

Response To The First Report. . . . Response to the initial report of IREC containing selected data collected through September 1, 1973 has been most encouraging, and this second report will update our progress figures, as well as presenting some further information about the first cars which spawned today's Corvette generation. One major benefit, which we anticipated and saw fulfilled by the publication of the first report, was the establishment of contact with a number of new entries for the Registry which had not previously been accounted for. Another result of publication was a series of letters offering encouragement or making inquiry for clarification of some aspect of the data. Several letters expressed confusion about the production volume data we cited as our reference point for the percentages quoted in the previous report.

Most confusion was with regard to understanding the difference between Calendar Year Production and Model Year Production. The generally accepted production and sales figures break down as follows:

	CALENDAR YEAR		MODEL YEAR
	Sales	Production	Production
1953	183	314	300
1954	2780	3265	3640
1955	1639	700	700

Obviously for the series of studies conducted by the International Registry of Early Corvettes, the model year production figures are the only relevant ones. However, a comparison of the above figures reveals several interesting stories about the early history of the car. Since the production of the 1953 version totalled a well authenticated 300 units, the fact that 314 units originated in the calendar year 1953 confirms the fact that the first 14 cars in the 1954 production were produced before the end of 1953, and prior to the closing down of the production line in Flint, Michigan, and its transference to its then new permanent home in St. Louis, Missouri. Further, since we understand that 3,279 of the 3,640 1954 cars produced were supposedly available for sale during 1954 (14 + 3265), we can appreciate why there may have been some high-level concern with the lagging sales figure of 2,780 cars.

We can imagine that when a low production "specialty" sports car produces such a surplus in the dealer showrooms, that a process of evaluation or second-guessing might begin as to whether the car was going to make the grade as a viable production effort. This is particularly evident since the original Chevrolet publicity releases indicated an initial production of 10,000 units per year was aimed for. Sales that ran only a quarter of what the manufacturers were originally hoping for must have been very disappointing, and the 1955 production of a mere 700 units is an acute illustration that faith in the project was shaken to the point that the now legendary marque of Corvette almost ceased to exist in its third year of life. A more detailed elaboration of this fascinating story of the early years of Corvette is better told elsewhere, so suffice it to say that we rely on the model year information as the most valid measure of the progress IREC is making toward its goals.

Updating The Progress Report. . . . Things have been happening since IREC Report No. 1 used the cut-off date of September 1, 1973, so let's update the statistics as of the new date of January 1, 1974. Here is the newest picture:

	1953		1954		1955		1953-55	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Car Fully Accounted For	119	39.7	698	19.2	155	22.1	972	20.9
S/N & Name W/O Addr; Addr W/O Name; Unable to Contact	35	11.7	42	1.2	7	1.0	84	1.8
S/N Verified, No Name/Addr.	7	2.3	0	0	0	0	7	0.3
S/N Unknown or Questionable	2	0.7	103	2.8	14	2.0	119	2.6
S/N & City, No Name/Addr.	1	0.3	0	0	0	0	1	----
S/N Possibly Accounted For	0	0	4	0.1	1	0.1	5	0.1
Verified S/N Destroyed	1	0.3	2	----	0	----	3	0.1
Total	165	55.0	849	23.3	177	25.2	1191	25.8

In addition to the continuing inflow of new entries, we have been able to eliminate some duplicate entries, and to uncover some previously unknown addresses for verified cars. The listing of what is now well in excess of 1200 cars (as of the date this report is being written) continues to confirm both their stating power and the possibility of our expectations to eventually account for as many as 50% of the original production for 1953-54-55 Corvettes. Hopefully, many will continue to contribute to that effort by feeding data to IREC and by spreading the word of our mutual efforts.

On The Subject Of Theft. . . . One of the objectives of the International Registry of Early Corvettes is to provide a continuing tracer on the early Corvettes to discourage theft. This objective is already receiving its first test, with the report from the east coast of the United States of the theft of VE55S001065 on November 10, 1973. The owner reports that the car was completely stripped in preparation for full restoration and was missing its soft-top, radio, seats, and chrome. The original engine and transmission were both still in the car. The theft has been noted in the basic Registry data, and we call upon the assistance of all those who read these IREC Reports to help in the search for the car, and to report its discovery to IREC so the information can be relayed to the distressed owner. It is our hope that the keen eyes of those who are especially interested in the early Corvettes will prove to be the source of the discovery of stolen cars and discourage such thefts in the future.

IREC, Continued

IREC treats information about individual car owners in a manner to provide privacy where it is desired. Our attention is centered on the cars themselves, since their ownership is often only a transitory situation. If IREC eventually achieves full publication as a Registry, information about the cars will identify them by serial numbers and state of location only. Individual owner's names and community location of their cars is treated confidentially and will not be generally available to others. Individual inquiries about specific cars will be forwarded to the specific owner for reply if they desire to do so. This procedure is believed to be consistent with our desire to provide to owners protection from theft as well as providing the benefit of a continuing world-wide tracer service for missing cars. It is our hope that owners of the 1953-54-55 Corvettes will understand this procedure and cooperate fully with it for the protection of everyone concerned.

The Colorful Corvette. . . . One aspect of the early Corvettes which seems to drum on the inquisitiveness of many of the owners is the nagging question of what colors their cars came in. The owners of the 1953 cars are an exception to this group since the color choice in the first year was a very simple one. Old Henry Ford told his customers "they can have any color they want as long as it's black." The creators of the first Corvettes let their customers know they could have any color they wanted as long as it was a Polo White exterior accompanied by a Sportsman Red vinyl interior. From the earliest prototype to the final E53F001300 off the Flint production line, that combination apparently never varied, and the 1953 owners were thus spared speculation as to the original color, 20 years after the fact of their production. For the 1954 and 1955 owners, however, it's a whole different ballgame.

IREC has been accumulating a quantity of data regarding the colors of the early Corvettes, both the combinations they bear today as well as the best information the current owner has available concerning the original color combination of his car. Some of the conclusions we have been able to draw from analysis of the data is based on previously well known fact. Some of the conclusions amount to nothing more than educated speculations. They may or may not stand up under better knowledge possessed by others who have researched more thoroughly the color question. We present these thoughts with the hope that anyone who can speak more authoritatively than IREC will contact the Registry to establish a worthwhile dialogue to determine more precisely the full range of color choices available on order from the dealers as well as those combinations which were made available through the dealers on a special order basis. With this in mind, what follows is what the IREC participants have told us all, about the colorful 1954 and 1955 Corvettes.

The 1954 Palette. . . . At this point it would appear that five combinations can be fully accepted as factory choices in 1954. Here they are together with the percentage value achieved compared to all cars reporting in detail on the Inquiry Sheets:

Polo White/Sportsman Red	73.3%
Pennant Blue/Shoreline Beige	8.5%
Sportsman Red/Sportsman Red	3.0%
Pennant Blue/Blue	1.1%
Polo White/Blue	0.7%

A few other combinations appear with only a light repetition, and others with no repetition at all. These we put in the after-manufacture alteration and customization category. One appears to be a possible addition to the five listed below, even though only one of them has been reported thus far. More on that subject in just a moment.

An unusually high percentage of IREC respondents reported an actual or at least assumed original color choice. A high 90.7% responded positively while 5.6% indicated the original color was not known or had been altered, and only 3.7% failed to respond to the color inquiry. With a secure depth of reference, an effort has been made to further verify the authenticity of the colors by tying in additional data provided by the owners to substantiate their belief in the colors reported. In doing so we hope also to zero in on the points in the production process when the new colors were being introduced. Here is some of the supporting data behind the five color choices we can recognize today:

Polo White/Sportsman Red — Well established as the original color combination for the early Corvettes, 84.6% of the total cars in the five accredited color combinations for the 1954 model were the white and red pairing.

Pennant Blue/Shoreline Beige — Among the same group of five combinations readily accepted, 9.8% of them fell into this category, making it the second most prevalent pairing of the 1954 group. The earliest serial number showing blue on beige is E54S001783, an original car with only 37,000 miles on the odometer at the time the current owner purchased it. While 1783 is the earliest actually registered thus far, our own personal experience indicates at least one earlier example, and there may be more which have not yet officially been registered in IREC as yet. Also in this group of cars are two original owners who still own the cars they took delivery on way back in 1954, in Pennant Blue and Shoreline Beige!

Sportsman Red/Sportsman Red — Representing 3.4% of the accepted group, there are a number of entries as early as the first 250 cars made in 1954, but none of the early ones have enough substantiating data with them to be convincing at this point. The earliest well-authenticated serial number is 2110, which is a terminal parts car now, but was reported by a knowledgeable Corvette owner and restorer whose information can be safely relied upon. The possibility that this color originated substantially earlier in the production run remains strong, and we hope further IREC registrations will confirm this assumption.

Pennant Blue/Blue — Now this one may cause a few raised eyebrows, since long term Corvette owners may never have seen one of these cars and may therefore question its authenticity. The early numbers with this combination of colors are not well substantiated by the supporting data. However, E54S004430 is a mint original 1954 Corvette owned by its 20 year original owner, and delivered to him by his Chevrolet dealer in a gleaming Pennant Blue with a bright blue vinyl interior. A better authentication for the color combination than that would be hard to find.

IREC, Continued

Polo White/Blue — If eyebrows were raised by the previous combination, this duo should add a wrinkled brow as well. But, with blue as a low volume interior color already authenticated by the previous entry, Polo White on blue becomes more believable. Further nailing down this one as a true original factory color is the fact that the earliest registered Polo White on Blue is number E54S001695---owned by its original purchaser since he picked it up from a General Motors dealer in Detroit 20 years ago, and showing only 24,000 miles on the odometer today. It would appear this is a limited but well authenticated color combination.

One more combination appears to be fairly authentic, although it has not been included in the basic group of five thus far, and that is Polo White on "Tan." This would appear to be an unusual combination of the popular Polo White exterior color with the Shoreline Beige interior of the Pennant Blue combination. It seems to be an unlikely scrambling of color concepts, but the car is described by its owner as being a stock body in good condition with 74,000 miles on the odometer. The car is green and black now, but he claims the original color combination was white on "tan," and he has owned the car for ten years now. So, some of the data seems to support its possibilities, but since this is the only reference to this combination, we reserve consideration of its authenticity at this time.

Various other combinations are reported in small numbers, but most appear to be alterations, and without better substantiating data that they are truly factory option color choices for the 1954 Corvette, they are classified as doubtful at this time. Anyone who can contribute further to our mutual knowledge of the colorful 1954 Corvettes are encouraged to contact IREC so we can better answer some of the questions which arise as to the authenticity of some of the cars we encounter as the owners of the classic glass gather to pursue their hobby.

The 1955 Palette.....In the next issue of the IREC Report (No. 3) we will discuss the seven color choices available to the purchasers of the 1955 Corvette, together with the two combinations which seem to be "possibles" at this time. Meanwhile, we encourage any readers who have comments regarding the 1954 color analysis or the forthcoming 1955 analysis to drop us a line with their thoughts. The data in these reports is not infallible and we hope anyone else who has a contribution to make to our mutual knowledge will feel encouraged to participate.

IREC Epiloge.....Comments regarding this IREC data are welcome. Participation by all previously unregistered 1953-54-55 Corvette owners is solicited. We extend our thanks to the many who have already become a part of this effort. We are particularly grateful for the cooperation and encouragement received from Ed Thiebaud of the Vintage Corvette Club, John Hutchins of the Classic Corvette Club, Jim Prather of the publication Vette Vues, and for the excellent work of a group of "regional reporters" whose sharp eyes and unbridled enthusiasm have turned up many cars which would otherwise have languished unknown for some time to come. Their efforts will be recognized in a future issue of the IREC Report.

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George F. Campbell
IREC Registrar

INTERNATIONAL REGISTRY
OF EARLY CORVETTES

CAR NO: _____
MODEL YEAR _____

Extra Parts: _____

Registry Date: _____

Condition: _____

Purchased by present owner:

From whom? _____

Where? _____ When? _____

Is car history known? _____

Mileage: _____

Color: Exterior Original _____ Now _____

Interior Original _____ Now _____

Engine: _____ Number: _____

Transmission _____

Options: _____

Missing Parts: _____

Owner's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

(Use reverse side if necessary. Include photo if possible.
Request additional sheets for additional cars.)

Return to: Int'l Registry of Early Corvettes
P.O. Box 666, Corvallis, Oregon 97330
Phone (503) 753-6789