Spoiler

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

PREZ SEZ

President Janice Greene

Happy New Year, everyone! I hope 2025 is everything you wish it to be!

As we "suffer" through this cold snap we're having, I try to remember that at least I'm not so far north that I must put away my Corvette for the winter to protect her. No icy roads, no sliding trucks to avoid, no frozen doors! The worst happening here is I'm unable to put my top down for fear of turning into a popsicle. I'll gladly forego that to avoid a "real" winter!

If you've been involved with us, you know what a busy couple of months we've just completed. We've done cruise-ins to wonderful food locations, a spectacular Toy Run, an outstanding Christmas party, a few ladies' breakfasts and various other little pop up events. I can't say "Thank You" enough to our wonderful Social Committee for all their hard work in 2024. Stay tuned for a busy 2025!

We welcome all new members and invite you to attend as many events as possible.

Each year we try to recognize a few members for their participation and hard work during the previous year. This year's award recipients were:

- Male Worker of the Year – David Elseroad
- Female Worker of the Year – Judy Thompson
- Top Male Racer of the Year – Keith Grice
- Top Female Racer of the Year – Veronica Duys
- Autocross Representatives of the Year – Zach and Veronica Duys

Continued on next page

- Car Show Representative of the Year – Faye Leschitz
- Charity Worker of the Year – Janice Anderson
- CKCC Member of the Year – Maryalice Istvan
- Club Appreciation Award – George & Kristy Halkovic

CKCC appreciates all the effort and attention these people have provided our club throughout the year.

Looking forward to sharing a fun and exciting 2025 with all of you.

See you at our next event!

Janice

Welcome, New Members!

Cindy & Dave Holmes

The Holmes live in the Savannahs on Merritt Island. Cindy recently purchased a new 2025 Blue convertible. They became new members of the club at the December meeting and are interested in participating in car shows and the Toy Run next year.

Eva & Giulio McDaniel

The McDaniel's live in Melbourne, own a 1974 White Stingray coupe and were also approved for membership at the December club meeting. They are interested in participating in all club events.

November Sunday Brunch Attendees

December Brunch

CAR SHOW CORNER

By Barbara Lenhard

The Corvette Club of Marion County had its 26th car show on November 9. More than 175 Corvettes assembled in front of the Dillard's Market Street at Heath Brook in Ocala. Since Marion County was celebrating its 40th club anniversary, it featured C4 Corvettes. These cars were parked in an honorable location near the trophy table and DJ set-up.

Cape Kennedy Corvette Club entered four cars. Our team consisted of Jerry and Carol Walsh, Faye Leschitz, Barbara Hurn, Peter Lenhard and me. After preparing our cars feverishly, using our secret tools of brushes, special microfiber towels and bottles of protective formulas, we were ready for the judges. The judges had a tough task. They returned for second looks at Jerry and Carol's C5 and Faye's C6, which made us all nervous. It usually means the cars are in tie breakers.

Although we mainly go to the shows to enjoy good food, good company, meeting other club members and seeing beautiful Corvettes, it is always nice to tuck a little trophy in your car before you venture home.

Well, we had a lot of tucking to do. All the CKCC cars won a beautiful glass trophy. Congratulations to each winner! Jerry and Carol won 2nd place in the C5-B category. Faye placed 3rd in the C6-B category. Barbara Hurn and Peter and I entered the Participant's Choice category with our C-8s. Despite the overcast weather, which prevented the voters from seeing the nice shine on the cars, enough people appreciated our cars and voted for us… yea!

The Corvette Club of Marion County had 57 baskets in their basket raffle. In addition to four remarkable car wins, Barbara Hurn won The Taste of Italy basket that she really wanted. The basket had Limoncello, Italian wine, a seasoning and oil dipping ceramic set, a mug, etc. Congrats Barbara! Our weekend included dinner at Las Margaritas Mexican Restaurant and lunch at Mimi's Café that gave Corvette show owner's 10 percent off the bill. We all had a great time.

Final Autocross Race at American Muscle Car Museum

By Veronica Duys

In 2015 autocross racing by our club and other local clubs were no longer allowed at the Brevard Community College (now Eastern Florida State College) Palm Bay campus parking lot due to an accident and lawsuit filed by a driver at another club's event. We held no events in 2016. In 2017 several members of CKCC began volunteering as docents at the American Muscle Car Museum (AMCM). They came back to the club after their first events and reported it could be a great location for autocrossing. And so began our seven-year relationship with AMCM.

Sadly, due to events and the ever-changing insurance industry, AMCM changed the rules under which we would be allowed to run at its facility. This September we were advised that no cars would be allowed to run on Hoosier tires; and despite the changes to National Council of Corvette Clubs (NCCC) Competition Rules and insurance coverage, AMCM would not allow E-Rays to compete at its facility. We had to get special dispensation to run our November events as these restrictions prevented several competitors from attending and forced others to use non-favored tires. NCCC will not allow us to schedule any future events at AMCM.

So, our last Hurrah was on November 16-17. We had a great field of NCCC and open cars. Competition for the Men was intense and close, with Keith Grice taking the majority of

1st place finishes and I took all of the 1st place finishes for the Ladies. The event made about $1,300 for CKCC, and a good time was had by all.

AMCM has offered to give us a reduced rate for running a non-sanctioned driver's school or test and tune on their property ($750/day). This might be worth considering until we find a new autocross location. We also need to find a new secure place to store our trailer. It's surprising AMCM has not insisted we remove it from their property by now. Maybe we can keep the free secure storage if we schedule a few test and tune events. We will miss working with Ed Dedick and the AMCM staff, and the club will also miss the income accrued from Autocrossing.

Members Switch Gears At Restaurant Cruise-in

By Mary Jo Helm

On a brisk November 23rd. evening 28 Corvette loving gastronomes met for dinner at Hemingway's Tavern in the Melbourne Oaks Plaza. Unfortunately the assistant manager informed us that they would be unable to accommodate our entire group together for probably an hour and a half. As we were discussing the options with him a couple of intrepid investigators took a walk and came back with news that another restaurant (they had dined at previously) could accommodate all us. Approximately 20 of us made our way to Pane E Vino Italian Restaurant, a short walk to the west where we were seated at two long tables in a nice Christmas decorated private dining room. A few CKCC members remained at Hemmingway's where they were quickly seated and enjoyed a fine meal. Meanwhile our group dined on Italian specialties and wine, enjoying good food and good company. Toward the end of the evening a few members who dined at Hemmingway's walked down to join in our conversations. Despite the initial turmoil it was a nice evening out with friends.

Note: Both restaurants are located at 1800 W. Hibiscus Blvd. on opposite sides of the Premier Oaks 10 Theatre.

End of an Era: CKCC's history with the AMCM

By Veronica Duys

Hosting autocross events has been a large part of CKCC's history and fundraising for the club. When Zach and I joined the club the autocross events were held at the Brevard Community College (BCC) Palm Bay campus. Zach and I volunteered at a few events but my car could not be run there as the ground effects would have been damaged by the rain swales in the parking lot. Then in 2016 there was an accident at an SCCA which impacted us all. The participant decided to sue SCCA, and BCC. Sadly, the lawyers for BCC advised the campus to ban all organizations from Autocrossing there in the future. So CKCC did not host an autocross for part of 2015 and all of 2016.

In 2017 our club started using the American Muscle Car Museum as our venue. It was mostly due to our many members that were volunteers there at the time that got us in the

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door. Initially we were not charged for the use of their property. The Porsche club also autocrossed there and presented us with a challenge. Each club would chose their top 12 drivers and the scores of the top ten in each club would be averaged to determine a winner. Each driver would contribute $50 to AMCM owner's pet charity – Pieloch Pet Adoption Center. We probably should have taken that as a hint to not take advantage of a free venue. AMCM started charging us in 2019 and the rates increased each year. In 2024 we were paying $1750 per day and still managing to squeeze out a small profit (a little more than $1000 the final weekend).

We knew the challenge was never going to be balanced – they have 1800 members to draw drivers from and we have 200; and we are running Corvettes with an average value of $30,000 against Porsches with an average value of $150,000. We came close a few times, which usually resulted in them upping the odds. We held our final challenge in 2023 – they hosted so their rules banned Hoosiers and then several of their cars ran a different brand of soft race tires (80 wear rating vs. 40 for Hoosiers, the ones on your car probably have a 300+ wear rating); and they set a course so ridiculous some of us almost left before the event started. When it was our turn to host this year, Bill Kassebaum tried to level the field by requiring all cars to run tires with a 200+ wear rating and using an SCCA handicap system and they declined the challenge.

After this collapse of the challenge, CKCC was advised by the American Muscle Car Museum that it was changing the safety rules to no longer allow Hoosiers to be used at its facility; and despite repeated requests would not lift its ban on EVs and Hybrids. We almost had our sanctions for the November autocross revoked by the NCCC National VP of Competition, as these rules would prevent several competitors from participating in the event. Zach and I lobbied hard to allow us to host one last event at AMCM as we had no other venue. We were given dispensation if it was the final event held there. The Men's regional standings in Florida might have been different this year if Harry Way (a proud owner of a new E-Ray) had been allowed to compete. There was also a couple from Wisconsin that would have competed and this could have impacted the National standing for them as well.

So, we can no longer host NCCC sanctioned events at the AMCM. This leaves us with a dilemma – not only are we losing the Autocross revenue that has been keeping our club financially sound but also losing the free trailer storage we've had for eight years. There may be a way to continue to store our trailer there. We have been offered a $750 per day fee to host non-sanctioned club only events like a Test & Tune or driver's school (aka no live timing except what the drivers can do on their own). This may be something we seriously need to consider. We might be able to leave our trailer there, if we run two driver's schools a year. It's not that much more expensive than paying for trailer storage; and we may end up with more people participating in a fun event. AMCM is far more secure than anywhere else we will find and it's covered parking.

We have had a lot of success and fun at AMCM so it's sad to turn the page on that chapter of CKCC's history. Many of us will also miss Ed Deddick their site manager, and the rest of the staff who were always very accommodating. We are working on a new venue but the club is going to have to tighten its belt until we find one.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL TOY RUN EVEN WITH A NEW STAGING LOCATION

What a fantastic day we had on Dec. 7th for our annual Corvette Toy Run.

Even with the new venue (Walmart Cocoa Distribution Center) things seemed to go off without a hitch. There were more than 200 beautiful Corvettes, cheerful and happy participants, $2,301 in 50/50 sales and a trailer full of toys — all under beautiful blue skies.

Santa and the Sheriff deputies were very happy to get their half of the 50/50.

The numerous CKCC members who volunteered to take care of registration, signage, waivers and parking the cars in the correct rows, did a great job even with changes that had to be made a few times to direct participants arriving and to accommodate the large number of C8s in the parking lot.

Long time members George and Kristy Halkovic once again did a fantastic job creating the flyer, acquiring the new venue suggested by the Sheriff's deputies, securing a food truck and Port-a-Potties, and planning and making arrangements with the Sheriff's deputies, firefighters and Walmart.

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Christmas Party Fun Raises Money For Charity

Saturday, December 16th marked the first time our Club has had the Christmas party at the Moose Lodge in Merritt Island, which was a nice gesture since we get to use the facility free of charge for all of our meetings. The Moose provided bar service in our banquet room and also set up a nicely decorated Christmas background for photos. The Social Committee arranged for an outside caterer that put on a great buffet with variety of delicious food choices. Members and guests seemed to enjoy the DJ music and the Moose's large dance floor. The gift raffle, consisting of member donated items worth at least $25 each, raised $850 and CKCC Board of Directors approved adding $150 from the Club treasury. The next day President Janice presented a check for $1,000 to the Sharing Center of Central Brevard.

Janice also presented Awards & Special Recognitions to the following members for their outstanding achievements in 2024.

Veronica Duys

Zach & Veronica Duys

Judy Thompson

Maryalice Istvan

Faye Leschitz

David Elseroad

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Pictured are some of the guests that evening

Why we like them or why we used to

Bill Kassebaum, Competition Director

Clutches have been around since the beginning of the automotive industry. But clutches in modern vehicles are becoming more and more rare and will likely disappear for all future internal combustion vehicles. I will not discuss electric vehicles as they don't really need clutches. There are a few generations of younger drivers that have never driven a car with a clutch. Sort of a built-in theft protection device against the younger generations.

Most folks think of Corvettes as being the American sports car and sports cars have always been associated with performance and originally maximum performance demanded that the transmission of choice be manual. Manual transmissions require manual clutches that would allow the driver to connect and disconnect the engine's torque to the transmission and driving wheels. The new C8 features a hybrid transmission with a computer controlled dual disk clutch and gear selection that has no torque converter or clutch pedal. This is the current state of the art for many new high-end sports cars like the new C8 Corvette. A separate paper will be written in the near future about the new C8 transmission.

But the first two years of the C1 Corvette only came with the 2-speed Powerglide transmission. What the American sports car did not have a manual transmission! There was not even a manual transmission option. I am sure some were converted by those racing these early Vettes.

The 3-speed manual transmission was introduced in the Corvette in 1955 but it was uncommon until it became standard in 1956. In 1957, the 4-speed close-ratio manual transmission was introduced in the middle of the model year as an option. Throughout the remaining C2 Corvette model years, the 3-speed was standard, and 4-speed manual transmissions were available along with the 2-speed Powerglide transmission as options except for some high HP engines which required the optional 4-speed close ratio transmissions.

If you have ever driven an early 2-speed Powerglide Corvette or any other 50-60s GM vehicle, you know why they were so eloquently called slush-boxes. This is the result of the torque converter that replaced the manual clutch that allowed the engine to idle in gear, allowed change gears, and provided a smooth application of power to the rear wheels. Early torque converters never locked up solidly like manual clutches. Corvettes with automatic transmissions and torque converters will not be discussed any further in this paper.

What is a Clutch?

The internal combustion engine (ICE) is still the main power source in all Corvettes including the new hybrid E-Ray. Sorry, I am not looking forward to an all-electric Corvette when or if it ever happens. No thanks. Pistons move up and down in the ICE and work together to spin the crankshaft. The spinning of the crank shaft delivers the torque to the driving wheels.

Torque originally meant "to twist" and is now redefined as a force that tends to cause rotation. It is not a surprise that the engine torque (the rotation or spinning of the crank) is the force that eventually rotates the drive wheels but if an engine were connected directly to the wheels they would turn all the time and you would not go very fast with a single gear. Not good even if you have more gears. Ever try to start from a stop in 4th (or 5th) gear? Our manual transmission Corvettes couldn't sit at idle, wait at lights or change gears comfortably without a clutch.

Drivers need to be able to connect and disconnect the spinning motion of the crankshaft without turning off the engine, and that's where the clutch comes in.

The manual clutch is like a circular vice or clamp with two smooth metal faces and a

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plate with friction material (clutch plate) in between. When the clamp is tightened the clutch plate is held tightly fixed and when the clamp is loosened, the clutch plate is allowed to slip freely.

Components

The clutch assembly is made up of 5 different components including:

1. Flywheel
2. Clutch Plate
3. Clutch Cover or Pressure Plate
4. Actuation System
5. Transmission Input Shaft

Each will be discussed in limited detail below. Each of these could be the subject of a lengthy discussion.

1. Flywheel

The flywheel is one side of the clamp – the fixed side. It is a metal disc that is bolted directly to the crankshaft.

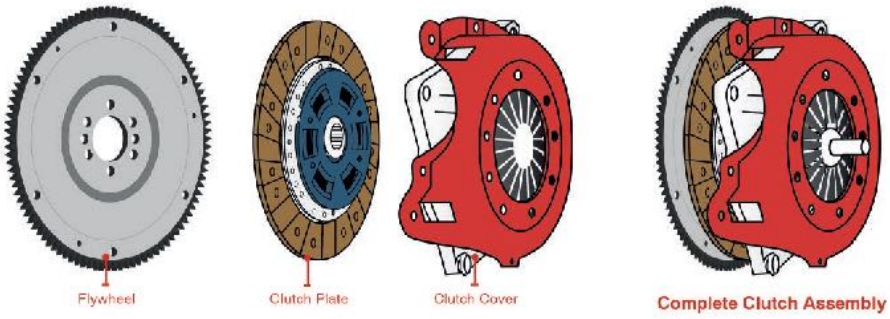
Typical Early Corvette Flywheel

Its purpose is to:

- Keep momentum, it's a heavy mass that keeps turning the crank.
- Act as a heat sink for the clutch plate.

Because the flywheel is bolted directly to the crank, the flywheel will always spin at the same rate as the crank shaft of the engine. The flywheel will also have a ring gear around the circumference that engages with the starter motor pinion to start your engine.

Most stock Corvettes have a relatively heavy flywheel that provides smooth and efficient transmission of power to the transmission and rear wheels. Corvettes that are raced occasionally or are considered track rats may have lightened steel or even aluminum flywheels to reduce the weight of the rotating mass. This can result in a quicker revving engine. Not something the typical street-driven Corvette needs or most drivers want due to issues (stalls easier, rougher idle, etc.) with drivability of the lighter flywheel.



2. Clutch Plate

The clutch plate is a disc with frictional material on both sides that slides over the gearbox input shaft. The spline or teeth at the center of the clutch plate match the diameter and tooth count of the gearbox input shaft. When the clutch plate slides over the shaft, the matching spline teeth mean the clutch plate is keyed or locked onto the gearbox

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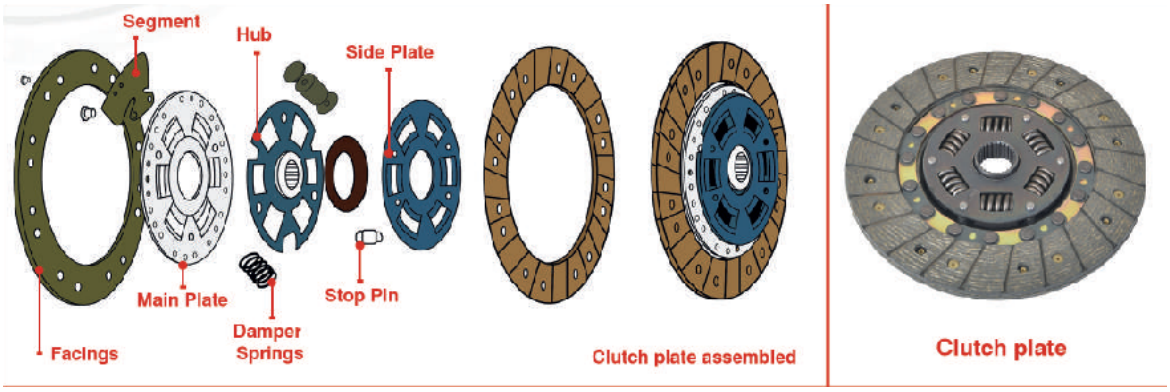

Typical Clutch Plate Components and Assembly

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input shaft and is positioned flat to the flywheel.

Around the outside of the clutch plate, on both sides, there is a hoop of friction material. The friction material riveted to the disc is designed to grip the flywheel. Because of the interlocking spline, the clutch plate and gearbox input shaft will then turn together.

Most stock Corvettes with manual transmissions utilize a single disk with long life (under typical street driving) organic material. Corvettes that see occasion track days or are taken to the drag strip will need an upgraded clutch as discussed later.

3. Clutch Cover or Pressure Plate

The pressure plate or cover assembly bolts to the flywheel and is adjacent to the clutch plate and provides the moving side of the clamp. The purpose of the cover assembly is to carry the matching surface (a heavy metal plate) for the flywheel, and a spring-loaded system that pushes the casting towards the flywheel. Together the pressure plate and flywheel work just like a clamp and provide the pressure to the friction material of the clutch plate. When the cover is bolted to the flywheel, its default position is clamped. Only when you push the clutch pedal to the floor does the pressure plate release the clamping force on the clutch plate friction material and allow the clutch to disengage the engine from the transmission.

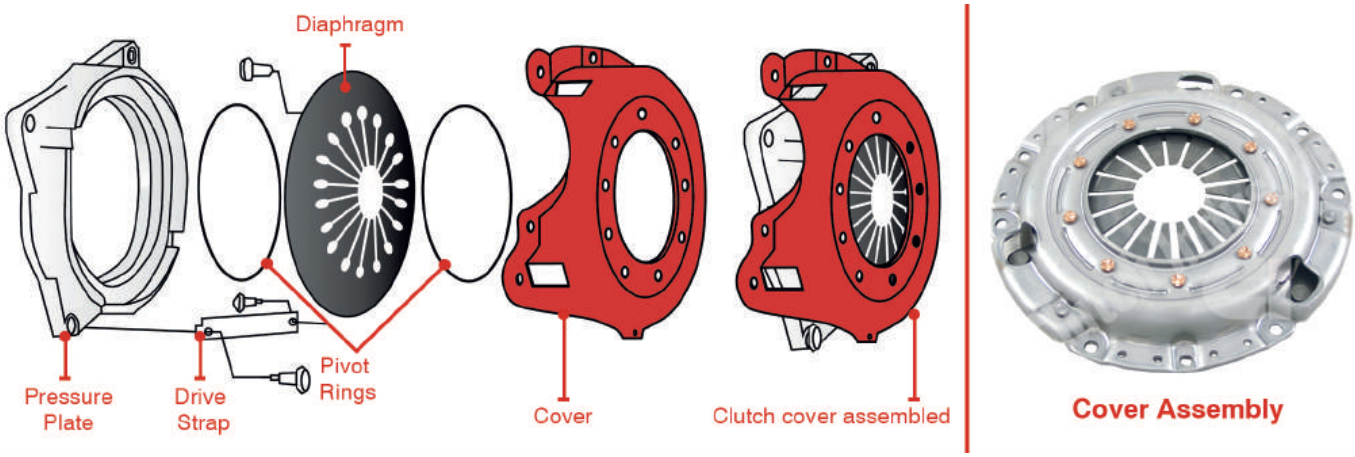
Most stock Corvettes with manual transmissions utilize a compromise to provide a sufficient amount of clamping pressure to the clutch disk to prevent it from slipping during normal driving situations. The clamping pressure is sufficient under normal driving conditions to be able to handle the maximum torque the engine is capable of providing. When engines are modified to increase the output torque, one of the methods to handle this additional torque is by increasing the clamping force the pressure plate can supply. This has a distinct disadvantage of increasing the clutch pedal effort, something most drivers do not want when driving their Corvettes in traffic or a slow-paced parade with a beauty queen next to them in the car. The left leg can get quite tired of holding the clutch in.

4. Clutch Actuation System

To disconnect the clutch, or let go of the torque, you have an actuation system which starts at the pedal and ends at the clutch cover assembly. The Thrust Bearing in a 3-piece clutch kit is one component of the actuation system.

Putting your foot on to the clutch pedal is the same as winding back one side of the vice. When you push onto the pedal, it works a

series of connected parts or hydraulic cylinders which end with a push onto the spring-loaded part of the cover assembly. The spring load is taken off and because the



Typical Pressure Plate or Clutch Cover

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Clutch Actuation System Typical Components – Master & Slave

clutch plate is no longer clamped to the flywheel, it stops spinning at the same rate as the crank. It means you have disconnected the engine from the transmission and essentially in neutral. Transmission gear changes can also be made with the engine disconnected from the engine.

Remember the locating pin of the gearbox input shaft is just a locating pin. It will sit in the flywheel pilot bearing but is not bolted to it, so it won't spin at the same rate. See next section

5. Transmission Input Shaft

A small but very strong shaft. At one end is a smooth diameter pin that sits in the center of the flywheel/crank. A clutch pilot bearing sits in the center of the flywheel, holding the locating pin of the input shaft. Because the input shaft is not bolted to the crank, it does not turn with the crank, it just uses it as a centering and locating point.

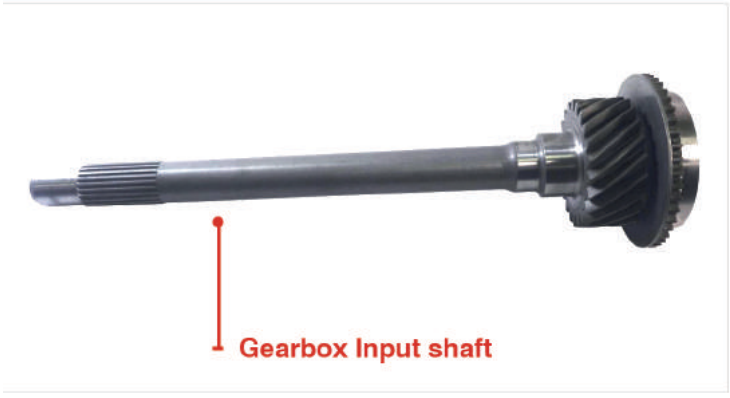
The opposite end of the input shaft is connected to the gearbox. Along the shaft you'll find a spline that matches the center hole spline of the clutch plate. The gearbox input shaft's purpose is to:

1. Line up the gearbox with the center of the crank shaft, keeping the rest of the drive train straight and true to the crank.
2. Give the clutch plate something to locate onto and position itself.

More than a few Corvettes with more than stock horsepower have experience failure of the transmission input shaft. This is especially true if the clutch components have been changed out with more robust components that can easily transmit more torque to the transmission and remainder of the drivetrain. But as many have found out, increasing the engine power and torque usually results in a failure of the next weakest component of the drivetrain. Performance upgrades to the engine may require upgraded clutch components as discussed next. But you will likely have to upgrade more parts to keep your Corvette reliable and fast.

Upgrades

An OE vehicle comes fitted with a standard clutch. The largest category of clutch sold is standard replacement kits but we're not all standard drivers, especially if you own a Corvette or two. If an engine is modified from standard to improve performance or if the vehicle is under a higher strain than normal (racing, carrying or towing heavy weight) an upgraded clutch might be needed.



Transmission Input Shaft

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The following are a few ways to increase the performance and torque capacity of your Corvette clutch system.

Clamp Load

Increasing the clamp load on the cover assembly is a common way to get more torque capacity from your clutch system. It involves increasing the load exerted by the diaphragm to clamp the clutch disc between the pressure plate and the flywheel. The amount of clamp increase is limited as this can make the clutch pedal feel heavy and put strain on the clutch actuation system (hydraulics or cable etc.).

Friction Material

Changing the friction material on a clutch disc can increase the torque capacity and can improve the heat properties. Common clutch disc materials are:

ORGANIC: Most commonly used on OE applications this material is great for drivability but is not suited for high performance applications due to poor torque capacity when hot.

ARAMID: Generally a mixture of organic and aramid this compound has the drivability of standard organic material with much higher torque capacity and better heat resistance.

CERAMETALLIC/CERAMIC: Suited to high performance or race applications, this material can handle a high level of heat while also giving a massive increase in torque capacity. Unfortunately, the drivability is significantly decreased as the material gives a more aggressive (quick/abrupt) engagement than organic material.

Multiple Clutch Disks

Installing twin or triple plates in most cases can be done without modifying the bellhousing and can double or triple the torque capacity without having a detriment to the drivability. Most performance clutch manufacturers have a range of twin and triple plate kits, which feature several different plate options to suit various applications from street to track.

Upcoming Events*

Jan. 5: CKCC Sunday Brunch, 10 a.m., Gators Portside, Port Canaveral

Jan. 7 – 19: Mecum Auction, Osceola Heritage Park, Kissimmee

Jan. 14: CKCC General Membership Social/Meeting, 5:30/7 p.m., M.I. Moose

Jan. 15-18: NCRS Winter Regional Event at the American Muscle Car Museum, details available at www.fl.ncrs.org

Jan. 25: CKCC Cruise-in to Shooters Oyster Bar & Grill, 916 Florida Avenue, Cocoa, 1:30 p.m.

Feb. 2: CKCC Sunday Brunch, 10 a.m., Gators Portside, Port Canaveral

Feb. 11: CKCC General Membership Social/Meeting, 5:30/7 p.m., M.I. Moose

Feb. 15: CKCC Valentine's cruise-in to The Italian Fisherman, Grant, 5:30 p.m., (Note: must be paid in advance to attend)

Mar. 2: CKCC Sunday Brunch, 10 a.m., Gators Portside, Port Canaveral

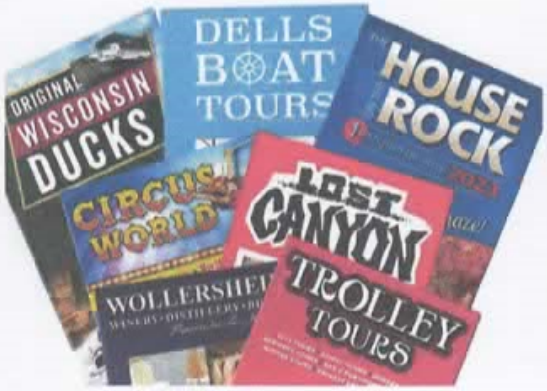
***Events are subject to change. Please confirm before attending.**

2025 NCCC Convention

NATIONAL COUNCIL CORVETTE CLUBS, INC.
MIDWEST REGION

We invite you to join us in the Wisconsin Dells and Lake Delton area of Wisconsin for the 66th Annual NCCC Convention August 17 – 22, 2025

The Scenic Wisconsin Dells area is an exciting and beautiful resort area for to gather for partying as well as sightseeing, driving unique roads and exploring everything the area has to offer. Wisconsin Dells is the Water Park Capital of the World.



Wisconsin Dells is about an hour north of Madison, WI. There is plenty to see and do in the Dells and even more throughout the surrounding area. The Host Hotel will be the Kalahari Resorts & Convention Center conveniently located for all activities just off I-90/94 at Exit 92. The Room Rate at The Kalahari will be $156.03 including taxes, free parking, no resort fee. Guests will have free entry to the Tom Foolery Amusement Park as well as free use of Indoor and Outdoor Water Parks. Entertainment, Parties and both Hosted Tours and Self Guided Tours are in the planning stages. Competitive Events are being planned for 2 Rallyes, 3 Drags, PC Car Show, Concours d'Elegance, Funkhana, Autocross, High Speed (not Time Trials), 2 Scavenger Hunts, Valve Cover Races and an Overall Competitor Competition.

To save travel, Speed events will be run on Tuesday (the 19th) swapping tracks around noon. Planning for the Autocross and High Speed Events is focusing on making it possible to give all competitors four runs.

ROAD AMERICA®
America's Park of Speed
Elkhart Lake, WI
www.roadamerica.com

Autocross will be run on the Briggs & Stratton 8/10 mile Motorplex shown above and with an X inside the Racetrack

High Speed will run on the 4.1 Mile Racetrack

All 3 Drag events will be held on Thursday (the 21st) at the Rock Falls Raceway just south of Eau Claire, WI. It is a little ways to drive (mostly along I-90/I-94) but so worth it to drag on an NHRA ¼ Mile track that is so clean, well maintained and professionally staffed!

ROCK FALLS RACEWAY
EAU CLAIRE • WISCONSIN

www.rockfallsraceway.com

Legendary Corvette Race Car Up For Sale

From the Registry of Corvette Race Cars December eNewsletter

Coming up on February 27/28 in Miami, the one and only very first Corvette Prototype race car will be sold at auction. "Experts" say it will fetch $5mm to 7mm.

Its striking look transcends from GM's chief stylist Harley Earl who conceived the Corvette after serving as Race Grand Marshal in 1951 at Watkins Glen.

Initially designated Experimental Project XP-64, the 1957 Corvette SS has a 283 cubic inch V8 and Ram Jet Fuel Injection.

The story begins in the waning days of 1955. The Corvette was on the ropes. Buyers flocked to Ford's 2-seat Thunderbird with a 292 cubic inch V8 engine, roll up windows and other creature comforts.

Things began to change with Chevrolet chief engineer Ed Cole's groundbreaking 265 cubic inch V8. His motor weighed 100 lbs. less and packed more punch than the "blue flame" six in the 1953 &1954 models.

Corvette engineer Zora Arkus Duntov wrote an impassioned memo to his superiors that GM needed to prove the Corvette in competition or watch it go down the tubes.

The 12 hours of Sebring on March 24, 1956 was just months away.

Four 1956 models were hurried into action. They sat on frames scavenged from late 1955 models.

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Racing guru Smokey Yunick bluntly said the Corvette was overweight, had awful brakes and handled no better than a manure spreader. To Duntov it meant that proceeding so fast was too risky a proposition.

Cole turned to John Fitch, considered America's top sports car racer. Fitch was the only American ever invited to join the world-class Mercedes racing team. A graduate of Lehigh University, Fitch was also no slouch when it came to engineering.To quote Fitch after winning the race in their class un-opposed, "We got more than we expected and more than we deserved."

GM jumped on the bandwagon, setting its sights to win overall against prototypes from Ferrari, Maserati and Jaguar, giving birth to the XP-64 Project.

They saved time with knowledge drawn from Fitch with a car designed along the lines of the Mercedes 300 SL. Make no mistake, Duntov was totally on board this time around.

The plan included rolling out a test bed called the "Mule" an ungainly thing that mimicked the SS for mechanical purposes.

Fitch spent January, February and most of March at Sebring, pounding around the circuit to unveil defects and prescribe the manufacture of parts to meet the punishing 12-hour race on March 23, 1957.

Arriving just a day in advance, the prized Corvette SS never had a chance to test that led to its failure in the race and then "out of the blue" put out of commission forever as the story unfolds.

And what about the test "Mule"? Bill Mitchell, successor to Harley Earl, bought it on his own nickel from GM. Mitchell re-styled the car, known as XP-89, with a look that foreshadowed the revolutionary 1963 Corvette Sting Ray.

Mitchell hired ace Dick Thompson to drive his creation now called the Sting Ray Racer. The car weighed only 1,850 pounds, about 1,000 pounds lighter than the production Corvette. In 1960, the SCCA crowned Thompson the C Modified class champion.

Getting back GM's quest to win overall, Harley Earl had his long-formed ideas about style, created a shapely body, clad in magnesium to save weight (which trapped too much heat for comfort).

At Sebring, Zora was more than eager for the great Stirling Moss & Juan Miguel Fangio to try out the Mule. Although each readily beat

the track record, they turned down the offer because they feared the Corvette SS would arrive too late from Detroit for a proper shake-out. AND THEY WERE RIGHT.

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