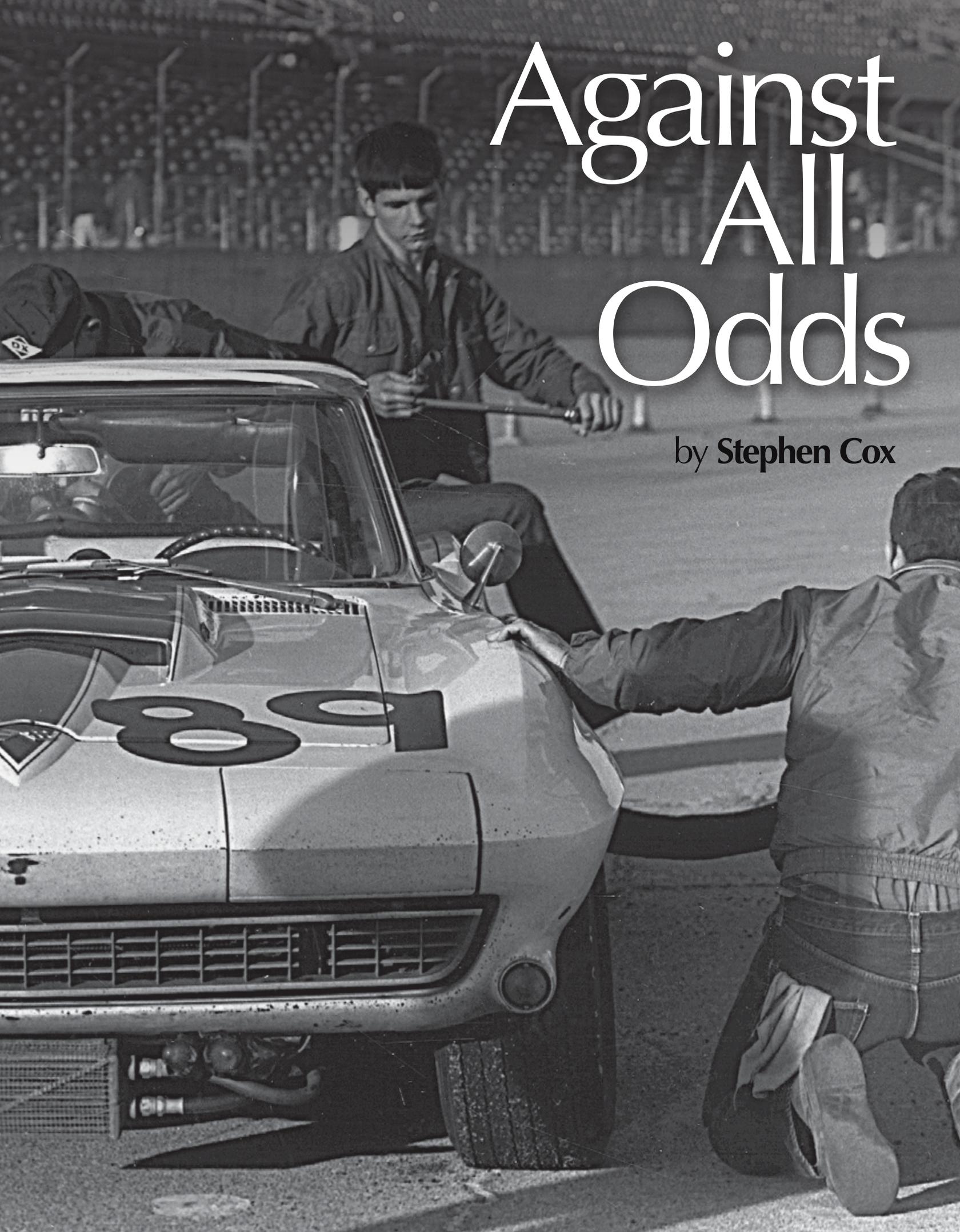


# Against All Odds

by Stephen Cox



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# Acknowledgments

They say that every life is a story, but few of us realize that while we're living it.

Cliff Gottlob planned none of this. The fact that the totality of his experience creates one of the truly great untold stories from the golden era of American road racing is even less than random chance. It's a freak accident.

Gottlob himself told me many times throughout the writing of this book that he was simply at the right place at the right time, or he knew the right people, or he was the benefactor of someone else's kindness.

That's not just genuine humility; it is truth. Re-living this story through the wide eyes of a 27-year-old engineer from Kansas has been amazing.

Corvette lovers already owe an insurmountable debt to David Burroughs who, with L88 #21550, has now faithfully preserved yet another priceless chapter in automobile history. He is an endless source of enthusiasm and his encouragement was never more than a phone call away.

Jack Blatchford was an indispensable resource for the description of the 1970 24 Hours of Daytona. His memories also constitute one of the few written accounts of what life in the trenches was like for a small team mechanic at the zenith of North America's road racing craze.

Daytona and Sebring winner Tony DeLorenzo provided invaluable insight into the 1970 race from the perspective of Gottlob's competition.

I offer my gratitude to each of these men for sitting patiently through one interview after another. The dialogue quoted in

the chapters that follow is not fictional or presumed. They are specific, first-hand recollections from interviews with the people who experienced it.

David Newhardt's stunning photography brings out every minute detail of Gottlob's Corvette, from the slightly tilted "Gulf" decals that were hastily applied at the race track to the painstakingly recreated rock chips on the fenders.

The Mecum Auctions Presentation Department was incredibly supportive and never hesitated to invest whatever resources were necessary to get the whole story, and to get it right. Their sincere commitment to accuracy and history is unsurpassed.

The story of Cliff Gottlob's L88 Corvette, and scores of others like it, would never be known were it not for the market created by Dana Mecum. Part of restoring a car is caring for its history and digging deeply into the past to resurrect long forgotten memories.

That history educates and entertains legions of collector car fans who will repeat these stories and carry them to a new generation of car lovers. That history leads us to stories like the 1970 24 Hours of Daytona, the legendary L88 Corvette that scored 52 straight victories, and the kid from Arkansas City who barely had the money to pay for it.

This story was over 45 years in the making.

I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Stephen Cox  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
July 2013





## CHAPTER 1

# Pit Road

**“You’ve got to realize  
I’m about half crazy.”**

**- Cliff Gottlob**

The hands on both stopwatches were still in place after the final practice laps at Daytona International Speedway. Unexpectedly low temperatures had turned their stainless steel casings ice cold, but Jeri Gottlob had no gloves. She wouldn’t have worn them anyway over her freshly painted red fingernails.

Twenty-two years old, single and pretty, Jeri and her identical twin sister, Janet, had been recruited to keep timing and scoring statistics for their brother’s racing team at the 24 Hours of Daytona. Both had taken time off from their jobs as TWA airline stewardesses to be at the race.

Jeri’s track side seat was a random wooden box on pit road with a pillow thrown over it. The cords on her dual stopwatches kept tangling, so she tied them together and hung them around her neck like a scarf. A pair of black sunglasses lay beside her. She didn’t need them yet. It had rained most of the week and the skies were still overcast. A wrinkled brown paper sack laid on the asphalt at her feet but she was too nervous to be hungry.

Florida is known for its heat, but on Friday afternoon, January 30, 1970, anyone who had a coat was wearing it. Temperatures had hovered around thirty-two degrees that morning and it remained cold all day. A pair of race fans seated high on the front stretch sheltered themselves under big white blankets. Team mechanic Jack Blatchford bundled up with two t-shirts under a plaid flannel shirt topped with a brown jacket.

Jeri and Janet kept warm by wearing identical white stitched coats with fur-lined hoods, matching white hats, bluejeans and red tennis shoes with their hair tied into pigtails using the same red yarn. No one could tell them apart, which they found to be a source of endless amusement.

In the days before digital transponder scoring, everything had to be done manually. Jeri would time each lap on alternating stopwatches and record the result on a clipboard with the yellow Number 2 pencil in her left hand. Janet would repeat the process as a fail-safe. After each session, their brother, team owner and primary driver, Cliff Gottlob, would check the latest lap times.

But now Jeri could only sit by and wonder what was happening. A tense conversation was taking place around Chevrolet L88 Corvette #21550, which sat idly on pit lane while practice continued out on the race track. Co-driver Dave Dooley, a consistent winner in SCCA regional road races, climbed out of the cockpit and joined the huddle as the crew checked over the car.

After expending a superhuman effort just to get there, it looked as if the team's once-in-a-lifetime chance at America's premier road racing title was doomed.

Gottlob ducked out of the conversation, stepped over the white, knee-high pit wall and squatted down on the asphalt in front of Jeri, who was camouflaging her nerves by reviewing lap times. Gottlob wore an off-white fire suit with red trim, gray socks with black canvas tennis shoes, and no gloves. He had worn a crash helmet most of the day and his curly black hair needed attention.

Jeri glanced up with an intense look. Gottlob said something that couldn't be heard over the roar of racecars, but she didn't have to hear him. She could tell by the look on his face that they had serious problems.

Gottlob tried to explain that the transmission had failed after first gear froze up. Dooley was fast, but he had consistently driven the car beyond its 6,800 rpm limit and the transmission couldn't take the stress. The gear had welded itself to the main shaft. Even if they could find an auto parts store still open late on a Friday afternoon, the team was out of money.

It would be nearly impossible to run the 24 Hours of Daytona now. To get this close and fail after struggling through so many obstacles was heartbreaking.

But team mechanic Jack Blatchford was still hopeful. He knew that Cliff Gottlob had made a career of doing the impossible.

Gottlob was fluent in German before he started grade school, thanks to a grandfather of German descent. He graduated from high school before his 15th birthday and later earned no fewer than five engineering degrees from Heidelberg University. He held world records from a drag racing career in the 1960s. And he knew Corvettes better than the people who built them. If anyone could work a miracle with a Corvette engine or transmission, it was Cliff Gottlob.

His love affair with the Corvette began in junior high school









when the car was first introduced in 1953. Gottlob began tinkering with the complex side-draft tri-power carburetors on the early C1 Corvette models. They were nearly impossible to properly synchronize, but the teenager soon realized that he had stumbled across an amazing talent... he could tune them pretty well. So well, in fact, that he enrolled at the Carter Carburetor school in St. Louis to further his skills.

A massive, four-story brick building on North Grand Avenue, the magnificent Carter Carburetor building took up an entire city block and blinded passers-by with thousands of glass panes on all sides. Carter's fourteen-week independent mechanic's course had become so popular that its graduates were starting their own apprenticeship schools as far away as Washington state.

"I was the youngest one to ever go to the school," Gottlob recalled. "And while I was in St. Louis, I toured the (Corvette) factory. That's when I got hooked. We started working on Vettes. The synchronization was a nightmare on those three carburetors. But word got out that I could synchronize them and consequently we had a lot of Corvettes to work on."

Gottlob's future in the automotive industry was secured. He began drag racing and continued to work on automobiles until joining the United States military in the early 1960s. Based in Germany, he was able to frequently visit his grandfather's family in Stuttgart, as well as the nearby Zuffenhausen Porsche works, on a regular basis. He also managed to drive thousands of laps on both the short and long courses at the famed Nurburgring, which whetted his appetite to go road racing.

By the time he returned to the States in 1965, Gottlob was already an engineering genius.

His early drag racing success had garnered the attention of Chevrolet's inner circle of executives, engineers and development specialists.

He had a remarkable talent for building racing engines and had amassed untold hours of self-instruction in road course racing.

Cliff Gottlob was determined to start his own road racing team. All he needed now was a car.



## CHAPTER 2

# The L88

**“You had to be  
a ‘somebody’ or  
a millionaire or both  
to get an L88.  
It was very rare.”**

**- Cliff Gottlob**

Claiming that the Corvette is special is much like declaring the Pope to be Catholic. But even within such an elite marque, some models are more unique and desirable than others. The L88 version of the Corvette is among them.

By 1967 Chevrolet had officially abandoned auto racing to the eternal consternation of Corvette engineer and designer Zora Arkus Duntov, a part-time racer who had driven at Le Mans and narrowly missed qualifying for the Indianapolis 500 in 1946 and 1947.

Not to be dissuaded by Chevrolet’s front office suits and lawyers, Duntov quietly introduced the L88 in 1967 as an over-the-counter option package available to the public through any Chevy dealership. The car was insanely powerful with a 427 cubic inch V8 engine that produced nearly 600 horsepower.

The L88 had none of the luxury items associated with street driving. It had no air conditioning, no heater and no defroster. There was no fan shroud and no radio. It wasn’t that these items had been removed at the factory... they had never been put on in the first place. The L88 was a born racer.

The L88’s chassis was blessed with stiffer springs, heavy duty dampers and bigger disc brakes. The drive train featured a posi-traction differential, an M22 “Rock Crusher” transmission, cold air induction and 12.5:1 pistons that required the car to burn 103 octane racing fuel.

Duntov had created a car with a performance capacity far beyond the ability of the average driver. Now he had to find a way to prevent the average driver from buying it.

The plan was simple – jack up the price and lie about the horsepower. The L88 option package added a whopping \$1,500 to the Vette’s price tag, placing it out of reach for many would-be buyers. And the engine was deliberately underrated at 430 horsepower, masking the car’s incredible potential and making the most desirable Corvette in history far less attractive to the average customer.

The ploy worked. Chevy built only twenty L88's in 1967.

Of course, Gottlob was an easy sell. He was already a fan of Corvettes and had specialized in tuning their carburetors since the mid-1950s. When close friend and Chevy executive Ralph Miller arranged a discounted price for an L88, the deal was done. Gottlob placed his order for a white Corvette with blue interior trim, 4-speed manual transmission and 4.11 posi-traction rear end on June 5, 1967.

On July 3rd the car was ready. Gottlob was not. Chevy called and asked him to pick up the car, but he couldn't.

After ordering his new Corvette, Gottlob's first chore in establishing his new race team was to perfect his driving skills at the highest level possible. Having worked with Chuck Cantwell, design engineer for Carroll Shelby, developing the Shelby GT350 and delivering Cobras to west coast customers some years before, it was only natural for Gottlob to attend a weekend stint at Shelby's California-based school of high performance driving.

He was lucky. His instructor was to be 1966 Sebring and Daytona champion Ken Miles, who had nearly won Le Mans as well. A better driving coach would be impossible to find. The school was to be held at Willow Springs International Raceway in Rosamond, which had been a west coast staple for area race teams since its opening in 1953. This was perfect.

Gottlob signed up for the weekend driving school scheduled for August 19, 1967, not realizing he would be a week too late.

Chevy called again. Could he please come pick up his car at the Corvette plant in St. Louis?

"No," Gottlob remembered. "We had some contractual jobs for some drag race stuff and I was getting a pretty good reputation for Mark IV engines. [The drag race teams] were bugging me to get going, and I said, 'I gotta go pick up a new car.' And they said, 'Well, which is most important, the income or getting to drive your new car?'"

It occurred to Gottlob that without the work, he had no means by which he could pay for his new Corvette. So the car continued to sit quietly at the Corvette factory in St. Louis.

A few weeks later Chevy called again, furious that a '67





Corvette  
SAFARI MODEL





model was still on the lot. Gottlob's was the last one, and Corvette #21550 was becoming a headache for accountants who couldn't clear their books for the year until it was gone. Gottlob finally went to St. Louis to pick up his new racecar-to-be in early August, 1967.

He pulled into the parking lot of the massive Corvette factory on the northwest corner of Natural Bridge Road and Union Boulevard. Chevrolet's Lee Boettcher, who had walked Gottlob through the buying process, was on hand to give him a grand tour of the factory.

Going through the front office and down the hallway led to the main production line, which was full of the newly-designed 1968 "Mako Shark" C3 models. The hall opened out into an enormous factory with a low ceiling, an overhead girder system and an ocean of cardboard boxes covering a plain concrete floor. The fiberglass bodies of hundreds of new Corvettes were mounted on carriage rails and sent through a tunnel-like paint booth before being mounted onto the chassis by what appeared to be a giant, ceiling-mounted claw.

The nearly-finished C3s proceeded bumper to bumper through their final assembly and leak testing before final inspection.

Four sets of bright quadruple fluorescent fixtures lit up the inspection line like a football stadium, where two inspectors would pore over each car with a 59-point checklist. An encouraging banner hung overhead proclaiming, "Final Line. We build 'em well... we know they'll sell!"

Just outside the final inspection line was a wide parking lot stocked with newly minted C3 Mako Sharks. Gottlob's L88 sat conspicuously in the center of them; the lone 1967 model on the lot and the last mid-year Corvette to leave the factory. Boettcher personally handed Gottlob the keys and wished him well.

The aspiring race driver fired up his big block 427 and took Union Boulevard north to Interstate 70, where he turned homeward and allowed his mind to drift back to the Shelby driving school that he anxiously anticipated in a matter of days. A few miles west of town Gottlob ran across a vast stretch of nothingness, bordered on the south by beautiful green hills that remain heavily forested to this day. The town of Warrenton and the recently-established Graham Cave State Park were in his rear view mirror and Columbia, Missouri, was dead ahead.

Just before reaching today's US 63 north of the Columbia Regional Airport, the brand new Corvette's engine began to misfire. "We started out with a full tank of fuel," Gottlob said. "And it takes 103 (octane) in the fuel for that car. So we were going to put in av-gas (aviation fuel) at Columbia and we had just slowed down and ratta-tat-tat... my brand new, heavy duty, ultra-wild L88 Corvette shucks an intake guide."

Gottlob couldn't believe it. He found a wide shoulder along I-70 and coasted to a stop, too stunned to deal with the fact that his powerful new race car couldn't even make the drive home. He then placed a phone call to the only good friend he had in Columbia who was sure to have a trailer... the owner of the local Ford dealership.

A few minutes later salvation appeared as a big, flatbed truck trundled down I-70 and squeaked to a halt thirty feet in front of the stricken Corvette. The only problem was that Gottlob now had to endure the humiliating experience of having his proud new Chevy L88 hauled home on the bed of a decrepit old Ford loudly badged with advertising banners from a competing car company.

"And that's how the car came back to Kansas," Gottlob laughed. "I don't do anything the easy way."

Fortunately, Gottlob's previous work with Chevrolet paid off. The company made good on the deal and offered Gottlob any parts he needed to fix the engine at no cost.

A few days later his phone rang. It was Shelby's school of high performance driving calling to say that Gottlob's highly-anticipated weekend racing experience had been canceled.

On Thursday, August 17th, Shelby instructor Ken Miles was testing a new race car for Ford at Riverside when he lost control and crashed badly. Miles, who was to have been Gottlob's personal driving instructor two days later, was killed. Shelby canceled the entire weekend.

Gottlob was told to be at Willow Springs again two weeks later. He arrived on September 2nd to find that despite the recent tragedy, he was lucky yet again by drawing future SCCA Hall of Famer John Timanus as his instructor.

The weekend went well. There was little new to learn that he hadn't already seen in his days at the Nurburgring, but the experience sharpened his skills. Cliff Gottlob was becoming a very good race car driver.

He returned home ready to race. Leaving the rebuilt 427 on the floor of his shop, Gottlob found an old 283 engine, bored it out to 292 cubic inches and installed it in his L88 Corvette to keep the miles off the car's original 427.

"I'll give away fifty horsepower but if my suspension is better, we'll win races," Gottlob recalled of the engine swap. "The car was instantly competitive and we were winning races right away. It was mainly testing other people's cars and stuff like that... that's where I got a vast amount of experience. I got to see a lot of failures in mechanical things, so I began to figure out how to avoid those problems."

Gottlob's new race team was now a reality.

He took his Corvette to Aspen, Colorado, and whipped three Shelby Cobras in a local SCCA event. He won the first club race at the new Hallet Motor Racing Circuit in Oklahoma. He raced amateur events at Lake Afton, War Bonnet, and Green Valley.

Under-funded, self-sponsored and working full time as an engineer, Gottlob still managed to pay his dues at local and regional race clubs, winning consistently at every stop.

By the autumn of 1969, he was finally ready for a shot at American road racing's most sought-after prize.





## CHAPTER 3

# Trial & Error

Gottlob's connections at Chevrolet wanted him in the 24 Hours of Daytona and had paved the way for his application to be accepted by race officials who, under any normal circumstance, would likely have rejected the petition of an underfunded team with a three-year-old car.

"At Daytona... you don't just put your car on the trailer and show up on race day and expect to get an entry form. It doesn't work that way. They review your entry and make the decision whether they'll let you compete," Gottlob said. "They weren't going to let me run because I was a low budget team. But Vince (Piggins of Chevrolet) came through for me and said, 'Well, he may be low budget, but we have some (special components) on his engine. It's a procedure, and we would like to see it accomplished.' So that's how I got in."

**"If you don't go,  
I'm taking the car and  
going without you."**

**- Jack Blatchford**

What little money Gottlob had to his name was quickly spent on the basic necessities. Motel reservations were made for the entire crew. His sisters, Jeri and Janet, were recruited as scorers. Mechanic John Wanko and machinist Dick Frantzen were brought on board as extra crewmen. Gottlob shrewdly sold Goodyear on a sponsorship program that would provide free tires and save the team what few desperately needed dollars it still had on hand.

Two weeks prior to the 1970 24 Hours of Daytona, everything was on schedule. Then, as Gottlob recalled, "I was Mr. Good Guy and loaned my trailer out."

Gottlob had lent his trailer to some friends for a trip to the Little Sahara off-road recreation park in northwestern Oklahoma for a few days of partying on the sand dunes. The inebriated group decided that a one-ton 4x4 off road truck would somehow fit on a trailer designed to carry a 3,000-lb Corvette, with utterly predictable results.

The trailer was ruined. The springs were destroyed and Gottlob's trailer was returned to him on top of another trailer, leaving the team with no means of transporting the Corvette to Daytona.

“Of course, my friends didn’t have any money and I had all my money invested in the Daytona endeavor,” said Gottlob, who was already working around the clock to prepare the race car “So my stress meter was pegged.”

Practice sessions opened at Daytona on Wednesday, January 28th, 1970, and the trailer incident wreaked havoc on Gottlob’s race preparations. He was struggling to outfit the Corvette with a new, lower rear end gear for Daytona’s extreme speeds. The big block engine was being rebuilt and installed in the car for the race. Every last-minute preparation was now running behind schedule.

Practice opened on Wednesday morning in Daytona but Gottlob’s team was still in Kansas working around the clock on the race car. When they tried to cancel the first night of their stay in Daytona, the motel refused to refund the money and insisted that the only way to keep the rooms was to pay for the entire reservation.

The situation deteriorated further when, on Wednesday afternoon, Gottlob’s phone rang. It was Goodyear’s representatives calling from the race track.

“They canceled my tire contract,” Gottlob said. “They were pretty upset. They thought that a C2 going to take on the new C3s with no practice was crazy. That’s the way Goodyear looked at it. They called and said if you’re counting on freebie tires, well, forget that. You’re violating the rules of preparation. It was just a stressful, nerve-wracking development. It really was that bad.”

The loss of Goodyear’s tire sponsorship was the last straw. Gottlob’s team had no tires, no trailer, no money and no more time. They had already missed the first day of practice and hadn’t even left Kansas.

Disgusted after having worked four straight days with practically no sleep, Gottlob called everything off and tried to accept the fact that he would miss the race that he’d always dreamed of running.

Jack Blatchford hadn’t heard the news yet. He showed up at the two-car garage that served as Gottlob’s racing shop in Arkansas City late on Wednesday and looked around in disbelief. Their trailer was junk. The car wasn’t on it. Nothing was packed and Gottlob was in a foul mood. Blatchford remembered the conversation:

“I said, ‘Are we going to Daytona?’”

“Nope. I’ve been working on it for four days and I’m tired. I need some rest. And it won’t load on the trailer. My trailer just got totaled.”

Blatchford was stunned. He had planned for more than a month to arrange vacation days with his employer for the trip. This was their shot and they weren’t likely to get another one. They had come too far to turn back now.

Both men stood there. Blatchford, deep in thought, finally responded, “Well, I’ll see you. I’ll be back in a few minutes.” Then he turned and walked out the door. Gottlob heard a car start and drive off into the distance.

Blatchford drove to Jerry Knox’s nearby auto parts store just before closing time. He bought a pair of stock mufflers for a passenger car, threw them in the back seat and drove back to the garage.

He crawled underneath the L88 while Gottlob looked on in amazement. The side exhaust pipes were dropped one by one. Two cardboard boxes were brought into the garage and a pair of new mufflers dumped on the floor. Minutes later they were bolted onto the exhaust headers and the car was lowered off the jack stands

Blatchford grabbed the Corvette keys, picked up his jacket and said, “Follow me.”

“Where are we going?”

“Daytona.”









## CHAPTER 4

# The Rendezvous

Some ideas are strange, a few are completely unorthodox and some are just plain crazy. This was the latter.

Nevertheless, everyone flew into action. All doubts were cast aside and Gottlob's assortment of friends and family became a professional race team overnight, ready and willing to take on the world's finest drivers in North America's most important endurance race.

Packing in the dark on Wednesday night, Dick Frantzen's El Camino was stacked high with tools, spare tires and racing gear. A rope was laced through the tires and fueling rig, and then lashed to the trailer hitch. The result was a top-heavy mess but there was no time to do any more.

Street tires were mounted on the L88 and a license plate from another car was screwed onto the taillight panel to give the appearance of legality. Racing spark plugs were pulled out and replaced with street plugs. After installing an oil filter, the car was deemed roadworthy and the exhausted racing team began their epic 1,626-mile drive from Kansas to Daytona.

Driving a race car on the street was unheard of. Driving it for 1,600 miles was unthinkable. It was also their only option.

19-year-old John Wanko sat in the passenger's seat of the Corvette, while Jack Blatchford took the first driving shift. It was the night of January 28, 1970 and the temperatures were below freezing. Most of the southern states were cloud-covered and blanketed in a constant, drizzling rain.

The L88 had no heater. Blatchford and Wanko huddled inside, donning winter coats and gloves in a futile effort to stay warm. The car's racing suspension offered little comfort. Its small, 16-gallon stock fuel tank was designed for neither racing nor long road trips and required frequent fill-ups.

Dick Frantzen's situation was little better. His El Camino had a heater, but Frantzen had no driving relief. Gottlob curled up in the passenger's seat and slept for the first time in four days.

**“They were two kids from Kansas who didn't know that you can't do that.”**

**- David Burroughs**

Jeri, Janet and co-driver Dave Dooley would all travel separately by air. If everything went right – and nothing had so far – the entire group would meet in Daytona on Friday morning.

Ten hours of driving crawled by. Passing through Shreveport, Louisiana at about 6 am on Thursday, a strange vibration came from somewhere under the front of the Corvette. Blatchford and Wanko pulled over and raised the hood to find that the bolts on the left side exhaust header had rattled out. They found new bolts, secured the exhaust header again, and kept going.

Some time late on Thursday afternoon, Gottlob finally woke up after sleeping nearly 20 straight hours in the front seat of the El Camino.

Twelve more hours went by. It was 4 am on Friday morning. The weather in Florida was no improvement. In 32-degree temperatures and freezing rain, Blatchford could barely feel his hands by the time he entered the unlit outskirts of Tallahassee. With no defroster, he was constantly wiping the inside of the windshield with a rag to maintain any semblance of visibility.

At the first stoplight, Blatchford had to rev the engine to get the car rolling in first gear. “Here I am trying to get a big block engine to launch from stoplights with a 2.73 gear under it at 3,000 rpm’s from Kansas to Daytona,” Blatchford said. “How many cycles that clutch went through on the way down there, during the race and on the way back is phenomenal.”

Blue lights flashed in his rear view mirror. Blatchford pulled over as a Leon County Sheriff’s Deputy walked to the driver’s door. What would he write them up for... improper license tags? A city noise ordinance violation? Maybe the deputy was a Ford man? There was no shortage of possibilities. Blatchford rolled down his window and braced himself for the worst.

“Is this your car?”

“No sir,” Blatchford replied. “The gentleman up there in the front car, he’s asleep. You see, he’s really tired, and we’re headed to...”

The deputy looked down at the black number 89 painted on the doors. “I know where you’re going. Good luck.”

Blatchford’s heart started beating again. He turned on the windshield wipers and fired the engine to resume the final leg of their journey. Gottlob took a turn driving the El Camino, but later turned it back over the Frantzen and fell asleep again.

After driving non-stop for nearly 40 hours, the ragged, unbathed crew staggered into Daytona and pulled over just outside the race track where the spark plugs, tires, oil filter and other necessities were changed back into race configuration.

Blatchford got back in the L88 and drove it through the tunnel, under the track surface and out into the rain. A single attendant stood inside the guard shack at the entrance to the infield. His wave motioned the L88 onward.

It was here that Blatchford could finally assess his surroundings. Looking through the rain that beaded on his windshield, Daytona’s massive, 3.8-mile road course spread out before him. It seemed to stretch from one horizon to the other, surrounded by grandstands that reached 5 stories high and provided seating for over one hundred thousand fans.

“It was spectacular,” Blatchford remembered. “It was a great place. I’d never been there before.”

Blatchford pulled into a parking spot adjacent to the nearest building, a single-story structure lined with undersized palm trees and fronted by the flags of various nations. A big blue and white sign overhead designated the building as “24 Hours of Daytona registration.”

The office looked deserted. All four ticket windows were shuttered. The team was obviously late and by this time completely unexpected.

Blatchford climbed out of the L88 again and gazed around in awe. John Wanko got out of the passenger’s seat, stretched, and looked at this watch. It was ten o’clock. Dick Frantzen drove in behind them as Gottlob slowly awoke from the only useful sleep he’d had since Sunday night.

No one could believe that they had actually driven L88 Corvette #21550 from Kansas to Daytona. Too embarrassed to admit that he had no trailer, Gottlob spent the rest of the weekend telling everybody, “this was my break-in procedure for the new engine.”

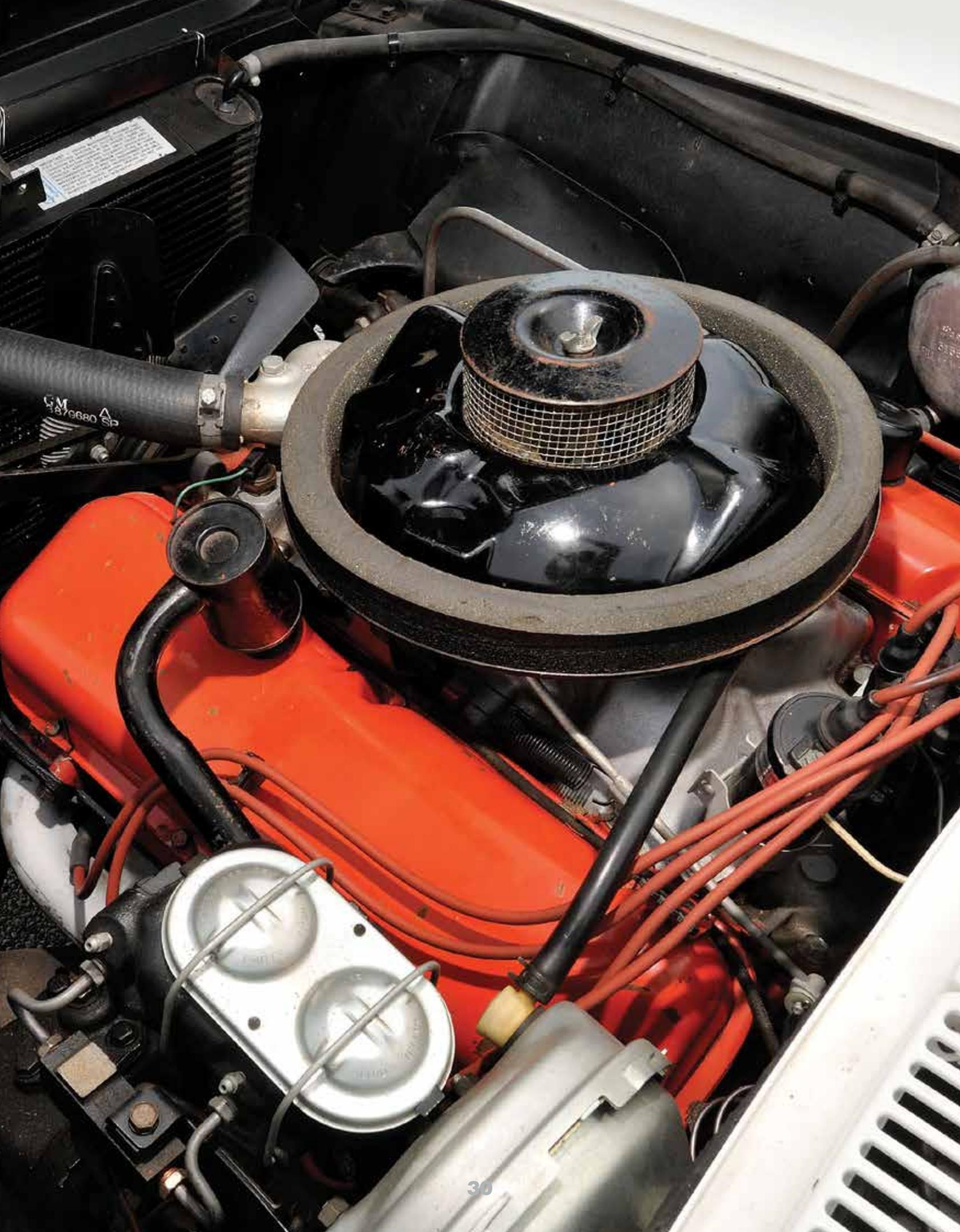
Jeri, Janet and Dave Dooley were already there, having flown in to the Daytona airport shortly before. Against all odds, the entire team had actually arrived at Daytona International Speedway as planned. Something had finally gone right.

Surely the hardest part was behind them now.











**“Carroll Shelby would ask, ‘Cliff, you’ve got thirty more horsepower than I’ve got. What are you doing?’ Cliff would just walk away laughing.”**

**- Jack Blatchford**

## CHAPTER 5

# Return to Pit Road

Jeri Gottlob sat atop her padded box on pit road. The hands on both stopwatches were still in place after their final practice laps at Daytona International Speedway. She was cold.

A pair of black sunglasses lay beside her, but the skies were still overcast. A wrinkled brown paper sack laid on the asphalt at her feet but she was too nervous to be hungry.

This couldn't be happening. Not after everything they'd been through.

Jeri gazed at the stricken L88 Corvette only a few yards away as her brother stepped over the white, knee-high pit wall and squatted down on the asphalt in front of her. She tapped a pencil on her clipboard and pretended to review lap times.

Gottlob wore an off-white fire suit with red trim, gray socks with black canvas tennis shoes, and no gloves. He had worn a crash helmet most of the day and his curly black hair needed attention. He tried to shout an explanation to Jeri over the roar of racecars. First gear had frozen on the main shaft and the transmission had failed.

Even if they could find an auto parts store open late on a Friday, the team was out of money. It would be nearly impossible to run the 24 Hours of Daytona now.

Until this most recent disaster, the day's practice had gone surprisingly well. The car was fast. Lap times were good. Trap speeds along the back stretch had reached nearly 190 miles per hour.

But the team had no time to sleep throughout the day. Every other team in the race had been practicing since mid-week, but Gottlob's crew had only a few hours on Friday. There was little time to make any major changes to the car and the crew was too exhausted to do anything but the necessities.

Searching for more speed in practice, Dave Dooley had revved the engine past Cliff Gottlob's self-imposed limit of 6,800 rpm's. Gottlob's idea was to go easy on the equipment,

outlast the competition and take advantage of Daytona's vicious attrition rate. Dooley's idea was to go fast at all costs, and he was remarkably talented at doing so.

The car was equipped with a memory tachometer nicknamed "the tattle-taler" by the crew. After each practice session in which Dooley drove the car, the revs were well past 7,000. Blatchford recalled, "Dooley came in and the tattle-taler was way over in the red zone. It finally caught up with us during practice. He couldn't get it out of first gear."

While Gottlob's team pondered their unimaginably bad luck, the day's routine for most other teams was markedly different. Many had semi tractor rigs and special stands from which they could see the entire track. The major teams had sponsors like Sunoco, American Motors, Gulf and Porsche. Gottlob's arch rival was the 2-car Corvette team sponsored by fiberglass giant Owens-Corning.

But they had come this far and the team refused to give up now. "We didn't have any doubt about fixing it," Blatchford said, "because Gottlob knows from one end to the other how to build an engine and transmission from every bearing to the tiniest little part."

Blatchford and Wanko went to work as darkness fell, pulling the exhaust headers, linkage, shifter, and finally the transmission itself. It was nearly midnight when they set the transmission on the asphalt along pit road and Gottlob began tearing it down to find first gear welded to the shaft.

There was no way to separate and save the parts. They could do no more work at the track. They needed a real mechanical facility.

Once again, Gottlob's connections at Chevrolet came through at the moment of truth. Chevy's Vince Piggins had a few friends of his own and had no intention of watching Gottlob miss the 24 Hours of Daytona.

Four miles down the road from Daytona International Speedway, the phone rang at "Smokey's Best Damn Garage in Town" on Beach Street in Daytona. The owner — racing legend, two-time NASCAR Mechanic of the Year and veteran of 57 race wins — Smokey Yunick, answered. The conversation was brief.

"So we go to downtown Daytona and Yunick lets us come in and work on his bench press and try to get that gear off the

shaft," Blatchford said. Yunick met them and looked over the lame transmission. It was clear that they'd be working for a while. Muttering something about "Anybody that Piggins recommends must be okay," Yunick handed them the keys to the front door and told them to lock up when they left.

"This was probably midnight or two in the morning," Blatchford continued. "We set it at 40 tons and it wouldn't press the first gear off the shaft, so we said, 'Let's just get all new parts. The bearings, seals, gaskets, new shaft and new first gear.'"

But no parts stores were open and the team was out of money. Fortunately, Gottlob's connections at Chevy came through for them yet again.

Every Chevy team at Daytona had been assigned a specific liaison from the manufacturer. In Gottlob's case, their liaison was Ernie Callard, who had access to Chevy's private airplane that was stationed near the race track for emergency use.

Callard sent word that a Chevy team needed seals, bearings, a new gear and a new shaft for their '67 L88 transmission, and the corporate plane was immediately dispatched to bring back the parts in the middle of the night.

"You cannot believe the support that Chevy gave me for that race," Gottlob said. "Ernie Callard had a great attitude and was a very compassionate individual. He saved our bacon." Thanks to Callard, the team was back at the race track before 5 am with every single new part they needed directly from Chevrolet.

It was Saturday morning... race day. Dawn began to break as the first rays of sunlight appeared on the eastern horizon. Maybe the week-long rains would finally stop.

While thousands of race fans filed into the track during the morning's opening festivities, Cliff Gottlob was working frantically to re-assemble his Corvette's transmission in a race against the clock. Their deadline was 3 pm. That's when the green flag would fall to start the 24 Hours of Daytona.

Their competitors took no notice of them. Few other teams considered them a factor and most had no idea of the superhuman effort Gottlob's crew had put forth to be there. Tony DeLorenzo, driver of the Owens-Corning #6 entry, said "We were vaguely aware of Cliff and we'd heard about them driving down. But this was 1970 and he's in a '67 car. If he







was on the radar, it wasn't something that we talked about."

In the morning driver's meeting, Gottlob's team was slapped with the ultimate disrespect when his car was voted by his competitors as the most likely to drop out of the race first.

But at this point finishing the race was the last thing on Gottlob's mind. He just wanted to start it.

By noon the repaired transmission was back in the hands of Blatchford and Wanko, undergoing a lengthy re-installation. With the car up on jack stands, the other crew members set tire pressures and filled the fuel tank while Dave Dooley donned his fire suit in the hopes that they could still beat the clock.

For everyone else, the pre-race ceremonies were festive and fun. The cars of Mario Andretti, Brian Redman, Jacky Ickx, Dan Gurney, Mark Donahue, Peter Revson, Pedro Rodriguez and a host of world famous drivers already sat quietly on the grid.

Andretti wore a bright red Firestone jacket over his driver's suit as he chatted with his crew on pit road, followed continuously by a host of photographers. He took a moment to pose with a beautiful Filipino redhead named Gloria Diaz who had just won the Miss Universe pageant.

The new #6 Owens-Corning Corvette driven by Tony DeLorenzo and Dick Lang had been fast all week and was a favorite to win. They would start in 20th position overall. Their stablemate, the #7 Corvette of SCCA A/production National Champion Jerry Thompson and John Mahler, was even faster and would start 11th. Both Owens-Corning Corvettes had been completely rebuilt for Daytona.

No fewer than eight crewmen neatly clad in matching uniforms pushed the #7 car to its starting position while the driver walked casually behind, his helmet hanging on one arm and his wife on the other.

Everyone paused for the national anthem. Bob Johnson, Robert Johnson and Jim Greendyke, drivers of the 1968 black and gold #8 Corvette, stopped clowning around and sang along. They were confident, having qualified toward the front of the GT field and 16th overall. Shortly afterward, around 2:30 pm, Johnson's crew pretended to wax the car while posing for a photographer's Super 8 film camera.

The Corvette brand was well represented. John Greenwood had brought his 1968 factory L88 from Detroit, while Or Costanzo's Corvette had qualified 27th overall and was expected to be a contender. Although there were plenty of Porsche's, MGB's and Shelby GT350's in the field, this was clearly going to be a Corvette showdown.

Moments before the command to start engines, the #7 Owens-Corning Corvette crew stood atop the pit wall, anxiously waiting for their driver to cruise by so they could salute him with a collective thumbs-up. Sixty-five cars stood by in rows of two, anticipating the command to start engines.

The only empty spot on the starting grid was way back in 34th position on the outside of row 17. It belonged to Cliff Gottlob and Dave Dooley.

At exactly 2:45 pm, the transmission installation on Gottlob's L88 was finished and the car was dropped off the jack stands. Scheduled to drive first, Dave Dooley climbed into the cockpit and started the engine. There was no time for testing or a run through the gears. He drove the car straight onto the grid.

Dooley didn't even shut off the engine. By the time he arrived at his starting position, fastened his helmet and tightened his shoulder harness, the pace car was leading the field slowly out onto the racing surface for parade laps. He revved the engine to 3,000 rpm's, let off the clutch and rolled down pit lane with no guarantee that it would shift into second.

Gottlob's crew was stuck at the end of pit lane, the closest stall to NASCAR Turn 4. Covered in oil and still holding the tools with which they had re-installed their transmission just minutes before, they could finally accept that by some cosmic miracle, they were in the race.

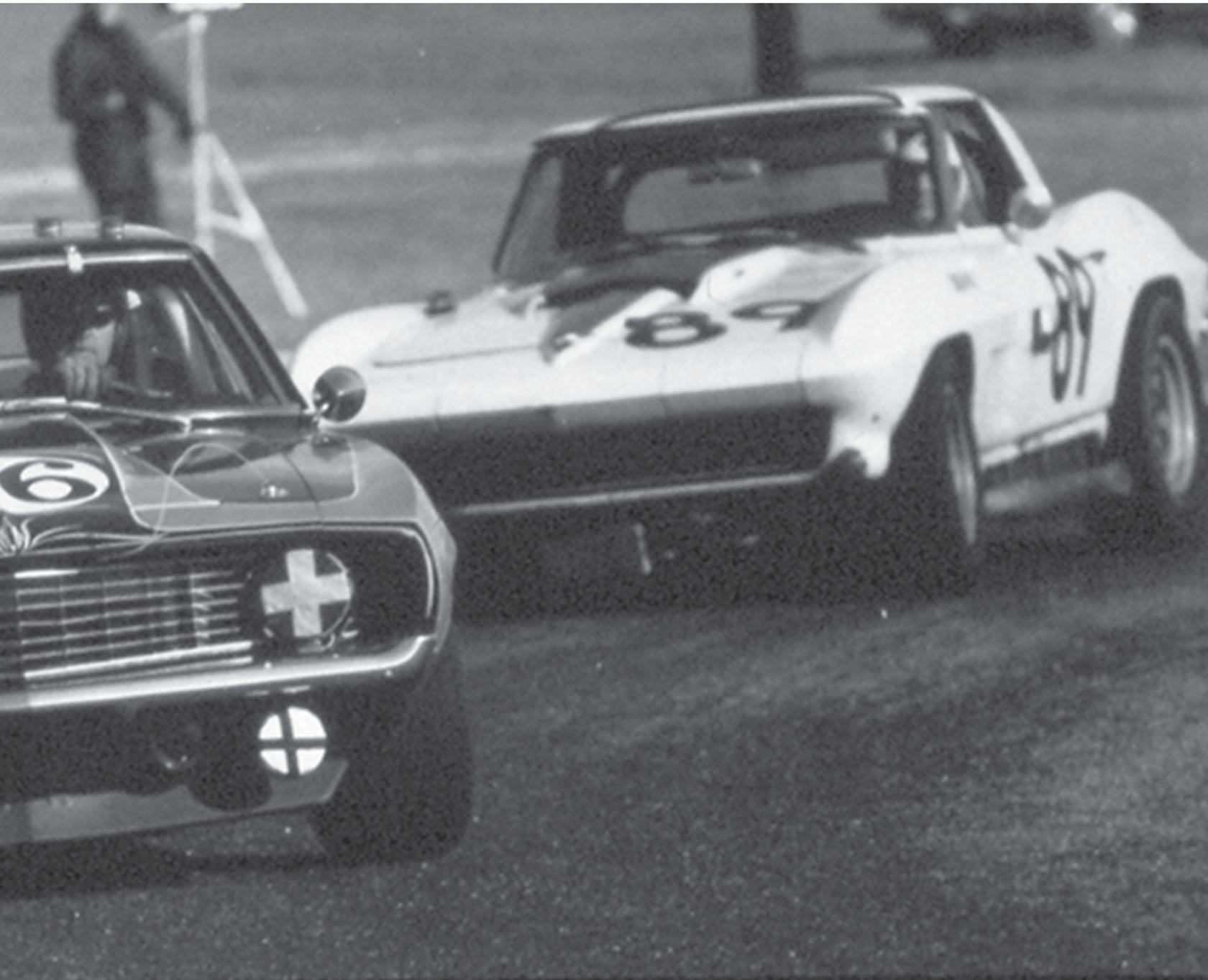
No one knew if they could finish. They weren't even certain they could make enough pace laps to take the green flag.

But at long last, they were ready to start the 24 Hours of Daytona.









*Dave Dooley at the wheel during the beginning of the race*

## CHAPTER 6

# Green Flag

**“If you talk with Cliff,  
tell him I said...  
holy cow! That’s incredible.  
It’s a helluva story.”**

**- Tony DeLorenzo**

The rain had stopped but the temperatures remained cool. The front grandstands weren't full, but by endurance racing standards it was a good crowd. Dooley could see them through the upper right corner of his helmet visor despite the afternoon sun glare.

Seats near the start/finish line were at a premium and few were still available as the cars completed their parade laps. Turn 1 was heavily occupied as well. A row of humanity lined the track fence with another group of die-hards nearly filling the top row of bleachers. The best place to find a last-minute seat was at the end of the uncovered bleachers near Turn 4, in what is now known as the Oldfield Tower, which was occupied by only a handful of hardy souls.

In 1970, the Daytona road course favored horsepower. Except for a few yards of pavement near NASCAR's Turn 1, the entire oval was utilized. The course's first turn was smoother and led to a longer straightaway. The modern infield straightaway between Turns 3 and 5 was longer and faster then. The Bus Stop Chicane on the back stretch wouldn't exist at all until 1985. The track was incredibly fast and perfectly suited to the L88's big block engine.

Dave Dooley took the green flag at exactly 3 o'clock and found that all four gears of his transmission functioned properly, and better yet, the car was fast. His only complaint was that the steering became very light at high speeds and didn't allow the driver to feel the race track. Dooley began navigating his way through the pack, driving brilliantly while carefully observing the 6,800 rpm limit.

Rather than rest while Dooley drove the first shift, the sleep-deprived Gottlob spent his time strategizing with Jeri and Janet. Gottlob's plan was "to outlast them." He meticulously calculated lap times, shift points and engine rpm's to arrive at a formula that would allow them to keep pace with the well-funded Owens-Corning cars and the surprisingly quick #8 Corvette.

The #8 of Bob Johnson, Robert Johnson and Jim Greendyke settled into the lead, chased by both Owens-Corning entries. The #91 Corvette of Allen Barker, John Greenwood and Richard

Hoffman lasted 100 laps before an accident removed them from contention. Meanwhile, Gottlob's team began passing cars handily and moving into the GT class' top five positions.

Attrition began to take a more serious toll halfway into the event when a cross member failed on the bright yellow Corvette of Or Costanzo, who had been running with the GT class leaders.

The #6 Owens-Corning Corvette of Tony DeLorenzo and Dick Lang broke a stud on the right rear wheel and spun into the wall. Rather than give up, DeLorenzo pulled into the infield, jogged across the track (in between cars that were still running at speed under a green flag) to retrieve a hammer and a handful of new studs, and returned.

"I was doing the work on the car and Spike, our axle and transmission guy, he was there looking over my shoulder making sure I didn't do anything stupid," DeLorenzo said. The exhausted driver whacked away at the studs but the muscles in his hands and forearms were spent. He couldn't hit the studs to save his life.

"I finally managed to get two studs replaced and Spike said, 'Well, don't go real fast 'cause two won't do it.'"

The #6 Owens-Corning Corvette of DeLorenzo and Lang would re-enter the race but find themselves hopelessly out of contention. Gottlob's team moved into third place.

Twenty hours into the event, the #8 Corvette of Johnson/Johnson/Greendyke had a sudden engine failure that ended their race at 11 am on Sunday, defaulting the lead to the remaining Owens-Corning Corvette of Jerry Thompson and John Mahler with Gottlob and Dooley inheriting second. It was now a two-car race.

Even as Gottlob and Dooley drove their L88 to the front, Thompson and Mahler were struggling with their own issues. Mahler had come down with the flu only hours before the race and was terribly ill. Rather than rotating two-hour driving shifts, Thompson would drive four straight hours and hand the car off to Mahler, who would toil through a miserable hour before returning the car to Thompson again.

The situation between Gottlob and Dooley was nearly as bad. Gottlob hadn't slept from Sunday through Wednesday, and then only grabbed what rest he could manage in the front seat of an El Camino on the non-stop trip to Daytona.

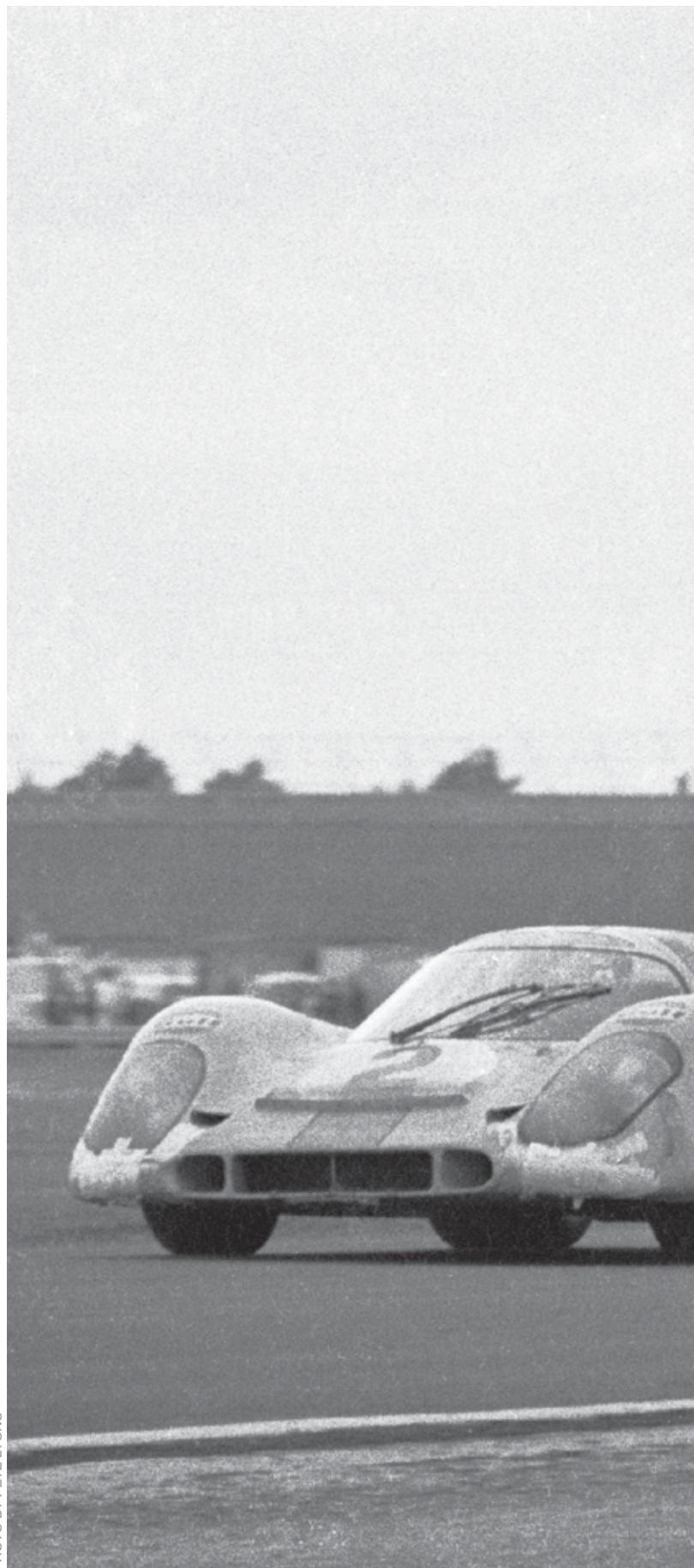
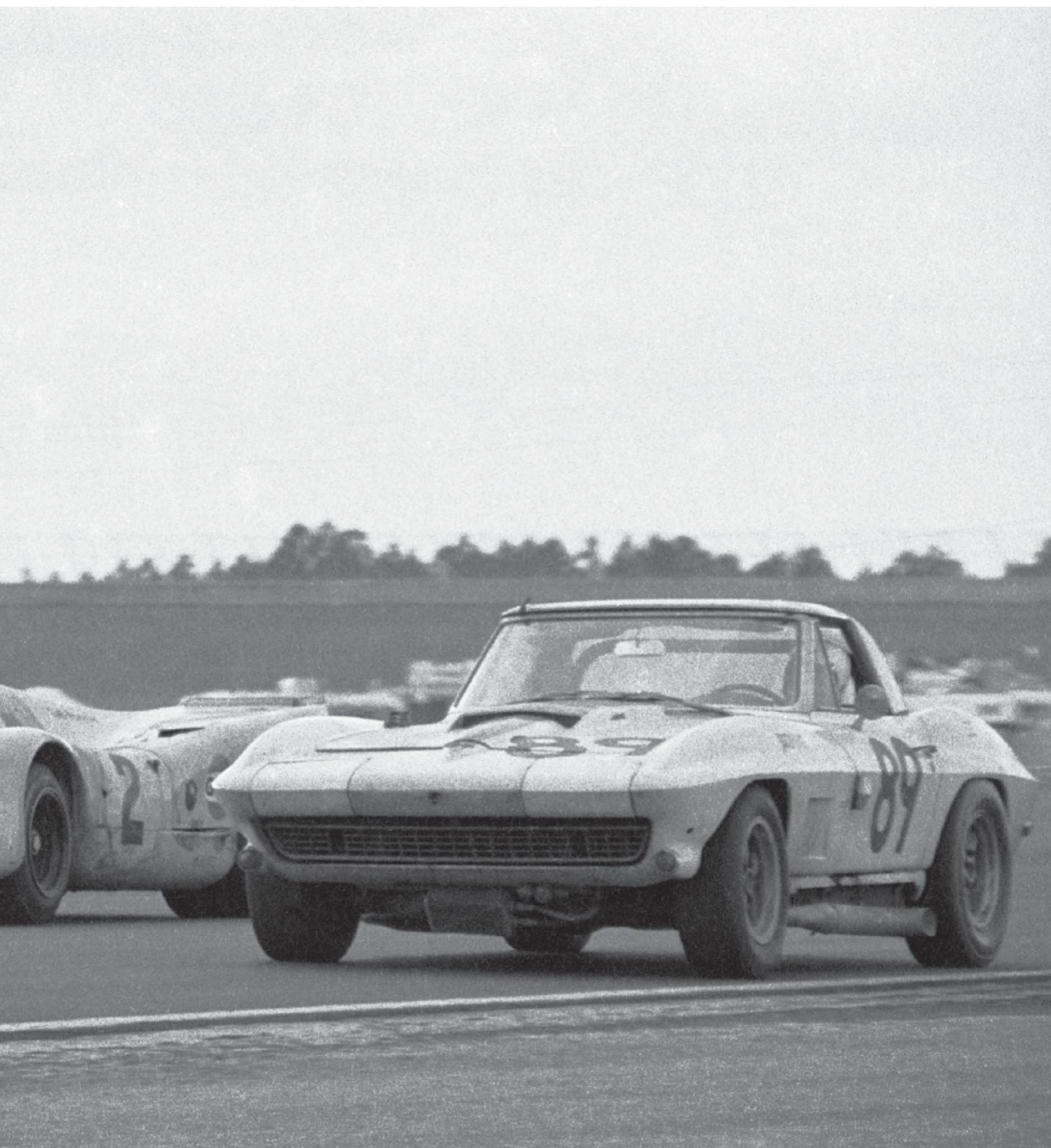


PHOTO BY PETE LYONS



*Gottlob side by side with race winner Pedro Rodriguez*





*David Burroughs idling at 80 mph—over 100 mph slower than Gottlob's 186 mph at Daytona.*

The transmission rebuild had cost him another night's sleep and rather than nap between driving shifts during the event, he had instead been plotting strategy with his sisters and managing the team. As the race entered its final stages, Gottlob hadn't had any meaningful sleep in 51 hours.

As a petroleum engineer with upcoming commitments on Monday morning, Dooley was required to catch a 3 pm flight out of Daytona on Sunday afternoon... the exact moment the race ended. That meant an early departure from the track to get to the airport, obligating Gottlob to drive the last two-hour shift on his own in a weakened, sleepless condition.

Still, Gottlob remained fast as he entered his final stint in the L88 with only two hours remaining in the 24 Hours of Daytona.

On the backstretch at nearly 190 miles per hour, Gottlob came up behind a bright red Ferrari 512, one of three nearly identical machines fielded by the famed European automaker. Its wide glass canopy and integral rear wing made it one of the distinctive marques in the race, and indeed, one of the more familiar shapes in auto racing history. A large #28 was painted on the white roundel on each side of the car. The driver was Mario Andretti.

Ordinarily the Ferrari 512 was faster. There was no shame in that. Everyone knew that the S-class machines were a separate division from the GT cars and were among the fastest classes in the race. But for some reason, perhaps due to tire wear late in the event, Andretti was running a slower pace.

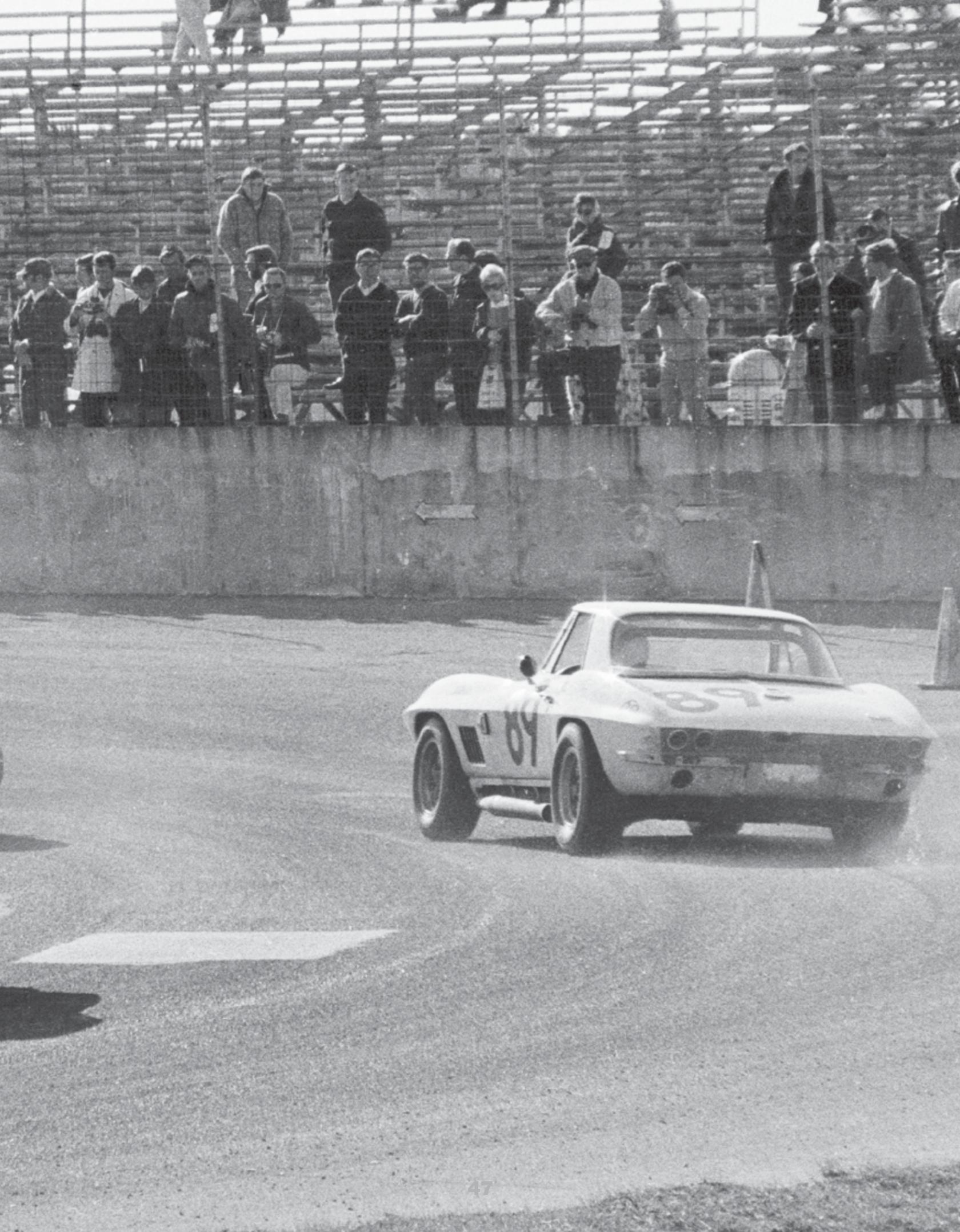
Gottlob swept past Andretti on the high side in NASCAR Turn 3 and rocketed down the front stretch and into the tight right-handed corner that led to the infield section of the track. Here, the Ferrari was unquestionably faster. Andretti dropped down to the inside and slipped past Gottlob's L88 in the next turn.

The process was repeated on the following lap. Gottlob's heavy, powerful Corvette could outrun the 5-liter Ferrari on the straights, but the lighter Italian car commanded the corners. Once again Gottlob made the pass only to lose it in the tight infield section.

As the duel continued, it occurred to Gottlob that he only needed to stay ahead of Andretti through the infield one time. Doing so would not only preserve his track position and allow him to pull away on the backstretch, but it would also give his crew a tremendous morale boost by beating the world's finest auto racing team in a fair fight... even just once.



PHOTO BY PETE LYONS





*Jack Blatchford searching for the oil leak.*

As expected, Gottlob passed Andretti again on the straightaway on the following lap. But the first turn was a surprise. The Corvette drove in deeply, trying to out-brake the defending Indianapolis 500 champion into the first turn. Gottlob brushed the brakes to set the weight of the L88 on the right front corner, dropped to the inside to block Andretti's anticipated move, and slid into the apex in a full drift.

It worked. Andretti couldn't make the pass and now it was Gottlob who held the upper hand. He dropped to the preferred inside line. If the Ferrari driver was going to regain the position, he would have to do it the hard way on the outside.

Andretti tried. The Ferrari was riding Gottlob's bumper and slid to the outside at the entry to the next turn, a fast right-hander halfway through the infield portion of the track. The two cars nearly touched, but the high groove offered little grip. Andretti drifted wide and fell back.

Three turns later Gottlob still held the position as they re-entered the NASCAR oval on the backstretch, and Andretti's bright red Ferrari 512 slowly faded into the distance behind him. It was a small victory that few others would ever know about, but the satisfaction it produced for Gottlob's team was immeasurable.

But just as the conclusion of the race was nearing, disaster struck yet again.

Blatchford remembered, "At the 23rd hour here he comes out of the last turn and he's smoking like a freight train, and I think, 'Oh, man.' Here we are an hour from the finish and we're done. Gottlob pulls in the pits and we jack it up and I see oil running out."

Tracing the oil leak to its source, Blatchford realized that the problem might not be terminal. The leak was coming from a copper line that supplied pressure to the oil gauge. Harkening back to his days as a Kansas farm boy, Blatchford grabbed a pair of pliers and turned the copper line back against itself, then did so again. The line was crushed into an "S" shape. Then he pinched off the end one final time, dropped the car off the jack stands and checked the oil level.

Blatchford's heart sank. The dipstick was dry.

Teams were only allowed to add oil once every 53 laps and it could only be added with oversight from the sanctioning body. With a possible win at Daytona slipping between their fingers, Blatchford sprinted to a nearby race official and shouted, "We need oil!"

"You can't have oil. You added oil last time."

Blatchford ran back to the L88 and leaned inside the driver's window to share the bad news.

"He won't let us have oil, Cliff."

The team had no trailer. They were out of money and out of options. The L88 Corvette was the finest material possession that Gottlob had in his life. He was not a rich man. If they blew the engine, they had no way of getting the car back to Kansas.

He sat in the driver's seat listening to race cars roaring past. This was the 24 Hours of Daytona... the most prestigious endurance race on the continent. Most people will never qualify for this event at all, let alone have a legitimate chance to win it.

A million thoughts flashed through his head like a lightning bolt, but at the moment of truth Cliff Gottlob didn't hesitate.

"Put her down and let me out. There's enough oil still in the lines and the cooler. Let's take a chance."

The L88 roared down pit lane and rejoined the race, now more than 100 laps behind Thompson and Mahler, unsure if the oil leak was fixed, and even more uncertain if what little oil remained in the lines would sustain the engine.

Unable to see most of the racetrack, Blatchford waited for what seemed an eternity before the white #89 Corvette came around again. Gottlob was right. There was no sign of oil smoke and the engine was still running.

"Here he comes around Turn 4 on the oval next time doing 185 miles an hour and it's running as clean as can be."

By the time the checkered flag fell at 3 pm, Gottlob had cut the margin to less than 63 laps and was gaining on the Owens-Corning Corvette, which was now barely limping around the racetrack. The #7 Corvette came home a winner, with Gottlob's team the runner-up in the GT class. Another hour and their positions might have been reversed.

The car that had been voted the most likely to drop out first had scored a podium finish in America's greatest endurance race.

The L88 drove down pit lane to a jubilant reception from Dick Frantzen, John Wanko, Jack Blatchford, and Jeri and Janet

Gottlob. The driver was in no condition to celebrate.

The door swung open, but Gottlob didn't get out. He didn't have the strength. On his lap was a pile of debris, and he was covered in dirt. When the car was being stripped for competition, a small plug was removed from the driver's floor pan. All night long the dust and debris from the track had been sucked up into the cockpit and gathered in the driver's seat.

"We had to pull him out of the car because he couldn't get out," Blatchford said. "His fingers were cramped and the whites of his eyes were completely bloodshot."

Gottlob recalled, "I was exhausted. I'd been up all night. I opened the door and shoved my legs over the side, and then used the door to push myself up out of the seat. Jack was giving me a hard time for being an 'old man.'"

The slender rim of the stock steering wheel had forced Gottlob's fingers into a tight fist for 13 of the past 24 hours and they refused to unlock. "That's the last time in my life I ever used one of those small diameter steering wheels."

Gottlob finally staggered out of his Corvette to be congratulated by an excited crew. "I was so glad. Just finishing at Daytona means instant credibility. I lined up the crew and went down the line trying to shake hands. I didn't give a very firm shake because the muscles in my hands were all screwed up. I was just so glad to finish after the ordeal we'd been through. We were overjoyed."

The crew attended the victory banquet that night and then, as Blatchford said, "Pulled across the street and changed plugs, put the mufflers back on it, and put the (license) tag back on it."

"Then we drove it 1,626 miles back to Ark City."



*Cliff Gottlob with the L88 at Daytona*



*Crew chief, Jack Blatchford drove the L88 back to Kansas.*





## CHAPTER 7

# Epilogue

A handful of Kodak snapshots was all David Burroughs had to work with.

By the summer of 1978, Burroughs had become one of the leading experts on Corvettes and was conducting in-depth research into the abbreviated history of the L88 series. He had received word that an L88 race car had become available, but Burroughs gave the rumor little credence.

He had heard many such claims before. Perhaps it was a replica L88 or a Corvette fitted with an L88 engine, but precious few authentic L88's existed at all and even fewer of them ever came up for sale. He had no intention of flying across the country to look at the car until he could at least examine a few photographs.

Sifting carefully through the pictures with a magnifying glass, Burroughs found a significant clue. "I saw the block-off plates on the firewall. If you were just going to make an L88 you probably wouldn't go to the trouble of putting in the heater block-offs. You'd just build an L88 [engine], put it in the car and go race. But when I saw a photograph that just happened to show the heater block-off plates, that was a good sign. By looking at one key fingerprint I could tell that the odds were high."

Burroughs called business partner Jim Krughoff and the pair flew to Kansas to see what – if it was genuine – might turn out to be one of the most successful Corvettes in racing history. The car had posted more than 150 victories in a competition career that lasted more than a decade. At one point, L88 #21550 had scored a staggering 52 consecutive wins.

The car's owner readily admitted that most of these victories occurred at the grass roots level of the sport. "In almost every race we ran, we took first place," recalled Cliff Gottlob. "It was mainly club events. I always used every excuse in the book to run that car. I didn't care if it was an autocross. If a Corvette could run, I had to be there. It had multiple wins and multiple track records after that."

But Burroughs knew that 150 victories in anything, anywhere was a stunning accomplishment that placed the car among

**“The Corvette is America’s iconic sports car. The 1967 models are the iconic collector Corvette. The L88’s are the iconic 67’s, and this particular racer is the iconic L88”.**

**- David Burroughs**

the marque's all-time elite. If the car turned out to be an authentic 1967 L88, it would be a monumental find.

Burroughs and Krughoff arrived at the Kansas racing shop in July 1978, amazed at Gottlob's creative use of limited space. Parts hung from the ceiling. An engine block and oil pan sat on a concrete floor strewn with hard-to-find auto parts. The walls were lined with shelves stocked with untold boxes containing everything from 1960's era experimental Chevy engine components to modern suspension pieces. This was not a garage. It was a museum.

"The very first thing I saw when I entered Cliff's shop was an engine sitting by itself on the floor," Burroughs said. "To this day I remember where it was sitting. It was this big, orange 427. I looked at the engine stamping pad and saw the code for the L88. The stampings looked beautiful. I could tell it hadn't been re-stamped. I could tell that the engine hadn't been repainted. There was original factory paint on it and original valve covers. It had seen some signs of wear, but the engine block was spectacular."

Gottlob then showed him the car itself. "About fifty feet from where I was standing I could see this race car up on jack stands," Burroughs recalled. "It was pretty tacky looking, but in twenty-five seconds I knew this had to be real."

This was an amazing find – the sort of discovery that every Corvette lover dreams about. Only twenty of these machines were ever built. Many of them were stored away as investments and never saw any street duty. Even fewer of them were actively campaigned as racers. Burroughs was interested.

"I asked Cliff if he had any paperwork. He said, 'Oh, sure! I've got everything.' Typically, when you ask people for paperwork, their idea of documentation is an ad out of a magazine, so you're naturally skeptical. I said, 'Well, Cliff, what do you have?'"

"Oh, I've got the window sticker."

"How did you get it off the window?"

"I didn't. It was in the glove box. It was a factory delivery. They didn't put it in the window."

"You mean it doesn't have any glue on it?"

"Oh, no!"

When Gottlob produced the window sticker, Burroughs was shocked to see that it was as crisp as "a brand new one-dollar bill. And this was in 1978, before people were making fake window stickers. Within three seconds of looking at it, I knew there was no doubt."

Burroughs asked, "Do you have anything else?"

"Oh, yes. I got the invoice, the dealer paperwork, got stuff from the factory."

The car's paper trail was impeccable. Gottlob had saved the original order form, all original receipts, the dealer receipt, Chevy's Vehicle Delivery Inspection and Adjustment Report, the owner's manual and reams of paperwork from 1967. He even kept the Kansas state tax form.

But since it had been stripped for racing, the carpet, kick panels, console and much more were missing. Even though the car was undoubtedly genuine, the absence of this material was a strike against its condition and history.

Burroughs asked, "What happened to all this stuff?"

"I took all that out."

"So where is it?"

"It's in the closet at my mom and dad's house. It's been there since August of '67."

Not only had every piece of the original interior been saved intact, but it was carefully wrapped in plastic and had never suffered any significant exposure to ultraviolet light, human touch, or wear.

Burroughs asked for the brake calipers. They were sitting on a shelf in the corner of the shop. The original distributor wasn't on the engine, Burroughs noted. Minutes later Gottlob produced it from the bottom of an old cardboard box. Gottlob's magic act continued for a day and a half and one original part after another was found in the racing shop. This was almost too good to be true.

The provenance, track record and completeness of the car were beyond special. Burroughs pulled his partner aside and said, "This is definitely an important automobile. We need to take this seriously." The parties agreed on a price and the deal was done.



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Model;	<b>19467</b>	<b>CORVETTE CONVERT</b>	<b>4141</b>	<b>00</b>
Destination Charge				<b>00</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>			<b>4141</b>	<b>00</b>

Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Delivered Prices on Options and Accessories installed on this Vehicle by the Manufacturer

<b>2972AA</b>	<b>ERMINE WHITE</b>			<b>00</b>
<b>2J50HA</b>	<b>VACUUM POWER BRAKE</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2414BP</b>	<b>BRT/BLUE VINYL TRM</b>			<b>00</b>
<b>2M22AB</b>	<b>HD 4 SPEED TRAN</b>		<b>237</b>	<b>00</b>
<b>2C48AA</b>	<b>LESS HEATER-DEFROST</b>		<b>97</b>	<b>85CR</b>
<b>2C07BA</b>	<b>AUXILIARY HARDTOP</b>			<b>00</b>
<b>2K66BA</b>	<b>TRANSISTOR IGN EQ</b>		<b>73</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>2F41AB</b>	<b>SPL SUSPENSION EQ</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>2G81TA</b>	<b>POSITRACT AXLE 411R</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2L88AA</b>	<b>HP V8</b>		<b>947</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>2J56AB</b>	<b>HEAVY DUTY BRAKE</b>		<b>342</b>	<b>30</b>

**Factory Installed Options And Accessories** **Subtotal** **1624 30**

**Total Amount** (Does not include dealer installed options or accessories, state or local taxes or license fees) **\$ 5765 30**

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Order No.	Date Received	Est. Date of Prod.	Order Number	Order No.	Order No.	CONFIRMED
224516	06-05-67	06-15-67	52072	52	520	
1967 CORVETTE CONVERTIBLE			62877A	MARINE WHITE		
Plant No.	Option No.	Type	Description	Customer Code		
224100	1000	Base	ONE/BLUE VINYL TOP	<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">57</div>		
224100	1000	Engine	HP V8			
224100	1000	Air Cnd.	LESS HEATER/DEFROST			
224100	1000	Transmission	TRANSIST. 100 80			
224100	1000	Body	POSTTRACT AXLE W/SH			
224100	1000	Transmission	HD & SPEED TRAN			
224100	1000	Tires				
224100	1000	Conv. Top	AUXILIARY HARDTOP			
224100	1000	Radio				
224100	1000	Comfort & Conv.	SPI SUSPENSION EQ			
224100	1000		VACUUM POWER BRAKE			
224100	1000		HEAVY DUTY BRAKE			
224100	1000		ST. LOUIS PLANT			
ST. LOUIS PLANT DELIVERY						
CUSTOMER NAME: MR. CLIFF GOTTLOB						
DELIVERY DATE: JULY 3, 1967						
Plant Number	Order Number	Order	Est.	Plant	Order	
224516	52000					
OPTION TOTAL \$1						

Original Order Form

6-26-67 824516 CUSTOMER DELIVERY

NEW VEHICLE DELIVERY INSPECTION AND EQUIPMENT REPORT

Assigned to: Mr. Drouin Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Serial Number: 224516 Key Number: 52000 Date Conditioned: 6-26-67

Engine Number: 224100 Transmission Number: 224100 Rear Axle Number: 224100

Body Style: 224100 Trim Number: 224100 Paint Number: 224100

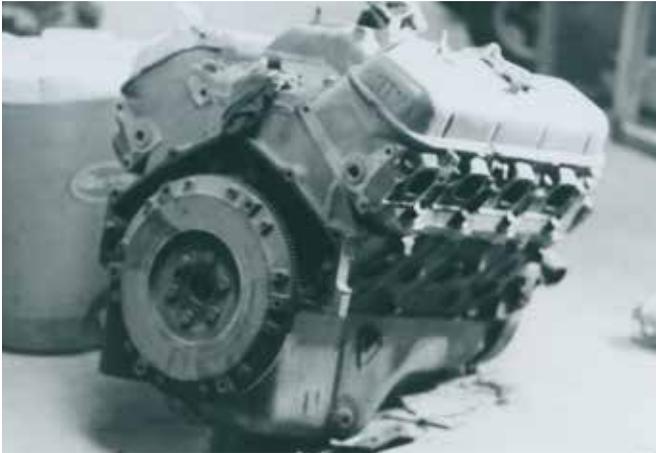
The following inspection operations have been performed on this vehicle and necessary adjustments completed:

LUBRICATION INSPECTIONS, AND CORRECTIONS	BODY, PAINT, AND FINISH INSPECTIONS AND CORRECTIONS
Brake master cylinder	Exterior of Vehicle
Radiator, level, anti-freeze	Good, fit, lock and safety catch
Transmission, rear axle level	Fender, fit
Air cleaner	Door, fit, lock operation, striker position, handles
Windshield, washer, anti-freeze, wiper action	Back lid, fit, lock operation, latch position, jack and tools
Power Steering level	Glass regulator action, channel alignment
Steering gear level	Bumpers, alignment, rattles
Battery level, connections, charge	Paint, brush-up, minor spot repair
Tire pressure	Interior of Vehicle
Chassis, tube fittings, owl seal	Seats, cushion position, adjuster operation
Body, Lubr. Friction Surfaces, Weather-stripe	Floor mats, install, position
Generator, oil	Trunk, spot clean, cuts or tears, fit
Manifold heat control valve	Hatchback, fit
Carburetor, throttle linkage	Paint, brush touch-up, minor spot repair
Clutch, linkage	
Air conditioning oil level and Freon supply	

GENERAL MECHANICAL INSPECTIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Instrument operation, horn	WASH AND CLEAN-UP, APPEARANCE DETAIL, POLISH BRIGHT METAL
Ignition switch, bulbs	ROAD TEST AND FINAL APPROVAL FOR DELIVERY
Accessory controls, rattles	Engine performance, acceleration, starting noise
Radio, station buttons, antenna trim	Operation, clutch, transmission, steering, brakes
Park brake	Locate noise, rattles and correct
Service brake, application, shoe clearance, connections	Owner manual and operating instructions
Transmission, selector lever, shift action	Letter to owner in glove box
Muffler, pipe alignment, rattles	Inspectors' Names
Convertible top, alignment, raise, lower, boot fit	<u>Mr. Drouin</u>
Steering wheel position, horn ring	<u>L. G. Gile</u>
Ignition timing, shell, wiring	
All drive belts, radiator hoses	
Oil, gas, water, exhaust leaks	
Clutch, pedal alignment, clearance	
Headlamp aim	
Top-its, tie-rod	
Wheel, lug nuts, front spindle, nut and cotter pin	
Pitman arm, nut, linkage, idler arm	
Electrical connections, clips	
Manifold bolts	
Carburetor, idler, linkage, attachment	
Cylinder head bolts	
Body bolts	

Original Factory Inspection Form



300A / IDENT # 824516

PLANT DELIVERY FOR:

MR. CLIFF GOTTLOB

DELIVERY DATE: 7-3-1967

Original Factory Ident Card

CHEVROLET MOTOR DIVISION				Corvette Order Copy		
Order No.	Date Received	Est. Date of Prod.	Order Number	Order No.	CONFIRMED	
224516	06-05-67	06-15-67	52072	52	520	
1967 CORVETTE CONVERTIBLE			62877A	MARINE WHITE		
Plant No.	Option No.	Type	Description	Customer Code		
224100	1000	Base	ONE/BLUE VINYL TOP	<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">52</div>		
224100	1000	Engine	HP V8			
224100	1000	Air Cnd.	LESS HEATER/DEFROST			
224100	1000	Transmission	TRANSIST. 100 80			
224100	1000	Body	POSTTRACT AXLE W/SH			
224100	1000	Transmission	HD & SPEED TRAN			
224100	1000	Tires				
224100	1000	Conv. Top	AUXILIARY HARDTOP			
224100	1000	Radio				
224100	1000	Comfort & Conv.	SPI SUSPENSION EQ			
224100	1000		VACUUM POWER BRAKE			
224100	1000		HEAVY DUTY BRAKE			
224100	1000		ST. LOUIS PLANT			
ST. LOUIS PLANT DELIVERY						
CUSTOMER NAME: MR. CLIFF GOTTLOB						
DELIVERY DATE: JULY 7, 1967						

Original Fuel Tank Sticker

RECEIVED  
FINANCIAL DEPT. COPY

## Car Shipper

No. **425891**  
ID. No. 22-018

Charge To: **BRANINE CHEVROLET CO** ST. LOUIS MO  
**1033 D. B. BROWN**  
**18000 PULASKI KANSAS**

Shipped To: **ST. LOUIS MO**

**307 JUL 24 AM 9 12** *RMH*

Serial No. **1946775 121556** ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Model And Options: **19467 CORVETTE CONVERTIBLE**

Destination Dealer: **ST. LOUIS MO**

ST. LOUIS PLANT DELIVERY  
 CUSTOMER: **CLIFF GOTTLÖB**  
 DELIVERY DATE: **NINE JULY 7, 1967**

77.80

Factory Installed Options And Accessories

Subtotal **1404.30**

77.80

2995.30 1172.85 211.00 875.00

77.80 40.00 457.85

ST. LOUIS PLANT

Dealer Order No. **43671**

Original Shipper Copy

**CAR INVOICE**

**BRANINE CHEVROLET CO.**  
 1014 N. Second Telephone PE 7-1191  
 MUSKOGEE, KANSAS

No. **260**

SOLD TO: **CLIFF GOTTLÖB**  
 ADDRESS: **401 50. S. ST.**  
**ARKANSAS CITY KANSAS**

SALESMAN: **TON BRANINE** DATE: **6-30-67**

MAKE	MODEL	REP. NO.	SERIAL No.	ENGINE No.	KEY No.	PRICE
CHEVROLET	CORVETTE	11	1946775121550			1,611.25
PRICE OF CAR FREIGHT AND PACKAGING OPTIONAL EQUIP. & ACCESS.						1,611.25
<input type="checkbox"/> FIRE AND THEFT <input type="checkbox"/> COLLISION — AMT. EXCESS. <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC LIABILITY — AMT. <input type="checkbox"/> PROPERTY DAMAGE — AMT.						
OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT and ACCESSORIES						
SALES TAX LICENSE AND TITLE <b>TOTAL CASH PRICE</b>						158.33 1,769.68
FINANCING INSURANCE <b>TOTAL TIME PRICE</b>						
SETTLEMENT: DEPOSIT CASH ON DELIVERY USED CAR PAYOFF PAY-OFF TO TIME SER. NO. ENG. NO. INUMENTS						200.00 1,569.68
<b>TOTAL</b>						1,919.68

*Received in Payment  
 Check # 15835 A Union State Bank  
 to Clifton E. Gottlob and Branine  
 Chevrolet Co. \$4000  
 and Personal Check for 549.68  
 Paid 4549.68  
 Received Branine Chev. Co.  
 Tony Branine*

ALWAYS SHOW SERIAL, ENGINE and KEY NUMBERS

Original Dealer Invoice

Burroughs and Krughoff bought the L88 and spent twenty years researching, restoring and exhibiting the car around the country. In 1997 the car changed hands again and spent 15 years in the collection of car aficionado Bill McDonagh, who wisely chose to leave the car virtually untouched as Burroughs had preserved it.

Today, L88 Corvette #21550 remains one of the most authentic and well-preserved examples in existence. Its recent appearance at the prestigious 2013 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance attracted a host of spectators and photographers, drawn not only to the car's racing history but also to the contrast it provided to the dignified, graceful cars that typify the event. The L88's original big block 427 engine bellowed a thunderous note in comparison to the delicate pre-war machines elsewhere on the lawn.

The L88 remained true to its racing lineage and was displayed at Pebble Beach precisely as it appeared at Daytona's finish line 43 years before. Even the rock chips in the paint were meticulously installed to match the original paint damage seen in the photos taken immediately following the race. The reception from the Pebble Beach crowd was overwhelming, with spectators stacked five deep on all sides during judging.

Burroughs, now serving his second stint as the caretaker and close associate of the car, noted, "This L88's identity was never as a show car. It was a prize fighter: rough, rugged, and successful, but not without scars of combat. It is not an actor dressed as a prize fighter. It's the real thing.

Dana Mecum and I have a long-term goal to ensure that Cliff Gottlob's L88 remains in its preserved state, never to erase his fingerprints or the combat scars etched in the car as it made its mark on history - against all odds."



1978 - Jim Krughoff, Cliff Gottlob, David Burroughs



1997 - David Burroughs, Bill McDonagh's representative, and Jim Krughoff



2013 - Dana Mecum (not pictured) and David Burroughs

## APPENDIX

# Ownership History

1967 Chevrolet Corvette L88 Convertible  
VIN#194677S121550

### ORIGINAL OWNER

June 30, 1967 – July 13, 1978

**Cliff Gottlob**, Arkansas City KS

### SECOND OWNERS

July 13, 1978 – May 27, 1997

**Jim Krughoff**, Downers Grove IL

**David Burroughs**, Normal IL

### THIRD OWNER

May 27, 1997 – February 19, 2013

**Bill McDonagh**, San Francisco CA

### FOURTH OWNERS

February 19, 2013 –

**Dana Mecum**, Walworth WI

**David Burroughs**, El Paso IL

**Not One Minute of Ownership,  
One Piece of Paper,  
or One Alteration  
is Unaccounted For.**

# Preservation/Restoration Legend

Documents	ORIGINAL			REPLACED
	Stored Since New	Unrestored	Refinished	
Order Form	X			
Factory Ident Card	X			
Factory Inspection Form	X			
Shipper Copy	X			
Fuel tank sticker	X			
Window sticker	X			
Dealer Invoice	X			
<b>Exterior</b>				
Body Paint				X
Decals				X
License Plate Bezels	X			
Bird Cage		X		
Cabin bulkheads		X		
Cabin floor pan		X		
Grille				X
Headlight bulbs				X
Headlight buckets & motors			X	
Ft. louver panels				X
Hood			X	
Windshield				X
Windshield stainless trim		X		
Windshield wipers		X(L)		X(R)
Door glass		X		
Vent windows		X		
Doors		X		
Door handles				X
Door mirror				X
Hardtop & stainless trim			X	
Hardtop back glass		X		
Hardtop back glass seal		X		
Hardtop front seal				X
Rear deck			X	
Rear quarter panels				X
Tail light panel			X	
Tail lights			X	
American 2005 wheels		X (stored)		X

Exterior continued	ORIGINAL			REPLACED
	Stored Since New	Unrestored	Refinished	
Good Year Blue Streak tires		X (stored)		X
Bill Thomas headers		X (stored)		X

## Interior

Console w/ L88 sticker	X			
Carpet	X			
Carpet board	X			
Seat Belts (OEM)	X			
Kick panels	X			
Fresh air panels	X			
Conv. Top dog legs	X			
Radio speaker grille	X			
Trim Tag & VIN Tag		X		
Glove box door		X		
Instrument Cluster		X		
Ignition / glove box keys		X		
Dash / dash plugs		X		
Sun visors		X		
Mirror (rear view)		X		
Heater block-off insulation		X		
Seats		X		
Door panels		X		
Door hardware		X		
Clock		X		
Shifter		X		
Dash pads (eyebrows)		X		
Steering wheel		X		
Horn button		X		
Floor color		X		
Hardtop interior trim			X	
Headliner				X
Accelerator pedal		X		X
Clutch & brake pedal pads				X
Racing seat belts & harness				X
Emerg. brake handle				X
Rollbar		X (stored)		X

Engine Compartment	ORIGINAL			REPLACED
	Stored Since New	Unrestored	Refinished	
L88 Engine		X		
M22 Transmission		X		
VIN & Date stampings and castings		X		
Original engine block & water pump		X*		
Cylinder heads (driver & passenger)		X*		
Harmonic Balancer		X		
Exhaust Manifolds & bolts	X			
Fuel line from pump to carb	X			
Valve Cover w/ IT tag		X (stored)		X
Valve Cover (driver side)			X	
Hood underside & wx stripping		X		
Firewall & block off plate		X		
Road draft tube		X		
Air cleaner lid		X		
Air cleaner screen		X		
Air cleaner element				X
Air cleaner base		X		
Carburetor				X
Intake manifold		X		
Coil		X		
Coil bracket		X		
Alternator		X		
Alternator bracket		X		
Distributor		X		
Distributor cap		X		
Ignition wires				X
Spark plugs				X
Pulleys		X		
Fan			X	
Fan clutch				X
Fan belts				X
Clutch housing		X		
Master cylinder & cap			X	
J56 proportioning valve		X		
Power brake booster			X	
Starter			X	
Windshield wiper motor		X		

\* Includes original crankshaft, rods, rod bolts, pistons, cam, push rods, lifters, valve train

<i>Engine Compartment continued</i>	<b>ORIGINAL</b>			<b>REPLACED</b>
	Stored Since New	Unrestored	Refinished	
Radiator support			X	
Radiator				X
Overflow tank		X		
Hoses				X
Battery				X
Battery cables				X
TI amplifier		X		
TI harness			X	
50% of main wiring harness and tape				X
50% of main wiring harness and tape		X		
<b>Chassis</b>				
Spare tire tub	X			
Off road exhaust & hardware	X			
Tail pipes & hardware	X			
Wheels (Steel)		X		
Beauty rings & center caps	X			
Frame			X	
Control arms			X	
F-41 Shock Absorbers			X	
Koni Race Shocks				X
Steering / relay rods			X	
Steering gear box			X	
Steering shaft			X	
Ft. Springs			X	
Rr. Spring			X	
J56 brake calipers			X	
Drive shaft			X	
Half-shafts			X	
Positraction/Differential			X	
Trailing arms			X	
Stabilizer bars			X	
Ft. Hubs			X	
Rr. Hubs			X	
Fuel line				X
Fuel tank				X
Brake lines				X

"It's a  
helluva  
story."

-Tony DeLorenzo

ULTIMATEL88.COM

