

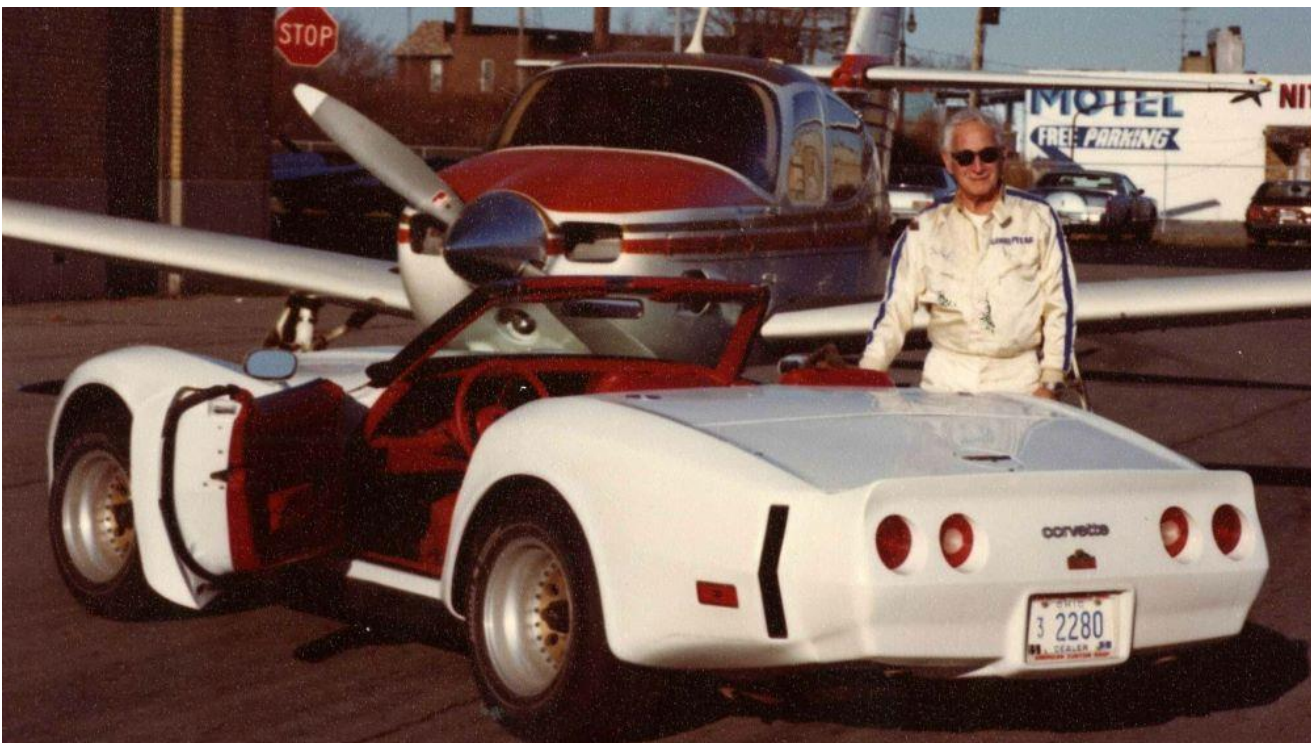
Duntov Turbo Was Zora's Own Personal C3 Corvette Pet Project

By **Brett Foote** - April 22, 2021

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The father of the Corvette teamed up with ACI to build the Duntov Turbo, a car that GM simply refused to make.



It's a rather well-known fact that the father of the Corvette, **Zora Arkus-Duntov**, wanted to build a turbocharged Corvette for some time. But like it often did over the years, General Motor brass disagreed, dismissing the idea as too expensive and appealing only to a limited market. Thus, Arkus-Duntov teamed up with replacement body panel manufacturer American Custom Industries (ACI) to make his dream a reality with a car simply called the Duntov Turbo back in 1980, and **CorvSport** recently revisited this obscure footnote in Corvette history.

The Duntov Turbo was more than just a turbocharged Corvette, of course. ACI modified the exterior of the car heavily, adding wider fenders that increased the width of the **C3** by a full six inches. Since General Motors quit making convertible Corvettes after 1975, ACI started out with coupes and chopped them up in-house, also adding OEM frame and cowl stiffening hardware from factory C3 drop-tops. Once that work was completed, the Duntov Turbo was painted white with a red interior, an homage to the original **1953 Corvette**.

Underneath, the Turbo was fitted with an upgraded suspension featuring Bilstein shocks. A set of Weld wheels were added to fill up the newly widened fenders, wrapped in a set of Goodyear Wingfoot tires measuring P255/60 in the front and P265/60 in the rear. But next came the most important step of building the Duntov Turbo – adding a turbocharger to the Corvette's 350 V8.



That task proved rather difficult in the small space and caused the engine bay to heat up to the point that rubber hoses were melting. ACI solved that problem by switching to braided metal hoses and adding additional air vents to the front end to aid with cooling. In the end, the turbo only added around 70 horsepower to the stock V8, and modest performance gains when paired with the car's automatic gearbox had ACI thinking of abandoning the project altogether.

The other problem was the car's cost. All of these modifications made the Duntov Turbo prohibitively expensive with a \$30,000 starting price, which was twice as much as what a base Corvette coupe cost in 1980. ACI voiced its concerns to Arkus-Duntov, but when Zora threatened to remove his name from the project if ACI ditched the turbo, the builder backed down and continued on with the project. ACI eventually sorted out the car's overheating issues, but customers weren't exactly enamored with the product. Aside from the marginal performance of the car, many found it to be quite ugly, and the Duntov Turbo wound up a massive failure, even after ACI began offering in-house conversions of customer cars.



Though it's unconfirmed, most believe that just 86 total units were produced out of a planned 200. Unfortunately for Arkus-Duntov, the company needed to sell 100 cars before he received his own, a clause embedded in his agreement that simply never came to be, just like his dream of a factory turbo Corvette.

Photos: **CorvSport**