

# PROJECT RESTORATION

**Noland Adams**

**BEWARE: 1953 - 1960 Corvette Owners!**

This month, we're going to depart from our normal question and answer format to address a serious problem. If you own—or may someday own—an early Corvette, this is for you. Serious (translation: costly) problems may be avoided by heeding the advice within.

This past summer, I had a couple of very interesting discussions about early Corvette problems. These involved the legalities of the serial number plate, later called the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) plate.

As you may know, the serial number plates of all 1953 to early 1960 Corvettes were held in place by two phillips head screws. On the 1953 to 1955 model, it was mounted on the side of the windshield mount called the "dogleg." In 1956, the serial number plate moved forward and down about one foot, and rotated 90 degrees to the front of the driver's door post. In early 1960, the serial plate was moved to an underhood position, where it was spot-welded to the steering column.

Since the mid-1965 model year, all Corvette serial number (or VIN) plates have been retained by rosette (scaloped head) rivets. The problem is that the average police officer rarely has the chance to see an old Corvette serial number plate. Apparently, training prepares police officers to accept a serial number (VIN) plate held in place with rosette rivets, and they are not aware that such plates were ever retained by common screws.

Within the last year, two early Corvettes were involved in serial plate mounting problems. Although one was in California and the other was in the state of Washington, their problems were similar. Both cars were stopped for incidental checks. Apparently following standard procedure, the registration and serial number (VIN) plates were checked. In both cases, the police officer was surprised to see the plate retained by screws, and both cars were impounded on the spot!

Here, the stories divide. After a while (a couple of days, as I recall), one Corvette was determined to be original and the car was released.

But the second car really got into hot water. Local authorities were convinced that the original, screwed-in-place serial plate was a counterfeit! Their solution was to remove the original plate and destroy it! Then, they planned to assign a state-issued serial plate BEARING THE ORIGINAL NUMBER and rivet it in place in a new location with their own rivets.

It took this owner several days of arguing to convince the authorities that the screwed-in-place serial plate—complete with the phillips head screws—was, indeed, original. With frazzled nerves, he was able to retrieve the Corvette with its original serial plate intact.

Both the stories above are real. This did happen, and it will happen again. The owners of 1953 to early 1960 Corvettes are advised to keep this article in their car whenever it is on the road.

I'd like to hear from 1953 to early 1960 owners with a serial number plate problem. Plus, if the article above needs clarification or further details, please write me c/o Keepin' Track, P.O. Box 48, Spring Valley, NY 10977.

Later... Noland

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**The Marysville Corvette Club under the SR-71 secret spy plane at Beale Air Force Base in California. They were the only organization ever to have this opportunity. MP's holding machine guns and guarding the plane were off to the right and out of the picture.**



**Photographer for SACE is Roy Braatz Jr., the Editor's son, standing in front of the B-1 Bomber.**