

STRAIGHT-AXEL CORVETTE ENTHUSIASTS (SACE)

SACE History

By Noland Adams

As SACE gets started, it is well to trace this club back to its beginning. So, let us go back to the late sixties in Central California.

In the rural area southwest of Fresno, turkey farmer Ed Thiebaud bought a red 1963 Corvette Coupe. Since it was in good condition, Ed entered it in a local car show. There, it placed behind an older Corvette - a 1954.

That '54 got Ed's curiosity going, and he started learning more about the early Corvettes. He soon found there was no place to turn: no organization to help locate parts or gather information. Ed decided to start his own club, and he did.

I first became aware of the Vintage Corvette Club of America (VCCA), 1953 to 1955, when I was waiting to get a haircut! I picked up a copy of Road and Track and there was Ed's ad. The year was probably 1968. At the time I lived only 15 miles away, so I called Ed.

I had saved two old Corvette parts books from a trash can when I worked at a Chevrolet dealer in 1958. They were in excellent shape. Among the first items Ed reproduced were the 1954 and 1955 Corvette parts books.

Ed's VCCA took off; the club was really needed. Ed himself became the hub of national Corvette restoration activity. You could still get many 1953 and '55 parts from Chevrolet, and there were many used parts around cheap. Ed got phone calls all day long, and more mail than you can imagine.

Early in 1971, VCCA 1953-55 was going very well. Ed had accumulated a fantastic collection of original, unrestored old Corvettes. There was '53 #3, and mint examples of every year up to 1962. His '56 and '57 were great, and I recall the '59 was absolutely perfect.

But there were pockets of discontent within VCCA members. A group of early Corvette owners in the East wanted to start their own branch, and asked Ed for help. Ed became very angry, and I always thought he saw this as a dilution of his control. Whatever his exact reason, he flatly refused to permit expansion of the club.

So, the outsiders started their own club. They called it the Classic Corvette Club, 1953 to 1955. The CCC was quite successful, having several meets in the Mid-West. But there were internal problems within CCC. In addition, the CCC was dedicated to 1953 to 1955 members only. The powers were unable to solve CCC's problems,

and it was disbanded. Most of the founders went on to start the National Corvette Restorers Society (NCRS).

The first NCRS newsletter came out in the summer of 1974. At that time, NCRS was really breaking new ground by covering 1953 to 1962. Information was hard to come by, and we had a tough time trying to find out just how the factory built our favorite car.

I began writing for NCRS by the second issue. About a year later, I was asked to join the Board of Directors. While I was researching in Chevrolet's files, I discovered that Chevrolet Public Relations was trying to answer questions about old Corvettes sent to Chevrolet. I arranged to have those letters forwarded to NCRS. Instead of getting a form letter back from Chevrolet, the letters were answered by NCRS members, and NCRS gained many new members in this manner.

During my term, I proposed the expansion to 1967. Some friends still feel that was a wrong move, but I think it was a timely move.

I had seen what limiting a club, either to specific years, or by geographic areas, had done to VCCA and CCC. Thus, I also proposed to the Board that NCRS permit the formation of Chapters. This idea really started off slowly, but now there are many successful NCRS chapters.

By the mid-seventies, Ed Thiebaud bought a large ranch on the California coast. The Corvette collection was sold to pay for the ranch. Ed kept '53 #3, and his original '63 coupe. VCCA 1953-55, and CCC '53-55, were just a memory by 1975. My own term on the NCRS Board ended in 1980.

Nowadays, NCRS is a major force in Corvette restoration clubs. Another expansion has been completed; NCRS now covers 1953-1972. Many meets are held in every corner of the country every year; NCRS judging rules are accepted as the standard.

Some NCRS officials view the formation of SACE with dismay. They feel we'll dilute the 1953-1962 group. Instead, we feel there's room for both groups. To help dispel NCRS fears, it is suggested that you check out NCRS, Inc., 6291 Day Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45247. That brings us to here, today. Where is SACE going? That will be up to its members.