



Saved from the sinkhole



The Pontiac XP-833 (above), 1954 Pontiac Bonneville Special (left) and 1955 LaSalle II roadster (below) were nearly displayed where the sinkhole opened at the National Corvette Museum.

In February 2012, I began negotiating with the people in charge of displays at the National Corvette Museum to display three concept cars from the Bortz Auto Collection. The concept cars were not Corvettes, or even Chevrolets, but each was related to the Corvette. The cars were the 1954 *Bonneville Special*, the 1955 *LaSalle II* roadster and the 1964 DeLorean Pontiac *XP-833 Banshee*.

The *Bonneville Special* had styling cues similar to the 1953-1955 Corvette; design cues from the 1955 *LaSalle II* roadster made it onto the 1956 Corvette; and the 1964 Pontiac *XP-833 Banshee* heavily influenced the 1968 Corvette.

The display never happened, because the Bortz Auto Collection wanted the cars to be displayed in the main rotunda, the best display area in the building. The museum planned the display for a more remote part of the museum, and the museum staff and I could not agree on a location to display the cars.

Had we agreed to display the cars

in the rotunda, the three Corvette-related concept cars would have been displayed during February 2014 — and everyone knows what happened at the rotunda at the National Corvette Museum in February 2014:

a sinkhole opened in the museum floor, swallowing eight Corvettes displayed in the center of the rotunda!

It is my belief that if the three General Motors concept cars from the Bortz Auto Collection fell 30 feet (equivalent of falling from a third-floor apartment) into that hole, there would have been no recovery of any of these cars in one piece. And some of the greatest 20th-century historic and unique concept cars would have been lost to history forever.

For the *LaSalle II*, the fall would have been most tragic, for this car had



just been restored after being cut up and discarded in a salvage yard in 1958, then left to the elements until I recovered it in 1988. At the time the sinkhole opened, the car had only been in show condition for about 3 of its 56 years on this planet!

All three of these cars are unique masterpieces of the 1950s and the 1960s and are irreplaceable. Fate has a way of working in both positive and negative ways.

In hindsight, I can certainly say without hesitation “somebody up there likes concept cars — and me!”