



## Chassis Lassies celebrate 20th anniversary.



The year was 1995 and a couple of women got together to form the Chassis Lassies Car Club. A club just for women to get together to show off their collector cars and have fun. Twenty years later, we are still showing our cars and enjoying the friends we've made over all of these years.

Some of us have been with the club a long time. Two members, Patty and Valerie joined at the beginning. Judy joined in 1996 and Arlene and Joyce in 1998 and 1999. Over the years we have had anywhere from 5 to 30 members. Right now we are at 11 members and counting. As with any club, we have had our ups and downs but have never lost our original spirit of having fun.

We put a lot of work into the car shows we've had and have contributed to quite a few charities along the way. We spend time with each other at car shows, parades, and other social events. This summer one of our fun events was a trip to Gateway to visit the Gateway Museum, the Allen Museum in Grand Junction and the Wine Festival in Palisade. And now we are looking forward to our Christmas get together.

We are always looking for women who have their own wonderful cars and want to join us for fun and laughter. If you are a woman who wants to join us, or you know of a woman who might want to join, please check out our website at [www.chassislassies.com](http://www.chassislassies.com)



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## "Otto Mechanic"

By Jay Piersanti





### 1964 Pontiac Banshee XP-833 Coupe Concept



Intended as a shot across Ford's bow, Pontiac's Banshee XP-833 coupe was an answer to Ford's Cougar II show car, and Pontiac brass felt confident they could bring the Banshee to market before Ford launched its own two-seater. History tells us that neither car saw production, but a glimpse at the Banshee gives us a look at design cues that would later appear on the third-generation Corvette and the first-generation Firebird. This is one of two first-generation Banshees built (the other a white convertible that's long been a part of Joe Bortz's collection).

The initial success of Ford's Mustang left GM scrambling to offer a counterpoint, and it would take until 1967 before the Chevrolet Camaro and Pontiac Firebird hit dealerships. Determined not to make the same mistake twice, Pontiac head John DeLorean asked his designers to come up with a light-weight two-seat sports car, one that could be brought to market for the 1967 model year, potentially ahead of the Ford Cougar II that was rumored to be bound for production. Two first-generation Banshees were put together, using an A-body chassis and fiberglass-reinforced plastic body panels.

The coupe was powered by an overhead camshaft inline six-cylinder, fitted with a crossflow head and reportedly good for 155 horsepower. Given the Banshee's curb weight below 2,300 pounds, even such a modest engine would have produced spirited performance, while delivering exceptional handling. The Banshee, in the eyes of Pontiac executives, would complement the Corvette, offering buyers of more modest means another GM two-seat sports car to choose from.

As Bob Hovorka wrote in the February 1989 issue of *Special Interest Autos*, production of the Banshee was never seriously considered by GM management. Perhaps any challenge to the Corvette as GM's sole two-seat sports car was seen as too much, or perhaps the Ford Cougar II was never seen as a serious candidate for production, but in 1966 the first Banshee project was scrapped. The cars should have been as well, but rumor has it they escaped the crusher by being secreted away and later sold to employees close to the project. Both coupe and convertible are semi-functional drivers, minus key details like functional headlamps.

The coupe remained with its original owner until 2006, when it sold at a Barrett-Jackson auction for \$214,500. Since then, it's been offered for sale numerous times, including a trip across the stage at RM's 2010 Amelia Island sale, where it bid to \$325,000 but failed to meet reserve, and at Mecum's 2010 Monterey sale, where it bid to \$400,000 without changing hands.

Officially, the third-generation Corvette was inspired by the 1965 Mako Shark II concept, but one has to wonder how much the concept was itself inspired by the Banshee. Even if the answer is "not at all," it's impossible not to see the Banshee's influence on the first generation Firebird's rear and on the production Opel GT, which seems to duplicate the Banshee's pop-up headlamps, sloping nose, fastback roof and Kamm tail in slightly smaller scale. Perhaps John DeLorean and his designers were onto something after all.



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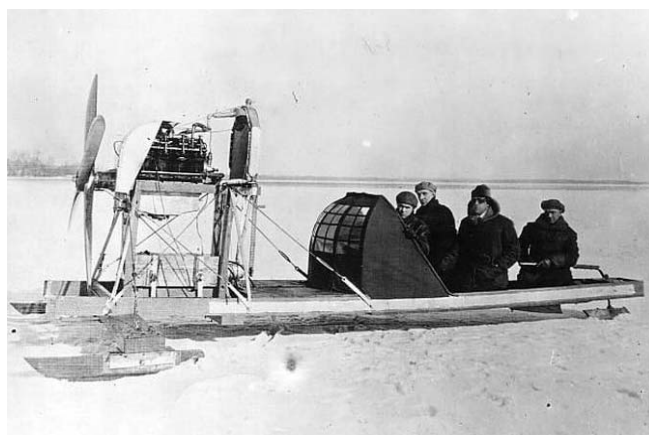
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In October 1989, a Long Island carpenter by the name of Dennis Amodeo won the prize of a lifetime for a Corvette fan: one of every year Corvette built from 1953 through 1989, courtesy of music television network VH1. Artist Peter Max soon acquired the cars for an ambitious art project that never materialized, and for 25 years the cars sat, largely ignored and only occasionally moved from one New York City storage location to another, until a New York Corvette fan and automotive consultant helped broker a deal to buy the cars. Now, thanks to their new owners, 36 pieces of Corvette history will soon be back on the road, and if all goes as planned, back on the market.

The story begins in 1989, when a television producer named Jim Cahill pitched an idea to the music network VH1 to boost its sagging ratings, particularly among baby boomers. A Corvette fan himself, Cahill suggested the network hold a contest to award one lucky winner 36 Chevrolet Corvettes, one from every year of manufacture up to the date of the contest.

The idea was given the green light and Cahill spent \$610,000 amassing the collection, which consisted largely of "driver" quality cars. Fourteen of the Corvettes were convertibles, and over 2/3 came equipped with automatic transmissions. To cover its costs, VH1 set up a 900 number, and entrants were charged \$2.00 per call, of which the network received \$1.49. In less than two weeks, it had recovered the full cost of staging the giveaway.

Amodeo, who'd placed just a single phone call, was the lucky winner, and the network spared no expense in making the presentation as theatrical as possible. Beach Boy Mike Love was on hand to pass Amodeo a big bag of keys.

Soon there after, Amodeo received a phone call from Peter Max, who requested a New York City meeting to discuss a deal to buy the cars.

Amodeo opened the discussion by asking \$1.5 million for the collection. Max countered, and eventually the pair settled on a deal that may still have repercussions: Amodeo received \$250,000 in cash, \$250,000 in Peter Max artwork and an agreement that if Max sold the collection at a future date, Amodeo would get a portion of the proceeds, up to an agreed upon cap of \$1 million.

For two and a half decades, that's more or less where the story ended. Max showed no interest in selling, restoring, or even maintaining the cars.

As late as 2010, he still seemed determined to do something with the cars, and even spoke of acquiring 14 more to bring the total number up to 50, making it complete through the 2003 model year.

Fast-forward to June of 2014. Corvette collector and Dream Car Consulting founder Chris Mazzilli was showing his 1971 Corvette at the Old Westbury Gardens car show, when, as Chris told us, "This guy walks up and starts asking me questions about values and restoration costs on a series of Corvettes. At one point I stopped him and said, 'You're talking about the Peter Max Corvettes, aren't you?'"

The guy was Peter Heller, and he was indeed speaking of the Peter Max Corvettes. As The New York Times related in a recent article, Peter's cousin, Scott Heller, had been approached by Max to find a new storage garage for the cars, and the conversation soon turned to the possibility of Scott buying the cars from Max.

After the chance meeting between Chris and Peter Heller at the Westbury Gardens show, the Hellers asked Chris to inspect the Corvettes. A Saturday full of research later, Chris laid out the good, the bad and the ugly for Scott and Peter Heller, giving them and their partners, the Spindler family, a value range for the cars. Chris told us that the Corvettes were purchased "in this range," but wouldn't elaborate on a more precise number to protect his clients.

While none of the cars sport a big-block engine or have rare and desirable options, all have merit as pieces of Corvette history wrapped up in a bit of urban legend, tied to an artist that once captured the zeitgeist of an era.





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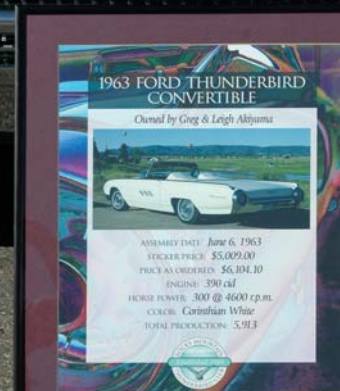
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### ***Colorado Collector Car News***

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This is a monthly publication dedicated to the enjoyment of the collector car hobby in Colorado.

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*ED: I am looking for other Cars of the Month. These cars do not have to be concours award winners, just cars that have owners who are proud to own them. (Don't we all feel that way?) To nominate a car and owner, please contact me at gakiyama@earthlink.net. Thanks.*

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