

RPM FEATURE ARTICLE: “MY CORVETTE STORY”

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I thought I would share the story of my '69 convertible L46 350/350 that I purchased in 1997. I affectionately call her *Frankenvette* as previous owners certainly had their way with her. As I log six decades on the planet this year, my first awareness of Corvettes was from my father when I was a child. He loved his cars in the 1950's and told how he picked up a collision '58 vette and got her going again. Well, I never saw it not even in pictures...he fell “victim” to the story as old as time...enter family...exit toys.

One day in '97 I was visiting my brother and his family south of Boston. We were standing outside and up rides a neighbor in a '69 with the top down...chatted for a while as he said he was bringing it out to the main road with a “For Sale” sign. I said really? And being still single, doing ok with my career, and student loans paid off and no other debt...we sealed the deal. I had fun with it that summer and the following year on July 4th weekend 1998 I met the woman who later became my wife. We had a lot of fun dates in the car and she loved going out in it. In fact, if I ever came home with a surprise “split window” that would be the only undisclosed purchase exception she might not get upset about...she loves those. The two photos below are when I first took her out of storage.

Sun & shadows make it look as though the left front is floating in mid-air!



After the “Y2K end of the world that wasn't” we got married in fall 2000 and a year later work unexpectedly took us to Los Angeles. I was to start the job in November so we flew out one weekend in September to look for our new home and woke up in a hotel room in Orange County on Sept 11 to turn on the TV and see the twin towers on fire. Talk about a moment in time where you don't want to be 3000 miles away from everyone you know, everything you own (including the Vette), and in a hotel room with a rental car! Back to *Frankenvette*. We got

past all that and had her shipped across the country with everything else. After getting settled at our new home in Pasadena it was time to get her registered in CA. But as they say “man plans and God laughs”. We got pregnant immediately so not being able to figure out where the car seat goes in a 69 convertible Corvette, in the garage she stayed. Six years and another child later we move to Pittsburgh, again for work. Back across the country came the Vette with us...landing in Pittsburgh with the same odometer reading as we left Boson 6 years prior!

Fast forward to today. Stuff happened, life got in the way, so she hadn't been started in about 20 years during which time she travelled 5,000 miles without being started nor incrementing the odometer at all!! Kids are now at a point where I was able to begin my long awaited restore of *Frankenvette* this past February. She is a true mutt.

A couple photos of her in the shop.



Originally Cortez Silver, which I hope to return her to one day, she was at some point painted “why-does-everybody-paint-them-lack-of-imagination corvette red”. I have nothing against red, just that they don't ALL need to be red, there are other colors and I am a fan of originality. She is an L46 4-speed without A/C. Engine was rebuilt. No original intake, smog/AIR system removed like many, and on and on. I have my work cut out for me. But we did get her started last month only to find I need a new water pump, radiator re-core, and the fun is just beginning.

L46 Engine



My priority is to get as original as possible over time. Don't know how far I will go...maybe have her judged one day...maybe not...who knows. I plan to what I have heard called a “rolling restore” so I can enjoy her in the summers and work on her in the off-season. We never know what tomorrow will bring for us...so don't want to miss another summer with her. I have long said that you don't want life to go perfectly as planned as you wouldn't have as many interesting stories to tell. I hope you enjoyed this one! *Keith*