

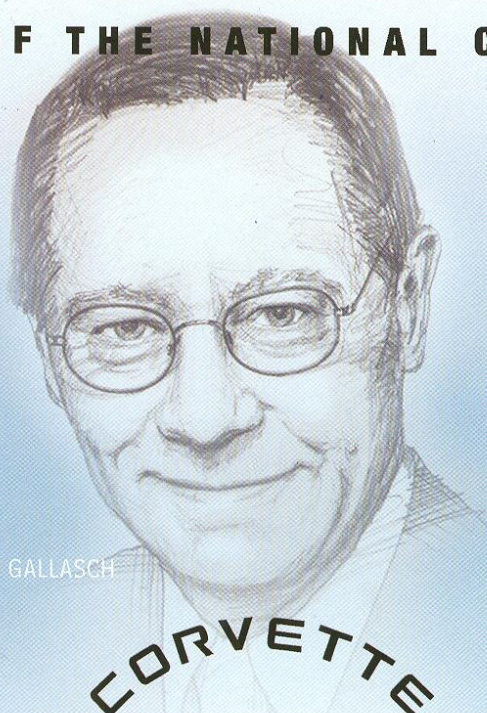
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A M E R I C A ' S SPORTS CAR

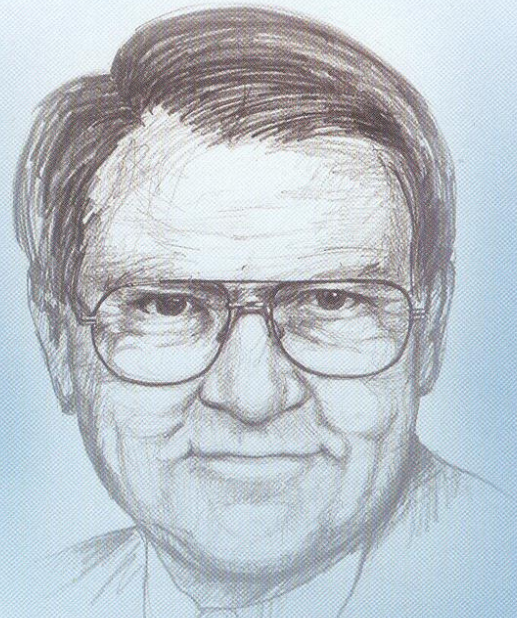
A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL CORVETTE MUSEUM



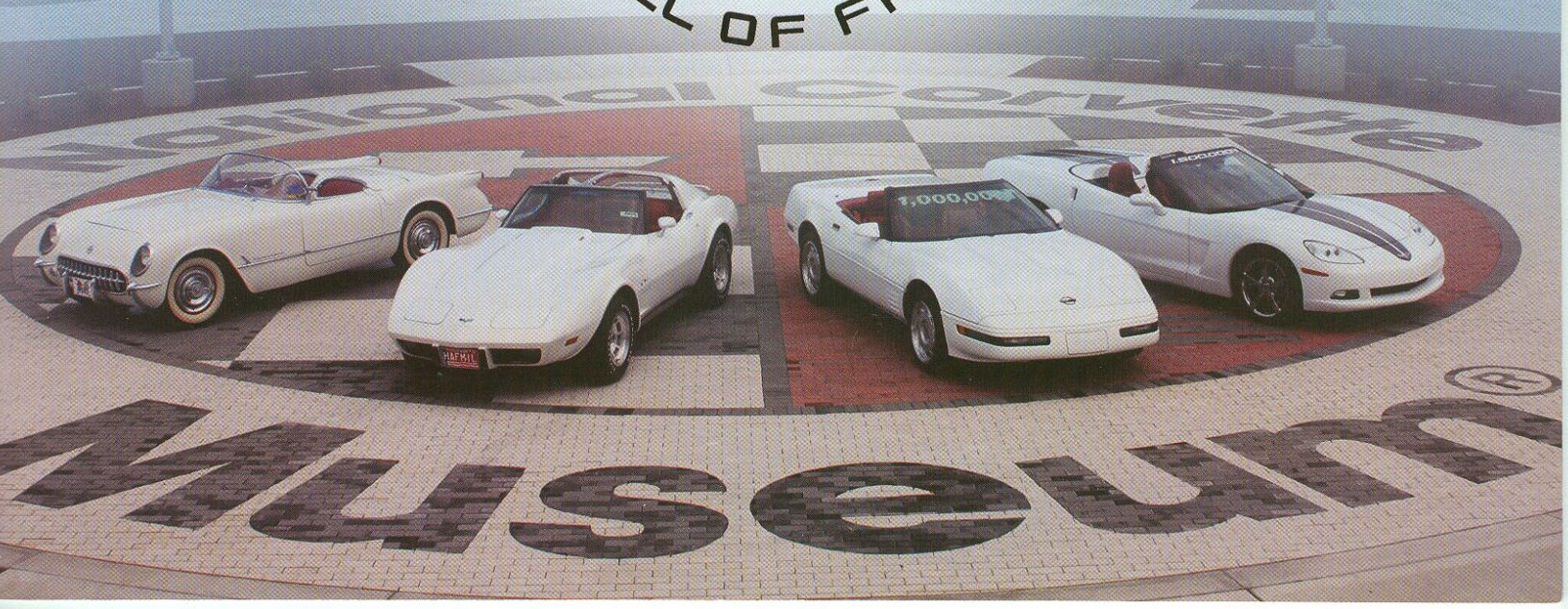
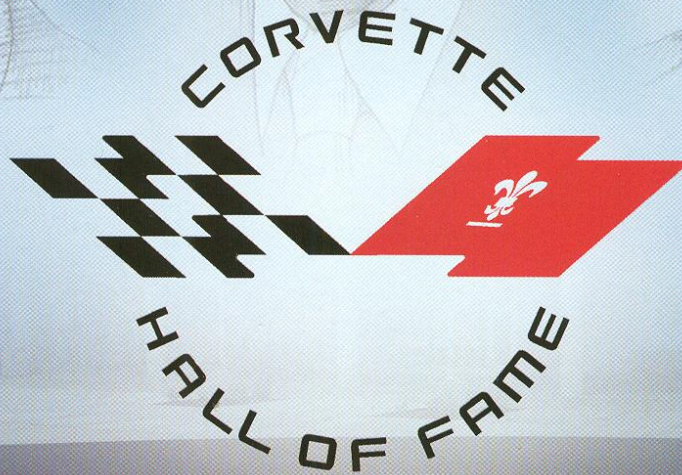
GRADY DAVIS

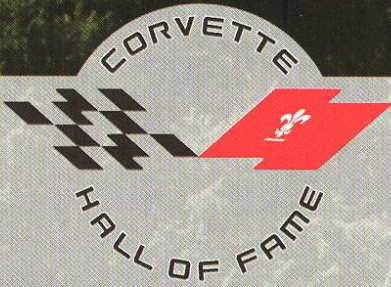


FRED GALLASCH



JIM INGLE





Fred Gallasch

CORVETTE ENTHUSIAST

The Corvette Hall of Fame was established to honor those who have had a significant impact on the legacy of Corvette as a GM employee, enthusiast, or through some aspect of Corvette's racing history. It's not unusual though, to see those lines blur a bit as Fred Gallasch proves. Not only did he work at GM as part of the Corvette group, but through the years he has collected Corvettes as well. You'll know that he is an enthusiast first and foremost as he rarely is seen anywhere without a Corvette shirt on. "I find that many times, the Corvette logo is a good conversation starter. Because of that, I have Corvette friends all over the world."

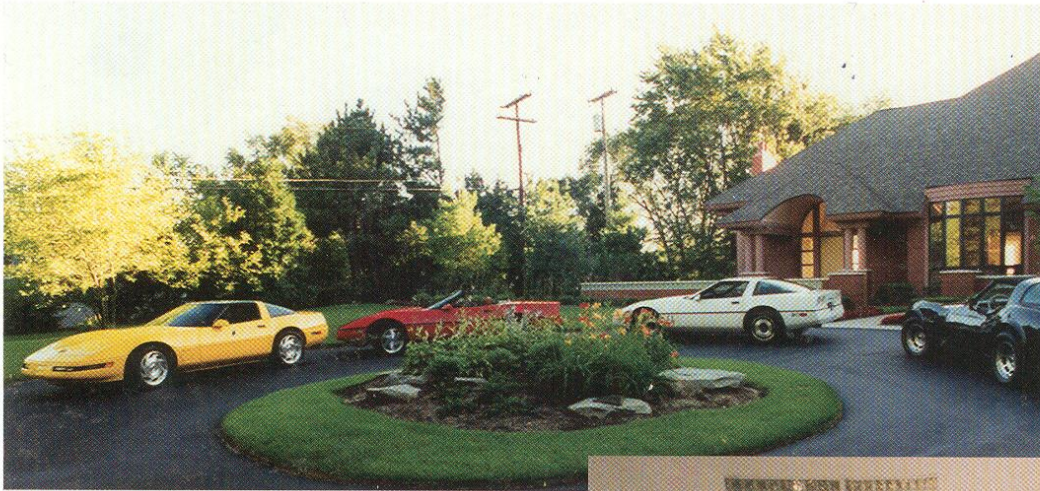
Fred was born in Richmond, Virginia, and says that he was a car guy since he was little. His parents tended to favor GM cars and always had a new one, trading them in every two or three years for the latest models. Because of that, Fred naturally gravitated toward GM as well and kept the tradition up by always buying new.

Before he could afford a Corvette, he had a friend with a 1970 convertible. "He would bring it over so that I could listen to the thing run, and give me rides. It was my first close experience with the car." From that moment on he dreamed of having one of his own someday.

Fred went to Hampden-Sydney College, where he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Math and Chemistry, and then went to North Carolina State University where he received his Master's Degree a year later. After three years of teaching he was certain that his future needed to be as a researcher, so he decided to go back to NC State to get his Ph.D. in Economics.



All along though, Fred remained a car guy with a love for Corvettes, so when it came time to turn his attention toward a career he aimed for Detroit and the automotive industry. There were some good positions open for a person with his education, but the one that appealed to him most was in the Societal Analysis Department at GM. "Our goal was to look at GM's interface with society. There were a lot of regulations going on with emissions and safety, and we looked at the impact of fuel prices on sales too. Lots of factors.



We built mathematical models that marketing could then use."

Being able to work in the automotive field was already a perfect situation for Fred, but one other great thing about the job was that he was in the right place to finally get a Corvette of his own. In 1975 he bought his first one, which was a rare silver with metallic blue convertible Z07. He liked it so much that after that he would try to buy a new Corvette in regular five-year intervals. Sure enough, when 1980 came out, he bought another one.

After a few years, Fred was able to move into management. "That's when I realized that the research labs, in my opinion, were not focused real strongly on cars. I wanted to get back into the automotive business, so after completing a project for a Chevrolet executive, I got a position in their Planning Department."

In the meantime, Fred continued to collect Corvettes. He had already purchased a 1985 and was looking ahead at what was being developed on the 1990 Corvette, but really favored the 1989, so he bought one of those instead.

Back at work, Fred was at the right place at the right time as the C5 began to be developed. As management split off into what they called "brand teams" he was asked if he wanted to head up the Corvette program

for the new car. "Of course I said that I would." Fred recalls. "On the inside I was thinking 'wow, how could this have happened to me?'"

"As luck would have it, my knowledge of Corvettes, and the enthusiasm I have for them has allowed me to spend nearly ten years of my automotive career planning, developing, and selling Corvettes."

In his new role he represented the customer to the engineering groups, which was the ideal position for Fred. "I would go to meetings where there would be

twenty or thirty engineers sitting around a big table—discussing the car and the issues they were having with it, and I was the lone wolf—I was the one marketing guy there. Sure, the Corvette is a lot of bang for the buck, but we can never lose sight of what the customer wants for this car."

"I would also set up clinics to interact with customers, and find out what else mattered to them so that I could take that back to



the teams. For example, we discovered that while people loved their Vettes, one frustration they were having was that they couldn't take them to the country clubs as there was only room for one set of golf clubs. The engineers relocated the gas tank, splitting it into two smaller ones, and we managed to increase the storage space to allow for two sets of clubs."

Changes were coming for Corvette though. Corvette Chief Engineer Dave McLellan was stepping down and Dave Hill came in as they were transitioning from the C4 to the C5. With the C4 ending, there was a real danger that potential Corvette customers would wait to buy one when the latest model was out. This same thing happened when the C3 ended, and sales were cut by about half of what they normally were. To keep this from happening

again, something special had to happen to make the 1996 a success.

When Corvette needs to do something fresh, it often starts with a look back in the past. This not only keeps all of the generations connected and relevant, but it also underscores the importance of tradition in the Corvette world. This look back took engineers to the legendary Grand Sport Corvette.

"I was able to help in making that change over and participated in the release of the Grand Sports of 1996." Fred says. "John Cafaro and John Heinricy really made that happen. It was a big thing that we were able to get a unique motor too. It is rare to spend money on a new engine for the last of a breed, but it turned out to be a great move that Corvette buyers responded to. The LT4 only came with a manual transmission and a "Grand Sport" plate was put on the engines with sequential numbering. Very special car."

As this was all going on, Fred saw Corvette gatherings as focus groups and went to "Vettes in the Rockies" which is run by the Looking Glass Corvette Association. He went to talk to them about the cars, and started making an annual thing out of it. He also began communicating directly with "Dealer Advisory Boards" which were networks of dealers who would give all sorts of advice that would impact Corvette design, build and performance. "They had a lot of wisdom and we used it very well." Fred says.

As the C4 era was ending, Fred really began to like that Grand Sport model. Being a big proponent, contributor and supporter of the car, he would go home and talk to his wife about it, but couldn't seem to get her to go along with the idea of buying one.

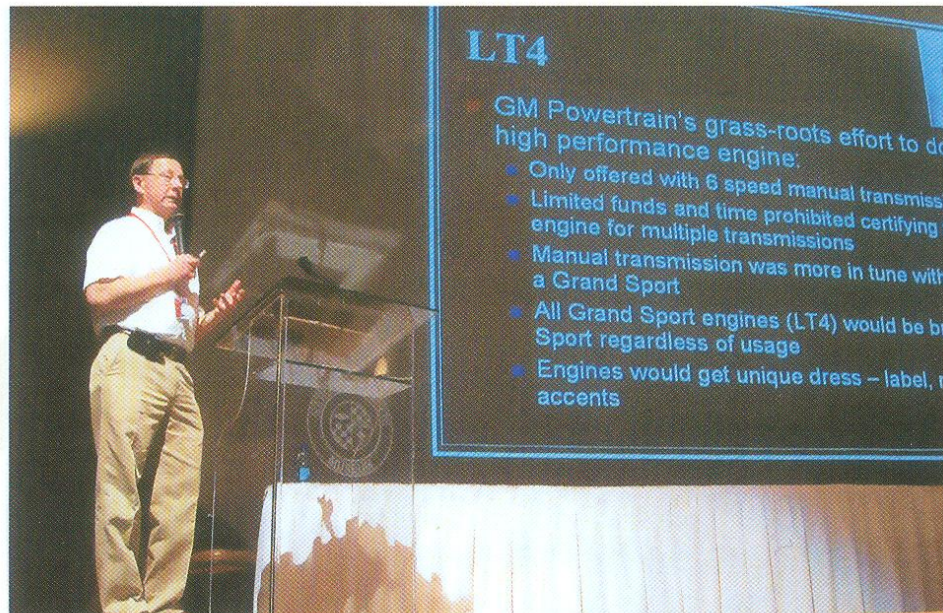
What locked in the deal though was when they were driving to an event together and a Grand Sport came from the other direction. "These cars are unmistakable. You can't miss them. Anyway, she looked at it fly past us and said, 'You gotta buy one of those.' That's what helped me get the Grand Sport. That is probably the favorite of all of my Corvettes. It has the red interior, which makes it rare as well."

When the C5 came out, Fred was going out to train dealers, getting feedback from customers, bringing back data that would later be processed by engineers as future Vettes were being developed. As an enthusiast, working at a job where he was able to get others enthusiastic about the Corvette was as perfect of a fit as the marriage of the body to the chassis. While he was at it though, he ended up buying yet another Vette for the fleet, this time it was a yellow 2002 Z06 with red interior. In 2004, he added yet another one as a new Grand Sport led the way to the next generation Corvette.

After that Fred moved into setting up the accessories

business for GM, and then helped with identifying ways to do business more efficiently, saving millions of dollars in the process. After retiring in 2004, he took the 30 years worth of lessons learned and started Gallasch Consulting Services, LLC, which helps other businesses develop branding strategies and marketing plans that will make the most of their abilities and opportunities. With one company he even helped develop a product that is being used on ZR1s today, which keeps him connected still to his beloved Corvette.

Fred remains active in the Corvette community, speaking at gatherings and showing up for events while writing the occasional magazine article. He still wears



Corvette shirts wherever he goes so that others in the hobby will be able to connect with him. He remains a supporter of what Corvette stands for, and wants to do his part to keep those crossed flags waving.

Fred's story points out one of the greatest things about Corvette, which is that the customer is king. What they want in their car has a direct influence on what it is becoming. To this day, people like Harlan Charles, Kirk Bennion, Tadge Juechter and Robert Parcell listen to what customers are saying, carrying on where people like Fred Gallasch left off in their quest to build America's Sports Car.

"The Corvette is our American creation!" Fred says. "Be vigilant and vocal if things are done which might harm it. Connect with other enthusiasts and support Corvette dealers, businesses, the Museum and events that honor the brand."

For being our enthusiast on the inside of GM and watching out for us; for being a friend to the Corvette and Corvette people ever since; we proudly welcome Dr. Fred Gallasch into the Corvette Hall of Fame.