

Corvette: 40 years old and still going strong

JIM ROBINSON
Metroland Car Critic

Just a badge about the size of a jam jar lid on the flank with a discreet "40" and a little lozenge in metal - half with a checkered flag the other with a red Chevy bow tie on black - says it all.

Several books have been written about the Chevrolet Corvette. They all talk about Chevrolet's gutsy move to launch "America's Sportscar" in 1953. To me it has taken an ongoing infusion of intestinal fortitude to have kept this car going through the Great Fuel Crisis and two harrowing recessions.

Ferrari is supposed to be a legend and so is Porsche. Some would say the Corvette doesn't fall into this category - too American to have panache.

Porsche and Ferrari, to name two legends, are still famous (and still building) the same kind of car 40 years on. The best-loved (some say only loved) Porsche is still rear-engined and in the form of the latest Speedster, still surprises the unwary. Ferrari still has a front-engined V12, the 465 GT, as its prestige model.

And Corvette still has a big V8 at the front driving the rear wheels and all encased in a plastic (polymer composites in 1993-talk) body. Because it has always been a big mistake to radically change American cars aimed at Americans, the Corvette has stayed even more

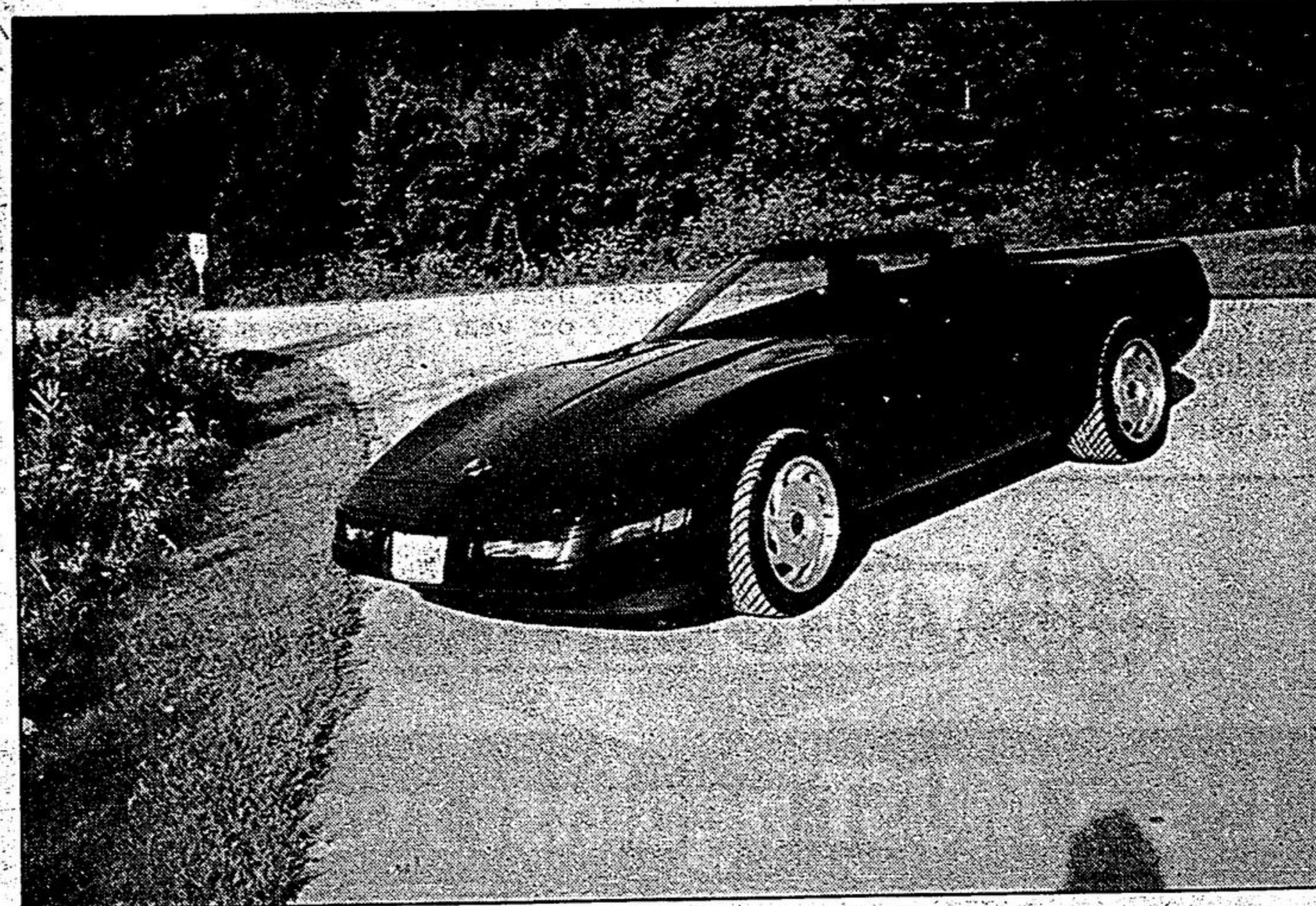
faithful to its roots than the Italian or German "legends" mentioned above.

For 1993, Corvette is offering a very limited edition 40th anniversary package on all three models of the Corvette - coupe, convertible and the redoubtable ZR1.

Prior to the big Corvette weekend at Grand Bend, GM Canada allowed me to use the 40th anniversary convertible for a week. It comes in an exclusive "Ruby Red" color inside and out and a 40th emblem on the headrest plus the badging on the sides.

As is standard, a space frame is used. This allows the entire front end to open up like a huge clam shell to expose the 5.7-litre LT1 version of GM's long-

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The Chevrolet Corvette marks its 40th year of production with a special edition of the coupe, ZR1, and convertible shown here in Ruby Red livery.

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