

CAR TALK

CORVETTE NEWS:

Well, no big surprise and not really unusual, but still really cool, a Corvette was selected to pace this year's Indianapolis 500 race on May 27. This makes 15 times a Corvette has paced the Indy 500. The first time was in 1978. This time around, it was a 2019 ZR1 that performed the honors.

Steve Majoros, Chevy's marketing director, stated, "Chevrolet is proud to once again pace the Indianapolis 500. The ZR1 is the most powerful and fastest Corvette ever made. It's the perfect choice to pace 'The Greatest Spectacle in Racing.'" Unlike many pace cars in the old days, the ZR1 required no performance modifications to handle the rigors of pace-car duties. All it needed were the usual complement of strobe safety lights and Indy 500 decals.

Disturbing News from Ford:

In late April, Ford's new CEO, Jim Hackett, informed the financial community that, come 2020, almost 90 percent of Ford's North American portfolio will consist of trucks and utility and commercial vehicles.

I don't know how you take this, but it flabbergasted me. I've been around long enough not to be too shocked when a car maker makes a big marketing decision like to drop a particular model, usually because it isn't selling very well. And I've been pretty clear how doubtful I was that the Corvette would ever be anything but a front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, naturally-aspirated V8-powered sports car. Well, it's looking more and more like I had that one wrong. But to pretty much out of the blue just stop building cars after 115 years? What's going on?!

Well, they're saying that at this moment in time, gas is relatively cheap and Americans are once again buying big trucks and SUVs like they're hotcakes. So, seemingly throwing historic trends to the wind as if this current situation will last forever, Ford has decided it doesn't need the Focus or Fusion or Taurus or Fiesta anymore. The only cars Ford says they will build in 2020 are the Mustang, which they make a fortune off of, and a rugged variant of the Focus. They brag that they're doing well with trucks, SUVs, and commercial vehicles and that they plan to bring out more off-road vehicles, even though almost no one goes off-roading in them.

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Apparently, Ford is so concerned that the market is rushing into electric vehicles and self-driving doodlebugs that they don't think they'll be able to make money selling gasoline-powered sedans, hatchbacks or wagons anymore, and they want to make all the money they can off of what's selling well for them right now. Is this brilliance? Or insanity? It makes me think that we fell off the tracks somewhere.

And then I wonder, is this just Ford? Or are the other big car makers thinking the same way?

Consider this: GM sold Opel, its most productive center of small car excellence, last year. And Chrysler has stopped the Dart and Chrysler 200 production lines. Trucks and crossovers are set to take over these production facilities. As was stated in Automobile Magazine, "Bailing on cars and failing to allocate adequate development money to carry these machines through their life cycles with dignity, all three of America's heritage carmakers have walked away from what had once been their lifeblood and -even in their darkest days- a big part of who they are."

So, while we've been blissfully watching the amazing new Corvette models rolling off one after another, the American auto industry has apparently decided to get ready for a whole new world in personal transportation. Electric cars, self-driving (and sometimes self-crashing) cars, a few sports cars and lots of big trucks and SUVs. This kind of evolution has never happened before.

Well, fasten your seatbelts, this could be a wild ride!!!!!!!

Do you have any other insights into what's going on here?

THAT'S DEPRESSING, SO LET'S LIGHTEN IT UP A BIT:

A cowboy from Woodward, Oklahoma, walked into a bank in New York City and asked for the loan officer. He told the loan officer that he was going to Paris for an international rodeo for two weeks and needed to borrow \$5,000 and that he was not a depositor in the bank.

The bank officer told him that the bank would need some form of security for the loan, so the Cowboy handed over the keys to a new Corvette ZR1. The car was parked on the street in front of the bank. The Cowboy produced the title and everything checked out. The loan officer agreed to hold the car as collateral for the loan and apologized for having to charge 12% interest.

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Later, the bank's president and its officers all enjoyed a good laugh at the Cowboy from Oklahoma for using a \$150,000 Corvette as collateral for a \$5,000 loan. An employee of the bank then drove the Corvette into the bank's underground garage and parked it.

Two weeks later the Cowboy returned, repaid the \$5,000 and the interest of \$23.07.

The loan officer said, "Sir, we are very happy to have had your business, and this transaction has worked out very nicely. But we're a little puzzled. While you were away, we checked you out on Dunn & Bradstreet and found that you are a highly sophisticated investor and multimillionaire with real estate and financial interests all over the world. Your investments include a large number of wind turbines around Woodward, Oklahoma. What puzzles us is, why would you bother to borrow \$5,000?"

The good 'ole Oklahoma boy replied, "Where else in New York City can I park my car for two weeks for only \$23.07 and expect it to be there when I return?" So much for 'dumb Okies'.....