

Marc Haibeck

By David Hetrick



Photo By Marc Lebryk

When you want to get good at something it takes persistence. When you want to be great at something it takes passion. When it comes to our ZR-1s, Marc Haibeck has that passion.

Growing up in the Midwest on the south side of Chicago, Marc grew up with a fascination of all things mechanical. A mechanical mind is never at rest, rather it is always wondering why and how things do what they do. That usually means popping off factory backing plates to see what's inside, and that's exactly what Marc did. Whether it was an old clock or anything mechanical, Marc's trusty screwdriver helped him reveal the secrets inside.

The more mechanically complex something is, the more interesting it has to be in the mind of a mechanically inclined person. For this type of person, an automobile is a fantastic machine full of interesting and complex devices that comprise that comprise the whole. Marc loved cars, and there was no job too great that would stop Marc from helping his high school friends repair and modify their old jalopies. This provided Marc with a fundamental education on automotive design and engineering, and his mechanical knack with cars also helped him develop many friendships in school as well as a following, even back then.

One of his friends purchased a brand new 1968 SS396 Chevelle during his senior year, and asked Marc to tweak more horsepower out of it. Even though Marc didn't exactly know where to

start, he definitely didn't want to say no when access to a car like that became available. With research and careful study, he happily started wrenching on his friend's pride and joy and found more power.

This interest in cars didn't end in high school, rather it carried over to his college days where he would do odd jobs on friends and family's cars in his mother's garage. It also helped Marc get through college by paying for tuition and books. After finishing school, he had a decision to make. Should he go into automotive engineering or electronics engineering? After some advice from



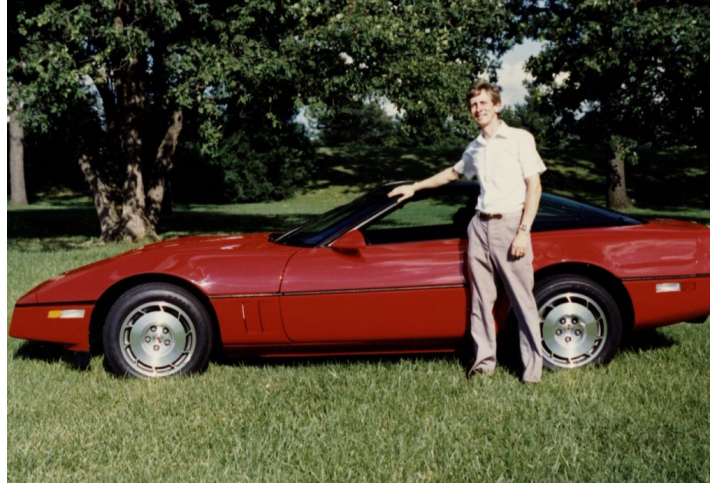
a close college friend, he chose to pursue the electronics engineering path. This resulted in a position with a prestigious physics lab called Fermilab where he worked in the computer maintenance department for 23 years.

During his time with Fermilab, Marc didn't forget his love of performance cars. During the mid-seventies, he built a drag car

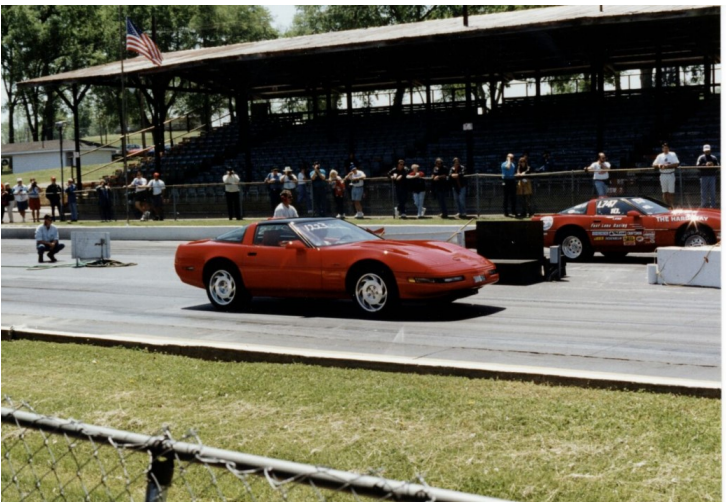


out of a 71 Vega in his spare time. He shoe-horned a 350 small block into the Vega and topped the V8 with a set of dual quads and slicks to put the power down; the Vega ran 10.8 second quarter mile times! So what got Marc interested in Corvettes?

Marc was at the local Chevrolet dealership to pick up parts for his 1975 Camaro, which he used as both daily driver and week-



in the garage being admired, he raced the heck out of it! Marc and his Corvette could regularly be found tearing up the road-racing track at Blackhawk Farms Raceway in South Beloit, Illinois. This 1.95 mile, 7 turn circuit allowed Marc to actually understand the capabilities of his Corvette, which he certainly could never do on the street. Marc was in his element, racing the most technologically advanced automobile on a racetrack, at



a time when Corvette completely dominated SCCA's Escort Endurance Championship season in the Street Stock class—essentially the same Z51 Corvette that he was driving. While the Corvette was all he ever dreamed of, Marc felt that the chassis was capable of handling much more power.



end road race car. The Camaro had a built engine and provided Marc with a lot of enjoyment—it was fast! Despite Marc's content with his Camaro, he couldn't turn down a salesman's offer to take a brand-new 1986 Corvette with a Doug Nash 4+3 transmission and for a spin. To quote Marc: "once I drove the Corvette, I was totally hooked. That 20-minute drive was all it took." The Corvette had nearly the performance of his built Camaro, but it was completely stock and it handled and stopped like nothing he had ever driven before. Right off the showroom floor, the Corvette had the performance he had been striving for with his Camaro without even breaking a sweat. The following week, Marc went back to the dealership and placed his order for a new 1986 Z51 Corvette with the Doug Nash 4+3 transmission.

Marc's new Corvette was his pride and joy, but it didn't just sit

Fast forward to 1988, Marc heard rumors of a 380hp engine that GM was developing, and followed the articles in the automotive magazines closely to see if anything would amount to the rumors. After a while, articles started to appear in Car and Driver and other publications. When the rumors turned to be viable, Marc decided to sell his 86 Z51 Corvette in order to capture his investment before its value dropped. This doesn't mean that he was one of the first to purchase a 1990 ZR-1, rather Marc modulated his enthusiasm to purchase a ZR-1 against the staggering dealer markup demanded for the first year ZR-1. While painful, Marc opted to wait.

Marc visited different Chevrolet dealers every month or so until 1992, when he found a dealer that would sell a 1993 ZR-1 for the sticker price. His diligence paid off as not only did he get the Corvette of his dreams, but he got it at a fair price with the more evolved LT5 engine. This is the same ZR-1 he owns today.

Marc's 1993 ZR-1 inadvertently helped usher him into the automotive repair and performance industry, focusing on Corvette ZR-1s. In 1997, our ZR-1 Net Registry founder, David Bright, began an email list of ZR-1 owners called the "ZR-1 Net". Marc began helping owners with technical problems on the ZR-1 Net, and to his delight, he began helping people fix their cars without even seeing them. He acquired so much knowledge of electronics from his work in advanced electronics at FermiLab, studies in collage, and practical experience tinkering with the electronic components on his ZR-1.

This was at a time when many dealers weren't quite ready for the technology that the ZR-1 with its LT5 presented, says Mr. Haibeck, so the community did what they could to help each other out. In 1999, Marc thought to himself, "if I could fix cars for people across the country, I could build myself a hobby shop, and if I could make enough to pay the rent, I would have the shop to work on my own stuff". This is how Marc made the fateful decision to rent an industrial space about 10 minutes from his home and open Haibeck Automotive Technology. At first, Marc continued to work at his day job at FermiLab, and spend his evenings at his performance shop.

A few of Marc's first customers, Terry Farber, ex-Trans Am series race car driver, and Debbie Hanson, were very popular ZR-1 open road racers, attended many ZR-1 events, and are well respected amongst the ZR-1 community. They were thrilled with Marc's work, and posted their sentiments about Marc on the ZR-1 Net. These and subsequent posts about the quality of Marc's work led to him being commissioned to build a 415ci LT5 for Dwight Eickmeier who took a chance on Marc even though he was an established customer of another LT5 engine builder. That 415ci LT5 was such a success that Dwight's enthusiasm spread



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to other owners looking to reliably make more power from their LT5s. As if the sun and moon finally aligned, in 2003 FermiLab a large number of employees an early retirement package. As Marc put it, "in two seconds" he took the package and shifted wholeheartedly over into his automotive performance business. Within a year, his son Bob joined him as a partner and father and son have been able to turn wrenches together now for about 13 years. Bob has the same passion as his father, and is an expert at building LT5 engines. He's especially skilled at measuring clearances and custom timing camshafts, and always looking to figure out how to make more reliable power.

Looking to the future, Marc is optimistic that the ZR-1 and LT5 will continue to be viable well into the future, and believes that there is so much potential in the design. He is not concerned about the lack of any replacement parts, rather believes that when an item becomes hard to find or a problem becomes much more serious that solutions always seem to be found. Marc and Bob remain steadily busy on just ZR-1 repair and modifications, which keeps the rent paid and affords Marc time to tinker with components, and continue to provide us with very informative articles each month for the Heart of the Beast!



Inaugural Jeal & Sons Camp LT5 July 24, 1999 Hook Norton, England



Pictured

Back: Toby Johnson, Jim Milstead, Geoff Jeal, Paul Deinert, Bill Kirchhofer, Jon Baker, Corey Hender-son, Will Barrett, Tyrenè Townsley, Tyler Townsley

Middle: Jennifer Johnson, Jeanne Milstead, Paul Gamsa, UNK, Daniel Jeal, (begin kneeling) Abby, Billy, Jordi Argudo, Eric Helling, UNK

Front: Marc Haibeck, Leslie Jeal