

America's Rarest & Fastest Corvettes

Text and photos courtesy of
Bloomington Gold

THE SPECIAL COLLECTION

Of course, multi-million dollar Grand Sport Corvettes are rare, but Bloomington Gold has presented Corvettes five times more rare than Grand Sports. For example: Bill Mitchell's original StingRay, Zora Dunton's SS Racer, the original Mako Shark, and the AeroVette. Five Grand Sports were built. However, only one of each of these cars were built, and the Special Collection has included them all at some point – some more than once.

The Special Collection has focused on different themes and wowed fans for a quarter of a century with its Grand Sports, L88s, Fuelies, race champions, styling cars, one owners, BENCHMARK originals, and so on. For twenty five years, Bloomington Gold has presented The Greatest Corvette Show on Earth. Corvette fans can see more rare Corvettes in one room than they would normally see in a lifetime of regular Corvette shows – in fact, that's why it was created. By the early 1980s, Bloomington Gold's CEO, David Burroughs, had already gotten the innovative judging process of Gold Certification up and running and believed it was time to develop new events for Bloomington Gold. He remembered going to Corvette shows for ten years and hearing people talking about one or two particular cars that caught their eye as being outstanding. Maybe it was a high horsepower car or

a low mileage Corvette. Maybe there was something special about it. In any event, there was always something that was the "star" of the show. Burroughs wanted to drop a bowling ball into a bucket of water. "Instead of seeing one or two really outstanding cars per show, what if we filled an entire room with 33 of them?" Burroughs liked the sound of 33 because that's how many cars started at the Indy 500. Coincidentally, that's how many would fit into the room he had in mind. Located about five miles away from the regular Bloomington Gold show at the fairgrounds, the ballroom of the Bone Student Center would make the perfect setting in which to hold an evening event featuring these special cars. Contrasted with the hot and dusty fairgrounds, the Bone Center was like a shrine. America's best Corvettes would be parked on a highly polished floor, surrounded with plush gold drapes reaching upward 30 feet into the pitch black ceiling. From the blackness of the ceiling, high intensity lights sparkled the paint and chrome of the most spectacular collection of Corvettes ever assembled. This effect blended with the faint perfume of gasoline, oil, rubber tires, polishes, and the air conditioning system to create the most profound experience Corvette fans had ever seen. Anyone who attended these collections at the Bone Center will never forget the sight

and smell of this place.

With all that horsepower in one room, the silence made it unusually powerful. Cars capable of ear splitting decibels were quiet, and so was the respectful audience who slowly meandered through the collection. The cars were impressive. The room was impressive. The experience was impressive, both for owners of the car and the fans who got to see them. It was truly a Special Collection. The Corvette media went, because it provided knowledgeable writers a wealth of material and experts all in one spot, which could then be passed along to the Corvette community through magazines. Everyone won.

Special Collection I was presented on June 9-10, 1984. It set the standards for what David Burroughs expected all Special Collections to reach. People's reactions were enthusiastic, and they encouraged Bloomington Gold to do more of them. So, one Sunday morning later that year, Burroughs penciled in themes for the next nine collections, and planned Special Collection X to be the Grand Finale. Burroughs said, "There are only so many of these cars, and they can't continue to be pulled out of the hat forever. If we can do ten of them, I'd consider it a success."

But things can change over ten years. Bloomington Gold moved from



Special Collection L88 Invasion



Bill Locke, Director of Special Collection