

Reasons for Change

Why Bloomington Gold is enhancing Gold Certification

Bloomington Gold has studied the dynamics of preservation, restoration, and collecting, along with the mentalities and mindsets that have formed over time. Some good trends. Some not so good. This summarizes what we see:

Trends

- The data file used to train inspectors is so immense; it will be increasingly difficult if not impossible for stamp installers' data or technology to ever catch up. *As the data files continue to expand and inspector knowledge deepens, the minutest deviations become obvious or "easily detectable" and it becomes more difficult to "let them slide". After 40 years of leap-frog between the inspectors' knowledge and the technology of the stamp installers, the last frog has probably been leaped.*
- Owners have been increasingly pressured and stressed trying to figure out how to play the game and beat the system. This stress will likely escalate, because it will become even more difficult and expensive to beat the system.
- Inspectors and Bloomington Gold have become increasingly aware that some owners perceive a conspiracy exists against them if/when inspectors detect actual deviations from factory configurations.
- Some owners have become increasingly combative when stamp deviations are detected and want to sue everyone for being misjudged, mistreated, devalued.
- On the other hand, inspectors (and Bloomington Gold) have become increasingly hesitant to continue to bless reproduction stamps containing tell-tale deviations only to see owners use their endorsements to imply an original engine or at least mask that it is a reproduction stamp on a replacement engine.
- The general Corvette population (including most of the owners) can't recognize the difference between professionally reproduced stampings and OEM stampings; and have becoming increasingly confused as to which is which. This is diluting the appreciation and distinction of the OEM blocks and stamps—a trend that Bloomington Gold does not want to support.
- There's been an increasing obsession getting reproduction stamps accurate within a nano-micron to get a Gold; but decreasing attention getting 16 square yards of reproduction body paint somewhere in the realistic vicinity of factory accurate. This imbalance needs a course correction.
- Although traditionally lagging the C2 data files, C1 data files are increasing and the stamps and VIN tags that have been previously accepted will come under increased scrutiny. The likelihood that inspectors will become better able to recognize the difference between OEM and reproductions stamps among C1s will likely escalate.will likely escalate.

Reasons for Change (con't)

Implications

If nothing is changed, some or all of the following cycles may likely occur:

Reproduction stamps will prevent excellent vehicles from GoldCertificates.

Owner enthusiasm/participation will decline from frustration and disappointment.

Preservation/restoration of many otherwise excellent vehicles will be discouraged.

OEM stamps will be diluted by the proliferation of “close” reproductions stamps

Collectors/enthusiasts will become more gun shy about what they’re really buying.

Stress levels on both owners and judges will reach the point they say, “forget it”.

It's hard to argue how this is good for the Corvette or collector car community. Someone will figure out how to turn these trends around with a new way of thinking. Bloomington Gold intends to be that “someone”.

Bloomington Gold Philosophy

- These trends and implications are not in the best interest of the Corvette community.
- Bloomington Gold is not interested in perpetuating these trends and cycles because they appear destructive to the Corvette community in both the short and long run.
- Continued improvement in reproduction stamp/tag technology is NOT for the greater good over the long run, anyway! We do not endorse it.
- Fostering the challenge for reproduction stamps/tags to be accurate, dilutes the historic value/credibility of true OEM stampings. Within 5-25 years they will be indistinguishable from OEM stampings. They need to remain distinguishable.
- Removing incentives to reproduce stamps within a nano-micron of OEM will slow the demand for more accurate reproductions and increase the appreciation of OEM stamps because they will retain their uniqueness & intrinsic credibility.
- Increasing the tolerance level of reproduction engine stampings in order to retain eligibility for Gold increases the incentive to properly and enthusiastically restore otherwise worthy vehicles.
- Reproduction stampings (or lack of them) does effect the perception of legitimacy among a large segment of the Corvette community. However, it should not be the linchpin or single preemptive factor preventing an otherwise historically accurate restoration from being GoldCertified.
- OEM stampings need to be distinguished from and remain on a higher plane than reproductions, replacements, or other non-OEM variations.

Bloomington Gold Action Plan

Bloomington Gold will take the lead in 2012 and introduce an approach to reverse these counter-productive trends and cycles and meet these challenges:

- Reduce the owners' stress levels related to reproduction stampings.
- Reduce the inspectors' perceived liability for not detecting the "easily detectable".
- Shift standard for OEM stamps from "Reasonably Undetectable" to "Undetectable"
- Distinguish and elevate the pride/prestige of vehicles with OEM stamps/tags.
- Reduce the incentive to make reproduction stamps indistinguishable from OEM.
- Keep Gold Certificates within reach of vehicles within 95% factory appearance; even if replacement engines are installed, but point it out on Certificates
- Keep the policy & procedures easily understood and easy to follow.
- Give owners options to "Declare" reproduction stamps w/out penalty.
- Give inspectors options to use all available data to determine OEM
- Change the mistaken impression that GoldCertified always means Original engine
- Clarify the true meaning of Gold Certificates in Plain English.