



The New Buyers Tour is available through the National Corvette Museum for \$350. It allows you and up to 3 guests to tour the Corvette Assembly Plant in Bowling Green, KY and observe your Corvette being created.

Butch Kingery (owner of Classy Chassis Auto Body at Summit Lake) and I departed SeaTac late in the evening on Sunday December 2nd. We

flew into Atlanta where we changed planes to fly to Nashville TN. Nashville is the closet airport to Bowling Green (BG). It is approximately 60 miles south of BG. In Nashville I picked up my rental car (which happened to be an "F" word). It was pretty fancy though, being a brand new Taurus with all the bells and whistles. The heated seats came in real handy on our second day there as the overnight temperature got down to the low 20's. It's always nice to have warm buns.

We got into BG in early afternoon on Monday the 3rd and immediately went to our hotel. We got checked in and refreshed and then headed off to the National Corvette Museum. There we spent several hours and several hundred bucks (each) in the gift store. I just had this urge to buy orange stuff (Imagine That????).

Our timing was perfect, as we wandered around in the museum store we met our tour guide for the next day. This fellow (James Guffey) was a real southern gentleman. He had worked in the assembly plant for 19 years and when he retired became a volunteer for the museum and was eventually hired as a tour guide. He gave Butch and I a real First Class tour and answered every question we had. In addition to the New Buyers Tour the museum provides assembly plant tours to individuals buying the RC8 Option with their new Vette. This is the museum delivery option.

Our tour was scheduled to begin at 8:00a.m. on Tuesday December 4th. Butch and I arrived at the assembly plant early in anticipation of seeing my new car. We met James and the first news he gave us was a little disheartening. The tours are all scheduled around the "marriage". And the "marriage" for my car was now delayed for almost an hour and a half. The "marriage" being the point in the assembly process where the chassis and the body meet and are joined. The chassis assembly begins in one part of the plant while the rest of the body assembly starts in another. The plant by the way is huge, over 1 million square feet. Not only is the Corvette built there, but the Cadillac XLR is assembled there also. The Corvette assembly takes up 85% of the plant while the XLR gets the remainder. Approximately 150 to 170 Corvettes are assembled each day while only 12 to 15 XLRs are built.

The New Buyer Tour is scheduled to start at the "marriage" to allow new Corvette buyers to actually see their finished Corvette come off the assembly line and to allow you to do the first start (sit behind the wheel and start the engine for the first time) of your own Vette. So, you can understand while I was a little disappointed. But the good news was that it allowed me to follow my entire chassis being assembled from the bare frame to the finished chassis at the "marriage". And to see more of the assembly process. This whole experience was truly memorable.

In addition to seeing the entire chassis being assembled, we followed the body around also. We got to the body assembly point after much of the interior, dash, trunk and rear body panels had already been built. We saw the doors placed, the engine compartment as well as the com-

plete front end of the car assembled.

The museum guarantees you will be in the plant for 3-1/2 to 5 hours. Butch and I were actually in the plant for almost 7 hours. We ate in the employee lunch room. Seven hours sounds like an awful long time to be in the plant but believe me it didn't seem like it. The time flew for me. I got to see just about 85% of the assembly of my car. Due to when we arrived I was not able to see the interior, dash, trunk and rear body panels assembled.

I got to see every 2008 color you can order your Vette with the exception of Silver somewhere on the assembly line. I guess this is not a real popular color as we did not see any at all. In the order of things, the 4 cars in front of my Vette were black as were the next 5 after it. The car immediately in front of mine was a Z06. This was really neat as it allowed Butch and I to see the differences between the "normal" Corvette and an "exotic" Corvette. And believe me the differences from the outside don't appear to be much. But, starting with the aluminum frame to the 505 HP dry sump engine the differences underneath are



immense. I can honestly say that this tour ranks right up there as the best thing that I have ever done with all my clothes on.

Several things really impressed me about the tour

and plant personnel. The plant was very clean and the quality control process is amazing. At every point along the assembly line we saw what appeared to be a pull cord that resembles what you would see on a public transit vehicle (bus). At various times during our tour we would hear chimes (tunes from nursery rhymes and other themes). These chimes would occur when ever a assembly tech would pull this cord. Pulling the cord once starts the chime, pulling it the second time accelerates the speed of the chime and completely stops the entire assembly line. Each area of assembly has an assembly supervisor who oversees several assembly techs. And each of these assembly supervisors has his or her own chime. When the chime sounds the particular assembly supervisor for that area is then alerted that there is a potential problem or concern in their assigned assembly zone. The supervisor will then immediately go to his or her assigned zone to investigate the problem or concern. If the problem is big enough or can not be resolved immediately, the Vette can be removed from the assembly line to allow what ever the situation was to be rectified. This actually occurred with my car. It freaked me out at first. I was watching the assembly tech at the point where the battery was placed in the engine compartment. The assembly tech went to place the battery in it's holder and then removed the battery and pulled the cord. The assembly supervisor got to this point in the assembly line in just what seemed like a few seconds. He looked into the engine compartment and then pulled the cord the second time. This stopped the entire assembly line. And when I say it stopped the entire assembly line, that is exactly what I mean. As I stated earlier, the body and the chassis are assembled

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