

# 1953 Supercharged Corvette... An Early Example of the "Muscle Car"

— Owner Dave Ferguson

Let's take a few minutes to recognize a significant effort to produce and demonstrate the first Corvette "muscle car."

The production of the new Corvette in 1953 caused great excitement at McCulloch Motors in California. The newly-developed Supercharger had provided a significant performance in after-market installations, so why not make it a production option?

A brilliant young engineer at McCulloch named Art Oehrli launched the campaign to: 1. Acquire one of these new sports cars. 2. Create and test a supercharged 1953 Corvette. 3. Produce supercharger kits to be installed on the Corvette production line.

Art Oehrli and his brother John had been the brains and muscle behind the invention and performance of the McCulloch superchargers. However, the acquisition of one of these new Corvettes proved difficult. Even though General Motors showed interest in Oehrli's idea, there were no cars available for this venture. However, G.M. did inform Oehrli that a 1953 Corvette would be delivered to the Los Angeles area.

Corvette number 024 (VIN #E53F001024) was bound for Los Angeles, California, to the President of Standard Oil in September of 1953. Art Oehrli contacted this executive and he agreed to loan him this new prize. The adventure was on.

The next few months were spent in the design and implementation of the supercharger modification into the compact engine compartment of the 1953 Corvette.

The results were impressive. The modified six-cylinder/powerglide drive-train showed significant improvement:

1. The acceleration time from 0-60 was reduced 25% (from 12 to 9.0 seconds).
2. Rear wheel horse power was increased 35% (from 87 to 117).

A complete description of the modification and performance improvements are contained in the attached booklet (dated 7 April 1954). This booklet was part of the proposal McCulloch made to General Motors. As noted in the booklet, this test data was verified by Maurice Olley, Chief Engineer for G.M.

Even with these significant improvements, G.M. decided to abandon the "ole" six-banger and proceed with the development of the V-8 for future Corvettes.

This supercharged Corvette was returned to its owner and after he enjoyed tearing up the streets and drag strips of LA with it for awhile, he must have found a new toy, because he gave the Corvette back to Oehrli.

The car sat idle for a few years, then Art gave it to his "Chief mechanic," his pride and joy, his daughter Sandy.

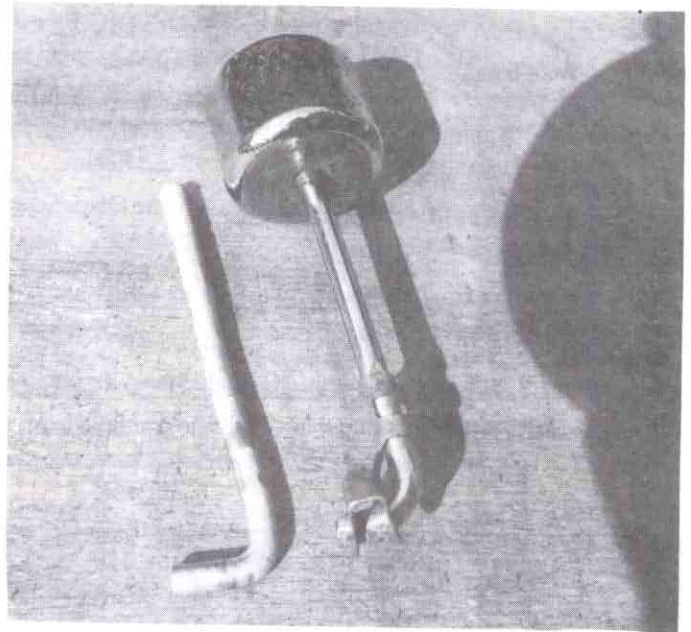
After disconnecting the blower and other slight modifications, he gave #024 to his daughter for her 16th birthday.

For the next few years, Sandy was the envy of every teenager in L.A. She cruised the '53 Vette all over. When she got out of college, she decided on a change of vehicle and sold the car in the mid '60's.

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## Another Change to be Expected in Early-Model Corvettes



The button and rod for the soft top lid assembly differed from 1953 - 1957 and 1958 - 1962.

Pictured above: The 1953 - 1957 was solid and the rod was brazed into the button, whereas, in 1958 - 1962, the rod was threaded and screwed into the button. It also had a retainer nut to secure it, which isn't in the picture.

They may have done this for various reasons... maybe to enable the button to be adjusted in or out, or to make it easier and cheaper to replace a bent rod.

Whichever, it's just another one of those little differences often encountered when working with these early Corvettes.

— Roy Braatz, Jr.