

1976-1978 CORVETTE

JACK DATE CODES

By Tom Russo

Judging the 1978-1979 Corvette began just over a year ago with the Cypress Gardens NCRS Regional event. The judging manual has concluded its second revision and data is beginning to accumulate suggesting a third revision is imminent. Much is being learned, and quickly, because the judging field comprises many fine, clean cars with original equipment from which conclusions are made regarding the originality of parts and car. The jack tucked away in the luggage compartment behind the passenger seat is one of those obscure parts which the assumption was made that 1978's were like 1979's and that 1975-77's were all alike. Sufficient judging of late models has revealed that differences exist and suppliers or their date code identification format changed at least three times from 1975 through 1979.

While the 1978-79 cars are judged from the same manual, jack similarities end there. Jacks furnished in those two years differ and we now know that jacks supplied in 1978 were date coded similarly to those supplied in 1976 and 1977.

The date code for the 1978 jack is stamped on the rivet head (one of two) located on the side of the jack base. Pointing the cranking end toward you, the date code is found on the right side. This departs from the location found on the jacks in 1979 cars which is stamped on the crossmember at the cranking end of the jack. The format in 1979 cars is 9E28. The 9 indicates the production year, E the production month and 28 the day of production.

The format used for the date code in 1978 is three digits and shown in the photo. The first digit indicates the year of production and the next two digits record the week of production. For example, 743 is located on a jack found in a 1978 car with a build date of about November 10, 1977. The jack date code indicates the jack was produced in 1977, the 43rd week of production, or October 1977, consistent with the car build date.

Likewise, 808 was found on a jack in a 1978 Pace Car built in April 1978. The car build date is about April 8, 1978. The jack code date indicates the jack was produced the eighth week of production in 1978 or February, 1978. This format has been traced on jacks found all the way into June built 1978's.

Cars built in 1977 also used this format. VIN 10,893 is a car judged in Bowling Green in April of this year. The car has 1,710 miles recorded and is still in its original wrappers. Its build date is November of 1976 and the jack date code is 642 (pictured) or, the 42nd week of production in 1976. The jack was produced in October of 1976, consistent with the car build date.

This date code format has also been traced back to 1976 cars. In 1975, the date code is stamped on the frame of the jack as outlined in the judging manual. At this point, we know that late-1976 built cars use the rivet date code format. VIN 45,825 is known to be consistent with the rivet

date codes found in 1977 and 1978 cars.

The supplier of jacks is not known to this author but 1978 jacks have a three letter, lowercase logo stamped on the bottom of the jack. The letters appear to be smp. However, heavy paint renders the logo less than legible. The 1976 jacks do not show a supplier logo on the bottom plate as the 1978 jacks do.

Owners restoring a 1976-78 should note the changes described above and ensure a restoration includes a correctly date coded jack. This data fills information void and vendors selling jacks for the late model years have assumed jacks supplied were similar without regards to date codes.

Judges should note the distinguishing characteristics of date codes for the late-year models and avoid the assumption that the 75-77's are like 78-79's. While it is less clear who suppliers of jacks were from 1975 through 1979, it can be safely concluded that date code formats changed three times from 1975-1979.