

1978 Silver Anniversary Corvette: A Matching Numbers NCRS 5-Star Bowtie Corvette

by Tom Russo

This 1978 Silver Anniversary Corvette was assigned VIN 09041 and is a low-mileage, all original, matching numbers, NCRS 5-Star Bowtie 1978 Corvette Coupe with RPO B2Z Silver Anniversary Paint. It's an L48 engine match to an M38 automatic transmission with approximately 35,000 miles. Recently, engine compartment went through a refresh with replacement of engine seals and gaskets.

An NCRS 5-Star Bowtie is a Corvette that met the criteria in each of four categories and was displayed at an NCRS National Convention. The four categories were paint, interior, chassis and mechanical (engine). Each area met the threshold of "originality" and therefore awarded the NCRS organization's most prestigious award.

In 2003, Corvette celebrated its 50th anniversary with a huge celebration in Nashville. The NCRS organization was invited to display Corvettes from each model year. This 5-Star Bowtie Corvette, due to its originality was selected to represent model year 1978. It was driven to Nashville and returned to Myrtle Beach, completing its last cross country road trip. NCRS Corvettes invited to display were required to be driven...trailer queens not allowed!

Matching Numbers: Body Assembly

Matching numbers means different things to different Corvette enthusiasts with the minimum qualification that the engine serial number stamped on the engine pad matches the vehicle identification number (VIN) embossed on the body VIN tag. A VIN derivative (abbreviated serial number) was used to stamp the engine and "mate" it to a particular body assembly. This same stamp with its VIN derivative was used to also stamp the transmission at the same time during chassis build-up. The definition of matching numbers expands to include the transmission but we will show that the definition swells beyond the major drive train components.

A third set of numbers that assist with authenticity and is expected to reconcile with VIN derivatives stamped



***Figure 1: 1978 Silver Anniversary Corvette
NCRS National Convention, St Louis, 1998***



Figure 2: Trim Tag for VIN 09041

on the engine and transmission are the date codes and broadcast codes on mechanical components of significance such as alternator, carburetor, distributor and smog pump (when equipped). But date coding begins with the trim tag riveted to the driver's side inside door jamb. The trim tag date code for this 1978 is C10 (Figure 2) and indicates the tag was installed on a completed body assembly November 10, 1977. Thus, it is typical of factory production that the mechanical components should be coded with a date that precedes the November 10th date.

The trim tag is also coded with the paint scheme and trim code (interior) colors. Paint and trim codes on the trim tag are 13U/07M (U=upper, M=middle) for the B2Z silver anniversary paint and 762 for mahogany leather interior and trim. The trim tag was installed between the first and second coat of paint and therefore paint on the trim tag in 1978 was typical factory practice. The trim tag date code is C10 (Figure 2) or November 10th, 1977. So we see date codes that reconcile and VIN derivatives that match the VIN plate (Figure 4).

Matching Numbers: Engine & Transmission

Figure 3 shows the engine pad with an engine assembly date and engine suffix stamp (V1007CLM), and the VIN derivative 18S409041. The “V” is code for the Flint V8 engine assembly plant; the date code is the “1007” and indicates an assembly date of October 7; and the CLM is the engine suffix for a 1978 350 ci 185 hp engine engineered for automatic transmission and federal emission control. Also note that while paint can be seen in the characters for the engine suffix and date code, the paint was cut by the stamp die for the VIN derivative. The pad was painted at the engine assembly plant after the codes were stamped but the engine had yet to be assigned to a body until installed at the St Louis assembly plant.

The VIN derivative on the transmission was stamped at the same time the engine was stamped by the factory worker assigned the responsibility for matching a particular powertrain with a completed body assembly. The Turbo-hydromatic transmission pad shows the VIN derivative 18S409041 (Figure 4). This transmission mates with both the engine and body assembly.

Matching Numbers: Date Codes

The generally accepted date code range for parts assembled on a Corvette is six months prior to the trim tag date code. This section looks at three major components and their date codes, stretching our matching numbers definition to include date code components with correct broadcast codes to illustrate how date codes contribute to the matching numbers definition.

Rochester built the Quadrajets for Chevrolet and twelve carburetor applications were listed for Corvette use in 1978. Figure 5 shows Carb GM # 17058204 with broadcast code BHT which indicates this carb was



Figure 3: L48 VIN Stamp Pad - October 7, 1977



Figure 4: M38 Stamp Pad - VIN Derivative



Figure 5: Rochester Carburetor BHT

designed for an L48 with air conditioning and federal emissions. Quadrajets date codes use a Julian calendar code shown with three digits followed by a digit for the year. The Quadrajets for this Corvette shows a date code of 3057 or the 305th day of 1977. The 305th day of 1977 is Tuesday, November 1st...the carb was assembled and stamped nine days prior to installation on VIN 09041 with its build date of November 10th. The Quadrajets date code falls within the six month timeframe.

Alternators were supplied by Delco Remy. The alterna-

tor installed on VIN 09041 is GM# 1102908, a 63 amp alternator matched for vehicles equipped with air conditioning. Figure 6 shows the natural aluminum case with date code 7J which translate to September 1977.



Figure 6: Delco Remy Alternator VIN 09041

Delmy Remy also supplied starters for Corvette. A typically starter coding as shown in Figure 8, is 1109065 7 J 29 2 while finishes have been observed to be either natural (and now rusted) or semi-gloss black paint. The part number is followed by a digit for the year (7) letter for the month (J), two digits for the day (29) and the last digit “2” is the shift. VIN 09041 (Figure 7) was equipped with GM# 1109065 for a Corvette with automatic transmission with an assembly date of September 29, 1977.



Figure 7: Delco Remy Starter

Finally, included is a photograph (Figure 8) of a body panel with a hand-written yellow grease pencil mark of 628 in. This number is unique to this vehicle because the number was assigned to body panels intended for this vehicle and is referenced on the build sheet. During body assembly, the VIN had yet to be assigned and so there was no way to track the various body panels. The number 628 was assigned to body panels as they were being assembled. Eventually, 628 would become VIN 09041, once body assembled was completed, primer and the first coat of paint applied. This was typical factory practice that dates to St Louis built Corvettes in the 1960's.



Figure 8: Body Underbody Panel Assigned #628

Summary

This discussion of matching numbers and date codes looked at major components and their date codes, the Rochester Quadrajets carburetor, the Delco-Remy alternator and the Delco-Remy starter. All dates reconcile with the trim tag date and underscore the statement that this Corvette is a fully matching numbers Corvette including major components and their date codes.

But matching numbers and date codes can be identified and tracked for numerous components and while this article has shown the major components, date codes can be documented for horns, mufflers, rear gear, distributor and many more parts. Equally important to a Corvette's authenticity, are the broadcast codes that can be reconciled with a build sheet or other reference materials that list a model year's broadcast codes.