

'VETTES GO MOUNTAIN CLIMBING IN MASSACHUSETTS

Story by John Gibson



Although Corvette clubs are involved in many types of events, from highly competitive racing to the more subdued Concours d'elegance, the number one activity for most club members is taking to the open road in that very special automobile. Frequently neglected in print are the simple, but totally enjoyable and relaxing trips to explore a locale which offers something in the way of special interest or beauty.

Corvettes of Berkshire is one club which often takes such leisurely tours. Members live in one of the most beautiful areas of the United States — Berkshire County in northwest Massachusetts. Here, one can view the Berkshire Hills, low lying mountains which are part of the range of the Green Mountains of Vermont. At Mount Greylock the Berkshire Hills reach a height of approximately 3,500 feet, the highest point in the State of Massachusetts.

The "Crowning Glory of the State" is the way the natives of this area describe Greylock Mountain and

State Reservation. Thousands of tourists wend their way to the top of this mountain each year to enjoy a view of incredible beauty. That's why it's not surprising that Corvettes of Berkshire decided to take the slow and quiet trip to the top of this great peak as a part of their regular summer schedule of activities last year.

The morning was exquisite. And, meeting at various points along the way, the Club caravan reached a total of 32 shining Corvettes. The caravan stayed on Route 7 from Pittsfield to Lanesboro, Mass., enjoying the 15 miles of breathtaking scenery to the State Reservation. Then the line of 'Vettes moved onto North Main Street and began the actual ascent to the top of Greylock.

Off the side of the road you are treated to an ever broadening panorama of deep green, rolling farm country. But it's best not to get carried away by the view. The road is barely wide enough for two cars. Hairpin turns, which occur quite frequently, are not to be approached aggressively.

Signs along the road indicate campgrounds, picnic areas and many foot trails. Since the reservation is well equipped, many travelers will spend an entire day or more touring the area.

When the caravan reached the summit, all the Corvettes were parked in a "by year" arrangement in front of the Greylock Monument — a tall structure with a narrow, ascending staircase for those who care to climb to the top.

As club members gazed at the beautiful countryside, they began to notice clouds forming rapidly overhead. Within minutes rain was falling, and the whole entourage was dashing for the protection of

Bascom Lodge — leaving their cars to be rinsed off in the natural open air carwash.

At Bascom Lodge one can find information about the area, souvenirs, and food and refreshments. For those interested in spending more than just a day in the area, the Lodge has overnight accommodations for 20 people.

The rain clouds vanished, and the brief shower hadn't dampened anyone's spirits one bit, though many brought out towels or a chamois to restore the luster to their 'Vettes.

After a rash of picture taking, conversation, and just quiet gazing at the terrain below, the Corvettes were regrouped in the caravan and the descent homeward began. And when it was all over, the "mountain climbers" agreed it was a place to be visited more often.

The Corvettes of Berkshire has a different approach to membership activities than you might expect of a sports car club. Yet, it is a mistake to assume that all Corvette clubs are racing- or performance-oriented. Of the hundreds of clubs CN has been involved with, each has had its own approach to activities, reflecting the general interest of the club's membership.

According to President George Beeker, the four-year-old Berkshire group is almost completely socially oriented. The only competitive events on the club's annual calendar are a couple of rallies that are best described as "fun" outings.



The mountain excursion is typical of what Berkshire club members prefer to do as a group. Each May they begin their season with an annual "Breakout" — a 90- to 100-mile one-day trek somewhere in New England. Ordinarily, this is a refreshing drive, which includes a stop for a picnic lunch before the group returns home.

During the past year, the Berkshire membership has gone on junkets to Howe's Caverns in New York, Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, and to the Bromley Ski area in Vermont. Earlier, they traveled to the Rhinebeck Aerodrome in Rhinebeck, N.Y. — an indoor/outdoor aviation museum which features an exciting, live, simulated aerial combat demonstration, involving authentic World War I aircraft.

For the most part, these excursions are exclusively for Berkshire club members. However, a significant amount of the club's activity involves participation with other clubs in the Northeast.

In July each year, club members usually attend the Rallye and Steak-out sponsored by the Pioneer Valley Corvette Club in Northampton, Mass. The show and swap-meet conducted by the Foothills Council Corvette Club in Lake George, N.Y. is popular with the Berkshire group, and they also turn out for the October Vette's weekend event in Laconia, N.H. The Gate City Corvette Club has been packing 500 or more Corvette enthusiasts into this fun weekend for the past few years.

Beeker has been president of the 50-member club for two of the four years it has been in existence. The club membership represents approximately 75 percent of the Corvette ownership in Berkshire county. One of the best reasons we can find for such strong representation is the fact that the membership is constantly being surveyed to determine what activities should be on the club's annual schedule. It's by plan, and not by chance, that the Berkshire club members have a great time whenever they get together.

