



Show

Quality

The 1964 World's Fair Show Corvette

by Jerry Heasley

Today, when GM is finished with a show car, it's locked away, never to see the light of day; or worse, crushed and hauled away for liability reasons. But, says Werner Meier, in the heyday of '60's car styling when GM "could do no wrong, the people at the top seemed to be able to do whatever they damn well pleased."

Werner, the hobby's heir-apparent spokesman and restorer par excellence, would know, as he has several of these rare styling machines in his stable of fine Corvettes. While some of the cars might have just had special paint and the signature metal grilles in the floorboards, many were built specifically for friends and family. Bunkie Knudsen's wife and Harley Earl's wife both had pink Corvettes with unique show-car features.





The 1964 New York World's Fair Corvette styling car was not far from the production car in overall design, but sported some great features, including the unique fuel injection housing which protrudes through the hood.

The coupe pictured here was built for display at the 1964 New York World's Fair. When that international shindig ended, GM stored the special car in a warehouse in the city. Allegedly, the car was vandalized and the unique instrument cluster was removed. After the incident, GM brought the car back to Detroit and installed the modified '63 production cluster the car currently contains.

Alex Maier, an executive VP for GM, thought the '64 would make a great birthday present for his 16-year-old son, Steve. The exterior pipes on the car were made of plastic, and no real exhaust system existed. Alex had the people in the engineering garage install a production exhaust. The exhaust exited under the car rather than through the side-pipe arrangement.

While most 16-year-olds would have hot-rodged and killed a '64 Corvette, Steve Maier, according to

Werner, "would not wear his shoes in the car. He kept the car in great condition." Steve kept this '64, resisting offers to buy, until the late '80s when it had historic value.

Initially, four businessmen purchased the car, looking to market it to a collector-car audience. The car ultimately wound up in Texas, and Werner flew there to try to purchase it.

"I had buyers lined up for five of my cars so I could buy that car. Five Corvettes were going to bite the dust to buy that car at the time," Werner says. "Trying to purchase the a car was fraught with cat-and-mouse games. The price, once set, went up. So, I walked."

The car eventually went to Corvette Mike in California and later to the famous Blackhawk Collection. In 2001, Mike Yager bought the '64 at the Monterey sports car auction held during the weekend of the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

While the original side-pipe system on the styling car was made from plastic and was not functional, the car has been made driveable with real side pipes created by Masterworks Automotive.



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Werner took the initiative to e-mail Mike, offering his special talents to try to restore the car to its World's Fair glory days. Mike agreed.

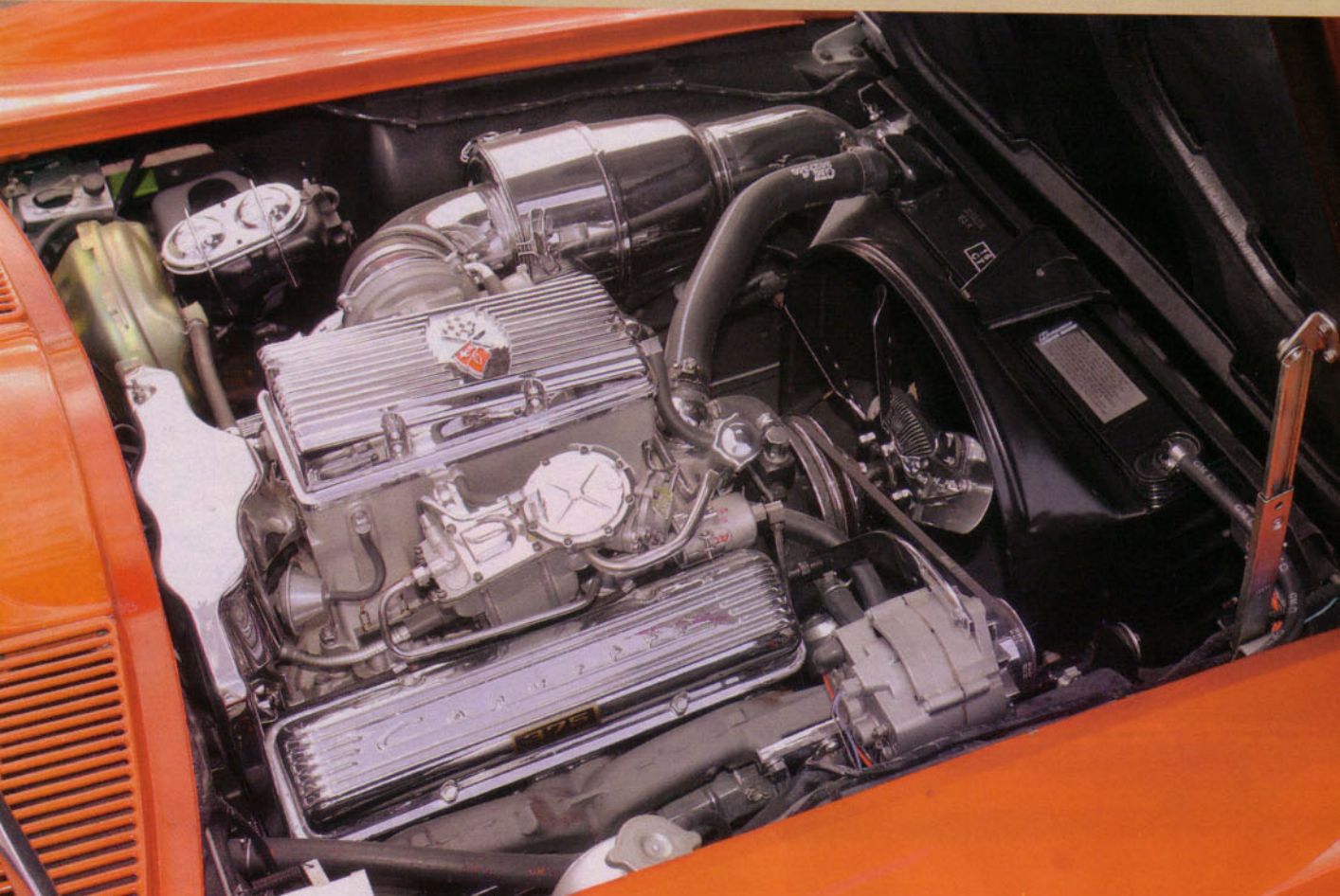
The car arrived in excellent original condition, having been babied its entire life. However, Werner explained, "Somebody had mismatched a set of knock-off wheels. The flashers weren't working in the doors and the radiator was oozing green. The brakes weren't working, the rubber was falling out of the control-arm bushings, and things like that." Werner suggested to Mike that he make the original exhaust system work using metal side-pipe systems.

This '64 is a complete show car rather than a "modified production" show car, as were many of the Corvettes that went out the door to friends and family of the corporate brass. After Alex's son took ownership, his father had the engineering garage at the Tech Center fix things on the car, so a few of the parts got swapped out. Thus, the clock is '65 vintage and the brake master cylinder is '67.



The original instrument cluster was stolen after the fair and replaced with a '63 unit. The interior is in excellent condition and sports the signature GM-styling, metal-grate floorboard treatment.

The 375hp, 327ci fuel-injection system has a taller doghouse than standard, which makes it fit through the hood. The engine was painted black and complemented with a ton of chrome accessories. The master cylinder was replaced by the GM Tech Center with a '67.





Werner walked around the car and pointed out the many unique features. The showiest are the side pipes, which he says are "a dead ringer to the plastic, fiberglass mock-up parts." The drivetrain is a "basically stock" 375-horse, 327ci fuelie.

"Making the fuel injector stick out of the hood was accomplished by making a new lid for the injector. The doghouse has a tall cover on it, which sticks up and was actually flush with the outer surface of the hood," says Werner. "The engine compartment was done in black crinkle finish, with a lot of chrome. They kind of went crazy on chrome with the thing. We took some liberties under the hood.

"The engine was originally the orange Chevy engine. It was painted silver. It looked like crap, so I asked Mike what he'd like me to do. My preference was to paint it black. So we did it all black because the silver doesn't complement chrome, and the other show cars I'd seen were done in black. I have good photographs of the other cars. I think the silver may have been applied later."

The car has disc brakes, which were not available in 1964. It also has six taillights, but they aren't original Corvette taillights, as they are much wider with a larger-diameter lamp overall. The Corvette emblem in the back is unique, as is the Corvette emblem on the glovebox door.

The unique holes in the top of the body were fake, but designed for brake-venting purposes.



The door panels were outfitted with sequential flashing reflectors, an innovative feature in 1964.

On the top of the rear deck, on either side, are simulated brake vents, similar to those used on the early Sting Ray racers. The grille is an egg-crate design, fabricated from aluminum plates. The interior is quite special. The door panels feature three sequential flashing reflectors. High-back bucket seats feature special leather trim. It has cut-pile carpeting instead of the original loop. The weatherstripping is red, and Werner is really proud of the floor grilles. Since show cars are so rare, the

chances of finding an unrestored car in such great original condition have to be extremely slim.

"Especially in Candy Apple Red paint," Werner added. "There's so much lacquer. The paint is starting to show some signs of distress, so we spent a lot of time finessing that paint, and we've restuffed the seats and restretched the leather on the console. But it looks like a million bucks."

Show quality, we'd say.