIN

Invite you to the 8th Annual

Holiday Ice Cream Social

at the

New Hampshire Veterans Home
139 Winter Street, Tilton, NH 03276



Please join us in honoring our **New Hampshire Veterans**

December 1st, 2019 from 2:30Pm to 3:30PM

There will be Ice Cream, a Sing-a-Long, and Raffles

John and Carol Slavin will be coordinating details
carolaslavin@yahoo.com

Anyone attending that would like to bring a "Goody Bag" (see attached list) or checkers, chess, or a table game may do so. No food please!

NHVV Sunshine Cart

The *Sunshine Cart* provides a wide variety of personal care items for our residents free of charge. The Sunshine cart is particularly important to those residents who are not able to attend shopping trips as it allows them a "shopping experience" at no cost. We are looking for the following list of items to be donated to The Sunshine Cart.

- ❖ Denture cleaning tablets: Efferdent or Polident
- ❖ Denture adhesive: Fixodent or Poligrip *
- ❖ Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- ❖ Stick Deodorants Men's & Women's scented *
- ❖ Hair combs and brushes
- ❖ Emery boards Toe Nail Clippers/ Nail Clippers
- ❖ Body wash Men's & Women's scented
- ❖ Pre-shave * After Shave: (in lotion or gel form)
- ❖ Women's perfume
- ❖ Alcohol Free Mouthwash
- ❖ Lip balm/Chap stick
- ❖ Kleenex tissues (plus lotion brand is nice) *
- ❖ Body Lotion and/or Baby body lotion
- ❖ Individually packaged eyeglass cleaner wipes
- ❖ Shampoo: 2 in 1 Shampoo, Baby Shampoo, or Dandruff Shampoo *
- ❖ Postage Stamps

A few GUIDELINES when purchasing donations:

- ❖ Residents prefer standard size products that can be used for an extended period.
- ❖ **We do not stock travel size items on the Sunshine Cart. Unsafe items such as, liquids containing alcohol, aerosol sprays, medical items, Q-Tips, body powder or food products are not accepted.**
- ❖ **We have received a lot of 3-1 (shampoo, conditioner, body wash) which the residents don't like so we are currently asking to avoid purchasing.**
- ❖ Before purchasing products, please contact Lisa Punderson at (603) 527-4449 or e mail lisa.punderson@nhvh.nh.gov for additional information.
- ❖ If you would like to make a monetary donation toward sunshine cart items, please make your check payable to NHVV Benefit Fund and reference "Sunshine Cart" on the memo line.

Corvette Winter Storage



This photo just never gets old!

Photo provided by Al & Carol Whittier - owners of "This Poor Vette"

The Corvette Action Center has a detailed article entitled “**Corvette Winter Storage Tips**” with lots of helpful information on how to ready your Corvette for winter storage.

Corvette Action Center

<https://www.corvetteactioncenter.com/tech/care/storage.html>

Topics covered in detail are:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Washing | 7. Battery |
| 2. Cleaning tires and wheels | 8. Fluid levels / Fuel stabilizer |
| 3. Polishing and waxing | 9. Mothballs |
| 4. Care of exterior trim | 10. Exhaust system |
| 5. Interior care | 11. Car cover |
| 6. Engine care | 12. Engine start |

Corvette Storage Checklist

Vehicle Information		
Model Year: _____	Model: _____	VIN: _____
Storage Information		
Mileage: _____	Begin Storage Date: _____	End Storage Date: _____

Engine			
1. Air Filter:	Replaced: <input type="checkbox"/>		N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Brake Fluid:	Replaced: <input type="checkbox"/>	Topped Off: <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>
	Type: _____		
3. Coolant:	Replaced: <input type="checkbox"/>	Topped Off: <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>
	Type: _____		
4. Clutch Fluid:	Replaced: <input type="checkbox"/>	Topped Off: <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>
	Type: _____		
5. Oil & Filter:	Replaced: <input type="checkbox"/>	Topped Off: <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>
	Type: Oil: _____ Filter: _____		
6. Transmission Fluid:	Replaced: <input type="checkbox"/>	Topped Off: <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>
	Type: _____		
7. Battery Charger Attached:	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Mothballs Added:	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>
8. Fuel Stabilizer Added:	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A: <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes:			

Exterior

1. Washed: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐
2. Polished: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐
3. Waxed: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐

Type: Polish: _____ Wax: _____

4. Windows Washed: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐
5. Weatherstripping & Hardware Treated: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐
6. Tires Cleaned/Dressed: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐

Type: _____

7. Wheels Cleaned: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐
8. Tires & Wheels Removed: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐
6. Tires Over-Inflated: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐

Pressure: _____

9. Exhaust Covered: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐

Notes:

Interior

1. Vacuumed: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐
2. Windows Washed: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐
3. Leather & Vinyl Cleaned/Conditioned: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐

Type: Cleaner: _____ Conditioner: _____

4. Dessicant Added: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐

Notes:

My Other Ride Is a Spaceship

How the Corvette Became the Car of Astronauts

<https://www.airspacemag.com/space/my-other-ride-is-spaceship-astronauts-corvettes-180972234/>

The futuristic lines of the 1959 Sting Ray racer appealed to Corvette aficionado Alan Shepard, shown here with GM designer William Mitchell, who used the car on his daily commute. (Courtesy GM Heritage Center)



Alan Shepard and William Mitchell in Corvette

By Cory Graff

AIR & SPACE MAGAZINE JUNE 2019 30805384

It all started with Alan Shepard.

He bought his first Chevrolet Corvette, a used 1953 model, from his father-in-law for \$1,500 in 1954. Five years later, when he became one of seven men chosen for NASA's Mercury program, Shepard bought another used Corvette—this time a 1957 model.

Shepard bragged to Life photographer Ralph Morse that the car went “like a bat out of hell,” and even wrangled clearance from the tower at Langley Air Force Base to charge down the runway at over 100 miles an hour to show what the car could do.

After Shepard joined NASA, he struck up a friendship with General Motors engineer Zora Arkus-Duntov, and soon after Shepard became a sensation as the first American in space, Arkus-Duntov persuaded the carmaker to give him a brand new 1962 Corvette. GM ordinarily didn't give away cars, but in the case of Shepard, the company recognized a terrific publicity opportunity.

Then Jim Rathmann, the owner of a Chevrolet/Cadillac dealership in Melbourne, Florida, took things further. A former Indianapolis 500 winner, Rathmann was as savvy at business as he was behind the wheel. In coordination with GM, he offered the Mercury astronauts a top-of-the-line car at a very reasonable lease—\$1 per year. After the lease was up, the spacemen could buy the car outright, should they want, also at an

astoundingly favorable price. Rathmann found he had no trouble selling a Corvette formerly owned by an astronaut.

Four of the Mercury Seven took Rathmann up on the offer: Al Shepard, of course; Gus Grissom, Gordon Cooper, and Deke Slayton. (Wally Schirra drove a Corvette for a short time before switching back to European sports cars, while Scott Carpenter favored a blue Shelby Cobra.)

And then there was John Glenn. He drove a German-made NSU Prinz with a 2-cylinder engine that produced more noise than power. It could do 60 mph, wide open, on a flat road. “My transportation was kindergarten level by comparison [to the other astronauts],” he wrote in his 2000 memoir, “and I took a lot of ribbing about it.”



Apollo 12 with Corvettes

The Apollo 12 crew (from left) Pete Conrad, Richard Gordon, and Alan Bean show off their Corvettes’ paint scheme, designed, in part, by Bean. (Ralph Morse / The LIFE Picture Collection / Getty Images)

Cooper, Shepard, and Grissom raced their Corvettes along the flat beaches around Cape Canaveral. Shepard regularly won, at least at first. Eventually Grissom began to win, telling a fuming Shepard, “I guess you’ve lost your touch.”

Shepard took his Corvette to Rathmann to fix the “problem” with his car, but nothing helped. After a few more races, writes Shepard’s biographer Neal Thompson in *Light This Candle*, Grissom and Cooper let Shepard in on the joke. They’d had Rathmann adjust the gear ratios on Shepard’s car so that it accelerated more slowly.

Shepard played a few pranks of his own. When Walter C. Williams, Project Mercury’s director of operations, needed a car to get to a meeting at Cocoa Beach, Shepard threw him his keys and said, “Oh heck, take mine.” “Really, you don’t mind?” Williams asked. “I insist,” said Shepard.

As Williams zoomed off, Shepard picked up the phone, and dialed security, saying “Some SOB just stole my Corvette and is heading for the south gate.” Shepard chuckled as he imagined the guards dragging Williams out of the car and onto the pavement.

When future Flight Director Gene Kranz first arrived at Patrick Air Force Base, pondering how he'd get to Cape Canaveral, a fellow passenger on the aircraft offered him a ride. Moments after Kranz climbed into the man's Corvette, the driver whipped the car into a 180-degree turn, punched it, and raced up the taxiway, plunging out onto the street in a four-wheel slide.

Rocketing through the security gate, the MPs didn't shout at him to stop or slow down...they saluted. On the highway, doing 80 or 90, the man finally turned to Kranz, stuck out his hand, and said, "Hi, I'm Gordo Cooper." As Kranz would later write, "I'd met my first Mercury astronaut."

Reporters covering the Mercury Seven felt it was only a matter of time before one of them died in an accident. Shepard spun out on a rain-soaked bridge and was nearly side-swiped by an oncoming car. Rathmann, with Grissom riding shotgun, flung Grissom's Corvette into the mud 200 feet off the road when he slid out of a rainy curve doing 80 miles an hour. A tow-truck pulled the battered car back to Rathmann's shop. Rathmann was always good for another Corvette. "They would get a new car every six months, as soon as the ashtrays were full or whatever, then that was it, they would turn them in," recalled then NASA simulator instructor Francis E. "Frank" Hughes, in a 2013 oral history.

One of the perks for NASA secretaries was driving the year-old Corvettes from Houston to a half-way point and swapping them out for the new models. "The guys trusted us with them," said Jamye Flowers Coplin in a 2008 oral history, "which was probably a huge mistake."

Dazzling, or scaring, passengers was half the fun. Hughes recalls getting a ride from Grissom the day they met. "He puts it into gear, and he just floors it, and we go racing up this half-mile gravel road, and he's going about 85 miles an hour. When he turns onto the two-lane road, without any slowdown or stop, now he's got it up to about 120, going toward the freeway. He looks at me with a big grin and said, 'Are you having a good time?' "

Later, Hughes became a passenger in Deke Slayton's convertible Corvette on a quick jaunt from Houston to the Cape. "But there is a problem," Deke told him, "Somebody broke into my car and they cut the top."

"So we get in the car, and now we're going 90 miles an hour down Interstate 10 to go back home," Hughes related. "Periodically, this gray tape would come loose...[and it] sounds like a machine gun over your head.... We'd stop and tape it back up again.... Did we just drive at 60? No, hell no."

NASA's John H. Boynton, who drove a Jaguar XKE, recalled regularly encountering Shepard on the Gulf Freeway, headed to the office. "I would see him, I'd hit the gas, he'd hit the gas. We raced for about three, maybe four years. Each time I always beat him, until the last year that we raced. I remember he got that new 427.... He hit the gas and I hit the gas, and we were going side by side. I looked at my speedometer, and I was doing 133 miles an hour. The front end of my car was starting to float.... A car was way up ahead of me.... I backed off the thing, he went shooting on past. So he never did beat me, but we were tied at that point. I used to race Al Shepard. That's how we lived, 100 miles an hour all the time," he said in a 2009 oral history.

Everyone wanted to be an astronaut—or at least look like one. Soon, aviator sunglasses, Ban-Lon sport shirts, and huge watches were seen all over the Cape, and so were Corvettes.



Buzz Aldrin arrives at Kennedy's Flight Crew Training Building, on July 9, 1969

One of those enthusiasts was future U.S. Congressman Bill Posey (R-FL), who purchased one of Gus Grissom's former Corvettes in 1965. Just 16 years old, Posey immediately quit sports and began bagging groceries to pay for the fuel-injected Sebring Silver 1963 Sting Ray convertible. Posey would go on to work with McDonnell Douglas on the third stage of the Saturn V.

A former NASA employee recalls walking to the cafeteria in the Florida sun: "The parking lot was full of Corvettes. Looked like a Chevy dealer almost.... We just got so used to it. We didn't think anything about it, which is why I never took a picture of it. I wish I had."

Flight controller Dutch von Ehrenfried bought one of Shepard's outdated Sting Rays to be part of the club—and then shattered the fiberglass nose of the car against a guard's truck.

Much more somber was the day Betty Grissom returned a Lynndale Blue 1967 Sting Ray convertible to Jim Rathmann's showroom. Grissom had barely had time to drive the car before his death in the Apollo 1 fire along with Ed White and Roger Chaffee. The car survives today in the hands of a collector, as does Neil Armstrong's 1967 Marina Blue Sting Ray, and Jim Lovell's Silverstone Silver 1968 Corvette. NASA propulsion engineer Grady E. McCright nearly dinged Lovell's Corvette while dueling for a parking spot in Houston. "Just a few weeks ago he was in a crippled spacecraft coming back from the moon and he successfully got home, and I almost hit him in the parking lot of Eckerd's Drug," he said in a 2000 oral history.

Periodically, one of these vehicles comes up at auction. In 1971, one collector located Alan Bean's 1969 Corvette at a GM lot in Austin, Texas. Each of the Apollo 12 astronauts—Pete Conrad, Dick Gordon, and Alan Bean—had matching "AstroVettes" painted Riverside Gold with black custom "wings." The trio, decked out in their spacesuits, were photographed leaning against their distinctive cars for Life magazine with a mock-up of the Lunar Module Intrepid in the background. Above the Sting Ray nameplate emblem, a special red, white, and blue insignia carried the initials CDR (Conrad, Commander), CMP (Gordon, Command Module Pilot) and LMP (Bean, Lunar Module Pilot). Only Bean's car appears to have survived and is today owned by car enthusiast Danny Reed, of Austin, Texas.



Astronaut Corvettes in National Corvette Museum

On loan to the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Kentucky, Apollo astronauts' Corvettes appear in the exhibit "From Gas Station to Space Station," which runs through July. The 1971 white model belonged to Apollo 15 Command Module pilot Al Worden; the 1969 gold one, to Apollo 12 Lunar Module pilot Alan Bean. (National Corvette Museum)

Sometime in 1971, NASA cancelled the one-dollar car program, fearing a backlash from the public. However, just under the wire, Rathmann bestowed a set of three 1971 Corvettes on the astronauts of Apollo 15, painted in Mille Miglia Red (Jim Irwin), Classic White (Al Worden), and Bridgehampton Blue (Dave Scott).

Apollo 15 was the first of three missions to bring a Lunar Roving Vehicle (LRV) into space, allowing astronauts to explore locations farther from the landing sites. The Boeing-built LRV by no means had the fearsome styling of a Sting Ray, but it did have an ounce of the Corvette's DNA. One of the major subcontractors on the LRV project that supplied systems including the wheels, motors, and suspension, was General Motors, the builder of the astronauts' sports car.

The LRV had real advantages for science, enabling astronauts to cover more distance and tote heavy equipment and bring more samples back home. But as retired NASA engineer Glynn S. Lunney said, "Oh, my God, they'd drive that thing too fast. You know, they're all Corvette drivers, and it used to just make me nervous as the devil. They'd be hot-rodding that thing around the moon. I was thinking, 'Oh, can't you go a little slower, please?'"

This story is a selection from the June/July issue of Air & Space magazine.

Article submitted by Alan Factor



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and a New Year
filled with
Peace and Happiness*

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adecampo@myfairpoint.net
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