

“PEAKING” IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

By Ken Peak, RCC Historian



HOW CORVETTE GOT ITS NAME



Many famous names are associated with Corvette’s long (now 71-year) success. First is Harley Earl (who, after watching Jaguars and MGs run road-racing courses, convinced GM to develop its own two-seater and oversaw the prototype); the National Corvette Museum says Earl is the father of the Corvette. “The Corvette was his idea pure and simple.” Right behind Earl is Zora Arkus-Duntov, who transformed the Corvette from a stylish sports-car into a legendary high-performance machine.

But for all its celebrated history, one name tied to Corvette lore that is all but lost in the dustbin of history is that of Myron Scott, the gentleman who gave “America’s sports car” its name.

Myron E. “Scottie” Scott was born in Camden, Ohio in 1907. After high school he attended the Dayton Institute of Art. Then, for 22 years, he served as artist, photographer, and art director with the *Dayton Daily News*. In June 1933, after photographing six boys racing wooden contraptions down a hill in Oakwood, Ohio, he got the idea for the soap box derby, which he created - and in 1934 attracted 330 participants and a crowd of 40,000. After that derby, Chevrolet decided to sponsor the event nationally (and sponsored the derby until 1972). His affiliation with Chevrolet led to GM hiring Scott in 1937 as an assistant director for its Public Relations department, where he was responsible for photographing new cars, designing press kits, graphics, and special events.



Sometime in early 1953 Chevrolet was planning to introduce an all-new fiberglass sports car (those first 300 Corvettes, produced in Flint, Michigan, were to appear in late June 1953), but

there was much debate about what name should be attached to it. Chevrolet General Manager Ed Cole had 15 executives in his office to brainstorm a name for the car – with the stipulation that the name was to begin with a “C.” Soon more than 300 names were submitted, such as Champion, Citation, and Challenger, but Cole was not impressed: “I don’t like any of them.”

One evening, Scott decided to thumb through the dictionary to search for potential candidates (beginning with C, of course), and eventually came across “Corvette” - the name given the British navy’s speedy pursuit ship. [The word Corvette was first used by the French Navy in the 1670s, taken from the Dutch word *corf*, meaning basket, from the Latin *corbis*.]

Scott believed this was the perfect moniker for Chevy’s land-based sports car. He later said "It began with a 'C'...rolled well off the tongue...and reflected the excitement of a fast World War II warship." The next day Scott sent a note to Cole: “How would you like to go for ride in my Corvette today?” Cole soon phoned Scott with the news, “Yours is the name for the new car.”

Years later in an interview Scott said he didn’t get so much as a small bonus or a day off for his selection of the name, but was just proud to be part of the project; and, as the saying goes, the rest is history. But Scott downplayed his role in the car's success. "The name didn't sell the car," he said. "It was the designer's efforts. I was just another team player trying to do a job." Scott also named a Chevrolet van, the Beauville.

In 1955 Scott moved to the newly formed Chevrolet Public Relations department as assistant director, responsible for photography of new cars, plus design of press kits, graphics, and special events.

In a 1993 interview with his old employer, the *Dayton Daily News*, Scott said he wasn’t a big fan of the car: “I’ve only driven a Corvette once. My God, this thing drives tough. I also don’t like sitting on the road.” He added that he chuckles to himself when he pulls up to a Corvette at a traffic light. “I always say to myself. ‘I bet that guy doesn’t know the old guy sitting in the Olds behind him named his car.’”

Scott retired from Chevrolet in 1971, was inducted into the Corvette Hall of Fame in 2002, and passed away in Kettering, Ohio in October 1998 at the age of 91.

Sources used:

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