

Member of the Month

Larry & Mary Lou Gilbert



The infamous “His and Hers” 1957 Corvettes belong to Larry and Mary Lou Gilbert of Elkton, Maryland. Both are graduates of Elkton High School while Larry is a graduate of the Institute of Biblical Studies at Liberty University and holds a Doctorate in theology. He is Chairman and CEO of Church Growth Institute, an organization that provides leadership resources for pastors and church leaders. Mary Lou owns Hoppin Bobbin embroidery, is a seamstress; does bridal alterations and consulting, and custom quilting.

When Larry was 12 years old, back in 1957, he bought a book that had all the new American made cars in it. Representing the Corvette was a beautiful Cascade green convertible. He said as soon as he saw the picture he had to have one. After several years of drooling over that picture the book was misplaced and ultimately was not to be found. But the dream was never lost. Fast-forward 47 years and after actively looking for five years he finally got the car of his childhood dreams. It needed a lot of work, parts put back on, alterations undone, and lots of detailing, but it had a great paint job (Cascade green) and a chromed up L98 engine.

Larry and Mary Lou started going to car shows together. Mary Lou wasn’t all that interested but it didn’t take long for the bug to bite her. She said, “If I’m going to keep going to these car shows I’ve got to have my own car.” She figured that big girls could have big boy toys too. So in September 2005 Larry bought Mary Lou her own 1957 Corvette for her 57th birthday. It looked like a 57 Vette, it ran, but it needed a ton of work. It had been rescued from a salvage yard by the previous owner who had patched it up enough to make it road worthy. The

1968 metal-flake paint job was flaking off in big chunks, the seats were out of a late model Oldsmobile and had head rests, the interior had been done in silver metal-flake kitchen vinyl, and the rear wheel wells had been cut out two inches. All in all very little had been left unchanged.

The day after Thanksgiving the woodworking tools were evicted from the garage and in went the Vette. Eight months to the day it showed up at its first car show. It was really a day of prayer because it was thunder storming all around and in order to rush it to the first show the convertible top and frame still set in the garage. She got her first trophy that day. The whole family had been involved, including the three-year grandson, and reworked everything, all new interior, complete body-on restoration, and painted Cascade green too at Purnell Body Shop in Elkton. The engine was cleaned up, painted, chromed up, two four barrel carbs stuck on top and put back in. But several hundred miles and six quarts of oil later it was back out and a new 350 create engine had all those chrome goodies on it.

Since then the Gilbert's have driven (don't dare put those cars on a trailer) to many community and Corvette shows. They have won numerous awards from best in class, to best engine, to best in show. But their most cherished awards are the ones they received as a pair for the "His and Hers" Corvettes.



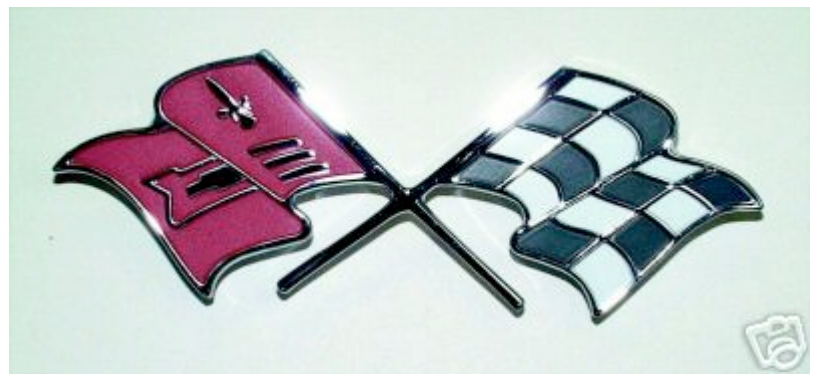
When seeing the two cars together the first question always asked by onlookers is, "Who's the fastest?" Mary Lou always says hers is, but Larry won't relinquish that right, that is, until one night when they were coming home from a cruise. Larry was cruising along about 65 in a 55 mile zone when Mary Lou got tired of following and went flying by him at about 90 miles per hour with a State Trooper, with his red and blues flashing, right on her tail. Since then Larry has allowed her to claim the title of "the fastest".

The body and interior of both cars is 99% original in every respect while the drive trains have been updated on both. His engine is an L98 tune-port-injection out of a 1991 Vette with a turbo-400 transmission and Vintage Air. Hers has a 350 engine with two fours and a four-speed transmission. Yes, Larry does take a lot of ribbing because she has the four-speed and he has the automatic.

The '57s are not the couple's first experience with Corvettes. Their first Corvette was purchased in 1965 only months after they were married, a 1960. It was worn-out before they even got it. Its lack of dependability was its dominant trait. Thus, it only lasted about three months till it was replace with a '58 Edsel; not quite as stylish or as much of a self-esteem builder but at least it got you to work on time. After that they fell into the posture of so many car crazy young folks with a

new family. So for the next 40 years automobile selection had to be a little classy but the predominant requirements were dependability with a back seat.

Meanwhile in 2007 they purchased a third '57. It's a Venetian Red numbers matching fuelie. However the fuel injection unit is still being used as someone's doorstep in the great land of Corvette history. You could say it's somewhat of a survivor. It has all its original parts including a wonder-bar radio that works. Overall it's a number two car, not as nice as the other two, but still way too nice to go to the expense of a full restoration. It's a great driver.



Fuel Injection