



Z-CAR CLUB



OF WASHINGTON

Volume XI Issue I

The Newsletter of the Z-Car Club of Washington

November, 1996

ZCCW Member Profile

Name: James Lux

Age: 48

What kind of Z? 72 240

1st Z?

No. I had a 73 in 1975.

How long owned?

This one, since 1990.

Other cars.

78 Toyota wagon. 86 Ford LTD.

How do you use your Z?

Every which way I can get away with.

How many miles per year?

Now, about 10,000. I've put about 65,000 on the 72.

Total lifetime miles:

Maybe 750,000. Maybe more.

Next Scheduled Meeting

Saturday, November 23
4:30 pm at Z-Sport

:On the Agenda

Our Club and the future.

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Number of cars owned in lifetime:

Hmmm. 61 Sunbeam Alpine; 60 and 65 Chev Corvair; 61 Chev 2 door; 64 Chev 4 dr; 66 Ford Supervan; 67 Fiat 850 Coupe; 64 Chev 3/4T Pickup; 65 Chev 1/2T PU; 73 2.0 turbo Capri; 76 Rabbit; 73 and 78 Volvo SW; 76 Chev 1/2T PU; 73 Blakeley Bantam with 2.0 turbo Ford, C-4 auto, and 4.11 LSD (Lotus 7 look-alike); 67 VW Beetle; 73 Chev Blazer; 67 427 Ford Fairlane 500; 86 Ford LTD baby wagon. That's 19. Probably a couple more I can't remember.

How many vehicles driven in your life?

Maybe 150. For many years I'd brashly ask anyone if I could drive their car, if it was one I hadn't driven. Oddly enough, most people said yes. The epitome of this activity came many years ago in Germany, at night, in a BMW.

Most interesting vehicles driven?

Certainly my grandfather's Isetta. The front of the car was the door, and the steering wheel pivoted out with the door on u-joints. Single bench seat with a sunroof. Two cylinder, air-cooled engine. Four speed on the left sidewall. He let me drive it when I was 12 or 13. Also the Bantam which, ironically, I once raced on ice in the rain. Also I have to include various semi's which are a kick to drive. My brothers' 66 GTO made the most tire smoke. The Bantam did the best doughnuts. I'll throw in a tractor

too, the first one we had, an Allis Chalmers G, just because of the obstinance and originality of the designer.

Is you Z stock?

The 72 isn't. Neither was the 73.

Mods on the 72:

Yoko A008 tires on Centerline 7.5 by 16 mags; stock L28 engine with SU's, equal length headers, and 2.5" exhaust; 280ZX 5 spd with brass shifter bushes; KYB shocks and HD springs; Poly bushings; Delrin steering coupler; shortened steering knuckles; heim jointed rear A arms; 1.125"F and 1.0"R sway bars; 3 row radiator with electric fan; strut tower braces; 3.36 R180 diff; hole in the dash where the radio used to be.

Have you autocrossed?

Yes. I did a fair amount in 73, 74, and 75, and a little bit the last couple of years.

What have you learned from ?autocrossing

1) You can do much more than you think you can. 2) Never look behind you. 3) Don't be bothered by mistakes. 4) Smoothness is critical, though I sure wasn't last year. 5) Cars set up for autocross are ridiculous on the street. 6) Limited slip differentials are very important, and quickened steering systems are very fun. 7) Nothing takes the place of practice. You simply can't do many things unless you practice

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A Message from the President:

First off, I must thank all of you who have voted me your new President! I truly appreciate the confidence you have placed in me!

This message is going to be relatively short. I apologize for that. I promise that future messages will be longer.

Apart from what has been discussed at the meetings, I have no grand plans for the next year. Yet...

As we all come from varied backgrounds and have varied interests involving ours Z's, I need your help. Since this is our club, I would like to receive input from all club members to

find out what we can do to make the club better for everyone. You can contact me by: Phone: (360) 424-8643; Postal mail: 2212 Alison Ave., Mount Vernon, WA 98273; or by e-mail: mswhite@sos.net

Speaking of email, our membership database is missing some information. If you do have an email address, we could sure use it. With the efficiency of email, it is very useful to distribute information like last-minute meeting changes, special activities, etc. to large groups. You can send your address to me at the address listed above.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the next meeting (November 23)!

Z-ya!

It's an icon that can live almost into perpetuity", said Tom Orbe, vice president of marketing for Nissan and Infiniti Divisions.

The concept is important enough that Nissan has assigned it a model line manager: Dave Ilchert, who also oversees the Quest.

Nissan is considering two variations of the program. Under one plan, top-volume Z-car dealers would get a fleet of off-lease 300ZXs for their certified used-car fleet. But the cars would be groomed and refurbished to a level far higher than typically given a certified used car. The cars would get special badging and certification as a "Heritage Z-car", and dealers receiving them would have to dedicate special floor space, signs and publicity campaigns to them.

Also under discussion is a plan to seek out and restore antique Z-cars all the way back to the debut edition 1970 240Z. While the cars would not be restored to concours condition, they would score a 90 out of 100 - or mint condition - on the vintage scale, Orbe said.

The restorations would be done by an outside contractor using "new old-stock" parts. But Nissan is still working out cost, logistics, emissions and warranty issues to see if the plan is feasible.

Orbe said the 300ZX plan has a strong chance of happening, whereas the second plan is more uncertain.

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New-Old Z Cars Forwarded by Barry Breen

If someone has access to "Automotive News", there is a recent article about Nissan setting up a program to sell reconditioned Z's. Here are the highlights.

Nissan said it will be testing market- ing restored, company-certified Z-cars at selected dealerships around the country. The plan envisions dealers setting up special heritage sections in their showroom to display and promote rebuilt Zs, including the fabled 1970s-era 240Z.

"We want to set up the Z-car like Rolex has done with its vintage watches.

Tell a fellow Z enthusiast about us!



October Meeting Minutes

Members gathered at Z-Sport only to be told the meeting room was unavailable, so we all moved down to Alf's. The meeting was called to order at 4:30 by President Paul Richer. First order of business was the nomination and election of new officers. After some wrangling and spirited voting, our new officers are: President: Michael White; VP: Barry Breen; Treasurer: Janene Mullen; and Secretary: Tim Nevins. Our thanks go to these individuals who volunteer their time to keep the club ticking.

Kudos and hearty thanks are also due our now-ex-prez Paul Richer for all his work in helping form and keeping the club running. The club similarly extends its thanks to Tim Nevins, also one of the club originators, who will continue to supply the secretarial duties.

T-Shirts: Jim Lux volunteered to get the T-shirts made with layout supplied by Michael White. Meeting

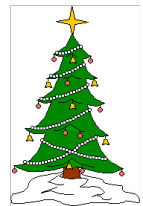
attendees were coerced into anteing up T-shirt money, and with any kind of luck at all, T shirts will be available for said coerced members at the next meeting.

Z-Sport's last minute withdrawal of the meeting place brought up the necessity of finding another meeting spot. It was suggested that meetings be held at a couple of locations, alternately in the Everett and Seattle areas to make it easier for our spread-out members to attend.

Christmas party: Sat. Dec. 14 7:00 PM. Potluck at Ex-Prez Paul's place in Snohomish. RSVP would be nice: 206-334-7356 or e-mail: paulr@lsid.hp.com. This is your chance to bring any Z or car related movies, photos, tall tales, etc. If you haven't had the opportunity to attend on of our Christmas parties before, suffice it to say that this is an event where we abandon any pretext to club organization, and where Z talk is interspersed with ingestion of vast quantities of unbelievably delicious food. Come join us.



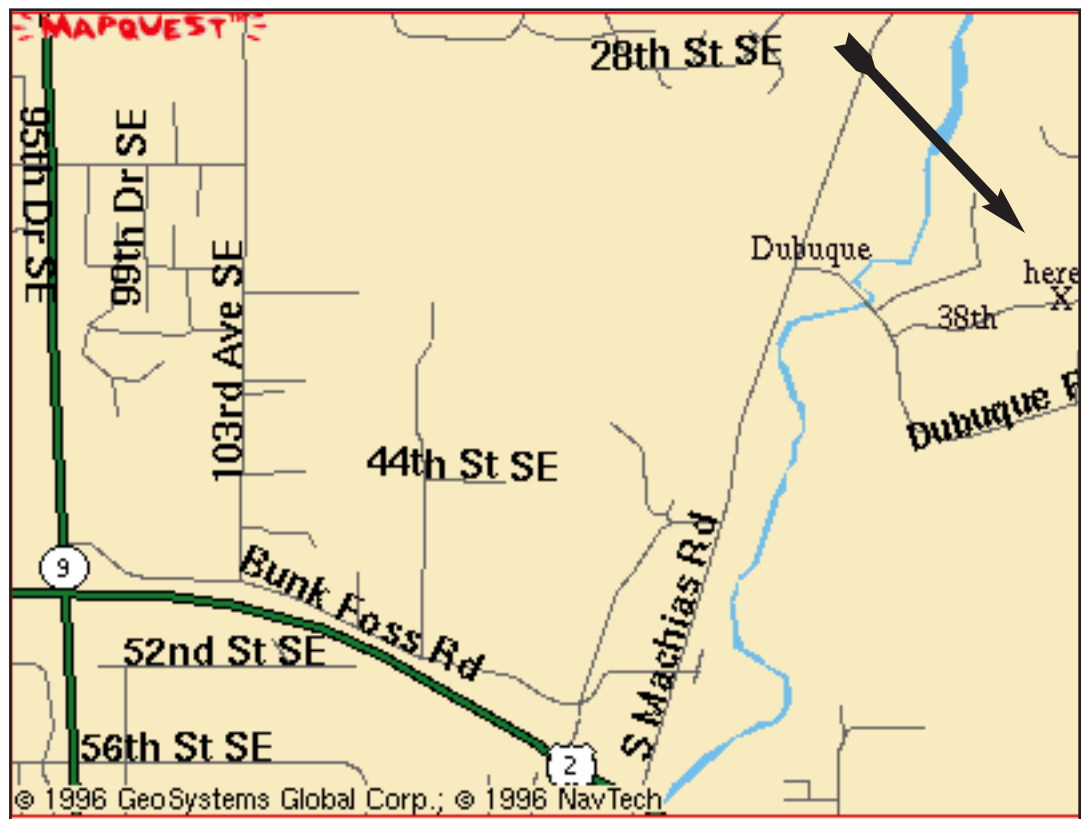
Christmas Party



Directions:

From I-5 take Highway 2 east (toward Wenatchee) to Highway 9. Take Highway 9 North and immediately after crossing over highway 2, turn right onto "Bunk Foss Rd". Go straight at the first stop and turn left at the second onto "S. Machias Rd". Continue to Dubuque Rd and turn right. Cross the bridge and turn left onto 38th (this turns into 132 Ave SE).

My house is on the left just past the "END OF COUNTY RD" sign. Look for big red reflective numbers "3624" on the mailbox.



A Short History of the World of Early Z Modifications

The twenty-seven years that have elapsed since the introduction of the Datsun 240 Z have stood witness to a plethora of owner performed mods, changes, additions, and deletions, all in the name of increasing performance. This month we'll take a somewhat superficial look at the array of traditional and current mods, and try to leverage some of our cumulative wisdom into assessments of real life mod benefit and bang for the buck. Hopefully we'll dispel some rumors and save you some money. Interest in early Z mods tends to focus on two general systems: the engine, and the suspension, so we'll begin there and continue with systems of lesser interest.

Engine

The L24 inline six cylinder engine, at 150 hp and 149 cubic inches, has good power output and a good power to displacement ratio. Performance increases overwhelmingly tend to concentrate on improving the breathing characteristics of the intake and exhaust. Relatively few people seek to improve the basic engine, but those who do tend to spend their money on blueprinting and balancing the engine, crank and rods. One acknowledged fact is that the long L24 crank has some inbuilt harmonics, and that harmonic balancers are very important. For example, one should never use an L24 balancer on an L28 and then try to run high revs. A thin slice of the Z owner population goes whole hog and assemble stroker 3.0 and 3.1 liter L engines using diesel cranks and different Datsun rods and pistons.

Intake breathing is improved by 1) porting the heads; 2) increasing carb and intake manifold flow capacity; and 3) installing a cam with greater lift and duration. Head porting is of lesser value than the other two, but is often included when a more aggressive cam is combined with both carb and intake manifold changes. This combination can produce about a 50 hp increase; an increase of over 30% over the stock engine.

The stock SU carbs will work quite well with stock and slightly modified engines. However, most twenty five year old SU's will have significant air leaks around the throttle shaft bores, and should be re-bushed. Marc Sayer offers this service, using a plastic material for bushings called Carsan. Consult the ZCCW Web site for links to Marc's page. In addition to throttle shaft leaks, old SU's often possess worn needles and needle seats. Power optimized SU needles and seats for L24's, as well as needles ground specifically for use with SU's on L28 engines, are available from Impact parts at 914-434-3338, and also from Victoria British, Ltd (Long Motor Corp) in Lenexa, Kansas at 1-800-255-0088. Cost: low. Bang for the buck: good. Negatives: none.

Several carb substitutions are common on L24's, L26's, and L28's. One is the British SU HS6 carburetor, which is a direct bolt-on replacement for stock SU's, and is available with standard piston or ball bearing piston high-performance configurations. These carburetors can be synchronized in less than two minutes, and have built-in mixture adjusting pins to make tuning very easy. Needles are available for all uses: highway driving/economy, autocross/racing. Needles are the latest floating type, with no jet centering required, which makes rebuilding simple. Cost: \$500 plus. Bang for the buck: pretty good. Negatives: somewhat hard to find.

Other carbs commonly used to replace SU's include the Holley 390 cfm four barrel, dual Weber downdraft DGV's, triple Weber sidedrafts, triple Sk carbs, and triple Mikuni's. Most of these carbs offer greater tunability than the stock SU's. All the triple carb setups run more than \$1000, and should be combined with an aggressive cam. Triple carb setups also require the experienced mind of a good carb tuner as well, so one should set aside \$200 or so for a good tuneup after installation. Remember that power increases due to carb mods will result in gas mileage reductions, particularly if combined with high numeric differential gearing. The jury continues to fight over the advisability of the Holley

and Weber downdrafts. Cost: high. Positives: Power! Bang for the buck: so-so. Negatives: fuel economy; tuning problems; emissions; cost.

Camshafts go hand in hand with carb mods. However it is possible to over-cam an L-series engine. When selecting a cam, don't go much beyond .487" of lift and 280 degrees of duration. That should give you power from 3000 to 7000+. The cam itself is only part of the cost of installing a cam. At the same time you should have the valves ground, making sure that all installed valve heights are identical, and install new high rpm valve springs. Figure a \$500 bill for all these things. Check with Ollie at Z Specialties at 206-363-3577 for probably the best cam deal around (.480" lift, 272 duration cam and followers for a little over \$200). Positives: wakes up your engine. Negatives: emissions. Bang for the buck: good.

If you live in an emissions controlled area, note that a hot cam with extra valve overlap and big carbs will do nasty things to emissions.

While carb and cam combinations can really give you a big bang, their initial and ongoing cost is high so actual bang for the buck is not all that hot.

Suspension

Some suspension parts are constantly wearing out faster than others, and those parts often get the performance nod before the slower wearing items. Shocks are a good example. The first thing you notice is that the difference in price is staggering, running from \$250 to perhaps \$1000 per set. What you get for increasing amounts of money is longevity, control, and adjustability. KYB gas struts probably occupy the bottom of the aftermarket niche, with adjustable Tokico Illumina's sitting on the high end. The best shocks will be the best at controlling transient handling—that small, but exceedingly important space of time when the car is transitioning from a straight-ahead mode to a cornering mode. You probably don't need spendy shocks for most driving, but if

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you autocross, figure on spending some bucks. Cost: moderate to high. Benefits: improved handling. Negatives: cost. Bang for the buck: depends on what you want to accomplish, as well as other mods you make. Shocks won't cure bad ball joints.

Other suspension parts that wear out, albeit more slowly, are ball joints and suspension bushings. Ball joints anchor the bottom of the front strut to the lower A arms, and connect the steering rack to the steering knuckles. You can't have crisp handling with worn ball joints, so this is a good place to start your mods. Bushings provide road noise isolation between the suspension pieces and the body. The stock bushings were rather puny rubber with a lot of 'give'. Today's high performance replacements are usually made of polyurethane and are a vast improvement. In addition to sway bar bushings, don't forget to include steering rack bushings, a delrin (or other) steering coupler, and harder front T/C rod bushings (not aluminum!). Here's one case where a high performance item is fairly cheap (even though they take some time to install). Positives: first step to crisp handling. Verdict: good bang for the buck. Negatives: increased road noise and rougher ride.

Tires and Wheels

The original Z was "blessed" with 4.5" wheels and 175/14 tires. Today, however, if you outfit a Z with aftermarket sway bars, new poly bushings, and new ball joints, and run those 175/14's, you'll find that while you've cut your roll angle roughly in half, you still have a lot of roll. And that is largely due to tire rollover. In a pinch you can jack up the tire pressure ten pounds, but the best way to conquer the roll problem is with a set of low aspect ratio tires. Combine low aspect ratio with a sticky compound and you've really changed your Z. Cost: starting at \$100-250/wheel, and \$90-200/tire. Remember though, that all wide tires are not sticky. Positives: way cool; much improved cornering force and transient handling; a delight on smooth road surfaces. Negatives: cost; nervous handling due to camber thrust and road surface variations; not as safe as

a well siped narrow tire in the rain; harder on wheel bearings; increased road noise; rougher ride; a magnet for car thieves. Bang for buck: like shocks, it depends on your aims.

Suspension Adjustability and Settings

One thing built into every road racing car is adjustability. And, unfortunately, the Z's achilles heal is the lack of adjustability in it's Macpherson strut suspension. Front toe-in is the only thing you can change. Yet one would like to be able to alter front and rear camber for cornering power, front caster for highway stability, and rear toe-in to prevent excessive tire wear and improve turn-in and exit behaviors. Traditionally, the high performance route for Mac struts was to go stiff, thus limiting suspension travel and therefore limiting the amount of roll and bump steer. Today, a few suppliers including Arizona Z and Marc Sayer offer completely adjustable A arms, but they aren't cheap. Yet if you want to improve cornering, you'll have to find some negative camber somewhere. The common "cheap" fix is offset inner suspension bushings for front and rear A arms. At about \$150 for both fronts and rears, this isn't a bad mod, though you may well find that camber adjustments are limited to a max of about 1.5 degrees negative, and that toe, camber, and caster settings may fight with each other, thus preventing even that much negative camber.

If you're autocrossing, you should be thinking in terms of 1.5-3 degrees negative camber in front and rear. Toe-in on the rear should be healthy: .125 to .250", and front toe will depend a bit on your turn-in preferences.

A neat fix for the front camber problem is suggested by the Jags That Run people: relocate the inner A arm pickup point by drilling a new hole about 3/4" upward and 3/4" outboard from the car centerline. This changes the car's roll center and also affects the Ackerman—the amount of steering (toe-in or toe-out) that's produced by the action of the car rolling from side to side. Positives: cheap.

Negatives: with any suspension pickup location change, you're on your own.

The other common fix for MacPherson strut cars is camber plates: slotted plates to which attach the strut tops, and which allow some camber adjustment. Cost: about \$60/corner. Positives: increased negative camber. Negatives: some installation costs; some welding sometimes required; not allowed in some SCCA classes; some costs for alignment after installation.

Sway Bars

The early Z had a rather small front sway bar and no rear bar at all. Rear bars didn't come in til the 74 260. Sway bars are the quickest route to limiting early Z body roll without increasing spring rates. A 1.0 or 1.125" aftermarket bar is common for the front, with .875" and 1.0" bars common for the rear. Adjustable end links are available on some bars, thus allowing you some sway control adjustment. Price: \$150-250. Benefits: very good. Negatives: some added weight; slight increase in ride roughness. Bang for the buck: very good.

Brakes

The current rage in early Z brakes is to bolt on a set of early Datsun 4WD four piston calipers. The mod is nearly a direct bolt-on and isn't all that expensive (about \$120/caliper without core) though you'll need pads too. Cost: low to moderate. Bang for the buck: great! Negatives: more unsprung weight.

The other major avenue to better brakes is carbon/Kevlar brake pads by suppliers such as Porterfield. Cost is about \$70/set. Porterfield also supplies pads for the Datsun pickup calipers for truly phenomenal braking. Cost: low. Positives: a terrific improvement. Negatives: carbon dust collects on your wheels and tires.

You can improve the feel of your brake system by installing a set of stainless steel sheathed brake lines which resist line bulging and ensure that all of your braking muscle goes to the pads and hot elsewhere. Cost: low. Benefits: slight, but perceptible. Bang for the buck: low.

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And if you want to go all the way, kits are available for replacing the stock rear drums with 280 rear calipers. Expect to get out the credit card on this one. And remember that about 80% of the braking is done by the front wheels, so don't get your expectation too high.

Cooling System

The early Z cooling system is marginal, particularly in warm climates, and Datsun went to quite a bit of work to remedy hot starting problems resulting from a heat soaked fuel systems. So it's not surprising we have problems today with our soon-to-be antique Z's. Common fixes include: 1) a new 3 or 4 row radiator; 2) good heat shields on headers; 3) a small fan installed in a hole cut in the aft section of the front fender well and blowing air out; 4) making sure the belly pan aft of the radiator is present and in good shape. Make sure your water pump is in good shape; abraded impellers won't help things. Change your coolant as per the manufacturers specs. Any corrosion on engine block cooling passages will greatly reduce heat transfer in your cooling system, so treat the inside of your cooling system with the same attention you give the rest of your car. And if you plan on any major engine work, make sure you have the block tanked to get rid of whatever corrosion is there.

Other overheating problems can result from lean carb mixtures, overly retarded spark timing, bad cam timing, and valves being out of adjustment. Upgrades other than radiators include oversized fans and electric fans. Water pumps on early Z's are famous for taking the radiator with them when they fail, which is another good reason to get rid of the engine driven fan entirely and replace it with an electric fan from a later model 280. You can further spread the cooling load by adding an oil cooler, as long as you don't place it in front or behind the radiator.

You can do a lot to ensure that all the air moving through the front grill goes through your radiator by installing a horizontal plate running forward from the lower edge of the radiator bulkhead mounting to the upper lip of the lower

valence, and by blocking any extra holes in the radiator bulkhead.

Verdict: Cool is cool! Money you spend keeping your cooling system happy will pay back with a longer lived engine.

Transmissions

With gas at \$1.40 a gallon and more, five speed transmissions are an obvious choice over the original Z four speed. Five speed trannys from 280's came with two fifth gear ratios: .86 and .78. The former gives you a 15% overdrive, while the latter will reduce your cruise revs by nearly 25%. The gear ratios of the various Z transmissions are as follows: 280 Turbo trans: 1st: 3.5; 2nd: 2.144; 3rd: 1.357; 4th: 1.0; 5th: 0.78. Early NA 5 speed (before 1979) 1st: 3.321; 2nd: 2.077; 3rd: 1.308; 4th: 1.0; 5th: 0.864. Late NA 5 speed ('79 to '83): 1st: 3.321; 2nd: 2.144; 3rd: better; 4th: 1.0; 5th: 0.78.

Transmission swaps from early to late Zs are relatively easy. The stacked clutch/throwout bearing height differs, so make sure you get a clutch and throwout bearing corresponding to the year of the replacement transmission. And the clutch slave cylinder is different (the later models are self adjusting). Other than that everything else should fit just fine.

If you like to do things the hard way, you can also use the same Borg Warner T-5 trans as is found in Mustang GT's and Camaro Z28's. This conversion requires a mod to the transmission mount, the shifter, and the console. The drive shaft spline on the tranny output is unique to this tranny, so you'll probably have to have a driveshaft made up by a machine shop. The Turbo Z drive shaft can be modified for use on early Z's by shortening and using the regular Z differential flange. But the synchros are reportedly superior to those in the Datsun transmissions.

Differential

The early Z's came with R180 differentials. The R200 diffs came on some 280's. The ratios and years are confused, but are similar to the following:

The 240 with 4 spd was delivered with either a 3.9 R180 with teeth: 10/39, or with 3.36 diff gears. The 240 and 260 2+2 with 5 spd used a 3.7 R180, teeth: 10/37. The 260 with 4spd used a 3.364 R180 with teeth: 11/37. Automatics had a 3.545 R180 with teeth: 11/39. The 3.7 diff came in the 84-86 300zx non-turbo. The 3.9 R200 came in 280zx models with a five-speed. The 4.11 R180 came on 4wd pickups with CV joints and were oftentimes R200's. (CV jointed diffs use a different side flange mounting arrangement; you'll have to change that.) Other diff gears available include 4.11, 4.56, and 5.12.

There are no external ratio markings on differentials, so you'll have to count the teeth and do the math, or turn the input flange and check the output flanges for rotation. The R200 is a stronger, and significantly heavier differential than the R180, and the two diffs use different moustache bars. Datsun competition produced limited slip assemblies for both R180's and R200's, but they are spendy. While you may be able to break an open (non LSD) R180 diff, an R180 LSD diff is strong enough to take almost any L series engine. Positives: no more one-wheel burnouts on corner exits. Negatives: cost, availability, and guaranteed sideways motion on low friction surfaces.

Steering

The original Z car had a fairly fast steering ratio. Datsun competition parts added to the fun by making available shortened steering knuckles that quicken the steering quite a bit. These knuckles are still available and are under \$100. Positives: More fun. Negatives: heavier steering; touchier at speed; probably more wear on steering rack as more force is concentrated through fewer rack gears.

So that's a quick and dirty rundown on major early Z mods. We'll try to cover more of these systems in depth in the future, now that everyone is on the same footing. If you have a system or problem you'd like to see more background info on, contact Jim at jameslux@whidbey.com and we'll put the topic on the article list.

ZCCW Member Profile continued

them. That includes cornering, stopping, and accelerating, which is mostly all you do in a car. All the work you do on your car and all the go-fast gizmos you hang on it mean nada unless you practice. 8) The best thing you can possibly do for a young driver (other than get them on a tractor) is to get them into an autocross or driver's school. Both will humble them and open them to learning. And both will give them a chance to practice the kinds of things that they will otherwise only practice during the few seconds of their next accident.

What do you think you have to learn next?

Work on my smoothness.

Ever Rally?

Once, in Iowa. A sedate affair. I thought it was semi-fun.

Long trips?

Iowa to Los Angeles to Portland to Iowa for one, in the 73. WA to IA to KY to AZ to Vegas to WA – in winter – for another, in the 72. From WA to Sacramento and return. Maybe ten trips to Portland and Eugene.

Current or past problems?

Yes. Not enough space here.

Horror stories?

Rolled my Fiat 850 a time or two at night on a nasty blind, off camber gravel road. That is, I used the road as a launching pad; I didn't stay on it. I remember quite a bit of crashing metal noise and not being able to find the steering wheel in mid-roll. Didn't hurt myself much but trashed the car. I wasn't driving fast; it was just a bad corner. That experience led me to distrust what I couldn't see. I get the shivers when I read about Jacques Villeneuve qualifying at the rain-cursed Japanese F1 race at Fuji in 76.

Scariest situation:

Driving the Z down the Seattle I-5 corridor to Portland in December 1993 on glare ice with wall to wall semis going 55. Crazy! It was so slick you could hardly stand up! Also the same kind of situation, minus the trucks, on I-84's badly troughed roads in ice and snow in Wyoming. Also the I-5 corridor in heavy rain showers with race tires on.

Humorous stories?

I once managed to park a truck loaded with 20 week old chickens at the top of a hill. The parking brake was bad, but I thought for some reason that gravity didn't apply to me that day. The truck trundled off when I was about 50 feet away. I thought about racing after it and leaping aboard, but it was picking up speed fast and I thought that it wasn't worth dying for, so I gave up in defeat and watched the show. The denuded hill sloped away a half mile in every direction, with vicious looking gullies awaaay off below ready to complete any destruction the slopes might miss. I realized that the only fence, an ancient barbed wire affair with rotten posts, would provide no impediment to this impending disaster. The lives of 3000 odd chickens and one 5 ton green GMC straight truck with hydraulic tailgate gate passed before my eyes. As I was beginning to contemplate the ugly and embarrassing task of retrieving several thousand feathered bodies and a formerly functional GMC from the recesses of a shortly to be famous ravine, the truck miraculously ran into the only tree on the entire hillside and stopped. Humorous stories and scary stories are often the same stories.

Another humorous story:

Near my teenage home was a gravel road leading over seven

rather large hills we called the seven sisters, probably because of their resemblance to feminine bosoms. The shape of these hills was very similar to the parabolic flight profile used by KC-135's used to train astronauts in weightlessness, and similar results could be obtained in virtually any car driven at sufficient speed. At the time my grandfather had a 63 Olds with a 440 or somesuch engine, and when he was away I took the Olds out (so prolonged disuse wouldn't damage it) and ran the seven sisters. Fifty mph would definitely lighten your stomach, and 65 would leave scores of yards of gravel untouched. The landings were exciting. My grandfather could never understand how gravel could get on top of the battery.

Dating/wife stories?

I fell in love in my 73, though that wasn't the car's fault.

?Accidents

Several, long ago. First, the Alpine: gentle rollover in a deep ditch following an oversteer situation on flat, rain drenched asphalt, pinning my hand between the windshield frame and the steering wheel. That taught me about rain. Then a light run-in in college when I looked but didn't see. That taught me that looking doesn't replace attention. Then another light run-in, in reverse of all gears, when in a 1953 Jeep CJ3A I backed out of the local drive-in directly into the front bumper of a pristine red 1963 2 door Chevy hardtop which was the pride and joy of the town tough. That taught me not to assume too much. I still don't know how he refrained from killing me. Turns out that in the intervening years we both managed to lose a finger in machinery of some kind or another, and now we buy each other a drink when we meet. It was after the Fiat

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accident that I decided that I would drive in such a way that I would never have another accident, and I have pretty much stuck to that. The roads are too crowded today, and while it may be merely stupid to hurt oneself, it's definitely not cool to put someone else in danger. There was one last one where I was a passenger with my brother-in-law in his new '73 Ford pickup. We were on a Sunday morning jaunt and he was driving wild. A sixth sense told me to put on my seat belt, and less than a mile later he tried a flat, 20 mph gravel corner at 35. We vaulted the ditch, rotated, and landed, roof down, on the fence line where the field met the ditch. Crunched the roof down to the dash in the middle. That was more than enough excitement for 10AM on a Sunday morning.

Weirdest situation in a car?

Probably in Jeeps: pulling dead trees over, and experiencing quicksand. Also a multiple spin/multiple ditch-tour day in a CJ-5 in a blizzard. Any sane driver would have stayed home. There's not enough time to relate weird Bobcat experiences. Another weird situation was when I was driving a rental Ford Fiesta to Seattle from Portland in about 1978. I was just ahead of a new Corvette, and we were passing two semis pulling the two halves of a modular house. I got even with the front semi, and it kicked up a piece of newspaper in front of the Vette. He swerved to avoid the paper, got sideways, caught it, got sideways again the other way and drifted down I-5 crossways gradually coming in front of the rear semi which T-boned it and both went into the ditch. The house then overturned. Nobody was hurt, but the Vette driver wasted a Vette and half a house trying to avoid a piece of newspaper. That was a case where the Vette driver thought he could

do more than he really could. As the Vette was tight on my tail, I was keeping a sharp eye, and saw the whole event through the rear view mirror. It's a wonder I stayed on the road.

Most helpless car in the snow:

73 Ford Capri.

Best car in the snow:

67 VW Beetle with chains.

Top speed in a car?

135, as a passenger in a friend's 63 Olds. He was crazy. He blew up more engines than I had girlfriends. One Sunday he pulled up and said "I got a new engine. Wanna take a ride?" Three miles, and a new personal speed record later, he was looking for another engine. Cars must not have been exciting enough. He became a bull rider in a rodeo. Holds a broken bone record now.

Ever been upside down?

Once in the Alpine. Once (or twice) in the Fiat. Once on (or off) a 250 Yamaha into six feet of 1/2" long brambles. Twice in Bobcat loaders. And the Ford pickup.

Fastest you've driven the Z:

125. Many moons ago.

Fastest you've ever driven the Z propelled only by gravity

I was driving in the mountains about 100 miles outside of Las Vegas when I came to a down-slope that was straight as a string for 5 or 7 miles. It was magnificently steep. I slowed to about 35, put the car in neutral, and let it go. The rear tires were not well balanced, and when the speedo got to 80, I called it quits due to massive vibration and slowed down. But there was still a lot of hill left, so I did it again, this time pushing it to 85. It was still accelerating hard when I slowed down for the second time, but I saw that there still was a lot of down left, so I did it a third

time, and had to back off once again. Three times was enough, and even with more hill left, I decided I'd had enough fun and pronounced the hill the winner.

What's your favorite car?

The 240.

What's your least favorite car?

73 Chev Blazer. It got 8 mpg no matter what I did. Always felt like it was going up a hill. And it was absolutely helpless in mud or snow. Had a great exhaust note though.

What is the best designed car in your experience

"Best" to me is subjective, so I think that means favorite. The early Z is my all around favorite. I fit in it well. I like the cockpit, driver position relative to the wheelbase, the hatch, the engine compartment, the engine.

What's the maximum speed you've been out of control

80. Braking induced oversteer resulting from a planned, but sloppily executed braking demonstration. Stayed on the road. Skill was not involved.

One last humorous story:

I was returning home at 2 AM after a 22 hour marathon chicken delivery in a 64 Dodge flatbed truck in six inches of newfallen snow and was dead tired. Traffic was nonexistent. On a straightaway in the last seven mile leg home, I came across the tracks of a lone car which had been doing doughnuts. Not content to do one or even five, or to do them on one spot, the driver had made his continuous, drifting each subsequent doughnut another 50 feet down the highway. The first set was a half a mile long and must have had 75 circles. The last unbroken set was over a mile. It must have taken him a half an hour, and it made me feel good all over.



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