

# 1960 Briggs Cunningham Le Mans #3 Corvette

The story behind the car and the  
goals for the future...



*By: Lance Miller*  
*Date: May 1, 2010*

# Facts about the 1960 Corvette #3

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- 10,261 Convertibles produced in 1960
- Date purchased by Chip Miller: Oct. 24, 2000
- Original owner: Briggs Cunningham
- Color: white with blue racing stripes & blue interior
- Engine: 290hp, 283ci
- Transmission: four speed



# Factory Options on the '60 Cunningham Corvette #3

- Heater
- Radio delete
- Windshield washers
- Temperature-controlled radiator fan
- Wheels 15" x 5.5"
- 290 hp (fuel injection) engine
- Four speed transmission
- Positraction
- Heavy-duty brakes and steering
- Hardtop only & 24-gallon fuel tank



# Added for racing in 1960

- Stewart Warner gauges in special dash plate
- Halibrand quick release fuel cap (Cunningham's team filled in the original gas door)
- Halibrand knock off wheels and rear axles w/ Firestone racing tires
- Running lights, Lucas brake lights (in addition to the stock rear lights)
- Koni competition shock absorbers, Bendix fuel pumps (2); front additional sway bar (as in 1959)
- Aircraft "jump" seats – neatly used as early racing seats
- Right hand windshield wiper transmission moved to the center of the cowl to prevent wipers from interlocking
- Brake ducting from the grille area; cooling duct from drivers side front bumper area – directed air to driver through foot well
- "Sebring" exhausts – exit in front of the rear tires; special splash pans



# Brief Corvette Racing history

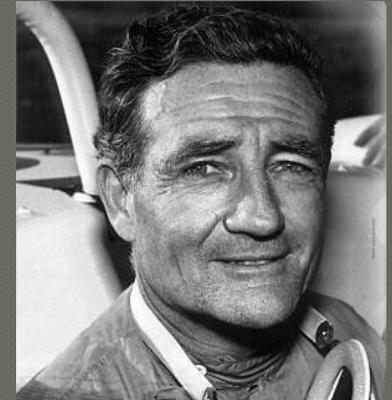
- Chevrolet pulled the plug on racing in 1957.
- The AMA (American Manufacturers Assn.) put a ban on direct factory teams.
- The mandate from AMA put a damper on Zora Duntov's dream of winning Le Mans.
- In 1960 Briggs Cunningham fielded a trio of Corvettes at Le Mans as a privateer.



# Briggs Cunningham

(Team Owner)

- Son of a wealthy Cincinnati financier who had made his fortune in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in real estate, railroads, utilities and banking.
- The elder Briggs Cunningham died while Cunningham junior was just a tyke.
- Briggs studied engineering.
- His wife, Lucy, was an avid yacht racer. Briggs and Lucy won the Bermuda's Cub in 1936 together.
- Briggs was introduced to automobiles through concours; this was the sport of wealthy gentlemen in the '30s.
- Briggs good friend, Miles Collier, would invite him to his estate where there were races held on his property. They formed the Automobile Racing Club of America (ARCA).
- Briggs traveled to various factories (GM, Chrysler & etc.) around the country and felt there were no American cars capable of winning Le Mans.
- In 1950 (age 43) Briggs took the first job of his life which was President of Cunningham Motors – his calling. It was closed down in '56 because the IRS considered it a hobby not a business (they were losing money). Briggs built plenty of race cars through this time.
- In 1958 he decided to take a break from automobiles and ended up winning the America's Cup in the "Columbia" yacht. After his victory he went back to cars once again.
- In 1960 Briggs owned a US Jaguar distributor and decided to run one Jag along with three Corvettes at Le Mans with the best-of-the-best drivers at the wheel.
- Briggs sold off his collection of cars to his buddy, Miles Collier, in 1985 as age overtook him.



Briggs Swift Cunningham II  
Jan. 1907 – July 2003

# John Cooper Fitch

(Co-Driver)

- Born in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 4, 1917.
- The first American to race automobiles successfully in Europe in the postwar era.
- Obtained an engineering degree from Lehigh University.
- A strong racing career from around the world in many various makes and models of vehicles.
- The only American EVER to be on the Mercedes factory team, and came in first-in-class and fifth overall in the 1955 Mille Miglia (out of a field of more than 600 cars) in a stone-stock 300 SL Gullwing coupe.
- Fitch served as the first manager for Chevrolet's Corvette racing team and the first general manager of Lime Rock Park.
- Inventor of the Fitch Barrier: yellow, sand-filled crash cushion used on highway safety.
- P-51 Mustang Pilot, he was shot down and a prisoner of war in WWII.
- Design & build the Fitch Phoenix, a Corvair-based sports car.
- Fitch has been the recipient of numerous awards. In addition to receiving a Presidential Citation, Theater Awards, Air Medals, a Purple Heart, and a POW Medal for his wartime service, Fitch was awarded the Stonex Roadside Safety Award in 1998 and was inducted into the Corvette Hall of Fame (2000) and the Sebring Hall of Fame (2002). He was also inducted into the New England Auto Racers Hall of Fame in 2009.
- On a more personal note, John is a wonderful human being. He's accomplished a lot throughout his life yet he's an incredibly humble approachable person. We're honored to have a true legend behind our efforts.



# Bob Grossman

(Co-Driver)

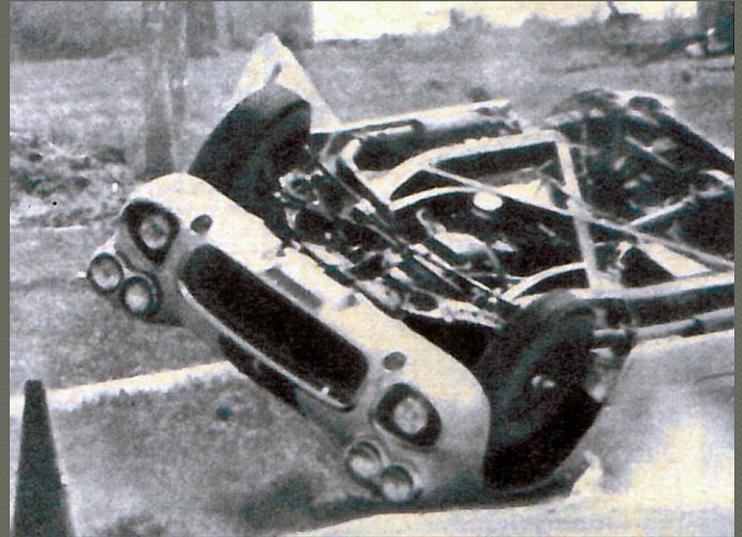
- Co-drove with John Fitch during the 1960 Le Mans class victory.
- Avid automobile enthusiast who enjoyed racing cars.
- He was a professional singer (a baritone) and served in the Army in Europe in WWII.
- 1963 he was president of the Road Racing Drivers Club.
- He was among the top 10 finishers of Le Mans 24 Hour Race in France four years in a row and captured a class champion in SCCA twice.
- After WWII he became a highly regarded dealer in foreign automobiles.
- His work as an artist included doing magazine covers for a number of news and sports publication.



Bob Grossman  
1923 – 2002

# 1960 Cunningham Corvettes

- Much like Zora Duntov, Briggs Cunningham had a vision to win Le Mans with an American car and team.
- Cunningham fielded 3 Corvettes in 1960 at the worlds most prestigious race... the 24 Hours of Le Mans.
- Two of the three Corvettes ran at the 12 hours of Sebring in 1960, the #3 Le Mans Corvette was one of the two cars (wearing #1 for this race). Briggs and John Fitch were driving the car for the 12-hour Sebring race. During the second stint the axle broke while John Fitch was at the wheel and the car lost a wheel & flipped (see above pic).
- The car was a DNF, of course, but it was fixed for Le Mans and given the #3 to wear.



# 1960 Le Mans Race

- The trio of Cunningham Corvettes were white with blue stripes that traditionally identified American entries in international racing.
- Three pairs of racers were on the team: Cunningham and Bill Kimberly; Dick Thompson and Fred Windridge; and John Fitch and Bob Grossman. Zora Duntov was listed as a reserve driver but did not drive in the race.
- There were 55 entries and four Corvettes in the race (the fourth car was the Camoradi Corvette).
- Cunningham Corvette #1: Kimberly crashed the Corvette during a heavy rain storm at the 3-hour mark.
- Cunningham Corvette #2: Thompson had to dig it out of one of the numerous sandpits that lined the circuit, and then the overtaxed engine expired in the 20<sup>th</sup> hour with Windridge at the wheel.



# #3 Cunningham Corvette

- Fitch and Grossman continued the race, running as high as 7<sup>th</sup> place overall during the cold rainy night of racing.
- During the waning hours of the race the engine overheated and lost coolant but regulations prohibited the team from refilling the radiator.
- Lap after lap the #3 Corvette would limp back into the pits; keep in mind each lap is 8.365 miles. Rules state that fluids could be added at 25-lap intervals; the #3 could barely make it a lap!
- The Cunningham team manager came up with a great idea and ordered the crew to pack the engine with dry ice from the team's catering tent.
- Overwhelming attention was given to this "show." Grossman nursed the car over the finish line with only seven Ferraris in front of it.
- The ice cooled Corvette driven by Grossman & Fitch took the checkered flag placing 1<sup>st</sup> in class (big bore GT class) and 8<sup>th</sup> place overall.



# Corvette victory at Le Mans held!

- 1960 was the first time in history a Corvette ever won its class at the famous Le Mans 24 Hour race.
- The 1960 Cunningham Corvette #3 held this title for over 40 years!
- In June 2001 the General Motors factory supported #63 C5-R Corvette that placed 1<sup>st</sup> in GTS class and ironically enough 8<sup>th</sup> overall in Le Mans just like in 1960!



John Fitch and Bob Grossman enjoying life after the victory of the 1960 Le Mans race!

# What happened next?

- After the Le Mans race, Briggs Cunningham sent the cars back to the United States.
- Once the race cars were sent back to the US, the chief mechanic was ordered to strip all of the race parts off the cars and put them back to street trim.
- All three Cunningham Corvettes were re-painted white and were sold as street cars.
- The roll bar, larger gas tank and halibrand wheels were still on the vehicles.
- #1 Cunningham Corvette is still being sought after today (2010).
- #2 Cunningham Corvette is owned by Bruce Meyer located in California (2010)
- #3 is owned by the Chip Miller Family Collection located in Carlisle, PA (2010)...



# 1960 #3 Cunningham Corvette Story...

- The 1960 Cunningham Corvette #3 was sold to a privateer; and was used as a club racer for a short period of time.
- The vehicle had seven previous owners prior to my father.
- Eventually the car was restored back to a street-trim 1960 Corvette red with white coves (pictured to the right).
- The car was discovered by Corvette enthusiast Kevin Mackay back in the 1993 timeframe.
- Kevin talked to my father about the vehicle and promised him he'd provide him with the first shot to buy the car if the owner decided to sell it.
- Kevin called the owner persistently year after year to ask if he would be willing to sell the car. In October 2000, the day finally came; the owner was willing to sell his beloved 1960 Corvette (not aware it was an ex-race car).
- Kevin Mackay called my father late at night (1am) per earlier instruction from him to call whenever the car was purchased. My Dad was beside himself. The car was often referred to as the "ultimate Solid Axle Corvette."
- The car was painstakingly restored by Corvette Repair Inc. of Valley Stream, NY. No expense or detail was spared. Authentic parts were located or fabricated and the Corvette was restored accurately and to perfection in 2002.



My father checking the car out upon arrival to Carlisle, PA.

# Restoration Celebration

- The street version '60 Corvette arrived at Corvette Repair Inc. located in Valley Stream, NY. On October 27, 2000 a celebration of what went on 40 years ago took place in the restoration shop. Numerous Corvette aficionados, editors and friends in the hobby were all invited by my father and Kevin for the unveiling. Ironically enough it was also my father's 58<sup>th</sup> birthday!
- The paint was stripped off the passenger side fender first to show the audience there was no damage, ensuring this car indeed was the #3 Cunningham Corvette.
- During the remainder of the paint stripping from the car there were interviews with Bob Grossman, John Fitch, Kevin Mackay, Jim Gessner, my father and a few other Corvette icons.
- The celebration brought everyone together and was incredibly emotional for everyone involved.
- Approximately 18 months later the car was restored to perfection by the best in the business. No detail was omitted and no expense spared to ensure the vehicle was brought back to the way it was raced at Le Mans back in 1960. A brief excerpt from an interview with my father helps summarize the effort: "By the time I was done with those two little hood hold-downs, we were talking an investment of \$4,000. They were unique for Cunningham Corvettes only."



Pictured above: Bob Grossman, Chip Miller & John Fitch proudly standing in front of the pre-restored 1960 Cunningham Corvette #3.

# The End Result...

- My father's "ultimate solid axle Corvette" was brought back to life by Corvette Repair Inc. from 2000-2002.
- The restoration took 3750 man hours (18 months) with no expense or detail spared.
- The restoration was fully documented along with a 6' collage provided by Kevin Mackay to my father as a keepsake.
- In the meantime the Cunningham Corvette has generated quite a laundry list of accolades...



# Credentials

- Raced at Sebring, March 1960 – drivers were John Fitch and Briggs Cunningham – out of race early when a Halibrand wheel broke with Fitch at the wheel. The car wore #1 during this race / DNF.
- Raced at Le Mans, June 1960 – drivers were John Fitch and Bob Grossman – won its class (Grand Touring [GT] 4000-5000 c.c.) and came in eighth overall. This was the first time Corvettes raced at Le Mans and it wasn't until 2001 that a Corvette again placed 1<sup>st</sup> in class and 8<sup>th</sup> overall with the C5-R.
- Special display with body elevated above the restored chassis at Corvettes at Carlisle; August 2001.
- Meadow Brook Concours d'Elegance, Detroit, August 2002
- NCRS National Event, Monterey, CA, Aug. '02 – previewed for American Heritage Award
- Monterey Historics, Monterey, CA, displayed in the Chevrolet tent; Aug. '02
- Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance – special display Aug. '02
- Chip's Choice #180, Corvettes at Carlisle, Carlisle, PA; Aug. '02
- NCRS National Event, Hershey, PA, July '03 – American Heritage Award
- Chip's Choice #187, Corvettes at Carlisle; Carlisle, PA, Aug '03 (Chip Miller Collection theme)
- Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, Amelia Island, FL, March '04 (rain out)
- Bloomington Gold Special Collection XXI – “Great Stories,” June '05
- Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance; Amelia Island, FL 1<sup>st</sup> in Class, March '06
- Chip's Choice #242, Corvettes at Carlisle; Carlisle, PA; Aug '07 (Chip Miller Collection theme)
- Amelia Island Coucours d'Elegance 1<sup>st</sup> Place in Corvette Category; March '08
- Chip's Choice #266, Corvettes at Carlisle; Carlisle, PA, Aug '09 (Le Mans Corvette theme)
- Bloomington Gold Grand Finale, June '09
- 24 Hours of Le Mans 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, June '10



# The DREAM!

- My father often mentioned his dream to take his beloved 1960 Cunningham Corvette, along with John Fitch, back to Le Mans in 2010 - exactly 50 years later to reunite the car and driver!

*Written by my father in the 2003 Corvettes at Carlisle Event Magazine page 36...*

## *Chip's Choice*

### **CHOICE 187 cont'd from page 35**

- Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, Amelia Island, Fla., March, 2003 – a rain-out
- NCRS National Event, Hershey, Pa. – July 2003 – American Heritage Award
- Articles in NCRS Driveline, Corvette Quarterly, Corvette Fever, Vette Vues, many others

**Documentation:** Almost endless – binders currently measuring 46 inches in width full of letters, original correspondence, race photos, restoration photos, articles, Internet info, catalogs – like I say, almost everything. Video taken as the car was stripped of paint and a half dozen of the most knowledgeable people in the early Corvette race car com-

munity in attendance. Also present were the two drivers from LeMans: John Fitch and Bob Grossman

Neatest piece: Briggs Cunningham's original FIA drivers license – 1960. The very one he presented to register my car for both Sebring and LeMans and to enter as a driver at Sebring! Ah, the magic of eBay.

**Dream:** Take to LeMans in June 2010 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its grandest race. I hope John Fitch (he'll be 92 years of age in June 2010) will be able to take some laps with me – sure, we'll take turns driving!

# The bad...

- March of 2004 my best friend, mentor and incredible father passed away from a little known disease called amyloidosis. He was 61 years of age.
- Promptly upon my father's passing we started the Chip Miller Charitable Foundation (more info can be found by visiting [ChipMiller.org](http://ChipMiller.org)).
- *The mission of the CMCF is to empower people with the knowledge and understanding of amyloidosis for earlier detection, ensuring a better quality of life for those afflicted with the disease and to help science find the cures.*
- This mission comes simple. If my father had been diagnosis earlier, there's a good chance he'd be fulfilling his dreams today...



Donations may be made online at: [www.ChipMiller.org](http://www.ChipMiller.org).

# My Father's Dream...

- The bond my father and I had was incredibly special to me.
- I did what any other son would do... ensure my father's dream came alive!
- I'm thrilled to announce in June 2010 the 1960 Cunningham Corvette #3 will be at the world's most prestigious 24-hour endurance race held in Le Mans, France.
- The original driver of the car, Mr. John Fitch, has agreed to be part of the festivities.
- My mother, Kevin Mackay (the restorer) and his wife Christina, along with some other friends will be attending the Le Mans 24 Hour Race in June.
- Some of the plans include...



Chip Miller standing by his prized possession.

# Plans for the 1960 Corvette #3

- A friend, Michael Brown who is the President/Owner of Michael Brown Productions, Inc. ([www.mbpvideo.com](http://www.mbpvideo.com)), will be documenting/filming our Le Mans effort to help capture it.
- The car will be sea freighted over to France and will take up to four weeks to arrive.
- Once it arrives safely in Le Harve, France the car will be transported from the port to the legendary Le Mans Museum and will be showcased there for a few days prior to the race.
- GM will provide a Corvette Corral area for the weekend, where the 1960 will be featured throughout the race.
- The “Great British Welcome” is a car event leading up to the race that will be featuring the Corvette marquee this year; they would like to showcase the 1960 Corvette. Doug Fehan, Corvette Racing Program Manager, will be the guest of honor for this event.
- Later Friday evening the car will stage for the “Grande Parade Des Pilotes” (drivers parade) where 400,000-500,000 race enthusiasts are able to catch a glimpse of their favorite drivers. This will be quite an honor!
- Friday after the parade, the vehicle will be taken back to the Corvette Corral where an annual Pig Roast is planned.
- Saturday morning the 1960 Cunningham Corvette will be driven by John Fitch with yours truly in the passenger seat around the famous Le Mans race circuit with approximately 50 Corvettes following. This will be an incredibly emotional moment; I know my father will be looking down with his beautiful and genuine smile. He'll be proud to know his dream indeed did come alive, through me.
- For the remainder of the race, the car will be displayed at the Corvette Corral area for spectators to enjoy!



Lance Miller along with John Fitch in front of #3!

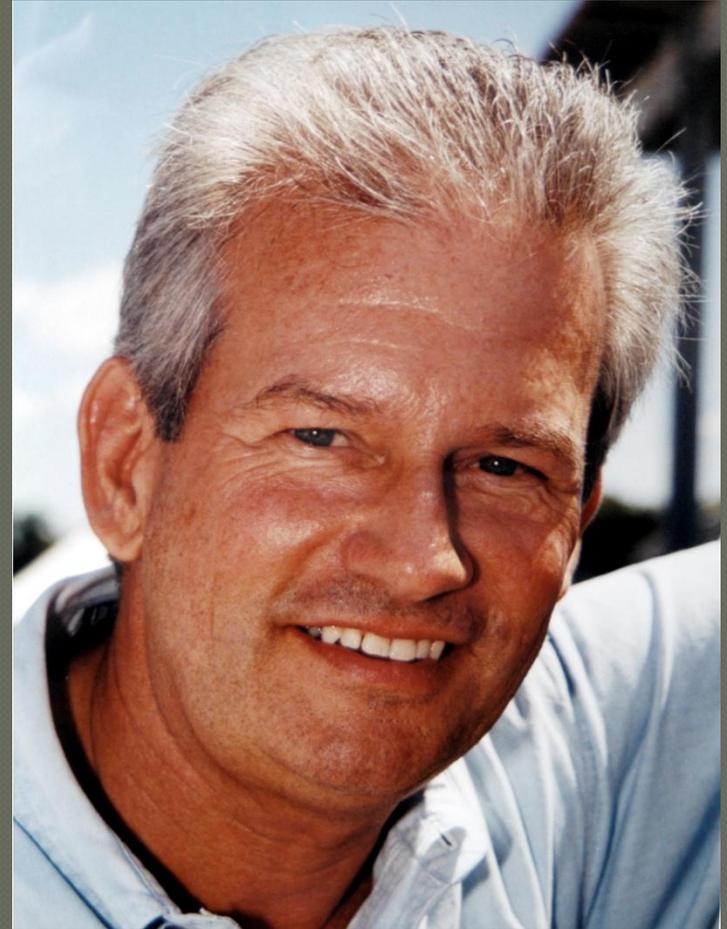
# GM Plans

- Corvette Designer, Kirk Bennion, produced artwork that will be used on apparel to focus on the 50 year anniversary of Corvette Racing. These items will be sold during the 2010 edition of Corvettes at Carlisle and Le Mans 24 hour race.
- This is an honor in itself!



# Life is good...

- My father was often heard saying “LIFE IS GOOD!”. He not only lived through these simple words he taught me and many others to live by them as well. I’m fortunate to have had him in my life in such a large capacity and I don’t take a second we had together for granted.
- Dad, this trip is for you. I love you and miss you dearly... enjoy the view!



*Follow our '10 Le Mans trip online at: [www.chipmiller.org](http://www.chipmiller.org).*