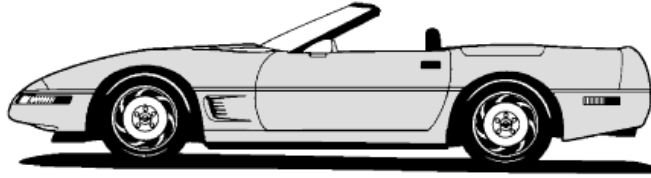


1996

To commemorate Corvette's year fourth the company offered "Edition" with a Silver exterior, as limited-run "Grand Sport" in Admiral Blue with a wide white center stripe and special detailing.



the twilight of remarkable, 13-generation (C-4), another "Collector Metallic Sebring well as a special,

The silver Collector Edition carried ZR-1 style, 17-inch, five-spoke wheels painted silver. Interiors were black, red or gray but convertible tops were limited to black.

The Grand Sport also used five-spoke, ZR-1 wheels painted black. Coupes featured rear fender flares to accommodate wider tires, whereas convertibles were built without flares. Interior color choices were limited to black, or a red-black combination. Two red "Sebring-style" hash marks were painted on the driver's side front fender.

The Grand Sport option was inspired by the five Grand Sport models built in 1963. Back then, it had been Zora Duntov's dream to build a world class Corvette. He planned to produce 125 of these 'Cobra-killers' but GM's general ban on racing and performance competition nixed the project. Although the five that were built were amazingly stock looking in appearance, they sported many features that set them apart. A 200mph speedometer, special tubular-steel frame, magnesium knock-off wheels, Plexiglas windows, 36.5 gallon gas tank and many aluminum and alloy parts were just a few of the differences. They last saw racing competition in 1966.

Yet another small block, 350ci, V-8 engine was developed exclusively for the 1996 Corvette, the LT4. It was rated at 330 horsepower, 30 more than the traditional LT1 and featured a higher compression ratio; a new aluminum head design; new camshaft profile, and roller rocker arms. The rpm redline increased to 6,300 over the 1991-developed LT1's 5,700. The LT4 was standard on the Grand Sport and optional on other models, but only with six-speed manual transmissions.

The LT1s were used exclusively with automatic transmissions, which offered better shift quality and improved torque converters. Both the LT4 and LT1 sported a new throttle body.

An electronic Selective Real Time Damping system option was introduced and it differed substantially from the previous Selective Ride option. Data from wheel travel sensors and the Powertrain Control Module were transmitted to a controller that calculated the optimum damping mode. Special shock absorbers could be individually altered every 10-15 milliseconds.

The special Performance Handling Package, a popular option in the 1984-88 models, was re-introduced with several new features. Finally, a more sophisticated, complex on-board package more than doubled its diagnostics from 60 to 140.

Production in 1996 increased nearly 800 units, with 17,167 coupes and 4,369 convertibles built. Of these, 5,412 were Collector Edition models and 1,060 were Grand Sports. The latter options added \$1,250 and \$3,250, respectively, to the price of the basic car. Base coupes sold for \$37,225 and convertibles for \$45,060.

Thus, the fourth generation of Corvette drew to a close. For 43 years Corvette had pushed the envelope in bringing style, quality, verve and innovation to the driving public.

Many of the options it introduced have become standard features on American and foreign cars built during those four decades.

Sitting behind the wheel of a powerful, high-performance, superbly handling Corvette, no matter the year or model, is a visceral experience...never to be forgotten and always to be repeated as quickly as possible.

What improvements and transformations in automotive form, function, feel and texture would lie ahead as America's own sports car entered its next generation? Only time will tell.