

# High Plains Shifter

Newsletter of the NCRS Rocky Mountain Chapter [www.ncrsmc.org](http://www.ncrsmc.org)  
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## Chairman's Message

By Rick Reiff

I think you might call this a "guest" Chairman's message as I am writing it for our Chapter Chairman, Rick Reiff. As most of you know by now, Rick suffered the catastrophic loss of his house due to a freak fire on Friday night May 2, 2008. He was backing his Corvette out of the garage when a fire erupted in the engine bay. Normally this would just be a concern about the well being of the car, but that night extremely high winds fanned the fire back into the garage and began burning the house structure. Fortunately Daphyne was able to get both the kids and pets out of the house before it was totally engulfed in flames that spread at an extremely fast rate. As a result, the house and contents are a total loss, along with the Corvette, Rick's 911 Porsche and their Volvo SUV. Currently the Reiffs are staying with neighbors until more suitable temporary housing can be located. Your RMC board members are looking into what might be appropriate in the way of family assistance and we will keep you updated on that endeavor.

On a lighter note, I want to compliment my committee members and all of the RMC volunteers who helped make our Rocky Mountain Regional the success it was. Outside of the weather, which forced us into our back-up plan for judging on the lower level, the meet went very smoothly. I had many people come up to me and compliment us on how well run the event was. This was only possible due to a large effort by many people who did an outstanding job. My thanks and appreciation goes out to everyone involved.

Save the Wave  
Ralph Ridge,  
Past Chairman

## Activities For March and April

By Mike Bird

After a great Regional, we still have some great activities for June.

We will have a road tour on June 21st. This tour, we will have a picnic at lunchtime so bring your own food and drinks. Information will be emailed to you in the near future on times and places.

Looking ahead, we will be having our Independence Day Party/ Board meeting at Dirk Gaddis and Lisa Racz's house in Evergreen from 10:00am to 5:00pm

Lets all have a great summer

Mike Bird  
Activities Coordinator



### Editors Corner

By Dennis Dalton

I volunteered to chair the parking committee at this recent regional. I had a lot of help from Bob Montgomery, Chuck Banks, Arnie Yuen, Jon Whitely, Pete Gregory and 2 or 3 others who came the day of move in to lend a hand. The snow was flying and the wind was blowing. I didn't pack enough clothes and put on everything I brought with me to keep warm. I even borrowed a jacket and gloves from Dave Heitzman. Jan Bogan ran for hot chocolate for those of us up on level 4 all day. To top it off, the next day I judged chassis and was on the cold cement from 8 to 4. You really have to like this. To end the whole event and make it worth while, I got my black hat at the banquet. I was kind of odd but Pete Gregory, John Hilborn and myself all sat next to each other at the same table. All three of us received black hats that evening and we were the only three to get hats.

Dennis Dalton, Editor

### National Corvette Museum

By Ron Berggren

For those of you who didn't already know, the National Corvette Museum recently broke ground on a new 47,000 square foot addition. One of the areas of expansion will include a state of the art

Corvette archives and library. This will allow for the preservation of valuable documents, film, photos and artifacts. It will be a centralized location for Corvette research and reference.

On our return trip from the Chattanooga regional meet, Ralph Ridge, Jim Lennartz, Russ Steinhaus and I visited the NCM. We had a chance to meet with the executive director Wendell Strode and delivery manager Gary Cockriel. Most of the cars are on loan from private owners. Hopefully, we will be able to see Jim Lennartz's '63' in the museum in the near future. Good luck Jim!

With all the exciting things going on at the NCM, I would encourage you to become a museum member. Your support would be greatly appreciated and you would be helping to preserve the history of a great car.

Ron Berggren  
NCM Ambassador

### "In The Family 50 Years and Counting"

By Tom Neel

The story of my '57 Fuelie (#E57S104793) begins in the spring of 1958 in Burlingame, California. I was a senior in high school at the time. My older brother, who was away at Stanford University, had a 1949 MG TC that was temporarily at home while he was "mending some fences and some grades" at school. Because the MG had recently been re-painted and re-topped after an accident, I decided to enter it in the Hillsborough Concours d'Elegance. At the show, my mother saw a Corvette up close for the first time, and said she would like to have one. I could not believe she was serious because I had never seen her in anything but a big Buick, but I mentioned in jest that a high school classmate of my brother had one for sale. It was either a '56 or a '57 with dual 4-barrel carbs and standard shift, and it had been driven just as you might expect by a nineteen-year-old boy - hard!

A couple of days later when we went by Ron's house, his car was parked out front. Once again in jest, I pointed it out to Mom and said that was definitely what she should get. After thinking about it for a few days, she stopped the next time she saw it out front and left a note saying she was interested in buying it! When she had not heard from Ron for a few days, I was asked to call to see if he really wanted to sell. Upon calling, I learned that he had just sold it. Yes, he had seen the note, but he thought it was a joke. He could not believe that the *mother* of a good friend was interested in what was really a racecar! Mom was disappointed, but I

figured it was only a momentary interest that would soon pass.



I got through graduation and went away for a summer job. Nothing more had been said about a Corvette. Therefore, you can imagine my surprise when I returned home at the end of summer to find an Aztec Copper 1957 Fuel Injection Corvette with four-speed transmission sitting in the driveway! I had mixed emotions since I was heading off to Stanford in a week or so and would not get to enjoy it. It wasn't fair. Why didn't she get it six months earlier while I was still at home! To make matters even worse, a few months later Mom and Dad moved to Los Angeles, so that I could not even get home on the weekends to take it out.

The person from whom Mom bought the car told her its early history. An oriental man who owned a fish market in San Francisco originally purchased it from Dick Bullis Chevrolet in San Mateo, California. He was a small man and did not like the manual transmission. He traded it in with less than 5000 miles on it for one with an automatic. It was then purchased by a young man who had dreams of racing it, but claimed that he never did. Before he had put 3000 miles on it he decided to get married, and could no longer afford it. Mom, who had obviously never given up thinking about getting a Corvette, saw it in a service garage, inquired about it, and bought it directly from owner number two.

If you will excuse the pun, there is something "fishy" about the car's history in the year before our ownership. First, the car is a heater-delete, radio-delete, courtesy-light-delete model with fuel injection (RPO 579, a #4520 unit), a high-lift camshaft, mechanical lifters and 283 HP (RPO 448), a close-ratio four-speed transmission (RPO 685), a positraction rear axle (RPO 678), a #1110908 dual-drive distributor, and a hard top in lieu of soft top (RPO 419). This was obviously ordered as a racing machine! Not something you would expect a small oriental fishmonger to have ordered. Second, even though the car was in perfect condition when Mom

bought it, recent restoration work indicates that it was most likely drag-raced during its first year. There are crude steel pieces welded to the frame cross members that were almost certainly part of a "safety strap" that wrapped over the drive shaft, preventing it from penetrating the driver compartment if broken. The tail shaft of the transmission has a 1958 part date, indicating that the transmission was probably blown and repaired in 1958. Finally, the driver-side window has been replaced with non-original glass, and there is evidence of fiberglass repair inside the door. All this occurred before we got the car in mid-1958.

One of the first owners put in a non-standard heater to ward off the San Francisco cold, and a non-standard radio. My dad installed a correct Wonderbar radio from a wrecked '57 corvette in about 1960. I have since returned the car to its original heater- and radio-delete status.

Mom drove the car as her principle vehicle until 1962 when she got tired of manhandling it around Los Angeles traffic. After that, Dad drove it regularly to work. In 1964, the car was in its only significant accident, when a taxi ran a red light and sheared off about five inches of the front fiberglass and grill. Luckily, there was no frame damage. It was repaired at Bruno's Corvettes on Ventura Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley. Bruno's was at the time one of the few places to have original fiberglass molds to rebuild body parts. During the time of these repairs, other changes were made. My Dad was unhappy with the ventilation when the top was on, so he had the fake air scoops on the finders turned into functioning vents. The fake screens in the scoops were drilled out so perfectly that most judges do not notice. He connected them to airplane style vents he had installed on each side of the dash. He felt this was the way Chevrolet should have built it in the first place! The work is so perfect that interior judges scratch their heads for a long time before deciding that they are not original. While I lose originality points because of these, they are part of the car's unique family history and I have no intention of undoing the professional work done by Bruno's.

The car has had an interesting maintenance history. Dad took very good mechanical care of it. From late 1958 until 1984, it was maintained only at Harry Mann Chevrolet in Los Angeles, one of the largest Corvette dealers at that time. Because fuel injection was relatively rare, Harry Mann had only one mechanic who would specialize in tuning them up. First it was Jimmy, and after his retirement Yuki took over. These are the only two people who ever worked on the fuel injection until it was rebuilt in 2006!

By 1982, Dad had finally tired of driving the car, and it was retired to the garage with about 125,000 miles. It was not started again until the summer of 1984 when Mom and Dad gave the car to me. Finally, after twenty-six years I was going to get to enjoy it regularly! While the car would start, it would not run because the injectors were all varnished up. We towed it down to Harry Mann one last time where Yuki, who must have then been near retirement, completely reworked the fuel injection and got it running perfectly.

While in good mechanical shape when I got it, the car was pretty "tired" aesthetically. The paint was poor, and there were a number of small "dings" on the body. Everything was in need of a good cleaning. I trailered it to Houston, TX, where we were living at the time, and got to work cleaning things up. It was in too good a condition to even consider doing a full restoration. Since I know the full history of the car, it is much more valuable to me to have it in its original, if not perfect condition.

In 1985 I took it to Nabors Automotive in Houston where it was stripped to raw fiberglass, re-sealed, primed, and painted its original color with an acrylic lacquer with clear coat. Unfortunately, I did not know at the time that clear coat was a major no-no in the judging world. We did not repaint the dash or the interior of the trunk, so that the original work would be preserved.

Over the next twenty years, my job took me many places and the car was driven sporadically. By the time I retired to Colorado and had time to spend with the car, the engine was still totally original with approximately 130,000 miles, but its age was beginning to show. It had a front seal leak, serious exhaust blow-back, a persistent miss, and disturbing knocks and sounds. While I frequently drove it a few miles, I was too concerned about reliability and completely destroying the engine to take it too far from home. I delayed restoring it for about 5 years, because I knew it was a very unique vehicle with a completely original engine. Finally, in late 2005 the desire to drive and enjoy it overwhelmed my tendency to keep the engine original, and I found Dennis Kazmierzak of the Rocky Mountain Chapter to do a full mechanical restoration. He brought in Ralph Ridge to do the suspension, brakes, exhaust, and engine compartment while he did the engine, fuel injection, and transmission. The work was finished in July 2006, and I have thoroughly enjoyed driving it in "like new" condition ever since. I have replaced the carpet and upholstery and done lots of little things to return the car to original condition.



My '57 Fuelie was flight-judged at the Rocky Mountain Chapter Fall Meet in September 2007, and narrowly earned a Top Flight award. I had it judged again at the Rocky Mountain Regional meet in Denver in May 2008, and narrowly missed getting Top Flight. In fact, had I driven the car 190 miles to the meet, as was my original plan before it began to snow, the driving points would have pushed it into the Top Flight. This is in spite of the fact that it received a full deduction for the wrong paint and wrong tires. It is a "driver" and I refuse to change out black-wall Michelins that have been the type used ever since we got the car.

This 1957 Fuel Injection Corvette was a gift to me, and I will never sell it. I have many more years to enjoy it, but if I ever tire of it, it will remain in the family. I have two sons and I am sure one of them will be willing to assume responsibility for it. Until then, it will always bring back memories of that day in 1958 when Mom said, "I'd like to have a Corvette", and I nearly fell over in my tracks.

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Membership in the NCRS is open to persons interested in the restoration, preservation and history of the Corvette produced by the Chevrolet Motor Division of General Motors Corporation from 1953 through 1982. NCRS is not affiliated with Chevrolet or General Motors.

Membership in the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the NCRS is open to all members of the NCRS National organization. Dues are \$30.00 for the first year, and are \$20.00 per year for renewal. First year dues entitle the new member to a Chapter ball cap and membership nametag.

Advertising in the Rocky Mountain Chapter Newsletter is free to all active members, for all Corvette related

items or Corvettes for sale. Commercial advertising rates for the Newsletter are \$15.00 for a business card, \$25.00 for a ¼ page, \$40.00 for a ½ page and \$60.00 for a full page. All rates are quoted for 6 issues or one-year printing. Contact the editor for further information. All editorial material can be sent to the editor.

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Award®, NCRS Flight Award®, and NCRS Sportsman Award®, and are registered with the United States Department of Commerce and Trademark Office. The NCRS American Heritage Award<sup>SM</sup> application is pending.



**Come join us in Evergreen on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Dirk and Lisa will host the annual event this year!**

**It might not hurt to bring along a hat, sun screen, and a light jacket. The mountain weather is always changing.**

**The club will supply various meats and condiments, bottled water, and soda pop. If you prefer, you can bring your own beverage of choice.**

**Also, please bring along a dish to share. Last names beginning with the following letter....**

**A-I Side Dish  
J-P Salad  
Q-Z Dessert**

**Friday – July 4<sup>th</sup> – 2008  
11:00 – 5:00  
6289 S. Skyline Drive  
Evergreen, Colorado**

From I-70, take the Evergreen Pkwy turnoff (Hwy 74). Proceed 8 miles to downtown Evergreen, where there is a stoplight at the dam of Evergreen Lake. Turn Right at the light, onto Hwy 73. Proceed south for 3 miles, to Skyline Drive (on the left side only). (Note: you CAN turn onto Skyline sooner, but it is easier to wait until you reach the other end AT 3 MILES from the lake). Turn left, onto Skyline Dr., and proceed ½ mile (this is a dirt road) to 6289, on your left, look for the steeply pitched roof. Call for other, more scenic driving directions, or for directions from your starting point.

Please call or email your RSVP by Wednesday, July 2.  
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