

Pushing Fun

By Bob Schmeichel

In 1959, at the very young age of 12, Tom Cain bought a 1945 Willy's jeep. Wanting to understand how everything worked, he took the engine out and disassembled it in the basement of his parents' home. It took him the next one and one-half years to rebuild the engine and reinstall it back into the jeep. He taught himself well as he drove that jeep without a problem until 1980 when he sold it. With that beginning interest in engines, Tom recalls that the 60s were the most fun time of his young life with everything being new and understandable then, unlike new cars today. During those early years, Tom got into drag racing and having '55, '56 and '57 Chevs to do it with. If he could only have some of those cars back

now that he played with then. He even was the second owner of a perfect 1934 Ford Tudor that he was intending on street rodding with all the parts he could get to complete it. But one day he was offered really good money for it from a guy from Missouri, and the car went away. Today Tom deals with "Why did I do that?" Tom started drag racing in Sioux City, Pierre, and Hanesworth, Nebraska. His love for engines and drag racing eventually led to starting a speed shop in 1967 in Mitchell, along with owning three other auto-related businesses at the same time. His success with what he did and desire led him to some serious drag racing with putting a dragster together starting in 1969. His wife, Judy, and daughters became his pit crew as they went around the country on the weekends racing persistently until he placed himself tenth in ranking in the nation in his class for a couple years. That is something to be proud of for a self-taught guy by any standard back then. Tom and his family eventually moved to Sioux Falls in 1987 because of a business venture he decided to manage. In 1988, Tom talked Glenn Rapp into leasing Thunder Valley Raceway to him so he could run the operation and did so until 1999. Tom's drag racing career slowed because of all he was involved with, and he eventually sold his dragster in 2006. After selling his dragster, Judy and he had a discussion about what to spend the sale money on. She wanted an RV camper and he said he wanted something fun. So they bought a 2004 limited production "Commemorative Edition" Corvette. Besides the special tan interior, the car is loaded with all the options and more only for this special car. Because of the Corvette, today Tom and Judy have been heavily involved with the Corvette Classic Rally, personally checking all the roads and laying out four to six cruise tours through the Black Hills for each future season. The up-to-200-miles-plus cruise tours always go in different directions to maximize the sites, with all ending back in Spearfish at the same evening time, which takes a ton of planning and coordination. Tom has never sat still very long with whatever he does, and the license plate on the Corvette says it all.

