

# BILL SKINNER'S 1966 DAYTONA

Story and Photos submitted by: Bill Skinner

In the fall of 1965, George Cornelius ordered a 1966 Corvette coupe with the intention of racing. The car was equipped with the highest horsepower 427 engine available, a 36.5 gallon gas tank, heavy-duty transmission, side exhausts, heavy-duty suspension, transistor ignition, positraction, heater delete, and no radio. After months of delays, it was finally delivered to Jacksonville, Florida, only eight days before the first "24 Hours of Daytona" which was then called "The Continental". George installed a roll bar, changed the wheels and tires, attached his sponsor's decal's, added driving lights, required side lights and numbers—then went off to race. (see picture below for actual 1966 racing picture)



George and his two relief drivers, Bob Brown and Dick Boo, finished fourth in class, against stiff competition. George was also awarded the trophy for "Most Reliable and Durable American Production Car". Following the race, the Corvette was featured on the cover of 1966 Corvette News, showing the car during a nighttime pit stop. The accompanying story told how George, operating on a limited budget, went heads-up against some of the premier race teams of the day, including Roger Penske, Dan Gurney, Bruce McLaren, and Don Yenko. Even though they didn't win, George's team set the record for fastest lap of the day in their class. That's not bad for a stock car only two weeks out of the St. Louis factory. The car was only raced sporadically after the Continental—surviving the years since in excellent, undamaged and unmodified condition.



A full restoration several years ago put the coupe back into the 1966 "as-raced" condition seen here. (picture at left)



Production records from 1966 show that only 66 cars were built with a 36.5 gallon gas tank, only 54 had heater delete, and only 15 were equipped with the heavy-duty (M22 "rock crusher") transmission. Overall, this Corvette was ordered from the

**Chevrolet option list and was capable of racing competitively straight from the factory! In fact, this car was so close to “factory stock” condition that George and his wife drove the car to the race at Daytona and then drove it back home again. After driving it back home his wife drove the car to work after they raced it. In conclusion, George Cornelius and his co-drivers added a significant event to the illustrious competition history of the Corvette by competing in the first Daytona 24-hour endurance race.**



- Equipped with M22 HD transmission (1 of only 15 produced in 1966), 36.5 gallon gas tank (1 of 66), 427ci/425 hp engine, heater delete, non-radio equip, HD suspension, and side exhausts.

- One of only two Corvettes that competed in the first 24-hour endurance race at Daytona (then called “The Continental”).

- Finished forth in class and awarded the trophy for “Most Reliable and Durable Production Car”.

- Pictured on the cover of 1966 Corvette News, Vol. 9, No. 4. Feature story by Joe Pike, editor of Corvette News.

**Pictured above: George Cornelius, the original owner and driver standing with car on the track at Daytona. Jan. 2006**

**Right: Bill Skinner and George Cornlius with the #67 car at the track at Daytona in Jan. 2006**

