

## Corvette, Now Billed as the World's Longest-Running Passenger Car, Marked Its 60th Year Last Week

Chevrolet last week marked its 60th anniversary of the Corvette.

The first Corvette went into production in Flint on June 30, 1953.

"During the past six decades, the Corvette has been woven into the fabric of American culture, as the sports car of choice for movie stars, musicians and astronauts," said Chris Perry, vice president, Chevrolet Marketing. "The very best Corvettes represent the state-of-the-art for their eras in terms of design, technology and performance."

Here are some key facts highlighting 60 years of Corvette history:

- Corvette is the world's longest-running, continuously produced passenger car. The longest-running vehicle of any type is the Chevrolet Suburban.
- Corvette made its debut as a concept vehicle at the General Motors Autorama in New York City on Jan. 17, 1953. It was such a success that a limited run of 300 production Corvettes began on June 30 of that year.
- All 1953 models were Polo White with a red interior and they were priced at \$3,498. In 2006, the third 1953 Corvette produced sold for a record \$1.06 million at auction.
- Corvette was exclusively available with an inline six-cylinder engine until 1955. That year, the optional V8 engine was or-

dered by 90 percent of buyers. The six-cylinder was dropped in 1956. Corvette has been available exclusively with V8 power since.

- Corvette was produced only as a convertible for its first 10 years. The fixed-roof 1963 "split-window" Corvette Sting Ray coupe launched the second-generation Corvette.

Sales doubled and it became a year-round car for drivers in colder climates.

- Approximately 1.56 million Corvettes have been produced since June 30, 1953. The 500,000th Corvette was built in 1977; the 1 millionth was built in 1992, and the 1.5 millionth Corvette rolled off the line in 2009.

- Corvettes have been produced at three facilities: Flint, Mich. (1953); St. Louis, Mo., (1954-1981); and Bowling Green, Ky. (1981-2014). The change from



The first Corvettes came off the line in Flint 60 years ago last week.

St. Louis to Bowling Green happened during the production year.

The first 1981 Corvette was built in St. Louis, and the last 1981 Corvette was built in Bowling Green.

- No 1983 Corvettes were sold to the public. The model year

was skipped in preparation for the all-new 1984 Corvette, which launched the C4 generation. Forty-four Corvette prototypes were built as 1983 models.

Only one of these cars remains, and it is on display at the National Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Ky.

## NADA Reports Positive Results For Auto Dealers

As the U.S. economy gains momentum and auto sales increase, employment at franchised new-car dealerships continued to rise, up 3.2 percent last year, says the National Automobile Dealers Association in its latest state-of-the-industry report.

In 2012, total employment at new-car dealerships increased to 963,400 employees, up from 933,500 the previous year, according to NADA Data 2013, a report on dealership sales and financial trends. The average number of employees per dealership rose from 53 to 55 last year. There was also a net increase of 95 franchised dealerships, bringing the total to 17,635.

New-car dealerships had an annual average payroll of \$2.9 million in 2012, up 12 percent from the previous year. The total payroll for all U.S. new-car dealerships was \$51.6 billion, up 12.6 percent. Average weekly earnings of employees at new-car dealerships last year was \$1,030, up 9.1 percent from last year.

Sales, payroll and employment at new-car dealerships as a percentage of total U.S. retail activity in 2012:

- Sales accounted for 14.9 percent of total U.S. retail sales;
- Payroll accounted for 12.3 percent of total U.S. retail payroll;
- Employees accounted for 6.3% of U.S. retail employment.

## Car Rental Firms Provide Demo Drives

Car rental customers try before they buy, according to a new study commissioned by Enterprise Holdings. The study, conducted by Polk, found customers who rent a car from Enterprise Holdings' brands – Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Alamo Rent A Car and National Car Rental – are 55 percent more likely than the average consumer to purchase a

new vehicle within six months of their rental. Polk analysis revealed that 1.2 million new cars (out of 11.4 million retail sales) were purchased by consumers within 180 days of renting from an Enterprise Holdings brand. Therefore, Enterprise, National and Alamo customers purchased 1 out of 10 new vehicles that were sold last year.

Polk's analysis found the highest purchase rates are among Enterprise Rent-A-Car replacement renters – customers who rent from neighborhood locations because their cars are in for body work or mechanical repairs. These renters are twice as likely as the average consumer to buy a new car within six months of their rental.

## Oakland County Hosts Packards at Club's National Meet

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rained on. The show ran until 1:30 p.m. and the rain didn't start until 4:30 p.m., so people had plenty of time to get their cars tucked away.

Luksik said compared with the 2012 Packard Club National Gathering in Williamsburg, Va., the number of cars and people in attendance was up about 60 percent.

"Everybody likes to come to Detroit, because it was the home of Packard for so many years," he said.

A bustling week of activities began Sunday, June 23, as club members had the option of attending an Ice Cream Social at Stahls Automotive Foundation (museum), about 30 miles from the hotel in Chesterfield.

The museum is said to be the home of more than 100 of the finest collectible cars from important time frames in automotive history.

On Monday, June 24, club members headed out to the Packard Proving Grounds on Van Dyke in Shelby Township, where, in addition to a tour of the grounds and a picnic lunch, guests were treated to a presentation by "The Ladies of Packard," three very special guest speakers – Margaret Dunning, who is 103 and still drives her 1930 Packard roadster she has owned for more than 65 years; Fran Hale, who shared her memories as a secretary at Packard from 1942 to 1954, and as executive secretary to PMCC President Hugh Ferry; and MaryEllen Dohrs, an industrial designer who was instrumental in the interior design of the 1955 and 1956 Packard Caribbean and Packard 400.

The Monday evening welcome party featured an Open House at Cranbrook Art Museum a short

distance from the hotel, where Brian Kaufman, videographer for *The Detroit Free Press* showed his documentary on the Packard Plant.

On Tuesday, June 25, club members had a choice of bus tours to the Flint area or to Detroit.

Flint sights included visits to the Sloan Museum and the attached Buick Museum.

**"Packard... was arguably the most prestigious car built in America, and it all happened in Detroit."**

**– Roger Luksik**

In Detroit, the tour included the Packard Plant just east of downtown, where visitors were able to see what the plant looked like when it closed in 1956, just before Packard moved to South Bend, Ind., when it merged with Studebaker.

Wednesday, June 26, featured swap meets where Packard owners could get parts for their classic rides.

Organizers also held technical sessions where owners could learn about repairing their cars and keeping their Packards on the road, followed by an evening dinner cruise down the Detroit River.

Centenarian Dunning, who celebrated her 103rd birthday during meet week, was the unquestioned queen of the cruise.

Dunning was a passenger on one of three boats ferrying club

members down the river to view stately homes on the Canadian and U.S. sides of the river formerly owned by Packard executives and their families.

At one point, the boats converged so that the hundreds of passengers could all sing "Happy Birthday" to Dunning.

The birthday gal wowed fellow passengers after she accepted the invitation from the skipper of her boat to come up to the wheelhouse.

Luksik reports that Dunning, without cane or walking aid of any kind, climbed three sets of stairs and, after a little instruction, took a turn steering the boat along the Canadian shoreline.

In terms of Packard pride, Thursday, June 27, was the culminating event that gave all owners a chance to compete for awards and trophies at Rochester Park in the city of Rochester.

"We handed out 38 trophies to the cars that won events in their respective classes," said Luksik.

One thing to notice about Packards – these cars are driven, not just backed out of a trailer. Some of these cars have been "part of the family" for years, with owners taking the car on memorable family outings, proms, weddings and cruises.

Accordingly, two cars earned Long Distance awards – in the post-War category, one owner drove a 1956 Packard Caribbean 1,100 miles to get to the meet; and in the pre-war category, owner of a 1936 Packard drove 680 miles.

"A lot of people think Packard was a part of GM or some other American car company," said Luksik. "But it was an independent automaker, manufacturer of what is arguably the most prestigious car built in America, and it all happened in Detroit."

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