

## WSJ Print Edition



James Sheehan, left, in his 1953 Chevrolet Corvette, No. 188 of the 300 built in the model's first year. His garage in Arizona, below, is a veritable Corvette museum.



### Corvette Fan Just Snagged an Original

MY RIDE

BY A. J. BAIME

*James Sheehan, 63, a custom-home builder living in Cave Creek, Ariz., on his 1953 Chevrolet Corvette, as told to A. J. Baime*

For the last 45 years, I have had at least one Corvette in my garage. The story goes back to when I was a kid growing up in Westwood, N. J. I had a paper route and I used to see a 1967 Corvette parked in a driveway.

I became obsessed. I got my first when I was 18, and I've probably had two dozen over the years. Right now my wife, Valerie, and I have 10 in our collection.

There is a whole culture in the U.S. surrounding this car. Once a month, I host a Corvettes & Coffee in Carefree, Ariz. It started with 25 cars four years ago, then it was 50 cars. Now it's 150, all Corvettes, from the first year in 1953 to 2025, with all eight generations represented. After a break for the hot Arizona weather, the next one is in October and I will bring my 1953 Corvette.

I first heard about this car a year ago. The owner was none other than Ken Carlson, who is regarded in the Corvette world as one of the best restorers. He had restored this car himself in 2010 and it was his personal car. He retired, so I was able to purchase the car from him in December. It is from the first year this model was built, and is No. 188 of the 300 made in 1953. This specific car is also interesting because, according to my documentation, it was used by General Motors in 1978 in some promotional materials, which I have. The car has won four Top Flight awards at National

Corvette Restorers Society shows. I like to show it to people because it's such a perfect example of how this whole story started in 1953, and to promote the legacy of its previous owner.

The Corvette's story begins with a man named Harley Earl, who was the head of design at General Motors. He set out in the early 1950s to make America's first sports car. It debuted at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York.

The first 300 were all polo white, with red interior, and an in-line sixcylinder engine called the Blue Flame. See? Red, white and blue. The engine was a 235.5-cubic-inch in-line six-cylinder with 150 horsepower. A lot of the cars from 1953 went to celebrities, to get them out there.

Now, 72 years later, almost two million Corvettes have gone into production. The body styles have changed, the engine has moved from the front to the rear, and the technology these days is out of this world. But to me and others who love these cars, there is a spirit about them that runs through all eight generations.

Not that I don't love some more than others. To me, my favorite is the 1953. I also like to share this car with younger people. I have had young people come up to me that don't even know what a Corvette is. Most of these kids have never seen an ashtray or a car cigarette lighter before. So I get to explain it to them. It's a Corvette, an American icon.

---

Copyright (c)2025 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved. 10/15/2025

Powered by TECNAVIA

---

The following is a digital replica of content from the print newspaper and is intended for the personal use of our members. For commercial reproduction or distribution of Dow Jones printed content, contact: Dow Jones Reprints & Licensing at (800) 843-0008 or visit [djreprints.com](http://djreprints.com).

---