

"CHICKEN COOP" CORVETTE

Michael Hunt captured a "very special" 1956 RPO model Corvette from underneath bird droppings on an Illinois farm. This "CHICKEN COOP" Corvette, as it is known, was equipped with Halibrand knock-off wheels, large REAR FENDER side air scoops ducting air to finned brake drums, finned drums up front with small METAL air scoops. DUAL rear shocks, heavy duty springs, and quick steering adapter.

In the spring Sebring race held on March 24, 1956, three factory "works" cars comprised a team under the leadership of John Fitch. These cars were equipped exactly as was the "Chicken Coop" Corvette. The three "works" car were entered in several competitive events afterwards including hill climbs which were so popular at the time.

By July of 1957, Chevrolet had introduced the Fuel Injected Air Box; 4-speed, 283 cu. in. 283 hp RPO 581 competition car and the remaining four unused side scoop SR-1 cars were sold to Doane Chevrolet in Dundee, Illinois. Two of these Corvettes are unaccounted for as of this writing and the other two are in the hands of Jummy Blakely and Frank Buck. The two SR-2 Corvettes were special G.M. development creations and were not intended at the time for private ownership. The three Sebring racers were a "one shot only" effort. The side scoop SR-1's were supposed to have been mass produced although only four were actually made, and this model would have been the "flag bearing" competitor for Chevrolet had it not been for the superior performance of the Air Box F.I. cars.

The 1957 Assembly Instruction Manual (AIM), indicates the introduction of RPO 581 on November 26, 1956, coincident with the production of 1957 serial number 1100 or so. Evidently only seven or so RPO 581s were produced until the release of ROP 684 on AIM

March 25, 1957 which would approximately equate with 1957 serial number 2900. RPO 581 was dropped at this time.

RPO 581 — COMPETITION PACKAGE (1956-57)
ONLY SEVEN WERE MADE

1. Five leaf heavy duty rear leaf springs.
2. Short heavy duty front coil springs.
3. Quick steering adapter.
4. Finned brake drums front and rear, (GM 3745534) with foldedover (toward the center) fins as viewed from the outside (same casting number as used in RPO 687 but different style).
5. Ceramic — metallic segmented linings, 2½ inch front, 2 inch rear.
6. No modification to the rear frame member holding the upper shock mounts.
7. Brake backing plates vented with small mesh screens; removable covers.
8. Special heat resistant brake shoe return and hold down springs, pins and retainers.
9. Heavy duty shock absorbers front and rear.
10. Small metal air scoops attached to the backing plates.
11. Probably 15 x 5½ wide wheels.
12. 21 or 24 GALLON GAS TANK!

Thanks to Mike Hunt — Research Project 1956/1957, "The Curtain Is Lifting," *Vette Views Magazine* March 1990, Volume 18, Number 8, page 104. Also thanks to Ray Masciarella, "1957 Corvette RPO 581," *Restorer Magazine, N.C.R.S.*, Volume 16, Number 3.

Ray Masciarella has written in the N.C.R.S. "Restorer" magazine with new evidence that R.P.O. 581 was NEVER PRODUCED! (Volume 16, Number 4.) He states that the 24 gallon tank did not appear from the factory in 1956-57 but was dealer installed. Ray now believes that these performance cars were built by G.M. as C.O.P.O. More research needs to be done. (5-14-90).

AC OIL FILTER 1956-62 RIGHT STUFF!

A full-flow oil filter unit #5574538 assembly was offered by AC spark plug division of G.M. under this part number you received an assembly including the long silk-screened canister, replaceable filter, and the #5573842 aluminum oil bypass assembly with the two "A" bolts. Also the long canister bolt has the "M" logo on its head. Red Roadster Restorations (California) (213) 548-3883 has these units new in stock and if you would like on call him. They come in the original box.



An original oil canister assembly new in box. Notice original filter blue AC.