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Honorable Discharge



After 32 years of stagnancy, this '65 makes a triumphant return

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Jere Pendergrass of Taylor, Michigan, is the original owner of this gorgeous '65 convertible. There's usually nothing better than hearing the story from the owner's mouth, so we'll let Jere tell us how it is.

"I admired the '63 Corvette when I was a young Infantry officer in the U.S. Army and planned to purchase one upon my discharge. I started shopping for a Corvette when I was discharged from service in July 1964. I waited until

fall, and decided to buy a '65. As it turned out, GM employees went on strike in October and Corvettes weren't available until later that December. I finally purchased the car January 8, 1965, at Ray Ridge Chevrolet in Trenton, Michigan, where I kept the original bill of sale, original owner's manual with the Protect-O-Plate, original title, and original license plates.

"The Corvette was built on December 28, 1964, in St. Louis. I paid \$4,630 for car, tax, and license 'out the door.' I was in a little over my head, since my first year's salary was only \$5,200

and the cost of the car and insurance exceeded that. Using the Corvette as a daily driver, it survived the drive to work in all kinds of weather. While fiberglass will not rust, the salt on the streets did a lot of damage to the metal components.

"Because of slipping and sliding and getting stuck in the Michigan snow, I had snow tires put on the rear wheels. The tires made driving during winter a lot easier. While the car was being restored, the snow tires were a source of amusement and ridicule for my friends, visitors, and the owner



and employees of Master Works, where the car was being restored. I'll admit—the snow tires did nothing for the sports car appearance of the Corvette, but they were practical. While driving to work in February 1971, I experienced brake failure at a stoplight and ran the Corvette into a utility pole to stop it rather than risk a more serious accident by running the light. One of the brake pads on the right front wheel had worked loose and fallen out, denying pressure to all four disc brakes. Because I was traveling slowly, the accident was not nearly as serious as it could have been.

"I was taken to the hospital, treated for a few bruises, and released. The front end of the car was caved in, which damaged the fiberglass, headlights, bumpers, radiator, and other parts. Luckily, the engine was not

damaged and survived unscathed. I had the car towed to my father's garage where it sat until October 2003, more than 32 years. The Chevrolet dealership estimated the cost of repairs at \$1,826.34, too expensive for me in those days. So I decided to buy a new car, a Chevrolet Caprice, and left the Corvette in my father's garage.

"Sometime in the summer of 1971, I sold the Corvette to a Detroit fireman for \$400. His initial plan was to fix it up and sell it for a quick turnaround. Fortunately, he never came to pick up the car and never paid me. Over the years, I searched for someone to repair or restore the Corvette, as I was undecided whether to repair it and use it as a driver or have a body-off restoration done. Also, if I had the car restored, I was undecided whether

to have it restored to showroom originality for judging or just have a good body-off restoration.

"I finally decided to go for the total restoration and have it judged for Bloomington Gold and Top Flight Certification. If I had purchased a used mid-year Corvette, I would not have restored it to that extent. But because the Corvette was my first car and a one-owner, I decided to go the restoration-for-judging route. I wanted the car to appear as it did when I purchased it. I spent many summers at Corvette events such as Bloomington Gold, NCRS conventions, and Corvettes at Carlisle searching for original parts to replace those that were not original or had been damaged. In order to restore the car to NCRS classifications, I had to purchase a carburetor, a starter, both

horns, a voltage regulator, bumpers, a cigarette lighter, and a battery tray, just to mention a few parts.

"Restoration began in October 2003 by Master Works, a Corvette restoration business owned by Werner Meier in Madison Heights, Michigan. Werner sent a truck to pick up the car and all the parts. The process took just over eight months. Almost every week I drove to Master Works to see the progress, make decisions, take pictures, and help with the restoration when I could. The body was taken off the car and every part

was disassembled. Each part was repaired, restored, or replaced with original parts before reassembly.

"One important decision I had to make was which kind of paint to apply. The car was originally painted with acrylic lacquer, which is difficult to apply, and it cracks, peels, and fades. It's hard to find and is harmful to the environment. I chose to paint the car with the longer-lasting and easier to maintain basecoat/clearcoat paint. I lost a few points during the judging, as I expected I would. But I had to balance originality with practicality. So,

while the color is original, the type of paint is not. The restoration was finished in June 2004 just in time for NCRS and Bloomington Gold judging. I received the Top Flight Award at the Michigan Chapter of NCRS Convention in West Bloomfield on June 12, 2004, the Bloomington Gold Award at St. Charles, Illinois, on June 25, 2004, and the Top Flight Award at the NCRS National Convention in Windsor, Ontario on July 29, 2004. Now that the Corvette is restored, I intend to drive it in the summer months for enjoyment and drive it to Corvette shows." **CF**

