

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 1963 RPO Z06 CHEVROLET CORVETTE

Article by Marty Fowler, and Contributing Editor Gregory R. Keith

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH PERFORMANCE IN CORVETTES

In May 1953 Zora Arkus-Duntov was hired as an assistant staff engineer at Chevrolet. The small block Chevrolet engine was being developed and Duntov wrote a letter to his bosses titled "Thoughts pertaining to Youth, Hotrodders, and Chevrolet" which detailed how the new Chevrolet small block V8 engine could overcome the Ford flathead V8 domination in preference by customers and the various racing communities. In 1955 he assisted in getting the new V8 into the underpowered Corvette. Soon it seemed Duntov was involved in anything high-performance related to the small block V8. At the Pike's Peak hill climb he set a stock car record in a 1956 Bel Air. Then he took a Corvette to Daytona Beach and set a record of 147.300 miles per hour average in the flying mile which required a two-way run. The speed was achieved by addition of the new "Duntov cam." Ed Cole was impressed enough to put Duntov in charge of fielding four Corvettes for the 12 hours of Sebring which was only six weeks away.

The three prototype Corvettes used at Daytona and one production 1956 Corvette made up the four Corvette team sent to Sebring, headed by veteran racer John Fitch. With only a few weeks to prepare, Fitch's team was literally testing and manufacturing parts as they worked to get the cars upgraded to withstand the twelve-hour race. Brakes were the most obvious area of attention, but other items were also addressed including steel 37-gallon fuel tanks to reduce fuel stops. The Corvettes did well enough that Campbell-Ewald, Chevrolet's advertising agency, created the famous "The Real McCoy" advertising campaign. In addition, six production SR1 Corvettes were assembled at the St. Louis assembly plant (less the steel 37-gallon fuel tank) for sale to the public. Corvette road racing had its start.

For 1957 Duntov had much more aggressive high-performance plans. Ed Cole was saying yes to high-performance and Duntov when given an inch would take a mile. The Corvette SS, a tube-frame magnesium body exotic race car, was developed to compete with the expensive race-only "production" European sports cars. He built a duplicate chassis of the Corvette SS with a fiberglass body, called "The Mule," for testing and to keep the real car away from publicity. Unknown at the time, the chassis from "The Mule" would be seen again under the body of the 1959 Stingray racer playing a part in the design of the 1963 Corvette. Duntov was developing the production Corvette racing program, improving weak points and adding new features. John Fitch was again signed on as team manager and driver. A SR2 from the Styling Department received the latest high-performance upgrades from the racing team and was included in the 1957 Sebring program along with two production cars. The Thompson-Andrey #4 Corvette finished twelfth overall and first in GT 5.0. By anyone's measure that is racing success. The racing parts used on the Sebring Corvettes were released as Regular Production Options (RPOs). However, the racing success was short-lived. By June 1957 a newly imposed racing ban by the Automobile Manufacturers Association (AMA) shut down all manufacturer supported racing. Chevrolet stopped its support of racing teams after the AMA ban, but the new RPOs became the method used to

let would be Corvette racers get their own heavy-duty and high-performance racing parts. It worked very well. The Corvette now could be equipped with RPOs including a fuel injected high-lift cam engine, a 4-speed close ratio transmission and heavy-duty brakes and suspension. All necessary parts to be competitive in racing.

Chevrolet Styling and Engineering Departments worked years in advance of new model introductions. In 1959 the Styling Department was already working on the design for the 1963 Corvette. Bill Mitchell, Vice President of Styling wanted to give the younger styling personnel a chance to change things up, so he tasked Pete Brock, Gene Garfinkle, Chuck Pohlman and Norm Neumann to come up with a completely new forward-thinking design. Larry Shinoda refined the design, and the result was the 1959 Stingray racer with the help of the 98-inch wheelbase "mule" chassis from Sebring. The tube chassis had independent rear suspension and was a racing chassis originally designed for Le Mans. Mitchell owned the car, and it was not officially connected to Chevrolet. He had Dick Thompson drive the car in a race at the Marlboro raceway on April 18, 1959 in the C-Modified class, finishing fourth in its first race. Thompson raced the car for the entire 1960 season and won the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) C-Modified class National Championship. It did not hurt for thousands of spectators to see the Stingray racer, which was easily the most beautiful car at any race appearance. Other racers got used to seeing the Stingray's six taillights.

Behind the scenes in 1959 the High-Performance Department was still at work making parts available through Chevrolet dealers and published a 23-page booklet, *"Corvette Sports Car Equipment."* This booklet illustrated the performance options available, tuning tips, driving in competition tips and information related to the SCCA. It also mentioned these available parts and options would retrofit to older Corvettes not originally equipped for competitive events.

By 1960 the racing ban had thawed a little at Chevrolet and Briggs Cunningham bought three Corvettes with fuel injection, 4-speed transmissions, and heavy-duty brakes and suspension to take to Le Mans for the 24-hour race. Duntov provided fiberglass 37-gallon fuel tanks, special exhaust systems, Halibrand knock-off wheels, hood louvres and extra stabilizer bars for the front suspension. Duntov and Frank Burrell assisted where they could. Alfred Momo's shop on Long Island prepared the three Corvettes. Another single entry was from Lloyd Castner's Camoradi team. Duntov even took a trip to watch the race. It was an exciting race, and when the smoke cleared, the #3 Corvette driven by John Fitch and Bob Grossman finished eighth overall and first in GT 5.0. This great finish impressed even the Europeans. Duntov was there to watch the race, but back in Detroit he had plenty to keep him busy developing CERV 1, the lightweight Grand Sport and the 1963 Corvette production model.

In 1961 Duntov continued back door assistance to a few teams preparing for Sebring with what has been called the "Sebring Package." In a February 7, 1961 inter-office letter to Mr. H.F. Barr, Chief of the Engineering Department, Duntov outlined there were two "Davis" cars (Grady Davis at Gulf Oil), one from Bud Gates an Indianapolis Chevrolet dealer who had obtained the services of Ronnie Kaplan formerly of Nickey Chevrolet and another unnamed entry. He went on to say there may be a few others, so it would be advisable to make up four to six sets of material. He said the necessary items were gas tanks (37-gallon), hardtop modification kits, exhaust systems, dual belt drives, a few front suspension items and other small parts. He said time was of the essence as the race was only 5 ½ weeks from that time. In subsequent letters with a more detailed description of the parts, Duntov also said the

exhaust systems should be the same as used at Le Mans last year complete with all attaching hardware. To expedite the process, he said to have Arvin make the exhaust systems. The Corvettes did well at Sebring with the Johnson-Morgan #4 Corvette finishing eleventh overall and first in GT +3.

THE DAWN OF THE 1963 CORVETTE RPO Z06 LEGACY

In preparation for upcoming Daytona and Sebring races, in January 1962 Duntov took a 1962 Sebring type Corvette to Daytona and Sebring to test how the brakes would perform with the new 1962 327 cubic inch engine. He also took CERV 1 and a prototype 1963 heavy-duty chassis with a cobbled body. The front half of the body was 1963 Corvette and the back half was 1962. A real ugly duckling for sure, but it was the first ladder type independent rear suspension chassis with what was to be 1963 Z06 equipment. Jerry Titus, an automotive journalist and part time racer was there for the testing in January. In a November 1962 Issue of *Sports Car Graphic*, he said the January "cobbled up prototype" was 5 miles per hour faster on the tri-oval at Daytona, and 5 seconds a lap faster at Sebring than the current model. Most likely Duntov let Jerry drive the mule Z06 chassis providing that he would not report on it until after the 1963 Corvette was in production. Titus kept the secret until November.

On March 24, 1962 seven Corvettes were entered in the grueling Sebring 12-hour race. Grady Davis, a Vice President at Gulf Oil Company, bought two heavy-duty Corvettes from Yenko Chevrolet and entered them in the race as #1 and #2. The #2 Duncan Black and M.R.J. Wyllie Corvette finished 18th overall and first in GT +4.0 and the #1 Don Yenko-Ed Lowther Corvette finished 19th overall. Four of the seven Corvettes entered finished. Just finishing at Sebring is a win of its own.

Meanwhile in Detroit, work on the all new 1963 Corvette was progressing with hand-built engineering prototype examples. On February 14, 1962 CEC Form 280, Request for New Optional Equipment or Accessories, was submitted for the release of heavy-duty special performance equipment as a package. It was approved and restricted to the 1963 Corvette Model 837 Aero Coupe. The partial first page

below.
is shown
birth
of the RPO

ORIGINAL
REQUEST FOR NEW OPTIONAL
EQUIPMENT OR ACCESSORIES

(267)

TO: Mr. R. E. Kaufman DIRECTOR OF SPECIALIZED VEHICLE DEVELOPMENT
COPIES: Mr. L. A. Bauer MANAGER - CHEVROLET PRODUCTION STANDARDS
Mr. J. R. Wilson CHEVROLET DIVISIONAL AUDITOR Gen. Adm. Mgr.

REQUEST ORIGINATED BY W. R. Palmer DATE February 14, 1962
DEPARTMENT Specialized Vehicle Development

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF NEW EQUIPMENT RPO release of Special Performance Equipment as a package including 36 Gal. Gasoline Tank, H.D. Brake Equipment, Patch on Rear Wheelhouse, H.D. Stabilizer, H.D. Springs, H.D. Shocks and 15 x 6.0 Cast Aluminum Wheels as indicated on the attached list.

REASON FOR THIS EQUIPMENT To provide Special Performance Equipment as RPO.

SPECIFIC MODELS FOR WHICH EQUIPMENT IS DESIRED 1963 Corvette Model 837 Aero Coupe used only with Fuel Injection and 4-Speed Transmission (2.2 low ratio) Equipments.

TO BE FILLED IN BY REQUESTING SOURCE

STANDARD VOLUME OR ESTIMATED SALES VOLUME 250 UNITS PER YEAR
ESTIMATE OF REASONABLE LIST PRICE _____ PER UNIT
ABOVE FIGURES CONFIRMED BY Mr. H. C. Wolfe and Mr. J. P. Pike SALES DEPARTMENT

APPROVED BY R. E. Kaufman DATE _____
EXECUTIVE HEAD B. J. Pichio DATE _____

This is the certificate Z06 option.

Shown below is the cover letter with Form 280. It gives more information about the new option

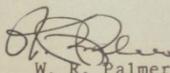
INTER-ORGANIZATION LETTERS ONLY G. S. D. 329



TO	Mr. E. J. Naudzius	ADDRESS	1-235 Engineering Center
FROM	Mr. W. R. Palmer	ADDRESS	3-312 Engineering Center
SUBJECT	<u>Special Performance Equipment</u>	DATE	May 25, 1962

Attached please find a copy of approved CEC 280 form dated February 14, 1962, requesting release of Special Performance Equipment for 1963 Corvette Model 837 Aero Coupe (used only with Fuel Injection Engine and 4-Speed Transmission), as indicated on the attached list.

Will you please initiate the necessary action to release accordingly as start of production of RPO Z06 Special Performance Equipment. The release of subject equipments as service units for Model 867 Convertible is pending further investigation by Mr. Duntov.


W. R. Palmer
Specialized Vehicle Development
Engineering Department

WRP:ams
Attach.

cc: Messrs. W. T. Burwell J. R. Wilson
 R. E. Kaufman L. A. Bauer
 K. H. Hansen P. R. Carling
 Z. Arkus-Duntov ✓
 D. F. Urban
 E. H. Gramzay
 J. G. Schmelzer
 J. A. Berner

and names it RPO Z06 Special Performance Equipment. The letter also says to initiate the necessary action to release accordingly as start of production. Further it is to be in the Model 837 Aero Coupe. Mr. Duntov is investigating the release of the option for the Model 867 Convertible. The option would later be released for the convertible.

By May 25, 1962 the RPO Z06 option was approved for release. Next to be done was build a real RPO Z06 to test and refine. But nothing can be done without a work order and plenty of paperwork.

THE FIRST 1963 CORVETTE RPO Z06 WAS ENGINEERING PROTOTYPE #3809

The document below is the first sheet of the Build Order for a RPO Z06 engineering prototype. It would be the first RPO Z06 created.

102

CHH

BGS RWG
TJM JJK
CWH ZAD

HWK
WCZ
CEW
EJN
JRA
ARB
CJF
VFF
RWG
LEP
RLC
DAD
FRP
DFU
WEB
RJV
JD
KHJ
KHR
DHMcP

AAB
RRP
EEM
EEK
MJD
CRO
ABK
LLP
RLJ
KTM
WEB
DRH
JCR
LHP
GP
WDR
RPM
JRG
FMA
JCE

CHEVROLET ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

BUILD ORDER

COMPLETION DATE 1-18-63

Quality Begins With Design

PRIORITY

Sheet 1 of 4
ORDER NO. 28001-20

TO: Experimental Shop, Garage & DATE 5-2-62
M-A-T

DIST: 3-F-R-J-P-S-T-W-Z-R PROGRAM 28000

UPC 15 NO. OF UNITS 1

CHARGE TO: 8-3303 EST. COST:

SUBJECT Rebuild of ~~28000 Program~~ Corvette #3809. WITH HEAVY DUTY EQUIPMENT (1963)
Req. by M.M.R.

ORIGINAL BUILD REBUILD PROGRAM DESIGN ORDER NO. NONE

REQUIRED FOR:

FUTURE VEHICLE NO.

PRETEST VEHICLE NO. #3809

PROTOTYPE VEHICLE NO.

MISC. (SEE REASON) LABORATORY TEST

REASON: To provide a 28000 Program Vehicle with Heavy Duty equipment.

WORK TO BE ACCOMPLISHED: This Work Order is to cover rework, installation, and procurement of special material required for rebuilding the above vehicle. This includes items covered on sheets 2-4 and other items that may be required for this project.

Vehicle presently incorporates material covered in Design Check reports 1,3,4, and 5.

The Experimental Shop will please use extra Prototype material for this rebuild where possible.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS AND/OR PRELIM. ACTION TAKEN TO DATE:
The High Performance vehicle group will furnish any additional information regarding build problems or material shortages.

DISPOSITION OF FINISHED MATERIAL:
#3809 is to be rebuilt by Design Check.

REQUESTED BY M.M. Roensch - 2	APPROVALS <i>98P 2 cards</i>
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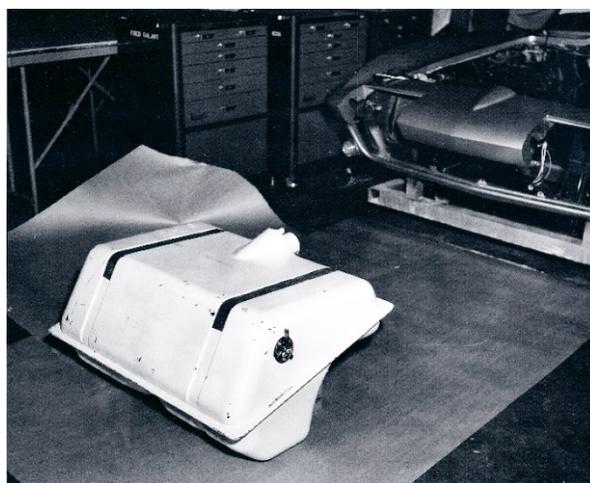
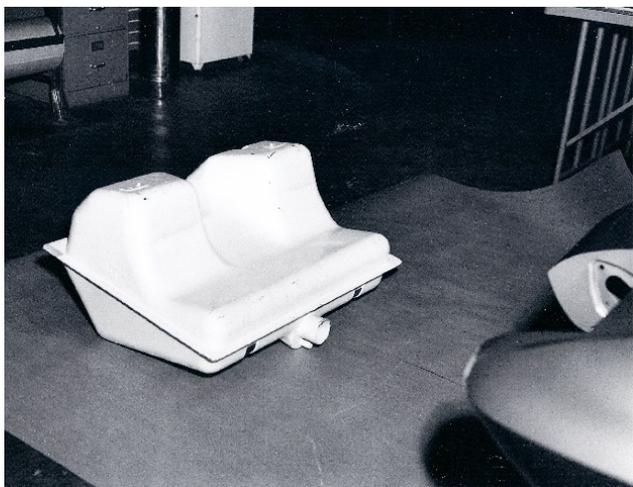
EXPERIMENTAL DEPT. USE ONLY

FABRIC. REQ'D. *205* INST'L. REQ'D. *57*

In the top right corner of the document, it says to rebuild Corvette #3809 with heavy duty equipment (1963). #3809 is not the vehicle identification number (VIN). It is an Engineering Department assigned number. VIN numbers began with the pilot build.

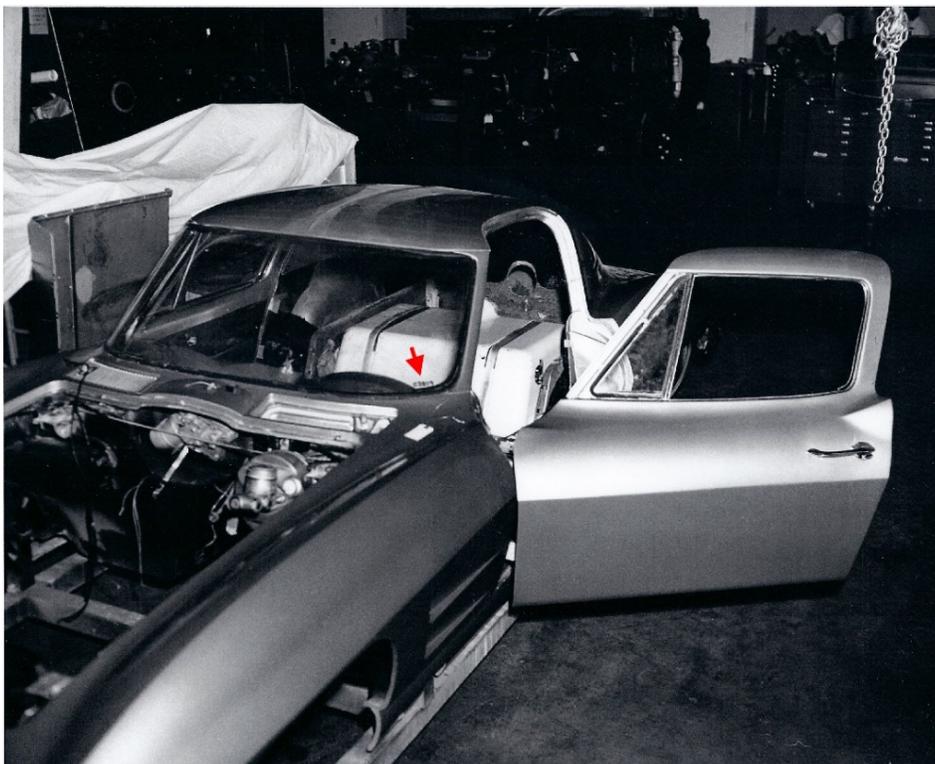
Corvette #3809 was an Engineering Department hand-built prototype. There are more pages to the "Rebuild" Order than can be shown here. Engineering Corvette #3809 was a convertible, and in May of 1962 most likely there were less than four total Corvette prototypes. The order said to rebuild the convertible into an Aero Coupe and rework the rear wheel wells to accept 8.20 x 15 racing tires. A 36.5-gallon fuel tank, brackets and related pieces were to be installed. The frame was to be inspected for cracks and repaired and repainted as necessary. The front suspension was to be of the latest prototype heavy-duty parts. The rear suspension was to be the latest prototype materials. The rear spring and lower shock mounts were to be as released heavy-duty specifications. The rear shocks were to be 1-3/8" diameter. The rear suspension cross member was to be the latest prototype design incorporating production type shear mounts. The rear axle was to be the latest prototype incorporating positraction and a 3:55 gear ratio. In addition, a 3:36 ratio positraction was to be built up for evaluation. Any remaining axle and front suspension pieces were to be the latest prototype items. Brake material was to be the latest prototype metallic heavy-duty version. Power brake installation was to be the latest prototype release. A split system 1" master cylinder was required. Ducting for rear brake cooling was to be cobbled per instructions from the High Performance Group. The engine was to be the new 327 cubic inch fuel injected high performance power plant incorporating the latest proposed items. The engine configuration and build-up were to be directed by the High Performance Vehicle Group. The transmission was to be the close ratio 4-speed type. Rebuild the existing transmission if necessary to incorporate the latest proposed parts. An auxiliary electric fuel pump with on-off switch was to be installed per the directions of the High Performance Vehicle Group. The fuel tank cover was to be the latest prototype design. The exhaust system was to be the straight-through type exiting in front of the rear wheels and cobbled as per the High Performance Vehicle Group instructions. The wheels were to be the 15" x 6" aluminum knock-off type. The tires were to be 8:20 x 15 racing type. These last two items were to be furnished by the High Performance Vehicle Group. The radiator and plumbing were to be the latest prototype release. The roll bar installation was to be cobbled per instructions from the High Performance Vehicle Group. The vehicle was to be instrumented as per instructions from the High Performance Vehicle Group. A Rupert seat belt and shoulder harness were to be incorporated on the driver's side.

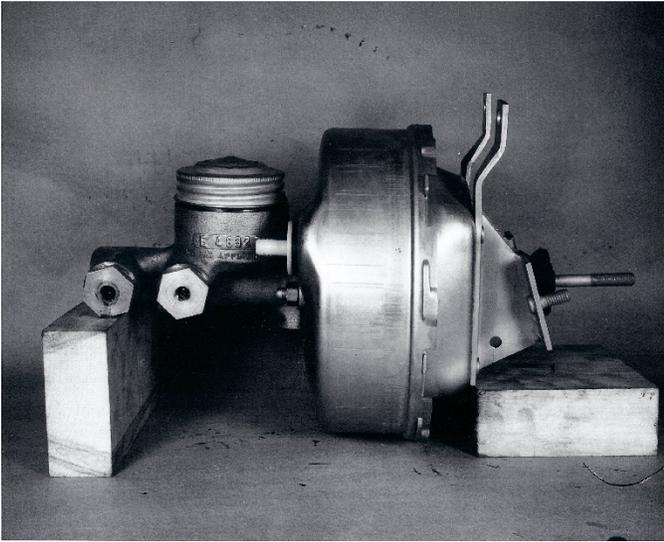
Below left and right is the 36.5-gallon fuel tank. On the following pages are more photos of #3809 and some of its build parts.



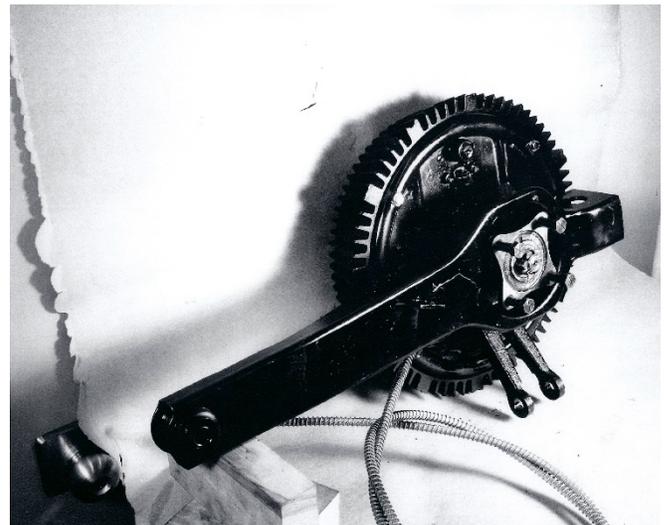
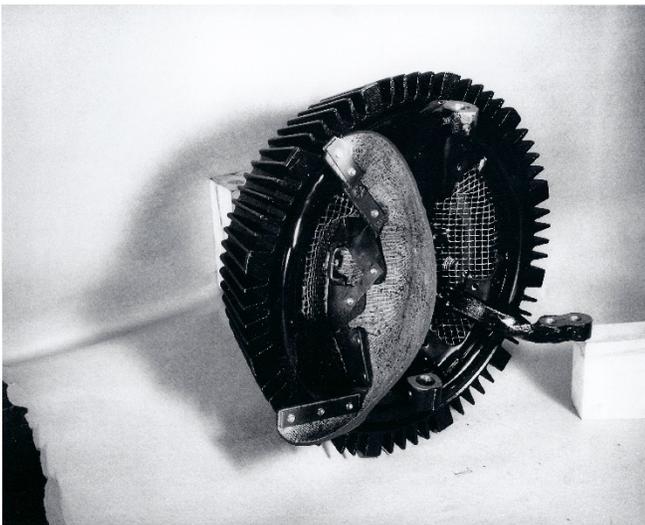


Above, the tank and hardware has been installed in 3809. Below, the booster and dual-circuit master cylinder are visible. The red arrow points to the 3809 marking applied to the windshield to identify this Engineering vehicle. The 3 relates to model year 1963 while the 8 identifies a Corvette model.

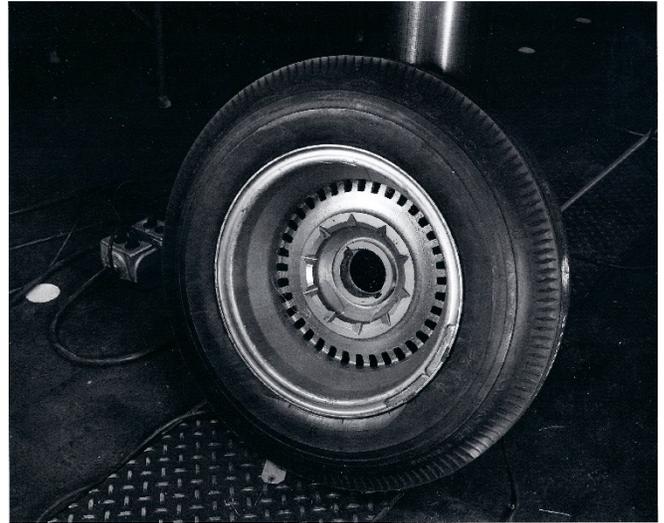
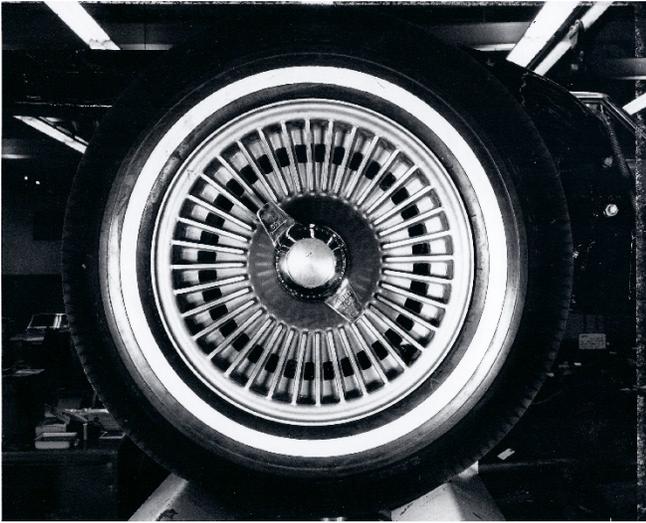




The left photo above shows the power brake booster and dual-circuit master cylinder. The E4832 embossed on the master cylinder indicates a prototype example. At least one of the first production Z06 specially assigned units still retains its original prototype master cylinder. The right photo above is the actual right front brake assembly used on #3809 as the number is painted on the face of the drum. The front drum shown is the first design drum with fins extending to the edge of the face of the drum. Also note the two joined fins at the high point after a space of four un-joined fins and no ventilation holes in the face of the drum. The drums were designed with aluminum knock-off wheels as part of the brake package and the ventilation openings in the wheels were to move air over the fins to aid in cooling the brake assembly.



The left photo above is another view of the right front brake assembly with a rubber brake air scoop installed. The right photo above is a view of the right rear brake and trailing arm assembly. The first design rear drum has joined fins like the front, but the width is for 2" wide shoes as opposed to the 2-3/4" wide shoes in the front.



The photo above left shows the aluminum knock-off wheel front side with the two-bar nut assembly. The nut is not debossed with the Chevrolet identification in the center as was seen in later versions. The photo above right shows the back side of the wheel with the cooling passages which lined up with the fin area on the brake drum. These wheels were the first design wheel and therefore were sand castings which might account for the large amount of wheel weights seen in the photo. The original design wheel as can be seen is a “gear-drive” wheel. This design was never released into production.

The photo below left shows the gear-drive adapter. Most likely this photo is from #3809 as the first design heavy-duty brake drum is pictured attached to a car. However, this photo is from the 1963 Corvette Shop Manual, Section 10 Wheels & Tires, Page 3. The manual had to be compiled months before the expected start of production to allow time for printing and distribution. No one could have imagined the problems that would arise during testing. At bottom right the photo shows the fit between the adapter and the aluminum wheel.

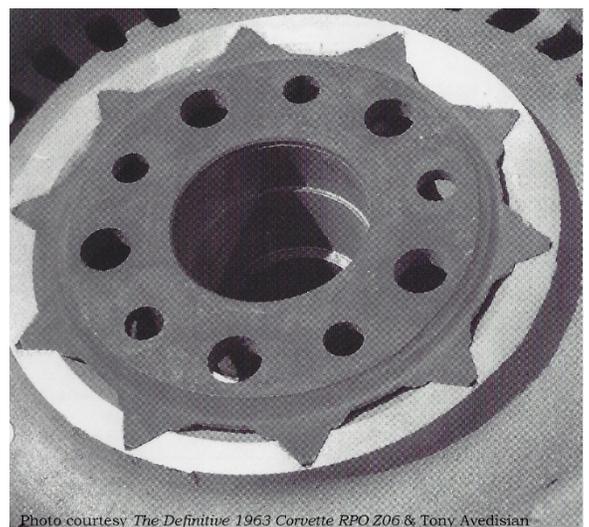
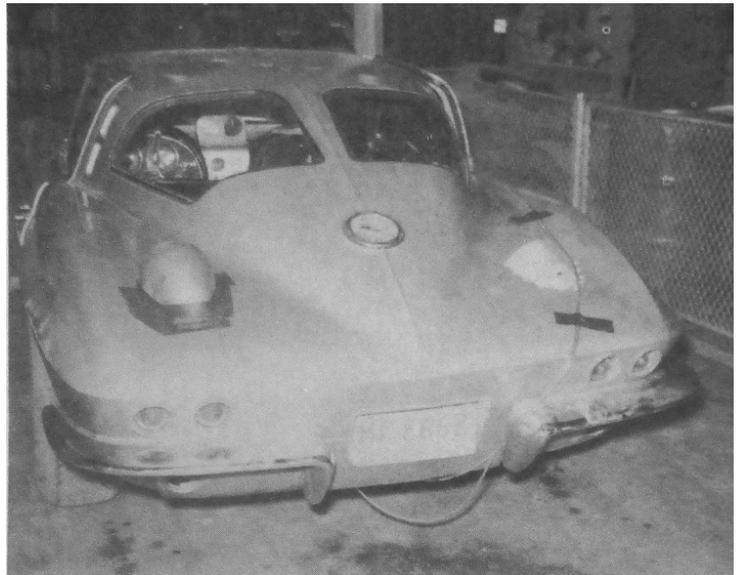


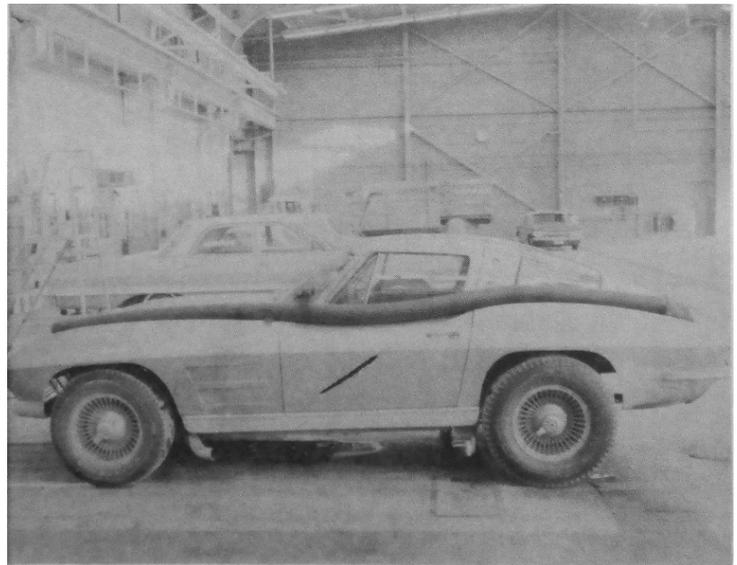
Photo courtesy The Definitive 1963 Corvette RPO Z06 & Tony Avedisian

The photo at right shows car #3809 in January 1963. The caption in the document from which the photo was taken states: "Car 3809 with rear scoops installed. The 5 inch scoop at left is recommended. The smaller scoop on the right is inadequate."



The photo below right shows car #3809 again in January 1963. The caption is, "Front air intake simulation. This 4 inch duct running back from the grille area to the rear scoop increased brake air only 15%. Not recommended."

The two-bar knock-off wheels can be seen as well as a very short exhaust system. By January 1963 the gear-drive knock-off wheel had been redesigned into an early design pin-drive wheel. The purpose of the scoops and ductwork was to improve brake cooling for the Sebring 12-hour race in March 1963. The #3809 prototype led a hard life with Bob Clift testing Z06 brakes and suspension at Milford Proving Ground from the time it was built in May 1962 through the summer. Duntov was trying to fix problems and improve brake performance before production began in September of 1962. They were not successful, but production would have to start, and testing would continue.



1963 CORVETTE RPO Z06 PILOT LINE PRODUCTION

Before regular production could begin, pilot line production was necessary to get the manufacturing equipment and assembly procedures finalized as well as make sure all the supplier parts were available and the puzzle would fit together to make a Corvette. The 1963 Corvette shared only driveline parts with the 1962 Corvette, so the pilot line was vital. The 1963 pilot line was to build 25 units. Most likely the first ten or so were built on a line in Flint, Michigan to make sure all the new equipment would function properly. Photos available of this line show two RPO Z06 1963 Corvettes were produced. The cars were shipped to St. Louis and disassembled to a degree. They were then reassembled on the St. Louis line after all the equipment tested in Flint was installed in St. Louis. Then the rest of the pilot line cars were produced. This all happened in July and August 1962.



The photo above shows a RPO Z06 1963 Corvette which was to be the Mickey Thompson car driven by Doug Hooper in the Los Angeles Times 5th Annual Grand Prix for Sports Cars at Riverside International Raceway on October 13, 1962.



The photo at left shows another pilot line RPO Z06 1963 Corvette being built. The red arrow in the photo shows the two brake lines which attach to the dual circuit master cylinder used only with RPO Z06 1963 Corvettes

The photo at right shows the absence of a steel fuel tank in the chassis indicating the fiberglass 36.5-gallon tank is in the body. The Daytona blue car to be driven by Doug Hooper was shipped by Flying Tiger air freight to Mickey Thompson's shop in Long Beach, California on September 12, 1962 to allow the Thompson shop time to prepare the car.



ST. LOUIS ASSEMBLY LINE PRODUCTION BEGAN IN SEPTEMBER 1962

St. Louis Corvette regular production began early in September 1962. The first month's production was only 675 units because the 1963 Corvette was totally different than any previous Corvette. It took time to get up to speed on the assembly line, work out assembly problems and get the employees familiar with the new assembly procedures.

The first regular production 1963 Corvette RPO Z06 units would be produced in early October 1962. As released for production, the option represented the entire competition package. It included the 360 HP fuel injected engine, 4-speed transmission, positraction rear axle, 36.5-gallon fuel tank, special suspension equipment, heavy-duty metallic brakes, and quick take-off wheels. There were problems, and these cars were produced without the aluminum wheels and brake parts under Deviation

Notice 87882 issued on September 28, 1962 to build ten vehicles.

2-Z06	
Spec. Performance Equip.	
Exc.	Units
A	13
B	--
C	2
F	184
Total	199

The chart at left shows the complete production records for the 1963 Corvette RPO Z06 units by Exception Control Letter (ECL). Each ECL has its own group of parts specified which controls what parts are on the unit. The 13 ECL A units specified RPO Z06 Special Performance Equipment including: fuel injected 360 HP engine, 4-speed

transmission, positraction rear axle, heavy-duty suspension, dual-circuit power cerametalix brakes, 36.5-gallon fuel tank and quick take-off wheels. The two ECL C units were for homologation for FIA certification purposes. The difference between ECL A and ECL C RPO Z06 units is not known, but both ECL A and ECL C were specially assigned units not available to the public. The ECL A and ECL C units were produced before December 14, 1962. The 184 ECL F units were produced after the December 14, 1962 Chevrolet Central Office letter to Zone managers. The letter separated the 36.5-gallon fuel tank out of the RPO Z06 option and made it available as RPO N03. The letter also took the quick take-off wheels out of the RPO Z06 option, but they were already available on the order sheet as RPO P48 on any 1963 Corvette. Lastly, the RPO Z06 F option was expanded to include the 867 Model convertible.

THE 1963 CORVETTE RPO Z06 WINS ITS FIRST RACE

Of the first ten RPO Z06 Corvettes, all specially assigned units built under DN 87882, five went to Chevrolet Engineering. Duntov sent the rest through dealers in the local areas. The first car built was VIN 684, an ECL A unit, billed to Don Steves Chevrolet in La Habra, California to be driven by Dave MacDonald. Another unit was billed to Alan Green Chevrolet in Seattle, Washington to be driven by Jerry Grant. One more unit was billed to Washburn Chevrolet in Santa Barbara, California to be driven by Bob Bondurant. These three units were all picked up at the factory in St. Louis, Missouri and driven back home. Duntov wanted to showcase his all-new Sting Ray as soon as possible. There was a little over a week to prepare these cars for the 3-hour Los Angeles Times Riverside, Grand Prix on Saturday, October 13, 1962. The Mickey Thompson/Doug Hooper car shipped on September 12th had much more preparation time.

Dave MacDonald got a fast start and led for twelve laps but was overtaken by the #98 Cobra of Bill Krause. The Cobra led until Lap 16 when a rear axle snapped and it was out. The #00 MacDonald Corvette led into the second hour until it lost a left rear wheel and was out. The Grant #8 and Bondurant #614 Corvettes retired with engine trouble. The #119 Corvette of Doug Hooper led most of the rest of the race and the RPO Z06 Corvette held on for the win in its first race.

Early October RPO Z06 units were also assigned to Caribe Motors in Puerto Rico to be driven by Candido (Candy) Higuera and Cochran & Celli Chevrolet in Oakland, California to be owned and driven by Paul Reinhart. The Caribe Motors car was shipped to Puerto Rico to be there in time for the Grand Prix De Puerto Rico in early November 1962. Paul Reinhart picked up his car at the factory and drove it home. He did not make the race at Riverside because the car was not ready. Paul was his own mechanic and could not properly prepare the car in the time remaining before the race.

After FIA certification, the two ECL C cars were sent to Mickey Thompson Enterprises to be prepared for the 1963 racing season. In addition, Thompson received an Ermine White ECL A unit. Considering that he already had the Daytona Blue unit that won the Riverside race, there were now four cars in his stable.

Three of the RPO Z06 units Chevrolet Engineering Center (CEC) received were used for testing: #3819T, #3829 and #3830. The numbers 3819T, 3829, and 330 were CEC assigned numbers for internal use and were not vehicle identification numbers. Most likely CEC also received the other pilot line RPO Z06 unit. CEC also had the white ECL A car that went to Mickey Thompson as mentioned earlier.

Later in October three more RPO Z06 units were built under Deviation Notice DN 89561 issued on October 25, 1962. One unit went to Nickey Chevrolet in Chicago on purchase order 22601. Two units went to Yenko Chevrolet in Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania on purchase orders 19272 and 19273.

Duntov took the CEC RPO Z06 Corvettes to the Sebring track in December 1962 to test durability, make the brake system go the distance and find any other problems the new car might have. The brutal track and hard driving found more problems than were fixed and a return trip had to be scheduled for January 1963. He wanted the new design RPO Z06 Corvette to finish well in three major races early in 1963. The first was the Daytona American Challenge Cup, a 200-mile NASCAR type race to be held Saturday, February 16, 1963. The second race, the Daytona Continental, a 3-hour Grand Touring race run under FIA rules was the next day, Sunday, February 17, 1963. The third race was the 12 Hours of Sebring, an FIA endurance race, on March 23, 1963 at the airport property in Sebring, Florida.

In January 1963 RPO Z06 F units began production. To get the 36.5-gallon fuel tank, RPO N03 had to be ordered. To get quick take-off wheels, RPO P48 had to be ordered. However, durability problems took the quick take-off wheels out of the picture for 1963 production Corvettes. The small number of January production RPO Z06 F units went to well-known racers with good competition records in years past. Some noted racers who received January built RPO Z06 F units were Dick Lang, Delmo Johnson, Mickey Thompson, Elmer "Red" Farris and Bill Sherwood. The general public could not get a RPO Z06 optioned Corvette until January 1963, but probably the first publicly available units were produced in February 1963. The majority of RPO Z06 F units were produced in February 1963, over 100 units in total, due to previously unbuilt orders and to satisfy homologation of the RPO Z06 option.

THE RACING SEASON AND TRIAL BY FIRE FOR THE NEW RPO Z06 CORVETTE BEGINS

The first major racing of the 1963 season was the Daytona Speed Weeks. Various races occurred in and around Daytona, Florida in January and February each year making up the "Speed Weeks." The inaugural American Challenge Cup Race included Grand Touring and "Classified" cars. Part of the classification limited the engine to 427 cubic inches or less. Duntov had Smoky Yunick fit two RPO Z06 coupes with an experimental "Mystery Motor" in the Mark II's version which was stroked to 427 cubic inches. Mickey Thompson entered two "Mystery Motor" RPO Z06 Corvettes, an Ermine White #4 car driven by Rex White and a Sebring Silver #3 car qualified by Junior Johnson in pole position at over 162 miles per hour. It rained on race day and the #3 car was driven by Billy Krause in the race because Johnson said he couldn't make the car handle in the rain.

Regular 1963 RPO Z06 Corvettes also entered the race including the #7 Alan Green Chevrolet car driven by Don Campbell and the #17 Nickey Chevrolet car driven by A.J. Foyt. These cars were built in October 1962. Newly built 1963 Z06 Corvettes entered were the #1 car owned and driven by Ed Cantrell, the #5 Dixie Motor Company car driven by Johnny Allen, the #6 Dixie Motor Company car driven by Jef Stevens, the #8 Lang Chevrolet Company entry driven by Dick Lang and the #12 Johnson Chevrolet Company entry driven by Delmo Johnson. Of these newly built Z06 Corvettes, the only one to race was the #1 car driven by Ed Cantrell. Most likely these newly built cars were produced in January leaving almost no preparation time before the race. The #19 Corvette entered and driven by Tony Denman was a 1962 Sebring Corvette formerly owned by Grady Davis and driven mostly by Dick Thompson who won the 1962 SCCA A Production title in the car.

The race was run in the rain, with Paul Goldsmith in the #50 421 Super Duty Tempest Pontiac winning, A.J. Foyt finishing second in the #17 RPO Z06 (327), Billy Krause finishing third in the #3 RPO Z06 "Mystery Motor" Corvette, and surprisingly, Tony Denman finishing sixth in the 1962 Sebring Corvette.

The next day was the Daytona Continental, a 3-hour Grand Touring race. This was an international FIA sanctioned race with the best cars and drivers from all over the world. 48 cars were entered, 15 of which were Corvettes. 13 Corvettes started the race, but only three finished. However, Dick Thompson in the #11 Grady Davis entered RPO Z06 Corvette finished third behind the winning Ferrari 250 GTOs of Pedro Rodriguez and Roger Penske. The #5 Dixie Motors RPO Z06 Corvette driven by Johnny Allen, finished sixth, and the 1962 Corvette entered and driven by Tony Denman finished in 22nd place. That was a world class finish for the new Z06 Corvette which had been in production less than six months.

The next race was the 12 Hours of Sebring. No less than seven 1963 RPO Z06 Corvettes were entered. Car #1 was entered by Grady Davis and driven by Dick Thompson and Don Yenke. Car #2 was entered by Grady Davis and driven by M.R.J. Wyllie and Duncan Black. Car #3 was entered by Johnson Chevrolet Dallas, Texas and driven by Delmo Johnson and Dave Morgan. Car #4 was entered by Ralph Salyer and driven by Salyer and Roy Kimnick. Car #5 was entered by Nickey Chevrolet Chicago, Illinois and driven by A.J. Foyt and Jim Hurtubise. Car #6 was entered by Dixie Motor Company and driven by George Robertson, Johnny Allen and Jef Stevens. Car #7 was entered by Alan Green Chevrolet of

Seattle, Washington and driven by Jerry Grant and Don Campbell. The attrition rate at Sebring is always substantial, and the Corvettes were not spared. The highest finishing RPO Z06 Corvette was the #3 Johnson-Morgan entry at 16th overall and second in GT +4.0. The Corvettes were competitive.

General Motors was under pressure by late December 1961 from Attorney General Robert Kennedy's announcement that he would file suit against GM for antitrust violations. The Automobile Manufacturers Association, a lobbying group, was pressing manufacturers to stop high-performance and racing activities. By February 1963 the Pontiac Division quietly stopped its Super Duty Program. By March 1963 Chevrolet stopped its High-Performance Program and Duntov was left with no funding. The almost developed Grand Sports were sold off to private individuals and Chevrolet backing of race teams with parts and expertise was gone. Duntov would not stop his high-performance work completely, he would just reduce it and stay under the radar. The antitrust suit never happened, but GM had already shut down its racing involvement. The Ford Motor Company never let off the gas, maybe because it was a much smaller target than General Motors.

RPO Z06 1963 Corvettes continued to be built after the large number of units produced in February 1963, with almost none in March or April until the last week in April. From that point until the end of June several units were produced each month. Starting in July and continuing until the end of 1963 Corvette production in the second week of August very few units were produced.

1964 SAW THE FINAL FEW ORIGINAL DESIGN RPO Z06 CORVETTES PRODUCED

As far back as December 1962 in Duntov's Sebring tests, disc brakes were part of the picture. The #38-1 Lightweight Corvette (Grand Sport) and one RPO Z06 Chevrolet Engineering car were equipped with disc brakes. The #38-1 Lightweight Corvette had Girling disc brakes and one RPO Z06 Corvette had prototype Delco disc brakes. Both of those cars had superior stopping power and control. In the case of the Delco test car the disc pads would only last 6 laps at Sebring. Smoky Yunick equipped the two "Mystery Motor" American Challenge Cup Z06s with disc brakes. More development was necessary, but the future of disc brakes on Corvettes was soon to be.

There was internal discussion of dropping the RPO Z06 option before 1964 Corvette production began, but the option was still offered at the beginning of 1964 production. On January 2, 1964 Chevrolet issued a letter to all authorized Chevrolet Dealers notifying them of new Corvette Options J56 Brakes and F40 Heavy-Duty Suspension and break-up of the RPO Z06 performance package.

SPECIAL BRAKE SYSTEM: OPTION J56

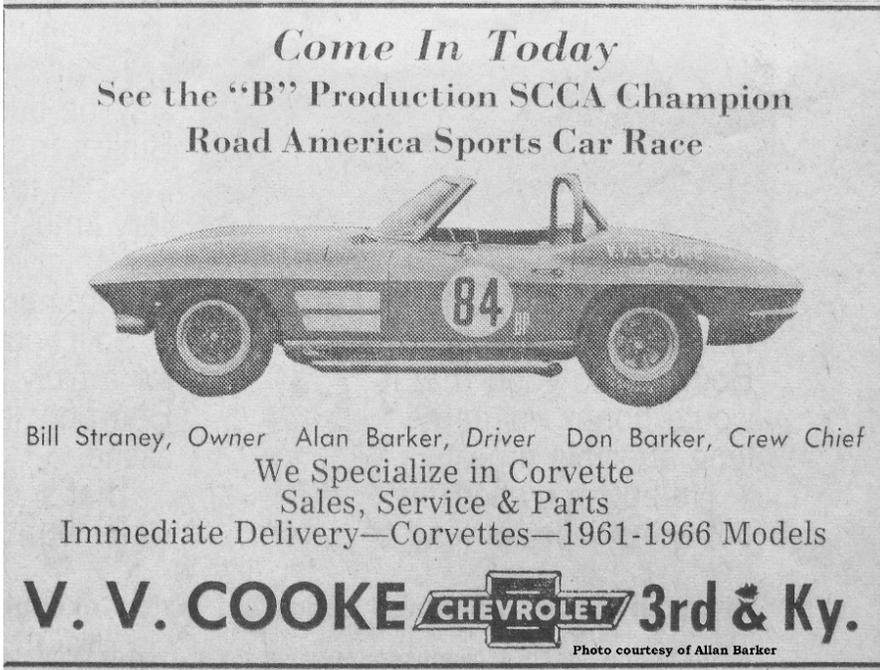
The Special Brake System includes finned brake drums with built-in cooling fans, front brake air scoops, power brakes with dual-circuit master cylinder and special sintered metallic linings (available only when 375 H.P. engine, 4-speed transmission and positraction rear axle are ordered which must be shown separately on order form and will be invoiced as individual options). Available late January 1964

The RPO Z06 option was discontinued by the end of January 1964. However, there may have been a few 1964 Corvettes built as RPO Z06 N03 units before the option was discontinued. After discontinuation of the Z06 option, the equivalent could be had by choosing the RPOs to make the same result. In 1964 production there were 29 units built with RPO J56 Special Brake System, 38 units built with RPO N03 36.5-Gallon Fuel Tank and 82 units built with RPO F40 Special Suspension. It is not known how many RPO Z06 N03 1964 Corvettes were built or how many chose the RPO groups to make the equivalent of one. Most likely less than six Corvettes were produced with the RPO Z06 N03 options or the equivalent. At least three are known to exist.

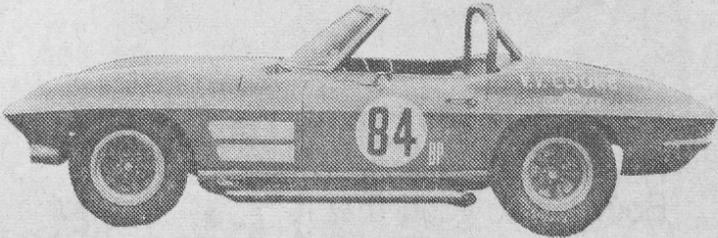
THE RPO Z06 LEGACY LIVED ON PAST THE END OF PRODUCTION

The start of 1965 production saw the end of RPO Z06. By the end of 1965, RPO L84 and drum brakes were gone. They were replaced by disc brakes as the standard, F40 Special Suspension, and big block 396 425 H.P. engines which had more power and were less expensive to make. Most RPO Z06 Corvettes were forgotten and considered obsolete.

In January 1963 in Louisville, Kentucky V.V. Cooke Chevrolet, a high-performance dealer, sold a 1963 RPO Z06 convertible to a local road racer. He raced the car a few times in the 1963 season and blew the engine. In 1966 he asked Allan and Donald Barker to race his Corvette in B Production. Allan was the driver and Donald was the engineer and crew chief. V.V. Cooke Chevrolet sponsored the effort.



Come In Today
See the "B" Production SCCA Champion
Road America Sports Car Race



Bill Straney, Owner Alan Barker, Driver Don Barker, Crew Chief
We Specialize in Corvette
Sales, Service & Parts
Immediate Delivery—Corvettes—1961-1966 Models

V. V. COOKE  **3rd & Ky.**
Photo courtesy of Allan Barker

The advertisement above shows the V.V. Cooke sponsored RPO Z06 after it won its first race with the Barker Brothers in charge, the 1966 Road America June Sprints. Later in the year V.V. Cooke Jr. bought the car back from the owner and the Barker Brothers had free rein to make the Corvette competitive.

By 1967 they qualified for the SCCA championship race, the American Road Race of Champions (ARRC), but had bad luck. In 1968 they qualified again for the ARRC. It was held at Riverside Raceway, Riverside, California, the same track as the first RPO Z06 Corvette race. Allan ran second behind the eventual winner the #89 Cobra of Don Roberts of Scottsdale, Arizona until late in the race when Allan's #24 Corvette broke a fuel injection drive cable and finished ninth.

By 1969 the V.V. Cooke 1963 RPO Z06 Corvette was unbreakable. The Barker Brothers won the SCCA Central Division and took the Z06 to the ARRC, this time at the Daytona International Speedway. In the A&B Production race Allen Barker in the #87 Z06 Corvette won the B Production title and was fifth overall, beating eight A Production cars.

The ARRC in 1970 at Road Atlanta was a repeat in the #87 1963 Z06 Corvette for Allan and Donald Barker. On November 29, 1970 they won the BP National Championship for the second time and beat a Shelby Cobra and Shelby GT 350 at the same time. It was the last race for the 1963 RPO Z06, but in its career it won two SCCA B Production ARRC championships and was most likely the winningest 1963 RPO Z06 of them all. Below is Allan Barker and the Z06 after winning its last race, the 1970 ARRC.



The RPO Z06 Corvette option would not be seen again for many years, but it would return with a legacy of high performance.

Article by Marty Fowler, and Contributing Editor Gregory R. Keith

We would like to thank GM Media Archive and the GM Heritage Center for providing photos and documents for this article. Also, thanks to Allan Barker for the V.V. Cooke advertisement and his photo with the 1963 Z06, and Tony Avedisian for permission to use information from *THE DEFINITIVE 1963 CORVETTE RPO Z06*, a book which takes a much deeper look into the 1963 Corvette RPO Z06 option.