STORY LARRY JEWETT **IMAGES** ANDY BOLIG

PURSUIT OF POWER

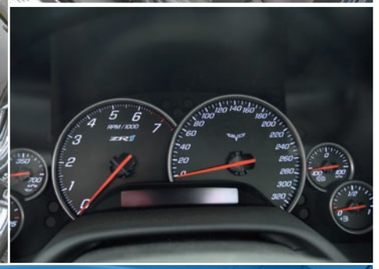
THE DRIVE FOR THE ZR1











"I WAS AMAZED THAT THE RELATIVELY MINOR EXTERNAL MODS AND TUNE WOULD YIELD AN INCREASE AT THE WHEELS OF ABOUT 85 HORSEPOWER AND 100 LBS-FT OF TORQUE."



carsandparts.com

carsandparts.com

KIRK DOBBS IS NO STRANGER TO THESE PAGES OR THE CORVETTE ENTHUSIAST COMMUNITY. WHEN YOU OWN A CAR LIKE "WILD THING", EVERYONE GETS TO KNOW YOU.

"Wild Thing" is a 2007 Z06 that is a 700-plus horsepower naturally aspirated ride with lots of modification including a paint job that steals a lot of the attention. That car has had its share of publicity, featured in the April 2010 *Corvette Enthusiast* and the December 2010 *Auto Enthusiast,* for example. Many recognize it immediately when they see it, but today, on these pages, it has to take a backseat to its stablemate. This car is worthy of attention in its own right. In a way, you could call this car the "Subtle Sister" … that is, if there is anything subtle about a car with more than 600 horsepower stock.

"When I acquired the subject 2009 Corvette ZR1, I was already fortunate enough to own the previous C6 "King of the Hill" … in fact, three of them. I had a Velocity Yellow 2006, a 2007 (Wild Thing) and a Jetstream Blue 2008. But because the ZR1 was emerging as the latest 'most powerful production car from the General', I just had to have one."

Desire is the easy part. Kirk had a geographic disadvantage that many readers don't have to endure. He and wife Lynda are residents of the province of Ontario and the allotment for Canadian cars was far less than what the shipments would be in the United States. "It was not easy, given the total allotment of them for Canada was pegged at 50 … and later turned out to be a lot less than that, but the exact number that came to Canada in 2009 I have yet to find out."

All he needed was one and he got it. "I took delivery in March, 2009 in Pembroke, Ontario. For a number of reasons, I swore that I would not modify my ZR1 for at least a year."

Kirk made good on his vow to get a ZR1, but he wasn't as successful in keeping with his word about waiting a year before modifying. Raise your hand if you think you could go a whole year, 365 days, without wanting to do something to any car you acquire. Didn't think so.

"Yes, the ZR1 was excitingly fast, but I guess Wild Thing had spoiled me with its grunt and growl because I found this car just a little too civilized for a 638 horsepower car."

And then, there was what Kirk called "The Justin Abbott Factor."

"Justin (vice president of Zip Products) orchestrated the performance transformation of Wild Thing and, once done, was anxious to start playing with my ZR1," Kirk explained.

"By August 2009, I was in Richmond, Virginia, watching it get dyno tuned after the desired mods were made. I was amazed that the relatively minor external mods and tune would yield an increase at the wheels of about 85 horsepower and 100 lbs-ft of torque."

Don't expect a list of modifications longer than your arm. We can sum it up in fewer than 20 words – Kooks long tube headers, high flow cats, CORSA Extreme exhaust, Lingenfelter LS9 supercharger pulley and snout, and a dyno tune.

The additions that have no effect on performance include Lloyds ZR1 mats and a billet grille. That's it. Nothing more.

"This definitely removed my perceived civility in the ZR1 and completely changed the character," he said. "After my experience with Wild Thing and the ZR1 transformation, I will not hesitate to do it again with future Corvette acquisitions. In fact, I will once again probably not be able to help myself.

The cars are tucked away for their long winter's nap since they don't get road time between November and April. Wild Thing has passed the 52,000 mark and the ZR1 is gaining with 32,000. When the weather is right, these cars are driven. Wild Thing has its place and gets its attention, but the ZR1 doesn't rest in its shadow. "I choose to drive the ZR1 mostly when alone and when I just want to let it go or get some driver training at a local track. It is somewhat faster and more responsive than Wild Thing. It too draws its share of attention, especially when I get on the throttle."

Kirk has his interest in the C7, waiting for the King of the Hill to show up in the latest generation. You can expect the Justin Abbott Factor to come roaring into the picture when that happens. The formula works too well to ignore as the horsepower is increased and the pleasure is maximized for Kirk's Corvettes now and in the future. ■