**Under the Hood, June, 2020**

Earlier this year I was invited as a guest to an event at the new Driver's Club. Driver's Club is a private social club (located near Redmond Costco) with meeting area, and a large high bay car storage area that will store perhaps 150 cars. I did check the Redmond building permit application and the building is listed at 48,000 sq ft. The car storage is all well marked and on the concrete slab. It doesn't have stackers installed, but I would anticipate that they could install stackers 3 high. The storage was about half full when I was there and ranged from all-out race cars (a recent Formula One racer and what appeared to be a Can-Am racer from the 70's), to more normal exotics. One oddball was the mid 50's Studebaker 2 door wagon with perhaps the best paint job I have seen in years. I was invited to an event to introduce the members to the new Ferrari Monza. This is Ferrari's newest front engine GT type roadster with a 6.5-liter V12 rated 810 horsepower. Afterwards I checked the internet for price and found quite a price range shown, but at the event I was told by one Ferrari owner that if you wanted to buy a Monza it would require an even $2 million. This is an extremely limited automobile, but there was not one, but two Monzas on display. Both owners were there to show off their cars and I will try to describe the cars from a close-up view. One of the owner's climbed in and out of his car to start the engine and thrill us with the typical Ferrari shriek. The body is all carbon fiber and the doors are cut very high. This leaves an extremely high door sill to climb over and then drop into the seat that has bolsters that are perhaps 3-4" high. If you find getting in and out of a C4 difficult, with the high and wide door sills, multiply that effort by 10. Since it is carbon fiber it is not really flimsy, but the doors are very flexible, flopping around on the hinges. Getting in was fairly easy, but exit proved much harder: raise myself high enough to sort of sit on the door sill; try to get my left foot on the door sill, slip and fall back into the seat, to try again; get my left foot on the door sill and try to raise my body high enough to get my right leg under me to stand straight; then left foot off the sill to the ground and then rotate to get the right leg out of the car. All I could think was that this was not a fast operation, or even a safe operation. Look out if your feet were wet. The second owner opened the trunk and hood. The trunk would fit perhaps 3 smaller duffle bags; it was clearly not going to fit your golf bag. Opening the hood required reaching into the side vent on each side of the car to release the latches. The engine was at least half buried beneath a huge cowl. I expect the cowl was removable for maintenance, but it was at least 2' deep. There was a horizontal carbon fiber strut running fore and aft in the cockpit, about shoulder height, separating the seats. With this strut and the high doors, I could envision a bit of claustrophobia. There was an opening beneath the strut, but you would hardly see the opening if you were in the car. One of the owners is a well-known Ferrari collector in the area. Perhaps a dozen years ago he was in my run group at an open track event at Pacific Raceway with his then new Ferrari Enzo. Since then I understand he still has the Enzo, has added one (someone told me two) La Ferraris to his fleet and now the Monza. Compared to the new C8, the Monza is an even larger car; about 1 inch longer, 2 ½" wider and 5" lower. After seeing the new Ferrari up close, I came home and sent the local Ferrari dealer an email cancelling my order.

The rise and fall of the 3-pedal transmission in the Corvette. We all know that the original 1953 Corvette could only be ordered with a 2 speed Powerglide automatic transmission. A more sporting 3 speed manual transmission was not offered until 1955. Even then for most of the model year, Corvette buyers were forced to buy the Powerglide even with the newly introduced V8. Only about 10% of 1955 Vettes were equipped with manuals. During the dark days of the late 1970's and early 1980's, with the challenging emissions standards, more and more Vettes were sold with automatics. This trend peaked

in 1982, the last year of the C3, when every Corvette left the factory with an automatic. With the introduction of the C4, considered a world class sports car, the take rate for manual transmissions again surged. It appears we have come full circle once again, as only the DCT (automated dual clutch transmission) is available on the 2020 Vette. Those of you that were at the February club meeting at Evergreen Chevrolet heard the report that the manual transmission is gone for good. I thought it would be interesting to look at the manual transmission take rate over the decades. All the numbers presented are the percentage of Corvettes equipped with a manual transmission, and the numbers are all from the "Corvette Black Book". 1960 (83%), 1970 (71%), 1980 (14%), 1990 (34%), 2000 (46%), 2010 (43%). Judy and I bought our first Corvette in 2001 and joined the club that year. Manual transmissions were installed in 61% of all Corvettes that year, but that number was skewed by the introduction of the 2001 Z06, a hot seller, which was not available with an automatic. We know that if you want to buy a Ferrari today, you will be forced to have some form of an automatic transmission. However, Ferrari has a loyal group of fans that will seem to buy whatever Ferrari tells them is the latest and greatest. Porsche attempted a similar game plan but had to pull back and re-introduce a manual transmission in some of their most sporting machines. Porsche claims that the automated transmission is better in every respect, but enough of their buyers demanded a manual transmission, and Porsche did not want to lose those buyers. Will the same thing happen with the Corvette? For now, Chevrolet is saying "no more 3 pedal transmissions" but I expect Chevrolet listens to the focus groups perhaps a bit more than Ferrari. I personally hope that a later C8 will be offered with a manual transmission, but for now I am not holding my breath.

In June, racing fans often look back to the Memorial Day weekend Indy 500. Much ink has been used to report on the 1978 Corvette Pace Cars and the bidding wars that occurred in trying to buy one. You would think that with Corvette being the only serious US sports car for decades that the new 1953 Corvette might well have been chosen to pace the 1953 Indy 500, but that role was filled by a Ford convertible. However, that 1978 Corvette Pace Car was the first Corvette chosen for this duty. There have been more than a dozen Corvettes chosen as pace cars since 1978. Camaros have also been well represented as pace cars since the Camaro introduction in 1967. So, what was the first Chevrolet to pace the Indy 500? There is a bit of conflict on the specific model. The Indy 500 web site says it was a 1948 Stylemaster convertible, while Chevrolet claims it was a 1948 Fleetmaster convertible. Stylemaster was the base model and Fleetmaster was the upscale model. Both were powered by the only Chevrolet engine, a 216 ci "stovebolt 6" rated at a whopping 90 hp. I believe the Chevrolet history is more accurate as I do not believe a convertible was offered in the Stylemaster line. Any history of post WWII cars will confirm that there was such a pent-up demand for new cars that the manufacturers simply re-introduced the last model built before production was changed to produce airplanes and tanks for the war effort. The 1946 Chevrolet was basically the same car as the 1942. Little was changed in 1947, but the 1948 Chevrolet was vastly improved with the introduction of a vertical center bar in the grille. Yes, it was that simple in those years when the buyers were lined up trying to buy anything. Wilber Shaw, a three-time Indy 500 winner, was the 1948 pace car driver. I suspect that the engine was hopped up, with higher compression, and perhaps a more aggressive cam. With these modifications, perhaps the engine was 120 hp. Remember that with a larger 235 ci engine, higher compression, cam, triple carbs etc, the 1953 Corvette was still only rated at 150 hp. How many of you ever had the opportunity to drive a 1948 Chevrolet? This era Chevrolet had friction shocks in the front suspension. As the cars aged, the cost to replace the friction shocks could exceed the value of the old car, so most were driven with bad shocks. By rapidly pressing and releasing the throttle pedal, then repeating several times, you could

get the front end bouncing up and down to the limits of the springs and bounce rubber. Who would have thought we were creating a new automotive trend, now taken over by the “Low Rider” fraternity?