

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

SUPPLIED BY DALE PEARSON

Q. Is there an incorrect center grille bar being sold as an accurate reproduction?

A. Yes. The incorrect grille bar does not have a "V" notch (or is it knotch?) on the underside or bottom of the bar. (G.M. Guard Assembly 3779661.) This bar bolts onto the two captive studs at either end of the bar and is secured by two each hex nuts, flare base, (G.M. 273802).

Q. What's the difference in front bumpers between 1958-60 and 1961-62?

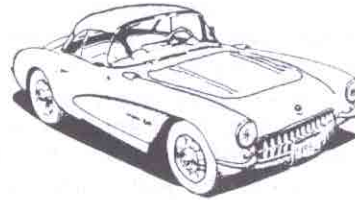
A. Remember that 1958-60 Corvettes used grille teeth. 58 and 60 are even numbers and the ends of the captive studs in the bumpers that hold the horizontal grille bar are EVEN with the rearward edge of the bumpers. 1961 and 62 bumpers have studs whose ends are more forward in the bumpers rather than even with the rear edge. (Thanks to the Fabers of Arizona for teaching a way to remember this difference.)

Q. Were steering wheels rough in texture when new; like a leather look?

A. The "competition" type stock steering wheel for 1961-62 used a color impregnated molded plastic rim with a leather embossed grain. This grain disappears with age and use. The color matches the interior trim color. Its hub, riveted to the center section or spyder, contains two roll pins for canceling the turn signal cam and is painted gloss interior trim color. An exception exists with original red interiors in that the hubs were painted orange and do not match the rest of the interior trim color. Red hubs which match the instrument cluster or steering column are incorrect.

Most steering wheels crack in two places on all three spokes near the end of the stainless spyder or beginning of the plastic material. The cracking is caused by the continual expansion and contraction of the stainless. A stress riser develops over time. These defects, as well as other nicks and cracks in the plastic, can be repaired by notching out or opening up a large "V" with hand files or a Dremel tool and then filing with an epoxy such as PC-7. Some restorers choose Bondo or other materials but I prefer PC-7. Body filler type polyester primer such as Feather Fill or Morton's Eliminator (water sandable) will have to be used over the epoxy to take care of the air bubbles. Careful shaping and sanding to original dimensions with progressively decreasing abrasive grit, (increasing numbers) will allow primer and finish color paint to be applied. A 25 percent gloss on the finish coat followed by 1200 grit color sanding and rubbing compound will bring out the beauty of the color. Lacquer is a forgiving finish but the two-part enamels will be more durable. Several people offer wheel restoration services and one of these folks is able,

by rapid repeated application of polyester primer, to achieve a texture similar to but NOT UNDETECTABLE from an original wheel. Also, Jack Turpin wrote a pamphlet about steering wheel restoration and an article appears on the subject in Volume 2, number 1 of the Classic Auto Restorer magazine.



Q. The seat separator has a storage compartment (glove box). I have heard you talk about a gasket that was installed somewhere in the area. Could you explain where this gasket should be and what it looks like?

A. See Page B-65 of the assembly manual. At the very top of the compartment where the door lid (panel assembly 3728728) closes against the seat separator (3742537) there is a trapezoidal fiberglass portion of the separator extending downward to hold a rubber bumper, (3725720) fixed in place with 0.05 ounces of "yellow death" weatherstrip adhesive. The bumper is shaped as is the fiberglass and can be made from a piece of vacuum hose. By the time the initial owner had driven his 1961-62 sufficient miles to break-in the engine this bumper usually fell off and resided in the bottom of the glove box until the first good cleaning or paint job. I've seen only one original example of this bumper and that was on Jimmy Blakely's SR-I at the Bend, Oregon N.C.R.S. National Convention in 1989.

Q. I see radio grounding strap sets sold for 1955-61 cars and different sets for 1962. What differences exist?

A. There are three identical straps which are different in the sets between the two year groups. The two exhaust hanger straps and the accelerator bell-crank lever ground strap are the same part for 1955-61, (identical to each other), and the three for 1962 are also the same part. The difference between the year groups is the shape of the terminal on one end; round for 1955-61 and septagonal (seven sides) for 1962.

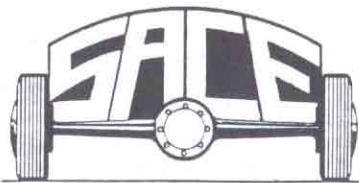
Q. I have a vibration problem with my 1962 at about 50-60 MPH (and over). I've checked the drive shaft and U-joints and they're all right. I'm wondering if anybody else has had this problem and if you might know of what I can do to correct it.

A. Those of us who drive our straight axle Corvettes any appreciable distance, (15,000 miles or more per year) have usually experienced vibrational problems at one time or another. Diagnosis and remedy can be as challenging as finding the source of an electrical problem. Since your question lacks specific clues, I'll touch as many bases as possible.

First see if your Corvette vibrates in 3rd or 2nd gear at the same engine RPM as you would turn at 60 MPH in 4th. If so, the problem is in the engine, balancer, pressure plate, etc. Park it and with the hood open, hand accelerate through the RPM range several times while looking for the source of unbalance. Check the fan and pulley bolts for tightness. GRADE EIGHT cap screws should be used in this application unless you like buying new radiators. Usually this area of the car is not the source of vibration problems.

Find a tire shop that can balance the wheels while on your car. Spin each wheel and, with your finger on the fender or bumper, note any vibration. Look at the edge of the wheel and tire for out-of-round condition. If your Vette is equipped with positraction remove the rear wheels for balance and inspection. Inspect each tire for blisters and bumps. Check tire inflation and correct if necessary. If radials are used, rotate or renew. One of the radial failure modes manifests itself in virtual imbalance. This failure happened to me with a set of Michelin XVS, (an excellent straight axle tire), after 50,000 miles of use but these tires still looked very much usable.

Open your ST-12 (Service Manual Corvette 1953-62) and learn how to adjust your steering box. Don't even look at this box without prior study. It's easy to destroy the worm and sector (irreplaceable) with a wrench or for that matter with heavy wide front tires. Jack-er-up and note the play by moving the steering wheel back and forth. If more than an 1/8th inch of play is observed look for worn components in the steering linkage. Finally, adjust the steering box and by the way, it's supposed to have grease in it (90 weight)!



The angle of the rear U-joint with respect to the driveline is important. Tony Greco wrote for S.A.C.E., Straight Axle Corvette Enthusiasts, in Volume 2, Number 4 of "Straight Talk" that vibration problems can occur due to having less than seven and a half degrees. Interference will occur in the full bump position. He explains to load the car until the distance between the axle housing and frame rail pick-up (metal to metal) is four and one half inches. The angle of the propeller shaft and pinion nose can be measured as shown in the passenger car manual. If correction is needed a 2 degree shim 3722797 or a 3 degree shim 3744488 may be used between rear

axle pads and springs on both sides with the thicker portion of the shim near the front. The shims should be made to lie flat by removing the locating tabs.

Now for what's probably wrong! Go to your favorite FRONT END shop for an alignment. The first step in alignment is an inspection of all suspension components. the control arm bushings and kingpins may be worn beyond tolerance and repairs will be indicated. (That's what you get for running those wide heavy tires.) Repack the wheel bearings and correctly torque them at this time. Incorrect torque or excessive play could be a source of vibration problems. A special procedure is used here. When paying your repair bill reflect on what follows!

The FIRST COMMANDMENT of straight axle Corvetting is, "THOU SHALT LUBE CORRECTLY 22 FITTINGS EVERY SATURDAY MORNING OR 1000 MILES WHICHEVER COMES FIRST!" Correctly means to wipe off each fitting so as to avoid forcing grime into the fitting along with the grease; and observation of excess grease coming out of the fitting. Always have a handful of spare fittings for the occasions when one or more fittings will be blocked. These beautiful old cars are bushed metal-on-metal and grease is essential weekly, grease is essential weekly, GREASE IS ESSENTIAL WEEKLY! Got it?

Increasing the unsprung weight on the front end, (wide tires), will destroy handling and steering as well as front end suspension with the passage of time. If you MUST pull a "G" on occasion, make sure the fat tire weighs about the same or less than a stock 6.70 x 15. (26 pounds). A Michelin Sport XGT 235/60 x 15 weighs 23 lbs and a G.M. 7 inch steel wheel weighs slightly more than a stock 5 inch wheel. This combination "gets it" and is used on my 1962 "VAROOOMMOBILE!" Wide footprints make the suspension work more, (sees more bumps in the road) and the time in between chasis lubrications should be decreased in proportion. I try to lube daily on a coast to coast excursion where the car sees 500 to 600 miles per day. I have an impressive group of drive pins, punches and rivet sets made of old king pins to attest to my, "Lessons in grease!" When your front end is worn out you will vibrate! No two ways about it. One other negative thought about wide tires is that they significantly increase the "BUMP STEER" of your car. You hit a bump and as a result loose steering control momentarily. Driving a rutted lane causes lateral shifting motion at random. This shifting can be very annoying on a long trip. The advantages of wide tires are of course better traction or adhesion to corner, accelerate, or stop. (Weight transfers to the front wheels on a stop.)

Lastly, inspect the U-joints and drive shaft. Inspect the rebound straps as well because they are there to limit the travel of the rear suspension. If your Aunt Tillie ever pulls negative "G's" on the way for groceries and the straps aren't there, the driveshaft might contact the X member on the frame and will become "bent out of shape!" You will than vibrate BIG TIME!