

## Hot Tips for Cold Storage

Don't try to heat the garage; all you will do is cause temperature variations that will create condensation

by Colin Comer



Winterize your Corvette before putting it away

### Resist the urge to start it now and then

**Q** Now that winter is here, any tips on storage for a guy that keeps his 'Vette in a cold, dry garage? Do I try to heat the garage? Cover the car or leave it uncovered? Jack it up so the tires don't touch the ground? Store the battery in the house? It will be parked from November until April, or less if the weather cooperates. Any advice is appreciated.—**B.D., Green Bay, WI**

**A** Good questions. I have a lot of experience here, as a fellow Wisconsinite with a cold garage.

First, make sure the garage is dry. A good dehumidifier is a wise investment. If the car is parked on a concrete slab, I like laying down a thick sheet of plastic first, and then a nice thick carpet or piece cardboard to block the moisture and keep the chassis from sweating. Don't

try to heat the garage; all you will do is cause temperature variations that will create condensation. Fill the gas tank with non-reformulated fuel and the appropriate amount of fuel stabilizer.

Forgive me for stating the obvious—make sure the antifreeze is fresh and mixed at 50/50. Get the car good and hot before you park it to burn off moisture from the exhaust and various lubricated components. You can “fog” the engine with cylinder lubricant through the intake right before you shut it off if so inclined. Leave the car on the ground and air up the tires to their maximum allowable pressure as listed on the tire sidewall.

You can leave the battery in, but make sure to disconnect it and attach a maintenance float-type battery charger. Leave the windows cracked slightly, and throw a few commercial-sized

bags of desiccant in the interior. When cool, seal the engine air intake and shove some old socks in the tailpipes to keep critters out. Make sure the car is clean and dry, with a nice coat of wax, and put a soft indoor-type car cover on it (not a Harbor Freight blue RV tarp). Resist the urge to “just warm it up a little” during the winter; all that does is load the engine oil with contaminants and fill the exhaust with water, along with washing all the oil from the cylinder walls.

Use common sense, keep it dry, keep the garage critter-free, and rest easy knowing your car will be ready to go after those April showers clean the salt from the frost-heaved Wisconsin roads.

### Here's a quick way to decode differentials

**Q** I previously wrote for advice on buying my first collector Corvette. Thanks for

telling me to test-fit a midyear before I bought one. I ended up with a great (and roomy) 1968 427/435 4-speed coupe, a better fit for me and my wallet. My question is about the rear differential gears. Stamped in the differential case is a number with a prefix of “FA,” which I am told is the code I need to decipher. I haven't been able to find this information published anywhere. Can you tell me what I have?—**M.L.G., Barrington Hills, IL**

**A** I'm glad you found a Corvette that fits. The 435-hp C3 cars offer a lot of bang for the buck.

You are correct; FA is the differential code, which denotes a 3.70:1 Heavy Duty Positraction unit. Remember, even though your car originally came with a 3.70 rear, it is very common to find a previous owner swapped out the actual ring and pinion to something more suited to his particular use.

The easiest way to see what is in there? Jack up the rear of the car, place it securely on jack stands, and using a grease pencil, place a mark on the driveshaft at an easily legible location, like 6:00. Place another mark on a rear tire, either at 6:00 or 12:00, for example. With a helper, rotate the rear tire slowly while your assistant counts the number of times the driveshaft rotates by using your grease pencil marks.

If one full rotation of the tire equals roughly 3 and 3/4 turns of the driveshaft, you indeed have 3.70 gears. A little over four turns of the driveshaft means 4.10 gears, etc. It isn't an exact science, but it's easier than taking apart a perfectly good differential to count the teeth on

the ring and pinion. Hope this helps, and enjoy your new car.

### Pan gasket is key to leaking Powerglide

**Q** I have a 1955 V8 Corvette with the Powerglide automatic. Even though I just had the transmission fully rebuilt, it still is not housebroken and leaves a puddle of transmission fluid when it sits. What gives?—*M.G., New York, NY*

**A** The Powerglide is a great unit, but also well-known for leaks. However, since yours was just rebuilt, it should be relatively leak-free. I'd make sure all the external hardware is snug and dry, and that the transmission pan was not over-torqued, which might have warped it and deformed the pan gasket.

Also check the seal at the base of the dipstick tube and make sure the side cover is snug and

the bolts are all dry. Lastly, if the fluid is overfilled, that can cause leaking as well. Check the level when it is hot and make sure it is correct. For good measure, use a rubber pan gasket (rather than the OE cork one) and make sure the pan flange is absolutely straight and flat. That usually takes care of these types of bad behavior.

### '56 'Vette is a rarer choice than '57

**Q** Is there a reason to buy a '57 Corvette instead of a '56? I have found a '56 that I really like, but my car buddies are telling me to hold out for a '57 because they are "better." True?—*AP, Boulder, CO*

**A** Yes, a '57 has some refinements over the '56, but none that make a '57 materially better. The main difference is a '56 has the 265-ci engine (highest hp available was 240), while '57s



1956 Corvette, rarer than a '57

have the 283 ci (highest hp being the magical one hp per cubic inch 283-hp "fuelie"). Late-'57 saw the introduction of a 4-speed transmission, but in the real world, the 3-speed available in '56 is actually easier to lug around town with its tall first gear. Both years look identical, and they made almost twice as many '57s as they did '56s

(6,339 vs. 3,467).

Maybe it is just the magic of the "1957" year, or the advent of many performance options that has your buddies urging you to keep looking, but if you found a car you like and it checks out, go for it. Unless you show them the title, nobody will know the difference, and you'll have a car with much lower production to boot. ■

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