

**A 1974 CORVETTE and the QUEST for the
NCRS BOWTIE AWARD
Submitted by Eduardo Padron**



Bowtie Sign-off and Flight judging - 2016 NCRS Winter Regional, Lakeland Florida

The 4-Star Bowtie award is arguably the most prestigious award in the NCRS portfolio. Bowtie judging is strictly for un-restored 1953 – 1982 Corvettes and is performed once a year at the annual NCRS National convention.

Along with Junior and Senior AACA judging in the 30C Corvette category, I had also experienced the NCRS Flight Judging process multiple times, but yearned of owning a truly original survivor car. There is something very special about a preserved unmolested original. You can always continue to improve a restored car, yet you can't make an original better. I found my original car by chance in late 2015, a very well optioned low mileage 1974 L-82 Medium Blue Coupe.

The Corvette was manufactured in early June 1974 and was delivered to a dealer in Johnstown Ohio. The car was very well documented with factory paperwork and ownership history, but more importantly the prior owners' diligent stewardship and care of the car was reflected in its preserved time capsule condition. Once in my possession, I carefully evaluated the car again, further validating my initial impressions. The quest for the 4 Star Bowtie award had just begun.

For a Corvette to be considered a Star/Bowtie judging candidate you must first register for Flight judging and Bowtie Sign off at an NCRS Regional Meet which precedes the next NCRS National Convention. Once successfully receiving the sign off, you can then register for the Convention. Due to the very detailed Bowtie judging process, there is four car limit per class, thus if you do not sign up quickly, your car may not get in. If the car does not get into the National it was signed off for, the sign off lapses and the owner has to start the process all over again for a future National. I know this from personal experience as the 74 was signed off at

the 2016 NCRS Florida Winter Regional, but we could not make the National that year, thus the sign off lapsed and we had to go through the sign off process again in 2019.

Bowtie judging is very different than Top Flight judging. The judges are looking for correct parts, but this time they want to ensure that the part being evaluated is the actual part that was on the car when it left St. Louis, not a replacement part. This means they're looking for evidence of screws having been turned, nuts scratched from wrenches, parts repainted, etc. Condition is not relevant, parts are simply given a pass or fail, based on originality to the car.

Four teams of two judges each evaluate the mechanical, interior, exterior, and chassis areas of the car. To receive the award, a Corvette has to achieve an originality score of 85% or better on the interior and exterior judging sections, an 80% or better score in the mechanical and chassis sections, and receive a final vote from the judges, indicating the car should be preserved in its current state due to its educational value to serve as a benchmark vehicle for judging guides, judging schools, and restorers in order to demonstrate how the plant actually built these cars.

As mentioned earlier, our sign off for the 2016 NCRS National lapsed, thus we waited for the National Convention to get back to the east coast in 2019. In the meantime, the judges at the 2016 meet had taken note of the car's originality and the car served as a reference Corvette in the mechanical and chassis section of the recently updated 73-74 NCRS Technical Information and Judging Guide.

Then along came the long awaited 2019 NCRS Winter Regional in Florida. The car basically started from scratch having to go through the Bowtie sign off process again. The 1974 easily achieved its fourth Top Flight at the event and the judges once again signed it off for Bowtie judging at the 2019 NCRS National Convention in Greenville, South Carolina.



Bowtie Sign-off and Flight judging - 2019 NCRS Winter Regional, Lakeland Florida

In Greenville, the car was submitted to one of the most exhaustive forensic examinations performed by NCRS judges, including a detailed inspection of the chassis section with the car up on a lift. Part numbers, date codes, finishes, and condition were carefully evaluated.

At the end of a very long day, the NCRS team leader gave me the good news that the car had passed all four sections and was awarded the NCRS 4 star Bowtie award, the highest award offered by the NCRS for un-restored Corvettes. To date, only 340 Corvettes have achieved this award.



2019 NCRS National Convention, Greenville South Carolina

Accolades for the Corvette continued thereafter as it participated as a Bowtie display car at the NCRS 2020 Winter Regional in Lakeland Florida, being selected for use as a benchmark car for the judging school seminar.



Judging seminar - 2020 NCRS Winter Regional, Lakeland Florida