

The Volt Vette Project

Chapter 19

Boxed In

A magazine photographer is coming over to do a shoot on the Volt Vette. I hurry to get ready.

The forward battery box looks ugly, but it fits. A snug fit, but hopefully not too snug. A coat of paint helps to cover my poor workmanship. I try to put 4 batteries in the box, but seem to have room for only three and nine tenths batteries.

I measure. Close, but workable. I hold the forth battery above the box, and let go. The battery drops like a 70-pound hammer. The fiberglass box lets out a short scream but does not crack. I bolt the battery box to the car frame. (As it turned out, all the cleaning and fussing was wasted; the magazine shrunk the article and eliminated the photographs.)



The photographer shows up with an impressive array of cameras, lenses, and lights.

I was prepared for a lot of questions, but he has only one: "Where does the gasoline engine go?"

I explained that this was an Electric car project. But I could understand his confusion. I too had listened to radio talking heads explaining that electric cars are impossible.

But after the photographer had left, I found out what was actually impossible; getting the batteries back out of the box!

I grabbed the handle of the first battery and gave it a tug. That failed, so I grabbed with both hands and gave it a hard jerk, and then I felt like a jerk when the battery handle broke off in my hand!

Time for the big guns.

I rolled up the engine hoist and attached it to a different battery. But applying upward pressure only deformed the handle. Time for a minute of hopeless despair!



OK. Go to plan "C". I wrap a leather glove around the handle of the third battery before attaching the steel hook. I hope this will reduce the stress on the handle caused by the hook. I work the hoist very slowly, but the battery remained unmoved. As I continued to work, the awful truth hit me. I was lifting the whole front end of the car!



Not knowing what else to do, I gave the battery a sideways knock with a rubber mallet. Instantly the Vette fell away from the battery. I could stop sweating bullets.

Once I had the batteries out of the box, I looked closely at the inside surface. The fiberglass was bumpy and that cut down on the useable space. Get out the sandpaper and remove all bumps. Still too tight.

New plan. I sand down the plastic ridge at the top of the batteries. Not too much, just a little. That works. The batteries fill the box without jamming.

But, I'm not out of the woods. The hood hinges are bolted back in place and they press hard against the side of the front battery box. The box has to be sanded down to give the hinges the needed clearance. Too much time spent on one box.

The Volt Vette will go on public display on May 3, 2008 at the Living Green Expo and there is much to do before then. I would be burning the midnight oil if it didn't pollute so much.