

After Decades Apart, Villager Again Owns Another '61 Corvette

It may not be a family vehicle, but the clean lines and classic details still attract admirers.

By **AMBER HAIR**
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THE VILLAGES

Rudy Neustadter originally had a black 1962 Pontiac with a burgundy interior.

His best friend had a 1961 Corvette.

Then they saw each others' cars and fell in love.

After talking it out with each other, Neustadter and his friend switched cars, even to the point of taking over each other's payments on the cars they'd originally bought. That's how Rudy got his first Corvette.

He had to give it up a few years later, when he got married to his wife, Barbara.

"A two-seater isn't good for a family," Neustadter said.

The interruption was temporary. Neustadter, of the Village of Fernandina, found his way back

to the brand when he bought a '62 some years later, a car that he had for 30 years.

He sold it to buy a 2003 Corvette in 2008. The 2003 Corvette was a 50th anniversary edition, which meant it had an exclusive color — Anniversary Red — and the one that Neustadter had was a convertible.

While Neustadter was visiting his family, though, he traded it in. His son and daughter-in-law had seen a '61 Corvette, the same model that he'd originally had, and they let him know where it was.

The car, a light-tan convertible shined to a high gloss, had been restored about eight years prior to when Neustadter got the vehicle. It came with white-wall tires and an interior that matched the color of the car.

"The '61-'62 body era was the style I liked," Neustadter said.

With the VIN number, Neustadter was able to track down

more details about the car: In a run of almost 11,000 cars made for that model year, this car had been the 108th off the line at St. Louis, with the official build date listed as Sept. 6, 1960.

The '61 was part of the first generation of Corvettes, known now as C1, which spanned from 1953, the year the Corvette first went into production, to 1962. This generation had solid rear axles, whereas the next generation marked the start of independent rear suspension in Corvettes.

More details about the original car have been lost to time. A fire out of St. Louis destroyed the records from 1953 to 1961, which means the exact history of everything that was available with the car when it rolled off the line at St. Louis is unavailable.

A few years later, when Neustadter went back to the dealership where he traded in his 2003 Anniversary Edition, he discovered it was still there — the

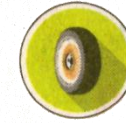
1961 Corvette Roadster



Engine:
V-8



Transmission:
Four-Speed Manual



Wheelbase:
102 inches



Base Price:
\$3,934



Miles per Gallon:
14.6 Combined

dealer hadn't sold it yet.

"My wife isn't too happy with the '61," said Rudy. "It doesn't have any creature comforts. No air conditioning, no power steering, no power brakes. That's why we got the '03 back."

Those features, which came with later years and models, could be added to the '61 to some degree, but to add those features would decrease the value of the car.

With his history of owning and admiring the brand, Neustadter joined the Corvette Club in 2010, when he and Barbara moved to The Villages. The neighborhood they moved to had a few other Corvette fans as well.

"The neighbor next door has a Vette," Neustadter said. "The neighbor across has two, and the guy around the corner has one."

He served for two years as the vice president of the club, and is still involved now, as the organizer for the car shows the Corvette Club goes to. Neustadter has been to several car shows himself, and has won trophies at a few car shows in the past.

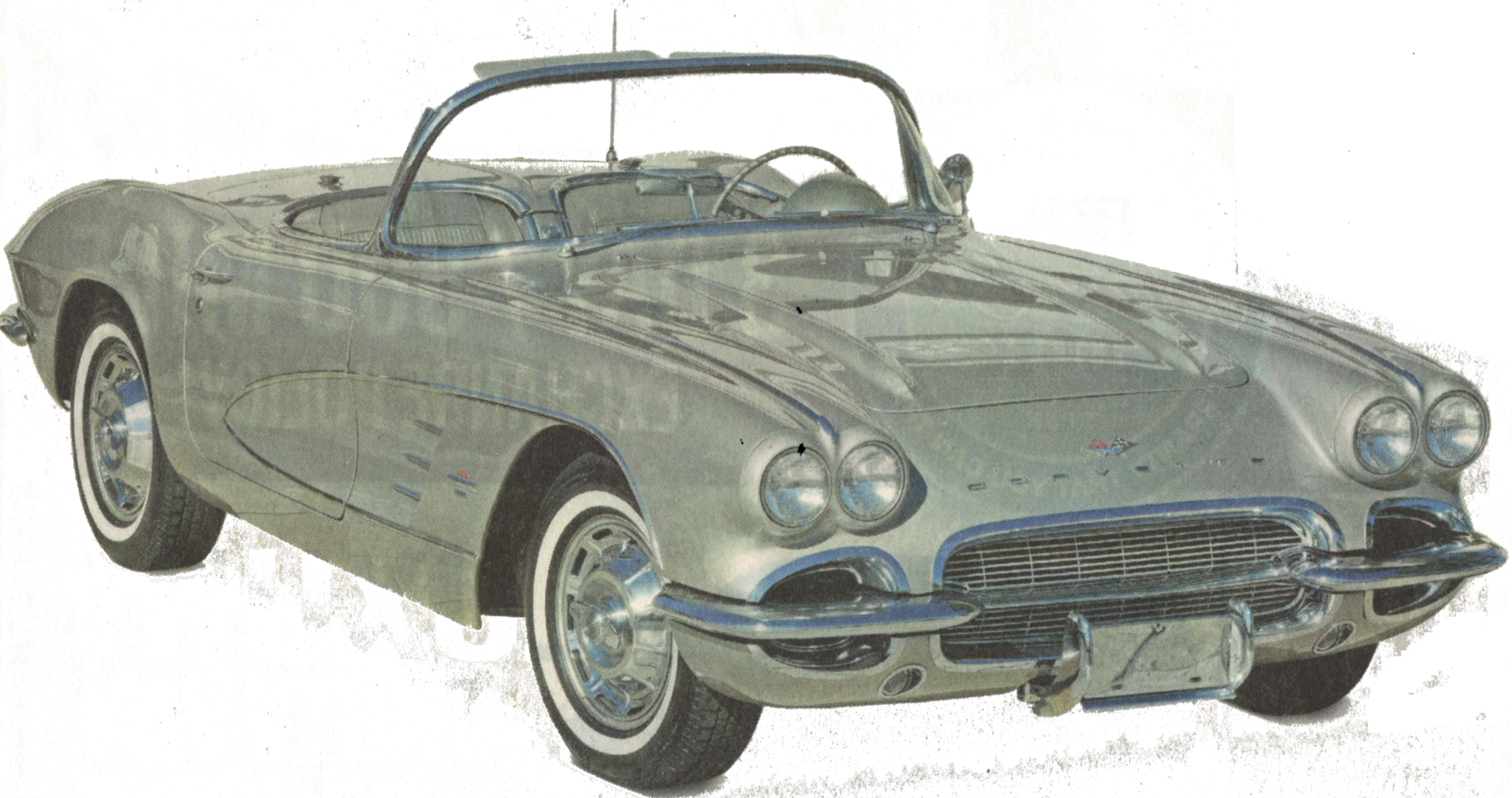
One of the car shows he's most proud of was a two-day car show at Disney. The first day was an all-Corvette show, where he won Best in Class. The next day, the show was opened up to all GM cars, and he won Best in Show.

"A lot of people say, 'You spend a lot of time there,' but I love the car shows," Neustadter said. "I love the thrill of being there."

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1961 Corvette Roadster

It may not have modern creature comforts, but Villager Rudy Neustadter can't deny the timeless charm of his 1961 Corvette. The '61 was part of the first generation of Corvettes, known now as C1, which spanned from 1953, the year the Corvette first went into production, to 1962. **Page E5**

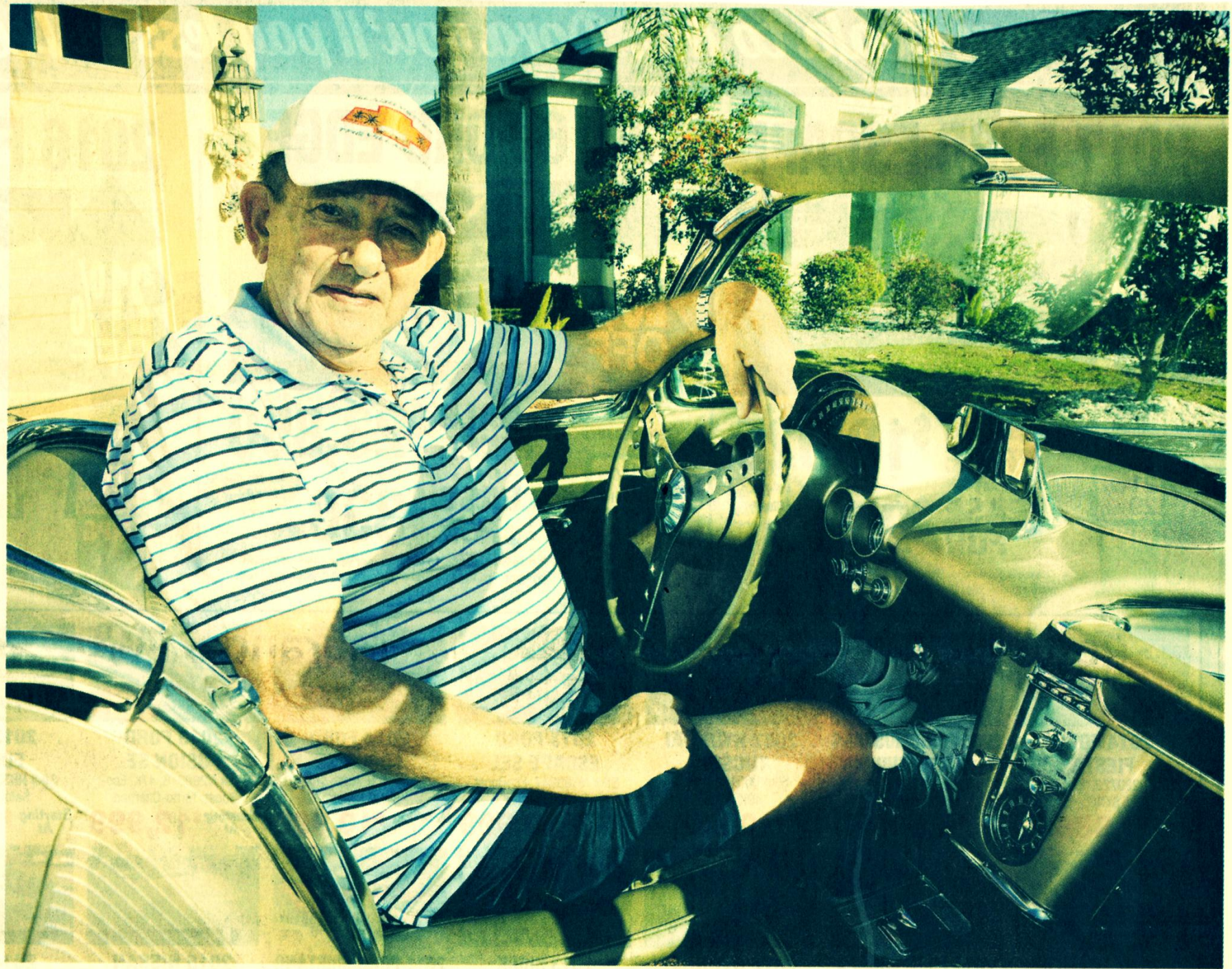


wheels

"My wife isn't too happy with the '61. It doesn't have any creature comforts. No air conditioning, no power steering, no power brakes. That's why we got the '03 back."

RUDY NEUSTADTER | Owner of a 1961 Corvette Roadster and resident of the Village of Fernandina.





Photos by Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun
Rudy Neustadter, of the Village of Fernandina, has spent nearly a lifetime with Corvettes. His most current vehicle is a 1961 Corvette Roadster, which was refurbished about eight years before he bought it in 2014. The light-tan convertible, shined to a high gloss, doesn't have air conditioning, power steering or power brakes, but it does have a classic style that Neustadter has admired for decades.