

Running Changes 1

by Noland Adams

At last, the final restoration phase of my 53 has begun. Old #284 hasn't been on the road since 1965, a longer term restoration indeed. With the help of several folks in Fresno and Clovis, the car is now at Don Mullenhoff's. Don has a wealth of experience in older Corvettes, so I'm helping him.

Working on the 53 renewed my interest in variations between serial numbers. So starting with this issue, I'll be writing about running changes. Running changes affect us all, and it's something that every member of SACE who owns a Corvette can get involved in.

First, let's define a running change. There are two types of changes that were performed by the Flint or St. Louis Corvette assembly plant. The most easily recognized is the model year changeover. An example is the 1957-58 headlights (was that 2 per side or 3 + 1?). Anyway, this is an example of a model year change.

Running changes are made during the model year production run. These may be noticeable changes like the 9 fin to 7 fin - and more - valve covers variations from 1956 to 1959 Corvettes. Or the tachometer changes within the 1958 model year. Or the changes from charcoal to black exterior paint during 1958.

More likely, running changes are small, often hard to detect items. Being a large Automobile Manufacturer, Chevrolet is constantly changing vendors. Let's say a certain type of clip is used to hold trim in place. (I purposely stayed away from safety items like steering nuts or bolts.)

In our example, a certain trim clip is unique to the Corvette, and each car uses 10 clips. As a new passenger car model is introduced, a new clip is fabricated to retain its trim. A later comparison shows that the two trim clips are close enough in design to use either one.

This would result in Chevrolet's purchasing department contacting both vendors for a price on larger quantities. The assembly line of both passenger cars and corvette would eventually be supplied with the same part number. If it was a different part, this would be a running change. Production line documents like the production part lists and the assembly instruction manual and perhaps the parts books would be changed to reflect the running change.

Model year changes like the 1957 to 1958 front end changeover can involve hundreds of parts at once. Just think about this 1957 to 1958 change. Besides wiring harnesses, there are the light bulbs, retaining rings, bezels, and many small springs, nuts, bolts, etc. Then there's changes in the front fenders, bonding strips, outer trim and retainers, etc.

Running changes may involve only one item, or may include several items, like the fuel injection air cleaner changes in 1962. While running changes are smaller (by using less parts) each time they occur, running changes out-number model year changes 10 or 20 to one or more. We're comparing the parts quantity here, not the time each model year or running change occurs.

The reason we're giving running changes so much attention is that there are Corvettes out there with original but unacceptable parts. An example might be 1959 parts on a 60 model. Just how could such "wrong" parts be original?

New parts replaced last years parts during the model year changeover, but often there were extra parts leftover. Let's say 1060 production has started, but a large quantity of 1959 parts exist. In order to use up the leftover parts by installing if the previous year's part will fit the current production car.

The proper terms here are "fit and function". If the previous year's leftover parts fit and function properly. Then he requested a variance from Chevrolet Engineering in Michigan. If such permission to use the parts were granted, it could take a couple of weeks.

By now we're well into production- say 3 weeks. But in order to use up last year's stock, we're going to move them over to the assembly line where they will be installed today. This could include such items as door panels, think how this will confuse some Corvette owners 30-35 years from now. The owner might not even know until he/she sees another car, expecting to see an identical car. There are many such

examples of owners trying to determine just which car has original parts.

The most documented case of such an occurrence is with 1960 leftover radiators being used in 1961 Corvettes. Yet after a discussion at the SACE convention in Springfield last year, we found that the use of 1960 leftover radiators was misunderstood.

If you care, the bulletin is on page 350 in my book. What it really says is that there were both leftover copper standard radiators and high performance aluminum 1960 radiators. In the beginning of 1961 production, the copper radiator were installed on Corvette with standard equipment engines, and the 1960 type aluminum crossflow radiators will be installed on all 1961's. After the supply of copper radiators is exhausted, all 1961 Corvettes will use the 1960 type aluminum radiator on 230 hp cars.

Finally, "when the supply of 1960 type aluminum radiator is exhausted. Corvette production will use aluminum radiator part number #3150916 on all other engines." These last two "normal" 1961 radiators use the now familiar separate surge tank.

The owners of some cars with running changes would like to know if their parts are original, or perhaps just how rare their car might be. Like 1954, serial number 82 (E54S001082), which is a red car. His question is, do I have the first non-white Corvette? Actually, we'd like to account for all the red, black, blue, and ??? 1954's. If you know of a non-white 54. Please share that information.

At the same time, a 1957 owner is questioning his engine block, which appears to be correct by the casting date. He's owned the car since 1964, so he feels is this the original block. However, instead of the readily accepted 1957 block, 3731548, his bears the 1958, within the last 400 serial numbers. Any other late 57's out there with a 3737739 1958" block

Now for a list of running changes, the 1953 engine numbers:

Serial Number	Engine Numbers	Serial Number	Engine Number
1	Lay300 *	204	Lay517174
3	Lay303666	206	Lay517162
33	Lay341011	214	Lay517164
35	Lay	225	Lay557854
51	Lay487715	226	Lay537516
65	Lay494733	236	Lay566992
66	Lay494790	249	Lay566965
72	Lay494561	253	Lay567025
80	Lay451665	260	Lay567017
89	Lay425223	265	Lay567008
91	Lay341018	268	Lay567010
93	Lay505454	276	Lay567023
108	Lay535720	278	Lay567031
112	Lay507604	281	Lay566999
131	Lay512507	283	Lay567013
145	Lay549382	284	Lay567014
149	Lay557855	288	Lay566988
173	Lay537522	297	Lay567021
175	Lay547830	300	Lay566991

* last 3 digits withheld by request

The first 1953 block casting number was 3701481, changing between casting dates J133 and J163 (OCT. 13 to 16, 1953) to the second type 1953 block, casting number 3835911, about serial number 230.

Note that my serial number 284 and the previous car (288) have consecutively numbered engines! the only two examples that exist, to my knowledge.

The above are just examples of running changes, there are many more. We don't know the direction of future article will take, because it will depend on the letters I get from you, the SACE members. I look forward to hearing from you.

HOT AUGUST NIGHTS

Every August in Reno there's a big fun event called Hot August Nights. This year there will also be a series of classes and seminars: Body Repair, Painting, etc. Roy Braatz and I have been asked to give a seminar or two, so we've told the folks that run the show what we can do. There's been no final decision, but we may be giving a seminar or two, plus there may be special events for S.A.C.E. members. See you in Reno, August 9-12, 1992.

Later, NOLAND.