

# LEEKY



# SEEL

## CORVAIR MINNESOTA NEWSLETTER

## President's Page

## March 2014

*March* is coming in like the proverbial lion. Actually snow leopard would be more appropriate given that I am writing this after Minneapolis received almost a foot of snow. You club members in Arizona and other parts south may want to delay your move back to the land of 10,000 lakes until June. Maybe the snow will be gone by then.

Of course Chevrolet was still working on development with a revised suspension for the Corvair in 1964, essentially a modified Corvette set up. And the turbocharged Spyder was the Corvair to have in the fun to drive factor. There are a lot of enthusiasts out there who feel this is the most collectible production Corvair to have.

Fifty years ago the Corvair had the sporty compact car market pretty much to itself. Ford tried to make things interesting with the Falcon Futura in 1962 but the Corvair was still the choice of drivers on a budget. For its part, Chevrolet added the Chevy II to its line up to satisfy the conservative families looking for a second small car and concentrated on making the Corvair *the* fun to drive American car.

We all know the rest of the story. Ford sold a gazillion Mustangs, other sporty compacts came and went, and Chevrolet stuck with the Corvair for about ten minutes before deciding to build the Camaro. The irony, of course, is that the Corvair showed there was a sporty car market, but Ford just did it better and cheaper. So early 50th Happy Birthday to the Ford Mustang drivers. And you're welcome.

This was all about to change in a big way. Ford began producing a little car called the Mustang on March 9, 1964 and offered it for sale on April 17th. Plymouth also had a new "pony car" up its sleeve, the Barracuda, which was offered to the public two weeks earlier than the Mustang.



Don't forget we are meeting at the Minneapolis Auto Show at the Convention Center again this year. More info appears in the SEEL. Special thanks go to Chuck Johnson for procuring the meeting room again.

Stay Tuned,  
*Lee Knauf*  
President



The Mustang, however, became a huge hit due mostly to its styling and Ford's great marketing department, which ran their new Mustang television ad on all three networks simultaneously.

# CORVAIR MINNESOTA

## February 10, 2013

President Lee Knauf gavelled the meeting to order at 7:02 with 20 members in attendance. We were especially pleased to have Dave Edwardy healed and back in attendance. Following the creed, we went around the room with everyone reporting the top speed they had driven a Corvair. Jim Brandberg won, having driven 125 mph while at the track

**January Minutes:** None available due to illness.

**Treasurer's Report:** We have \$2499 in our treasury currently.

**Recent Activities:** About a dozen club members toured the Pavak Radio Museum (after meeting for breakfast) and highly recommend it. Thanks go to John Herkenratt for making arrangements.

### Upcoming Activities:

**MSP Auto Show:** Our March meeting will again be held at the Auto Show March 11. Come whenever convenient and we will convene at 7 p.m. on the second floor.

**Spring Waffle Breakfast:** We will be in Buffalo this year near the end of April, assuming winter ever ends.

**July 21-25, 2014: National CORSA Convention:** Tacoma, Washington at the new LeMay Automobile Museum, only 5 months remains to complete projects!

### New Business:

**STEP:** Fran reported that his favorite wife Mary received an additional personal note from STEP thanking the club for all of our cash, toy, and toiletry donations during the Holidays, they were very appreciative.

**GMCCA:** New representative Dan Quinn reports the CMI volunteered to host the registration table for the newly added "Saturn/Other GM" Class to the show. This class will assemble on the lot to the east of us. Any GM vehicles are welcome in this area, "Owner's choice", just like Corvair trucks are welcome in our area or the Chevy/GMC truck area. The thought is this area will attract primarily small cars and many displayers may feel more welcome here than in their parent division car displays. And because Corvair owners have sometimes experienced being the "red haired step child" at other shows, what club would be a better host for these newbies. . .and hopefully *repeat* displayers?

**Adopt-A-Highway:** Cliff recommended our spring cleanup for May, so we decided on May 10<sup>th</sup> with May 17<sup>th</sup> as the rain date. Meet at Dobo's as usual!

**Wearables:** Bill Cook, basking in the sun, asked Cliff to bring the CMI vest and other wearables ordered during the dues party. The vests are great! For those not at the meeting, Bill will bring them to the April meeting.

**Treats:** Cliff Picht provided cupcakes.

### Tech Session

VP Gary Nelson brought the major components of a '62 factory air conditioning unit to disassemble for us, describing the functions and the strengths and weaknesses of the various components.

We adjourned at 8:45.

Respectfully submitted,

*Chuck Johnson*

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**Spring** is right around the corner, and it's time to think about the CORSA Board of Directors elections. This year we have terms expiring in all divisions, Eastern, Central and Western. Current board members whose terms expire in 2014 are all eligible to run again for these board positions and encouraged to do so. For all of the other CORSA members, this is your opportunity to help the organization and become part of the Board to help direct and steer the club into the future. If you have an interest in running and have questions, you can direct them to me or any director, as we should all have answers to your questions. Being part of the Board is a very rewarding position as we guide the club towards the future-- after all we're now celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1964 Corvair, with many more years to celebrate and grow the club.

We're running short of time, so if you can put together a paragraph or two describing how you believe you can help CORSA by being elected to the Board and submit that with a photo that we can run in the April *Communique*, please send the information to Mike McGowan, *Communique* Editor at: [communique@corvair.org](mailto:communique@corvair.org) or myself at : [mrhvair@aol.com](mailto:mrhvair@aol.com), and we will get you published. The deadline for getting your article in the *Communique* is **March 1**; this puts your information in the April Issue along with the Ballot for the election. Thanks for your continued support of CORSA and our hobby.

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# Fading Memories and Rusting Metal

By: Jake Callahan

It's been two years since I first got my Corvair and what a journey it's been. I went from having no idea what a Corvair was to owning and restoring one. But it's more a story of family and life than of making an old car new. In many ways this car saved my life, in that I needed a project to prove to myself (while in the midst of a deep depression) I could accomplish something completely new to me and complete a car that had been in the family for 40 years.

It was bought from the best I can find by my great grandfather used in the early seventies. His interest in it was that they stopped making them and he figured it would be worth money one day. Unfortunately the Corvair has never been worth much. Having grown up in the depression he picked up the base model.....a 1965 Corvair 500 coupe, built in the 1st week of April of 65 at Willow Run, Michigan plant. The only factory accessory was a rear antenna. The car was white with a red interior. From there it sat next to the garage for a decade. No old pictures exist according to my great grandfather but I hope to find some one day. The city made a fuss about the car being next to the garage so he took it up to the family cabin and there it sat in the dirt floor garage made of old telephone poles for another 25 years.

Then in the mid 1990's the car was given to his son, my great uncle. He had some money to put into the car and did a ton of work with the help of the family including my grandfather. Together they put in new floors, gas lines, brake lines and got the engine running. My uncle then stripped off most of the old paint, added to the layers of bondo in a few spots that my grandfather did and put gray primer on the car. The deliveries from Clark's Corvairs got so frequent that the mail man would just say "another part for the Corvair". My uncle would laugh and then joke that it will be done in a few decades.

Then the fire happened and the entire house was gutted by the inferno....except the garage which was untouched....with the Corvair sitting inside. As a child I was always interested in old things.....things with history. My dad once took an old railroad spike I had picked up along the railroad tracks, sanded the rust off and made it look like new. Since then I always wanted to do that again somehow. I remember as a kid looking at that old Corvair sitting in the garage wishing I could make it new again.

My uncle had lost steam on the project by about the early 2000's and there it still sat. Around the same time I was helping the same grandfather who put the new floors in the Corvair with restoring his 1955 Ford Customline. We spent many days polishing chrome, putting pieces back together as the car was already painted and ready for everything again. My grandfather always said I was the reason it got done.....\$10,000 later. I was 15 and the time with my grandfather was precious.



(3)

Fading Memories, continued on page 7

## A Spring compressor: good tool!

When my Rampside has about a 500 pound load in it the ride is magnificent and the handling is right on - - it's a truck made to haul. Unfortunately my Rampside spends most of its time driving around very lightly loaded. Such that the rear tires start to wear off on the outside edge and it could be that the driving is compromised by a couple degrees of Positive Camber on each rear wheel. One degree is a ¼" in a foot, so it's pretty easy to take a one foot level and stick it up against a wheel to read ¼" or even ½" off of vertical.

Anyway I replaced my rear springs with front FC springs and the back end dropped down a bit and the wheels were straight up and down. This, however; exacerbated the nose in the air attitude that is common to the FCs. Ken Hand sells modified Ford springs that are supposed to mitigate that nose-up condition. I bought a pair from Ken.

The other day (turns out I get older every day and every day I put off these projects I get a little weaker!), well, the other day I went to change out those front springs. Took out the shock, opened the ball-joint (no small task as these have been in there for 50 years!) tied up the spindle and lowered the jack holding up the lower A-arm. The rubber bushings are in very good shape – the edges of the rubber are all gnarly and rotten from exposure but the A-arm was firm and fought me vigorously as I tried to bend it out of its normal position. All went well getting the FC spring out but I could not push, shove, kick, crowbar, pound, etc. that new spring into the chamber in the spring tower and down onto the recession in the A-arm. NO WAY! (I'm certain that I could have brute forced it 30 years ago). I had to quit and sleep on the idea.

During the night it hit me that I have a spring compressor in the cabinet. The next day was some stuff and then it was Sunday and we had other stuff to do so it took a while for me to cogitate on the project and it always came back to how easy would be the job if the spring were shorter. I finally got back to the project and clamped the spring down onto itself and installed it – bingo!

Now for the other side! Spring compressor in hand; I tackled the job with gusto. This time I dropped the inner end of the lower A-arm and swung the whole assembly out towards me - - I tied the old spring down before starting the job. Everything went well. Cleaned out the spring pocket in the A-arm, cleaned up the grade 8 bolts, clamped the spring to the A-arm with the compressor and jacked it up into place. That big 5/8" bolt hanging down was an easy target and I soon had the A-arm hooked to the cross member by that big bolt. Then things started to be a bit more difficult as I couldn't get that whole assembly to swing forward so I could line up the front bolts. I crowbar'd it a bit and tried my little bottle jacks but they don't work well on their side...and then I thought why not get out my Porta-Power and put the right sized pipe in there and persuade that baby to come on around. I climbed out from under the vehicle fully confident that my problem had been solved. When I couldn't find the Porta-Power the project slowed down...I hunted in every conceivable corner. Nope! It was gone! I was now stuck, very close to completion, but stuck.

The next day I stopped to see our friendly police department and a guy came out and walked and talked and asked what is a Porta-Power and what did I use it for. I gave him a grand tour of my garages and showed him each CORVAIR. He assured me that he would check the local pawn shops and get back to me if/when they found it.

I went back to the project with renewed vigor and was able to get the bolts lined up by tightening the spring compressor even more.

That allowed me to push the assembly into position so the bolts would fit. Finished the job and cleaned up the area. Measured the ground clearance of the body in front of the rear wheels and behind the front wheels....the front clearance is ½" less than the rear, with a half tank of gas. I noted the measurements joyfully!

Oh, I told Gary about my success and about my absent Hydraulics and he said, "It's over here at my place"! I had totally forgotten using it to bend some of his El Corvino pieces – in his shop – and then leaving it there in case we needed to bend some other stuff.

I sheepishly unreported the burglary to the police.

**Fran** 🤔



# Pavek Museum of Broadcasting Tour

After a sumptuous breakfast at the Park Tavern on a cold January morning, we caravanned to the Pavek Museum of Broadcasting for a guided tour of the history of broadcasting up to about the 1970s.

Daniel our guide was very knowledgeable and the time flew by. There is so much history and so many exhibits, a person could spend hours and hours soaking it all in.



If anyone went hungry, it was their own fault (right Vince?)



## On to Pavek



Danny talking about the early days of recording



The early days of radio and telegraph



Danny is showing Dick an early wax cylinder for recording (the very earliest recordings were done on tin foil).



Cori and a grandfather radio



A remote control radio (Philco)



His Master's Voice

Fast forward to 2011 and my younger brother is talking to my great uncle about the Corvair sitting in his garage. My brother being a gear head had somehow made the deal of century.....my uncle was going to give him the Corvair.....for nothing. When I heard this I was not upset as I knew very little about restoring cars and was at the time 25 years old, working at Red Lobster and far from having money for restoring a car. But when my brother got the car home, realized it wasn't the fast car he wanted and decided to sell it for \$500 (it ran and drove at this time) I decided to go ahead and keep it in the family.....and bought it with student loan money. Shortly after I landed a job making much more than I did before and now had some money to put into the car.



From there the car went over to my grandfather's house and we proceeded to work on an old car together again. It was like old times except now he moved much slower.....he had his first couple rounds of chemo. He helped me grind all the surface rust peeking through the old primer off and fill the two rust holes in the car. We had some great bonding time again, talked about life and he encouraged me as I was going through a very hard time. All of this in the same garage we had used to restore his 1955 Ford ten years before.

Enter my cousin's husband, a great guy who had restored a 1963 Ford Fairlane and ran a car club. He offered to help me do the bodywork and paint it as he wanted another paint job under his belt. A price was not discussed.....he just told me to drive it down and we will get to work. So I drove the car for the first real time on a sunny March day.....no snow on the ground (very unusual for Minnesota) and it went well. The car had not seen that much driving in a very long time and a real smile formed on my face for the first time in months. As I arrived at the house (taking back roads as the Corvair wasn't exactly street legal at the moment) there was my Great Grandfather and some more family who happened to be there for a birthday party. My grandfather seemed pleased to see the car there, running his aged hand over the places he sanded all those years ago. Another family member distinctly remembered having to help grandpa put bondo all along the lower windshield panel. After everyone had a look the Corvair went into the garage where it would stay for the next three months.

Wade (my cousin's husband) and I got to work whenever we could. He taught me how to sand, bondo, mix primer.....most of all patience, which had never been my strong suit. As we worked we found we had a lot in common. Whether it be music, movies or antiques. But most of all we shared a faith in Christianity and knew the value of family ties....Uncles, grandfathers, and grandsons and the old cars that bring them together. With this we bonded and became friends. Wade's kindness was something I needed very much at that time in my life.....when I felt I wasn't capable of anything anymore. He showed me a generosity I can only hope to give others one day. As a token of my appreciation I gave him a new set of floor mats for his 63 Ford.....complete with the embroidered Ford emblem on them.

Then came the big day.....paint day.

As I watched the car being completed.....I knew I had done it. The Corvair was finally done. I knew, despite the obstacles, that God had provided an amazing family and that car to show me I could do anything I set my mind to. That God will always take care of me.

I hurried to get the car back together and get it ready for the Fourth of July deadline I had set. My grandfather had been given only weeks to live. So on a hot summer night, the moon orange and vibrant, shining through the open window of the Corvair I drove up to the Cabin. Two hours, no music.....just the road. The next morning my grandfather and I took a picture next to the car.....like we had ten years before in front of his Ford. A picture he would have hanging in his home for the coming months as he fought cancer.



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The last words I said to him as he lay in his hospice bed where "I'll always think of you when I drive the Corvair". And I always do. I think of family.....I think of how God provides.....and I enjoy every minute of it.....because you only live once. And whether we like to believe it or not life is unpredictable and unsafe at any speed; might as well live it to the fullest with the people that matter most.





# CMI Classifieds

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FOR SALE. \$5.00 (plus \$1 postage) 1963 Corvair owners guide. Front cover was written on by the original owner who sold a 1964 Corvair to me in about 1986. :) some underlining inside and it's a bit worn. Hence the \$5 price!

FOR SALE. \$10.00 (plus \$1 postage) 1964 Corvair Owner's Guide. Slightly worn on the edges, a bit of underlining inside but otherwise in really good shape for something 50 years old!

Carole Isakson isakson@kwgc-law.com 612-308-2123

\*\*\*\*\*

1960-69 (including FC) **Steering Stabilizer**. Clark's part number C1460 (see on page 138 & 152) – new in box. Catalog price - \$98.70 (+ 8 lbs shipping). Your price: \$50. (+ shipping, of course) John Herkenratt (952) 935-4596

\*\*\*\*\*

**New:** Engine electrical harness, ball joints, Pertronix ignition; headers (110 and 140); custom exhaust; Wallen rebuilt starters generators and alternators; mufflers; rebuilt flywheels; new belly pan for late; crank and rod bearings.  
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*Old Cars Report* PRESENTS  
**Car of the Week** *Weekend Extra!*

February 19, 2014



**By Brian Earnest**

Chevrolet Corvair guys have a reputation for believing that “one is never enough.” Jim Enfield of Felton, Pa., would be one of those guys. He doesn’t deny it. He didn’t start out trying to become a Corvair collector, of course, but one led to another, and another, and another.

“I’ve got four of them now. I’m out of space,” he laughs. “I even bought a trailer to keep one of them in.”

Enfield’s stable includes an award-winning 1963 Monza convertible, 1962 station wagon and a 1962 Corvan panel van. Perhaps his most interesting vehicle, however, is his 1964 Rampside pickup — a true oddity in any old car circle and one of the most unique pickups ever built.

On top of all the other things to like about the truck — its wonderful condition, originality and scarcity among them — Enfield’s turquoise-and-white Rampside is a true “barn find.”

## eSEEL EXTRA

“I found this one in an online ad in I think 2004 from a guy in Mechanicsburg, Pa.,” he recalled. “I went up and looked at it and thought, ‘Well, I’m going to get this!’ The guy pulled it out his barn that it had been in for 19 years. It wasn’t driven for 19 years until I bought it.”



Amazingly, the truck still ran. It was in no shape to drive back to Felton, but the fact that it started at all was a bonus for Enfield. “It was running very rough. It was only hitting on about three cylinders, I think,” he chuckled. “But it ran enough that I drug it up on the tow dolly and we took it home.”

Enfield isn’t sure why the previous owner parked the truck and let it sit for so long. The Rampside had clearly been taken care of over the years. “He had a little farm there, so I guess it was for light farming,” he said. “I couldn’t find anything else about it and I really don’t know what he planned to do with it.”

The truck was the third Corvair Enfield had ever owned. He got his first rear-engined machine as a teenager and quickly became a fan for life. “My first car was a 1963 Corvair convertible ... and about 12 years ago I found another one just like my original one,” he said.

“A convertible — they are like a dime a dozen. There are many, many Corvair convertibles around — of the early models. I wanted something different, more rare.”



## eSEEL EXTRA

He found it in the Rampside, the Spartan, uniquely utilitarian hauler that lived in the Chevrolet line from 1961-'64. The Corvair 95 series was unveiled for the '61 model year as America's first true small van and a direct competitor to the similarly rear-engined Volkswagen van. The driver-forward 95 series trucks and vans were built on the Corvair platform and used the same air-cooled rear engine and transaxle. The same fully independent suspension used on the Corvair automobiles also gave the 95 series trucks a definite advantage over their domestic competition.

Initially, the 95 series lineup included a Corvan panel van, Greenbriar passenger van, Loadside truck with a traditional rear tailgate, and a Rampside, with both a rear tailgate and bottom-hinged door on the passenger side that dropped down and transformed into a ramp. The side ramp door was covered on top with a rubber shield to protect it when the ramp was lowered.

To move the driver far enough ahead of the front wheels, the wheelbase was shortened to 95 inches — hence the 95 series moniker — which was 13 inches less than a Corvair sedan. The unitized pickups had a box that was 43 7/8 inches wide and 105 inches long. The bed was raised slightly in back to accommodate the engine. Standard equipment included a 144.8-cid, air-cooled opposed six-cylinder engine attached to a three-speed manual transmission. The Corvairs featured two carburetors and were rated at about 95 hp and 128 lbs.-ft. of torque. A liberal use of aluminum in the engine helped keep the Rampside's weight to 2,665 lbs. and helped keep handling manageable, although the Corvair commercial rigs were never lauded for their agility. The trucks had a respectable payload rating of 1,500 lbs. with a gross vehicle weight ceiling of 4,700 lbs.

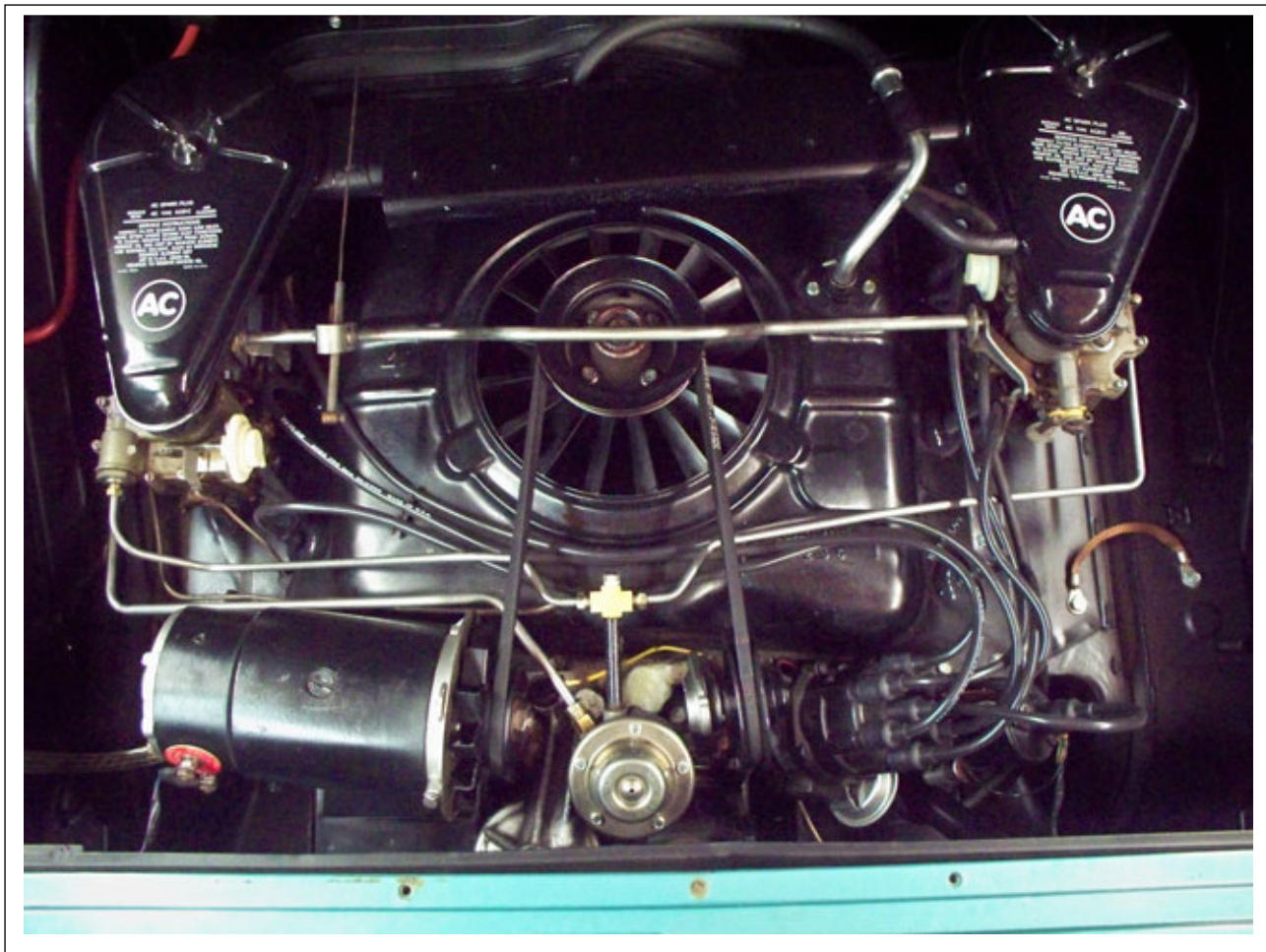


## eSEEL EXTRA

The engine was accessed from a flip-up panel in the rear of the bed. Up front were two sets of prominent headlights, and a concave, sculpted contrast strip ran from nose to tail. Inside was a simple bench seat, large truck-style steering wheel and minimalist dash.

The Loadside pickup was discontinued after the 1962 model run, but the Corvan and Rampside lasted for four years before dwindling sales prompted GM to give up on the line. The 95 Series trucks and vans got off to a decent start in 1961 when Chevy built 15,806 of the Corvan panel vans, 10,787 Rampside trucks and 2,475 Loadside trucks. That was as good as it got, though, and by 1964 only 8,147 Corvans and just 851 Rampside vans were built before the plug was pulled on the Corvair commercial line, leaving the Greenbriar passenger van to soldier on alone.

Enfield wound up with one of the few 1964 Rampside pickups that are still rolling. His truck is equipped with an optional four-speed manual transmission (a \$71.10 extra), gasoline heater (also \$71.10) that ran off gas from the pickup's tank, and two-tone paint (\$25.10). The truck shows 55,000-plus miles on the odometer and is in impressive shape for a largely unrestored machine. Enfield has spruced things up and taken the engine apart, but most of the truck is unmolested.



“The first thing I do when I get a Corvair is tear the engine down and detail it and get it running right,” he said. “I spent quite a bit of time on the engine and engine compartment... It did run and it did drive, but boy did it smoke. I left a trail. I’m pretty sure he had to put a battery in it to start with. I’m not sure what else he did to get it to start. Corvairs are pretty tough!

## eSEEL EXTRA

“The condition was still very good and I still have not repainted it. Some of it is original paint. A lot of people say it looks pretty good. The exterior is the way I got it. I think it had been repainted, but I think that was was like 30 or 40 years ago. It does have some dents and dings, and everybody says that gives it character. The bed was sort of beat up. I’ve seen worse. The cab just needed freshening up. I wound up painting the inside. That was within the first year of me having it.”

The vinyl seat covering is original, Enfield believes, as is the headliner. The beat-up rubber mats on the floor have given way to carpet. Beyond that, there wasn’t much to fix up.

Although Enfield probably isn’t going to squeeze into his Rampside and head off on any coast-to-coast runs, short trips are always eventful and draw plenty of reaction. He tries to spread out his hobby miles between his four Corvairs, but Enfield knows he’ll always get plenty of attention when he shows up in his pickup, and he’ll have fun getting there. “I like driving it. It has 4-speed transmission and I like shifting gears! You can’t do that much anymore in new cars and trucks.



“I like the way it steers. It’s got a big steering wheel on it. It’s a truck steering wheel. It steers good as far as I’m concerned, and even though it’s only 95 hp it has some get up and go. The back of it is the heavy part, because the engine is back there. It’s good in snow, but I haven’t tried any lately!”

At shows, Enfield runs into plenty of folks who’ve never seen a Rampside Corvair truck. He’s used to fielding all kinds of questions. “Some people even think I built it like that or modified it. ‘Why did you cut the side out and make that door?’ I get a lot of that.

## eSEEL EXTRA

“There are a few thousand around the country — I don’t know the exact number. Mine is the rarest of the bunch. It’s a 1964 which there were only 851 produced in ‘64. I’m just going to keep it this way. It’s certainly not a 100-point vehicle, but people seem to think it’s nice and I like it the way it is.”





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*A trunk full of Unsafe  
(Photo courtesy Kevin Wilson of Juneau, AK)*



**CMI is a non-profit corporation, chartered with The CORVAIR Society of America. Send CORVAIR Minnesota's \$20.00 annual dues, payable by Jan 01, to the CMI Treasurer. Membership in CORVAIR Minnesota entitles you to the monthly newsletter, "The Leeky Seel", with free ads for members, a club window sticker, discounts on club activities, information on parts availability, and good advice on the preservation and enjoyment of the CORVAIR automobile.... Yeah!**

**THE LEEKY SEEL**

3370 Library Lane St. Louis Park, MN  
55426-4224 Ph: 763.475.0350

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*How about inviting a friend to a CMI event?!*