

The Volt Vette Project



Chapter 1

For the past 20 years I have wanted to own an electric car. But, after seeing the film "Who Killed the Electric Car" I felt that if I wanted such a car, I would have to make one, myself.

Why an electric car?

Most of you know why. Save money. Don't have to buy an air filter, oil filter, fuel filter, Muffler, spark plug, and so on.

Save the planet. No greenhouse gases.

Step 1. Join the Electric Automobile Association.

Step 2. Read, read, read everything I can find on converting cars to electricity.

Read that of all the people who try to do a conversion, 80% fail!
Make note to myself, "Do NOT Fail."

Step 3. Go to EAA meetings. Get advice. Test-drive a few electrics.

Step 4. Pick a car. Spend 2 months looking for the right car!

So What Is The Right Car?

This question can keep electric car buffs talking all night. I will boil it down a little. You want a car that will slip through the air as smoothly as possible, with as little drag as possible. You want a car you can easily get parts for. The car should not be too heavy. Example: If a car has a curb weight of 3,000 lb and a maximum safe weight of 3,250 lb., that's bad. A car with a curb weight of 2,000lb and a max weight of 4,000lb gives you a lot of wiggle room for all the heavy batteries you plan to drop in.

But the most important consideration is: (drum roll) Do you like the car you are going to convert? If you pick a Ford Pinto, but you hate driving a Pinto, it's hard mentally to spend hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars on a conversion. A book I read on electric car conversions said the Chevy S 10 pickup was the way to go for a trouble free conversion.

But my wife, Joyce, wants a hatchback. A used Honda Civic? Hard to find at a reasonable price. A Mazda 626? Reasonable price, but no hatchback. A new Honda Fit? It's so popular; I'm told I would have to wait 4 months to get one.

I visit my Dad. He has a new coffee table book on Corvettes. In the back of the book it has rows of dry facts on all the models from 1953 to 2003. I notice the curb weight of many Corvettes is less than my Saturn. A crazy idea pops into my head. But first, I must make a confession. I am the same age as George the Bush and when I was young and irresponsible, I, with a little help from my friends, I restored a 1963 Corvette. It is my secret sin, but gee it was fun to drive.

