

The First Twenty Years
By Dennis McPeak & Friends

We all make decisions everyday. Most of them are unimportant, such as what to wear or what to eat. There are some decisions, however, that changed our lives, the lives of our families, and the lives of friends and acquaintances. Deciding to try and organize a Corvette Club in Fort Worth was one of those decisions that changed the lives of a large number of people.

As most of you know, I was active in the Colorado Springs Corvette Club while I was in the Army. When I got back home after my tour of duty, I wanted to continue activities with my car. There was no local club, so I joined CCT. The Dallas club was in their prime during the early '70's; it had a lot of very active members who traveled to a lot of events. I got on the bandwagon and participated as much as I could. This was my first experience with NCCC and my first time to actually compete against other Corvettes. In Colorado Springs, our sanctioning group was the Rocky Mountain Area Sports Car Club Council, whose rules grouped my '61 solid-axle with Mustangs, Camaros, and Cobras. I was glad to be on equal footing for a change.

Shortly after Jennifer [*Dennis' first-born*] was born, it became obvious that the monthly trip to meetings was becoming a problem. I say this in kindness, but children were not welcome at CCT meetings during that time. I do not recall how I found out about the group that was meeting on an informal basis, but I think I probably went to Jim Pressley's shop and found out about Buck Vaughan's group. I went by his upholstery shop where the meeting was being held. Because it happened to be on a CCT meeting night, I stayed a short time, found out what the group was up to, then went to Dallas with a resolve to get involved with the Fort Worth group and start a club.

I got pretty deep into securing a meeting place and a sponsor. As a result, in early 1974, we began our meetings at Bruce Lowrie Chevrolet. To say that the beginning was rocky would be an understatement. To this day, I don't know what the original group wanted the club for, but it was obvious that they were not interested in competing with other clubs and didn't see the need for NCCC, rules, insurance, or anything else along organizational lines. There was a split and those of us remaining renamed the club COWTOWN VETTES. I then registered the club in my name, we joined NCCC, we incorporated as a non-profit organization...the rest is history.

As the first president of Cowtown Vettes, I was asked to write an article about the first twenty years. I have enjoyed digging through the old newsletters and, with the help of Sylvia Hoaldrige and Karyn Fowler, have pulled some of the happenings from them that I think that have been interesting and some that have been significant in the life of our club. I will end with the very first "President's Paragraph" that I wrote. I think that you will find it interesting.

Jul '75 – CTV sends about 40 members to the Southern States Corvette Festival in Oklahoma City. There were about 80 cars in the Concours alone and over 800 people in attendance. (Does anyone remember the body-painting contest?)

Sep '75 – Joe and Wileen Crow win 1st place in Concours in Class D with the '63 coupe after a two-week marathon by every member of the club to get the car together. Joe later took up two pages of the newsletter thanking everyone who helped.

Jan '76 – Larry Hoaldrige is chosen Key Member of the Month for, among other things, the many hours of work involved in keeping Cowtown Vettes on the active NCCC list.

Mar '76 – A page of what our club members are doing...

- I'm building the engine for Larry's '56, another for Jim Pressley, and another for Tommy Farquhar's '58. I'm also working on my '66 coupe and going to graduate school.
- Larry [*Hoaldrige*] is doing the glasswork on my '66 coupe and his '56.
- Jim Forsythe is re-assembling his '57.
- Pete Schneider is building the engine for Jim LeGrotte's '61.
- Phil Anderson is rebuilding the drive train for LeGrotte's '61 and is restoring his '66 coupe and roadster.
- Tom Arenson is re-assembling his '66 coupe.
- Richard Sukup is rebuilding his '72 LT-1.
- Bob Bonilla is rebuilding the engine in his '66 coupe.
- Kendall Carmichael is restoring his '62.
- Lew Venable is rebuilding the engine in his '68.
- Russ Warren is repainting his '73 coupe.

Jun '76 – Marlin Lyons wins CLM in the Drags at the Southern States Corvette Festival and lowers the record by 1.99 seconds. He also wins TE in his very first NCCC event.

Sep '76 – Bobby Jandrucko wins TE at CCT's Roundup and Sarah Jandrucko wins her class. (I consider this the beginning of our ladies as serious competitors.)

Mar '77 – Cowtown Vettes enters the Street Freaks Rod and Custom Show. In addition to winning Best Club Display, all ten entrants win trophies. My '66 coupe wins Best Paint – thank you, Jim Pressley.

Apr '77 – Cowtown Vettes loses a vibrant new member who is tragically killed in a head-on collision going home from the club meeting. We never really got to know Craig Baldwin.

Jun '77 – Southern States Corvette Festival – a miserable event – everything goes wrong; very poor organization. I think that this is the beginning of the decline of OCCC. I throw the rods out of my '66 coupe and run over a motorcycle rider on the way back to the motel – a very poor weekend.

Jul '77 – Bobby Jandrucko and I tow his car to Amarillo. I win Class C in his car (he's third). We make Harvey Williams enter his '65 roadster in the Concours, help him clean it, and he wins Class, Best of Show, and \$50; he buys dinner.

Jul '78 – Don Fowler and Karyn Pilgrim are voted in as new members. Both become very important members of our club.

Aug '78 – Debbie Lindsey comments about some suspension modifications to their car, "If I can tell the difference, you know something has changed." Our ladies are getting VERY serious and VERY competitive.

Apr '79 – Cowtown Vettes is five years old!

Jul '79 – Convention in Colorado Springs – CTV only does fair. Some political problems between the Denver and Colorado Springs clubs cause the weeklong event to be less than it should have been.

Mar '80 – Jerry Lindsey places 1st in Men's '79 Regional points.

Mar '81 – CTV places 12th in '80 National points and 2nd in Regional points.

May '81 – CTV hosts its first Record Drags. What a job!

Jan '82 – CTV places 1st in '81 National points and 1st in Regional points. Way to go, Cowtown!

Jul '82 – CTV hosts the Concours at Convention in Houston.

Jan '83 – CTV places 3rd in National points and 1st in '82 Regional points; Tom Jamison places 1st in Men's Regional points.

Mar '83 – Larry Hoaldrige is chosen Southwest Region's '82 Outstanding Member.

April '83 – CTV makes the cover of Green Bars, aka Blue Bars.

Jun '83 – In last five Drags, CTV walks away with Men's TE, Ladies' TE, and/or Overall TE. Not a bad record!

Jul '83 – Jerry Lindsey receives '83 President's Award at Convention in Indianapolis.

Nov '83 – Jerry Lindsey is elected NCCC's VP-Competition for '84/'85.

Jan '84 – Larry Hoaldrige is elected RCD along with Sylvia Hoaldrige as RMD. CTV places 5th in '83 National points and 2nd in Regional points.

Apr '84 – CTV is 10 years old!

Jan '85 – CTV places 1st in '84 Regional points.

Apr '85 – Debbie Lindsey is chosen Southwest Region's '84 Outstanding Member.

Jul '85 – CTV wins Club Participation Award at Convention in Tulsa.

Aug '85 – Debbie Lindsey and Sylvia Hoaldrige are elected RE and RMD, respectively.

Apr '86 – Tips from the driving school:

- You don't outrun money.
- Believe you can win.
- Good attitude.
- Good helmet and tire gauge.
- You have to be able to see.
- Launch, brake, steer.
- Don't jerk the wheel.
- Left foot brake.
- Shift at the apex.
- Tire pressure is critical.
- Drive to the grocery store like it is an autocross.
- Most of all, don't ride with Ed Hamrick.

Feb '87 – Debbie Lindsey is RE, Larry Hoaldrige is RCD, Karyn Fowler is RMD, and Sylvia Hoaldrige is VP-Membership. CTV does Tupperware as fundraiser for event at Texas Motorplex.

Mar '87 – Sylvia Hoaldrige is chosen Southwest Region's '86 Outstanding Member.

Apr '87 – Bruce Lowrie Chevrolet becomes CTV's sponsor. Doug Shilen makes a profound statement regarding drags – you cannot drag race if you are colorblind!!

Jul '87 – Jerry Lindsey hits the retaining wall at Texas Motorplex, which results in the sale of his Corvette (in rough condition)!

Nov '87 – Debbie Lindsey is elected NCCC Secretary for '88/'89.

Apr '88 – CTV places 1st in '87 Regional points and receives the Southwest Region's Club Participation Award.

May '88 – Art Gates receives his "Luv wish" from KLUV Radio...money to repaint his Corvette. CTV works Super Chevy Sunday at Texas Motorplex.

Jan '89 – Nelda Mitchell wins Overall Top Competitor for '88 beating Roger by 4 points!

Feb '89 – CTV places 1st in '88 Regional points and 4th in National points. Walt Zschirnt presents Corvette Help-Net.

Mar '89 – CTV collects \$2,641.80 for Spina Bifida from North Hills Mall car show.

Apr '89 – Jerry Lindsey is chosen Southwest Region's '88 Outstanding Member.

Oct '89 – Rumors are flying about CTV hosting '92 National Convention. ARE WE CRAZY?!?!?!?!?

Jan '90 – Rumors are true...CTV will host '92 NCCC Convention in Arlington, Texas.

Feb '90 – CTV starts contributing toward Women's Haven as a charity event.

Apr '90 – CTV hosts Easter egg hunt at Cook Children's Hospital. At CTV's 10th Annual Corvette Mall Show, \$611.17 is collected for Women's Haven and \$670 for Spina Bifida.

May '90 – CTV participates at the Regional Fundraiser and accumulates 747 points for the weekend. Way to go!

Oct '90 – Debbie Lindsey is asked and agrees to serve as '91 Convention Treasurer.

Mar '91 – CTV places 5th in '90 National points and 1st in Regional points. Roger and Nelda Mitchell place 1st and 2nd, respectively, in Regional points.

Apr '91 – CTV receives the Southwest Region's '90 Club Participation Award.

Jul '91 – CTV hosts '92 Pre-Convention Warm-Up.

Aug '92 – Convention is over. We work hard and try not to make the mistakes that have occurred at other conventions. Tom Walter (Crescent City Corvette Club in New Orleans) writes an article for his club's newsletter. His last sentence says it all, "Of all the nice people I met in Texas, the people of Cowtown Vettes were the nicest of all."

Jan '93 – CTV has 102 members!

Feb '93 – CTV places 7th in '92 National points and 1st in Regional points. Cheri & Bobby Joines place 1st and 2nd, respectively, in Regional points. Bernyce Molenda is elected RMD.

Jun '93 – CTV sponsors a Charity Mall Show for "A Wish With Wings" and works the Corvette "Dream & Drive."

Nov '93 – Debbie Lindsey is asked and agrees to be '94 Convention Treasurer.

Dec '93 – CTV renews with over 100 members!

These are but a few of the things that have happened during the first twenty years. We did not try to pick on anyone or anything in particular, just wanted to point out a few examples of what we've been about.

The following active club members are just a few of the many reasons why Cowtown Vettes has been and will continue to be a successful and active Corvette club:

Tom Adams...has probably had more to do with winning engines than anyone in the club – a quiet, patient, wizard with an engine. If he tells you to put golf balls in your oil pan, do it; you'll go faster. I bought my first Corvette from him. I guess we can blame this entire "club" thing on him.

Larry and Sylvia Hoaldrige...I've watched them become national contenders in every event they enter. No two people worked harder or contributed more. I'm proud to call them friends.

Don and Karyn Fowler...very quietly going about business – fierce competitors – a credit to anything they are involved in.

Roger and Nelda Mitchell...always around when you need help of any kind. Strong competitors and outstanding ambassadors for Cowtown Vettes and NCCC.

Jerry and Debbie Lindsey...the absolute backbone of Cowtown Vettes for many years. No two people knew more or did more for Cowtown Vettes than these fine folks.

Kim Carpenter...was instrumental in establishing the standard by which all clubs should work toward when dealing with charity activities.

Walt and Sharon Zschirnt...solid workers and competitors. Walt is the first to challenge us to be involved. Few of us have every attained his level of participation.

I've watched over the years as people have come and gone. The names and faces change and are replaced with those even more dedicated to the Corvette, Cowtown Vettes, and NCCC. I've seen our members work and play together with unbelievable harmony. I've watched people like Gary and Kathryn Pennington start competing from scratch and become very successful competitors. I am very proud of our image in the City of Fort Worth and in NCCC. I am very proud of our significant charity involvement. I think I am most proud of our ladies...they have established children's activities for club events; have done excellent work as local, regional, and national officers, and are outstanding competitors.

The following is a reprint of the first President's Paragraph as it appeared in Cowtown Vettes' April 6, 1974 newsletter:

As this is the first of these verbal splurges, let me express my gratitude to each of you for having the confidence in me to elect me to this office and pledge my best effort to you as club members and us as a club.

I am excited about our group of people and see no reason why we can't become one of the best 'Vette clubs anywhere. We have many talented people and many beautiful cars – get to know each other better and help one another. In the same breath, might I add that I hope each member will involve his family in our club activities as this is, in my opinion, the best way to gain cooperation and understanding from them.

Be a good public relations representative for our club, for our sponsor Bruce Lowrie Chevrolet, and for our members who have business interests that can benefit from membership, such as Buck Vaughan, owner of Buck's Auto Trim. If we are to be a club worthy of notoriety, we must first be a club worthy of noting. If we are to look for benefits from others, we must first be of benefit to them.

Here's to the FWCC [Fort Worth Corvette Club].

*Save the wave,
Dennis McPeak*

We still have talented people and beautiful cars. We know each other and help one another. We are truly a family club and I think that is where our real strength is. We have excellent relations with our sponsors, with local businesses, and with the city officials. We have proven to be worthy of notoriety and I feel that we have not only been a benefit to others but to ourselves as well. WE DONE GOOD!!!!

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to be a very small part of this club and for making Cowtown Vettes the best Corvette Club in the nation. The next twenty years should be a hoot!

Save the wave!

NOTE: Dennis and his friends are busy working on a compilation of the next ten years that should be available shortly.