

1975-77 Technical Information Manual and Judging Guide Update

by Tom Russo and Guy Franzese

The newly revised 3rd edition of the 1975-77 TIMJG will see Corvette book shelves in 2021 and reflects numerous assembly inconsistencies now documented. A comprehensive review of one-owner cars as well as a comparative analysis of 1975-77 Assembly Instruction Manuals (AIM) has discovered many production anomalies. During this build period, these variances were a direct result of the dramatic increase in Corvette production driven by increased customer demand. Production had been steady prior to 1975 when suddenly it increased by 21% from 1975 to 1976, and increased by 28% from 1975 to 1977. Units (cars) built per day increased to 142 in 1977 from 85 in 1973, justifying the cost to relocate production to a larger more modern assembly plant. As a result, many owners reported parts that were previously tagged for the next model year as showing up on the current built models. Model year AIM sheets marked ROLLING MODEL CHANGE verified many of these changes. Add the challenges to meet emission requirements during this period and enthusiasts can understand the complex problems that confronted engineers meeting regulatory and buyer's demands. Buyers were ordering Corvettes in numbers unprecedented.

As a result this edition sheds the long shadow of myths evoked by C2/early C3 guidance that had served as a basis to judge these model years. Research of original, one-owner cars revealed that assumptions and data used to judge these years was limited and, at times, out-of-sync with factory rolling model changes that became typical during these model years.

Throughout all sections, readers will see greater attention to running model changes with illustrations to depict distinctive characteristics of these deviations. To place the modification in the context of a production change, an explanation or rationale provides the reader with background reference. The revision paid particular attention to the impact of Corvette demand and the extent to which parts were introduced earlier

than intended from one year (1977) to complete the build of the current model year, typically 1976 Corvettes.

For example, a third edition *ROLLING MODEL CHANGE* was for the 1977 alarm system. A redesigned anti-theft alarm system was introduced mid-1977 production, slated for model change with March 21, 1977, vehicle assembly at VIN 21373. The alarm-activation switch was moved from the driver's side fender and was incorporated into the driver's side door lock. The alarm horn, located above the driver's side muffler, was moved to inside the engine compartment near the washer fluid bottle. The alarm flasher and alarm relay were relocated from the bulkhead in the jack storage area to under the console plate.

A re-engineered wiring harness accompanied these changes. This documented *ROLLING MODEL CHANGE* defined by 1977 *Technical Service Bulletin* provides clarity to the owner and restorer, as well as to the judge on the judging field. However, as definitive as **TSB 77-I-38** is, the study of early 1977-built cars reveals that parts of the redesigned anti-theft system were introduced before March 1977. Several owners reported early-built 1977s had the new horn used but it was located above the driver's side muffler.

Another intriguing finding is that early 1976 Corvettes were shipped with truly a *six-month only* shroud system. Caught between the 1975 shroud and a redesign introduced in *late* 1976, affected both the shroud and the shroud-mounting brackets that secure the shroud to the core radiator support. Late 1976 introduced a one-piece shroud, no longer a two-piece shroud with extension. Why? In 1976, the introduction of the ThermAC air cleaner used a duct that had to ride over the radiator to direct cool air into the air cleaner. Thus, the shroud mounting brackets in late 1976 integrated the radiator end caps with the shroud mounting hardware and used through 1979. Gone was the cowl-induction system used in 1973-1975.

While the redesigned shroud system illustrates a *ROLLING MODEL CHANGE*, the study of painted engine pads settles the confusing state of affairs that encircled the judging of pads. The conventional thinking was that Flint engines produced for Model Year (MY) 1977 were the first engines shipped with painted pads. Several members of the 1975-77 revision team (and one-owner cars), came forward to show their stamp pads with paint. Other members tell the story of how when their 1975 Corvette was presented for judging, and this goes back to 2000, they were told their painted pads could not be judged with paint on it. So, the owner confronted with loss of points, removed the paint for the purpose of getting the points. Similar stories were told that date back to the 1973 model year.

The novelty of this topic that came as a surprise, probably only to this author, was the degree to which mid-year C3s were shipped to St Louis with painted engine pads. It was well established that corporate blue engines came with painted pads but apparently orange pads were treated with deference...remove the paint to earn the points. Typically, paint fills in the engine-plant assembly-stamp characters but not the VIN derivative stamp. The alphanumeric characters of the VIN derivative, once cut with the stamp, shows either bare metal or a rust appearance, consistent throughout the VIN sequence. The 1975-77 revised third edition judging guidance states:

Judging Guidance: Owners should not be instructed to remove factory original paint from stamp pads.

A takeaway lesson from this twelve-month project is that we changed the manual and avoid the temptation to change the car! Too often, stories came forward of owners' past actions to comply with an outdated manual by changing parts or finishes to chase points. Rather the lesson to judges is that when the question of originality, the benefit of the doubt goes to the owner. Also when in doubt, you must involve your Team Leader of meet Judging Chairman.



1975 L48, M40, C60, paint removed for judging. Note engine suffix with paint while VIN derivative void of paint.



1975 L82 & M20/M21. Pad is painted. Note engine suffix with paint while VIN derivative is void of paint.

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