



A dressed-up LS376 crate engine generates around 500 hp, while 18-inch rolling stock and a customized nine-inch rear end help deliver it to the ground.

# CROWN JEWEL

Ric Ferrera and CCC polish a gem of a '59 restomod

| BY HAROLD PACE | PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR |

Ric Ferrera has a collection of exotic sports cars and hot rods, but he's long had a soft spot for Corvettes, an affinity he traces back to when his favorite junior-high-school teacher sported around in a '59 and a '60. That teacher tragically passed away at an early age, and Ferrera decided to have a Corvette built as a tribute to his mentor. "I also had two other Corvettes that I loved," he says, "a 1966 and a 1968 427."

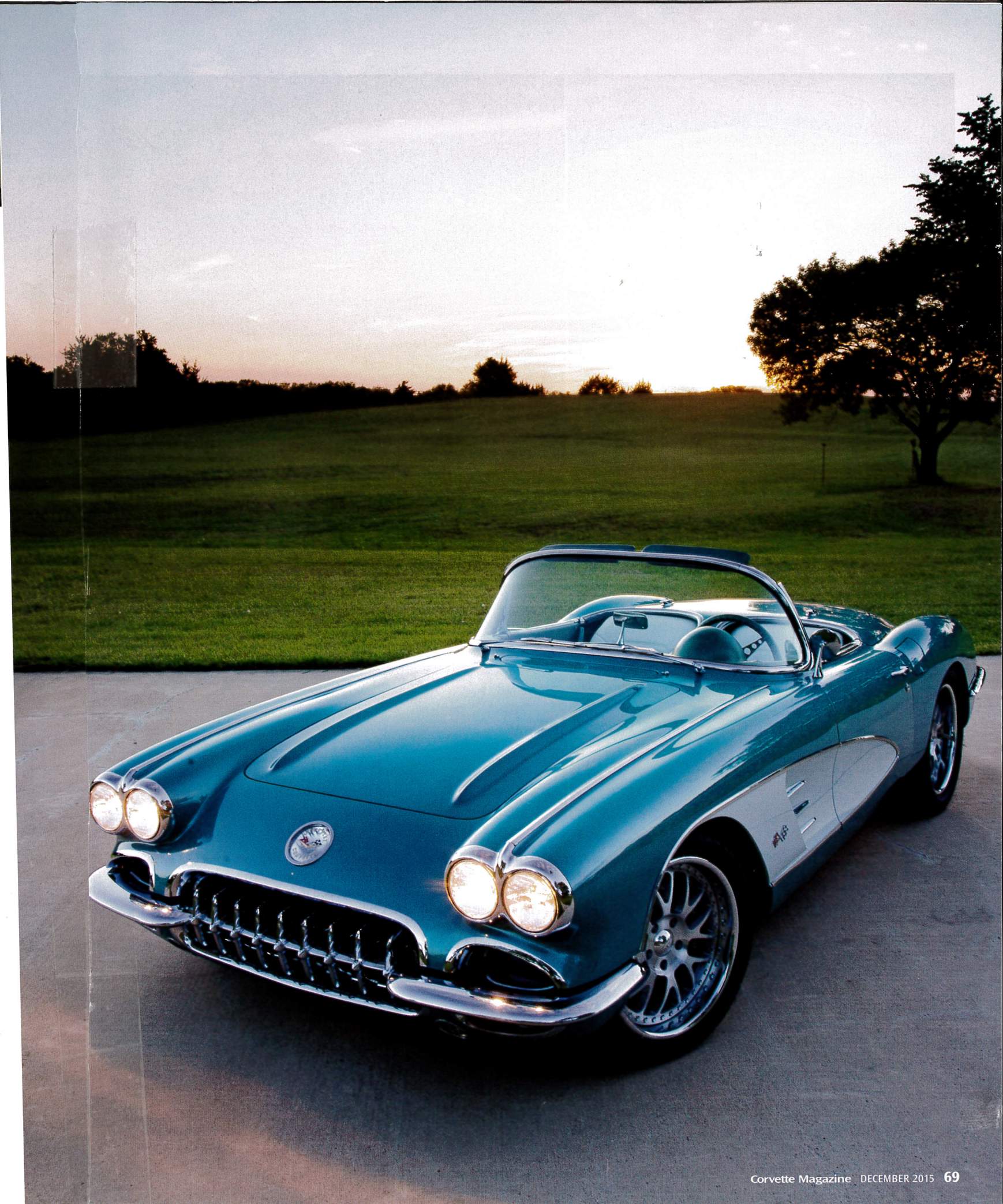
After an exhaustive Internet search, Ferrera selected Carr Campbell at Carr's Corvettes and Customs (CCC) to build a restomod for him. "I wanted it to look as original as we could, but with modern running gear," he says. "I found Carr by searching online for modified Corvettes and called him up. I had no doubt he was the guy to do the car."

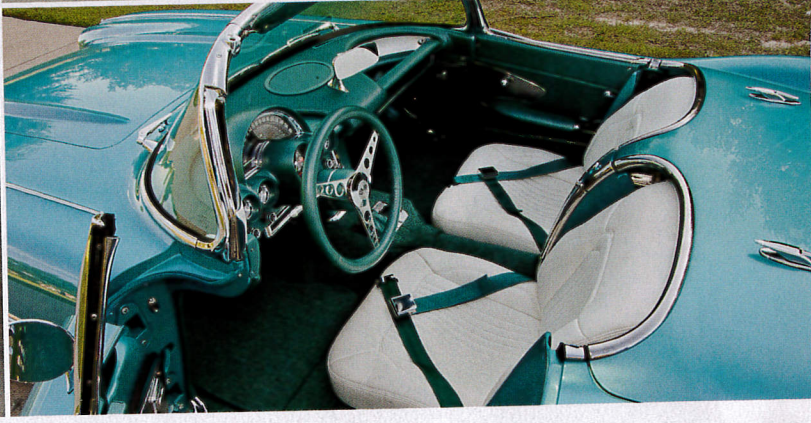
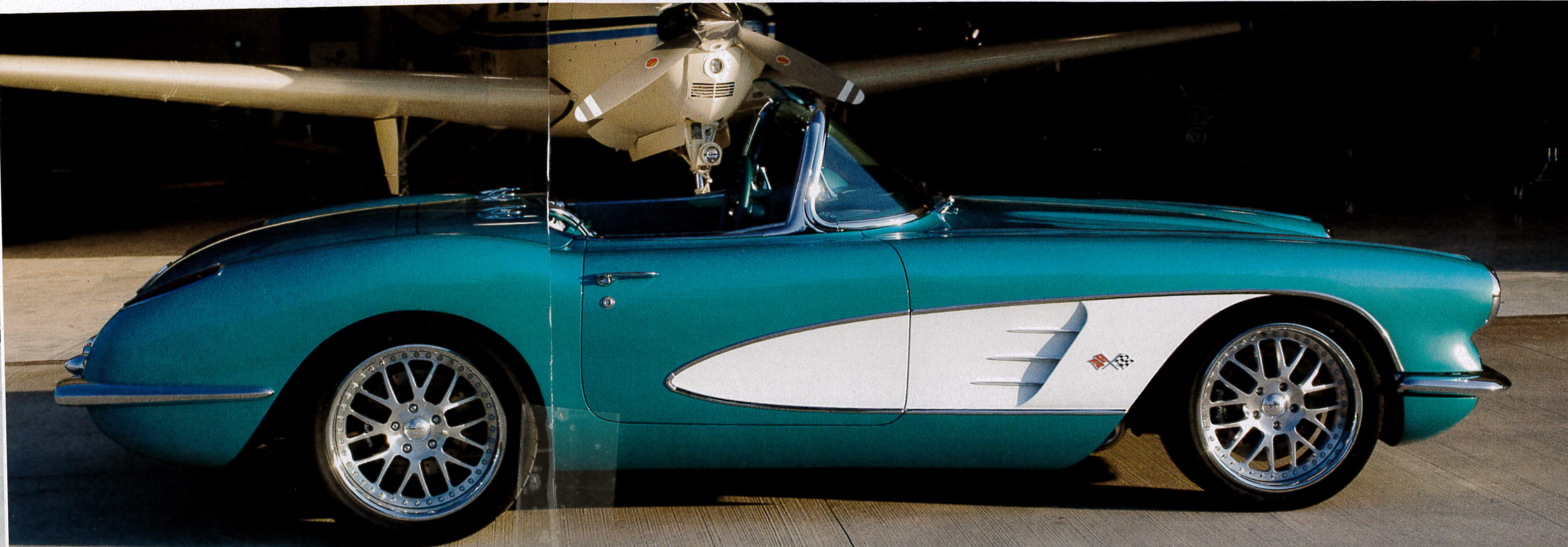
The distance between Ferrera in Kirkland, Washington, and Campbell in Plano, Texas, was-

n't a problem. "We didn't even meet face to face until last year," relates Ferrera. "Then it was like we were long-lost brothers."

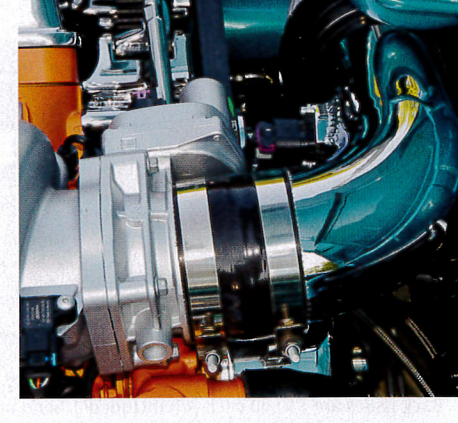
Campbell located a '59 C1 in Pennsylvania that was in rough, but fixable, condition. The engine and transmission were missing, and there was a huge hole in a rear quarter panel from accident damage. All in all, the car was worn out, and the missing running gear precluded it from being a mint restoration. "I would not have modified an original, matching-numbers car," Ferrera says.

But the one thing he didn't want to change was the car's Crown Sapphire paint. "I loved that color, and was intending to paint whatever car we found in [it]. When we discovered that the Corvette that Carr found was originally that color, I knew I was intended to have it."





One look at the car in "as discovered" form (top left) and it's clear that this was no typical restomod project. Jettisoning the rusty stock frame for an Art Morrison setup provided a suitably modern foundation, to which builder Carr Campbell bolted a tweaked LS3, a five-speed trans and manhole-sized Wilwood brakes. A high-shine take on the original Crown Sapphire paint keeps the look firmly anchored in the '50s, even if the car's performance is more in line with that of a C7.



Ferrera wanted a fast, but drivable, C1, so the chassis was replaced with an Art Morrison GT Sports Chassis mounting C6 front suspension and a triangulated, four-bar Strange/Ford 9-inch rear axle. The chassis was set up for street use, with 350-pound front springs and 170-pound rears installed in Strange coil-over shock units. Wilwood Dynalite C6 14-inch front brakes team up with 12.19-inch rear rotors by the same company, while an ABS Power Brake master cylinder and booster provide a modern pedal feel. Finally, the primitive C1 steering system was swapped out for a Detroit Speed and Engineering power rack-and-pinion setup.

In addition to looking great, the special chassis and slightly wider rear fenders provide

room for more-aggressive rolling stock. Boze 18-inch forged wheels with chrome inner and outer hoops were chosen for their slight dish, which Ferrera felt looked more "period" than flat-dish rims. Widths are 8.5 inches in front and 9.5 inches in the back. Nitto NT555 rubber (255/35 front and 275/40 rear) provides the grip.

Under the hood sits a Chevrolet Performance Parts LS376 crate motor packing a dyno-verified 417 rear-wheel horsepower (just under 500 at the crank). Features of this LS3-based, 376-cube engine include a six-bolt aluminum block with a nodular crank, high-performance rods and 10.7:1-compression pistons. It also sports a much more aggressive cam than the standard LS3

crate engine, which delivers some 50 fewer horses. Although the extra power is there when you need it, it doesn't hurt the motor's flexibility at street speeds. GM even made the electronic accelerator assembly that allows the fuel injection to work in aftermarket applications. (CCC did modify it to match the Lokar brake and clutch pedals.)

This thoroughly modern engine boasts a suitably retro look, thanks to CCC's classic Corvette-style valve covers concealing the coils and wiring. A Street & Performance chrome serpentine system also helps clean up the underhood area, while a DeWitts conversion aluminum radiator and SPAL 16-inch, aluminum-shrouded electric fan keep the hard-charging LS cool in any driving environment.

A Tremec TKO-600 five-speed supplied by Silver Sport Transmissions is charged with gear selection.

Ferrera's beloved Crown Sapphire paint is actually a particularly striking shade of turquoise. "Carr found a sample of the original paint on a hinge and matched the color to it," he notes. In a nod to modernity, CCC opted to custom mix a high-metallic version in PPG base coat/clear coat for extra sheen and "pop." Of course the paint didn't go on until the shop had fixed all the bodywork damage, widened the rear fenders by 1.5 inches to clear the wider rear rubber and perfected every panel and gap.

The interior had to be as stunning as the outside, so CCC installed turquoise leather

upholstery from Al Knoch Interiors. Knoch also supplied a set of its perforated-leather AOK seats, which are designed to retain the feel of the original buckets while providing more seating area and a greater recline angle. The rest of the cabin was upholstered by CCC using repro '59 turquoise leather, also from Knoch, while the matching molded carpet was sourced from Auto Custom Carpets. The trunk "finish out" is a custom treatment unique to the car.

The original C1 instrument cluster was retained but restored, and the tach and oil-pressure gauges were upgraded to electric operation. Other deceptively retro-look additions include a Classic Auto Air HVAC system, an Ididit steering column and a

Gabe's CON2R wheel. The latter is a bolt-on item that preserves the classic C1 styling, but in a smaller diameter that improves ingress/egress as well as maneuverability. The finishing touch is a Retro Sound radio whose OEM pushbutton looks hide inputs for modern electronics. "I doubt I will ever turn it on," admits Ferrera. "The engine just sounds too good!"

Ferrera has an impressive collection of special cars, from mint '32 Fords to a McLaren MP4-12C, but his favorite is the Corvette, which he's named "Crown Jewel." He likes driving it to Cars and Coffee events, and you might imagine, has no intention of selling. After all, where would you unearth another turquoise gem like this one? ○