

CAR TALK

CORVETTE NEWS:

For Corvette lovers, these are exciting times. Chevrolet has been offering us all kinds of new, exciting models to choose from. They've given us more options to choose from than ever before. They've combined some of the best parts of special models to create even newer models. We're just now seeing the black Centennial models beginning to hit the streets. These late C6 cars are the best Corvettes ever built, in terms of handling, comfort and brute power.

But now, we're coming to the end of the C6 model life and waiting breathlessly to see the new C7. We know the C7 comes on the scene with the 2014 model year. Chevrolet says the C7 will likely be available in the spring of 2013. Oh Boy!

But wait! What about the 2013 model year? Will there be anything noteworthy about the 2013 Corvette? Oh, you bet! After all, it's the 60th anniversary of the Vette. And as we mentioned in the January meeting, there will be a 60th Anniversary Edition model. And how about that other announcement; a Corvette 427 Convertible. (I sure hope Pat Reeves wins the lottery, 'cause I know this car is right up his alley.) This car is a blend of parts from other models, specifically the carbon-fiber front fenders of the Z06 and hydroformed steel frame rails from the Grand Sport. But it's a unique model and will carry a specific VIN sequence just like the ZR1.

The 427 Convertible features the hand-built 505-hp 7.0-liter V8 paired with the Z06's 6-speed manual transaxle, and will come with standard Magnetic Ride Control and a beautiful 60th Anniversary wheel/tire package in ZR1 sizes. Performance numbers are unheard of for a convertible car; 3.8 seconds to 60 mph and 11.8 seconds for the quarter mile. Top speed is a hairdo-destroying 190 mph. And it's being offered in that gorgeous color combination of Arctic White with Pearl Silver Blue racing stripes. Also astronomical will be the price: let's call it a nice round number of \$100K.

Oh and by the way, it will be available this summer.

Road & Track interviewed Tadge Juechter in their April edition. Tadge is now the Chief Engineer for Corvette. He's been a part of GM for 33 years and joined the Corvette team in 1993. After the introduction of the C6, he became the chief engineer and has been responsible for the continuing development of the C6 and now the C7. It's amazing to realize that he's only the 5th chief engineer in Corvette's 60 year history.

Tadge was asked how the Chevrolet Centennial Edition Corvette came to be black. He answered, "*We've learned the hard way that doing a special edition in an unpopular color is not a good strategy—exotic colors are something only a handful of people will like. Various colors of red are extremely popular. But black is also very, very popular. A special edition in black is a natural choice.*"

He was also asked what detail about the Corvette was particularly special. His answer to that was interesting. He said, "*The painting process of the Centennial Edition's wheels is amazing. We paint the entire wheel red first, then we paint the entire wheel black. Afterward, we put it back on the lathe and machine a thin layer of black off to reveal the red below and then we clear-coat the entire thing.*"

This April Road & Track edition also includes a Spring Mountain test track comparison of all 4 of the various 2012 Corvette Centennial Edition models (Basic, Grand Sport, Z06 and ZR1), plus they even threw in the Le Mans-winning C6.R. Check it out—lots of great information.

Chevrolet is still being quite secretive about details of upcoming Corvette models. But it's fairly certain that engine sizes are going to begin shrinking; we hear the first downsize will probably be to 5.5 liters. However, the good news seems to be that horsepower and torque ratings will continue to grow.

One of the big breakthroughs making this possible is direct fuel injection, which enables the use of higher compression ratios. [I can attest to this. Cheryl's Cadillac CTS has the 3.6L V6 with direct injection and 11 to 1 compression and it produces more power than the Northstar V8 that was in her 1999 STS.] Of course, direct injection engines also require an ultra-

strong engine block to withstand this higher compression. This is one reason why a new generation of engines is needed, because the LS engine architecture isn't up to the task. So, that's right, the new engines will also be well suited to handle forced induction. And sure enough, word is that the next ZR1 will employ a pair of turbo-chargers to achieve output levels that meet or exceed the current model's. Who said the ZR1's days were over?

AND SPEAKING OF POWERFUL ENGINES:

A lot of us are familiar with the *GM Performance Parts* name. Well, they're changing their name to *Chevrolet Performance*.

If you're upgrading an older Vette and trying to decide what engine to put in it, the Chevrolet Performance group has just come out with an awesome new crate engine called the LS376/525. Real catchy name, eh? It blends the LS3 6.2 liter production engine the racing-derived ASA camshaft to create one of the most powerful production-based crate motors ever. It delivers 525 hp and 489 lb-ft of torque. The engine comes fairly complete, you just add the front-end accessories and of course the engine controller kit. Suggested retail price is \$8,937.50. I'm sure the fellas here at Penske can fix you up with one and probably even knock the price down a bit.

If you have a C6 and wanna make it look more like a ZR1, Katech offers a new front splitter and side-skirt kit that'll do the job at a decent price. And it's functional, too, adding front and rear downforce for your high-speed driving needs. They're offered in both fiberglass and carbon fiber.

If interested, check out www.katechengines.com.

TRUE STORY: from Gus in Illinois

"A few years after buying a new '71 Vette, it needed a valve job. With two young children and a stay at home mom, I decided to save money by doing it myself. I also decided that while I was at it, I would do a total overhaul. Near the end of the project, I was under the car wiping out the oil pan prior to putting it back on the engine. While I was doing this, my wife came to the

garage and announced that I had a phone call. I took the call then crawled back under the car to resume what I was doing.

Finally finished, I put in new oil, buttoned everything up, started the engine and started out for a test drive. The oil light stayed on the whole time! I knew I had oil, so I kept driving thinking there was air in the tubing to the gauge. That was my thinking then. Eventually, the engine started laboring and the temperature light came on. I limped back home and called the dealership to come and get the car. Whatever the problem, it was apparently beyond my capabilities.

A few days later I got a call at work from the service manager who said, "Are you sitting down? There was a diaper wrapped around the oil pickup."

I instantly had a flashback of wiping out the oil pan with a clean diaper, which we had a lot of since my youngest was newly potty trained, and being interrupted by the phone call." Mystery solved.