

# BUBLE TOP CAR

A front cover story from the Blue Flame Special in 1971 that Ed Thiebaud did.

Dear Ed,

I bought my first car, a 1954 Corvette, in 1962. It was not original but was very nice; gold paint, a black naugehyde interior and a three-speed transmission with a hydraulic clutch which took about 500 pounds of pressure to operate. After driving it through a Wisconsin Winter and freezing my nose several times, I traded it in on a "regular" car.

However, I could not get it out of my mind and always watched the ads with the somewhat secret wish of owning one again. Five years later my wife and I took a wrong turn off the freeway and saw a Corvette with a bubble top on a used car lot. It was so unusual we had to stop and look closer . . . even getting as far as kicking the tires and asking the price.

After two nights of nightmares and justifying the purchase of it to each other, we went back to take it for a test drive. The noise inside the car was terrific . . . the combination of a leaky muffler and the reverberation of the top gave the sensation of being inside a guitar! The engine quit after a mile and wouldn't start, but it turned out it was out of gas.

A boy from the used car dealer came out with a can of gas. After putting it in the car, he pulled away and hooked the front fender of the Corvette with his bumper, but fortunately only took a small chip out of the fender.

We decided to take the Corvette after the fender was repaired. While looking at the engine I noticed the ignition shielding was missing. The salesman had no idea what I was talking about, but the mechanic remembered "seeing it around someplace." We found it on the junk pile! We gave him \$1500 and drove off with our prize.

The car was purchased from the original owner — even better than the proverbial "little ol' lady". He is the owner of a large Milwaukee based industrial plant and took exceptionally good care of the car, driving it only in the summer on nice days and even keeping it in a garage at work. It had 50,000 miles on it when purchased in 1967. He sold the car because he didn't have the time to keep it up, and because, I think, it was not the most comfortable car for a 6'3" person over 40! He drives a new Corvette now.

My Corvette was one of the first two bought in the Milwaukee area. The other was a blue one with the tan interior bought at the same time by a friend of the owner of my car. My car's owner had to top his friend though and got a bubble top for it. One day he was driving on the freeway when the top came off traveling at a good distance upside down on the pavement. The top was taken to O'Hare Field in Chicago and the scratches were removed and the fastening system improved.

We use the bubble top very little — about two weeks in Spring and Fall. It is like a greenhouse inside when the sun shines.

The car is driven daily to work during the summer, used for weekend trips, and stored during the Winter. Here is my storage procedure (I would like to see an article or some opinions in our magazine regarding Winter storage):

The car is put on blocks to take the weight off the tires.

The battery is removed and trickle charged regularly throughout the Winter.

The engine is run every two weeks at a very fast idle of about 1500 RPM for 1/2 hour.

(My feeling on this is that one doesn't have to drain the fuel system to keep varnish from forming and pressure is built up against the oil seals.)

The car is put in gear for a few seconds at idle to rotate all the parts of the drive train through its oil. (Some believe it is better to soak everything in oil and leave it sit: as I said, I would like to hear some arguments both ways.)

We have worked out a restoration project for each year. We purchased wide whitewall tires last year and will reupholster the car this year, and plan to get a new top next year. There have been many happy hours with the Corvette and we're sure we have done well over three years on our \$1500 investment. There have been no unusual costs; a new battery and transmission seals were all that were needed. We plan to continue driving our Corvette for many years, so no offer to buy please. However, we would be happy to correspond with other owners.

## COVER CAR STORY

