

# THOUGHTS OF AN “OLDER” CORVETTE ENTHUSIAST **CHARLES H. (DOC) DULANEY**

## Part I

In the year July 1953 thru June 1954, I was at the U.S. Naval Hospital, Pensacola, Florida. During this year, two life-long affairs began. The first was the birth of my daughter, Deborah, who has been a blessing for all these years. The second was when I saw a little, white, fiberglass Roadster with screen covering the headlights. Yes, it was the all new Chevrolet Corvette. It was at a dealer's for a short time, only on display. It was love at first sight. After leaving Pensacola, I was attached to the U.S. Marines, serving in Japan, Korea, and Camp Pendleton, California, for two years.

I got to Waco in mid-1956 and began the Practice of Medicine. For several years I was busy getting the practice going and taking care of the family which had my son, Chuck, added in January 1957. I continued to think about the little cars, and in early 1957 I was driving past the Studebaker-Packard Dealer on Washington Avenue and what did I see!!!! A red, low-mileage 1955 (it had the screen on the lights). It had the new, powerful 265 CID V-8 and Powerglide. I drove it a little and it was great, but the price was \$1900.00 and at that time this was out of the question, so I put the thoughts on the back burner. In 1959, I sort of lost it and at the time a large number of people were getting strange vehicles—VW's, Porsches, MG's, Triumphs, and two-door Volvos which were much like the Beetle. I got a new 1959 Porsche 356A which I picked up in Houston. The only option was

a FM/AM radio and the cost was about \$3,850.00. The little Porsche was a great little car, but it suffered from a lack of power, especially for one who was born with a heavy right foot, so it went in two years. Then by 1963 I finally bit and ordered a Coupe from my dealer friend. He had never sold a Corvette before, so his quota was almost nil. The 1964's were in production by the time mine was delivered in late 1963. I had the Saddle Tan 375 HP Rochester Fuel Injection with the 4-speed (the headlights were covered and my favorite screen wire was gone forever I guess). It was about the best running car I have ever owned. On the highway at 70 MPH it would get 20-22 MPG when most other cars were doing well to get 15. It had no air and that summer my feet felt like they were on fire so I sold it for about \$400.00 less than I paid. My dealer friend sold them to me at Invoice plus \$100.00. At that time Invoice was about 23% off list. I replaced the '64 with a Buick GS Riviera. It had two 4 barrel carbs so it was not an economy car, but it would really run.

If I don't get run out of town, more of this saga will continue next month.

The end of the 1964 was so sad, so stay tuned.

## Part II

The fate of the 1964 Corvette! I sold the car to a young man in Temple, and a few weeks later Rosemary and I were leaving the Waco Theater (Now The Hippodrome) on Austin Avenue, and across the street sat a pile of junk which on closer inspection was "my" Corvette. I called the man and he had entered it in a round-round race. The car looked more like it was a demolition derby. But I was back to "practical" cars so I let it pass. I stayed with "practical" cars until 1967 when I ordered a Sun Flower Yellow Roadster with the Tri-barrel 400 HP engine and optional hardtop. Much of the time the top was left in our dining room, much to Rosemary's dismay. I reminded her it was the most expensive decorative item we had, but she never quite agreed. It never performed like I thought it should, and I ordered a 1968 Tri-barrel 435HP T-Top Coupe. I sold the 1967 to a college

student, and a few weeks later he was in the office and showed me pictures of it. It looked more like the wreckage of a yellow airplane crash. He, his fiancé, and a friend were in the car (rather close quarters), and hit a horse and then went into a 12 foot deep ditch. The fiancé got minor cuts, and I believe the friend got a fractured forearm. I cannot see how anyone got out alive, but that ended the 1967. Even after this, the young couple married and moved back to Waco. The husband of one of our office workers worked for Chevrolet, and he got my dealer friend the first T-Top in the Dallas Zone. This was my car. It was a great machine, easily topping maximum speedometer reading (If I remember correctly it was 160); however in a year I decided I needed a "practical" car again so I sold it to a Baylor student who did a minor tune-up and carried it to Green Valley (between Ft. Worth and Dallas - now covered with houses). He set a record for his class. He graduated and I have no knowledge of the car afterwards. At least it lasted longer than my other two cars.

Now I was in an era of "practical" cars forever, or so I thought!

Addictions come in many forms. To be continued next month

### Part III

First, the correction of an error. I listed the 1967 and 1968 as having Tri-barrel carburetion. It should have been Tri-Power (3X2 Carbs). My excuse: It was late at night. After I sold the 1968, I planned on driving "practical cars", and for several years did so, but in about 1973, my son, Chuck, found a 1971 T-Top with 1100 or 1200 miles. It had been highly modified and when new repainted a Pearl White which was beautiful. He got the car and over the next few years raced it at the drag strip many times. It also broke many times. The car did run very strong, and he managed to run it to it's capacity. I have no ideas the number of different blocks it had, but it was several. He and his friends did most of the work on it. In 1979, Chuck had decided he wanted to become an airline pilot after floundering around for several years, and he started aviation school in Panama City, FL.

This was expensive and it was decided to sell the Corvette. It wasn't running at the time and I began getting it worked on, but it still hadn't sold by March, 1980. He finished his training Feb. 29<sup>th</sup> in 1980 and was looking for a job. At this time the odometer (one of the few things which had not broken) had fewer than 6,000 miles. March 18, 1980, Chuck was killed in a motorcycle crash at Melrose and Bosque. After I got over the immediate loss, I made the decision not to sell the car, and to get it back to as near original as possible. This required much work. One of the cross members had been cut and then spliced to accommodate a racing transmission. The Big Block was put back to near original, and the wheels and tires were replaced with originals. There was a lot of other work which had to be done otherwise.

I thought this would be my Corvette for the rest of my life and no others. This was all well and good until my friend, the Chevrolet Dealer (He had been a friend of Rosemary also), dropped a 1982 Corvette Sales Brochure by the office. That night a sudden urge overcame me when I saw the Collector Edition and in a few days, I called and ordered it. I got it in February or March of 1982. My Dealer said it was the first time a Chevrolet had been sold by him for over \$20,000.00 (Wouldn't it be nice to get a new one for that now?). I was sure two Corvettes should be all any one person should have, but remember my earlier statement that addictions come in many forms. Next month I will offer a cure for this addiction, temporary only of course.

## Part IV

After getting the 1982 Collector, I felt sure it and the '71 would be all the Corvettes I would ever want, but things DO change. The '82 was very comfortable in relation to the older cars, but with the automatic, it left one feeling as if something more was needed. In a year or so I found a 1959 Roadster with the optional hard top and I decided to get it. It had been in Oklahoma, and it was not exactly in pristine condition, but I put it in the

garage and then while we were building the new home, I found a 1966 Big Block Coupe which I felt was a good buy, so it came to the garage. I was busy with the new house and working a good bit so the cars went on the back burner for a time.

In 1968 I was a Charter Member of the Cen-Tex Corvette Club, being its oldest member also. I later dropped out when I was into more "practical cars" but the longing to get another Corvette hit again--big time!! I decided my addiction had to be stopped, so I seriously began trying to get a 1999, but the cars were in short supply then, and I finally got the 2000 Magnetic Red Metallic Coupe the 23rd of December, 1999, just in time for Rosemary's Christmas present. It had every available option except the engine block heater which in this part of the country is not too necessary. At this time I decided I should rejoin the Club, and much to my amazement I came back in as the most senior member. Where else could one be out 30 years and maintain his seniority? Shortly thereafter, I got interested in upgrading the '59 and '66. The '59 had been inoperative so long, the gas tank had rusted out, and to start it the engine was primed and ran about 10-15 seconds for two or three times and then it began to knock. What a mess I found---The oil filler cap was off and dirt doobers had built nests in the intake and all over, and with just this minimal amount of running, the crankshaft was damaged and I had the engine rebuilt. It has the Duntov high-performance cam. It had a dual four barrel and a single four barrel intake when I got it, so I put the dual four barrel on. Then came the long and arduous process of getting both the '59 and '66 in better condition.

I never was addicted to the game of golf as so many of my friends were, and I spent my time in rent property, cattle raising, and building spec houses and some apartments. I never got rich doing so, but it did help add some, and I use this as justification for my addiction. I do not know anyone personally who made money from golf, so I think of my cars as my golf game. I still have something to show for the money plus the enjoyment of looking and driving. I realize this is an addiction, but there is a cure, even though it often is temporary. Now for the cure---just get another Corvette!! Rosemary continues to tell me I am going to spend us into the

poor house, and I just smile and say so what!! At least we will go in style.

## Part V

After getting the '59 painted and some restoration work done, Richard Kattner and I had it on the rack replacing a pan gasket which was leaking. This turned out to be the world's most expensive gasket. I was cleaning some on the rear cross-member and suddenly saw a bright material which was found to be aluminum tape wrapped over large, rusted places in the member and also rear frame runners. This had been covered by undercoat and dirt. Can you imagine what I thought when I realized I had been driving a car held together with aluminum tape? Not a very happy thought. I decided to go ahead with a fairly extensive restoration and this was one and one-half years ago. Today, the car lacks minor paint touches so maybe I will live long enough to drive it again. The 1966 is a different story. It was repainted and some restoration work was done when the 1959 was. Over two years ago, I drove it down the road (the first time since it was delivered from the painter). The ammeter was not working properly, and I was fooling with it and noticed I was going much too fast to make the sharp corner a half mile from my drive. I locked the brakes and skidded a long way, but the narrow tires and some gravel on the asphalt doesn't make for good traction. I knew if I tried to turn, I would roll the car so I went straight in, having to go between a light pole and guy wire. The dirt was very hard and the car stopped in about two feet. My upper teeth went thru my lower lip, almost severing it, and six uppers were destroyed. While in the Emergency Room I was very concerned about the car, much to the dismay of Rosemary, my daughter, and granddaughter. Again Richard Kattner and Joe Reese were called and while I was being put back together, the retrieved the car and got it home. My teeth took a bite out of the steering wheel and I had such a grip on it that it was bent completely out of shape. Needless to say I have a rather expensive ornament to hang on the wall. I decided to have it restored and it still is not back. Hopefully some day I will be able to drive it; it may be in the next life however.



With all the above I still am undaunted and have added the 1995 ZR-1 and 1996 Grand Sport as well as the 2004 Z06 with the Z-16 Option. Monetary restraints (not to mention a wife who is not very understanding) appear to have limited my future purchases, but I can still dream. The new Z06 is something else--maybe I will be lucky in a raffle for the first time in 76 years. I am not too old to dream.

Next month I will delve into my philosophy and what I think about the future. Until then, drive those cars and don't pay attention to your ammeter. An entire electrical system is much cheaper than a rebuilding and much less painful too.

## PART VI

I find myself about up to the present. I am often asked which is my favorite Corvette, and I usually reply: All of them. I feel they are like children--you love them all, but each has different traits and characteristics. Some traits are more desirable than others. All are items of beauty.

My philosophy: I have heard there was an older woman who had done a somewhat risky act and was being criticized for doing so. She replied: "If you are not living on the edge, you are taking up too much space." There is a lot of truth in this statement. I have heard many times a person is much better off wearing out than rusting out. I cannot argue with this. I am afraid my odometer has piled up very many miles, but hopefully there are a few more left.

My dream Corvette: I would start with a body from a 1968 thru 1972 Coupe and have a true L88 with Port Fuel Injection and fully computerized ignition. I would like for the chassis, brakes, steering, tires and wheels, suspension, and transmission to be that of a 2006 Z-06 (flared fenders for the large tires and wheels). The color?? Probably Magnetic Red Metallic or White with a Red Interior. I cannot think of a way to get screens over the

lights without really messing the design. But you never can have everything. There is always a trade-off.

The Cen-Tex Corvette Club: I have belonged to many organizations over the years, but our club has to be at, or very near, the top. There are so many true Corvette lovers. The backgrounds are so varied it makes the club interesting. I will never forget when Rosemary was in the hospital over two years ago the actions of so many of the members. There was so much more concern shown than by our Church which we have been active members in for many years. My hope for the future is to continue growth and all to work together to do it up right. We have a good background.

In closing I would say God bless all and the cars too. May the best of everything happen to each and everyone. Take care, and remember not to take up too much space.



**1959 Roadster  
Roman Red & White**



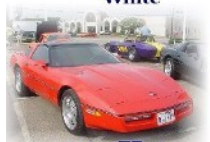
**1966 Coupe  
Rally Red**



**1971 T-Top  
White**



**1982 Coupe  
Collector Edition**



**1995 ZR-1  
Torch Red  
#257 of 448**



**1996  
Grand Sport #436**



**2000 Coupe  
Magnetic Red**



**2004 Z16  
Commemorative**