

# NorCal/N. Nevada/Utah



TO BOWLING GREEN

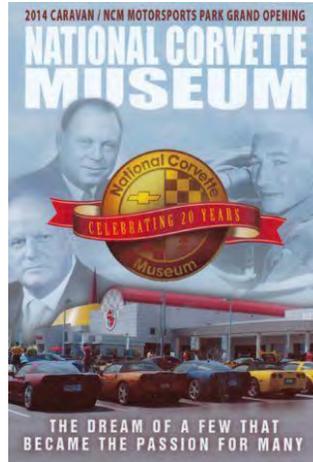
## 2014 National Corvette Caravan

### Our Story



Aug. 22-31  
2014

## National Corvette Caravan



When the National Corvette Museum (NCM) had its Grand Opening in 1994, they invited Corvettes from across the Nation to converge on Bowling Green, KY, which turned out to be a huge success (and jammed the highways around Bowling Green for miles). The NCM has held successive Caravans every five years since, with 2014 being the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The nation is split up into sections and a Captain appointed for each section to organize and guide that part of the Caravan. WSCC has provided Captains for the previous Caravans, Gary Moreland in 1994 & 1999, Dick Realph in 2003, Steve Cleveland in 2009, and for 2014, your WSCC Publication Director (me).

The Section that I was assigned was Northern CA, Northern NV, and Utah. Although a large geographical region, it doesn't draw the interest seen in some other parts of the country. However, I was pleased that we had far more interest than 2009, and we had about 70 cars heading to Reno from CA (some didn't go all the way to Bowling Green). Later on we picked up several NV cars, and then a large group of Utah cars, so the total on the road for our group was around 90 give/take as we went along. In my initial planning (which began over 3 years ago) I was leery of having another small group as in 2009, based on the economy, so I asked the Captain of the Pacific NW group if it was OK if we tagged along with them, once we both reached Cheyenne. As time went on, interest grew and other sections joined in (CO, WY, NE, Western Canada, MO) such that on the last leg of our journey, we had 800-900 Corvettes lined up entering Bowling Green. Unfortunately, standing still for lengthy stints – but that's another story.



The itinerary that I laid out would take 6 days. The first day was a short stint to Reno, only 179 miles, but from then on we would average around 500 miles a day, with interesting stops along the way, and/or evening activities.

## National Corvette Caravan



Participants were encouraged to sign our banner. In addition I had the banner at Laguna Seca in May, and had the Drivers, Doug Fehan, Dick Guldstrand and the GM representatives that were present sign it also.

The banner was placed in the NCM Archives for posterity.



Vaca Valley Corvettes worked with Specialty Sales Classics in Fairfield to host our launch (thank you folks!). Buzz Marston helped me welcome folks on behalf of WSCC and the NCM. I decided to keep things simple, so after a brief orientation, and a little time to put Caravan Participant decals on their windshields, we saddled up, worked our way through Sacramento, found places for lunch, and then regrouped in Rocklin. Our next stop was the Rest Stop on I80 near Donner Summit, where several members of Reno Corvettes welcomed us and guided us down to the Atlantis Casino in Reno, which is where most of us found beds that night. With a lot of help from Reno Corvettes, and Carlos Mejia in particular, I had arranged for a group visit and dinner at the National Automobile Museum (former Harrah's Collection) that evening, and 127 people participated. There was an introductory film, and the docents guided groups around and explained the exhibits (including John Wayne's 1953 Corvette).

[A side note: day 1 did not bode well for two WSCC participants. Ken and Marci Albers wanted to take their '61 in true Corvette spirit, as they had done in 2009, although Ken had subsequently installed a 5-speed to make the trip a little more enjoyable. Unfortunately, the car made it known that it didn't want to go by the time it reached Reno. A helpful Reno Corvettes member let Ken store the car in his ample garage, and Ken and Marci rented a car and headed back home to get another Corvette out of their stable (Marci's Ron Fellows Z06). Ken told me that they hoped to catch back up with us by the following night in Salt Lake City, but to my (and others) surprise, they were back with us by the time we stopped in Wendover.

The other person for whom things didn't go well was John Yde of Lake County. For the 2009 Caravan, he started out with his '62, but didn't even make it past Rocklin. His car was fine, but riding in a C1 was too brutal for his elderly passenger, so John had to turn around. He ended up flying back to Bowling Green to join us there. This time, John was going solo, again in the '62. He was proud of the fact that by the time he reached the NCM, the '62 would have over 350,000 miles on the odometer using the same engine block. He had just put new tires on, but hadn't driven any highway miles. He looked very worried at the launch, and told me that the car had very bad vibration at speed – almost uncontrollable. I think that he tried to get a wheel balance in Reno or maybe before, but it didn't help. With all the activity of doing my captain role, I lost track of John. The next morning, I was shocked to hear the he had collapsed on the escalator in the hotel and banged his head badly. Luckily, a friend was alongside him and applied CPR, as he appeared not to be breathing. The paramedics arrived and took him to the hospital. With stitches and rehydration, John was eventually well enough to drive himself home. He called me later and apologized to me for having to drop out of the Caravan – can you believe that? Unfortunately, he had to stay home to get a doctor checkup, so he couldn't even fly back this time – sorry John, but very glad to hear that you are fine now. He attributed the collapse to dehydration and worry about the car.

John wants to thank all those who sent concerns and wished him well]

# National Corvette Caravan Getting Underway



Specialty had a nice spread of refreshments



We regrouped at Donner Summit



Drivers' meeting to explain how to get to the hotel and what to expect once we got there



Then we saddled up...



...and made a nice string down into Reno

# National Corvette Caravan



John looked happy at this point, but see story



The Caravan got billing on the Marque



Me, my helper, and my ride in front of the Atlantis "Big Blue" stayed in front of the hotel for additional publicity



That evening we had a private gathering at the National Automobile Museum



We started with an orientation....



...then docents led groups among the exhibits

**National Corvette Caravan**  
**A Little Sample of the National Automobile Museum**



John Wayne's '53

As a kid, the Cadillac Eldorado fascinated me



After the tour we had dinner...



...surrounded by historic automobiles

# National Corvette Caravan



**Day 2** found us heading to Salt Lake City. The Corvette Club of Utah had arranged for us to gather in front of the historic hanger in Wendover, where WWII heavy bomber crews were trained, and where the Enola Gay B29 was prepped and trained for their H-bomb drop. After that, we broke up for dinner and made our way to the hotel in Salt Lake City.



 **HISTORIC MARKER "A"**

**OPERATIONS BUILDING**

Welcome to Wendover Airport, the historic airfield where the most heavy bomber crews were trained, including the crews of the famous Enola Gay and Bock's Car B-29 bombers that flew the atomic missions over Japan.

Twenty-one heavy bomber squadrons and a P-47 fighter squadron trained here. Tens of thousands of airmen and support staff passed through the airfield during WWII on their way to destinations around the world.

The OPS building was the control center for all flight training operations at the airfield. Flight commanders received their daily flight instructions and weather briefings for each training mission in this building.

The OPS building currently houses the Hall of Honor Museum and the airport administration functions. The historic role of providing aircraft radio and automated weather information for today's pilots continues.



Over 100 bombers and fighters on the Anchorage during the height of training



Original Layout for buildings  
In the Ops Building Area

## National Corvette Caravan



**Day 3** was to take us to Cheyenne. I had laid out 4 possible routes to get there. Option 1 was straight forward, literally – just get back on I80 and follow it to Cheyenne, 446 miles. Options 2/3 were scenic routes going through Flaming Gorge with an optional side trip to Dinosaur National Monument – nearly 600 miles if you did the whole thing. Option 4 was set up by the Utah group, again going to Dinosaur Monument, but then continuing on through Steamboat Springs to Cheyenne – a slightly shorter 525 miles.

I think that I was the only one to do the longest route. On one hand, I was glad that I did, as the Dinosaur exhibit was very impressive, and the drive through Flaming Gorge was pleasant and scenic. On the other hand, it was a LONG HAUL, and as a result, I missed most of the evening activities in Cheyenne. A few people did go through Flaming Gorge, but bypassed the Dinosaur Exhibit. A sizeable group did the run through Steamboat Springs, but the vast majority of folks just did the straight shot to Cheyenne (what a bunch of wusses!).



## National Corvette Caravan



The primary exhibit (on the right) is a river bed embedded with every size dinosaur bone you can imagine

The evening activities were a visit to the **Cheyenne Depot Museum**, and a welcoming spaghetti dinner at the local Chevy dealer - **Tyrrell-Doyle Chevrolet**. Up until the middle of that night, we had been enjoying very nice weather. Our sleep was disturbed by some very loud claps of thunder, and there was still enough rain around in the morning to complicate getting loaded back up into our cars. Leaving Cheyenne, we ran into a fairly brief but serious downpour.



Thanks to the folks at Tyrrell-Doyle for treating us to a nice welcome to Cheyenne Dinner. I was told that they had their service bay open and mechanic on call, and he was put to good use.  
(Thanks to Diane Souders for these pictures)

## National Corvette Caravan



Our hotel in Cheyenne had an interesting motif, including a teepee chandelier with buffalo. The Depot Museum was kept open exclusively for the Caravan.

**Day 4** was a straight shot to Lincoln, but had a couple of interesting optional visits in Kearney, NE to break up the drive. One was the **Great Platte River Road Archway**, which had life-size dioramas depicting the migration of wagon trains and even hand carts across the plains to the West. The other optional visit was the **Classic Car Collection**. There was also a Caravan Welcome in downtown Lincoln for us that evening.



## National Corvette Caravan



I think that everyone who visited the Arch took a picture like this



# National Corvette Caravan



# National Corvette Caravan

After Restoration



## National Corvette Caravan



**Day 5** had an optional activity for us before we even left Lincoln – a visit to the **American Museum of Speed**. As you can see in the photos, most of our group opted to go and we were rewarded with a mind boggling experience. This three story expanse is sponsored by Speedway, who bill themselves as “America’s Oldest Speed Shop”. Naturally you would expect to see a nice assortment of race cars, but what they had on display ran the gambit from F1 to the earliest racers, including Indy cars and midget racers. Unbelievably, that was just a portion of what we saw. They had rooms full of soapbox racers, pedal cars, numerous engine displays and machine shops, racks of early headlights, taillights and emblems, bicycles, tricycles, lunchboxes, and toys related to cars/racing. We left with our mouths agog and were remarking about it for days after.



In spite of the crowd, the outside Speedway crew was very helpful and efficient in getting us parked

## National Corvette Caravan



The Speedway folks inside were just as helpful and cheerful in welcoming us. We filled many pages in their guest book. The exhibits in the entry hall were probably what most of us would expect based upon the name of the museum – maybe a little nicer. However, we were totally unprepared for what we found as we got further in.



## National Corvette Caravan



In addition to rooms full of race cars, there were exhibits of custom Rods...



...and classics like this Tucker, which in itself was worth the visit, to soapbox racers...  
(that's a "Knee Action Chevrolet")



...to an unbelievable assortment of pedal cars, and tricycles/bicycles

# National Corvette Caravan



There were a multitude of engine displays



Of course, some dragsters



This Pontiac drew a lot of admiration



CO Captain Richard Loch and wife (note WSCC logo)



## National Corvette Caravan



One of several Corvette Pedal Cars on display



The parking lot became a Corvette Showroom

## National Corvette Caravan



We made our way to Columbia, MO either by cutting around Kansas City or just sticking on Interstates. Most of us chose to take the scenic bypass, which turned out to be mostly nice divided highway, although with stops/services few and far between. One person who stayed on the Interstates told me that the drive through Kansas City was a “breeze”, which surprised me as my few past experiences there had not been pleasant (traffic/construction/police). The Mid Missouri Corvette Club had set up a welcoming BBQ at an auction facility which had ample parking for us all. The facility had a 3-bay manual charity car wash set up, and lots of folks lined their Corvettes up for a bath, thinking that we had made our way past thunderstorms – ha, ha. We didn’t even make it back to our hotels before the skies lit up and the rain came POURING down. This is what we learned afterwards from MMCC:

*Thanks to you, the charity car wash raised over \$4000 for the Central Missouri Dream Factory! We cannot begin to tell you how much this means to the Dream Factory, as 100% of those dollars will stay right here in Mid-MO, to assist children who are terminally ill, and their families. Hopefully, the rain that fell after the car wash wasn't too much of a downer. It figures. if there is one way to ensure that it rains, it would be washing and gathering a few hundred Corvettes together!*



## National Corvette Caravan

**Day 6** was our final leg into the NCM. My partner and helper, Sharon, had been developing medical issues which I won't go into. Let's just say that she knew that she would have to stop at every rest stop and McDonalds between Columbia and Bowling Green. So early that morning I tried to tell as many of our group as I could find to link up with the other sections because I wouldn't be around.

Only the four largest groups were going to be given police escorts, so I thought that it would be an advantage to join the group that we were basically travelling with anyway. In hindsight, it may have been better to stay separate, but if we had done that, we would have had to wait and be the next to last group going in. Oh well, lesson learned. The entire group was told to converge in Morgantown for the police escort into the Museum. Things got mixed up in Morgantown as people weren't sure where to go, and the police escort left a bunch behind. To add to the confusion, there was construction and one lane traffic on the main road through town. From later on feedback to me, I believe that most made it through to do a loop in front of the NCM to commemorate the end of the Caravan.

Meanwhile, as we neared Bowling Green, Sharon's problem became more severe and it was obvious that I had to get her to a hospital. So here I am trying to rush to the hospital, only to find that the route to the hospital is the same route being taken by our Caravan, so I end up stuck behind a long line trying to get off the highway and work through a traffic light. Eventually, I was able to get close enough to the light to cut around the Caravan and get into the left turn lane towards the hospital. We cannot say enough good words about the staff and treatment we received at The Medical Center in Bowling Green. Sharon promptly recovered and was fine for our return trip. Thanks to all of you who expressed concern.

**So years of planning are over as the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Caravan has completed its journey. However, plans are already underway for the next Caravan in 2019 to Celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NCM, so mark your Calendars! Thanks to all of you who joined in this time.** The final numbers are still being tabulated, but it is expected to be that around 5,000 Corvettes and 9,000 Corvetters converged on Bowling Green.



## NCM's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



**Our Destination**

Technically, the Caravan ended when we reached Bowling Green, but it linked directly into the **NCM's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** celebration. There were numerous displays, exhibits, seminars, vendors at the NCM as well as road tours in the countryside to distilleries, horse farms, quilting museums, and caves. Attractions in Nashville were only an hour away. Folks lucky enough to have gotten signed up for Corvette Factory Tours enjoyed seeing C7's being built, and some even watched the first of the C7 Z06's taking shape. For those who weren't able to get into the factory, the NCM ran a "virtual" factory tour in their theatre. Several C7's were on display, including both a Z06 Coupe and a Z06 Convertible. GM representatives were present to answer questions, including Harlan Charles (Corvette Product Manager) and Kirk Bennion (Corvette Designer).



**One of several C7's on display and open for inspection**

Seminars included a run through of the new Performance Data Recorder, C7 Design Review, the 9/11 World Trade Center Experience by retired FBI Agent Wes Wong, Getting To Know Zora Duntov, Using the 7<sup>th</sup> Generation Navigation System, Inspired from the Ground Up (sinkhole recovery), Joe Spielman's History of the Corvette, Demonstrations in the Museum's Delivery inspection area, History of the 1983 Corvette by Dave McLellan, Meet the Corvette Plant Manager – Jeff Lemarche, Corvettes & Karst NCM Sinkhole, and Safe Driving Tips by Andy Pilgrim. Most of these seminars were repeated on different days to allow for the crowd and for timing conflicts with other activities. In addition, there were seminars for this year's Corvette Hall of Fame Inductees: Dave MacDonald, Jerry Burton, and John Heinrich.

## NCM's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Book signings/poster signings included Mike Mueller – The Complete Book of Corvette, Dick Guldstrand (restored GS90 unveiling), Will Cooksey – No Time To Cry, Randy Leffingwell – Legendary Corvettes & Corvette 60 Years, and Larry Edsall – Corvette Stingray.

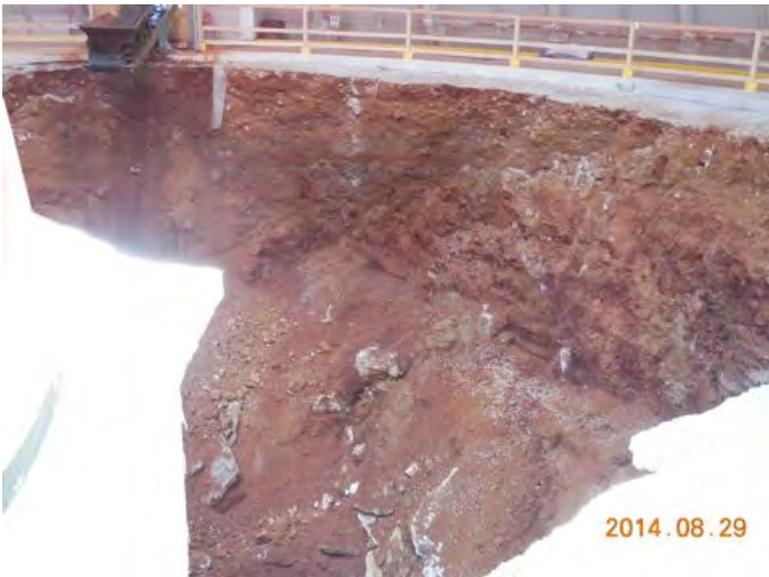
Besides the Grand Opening Ceremony for the NCM Motorsports Park across the Interstate, there were seminars on Corvettes at Le Mans, Corvette Racing, Michelin Tires, Holley Performance Products, and “How I Analyze Race Tracks” by Andy Pilgrim. There were several slots for attendees to drive their Corvette on the new track at Parade Lap speeds, or they could pay \$50 for a VIP ride along hot lap at higher speeds.

The seminar on Safe Driving Tips by Andy Pilgrim was really an expose on a program that he has underway to educate the nation about the impact of distracted driving. In the early '80's the U.S. was ranked #1 in the world for traffic safety. Currently we are ranked #42. Whereas we seem to be proud of the fact that U.S. traffic deaths have dropped to 38,000 a year, based on what has happened in several European countries, that figure should only be 6-8,000. Here are the major factors that he attributes this failure to:

- Parents are unwittingly teaching their children to drive distracted by chatting/texting while they watch from the passenger or rear seat.
- The U.S. has the highest % of automatic transmissions in the world, by far. This means that drivers have one hand free for texting/phoning etc.
- The U.S. driving test is a joke
- Parent and politician pressure makes it virtually impossible to raise the minimum driving age.
- Most schools no longer have a driver education course, and even if they do, they are using outdated curriculum that says nothing about distracted driving, and the kids don't pay attention anyway because they know that the driving test is a farce.

The Caravan Captains were given a private session on the track as a reward for their efforts, and we enjoyed several laps at a spirited pace. Shortly after we pulled off the track, the #4 C7-R went out and showed us how it is really done.

The NCM had kept the 8 cars that fell into the sinkhole on display so that Caravan participants could see them up close, as well as the sinkhole itself. The Museum Board of Directors met on the final morning of the celebration and came to a decision to fill in the sinkhole entirely and only restore 3 of the cars: The Blue Devil, the One Millionth, and the Black '62. GM will restore the first two themselves – in fact they were on a trailer out of the NCM before we left town. The NCM will choose a team experienced with C1 restoration to repair the '62. When the Board heard that leaving a partial opening to view the sinkhole would cost over \$1M more than filling it in, and even so, the view would be obstructed by structural supports, they decided that filling it in was the best choice. They will still try to have some sort of display to convey what the sinkhole looked like.



**It will be interesting to learn how many yards of material will be used to fill this in.**

# NCM's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



Historic race Corvettes on display...



...in the NCM entry hall



The C7 Z06 was on display



The Sink Hole Cars on display in the Skydome



Caravan Captains on the track



Just to show that the Motorsports Park is just across the Interstate from the NCM



The #4 C7-R is waved onto the track...



...for inaugural runs