



Blue Bars

Official Publication of the National Council of Corvette Clubs, Inc.

Winter 2022

Back Cover: Mid-West Corvettes



About the back cover.....

Mid-West Corvettes, Inc. Celebrates 60th Anniversary

The year was 1960. The U.S. enters the Vietnam War. Hugh Hefner opens his first Playboy Club in Chicago. The heart pacemaker is invented. John F. Kennedy wins the Presidential Election. And tunes such as Elvis' "It's Now or Never," Chubby Checker's "The Twist," and Bryan Hyland's "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini" are playing on the car radio.

The same year, Chevrolet is producing more Corvettes than it has in the sportscar's seven-year history. Sales are jump-started, in part, by the popular TV Show "Route 66." And in Moline, Illinois, Paul Ray Castle gathers a group of fellow Corvette enthusiasts on a Sunday afternoon in May to form the Mid-West Corvettes (MWC) club.

Like many milestones in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic kept MWC from celebrating its actual 60th anniversary. Instead, the club celebrated its history, longevity, growth, and charitable mission with a banquet on Sept. 26, 2021, at Camden Centre, Milan, Illinois. As MWC observed its diamond anniversary, club members reflected on the club's rich history, the founders who paved the way, the promising future and, of course, the roads well-traveled.

"I believe that all of our members, past and current, joined this organization for the common interest of owning and driving America's ultimate sports car," said Darrell Amato, MWC president. "However, I think that all of us quickly realize that it is the friendships that are developed which are the most important. Every member becomes our Corvette family."

The MWC story began in March 1960 when Castle became the proud owner of a new shiny Corvette convertible – the automaker's only model at the time. Reading his first issue of Chevrolet's "Corvette News," he spotted a Corvette Club Directory and thought "now that would be fun." A couple of weeks later, Castle received a letter from Mills Chevrolet in Moline asking him to join a group of new owners for a publicity photo shoot. Nine Corvette owners showed up and the idea of creating a club was planted.

Soon after, the 22-year-old Castle returned to the Chevy dealership to gauge owner Bud Mills' interest in starting a club. While the answer was negative, Castle was encouraged to push forward with Mills volunteering the help of his dealership and sharing the names and addresses of those involved in the photo session. Castle also was unconventional in his recruiting— waving down Corvettes as he met them on the street to talk up the idea of a club.

On Sunday, May 15, he convened a group of founding members, who ratified the club's constitution, adopted the Mid-West Corvettes name, and set the next monthly meeting in June. Dues were set at \$8 per club year and membership was open to Corvette owners. The first officers were: Castle, president; Harvey Garver, vice president; George Christenson, secretary-treasurer; and board directors, John Corelis and John Hensley.

From ten charter members, MWC would grow to 27 members by the end of its first year. The club then grew steadily over the years as the sports car enthusiasts forged deep friendships during their social and sporting activities all centered around their common love – the Chevrolet Corvette.

"Being an MWC member has been a grand journey of 47 years as a member," said MWC Governor Al Fiscus (Life Member), who recalls being 10 years old when he saw his first Corvette – a '57 – drive up to his neighbors' house in Hastings, Neb. "The sight and sound of that Corvette was like something out of a movie that I never forgot." At the time, the young boy could not know that he would buy his own Corvette at age 19 from Mills salesman Denny Waddell (MWC Lifetime Member). Nor could he have imagined it would be the first of more than 50 Corvettes he has owned over his lifetime. Fiscus, who joined MWC when he got the keys to his first Corvette, said "As the old saying goes "We came for the cars and stayed for the people."

Now known as Mid-West Corvettes, Inc., the club is a not-for-profit and a charter member of the National Council of Corvette Clubs (NCCC). Over the years, the club would become known for its now twice-monthly drive outs, spring Rally, fall Autocross, its car shows, low-speed events, fundraisers, social events, and annual awards banquets. The club would mark its significant milestones with special anniversary banquets – 25th anniversary (1985); 40th (2000); 50th (2010); and its 60th on Sept. 26, 2021 (a year late).

First sponsored by Mills Chevrolet, the club later was sponsored by Warren Chevrolet in East Moline – gathering there for a 20th Anniversary photo 1980. Beginning in 1983 and ever since, MWC has been sponsored by the Eriksen Chevrolet-Buick dealership in Milan, where it holds its monthly meetings on the first Tuesday of the month.

"Our Mid-West Corvette Club continues to offer fun club socials, picnics, car shows, rallies, low-speed event and drive outs, and I believe all of our members are most proud of giving back to our community through our many charity fundraising activities," said Club President Amato.

The club, which now numbers about 115, reached an all-time high membership of 200 in 2014. Amato said membership has fluctuated in recent years due to members retiring to warmer climates, spending more time traveling and sadly, many longtime members have passed away. He estimated that most the members are 60+ years old.



MWC Treasurer Sherri Brown and her husband Gale are newcomers to the club – having purchased their first Corvette three years ago. But they wasted no time in becoming active club members including serving on its board and committees. Sherri also has volunteered as Charity Director and is chairing the 60th Anniversary. Gale volunteers as Membership Director. “An aspect that has consistently impressed me is how quickly our club is there to help support members by any means during life’s extraordinary difficulties,” she said.

The current Charity Director Donna Jochim agrees. Diagnosed with a life-threatening cancer in 2015, Jochim found her support group in the club including member Deanna Glossop, who organized a fundraiser on her behalf. “Even though this was not a club-sponsored event, each and every member came forth and donated their time, energy and funds to make this a huge success.” While it was a financial success, Jochim said “It was the emotional support that gave me the strength to get through this very challenging time and kick cancer’s butt.”

Over its history, MWC has raised and donated thousands of dollars to various programs and organizations in need. It focuses much of its philanthropy on Toys for Tots, children’s hospitals and therapy centers, Spina bifida, as well as veteran groups and food banks.

One of its crowning moments would come on July 7, 2012, when MWC hosted its inaugural Vettes on the River Corvette Car Show on the banks of the Mississippi River in nearby LeClaire, Iowa. Under sunny skies and with a heat index of 108 degrees and high humidity, show organizer Randy Huber repeatedly said, “they just keep coming.” By day’s end, 247 Corvettes – representing as many as 18 Corvette clubs around the region -- flocked to the riverfront.

Vettes on the River, which rotated between clubs located across eastern Iowa, returned to LeClaire – located in the Quad Cities region – again in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. The idea of partnering with other Midwest clubs to host combined events and fundraising was initiated by Huber’s wife, Jane. The couple ran the event for many years and currently run by a non-profit VOTR “FOR VETS.”

As the world returns to post-COVID normalcy, the club is back on the road with its Sunday drives two times a month. Fellow Corvette fans are always invited on our rides that travel the backroads of our Midwest home. For more information or to join MWC, visit mwcorvettes.com.

Article written by Jennifer DeWitt