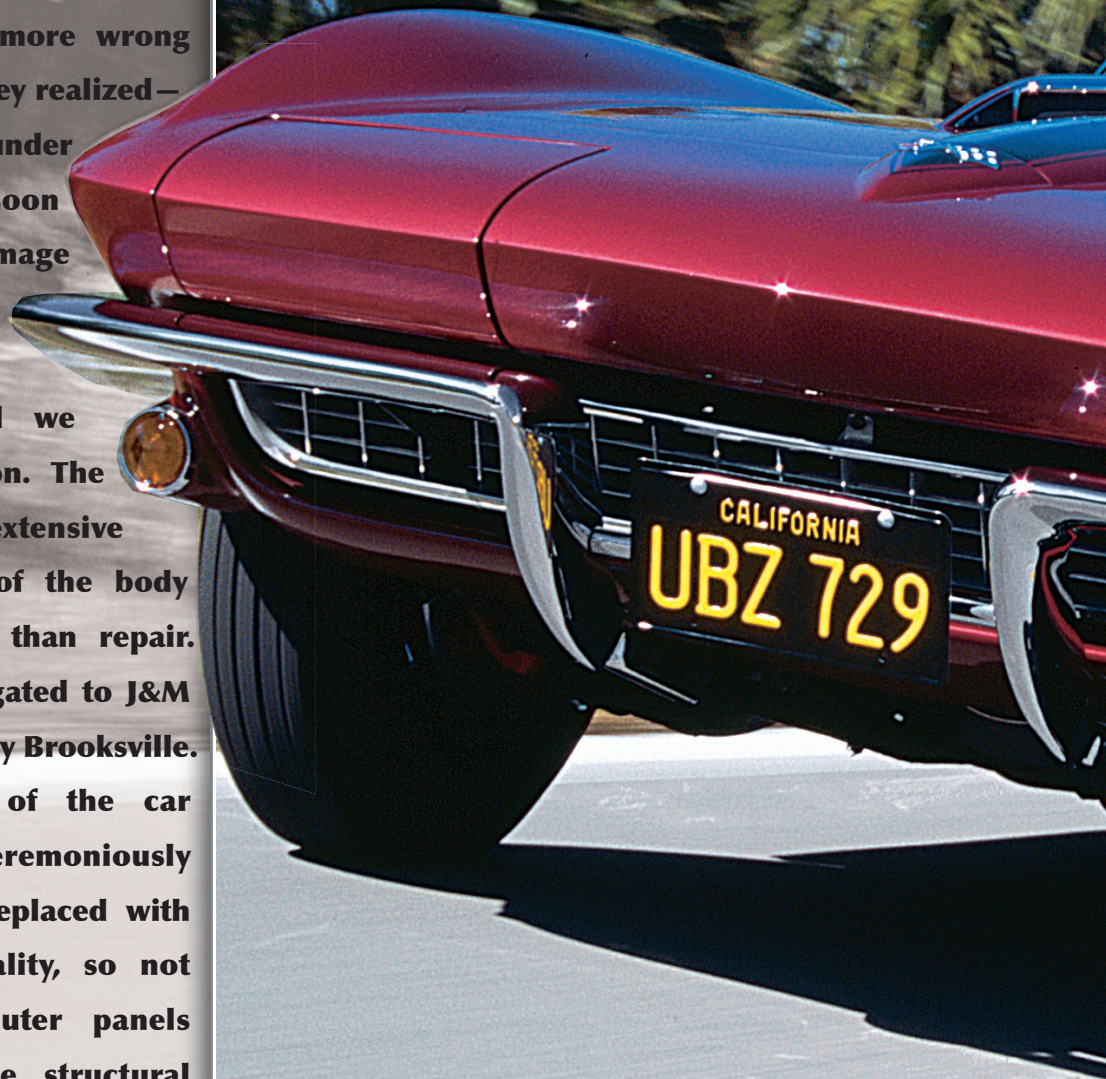


Gunner's

Earl Gunnerson is very proud of his 427/400hp Corvette, and he should be. After owning the Corvette for about a year, he decided to ship it from his home in Huntington Beach, California, to Jerry's Restorations in Spring Hill, Florida, for a run-of-the-mill restoration. Or so they thought. As fate would have it, there turned out to be more wrong with the car than they realized—a lot more. Once under the car, they soon noticed body damage with previous repair attempts made in a, shall we say, sub-par fashion. The damage was so extensive that replacement of the body panels was easier than repair. That task was delegated to J&M Enterprises in nearby Brooksville. The rear corner of the car had been unceremoniously chopped off and replaced with “close-enough” quality, so not only were the outer panels affected, but those structural pieces, designed to keep the outside panels straight, had to be reconstructed before work could progress.



Got One!



EVERYONE WISHES THEY HAD A 1967, NCRS TOP-FLIGHT, BIG-BLOCK ROCKET

BY ANDY BOLIG / PHOTOS ANDY BOLIG



When it came to painting the car, John Ames and his crew at J&M were careful to bring the car back to original shape, not perfection, because this car was destined to go to the NCRS Winter Meet in Orlando. They did know that they were going to sacrifice some points because they wanted to use a basecoat/clearcoat paint to help protect the color from the elements, as Earl drives the car. John was careful to duplicate the color, gloss and texture of the original paint. Once the NCRS judges were let loose to inspect the new paint, the only flaw they could deduct points for was the lack of an edge where the black stinger and the body color meet. In fact, National Judging Chairman Roy Sinor said that the replication of the Marlboro Maroon color was "the best he's ever seen." The quality of the bodywork and paint is enough to satisfy the NCRS, but what's really amazing is that it took J&M only 2½ weeks to replace all the exterior body panels (except for the doors and rear deck lid), and squirt the paint that would draw so much praise.

As the body was being massaged back into shape, Jerry and team were busy with the chassis. The heads were sent out to Harris Performance in Palm Harbor, Florida, to be rebuilt. Initially it appeared that the engine would simply need to be freshened up and reassembled, but that proved to be out of the question. A spun bearing and the resulting scored crank journal for cylinder number eight took them deeper into the engine. Art and John at Van Steel in nearby Clearwater were commissioned to rebuild the block. Care was taken to ensure that the deck would not be resurfaced to preserve the original engine stamping. Jerry's Restorations works closely with Van Steel and sent the suspension pieces over to Art and company for a complete restoration. The only variation was that components like the trailing arms and control arms were powder coated instead of painted before the original-style rubber bushings were installed. Again, the correct gloss and color were imperative. This car had been originally shipped to California, and Jerry reports that the chassis components on this car were "the finest we've seen," once all the years of road grime and oil were removed.

Reassembly came at a feverish rate so the car could be ready for the NCRS Winter Meet, and Jerry and his friends beat the clock, but not by much. They





put the finishing touches on the car while it was in the trailer, awaiting shipment to the show that day. Only 3½ months had transpired between the day that an oil-dripping, body-damaged Corvette had driven into Jerry's shop and the day the car appeared on the NCRS show field awaiting a Top-Flight Award on its first attempt.

While a lot can be said about the teamwork it took to make Earl's Corvette a winner, there's a lot about this particular '67 that makes it interesting. Of course, the 427ci L68 engine is a definite plus, but the fact that it was originally a California car meant that it was shipped with the necessary K19, Air Injection Reactor. With 2,573 Corvettes receiving this \$44.75 option, it's not particularly rare, but it does make for an interesting accessory – and who knows how many actually exist today? Other factory add-ons to Earl's Corvette are the A02, Tinted Windshield, C07, Auxiliary hardtop, G81, Positraction rear axle, M21 4-speed transmission and the K66, Transistorized Ignition.

While Earl had his Corvette for just a short while before he decided to re-do it and the project proved more time consuming than he'd anticipated, we surmised that he'd say it was all worth it. We caught up to him as he was driving his newly restored ride, just before the NCRS show. As far as we could tell, he's quite pleased, but who wouldn't want a Top-flighted, big-block '67 Corvette that you can drive on the street?

Earl Gunnerson's got one. ■

