

A Labor of Love

Debbie and Gene Marler joined Boone Trail Corvette relatively recently, yet have attended virtually every event we've held to date, and helped work at every one they did attend. They are true Corvette people, and Debbie very much loved her 1989 convertible. When purchased, it wore the factory original Charcoal Metallic paint in decent shape. But within a few short weeks after having seen another member's custom purple Shark, she decided it was time for a new finish. Convincing her husband, Gene, and fellow member and brother, Don Forden, the car was quickly off to the body shop, where it was disassembled and shot with a custom-blend purple of Debbie's choosing. There is no other car anywhere with just that shade! Thus began an extensive upgrading of many of the convertible's features.



Debbie shortly after her Corvette's purchase.



This shows just how far disassembly went for painting!

Next up a set of chrome C4 ZR-1 style wheels and new tires, and a cat-back exhaust, all installed at MidAmerica Motorworks' Funfest in 2011. Groundwork was also laid for an all-new interior, but that would have to wait a few months until funds freed up.

Then tragedy struck. Debbie suffered a fatal heart attack in early February of 2012. Her passing has been mourned by all who knew her, including all her many friends from the Corvette club. 20 Corvettes escorted Debbie to her final resting place in a fitting tribute to her love for the Corvette community.



Some of the many Corvettes that escorted Debbie to her resting place.



Unlike many who experience such a life-shattering event, Gene chose to keep Debbie's Corvette rather than sell it, and has continued the plan he and Debbie had settled on for future modifications. First up were all new leather seat covers

in brilliant white, offering a striking contrast to the deep purple paint. Debbie had always been fond of butterflies, and had been gradually adding them in tasteful touches throughout, and wanted them embroidered on the headrests. Gene and MidAmerica's interior staff worked diligently to find a good pattern, but decided butterflies just wouldn't be practical. Instead, Gene had the headrest embroidered in a loving memorial to Debbie. Fresh black carpet was also installed and several plastic trim pieces received a fresh coat of black paint. New door panels were also ordered, but would take a few extra weeks to produce, as the white accents had to be installed at the factory during production. In all, Gene made three separate trips to MidAmerica's Effingham, Illinois facility for a very personalized installation.



The original interior was worn but serviceable.



The project began with removal of the seats....



....and pretty much everything else!



Plastic pieces get a new coat of paint.



New carpet was carefully fit and installed.



The door sills have the carpet glued to plastic backers.



And the sills are carefully aligned and fastened in place.



Next the new seat foam and skins are installed on the seats.



The mostly reassembled seats are installed.



And the finished job looks spectacular!

Now that the modifications are mostly complete, Gene shows Debbie's '89 at every event he can, and has won several awards to date. He also drove it on our Pensacola Road Trip II back in June, and continues to enjoy the Corvette in just the way he and Debbie would have. This project has indeed been a true labor of love, and the perfect way to honor Debbie's memory.

