

24th Annual Corvette Convention - Feb 13, 14 & 15, 2004
Wellington, New Zealand

The following is a run-down of the event, but first an aside:

In October of 2003, the team at Capital Corvette hosted a Performance Car & Bike Show to raise funds towards the cost of hosting the upcoming Corvette Convention.

The show was a modest financial success, and this was despite the weather doing it's best to wash out the whole affair. From Friday morning until Sunday morning the whole Wellington district was lashed with astonishingly heavy rain. The main State Highway just north of Wellington was even closed for approx 24 hours due to a massive mud slide, preventing one exhibitor from showing his car, and restricting many paying customers to a Sunday afternoon visit. Ultimately the storm was to be the worst to hit the region in something like 40 years!

Now, something like that couldn't happen to us twice ... or could it?

Friday February 13th dawned fine, a little cloudy, and breezy by Wellington standards. But it was downright windy by the standards of our visitors.

Cars began trickling into The Museum Hotel car park around mid-day, and by around 6.00pm almost everyone had arrived. We had a couple of cars from the very south of the South Island, a thousand kilometres away, and many from near the top of the North Island, which is almost as far away. Plus cars from most points in between to make for a total of 75 cars.

There were a couple of '58 models, plus one of almost everything more recent, right through to a couple of ZR1s, a 2002 convertible that had been in the country for only four days, and even a Z06. But even more importantly, there were many familiar faces, plus some newcomers to keep things interesting. We even had Richard and Victoria DeMay from Farmington, Michigan, who had timed their holiday to NZ to coincide with the convention. They travelled down with the team from Auckland. Their red '69 Roadster wouldn't fit in their suitcase for the trip to NZ but they were nonetheless extremely welcome.

After a short welcome speech by our club president, and introductions of the committee, etc, enjoyed over finger food and refreshments, the gathering broke up into smaller groups and drifted off to nearby Courtenay Place in search of their preference amongst the many restaurants and bars in

the area. A late night was had by some but no names will be mentioned.

Saturday February 14th was Valentines Day. And it rained throughout the early hours of the morning, prompting many of the committee to lie awake staring at their ceilings and ponder worriedly. They weren't wondering what to buy their beloved on this special day. They were trying to imagine how they were supposed to host a Show 'n' Shine later that morning!

Te Papa, a Maori name which loosely translates to "our place" is the National Museum of New Zealand. It stands almost directly opposite the hotel, and in fact was the original site for the four storey hotel prior to it being moved across the road to its present home. It was an engineering feat which made world headlines. But I digress.

The show 'n' shine was to be held in front of the main doors to the museum. But there was no way the public could enjoy an outdoor show, given the weather. A hurried phone conference with Te Papa management produced a kind offer to use their indoor car park, which they subsequently closed to the public for a few hours at a considerable loss of revenue. It was very generous of them, especially considering they were already hosting the overflow of overnight parking for the Corvettes that wouldn't fit in the hotel car park, and once again for free.

We soon had all the cars arranged in a very casual setting, with a few cars parked outside to guide or lure the public indoors. And then, at exactly 9.00am, which was the start time for the show, who would have believed it possible, but the rain stopped and the sun came out!

With the public beginning to mill around, it was deemed too dangerous to move the cars outside, so we simply made the best of it. The plan even called for one of our members to use his yellow '94 Corvette to pick up the Mayor from her home, much to her delight. After a few words of official welcome, a relaxing couple of hours were spent viewing the cars, during which time the public and the conventioners also completed voting slips, voting under different categories.

At 11.00am the cars were formed into pre-arranged groups of ten, and then with each group being led by a local, they cruised along the harbour side of the normally-restricted waterfront park, out onto the city streets, then north for a one hour trip over a nearby range of hills to a district called Wairarapa.

A sumptuous BBQ-style lunch was enjoyed outdoors in a secluded farm-like atmosphere. The food included your choice

of carved-before-your-eyes beef, lamb, or pork, all washed down with a responsibly restrained ale or two. Fantastic!

After lunch a brave few tried their hand at a reasonably simple driving course set out in an adjacent paddock. It seems that despite a detailed briefing, as well as a demonstration as to the correct route and method of negotiating the cones, some of our members had trouble comprehending plain old English. A few subsequently went awry, with sometimes hilarious results as judged by the crowd of fellow Corvette owners watching from a safe distance.

All too soon it was time to leave and enjoy a leisurely trip back to Wellington, with plenty of time in hand for the ladies to ready themselves for the Valentines Day dinner later that evening, once again at a facility within the Museum of New Zealand, or Te Papa. Unfortunately, the rain came back with a vengeance during the late afternoon, prompting some of our ladies to avail themselves of the hotel courtesy vehicle for the trip across the road ... their hair you see ... I'm sure you understand ...

Dinner was very enjoyable, and made more so by the band, of which one of the Capital Corvette team is a member. After midnight we drifted back to the hotel and descended upon the room of one of the party-hard brigade, whereupon another late night was had by many. There are stories to tell but unfortunately I swore an oath of secrecy.

Sunday dawned ... you guessed it ... wet. Fortunately the rain eased to drizzle while we convoyed the cars through the central city to the grounds of Parliament, where we had kindly been given permission to assemble the cars for a group photo. Many of our people also took advantage of a guided tour through parts of Parliament, with most finding it interesting. Possibly because being Sunday, there wasn't a single politician to be seen.

For the next hour or so, the rained stayed away, making the beginning of the mystery tour around Wellington rather enjoyable. The huge waves pounding the south coast of the city were later remarked upon by many of the out-of-towners. Once we realised the people were impressed and amazed by the waves, rather than annoyed or frightened by them, the locals quickly pointed out that we'd arranged the waves specially, as part of the tour. Yeah, right!

The rain arrived in time for the lunchtime end of the tour at a local waterfront destination, with a few getting soaked during the dash from the car park to the restaurant. After lunch it was time for the raffles to be drawn, the AGM to be held, a proposal from our friends in the Deep South for the 2005 convention, and general farewells. Despite the rain,

the mood was warm and relaxed, and everyone we spoke with seemed to have enjoyed themselves very much.

Which was just as well. The almost torrential rain continued throughout the night, throughout the next day, and created havoc across much of the North Island. Ferry sailings were cancelled, stranding our South Island visitors for a further two days. And road closures due to flooding stranded much of the Auckland contingent before they had travelled more than a few hours north of Wellington.

We'd done it again, with the "Capital Corvette Storm" producing previously unheard of levels of flooding in many areas, and going down in the history books as the worst storm in a hundred years!

Sadly, there was wide spread damage, with many people losing their homes, as well as stock losses in many farming areas. It would seem that our Corvette people counted a delay during their trip home as a very minor thing when compared with the losses suffered by many. Fortunately there seems to have been no reported loss of life.

A series of photos and news items at <http://xtramsn.co.nz/news/0,,3882-3091679,00.html> captures a little of what the country experienced. Photos from part of the Wellington region can be seen at <http://www.svn.co.nz/archives/2004March/febloods.html>

Going by recent history, the team at Capital Corvettes seriously doubts the country will survive, should we ever decide to host another major event.

The Capital Corvette team wishes to once again thank all those overseas Corvette Clubs who sent their good wishes, newsletters, photographs, tee-shirts, caps, and a host of other fascinating items. It made for an impressive display and added a very special dimension to what was a fantastic weekend of Corvette fun and friendship.