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CAR TALK

CORVETTE NEWS:

Have you heard about this? Beginning soon, Speed TV will introduce a new weekly show entitled "Vetted, A Corvette Series". The 13-episode half-hour series celebrates the Corvette culture from its inception more than 60 years ago, through its classic muscle car years, into its current incarnation as a world-class sports car, and beyond.

The show will be hosted by actor and Corvette lover Drew Waters and more of interest to me, Jeff Hammond. Jeff currently works for Fox Sports and is seen on their NASCAR Sprint Cup race broadcasts. He's a technical guy who knows cars and is fun to watch and listen to. He's also been a NASCAR championship crew chief and served in that role for Darrel Waltrip when he was winning championships.

Watch for the date and time of this show. It should be a great show for all of us.

Ok, so it's been 60 years since the first Corvette rolled off the assembly line in Flint, Michigan. A month before that first Vette was built, a Belgian-born engineer named Zora Arkus-Duntov joined Chevrolet. We're all at least somewhat familiar with that name, but it would truly be hard to overstate the importance of Duntov's influence over the Corvette. This two-seater was hurried into production back in 1953 after a car-show version drew rave reviews at GM's Motorama event in New York. Even though it was presented in a fancy new fiberglass body, most everything under that skin was regular Chevrolet parts, including the fairly anemic 150hp Blue Flame six-cylinder engine and a less-than-exciting two-speed Powerglide automatic transmission.

It's really a testament to Duntov's innovative thinking - as well as his persistence - that the Corvette was a true sports car just four short years later. What often gets lost in the telling of Duntov's legend is his key role in

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the development of the performance aftermarket. Just month's after his hiring, he drafted a memo to his supervisor titled "Thoughts Pertaining to Youth, Hot Rodders & Chevrolet". In that memo, Duntov laid out what every teenaged car nut at the time already knew; that Ford cars and parts to hop up Ford engines dominated the performance scene. He realized that the connection between young men and their hot rods established the kind of brand loyalty that kept them buying Fords as their age and means increased.

Duntov admitted that there was little connection between Chevrolet and high performance in 1953. But he also believed Chevrolet had an opportunity to get on the hot rodders' radar screens with the upcoming overhead-valve V8 - especially if Chevy accompanied the introduction of the engine with "ready-engineered parts for high output". This meant the development of a whole range of special parts; like camshafts, valves, springs, manifolds, pistons and such that folks could purchase and increase the performance of their Chevrolet engines.

It took a while to convince the GM brass, but Duntov persisted, using the Corvette to roll out performance parts that would become state-of-the art, high-demand pieces for rodders and racers of all kinds.

Of course, the rest is history. For the last 50 years now, the small block Chevy engine has enjoyed the availability of more factory and aftermarket performance parts than any other engine. As the Corvette celebrates its 60th anniversary, it is still powered by a small-block Chevrolet V8 engine. The fifth-generation V8 displaces 6.2 litres and produces about 450 hp. Both it and the all-new, seventh generation Corvette that surrounds it can trace their roots to that memo drafted back in December 1953.

RACING NEWS:

You may have heard that Irwindale Speedway went bankrupt last year and had to cancel all oval-track racing. I believe the drag strip has been used, but the $\frac{1}{2}$ mile oval that had been referred to as the best oval track west of the Mississippi was out of business.

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Well, good news for race fans! Team 211 Entertainment, the new operators of the newly renamed Irwindale Event Center, recently announced that oval track racing will return to Irwindale for the 2013 season. All kinds of racing are being planned, including West coast NASCAR events, late model stock cars and trucks, open-wheeled cars, etc.

Team 211 is calling on public support to make the track successful. They realize how hard it is to keep a race track open and hope the race fans will come out and help make that happen.

REGULATORY NEWS:

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has issued a proposed rule that will require hybrid and electric vehicles make a minimum level of sound in order to alert pedestrians and bicyclists of their presence. The automakers would have a wide selection of choices when creating a sound. The sound would need to be detectable over a range of street noises and other background sounds when the vehicle is moving under 18 miles per hour. At 18 mph and above, the vehicle should produce sufficient sound on its own to be heard.

CORVETTE TRIVIA:

- Harley Earl and his boys started work on the new Chevrolet sports car in 1951. What was it originally called? Opel.
- Corvettes have been assembled in three different cities. What are they? Flint, Michigan. St. Louis, Missouri. Bowling Green, Kentucky.
- The first Corvette rolled off the assembly line on Tuesday, June 30, 1953.
- The first Corvettes were literally rolled off the assembly line. The early production line was not prepared for grounding to a fiberglass body and, therefore, the first cars would not start.
- Its radical fiberglass body was the only really new component on the 1953 Corvette. Everything else was directly off the Chevrolet parts shelf. Because of this, the first Corvette was essentially a regular 1952 Chevrolet under the skin.
- 1953 Corvettes were offered in any color you wanted.....as long as it was Polo White with Red interior.

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- What were the only two options offered on the 1953 Corvette? A heater and an AM radio.

Ok. More of that next month.

TRUE STORY OF THE MONTH:

From Wayne in New Hampshire----

As a kid my family, living in New England, could only afford mechanically sound but rusted vehicles. The usual area requiring attention was the trunk floor, especially the outside edges. The usual practice was to get out the pop-rivets and sheet metal and patch the holes and then seal the edges with plastic roofing cement. The result was a car which would pass inspection, but had a trunk which was unusable for anything but tools and spare tires. One Saturday, I gazed at the trunk of my sister's severely rusted '60 Chevy Biscayne and tried to figure out the best way to patch the rear quarters while hiding the rivets as much as possible. Suddenly, I had a stroke of genius! By drilling from the inside out, I could hide the rivets behind the chrome strip! All I had to do was lean over the fender into the trunk and drill away. The drill would pass through the sheet metal of the fender and come up against the back side of the chrome strip and stop. Perfect!

However.....on the fourth hole the drill bit shot right through the fender and chrome strip and buried itself in my leg! I yanked the drill out, threw it across the lawn, and fell backwards onto the ground, holding onto my leg and yelling in pain. Now my father, who was working on his car, parked next to my sister's, walked around the front of the car, stared at me for a few seconds, and then calmly walked to the front door of the house and rang the doorbell. My mother came to the door and said, "What?" My dad pointed at me, thrashing around on the ground, and said, "Go see what YOUR son did to himself." As my mother ran over to me, she yelled back over her shoulder, "Why is it when they do something stupid they're always MY kids?"