

# The Ongoing Saga of the Old '54 Drag Racer

—Rich LaValley

Okay, okay... I know what I said. "Getting to the bottom of the iceberg." (Straight Talk: Volume 2, Number 2). "The old race car had raced once more and would retire a champion, NEVER to race again."

Well, first, never say never!

Second, let me tell ya a couple of true short stories.

## Story Number One:

A buddy of mine spent 7-1/2 years to complete his '54 Corvette, then drove his car twice last year...

I feel that all of us straight-axle enthusiasts must keep one thing in perspective. Our cars are very, very special cars. However, they are cars! After all of your hard work restoring them, drive'm!

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## Modified, Non-Original Corvette

repo this item yet?

Original is desirable only because it's rare, not because it's good.

*P.S. I have included a few pictures of the modifications which have been done to my '56. I have also included a Xerox copy of my Hayden Proffitt pictures. Sorry I can't let those out of my possession. You have my permission to use any, all, or none of the pictures if you wish.*

*In V3-3, you stated that you feel that most 'Vettes are not completely original, because owners of early cars have made changes to improve the car. I know several owners in and around the Oklahoma City area, and NONE of their cars are original, but they are nice cars, and maintained well.*

*Let me speak very candidly and off the record. You never hear people gripe, complain and moan when they see a nice '55 Chevy that has been personalized with a super paint job, custom interior, custom wheels and tires, plus a 350 and 4 speed... or a '32 Ford that has been made into a fine street rod. So, why are modified early 'Vettes so widely criticized?*

*If I don't stop here, I will never get off my soap box. Thanks, Tom.*

I told my buddy, "When you're taking your last breath on earth, you'll probably say 'Gee, I sure wish I'd driven my little Corvette more than twice a year!'"

Well, I drive my little car every chance I get. If my wife says, "Oh, darn, we're out of milk," I raise my hand and say "I'll go! - I'll go!"

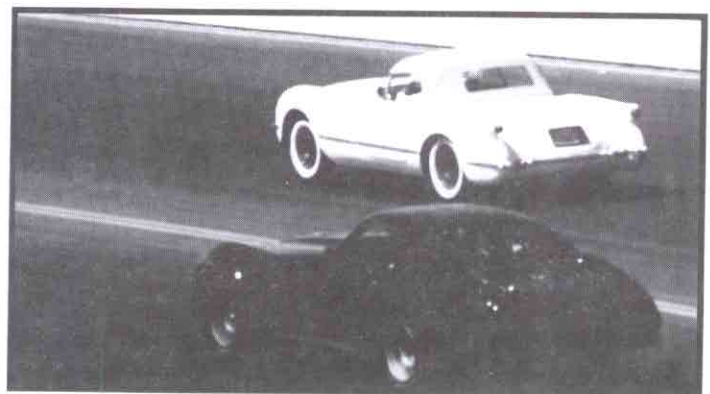
What's the point, you ask. Drive your little car every chance you get. We only go around once in life. So, get all the Corvette-ing you can get!

## Story Number Two:

I joined Santa Cruz Corvettes... What a fun club! We go on tours, rallyes, auto cross, car shows, socials, etc. Well, the guys kept asking me if I was going with the Club to 'Vette Magic... "Well, I'll go and watch," I said. "You'll watch?" they said, "what about your philosophy... 'We only go around once in life...'" and so on... so...

The biggest "All Corvette drag racing event in Northern California" was held at Sears Point on August 5th.

I dialed in at 18:20... Six races later, I had beaten all but one Corvette. That race turned out to be the most exciting race of all. I was lined up in the right lane. I adjusted my left outside mirror, so that during the race, I could keep my eye on the blue '74 Corvette in the left lane. The light went yellow and I slowly wound up the stove-bolt six and let out the clutch. No burning rubber... just wanted to get away from that slippery starting line... 30 miles per hour, go to 2nd gear... in 2nd I floored it until the speedometer showed 60 mph... then hit the high gear and go... check the rear-view... where's that blue Corvette?



The good news was that he was two car lengths back. The bad news was that he was coming fast! Checked to see where the finish line was... 350 feet to go! Where's

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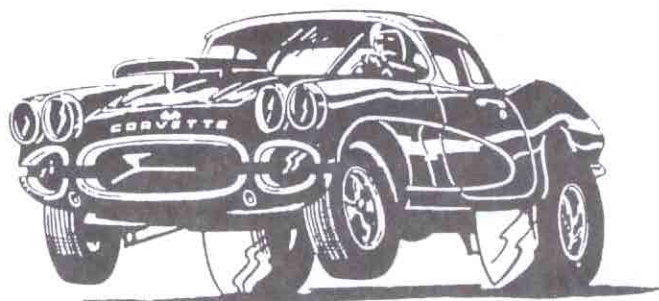
that blue Corvette? He was still coming... one car length behind me now... I had to make a decision. If I went too fast, I might blow my dial in of 18:20. If I slowed down, I might not win the race... and I didn't want to lose. So I hit the gas and then checked the mirror.

It was then I knew I had screwed up. The blue 'Vette was wound out as fast as he could go — and was still one car length behind. As we went over the line, I slowed and glanced to my left. There he was, giving me a thumbs-up sign, which I returned.



On my return to the time shack, I was sure that the time would be close. I never could believe how close. The time slip said that I went 2/100 of a second too fast. Oh, well! It was a super race. I knew I would get a runner-up trophy, but Holy Cow! To my surprise, it was enormous. This was the biggest trophy I had ever gotten in my life.

Who won "King of the Hill" that day? The car that won all brackets was a black, '62 straight-axle. No, I don't have a picture of that race car... I do, however, have a cartoon drawing that epitomizes that car, that day, that race, that 'Vette Magic.



Pretty neat, huh? Happy Corvette-ing!

—Rich LaValley

### Regarding '54 Hard-Tops:

Dear Editor,

I am very lucky to be the second owner of a 1954 Pennant Blue 'Vette. It is all original except the tires and has only 36,000 miles. The first owner is a 90-year-old man.

I would be interested in knowing more about hard-tops for 1954's. Were they an option?

I enjoy your publication. Thank you.

CARROL F. KETCHUM  
Bethel, VT

*Two hard tops were available as an after market product. Both came from Southern California. The first was a small rear window and there were three hold down clamps at the front. The second was a large, wrap-around window and there were two hold down clamps at the front.*



**Carroll & Marguerite Ketchum's '54. Two hard-tops are available for this year as an after market option.**