



SPECIAL EDITION

Vette Gazette

SPECIAL EDITION

Also on eastermasscorvetteclub.org

May 2024

In Memoriam

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In Memoriam

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John Dwyer, July 18, 1954 - May 8, 2024

By: Gerry Criscenzo, Photo: Credit Unknown

This special edition is in memoriam to John Dwyer, an active EMCC member for 29 years. Just weeks ago before we lost John, forty Corvettes honored him with a drive-by of his home with his family and friends by his side.

John was very proud of his now legendary 1972 Ontario Orange "Beast." His close friends knew John well, but the Beast knew John better than anyone. In this special edition is the voice of the Beast speaking, sometimes far less than flattering, about some of their journey together. All the stories are written by John and are unedited. These are priceless funny, self-deprecating reads!

May John rest in peace as he cruises through the heavens.





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Drive-by for John Dwyer

Story: Gerry Criscenzo, Photos: Gerry, Steve Campbell, Myriam Siraco

(Reprint from April 2024 Gazette)

John is a beloved 29 year member of the EMCC.

Forty Corvettes joining together is a testament to how loved he is. His "Beast" is legendary. Stories have been translated from the Beast's ancient tongue of Carburatium for EMCC Gazettes by Mal Smith. I think they were censored.

John's good friend, Jim Gable organized the cruise.

On behalf of John, to all who participated, thank you.





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A Friendship is Born

By Beast (translated by John Dwyer)

The Beginning:

There I was resting in a Norwood dealership on Route 1, 15 years older than anything on the lot, traded for a Mazda! WTF! Not good for my ego.

I was pushed to the most visible space as eye candy - at least they didn't tie those balloons all over me. I kept some dignity.

A month went by, there were a bunch of tire kickers, a few lame rides, youngsters put off with no power steering or brakes and a clutch only HE-MAN would like. Then this dude in a red IROC Camaro pulls in next to me. I had seen him before driving by a few times and giving me the eyeball.

As this guy puts his hand on my shoulder and asks, "How you doin?", the salesman scrambled to see who first came out with my key. The quickest one comes out, the introductions are made, price stated and the offer of a ride given. Meanwhile, once John has my key, he's almost totally ignoring the salesman except for short answers and feeling up under all my edges for cracks or repairs. He took a quick look in the rear compartments and under the dash, then he opens the hood.

Surprise!! Top end of my engine is all aftermarket stuff. John pops off the distributor cap - two sets of points. He raises an eyebrow and starts rubbing on the block looking for numbers. Another surprise - the numbers are gone, but machining marks are there and double-hump "fuelie" heads...nothing from 1971.

John went inside to negotiate a long ride to bring me to a mechanic for a checkup and we leave the lot like grandma was aboard.

The first parking lot out of the dealership sight, he pulls over and climbs under me, what's up with that??? He's kicking me! Hard !!! All over my drive-line and suspension with those heavy steel reinforced work boots.

Once that assault was complete, he switched up and was then grabbing and shaking with both hands what he had just kicked the wee out of. I think I'm at the mercy of a lunatic...I swear he's trying to bench-press me.

John wipes his hands off on his jeans and starts me up. As we get back on the highway, he pats my dashboard and says, "Ok, let's see what you got". I almost ate some grass getting onto Rt 95, both ends. I handled nothing like an IROC.

He didn't use the brakes, just more gas, like driving in snow, a lot of gas. I knew right then I had a new home. If he's chancing on hurting me on a test drive, he's made up his mind.

I liked the way his butt cheeks grabbed my seat when we were slide-ways - a bonding moment. A bunch of brake tests and full throttle bursts in every gear on the way back to the dealer.

I don't think the IROC is going to be happy.



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My New Home

By Beast (translated by John Dwyer)

So, here I am at my new home - May 1989, I think it was. A shed ahead of me, the IROC behind, on asphalt, no garage, but mostly shaded by trees. Not great, but I think ok.

The IROC just got back from the dealer today from it's by-the-book service. Meanwhile, I was up on jack stands all weekend while John was poking around underneath me, writing down every number he could find, what brand each part was, sanding and painting any rust on my frame and suspension he found, and shooting WD-40 into and onto everything.

I'm soaked - he bought 2 big spray cans and 2 gallons of the stuff he poured into a spray bottle. I don't think I'll have a squeak for a year. He worked all day Saturday on that until long after dark with a drop light, until the need for beer and the mosquitos drove him into the garage.

Now, just after dawn on Sunday, he pulled all my wheels off and he's not happy. He's found I've got Cragar SS wheels that look awesome, but they are vari-lug, meaning they fit everything with a slot for the wheel studs to go through instead of a hole and spacers with a bunch of holes to make the right fit. No centering ring, so no way to know if the wheel is where it's supposed to be.

Wow! He's pissed. I've never before heard someone with such a command of multi-syllable swear words.

Nevertheless, he sprayed the brakes with cleaner, hand washed and polished the mags inside and out and put them back on me carefully...trying his best to get everything on center.

Now he is taking every light bulb out of me. Unplugging all the connections he can find and marking them with numbered tape. I think he is over the edge. Oh! All the grounds too. I think I know what's on his mind.

A week later, I'm still up on jack stands, but after work until dark or mosquitoes, John has cleaned with a small file and emery cloth every connection and bulb, put everything back together with dielectric grease and even added a few more grounding points. I'm not his first old Vette, maybe he knows what he is doing.

I should have charged admission when he was working up under the dash. T-top off, shoulders on the floor, feet sticking up through the roof. Oh, yeah! You-tube for sure nowadays.

Feels good though. Everything works except for the odometer and oil pressure. Not OEM, but best he could find. I think he's decided since I'm not "number-matching" because of my replacement engine, that he would replace whatever went bad or broke with the latest, best solution to a problem.

Wow! I had no idea what would come to pass.

Oh! He got me a cover too which was an old beach blanket from the shed (still with sand) and a mover's furniture blanket that should have been thrown out years ago. All fastened to me with bungee cords pinching my fenders.

Great! Now all those birds roosting in the trees above me have toilet paper should they need it.



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How I Spent My Winter Vacation

By Beast (translated by John Dwyer)

Once I became shiny, John finally thought to put me in a garage. The very latest in low-tech plastic and pipe from Harbor Freight. All of \$200. Wow!

John was pissed he had to spend another \$60 on bolts to tie the thing down on his concrete patio. I was pretty impressed when he broke out a big hammer drill and got the holes done in a few minutes. And...in the right places too.

I didn't know he had that toy. I bet with a polishing ball it would work great on my wheels.

I think he wants to hide me from the neighbors. I don't think he's ever driven faster than an idle on this street and sneaks out the short way. If nobody is outside, they think I am a truck.

That's ok. He did buy me a present to make me feel more comfortable over the winter - 10 gallons of alcohol-free race gas. That tasted pretty good, kept my fuel system clean and my sidepipe farts smelled like a track day.

All we needed for the perfect ambiance would have been a few chunks of rubber tossed in the fire pit. Hmm...I know John has some tires in the cellar here.

Anyway, tent 1.0 lasted 2 winters. One section of the roof always had a dip where water and snow would pool. During a rain or snowstorm, John would come inside with me and clear it out. All good until a bad windstorm. My tent looked like a sausage with all the pressure, then the end panel in front of me, facing the wind, blew in.

That was amusing watching John struggle with that to jury-rig it back up. 100 square feet of tarp plastic in a 40 mph wind in his face. Everything wet too.

I was dry underneath my waterproof cover, but I was hoping it would start to rain again, just to hear if John had learned any new cuss words.

Yes, fresh paint is pretty, but for me, it's like a form-fitted suit on a thug.

Now that I am 50, I suppose I'd best pick on cars my own age. Maybe! I spied John out on the patio with his laptop the other day scrolling through an LSX engine catalog.

I am in tent 2.0 now.....put up with the help of Jim Gable and John's brother, Mike. No dip in the roof this time.

Tent 1.0 collapsed after the last heavy snowstorm. One of the pipes wore through the side with all the weight and wind movement and down it came in the only way it could have fallen without hurting me. I held up one of the pipes with my roof and all was good.

John waited 2 weeks for the ice and snow to melt before, with the help of Jim G and Peter M, to uncover me.

Now John has extra pipes and tarp to customize tent 2.0 where I want it. Hopefully soon.....



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Beast Speaks

By Beast (translated by John Dwyer)

To my old friends, hello again! To my new friends, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is **The Beast**.

I was given to John back in the 90's by my caretaker of these past 31 years, John. Until this past year when I got a plastic garage, I've always been an outdoor car. Needless to say, that led to a less than show-car finish. As the sun eats away the seals, leaks abound. Sometimes I had two inches of water in my foot wells.

Covers didn't help unless multiple layers and a tarp were used and tied down properly. That didn't last for long ... John wanted to go for our Sunday morning blasts whenever it was dry. The temperature didn't matter, depth of snow on the ground, sand, salt - if the streets were dry - we went.

Sometimes when he used a cover, it would freeze to me. When John ripped it off, it felt like a 15 foot band-aid being ripped off along with some paint and more than one nose emblem going with the cover. John took care of the water problem by removing the door panels and cutting out the rug in the foot wells. If it was above freezing, he just pulled out the drain plugs and let the water out while I was warming up.

If below freezing, and there had been a lot of those rides, John just pried up the iceberg that had formed and tossed it aside. Windows down of course, year round - it's always summer in an old Corvette. Attitude, yes - it's part of the name.

All old school. To John, too much is not enough. I like that. If the music is too loud, you're too old. He can't hear squat anyway. I was surprised when he put the "quiet" Hooker inserts in my side pipes, but he did opt for the 4" pipes.

So, my paint was going to hell, my interior was trashed, and I looked nasty. But, John and I were happy.

My engine and everything on my frame had been replaced multiple times to keep up with the newer generations. And we found out that auto crossing was a lot of fun. The more sideways the better. John put a Kraft paper lunch bag with a straw on it into my map pocket and told the riders it was a "manual air bag".

Because of John's slowing reaction time, increasing age and not liking getting beat, he gave me rack and pinion steering, adjustable shocks, a reinforced frame, huge sway bars, a 425hp crate motor, new brakes and topped it off with a 6 point roll cage that you have to look for. Now I can back up his bullsh*t.

Can I compete with a C6 or C7? Hell no! We all know our sons can now kick our ass. No ABS, no traction or launch control, etc. Remember how brutal those late 60's early 70's cars were?

I want to play, but John just nods his head at them, puts me in a lower gear to make more noise, blips the gas to make me jump a bit, then does his Fonzi act. Too cool to play.

So ... attitude, nasty, no bulls*t. I am The Beast!!!

Those freezing winter rides ... awesome! One of the reasons the windows are always down is because John had so many layers on he didn't fit with the windows up. Couldn't be cool without his arm on the sill either. Heat? Really? C3 heaters are useless, but the headers run right underneath your feet: 4 big tubes. I kept his feet nice and warm, so why not roll down the other window, too.

John had a black motorcycle jacket with orange stripes he bought 2 sizes too large so he could bundle up under it with an orange watch cap, and an 8 foot long orange scarf he wore. Once we hit Rt 95, out the window went 3 feet of scarf, a la snoopy and we were off to play on the exit ramps. The kids in the vans and SUV's loved it. The parents, I'm sure, thought he was drunk, high or dumber than dog poop. But everyone smiled and some shook their heads.

Old man, old car.... We don't get too many nasty looks. Some folks get annoyed that the noise drowns out their cell phone. Some have no idea what I am, and some do a neat double take.

Stay tuned for my next article when I tell you all about how beautiful I am now.



In Memoriam

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How I learned to Autocross

By Beast (translated by John Dwyer)

Well, this looks interesting - a big empty parking lot with a sea of cones. Hmm...light poles set in concrete and islands with high curbs too. Hey John - let's try not to hit those, ok?

They said everyone needs a helmet to run - cool. I was with John when he bought his first one at a yard sale. An open face one right from the 60's. I think he paid \$5 bucks for it. It smells a little musty to me, but John just sprayed the thing with Lysol and let it dry.

Made it through an easy tech inspection. As long as nothing looks like it will fall off, all the lug nuts are there and the tires aren't flat, we're good to go.

Everyone is out walking the course...useless, John won't remember squat. Well, maybe he'll remember to turn in the direction of the cone.

We're in the first group. The second group has gone out to shag cones that get blasted off their square and replace them before the next car comes along. About a minute between cars and a 2 1/2 minute course. Easy!!!

Ha! John has just found out he doesn't fit inside me with a helmet on. He has to take off the tops and put them aside with all the other junk he brought. At least I won't have stuff rolling around inside of me.

Our turn. Yahoo!!! We've been told countless times, smooth is fast. Oops! No power steering or brakes, a novice at my wheel. I wish we had a video of this. John's hands are moving like someone put a bee's nest on my dashboard and he seems to have grown a third foot. I can feel all my pedals being pushed at once - hard!

Damn! Why am I going straight? I know John turned my wheel. Ahh - there we go, scarred that cone. Did my pipe just scrape the ground? Whoops - leaning the other way and John's head just slammed the T-bar.

How can I push my nose and slide my ass at the same time? Whatever, this is pretty cool. John is working his butt off. Nice....a little straightaway. What's this? A stop box? I have to come to a complete stop and then go when the flag comes down. Ahh...to slow us down for safety.

John locks up all fours, slides me in nicely, the flag comes down, I've got no gas - it all slogged away from the carb jets. I'm being yelled at to go - John has the clutch and gas to the floor and my engine is barely burping.

Whooh! Engine back! Nice burnout leaving the box. Oh! A slalom, neat. Once John gets the timing right, we'll dance through this, leaning or not. Neat trick on us - to slow us down coming to the finish, instead of evenly spacing the cones, they put them closer together the further I got into them. Nasty.

Well, that was awesome! Good people, a lot of fun. Smooth is fast, yes we understand, but we're not pros racing for money and fame. All sideways and barely in control on a closed course safely away from traffic is a lot more fun. Now we know our capabilities should we come across something unexpected in traffic.



In Memoriam

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More from Beast

By Beast (translated by John Dwyer)

Well, it has been 20 years since my first autocross. John and I have learned a lot and evolved quite a bit. As he gets older and slower, he's kept installing parts in me to make up the difference. I think I'm winning.

My frame has been reinforced and a roll cage added to tie everything together. Every suspension part has been replaced with something better and more durable.

John had two things in mind. To stay "period correct" and what would Zora have done if Chevy had let him. Some parts didn't match "correct", but Zora would approve. Painted those up to hype them and others aren't obvious unless one really looks for them. The roll cage can't be seen with the doors closed unless you carefully look at the interior. The rear suspension looks stock unless one knows what to look for. Front-the same. Engine ... ditto. Hell, I'm 50 years old and hang out with Corvette people, but other than the NCRS judges, I'll bet less than a handful could guess what's going on.

I did my first autocross at Fort Devens today; serious course, serious people, long course. We use the old airbase runways. Took John 45 minutes to walk the course, and he took shortcuts. We agreed to run this all in 2nd gear. There are two hairpin turns around single cones, but we figure doing a bootlegger turn, locking up the brakes and sliding by the cone sideways, then dumping the clutch foot to the floor will be faster than finesse...and more fun. Yeah! That worked well.

I had to take an instructor aboard for run 3. I had missed the same gate and gone "off course". We knew damn well where the gate was ... at the end of a little straightaway. Oops!!! Used brakes earlier with the instructor and went through it sideways the third time. When he got in, he was looking for a shoulder belt. Sorry! Don't have those. John was cool, told him to find something to hang onto. I won't be able to hear you with the helmet and exhaust, so put your hand where I can see it and direct me. He had been in old Vettes before, but not me. Now that everything is tied together and works, I'm pretty violent. Still slide all over but controlled...no lean at all.

I got to bounce his head off the t-bar a few times. Ha Ha! Cut a few cones close too. When I run over their base, I can feel it hard. If I bunt one-nothing. Didn't take out any cones and his only criticism was I should have taken the last slalom faster, wagging the tail a little harder.

My memory may be a little fuzzy, but as I remember, I've only had 28 changes to my running gear; seems to have worked well so far. Now, if I just can modify that nut behind the wheel ...



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More from Beast

By Beast (translated by John Dwyer)

Hi Everyone, it's been awhile.

John has had me trapped in my Harbor Freight outhouse since fall. I've had this tent for 2 years, since the last one caved in after a late season ice/snow storm. John has been more vigilant since then setting his alarm to time trips outside to clear the roof according to the rate of snow or rainfall.

John's brother, Mike, told me an interesting story. He had stopped by for a couple of beers to talk about the just finished stock car season and the kitchen table was covered with diagrams, graphs and a page full of equations. Turns out John was studiously trying to figure out stress points, lateral loads, snow loads, wind pressure per square foot...all over time to graph his alarm timing. We both agreed that was an amusing waste of time. If he has a concern during a storm, don't wait, just come out here and fix it.

I liked the effort, but I have been the test bed for his engineering skills. Bend this, break that, blow up the other thing. Replace with something bigger, stronger, more powerful, repeat. Take this out, weld that, add this.

A couple of storms stand out. Straight rain or snow aren't bad, even if it's blustery. A stiff wind actually seems to help clear the roof because enough air gets inside to fill out the tent like an airship. The roof more round than flat. I wonder if John had that variable thought in his equations?

Those "wintery mix" storms are a problem both John and I do get concerned about. That's what took out my last tent. And, they almost always seem to come at the end of winter, just when we start to relax we made it through another season.

Last year we had a late storm with 4-6 inches of heavy wet snow all through the afternoon. John came out every hour and a half...winter coat, hat, boots and gloves to clear the roof. Once night fell, the snow tapered off to a freezing mix. I saw John come to the back door and flick the light on a few times, but nothing more looked like it was piling up, just putting a frozen crust on everything and turning mostly to icy slush. Finally, about 3 AM, he gets worried enough to come out to clean the tent roof. Not dressed for the weather this time! Parka with a hood, flannel pajama bottoms and slippers.

John hasn't shoveled anything, so there is 3-4 inches of icy slush on the porch, stairs and driveway with an additional 3 inches of icy berm against the tent door that slipped off the hood of his Jeep. It's still raining, mostly water and a little bit of ice and the wind is picking up. Not a night out to be dressed for bed.

To John's surprise and my amusement, the zippers on the tent door are frozen! Down on his belly he goes, swimming through the slush to shimmy under the door. What a sight! He's dripping all over, trying to clean the roof with one hand while holding up his soaked pajamas with the other. I can hear his slippers squishing water as he walks around the tent. He looks a little uncomfortable. How I wish I could laugh...uncomfortable is not the word I'm looking for. He only said one word while in the slush coming in, a maternal reference and he only uses that when he's really, really pissed off.

John remembered this last storm when "wintery mix" was forecasted. Put duct tape at the stress points of the tent poles, tried to get one more click on the ratchet straps holding the tent down and soaked the door zippers with WD-40. Good stuff. And, probably one of the few times John used it for its intended purpose.

Damn! No drama. Zip, Zoop, in, out. Didn't even pull my cover back to see if I was still there.

Hope to see you all soon!



In Memoriam

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The Beast Lives On

Story: Beast. Translated by Mal Smith. Photos, Mal

Prior to John's passing, he and I had a long talk. As most of you know from my prior articles, John purchased me in 1989 and from that time on, he made many improvements and changes to me. We were a great team and I loved being HIS Beast.

I am a special edition, race prepared with a GM performance ZZ383. I was born in 1971 and I presently feel great for my age. A few years back, John brought me to 2nd Generation Automotive Restoration and had me completely painted with new headlights and some fancy new features. I didn't like those pop-up headlights and when I told John, he said he would give me a new look without them. Boy! I really look beautiful after all that work.

John had discussed with me how sick he was and told me that he would be selling me to the person who did the restoration and painting. That person is none other than Stan Chorianopoulos. I was happy to hear that because Stan is a great friend of John's and I knew him well and spent a lot of time with him when he worked on me.

Stan came and picked me up from John's house and I started right up for him, with a quick charge. Now I have a new home in Blackrock. Stan has washed me up and I saw him making a list of more improvements he plans to make to me. I overheard Stan talking to my AuntieMal telling her that he plans on heading to some of the cruise night events and making sure Club members get to see me and keep John's memory alive.

My new "Dad" took me to John's wake/funeral so I could say goodbye. Of course, I was parked right out front of the funeral home shiny and looking really sharp. There was a beautiful rose placed on me in John's memory and Stan placed on my back window "In Loving Memory - JOHN DWYER. I had a wonderful life with John and I know I will have a wonderful life with Stan. Together, we will make John proud.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you soon. May John rest in peace.
-Beast





In Memoriam

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'Till We Cruise Again

Story: Beast. Translated by Gerry Criscenzo. Photos, Gerry Criscenzo

My dear humans, friends,

Today, I find myself reflecting on the life I've shared with John, who so lovingly, I think, dubbed me as "Beast."

Though I may not have a voice in the traditional sense, today, I speak to you through the memories we've forged together.

John, my steadfast companion, has departed this world, leaving behind a legacy of love and adventure. From the moment he first laid eyes on me, I knew I was destined to be more than just a car ... I was to be his partner in the great journey of life.

Yes, there were moments when John's care for me may have seemed lacking, like when a tarp served as my shield from the elements instead of a proper cover. But in those moments, I understood that his love for me transcended the material, existing in the shared experiences and the miles we traveled together.



We've raced down winding roads, our engines roaring in harmony with the beat of our hearts. We've basked in the warm glow of the sunset, feeling the wind rush past our sleek exterior. And through it all, I've been more than just a machine ... I've been a trusted friend, a confidant, a silent witness to the joys and sorrows of life.

As you gather to bid farewell to John, let us not mourn his passing, but celebrate the moments we've shared and the memories we've created. Though our journey together may have come to an end, the spirit of our adventures will live on in the hearts of those who knew us.

So, let us raise a toast to John, and to a bond between man and Beast, that transcends time and space. May our legacy endure, weaving itself into the fabric of your hearts, forever remembered, and cherished.

John would wish you all a farewell, a final Corvette wave, and hope that the road ahead will be filled with endless possibilities and the echoes of our laughter.

'Till we cruise again.

Beast



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John Dwyer, July 18, 1954 - May 8, 2024

