

CAR TALK

CORVETTE NEWS:

So I guess we can pretty well close the book on the Corvette for 2013. The model year before a major redesign is always a tough one and usually results in rather poor sales figures. And even the styling is usually kind of stale that last year, with very few, if any, upgrades to excite the buyers. But, of course, Chevrolet gave us some great Corvettes to choose from in this last year of C6 production. Perhaps most notable is the 427 Convertible, which accounted for 19% of sales.

13,466 Corvettes were built for model year 2013. The most popular single color was Arctic White at 21.8%. However, if you add together the Torch Red (14.1%) and Crystal Red Metallic (my personal favorite) at 9.4%, then "red" wins the color choice contest with 23.5% of sales. 15.3% of buyers opted for the fabulous 60th Anniversary Package.

NOW, BRING ON THE 7TH GENERATION CORVETTE!

AUTOMOTIVE HISTORY: Did you know.....

In 1941, the combination of a fully-enclosed, carlike body and all-wheel-drive underpinnings got its start with the Volkswagen Type 87 Kommandeurwagen. Built in limited numbers during WWII, the Kommandeurwagen hopped up a basic Beetle with a 4X4 system borrowed from the amphibious Schwimmwagen -- making the rugged Bug the conceptual, if not direct, predecessor of today's faux-SUVs. Now we call them Crossovers.

Move over, Mercedes Benz Adaptive Highbeam Assist. General Motors developed the photoresistor-based high-beam-controlling Autronic Eye in 1952. Of course, today's systems are better able to distinguish between traffic and false positives like street lamps. Still, with the addition of the Twilight Sentinel automatic lighting control feature, GM products had a functionally modern setup before we reached the moon.

Heated seats are now as affordable as they are widespread across all automotive segments. But in 1966, you had to go to the very top -- to Cadillac, the Standard of the World -- to heat your buns. Even then, it cost a not-inconsiderable \$60.20 on top of the 1966 Cadillac Fleetwood's roughly \$5,000 base price to enjoy the option.

Before GPS, in-car navigation was limited to paper maps and gas-station directions. It didn't have to be that way. Honda devised an inertial guidance system (similar to those used in

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intercontinental ballistic missiles) as an option for the Accord back in 1981. Called the Electro Gyroator, it used a motion-sensing helium gas gyroscope to calculate location. No records exist of how many Gyroators were purchased and installed, but at \$2,800 a pop, it probably wasn't many.

AUTOMOTIVE TRIVIA: What's your guess?

Chrysler's latest SRT Challenger, Charger, Grand Cherokee and 300 models are powered by the 6.4L, 392 cid HEMI. Chrysler puts "392" badges on the fenders and valve covers rather than "6.4L". Why? (select A, B or C)

A. After the numbers are rounded off slightly, this 392 cid engine features 392 horsepower and 392 ft.-lb. of torque. Chrysler is using this symmetry to promote the engine's high output.

B. Similar to the SRT team of today, Chrysler's "Group 392" was responsible for racing programs in the 1960's. Group 392 pushed for the Plymouth Superbird and the short production run that enabled it to be classified as a stock car for racing. Richard Petty won the 1971 Daytona 500 driving a Superbird.

C. Chrysler build a highly-respected 392 cid HEMI in 1957 and 1958. This second generation HEMI featured a sturdier engine block and crankshaft, larger intake and exhaust ports and other improvements that made it a great engine for racing. Don "Bid Daddy" Garlits ran a 392 HEMI in the "Swamp Rat" dragster he used to break the 200 mph barrier in 1964.

(Answer below)

AUTOMOTIVE STORY OF THE MONTH:

Jack in Alaska tells us.....

As a young man I worked pumping gas at a local service station and when not busy, helped out in the garage. One day we had a car in the shop that had a broken distributor cap. The cap had been replaced recently, so the mechanic was trying to figure out what the problem was - to no avail.

The service station sold candy and pop, and kids from the school would stop in when they were walking home. One of these kids overheard our discussion about the broken distributor cap and said the car had a broken motor mount. At the time, the mechanic disregarded the advice, but when all else failed, remembered what the kid had said. So he jacked up the engine, and sure enough, a broken motor mount was the problem. The kid got a free soda, and the mechanic found out the kid's dad had the same kind of car....and the same problem. When it was put

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under power the engine would shift, and the distributor cap was close enough to the firewall that it would crack when banging into it.

I learned to take advice wherever I can find it, even from a little kid.

Answer to Trivia Question: C