

CAR TALK

CORVETTE NEWS:

On February 28, at 8:04 a.m., the last 2013 Corvette rolled off the Bowling Green assembly line. And so, the last C6 has been built. A total of 215,100 sixth-generation Corvettes were made at Bowling Green since production began in 2005. This last one was a good one: 427 Convertible Collector Edition outfitted with the 60th Anniversary package (which means Arctic White exterior and a Blue Diamond-wrapped interior with suede-microfiber accents). This car will join other historic GM vehicles at the GM Heritage Center in Warren, Michigan.

But less than 30 minutes after rolling the last C6 off the line, workers were already starting to tear the assembly line apart to prepare the plant for the launch of the all-new 2014 Corvette Stingray. In the span of just four weeks, 120 workers will turn the plant around. It normally takes several months. But on March 25th, the assembly line workers are due back, where they will learn the entirely new process required to build the Stingray.

General Motors is moving the Performance Build Center, which lets enthusiasts pay \$5,000 or more to construct the high-performance engine for their Corvette, from Michigan to the Corvette assembly plant in Bowling Green, Kentucky. The move is expected to be completed by spring 2014. It will allow Corvette buyers to build their own engine, with help from a GM technician of course, and then see it installed as it goes down the assembly line.

OTHER CHEVROLET NEWS:

For those of us who like their family sedans to be almost as fun and interesting as our sports cars or muscle cars, we'll soon be back in business. The 2014 Chevy SS has now been introduced and has even won its first NASCAR Sprint Cup race, the Daytona 500. Danica Patrick even put one on the pole for that race. The SS is Chevrolet's first performance-based rear-drive sedan since the Impala SS checked out in 1996, and its performance is

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a whole lot better. It's powered by a 6.2-liter, 415-hp V8 with a six-speed automatic transmission and enough room for five adults. It weighs just under 4,000 pounds and is about 4 inches longer than a Malibu. Chevy figures it can hit 60 mph in a shade over 5 seconds, not bad for a full-size sedan. With great-looking nineteen inch aluminum alloy wheels, performance tires and Brembo brakes it should handle and stop as well as it goes. It comes fully-loaded for \$45,000, but you can add a sun roof if you really want one.

It's made in Australia by Holden, which also provided the Pontiac GTO starting in 2004 and the Pontiac G8. I'm hoping the SS will fare better than those models did. I think it will; I think the time is right for a solid, old-school performance sedan with all the modern bells and whistles.

A SALUTE TO THE CAPTAIN, ROGER SR. :

We should wish a belated Happy Birthday to Roger Penske, Sr. He turned 76 last month. Roger's been a great role model for anyone who longs to be successful. His work ethic is legendary, as is his motto, "Effort Equals Results". And his ruthless pursuit of excellence and victory has lifted him and his organizations to the highest levels of success in virtually every field he's entered. His business empire produces annual revenues in excess of \$16 billion. Here's a brief list of his accomplishments in the world of motor sports.

1958- Made his first professional racing start in Upper Marlboro, Md., in a '57 Corvette.

1961- Named Sports Illustrated SCCA Driver of the Year after winning the SCCA National D Modified championship.

1965- Announced his retirement from race-car driving.

1966- Entered Corvettes at Daytona and Sebring, winning the GT class in both.

1967- His driver, Mark Donohue, won the US Road Racing Championship title with six victories in seven starts and then records five podium finishes in 12 Can-Am events.

1968- Won 10 of 13 races en route to the Trans-Am championship and again wins the US Road Racing Championship.

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- 1969- Won second straight Trans-Am championship and enters first Indianapolis 500 race, finishing seventh.
- 1971- Won third Trans-Am championship, finishes third in the Daytona 24 Hours and enters first Formula One event.
- 1972- Won Indy 500 for the first time and makes NASCAR debut.
- 1973- Won a NASCAR race for first time (happened to be a Riverside Raceway), won the inaugural IROC all-star series title and another Can-Am title.
- 1975- Set World Closed Course Speed Record (221.160 mph) at Talladega Raceway (in a Porsche 917). Unfortunately, Mark Donahue died a week later while practicing in a Formula One car.
- 1976- Team Penske's first F1 win at the Austrian Grand Prix.
- 1977- Becomes first team to officially record a 200-mph lap at Indy.
- 1979- Driving for Penske, Rick Mears won the Indy 500 from the pole and went on to win the CART championship.
- 1981- Won second CART championship.
- 1982- Won third CART championship.
- 1984- Won Indy 500, again from the pole.
- 1985- Won another CART championship and Danny Sullivan, driving for Penske, performs his famous "spin and win" at Indy.
- 1988- Won Indy 500 and the CART championship.
- 1991- Won 10th Indy 500 pole and 8th Indy 500 race.
- 1993- Won 9th Indy 500.
- 1994- Won 10th Indy 500.
- 2000- Won CART championship.
- 2001- Won the Indy 500 and CART championship.
- 2002- Won the Indy 500.
- 2003- 13th Indy 500 win.
- 2006- 14th Indy 500 win.
- 2008- Penske gets his first Daytona 500 win with Ryan Newman driving. Also wins Sebring.
- 2009- 15th Indy 500 win.
- 2010- Brad Keselowski wins NASCAR Nationwide Series championship for Penske. Also set a series record with 26 top-five finishes.
- 2012- Keselowski wins Penske's first NASCAR Sprint Cup championship.

REGULATORY NEWS:

A bill has been introduced in the U.S. Senate to ban the sale of gasoline containing 15% ethanol. The bill would overturn actions taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) two years ago to permit ethanol levels to rise from 10% (E10) to 15% (E15). The agency is only requiring a gas pump warning label to alert motorists that E15 could potentially cause equipment failure for vehicles older than model-year 2001.

Ethanol increases water formation that can then create formic acid and corrode metals, plastics and rubber. Older cars and certain high-performance specialty parts are not constructed with corrosion-resistant materials or able to tolerate the higher temperatures at which E15 may burn. Auto enthusiasts have complained for years about damage caused by E10, which is now in more than 90% of gas sold in the United States. E15 would increase that risk by 50%. For classic cars that are infrequently driven, corrosion could eventually damage the engine, fuel lines, fuel tank and exhaust systems.

This legislation is an attempt to protect auto enthusiasts by preventing damage to older vehicles and high-performance specialty components. It would correct, by statute, a flawed decision by the EPA. Unless enacted into law, E15 may soon appear at a gas station near you.

TRIVIA:

What is the oldest American car in production today? Not Ford. It's Buick.

Buick can be traced back to the 1890's and was producing engines in 1899, while Fords weren't introduced until 1903.

The term "tune-up" was coined when Henry Ford was working on his first automotive prototype. His first ignition system was very simple; one ignition coil for one spark plug, so four spark plugs required four ignition coils. These coils needed to be adjusted to provide the same spark intensity for better idle and acceleration. As these coils worked, they made a buzzing sound. When all the coils were adjusted properly, they all buzzed at the same level - they were "in tune".