

Larry Cook has owned his 1969 Corvette since 1995.

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Photographs by Mike Fitzgerald

1969 CORVETTE CONVERTIBLE

Excelsior Springs man now has the Corvette he longed for

By DAVID BOYCE
Drive contributing writer

As a 12-year-old in Falls City, Neb., Larry Cook saw a Corvette and dreamed of owning it one day. It belonged to an elderly lady.

"She was the only person I had seen with a Corvette," said Cook, of Excelsior Springs. "I told my dad after we moved to Iowa that I wanted that car. It went up for sale in an estate auction."

So Cook's dad went to the auction, heard that the price was \$4,000 and told his son he decided not to buy it.

But the dream of owning a Corvette remained vivid for Cook. He just had to put it on hold.

Once Cook's youngest son graduated from Northwest Missouri State, the idea of owning a Corvette became more of a reality. After surviving a heart attack, Cook knew the time was right.

"I thought, 'Forty-nine years old. I am going to go for it,'" he said.

His search took him to an advertisement he saw in The Kansas City Star in May 1995.

"I found it in Overland Park," Cook said. "The owner was too old to get in and out of it. He hadn't driven it in 5 years. His sons didn't want it. I was lucky. It was just what I wanted."

Nearly 20 years later, Cook gets just as much enjoyment out of his white 1969 Corvette convertible as the day he purchased it.

Other than the paint, he has overhauled the entire vehicle. Some of it, like the interior, he has worked on himself. The rest of the work was by Midwest Corvettes and Classics in Kearney.

Working on it and driving it bring joy to Cook, 68, who is retired after more than 40 years in the paint sales business.

"It keeps me busy, keeps me young. I always have something to do, whether it is polishing it or taking it to town. It is a grocery-getter, too.

When he goes to car shows with his 1969 Corvette, it is easy for him to remember when he was 12 and sitting in a Corvette. For that reason, he enjoys when kids that age and older want to get in his car.

"All the other guys are like, 'Kids, stay away from my car,'" Cook said. "I let them get in, honk the horn and start it up if they are big enough. I take them for rides."

Over the years, Cook's Corvette has been in the Smithville and Park Hill homecoming parades.

"It was a lot of fun," Cook said.

Cook bought the 1969 Corvette to drive and not just be a showpiece. He has put 50,000 miles on it, driving it to Chicago more than a dozen times and once to Bowling Green, Ky., with his Corvette Club members, to the Corvette assembly plant.

He joked he had a hard time keeping up with many of the members who had much newer Corvettes that were getting 28 miles per gallon compared to his 14 miles per gallon.

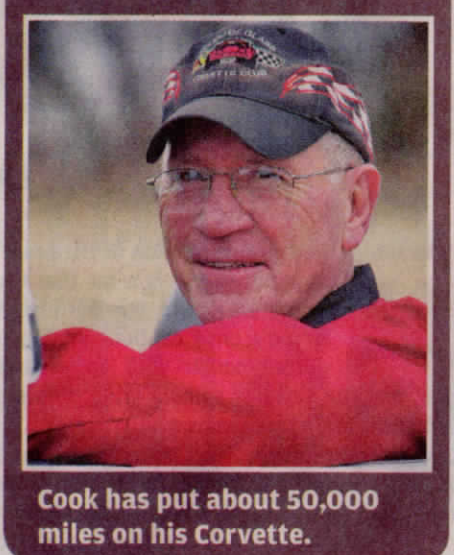
"I had to stop every 200 miles to get fuel," he said.

Cook has no intention of trading this one in for a newer model. In fact, he said his 1969 Corvette will stay in the family, joking that his three sons will trade off owning it at different times of the season. He figures his son in Rogers, Ark., will have the Corvette in the winter time and his son in Denver and son in Chicago will have to figure out who gets it in the spring and summer.

But those decisions are years away. Cook and his wife are still having a great time with the 1969 Corvette.

"It is just cool," Cook said. "It is a lot of fun. My wife enjoys going with me when it is not too hot. She doesn't like the wind blowing her hair."

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Cook has put about 50,000 miles on his Corvette.



Some of the renovation was done elsewhere, but Cook restored the interior.



Cook installed the audio system in his Corvette.



Cook has wanted to own a Corvette since he was 12.