



Metallic Charcoal Gray 1982 Corvette Is His Pride and Joy

Village of Osceola Hills resident has entered his car in several shows, often winning first place.

The Villages Daily Sun
Friday, June 26, 2020
By Sherri Coner

Before his 30th birthday, Chris Bleistein bought a brand-new Corvette, which became a symbol of his faith in himself. His work ethic and savvy business decisions made it possible. Bleistein never wanted to forget that.

When he and his wife, Eileen, married in 1975, medical technology was Chris' post-college career. It didn't take long, though, to realize the mistake. Chris carefully analyzed his future. He knew medical technology was not his passion.

At first, Chris didn't exactly know what he would love to do every day as a career. He only knew that his thoughts repeatedly returned to all the summers between college semesters, when he worked in a busy deli. He enjoyed everything about that job.

Risking the already shaky financial beginning he and Eileen lived as newlyweds, the Village of Osceola Hills resident made a huge decision with no space for mistakes.

He opened a deli in his hometown of Long Island, New York.

To ensure the deli grew into a new community favorite, Chris worked day and night, burning the proverbial candle at both ends.

But one day, the exhausted young man took a break from the grind. It was time for self-reflection. "I was working really hard, putting in a lot of hours," he said. "I felt it was time to do something for myself."

And then, out of the blue, Eileen made a suggestion that was music to his ears. "Eileen said, 'Just go buy the car. It's what you have always wanted,'" Chris recalled.

She definitely knew her man well. Since childhood, Chris wanted to own a Corvette. "I had been looking at them for years," he said. "So I went out one day and I bought one."

It was 1982. Chris, at 28 years old, fell for a brand-new metallic charcoal gray beauty with silver interior. He drove the dream off the lot that day, grinning from ear to ear.

Like lots of other guys, Chris' wallet didn't match his automobile interests when he got a driver's license. But, he made do, driving first a 1970 Mustang Mach 1 and then a Dodge Challenger.

When he and Eileen committed to do life together, "I got rid of the muscle car and bought a family car and faced reality for a while," Chris said with a laugh.

A couple of years after becoming a Corvette-owning kind of guy, Chris took a few breaks from working in the deli and started entering his pride and joy in plenty of car shows, often winning first-place awards.

"I used to take the girls with me to the car shows," he said of daughters, Bridget and Jillian. "They were my little helpers."

With a strong vision for his family's future, Chris pushed his talents and faith in himself. Through the years, he opened three more deli restaurants.

Then, at age 44, Chris achieved the goal he made soon after becoming a business owner: he retired.

"Then I sold everything and we moved to South Florida," he said. In April 2017, the Bleisteins moved to Central Florida from Deerfield Beach.

Along with playing golf and table shuffleboard, Chris also is Calzoney the clown with Clown Alley and the president of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club.

And he's still smiling from behind the wheel of the 1982 Corvette.

"It's got 11,000 miles on it," he said.

