

# CAR TALK

## **CORVETTE NEWS:**

How many of you have ever purchased Corvette parts from an Eckler's catalog? I know I have. Unfortunately, Ralph Eckler, the founder of the company, died April 23 at the age of 74. He started in 1961 by forming a Corvette fiberglass company (Eckler's Corvette). From that one-man shop, he grew his business into the leading company in automotive aftermarket restoration, supplying quality replacement parts for most Chevrolet products.

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## **OTHER GM TOYS:**

Do we have any Pontiac Trans Am fans here? Do we have any Smokey and the Bandit fans? How would you like to own a brand new Smokey and the Bandit black Trans Am? Well, you can.

Trans Am Worldwide is a company that has been transforming new Camaros into '77-'78 Trans Am look-alikes, complete with the screaming chicken hood decals, shaker hood scoops and optional T-tops. When I was at the SEMA show in Vegas two years ago I drooled over one of their cars on display. They do an incredible job. And now they're working on producing new Trans Ams based on the latest (6<sup>th</sup> generation) Camaro platform and presenting them either in a 1969 Trans Am style or the mid-'70s Bandit-era look. Either way the new car will offer upgrades to the LT1 V-8, likely in 550, 650 and 700+ horsepower versions. Those should be available in the spring of 2017 and set you back about \$70,000.

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## **RACING:**

Well, you probably know that Chevrolet did not win the 100<sup>th</sup> running of the Indianapolis 500. Honda did. However, there is some good news, sort of.

Roger Penske's NASCAR team with driver Brad Keselowski won Penske's 100<sup>th</sup> NASCAR Sprint Cup race last Saturday night in Daytona Beach, Florida, in this year's Pepsi 400. So,

we can be happy for the Penske organization and our association with them. We just won't dwell on the fact that Roger runs Fords in NASCAR.

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## **READY TO GO ELECTRIC:**

We're here because we love Corvettes and, in most cases, the high performance of our Corvettes. But most Corvette owners also own and drive some other type of vehicle some or even most of the time, saving our babies for the fun times.

So, are you thinking about an electric car, or at least a hybrid? I'm sure a few of us already have or have had a hybrid. And if you like the idea of an electric car that by-passes all the gas stations, is super quiet and leaves the environment as clean as it found it, you might be considering a Tesla. After all, at least some Teslas are very good looking, are great performers, are built with high quality and have luxurious interiors. And Tesla is already taking orders for the new Model 3, in fact over 400,000 people have already plopped down at least \$1,000 to get their name on the waiting list. The Model 3, which won't be out for another 2 years, will be a smaller sedan, base-priced in the \$35,000 range (they think, although the average delivered price is expected to be about \$43,000, which is remarkably similar to that of a Chevy Volt), and is supposed to have a range of 215 miles. 0 to 60 times are claimed to be in the 6-second range.

But here's something to think about. Journalist Eddie Alterman makes the following case: Many of the major auto manufacturers have noticed that the desire for electric cars is not going away. GM, BMW, Ford, even Porsche have gotten serious about producing large volumes of increasingly desirable electrics. So, what does that say for Tesla? For the vast auto-buying public out there, it seems likely that more people are going to opt for an electric car from a large, well-established automaker that they can buy in any state and have serviced close to home. The early adopters have pretty much already early adopted. The electric vehicle mainstream will require mainstream retailing, service and credibility. And, as you probably know, despite the relatively high price of Tesla stock, they are on borrowed time. Tesla continues to lose money on every car they sell. Sooner or later, they're going to have to make money.

Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla, is a very smart guy, and we think he probably knows what he's doing. What Musk really wants you to buy aren't his cars, but his concept of the electric vehicle. Commercialization of the technology, not the vehicles themselves, has always been his goal. He wants people hooked on EVs -any EVs—as long as his Gigafactory is making the batteries and his pipeline is supplying the electrons. So really, Teslas should

be seen as marketing for Musk's utilities. The cars he can let go. And let go he will, by which time Tesla will be competing not with GM or Porsche or BMW, but with ExxonMobil and British Petroleum. Even harder than creating a successful car company is creating a new utility. But Elon Musk is doing both.

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### TRIVIA QUESTION:

The car show crowd gazed at the beautiful 1930's-era classic and knew the mechanic who restored it was skilled at planishing. What does "planish" mean?

A: Upholstering car seats using brushed felt material that is primarily sheep's wool.

B: Cutting and polishing tempered glass.

C: Smoothing sheet metal with special hammers and other tools.

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### LESSONS LEARNED:

My friend Paul in New Jersey shares this embarrassing story.

My wife and I bought a 2003 Volvo V70 wagon and I decided to do an oil change, as I do on all my cars. The Volvo uses a replacement paper filter that is covered by a plastic cup that screws into the bottom of the engine. So I removed the cup, replaced the filter, screwed the cup back on (remembering to put a new O-ring onto the end of the cup), and put in the oil. Simple.

The next day my wife called to say that there was oil leaking from under the car. So, I figured that the O-ring was bad. I grabbed a new filter and O-ring from my supply, and replaced them again. The next day my wife called again to tell me that oil was leaking from under the car.

I then figured it must be excessive oil pressure, which is usually caused by a clogged oil trap, which is very (in)conveniently located under the intake manifold on the Volvo. This required removing the fuel rail, the mass-air meter and, of course, the intake manifold. In the process, again of course, I broke a fuel injector. But after a few days of work, I had the new oil trap installed, with new hoses, and also the new fuel injector. All was well.

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The next day, my wife called to say that there was oil leaking!

Grudgingly, I admitted defeat and started at the beginning. I picked up the shop manual for the Volvo and started reading. I found that the O-ring on the oil filter cup is meant to go in a groove about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the end of the plastic cup, not at the end as I had installed it. I drained the oil, removed the oil filter and moved the O-ring to the proper groove, reinstalled the cup and refilled the oil.

The next day my wife called to say that all was well.

The moral of the story, of course, is that there are times with the manual should be consulted for even the simplest tasks!