

CAR TALK

CAR SHOWS:

Did anyone make it to the Belmont Shore car show last Sunday?

It was pretty typical of the annual show. Lots of nice classics, hot rods, low-riders and muscle cars. The crowd seemed a little smaller than usual, but it was a fairly hot day. Also appeared that more of the cars on display were for sale than normal; not sure if that was true. But it's definitely true that there are a lot more drinking establishments along 2nd Street than there used to be, and they were all jam-packed with jovial crowds.

Also, I would just like to point out that the Orange County Int'l Auto Show is coming up on October 2-5.

CORVETTE EXPERIENCE:

I noticed that Automobile Magazine purchased a 2014 Stingray for long-term testing and driving experience. (They do this with several new vehicles each year, so they can report out on the good points and not-so-good points that their magazine staff runs into throughout the year.) So far, they've had this to say about their white Stingray.

At 806 miles: We're dying to christen the Corvette with massive burnouts, but it needs 1500 miles on the odometer first. That's easy, in less than a week we've added the required miles and are roasting the rear tires.

At 3821 miles: Don't let the competition seats fool you; this is a comfortable grand tourer. We took the Vette to Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Chicago (twice) in short order. (I believe their editorial offices are in Florida.)

At 5349 miles: Cylinder deactivation, which turns the 460 hp 6.2 liter V8 into a V-4, might save fuel, but when the engine deactivates, it can be a bit jarring. But that's the price you pay for 29 mpg.

At 6157 miles: We're at GingerMan Raceway in South Haven, Michigan, with our Corvette and the all-new BMW M4. The precisely-engineered M4 is powerful and refined, but it's far less fun than the raucous Stingray.

At 6480 miles: During Fourth of July weekend, the Corvette gets a compliment from a guy wearing an "Iraq War veteran" shirt at a fireworks stand in Pennsylvania. How American is that?

CORVETTE NEWS?

This next item is rather disturbing to me. Have you read or heard anything about Chevrolet working on the replacement for the C7 Stingray? I mean, there was so much buildup to the introduction of the C7, and now it's been around for all of one year, and some in the media are already trying to focus on what's next.

For what it's worth, I thought I'd mention that Car and Driver magazine has published a rather lengthy article in its October edition where they piece together rumors and speculation to paint a rather thorough picture of the next Corvette. They're suggesting that the C8 will be introduced as a 2017 model and might be called the Zora ZR1. They also believe that it will finally introduce a mid-engine arrangement for the Corvette, claiming that Chevrolet really can't get any more power to the pavement as long as they have the engine sitting up front over the front wheels. This has been discussed and speculated for the last couple of decades, so I'm not ready to swallow it yet.

Car and Driver goes on to say that the current fabulous V8 powerplant will likely continue in the C8, but will have to succumb at some point to a smaller, supercharged or turbocharged V6. In addition, by placing the engine behind the driver, they say that will free up space in front for an electric motor, so the Corvette can become a hybrid. And, they venture on to say, all-wheel-drive hybrid Corvettes are very likely by the year 2020. They go on in amazing detail about how the various components will have to change to accommodate the mid-engine design, and they admit some of these changes will be daunting. They even offer some possible body style renditions created by various automotive designers.

They also project that the C8 Zora ZR1 will likely overlap with the C7 Stingray, with both models being offered for a couple of years.

So, I don't know. Maybe they're right on track. But it doesn't feel right to me. With all the hoopla that came with the introduction of the C7, hearing about how hard the design and construction teams worked to keep the essence and heart of the Corvette (meaning the front-engine, V8 small block engine, push-rod engine no less, etc.), radical changes such as the magazine is predicting makes me very skeptical.

What d'you think?

TECHNICAL STUFF:

Do you really know what those "ratings" on your car's battery sticker mean? Batteries are rated according to standards developed by the Battery Council International (BCI). For car guys, the most important specs are:

Cold Cranking Amps (CCA)- This is the discharge load in amperes that a new, fully-charged battery can deliver at 0 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 seconds while maintaining a voltage of 1.20 volts/cell or higher. This measures the battery's ability to start (crank) an engine under low-temperature conditions where the chemical reaction inside the battery slows down. A battery puts out 100% of its rated power at 80 degrees, 65% at 32 degrees, and only 40% at 0 degrees. CCA is great for comparing battery performance in cold climate areas, but in hot climates lead-acid batteries with extremely high CCA ratings may actually have a shorter life than those with lower ratings. You see, within a given battery case (Group) size, upping the CCA requires thinning out the internal plates to squeeze more out of them within the same case volume. Thinner plates are more susceptible to vibration and overheating.

Cranking Amps (CA)- The discharge load in amperes that a new, fully-charged battery at 32 degrees can continuously deliver for 30 seconds while maintaining a terminal voltage equal to or higher than 1.20 volts/cell. But CA ratings can be misleading because they can be up to 30% higher than the equivalent CCA rating. The BCI requires that a battery carrying a statement of its CA performance must also list its CCA capacity.

Reserve Capacity (RC)- If listed, this is the number of minutes a new, fully-charged battery at 80 degrees can be discharged at 25 amperes while maintaining

a voltage of 1.75 volts/cell or higher. For a 12-volt battery (having 6 cells), reserve capacity is the number of minutes it can maintain a voltage of 10.5 volts with a 25-amp draw; therefore, a "75 minute" battery lasts 75 minutes under these conditions. The bigger the RC the better; modern cars with lots of accessories can see a current discharge rate much greater than 25 amps.

Deep Cycle- This is an SAE-specified measurement of the battery's ability to withstand repeated discharge and recharge cycles. Lasting more than 100 hours, this severe test offers the best overall gauge of automotive battery performance under severe operating conditions. Because of the test's severity, you generally won't see this info published except for batteries specifically designed for "deep-cycle" service. Deep-cycle batteries are typically used on race cars or boats without an alternator that require a between-rounds recharge, or in a street car that sits in a parking lot for hours with a high-amp stereo system blasting with the engine off.

C6 Headlight Crazing:

Here's a question to those of you who own C6 Corvettes. Have you noticed your headlight lenses crazing? What in the world is crazing, you ask. Crazing is the gradual formation of hairline cracks along the surface of your headlamp lenses. Unfortunately, this is fairly common with early C6 models. The lenses were made of a polycarbonate which was found to be very sensitive to almost everything, with the result being crazing. I believe this is different than what you see on almost every type of car that's more than a few years old. Those are also a degrading of the lens surface, but the result is more of a clouding or yellowing of the surface and is largely caused by too much sunlight. The cloudiness can often be carefully sanded out with a series of finer and finer sand paper. Unfortunately, sanding will not remove crazing.

While early C6's were under warranty, Chevrolet quite often was willing to replace the headlamps that were showing signs of crazing, at no cost to the customer. Once the warranties ran out, however, the owner had to foot the bill to the tune of about \$2,500 a pair. (You can't buy just the lens, the whole headlamp assembly must be replaced.)

According to Chevy technical service bulletin 02-08-42-001B, dated 10/08/2004, "the covers are extremely sensitive to just about anything that comes into contact with them. A variety of chemicals can cause crazing or cracking of the headlamp lens. Care should be exercised to avoid contact with all exterior headlamp lenses when treating a vehicle with any type of chemical."

Apparently, rubbing compound, grease tar and oil removers, tire cleaners, cleaner waxes and even car wash soaps in too high a concentration may attribute to this condition. Even frequent car covering can add to the deterioration of the headlamp lenses, particularly if you cover the car while the headlamps are still hot. So, as ridiculous and it sounds, anything from washing your car to keeping it covered can cause or contribute to the destruction of some headlamp lenses.

Our Buddy, Jay:

I'm tickled that Jay Leno is now writing a monthly column for *Autoweek* magazine. As you know, Jay is an avid car guy. He loves driving them, he loves owning them, he loves working on them and he loves talking about them. And, best of all, he's just a down-to-earth guy. His fame and fortune allow him to have his fun with vehicles, but hasn't made him feel that he's any better than the next car guy.

Here's a few excerpts from a recent column in which he was talking about the fun of DIY, Doing It Yourself. If you close your eyes, you can almost picture Jay saying this.

"I've always like working on cars. As a kid, I worked for a Ford dealer and at Foreign Motors of Boston. I was not a mechanic. I did new-car prep and what we used to call "odometer recalibration" on used cars.

"I love the older cars' simplicity. The greatest thing is when you're broken down by the side of the road and you're able to do a quick fix. Y'know, like tracing a loose connection or tightening a fuel line to get it home. You feel like you accomplished something.

"I especially like working on steam cars. They are fun because they are among the few vehicles where you do the job and then say, 'Close enough'. They have pretty loose tolerances.

"I enjoy doing general maintenance on my cars. I'm one of those guys who believes when you wash your car and change the oil yourself, it seems to run better. I know there's no scientific basis for that, but for some reason, it happens.

"I don't like modern cars that don't have dipsticks, for example. My wife has a Jag XJ. They say, 'You don't have to check the oil.' I say, 'No, no, I want to check the oil.' 'Well, bring it by.' 'I don't want to bring it by, I just want to check the oil.' It becomes a huge deal. You're supposed to run it for 20 minutes, shut it off. Then press a button. Sheeeesh! 'Can't I just put a stick in there and see where the oil level is?'"

"Anybody who does his own maintenance work truly understands his automobile and takes care of it and probably keeps it a long time. You wouldn't believe how many people I meet in Hollywood who haven't a clue about their cars and go through new Lambos and Porsches on a regular basis. I ask, 'Is it a turbo?' 'Oh, I don't know.' 'Then why do you have this thing?'

"A friend who I didn't think was a car guy said to me, 'Hey, what do you think about the Corvette? Should I get a Corvette?' I said, 'Yeah, the Corvette is a great car.' He said, 'How is it with girls? Do Corvette guys get girls? Is it better than a Porsche?' I said, 'I don't know.' He said, 'If you were single, which one would you get?' I said, 'I would get the one I like.' I don't know if any girl would care whether it's a Porsche or not. Ridiculous!

"Shop manuals used to have great detail; today, they assume you don't know how to work on a car. Look at a Ford manual from the '30s—it tells you how to set the valves, adjust the carb.....I looked at a new-car manual and I just wanted to know how to check the tire pressure. It said, 'Check with your dealer.' They were afraid to give the procedure for checking tire pressure. Today's manuals have little labels: 'Do not drink contents of the battery' and other nonsense. They're not owner's manuals anymore. They're more 'how to avoid a lawsuit' booklets.

"When I hire new people, I like to hire the gray-haired guy who's not going to be joyriding in my car when I'm not around, but who enjoys seeing it operate properly and understands what good work means. I know a lot of people who swear by the flat-rate manual. Oh, fix a radio? Sure \$50. It actually took the guy four hours to get the radio to work. He doesn't want \$50. He wants to be paid for his actual

time. Sometimes jobs just take longer. When you watch some of these old guys work to meticulously, you see why they get the big bucks. They do it correctly.

"Bottom line is, there's still much you can do yourself. If you own an old car and have reasonable skill level to find a loose wire or replace a fan belt, you just need a tool kit, a cell phone and a fire extinguisher. That's what I do. You can't guess what's going to break. I chuckle when guys bring along a spare generator or spare starter or whatever. Then there's my friend who changed the trans on his Pantera on his honeymoon....because he could. He was carrying a spare! If that happens on your honeymoon, forget about it! Use the cell phone and call a flatbed."