



# Group Corvair Comments

GROUP CORVAIR'S NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA



VOLUME XLV, No. 4

April 2017



**Dinner at Beijing of Greenbelt**

## CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

*(There are **many** local events over the year, too many to list here; search Google for "Maryland, DC or Virginia Car Shows" to find more.)*

### April

15 – **CHANGE!** The Group Corvair Meeting this month is moving to **Saturday, April 15**. No, we're not celebrating Tax Day or the day the Titanic sank, but rather we decided to have a spring weekend outing and go to the Fisherman's Inn restaurant on Main Street, Grasonville, MD; that's just across the Kent Narrows Bridge off Rt-50 as you go to the Eastern Shore. Our plan is to meet in the McDonalds restaurant parking lot near exit 29 on Rt-50 (1450 Whitehall Rd, Annapolis) and at 12:00 noon convoy to the Fisherman's Inn. **PLEASE LET ME (Jim Simpson) KNOW IF YOU ARE COMING SO I CAN MAKE A RESERVATION AT THE RESTAURANT!**

19-23 – Spring Carlisle, Collector car swap meet, corral and auction.

22 – Asphalt Angels Spring Show, Bowie, MD

## May

16 – Group Corvair Meeting, 7 p.m., Fratelli’s Restaurant (the old Howard Johnson’s), 5820 Landover Road, in Hyattsville, MD.

21 – West Friendship 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Car Show, Howard County Living Farm Heritage Museum, 12985 Frederick Rd, West Friendship, MD. For info: Al Zimmerman, 410-560-0237, email: [ximmco1@comcast.net](mailto:ximmco1@comcast.net)

27 – Bowie Memorial Day parade.

27 – 4<sup>th</sup> Annual FIRST Classic Car & Hot Rod Show, Greene Turtle, 3213 Solomons Island Road, Edgewater, MD.

## June

2-4 – Virginia Vair Fair, Lexington, VA. The host hotel is the Howard Johnson, Lexington on I-81. Call (540-463-9181) and ask for the Vair Fair rate (\$74.95) which includes breakfast. Contact Anne Davis (757-471-5207) for more information and the registration form is at:

<https://sites.google.com/site/centralvirginiacorvairclub>

10 – Tentative date for the “Wings ‘n Wheels” show, Frederick, MD.

18 – Sully Plantation/George Washington Chapter Model A Club sponsored annual Father’s Day show.

20 – Group Corvair Meeting, 7 p.m.

23-25 – Carlisle Chevrolet Nationals (This replaces the old GM Nationals, but all GM brands are welcome.)

27 – July 1 – CORSA International Convention, Independence, MO.

## July

14 – 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Collector Car Appreciation Day. For info and local events:

[http://www.semasan.com/page.asp?content=celebrate\\_collectorcar\\_day&g=SEMAGA](http://www.semasan.com/page.asp?content=celebrate_collectorcar_day&g=SEMAGA)

18 – Group Corvair Meeting? Or do we plan to have a “Not Quite Fourth of July” picnic/meeting?

30 – Asphalt Angels “Summer Sizzler” car show, Bowie, MD.

## Minutes of the March Business Meeting

Marolyn Simpson

Eight Group Corvair members met at 7:00 at the Beijing of Greenbelt restaurant for the March 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. As in the past we ordered several dishes and ate family style.

Jim Govoni called the meeting to order at 8:10. Jim Simpson gave the treasurer’s report: Income was from dues; there were no expenses during the last month.

We decided to put off discussion of a possible 4<sup>th</sup> of July picnic until the April 15 meeting. We’ll also discuss purchasing the name tags that Rob Neighbor brought up during the February meeting.

The April meeting will be a special one, a spring outing. It will be at the Fisherman’s Inn on Main Street in Grasonville, MD. That’s on Main Street in Grasonville, MD. Note that April 15 is a Saturday--instead of our usual third Tuesday meeting day. We will rendezvous at the McDonalds restaurant parking lot near exit 29 on Rt-50 (1450 Whitehall Rd, Annapolis) and at 12:00 noon convoy to the Fisherman’s Inn. It is just across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge (toll - \$4 outbound, free return). Jim Simpson offered to make a reservation so please be sure to contact him.

The tech discussion for the evening was about tires currently available for the Corvair. There is a relatively limited selection of tires available in sizes suitable for a stock Corvair. Maxxis (Chinese manufacturer) has a 185/80R-15 whitewall; these are relatively widely available including from Clarks. Vredestein (Holland) makes a 6.40/7.00SR-13 blackwall in their “Classic Sprint” line; these are slightly larger diameter tires than the Maxxis and perhaps a closer match to the original 7.00-13 bias ply tires. And Coker has introduced a reproduction of the original Firestone

7.00-13 bias ply tires with 5/8" whitewalls. These would be the choice for true authenticity as long as you wanted to live with bias ply tires.

Under the category of "past Corvair memories" there was a discussion about the 1991 National Convention that Group Corvair hosted in New Carrollton. Topics included memories of the talk given by Ralph Nader about automobile safety.

The May meeting will be at Fratelli's Restaurant (the old Howard Johnson's), 5820 Landover Road, in Hyattsville. It sounds like a fun evening.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45.

## GROUP CORVAIR 2017 OFFICERS and Points of Contact

**President:** Jim Govoni  
12713 Keswick Ave, Bowie, MD 20715  
301-262-7017 [JKFG717@gmail.com](mailto:JKFG717@gmail.com)

**Vice President:** Barbara Torbert  
5317 Crittenden Street Hyattsville, MD 20781  
301- 927-6029 [barbara.torbert@hotmail.com](mailto:barbara.torbert@hotmail.com)

**Secretary:** Marolyn Simpson  
3845 Wayson Road Davidsonville, MD 21035  
301- 262-0978 or 240-232-2820  
[m.simpson7@verizon.net](mailto:m.simpson7@verizon.net)

**Treasurer:** Jim Simpson  
3845 Wayson Road Davidsonville, MD 21035  
301-262-0978 or 240-232-2820 [simpsonj@verizon.net](mailto:simpsonj@verizon.net)

**Newsletter Editor:** Jim Simpson  
3845 Wayson Road Davidsonville, MD 21035  
301 262-0978 or 240-232-2820 [simpsonj@verizon.net](mailto:simpsonj@verizon.net)

**Merchandise:** Gus Torbert  
5317 Crittenden Street Hyattsville, MD 20781  
301-927-6029 [barbara.torbert@hotmail.com](mailto:barbara.torbert@hotmail.com)

## Forty, Thirty and Twenty Years Ago This Month

Jim Simpson

*Group Corvair Comments* thanked Jack Dempsey in the March/April 1977 issue for the open house he hosted at his Hot Air Enterprises shop. He had several displays including a complete turbo system, steering boxes from all years, brake hubs and drums, early and late engine blocks to point out the differences, and a differential display. Reportedly about 50 Group Corvair members attended!

Back in April 1977 the *CORSA Communiqué* had a "thank you" to Dayton Wheel Products for their support of the Corvair racing program. Back in the day, Dayton Wheel Products had a major support program – along with a wide range of performance parts – for the Corvair racers. In fact, the *Communiqué* had an advertisement for Dayton two-piece cast alloy (in either aluminum or magnesium) wheels in 13" diameter with the right offset for Corvairs in widths up to 8". Those were the days. In the forum section, there were letters concerning Bill Fisher's book *How To Hotrod Corvair Engines*, trailering Corvairs to conventions, and some ideas on building an eight cylinder version of the Corvair engine. (Note that Chevrolet did experiment with variations on the Corvair engine design including a ten cylinder version that was intended for a front-wheel drive version of the full-size Chevrolet.) Group Corvair's Freestate Corvair Affair was advertised; it was to be held at the Cross Keys Inn, Columbia, MD on May 14/15, 1977. As in the previous month, lots of cars for sale including James Reeves Stinger, a '65 Fitch Sprint, and a '65 "Stingerized" Corsa set up for SCCA racing.

Jumping ahead a decade, the April 1987 issue of *Group Corvair Comments* had a column written by the club president, Ward Bourgonien. He commented on the number of people who had popped up asking about the club and others asking for advice on their Corvair's value and condition. He also noted that if you want to have your Corvair appear in a movie, move to Baltimore! *Tin Men* had just been filmed up there and CORSA of Baltimore had provided a '63 convertible for Danny DeVito and a '60 4-door for Richard Dreyfuss. Bobby Trevvett contributed a recipe for "Raggedy Robins", a chocolate, peanut butter and oatmeal no-bake cookie. We also published a number of tech tips, one of which is repeated, and expanded upon, later in this newsletter. Under the 'Vair Vendor, Mark Holmlund was downsizing, offering four cars for sale, all at pretty reasonable prices.

The April 1987 *CORSA Communiqué* was an interesting read even ignoring the various April fool's day articles. Wade Lanning had a major article about the Monza prototype that the Central VA Corvair Club had recovered. It was

one of two prototypes that GM built for the NY and Chicago auto shows. This particular one had been given to Richard Reynolds of the Reynolds Metal Company in Richmond, VA after being displayed in New York. (No one seems to know what happened to the other prototype.) It was a family car for a couple of decades until it was finally donated to the club in 1986. At the time of the article, the club was just getting started on its restoration.

Supplementing the comments in our newsletter, the Baltimore Corvair Club had an article about the making of *Tin Men* and how their club supplied a pair of Corvairs for the filming. If you are interested in rounding out your Corvair bookshelf, Jim Rice had his list ranging from the *SAE Papers* to Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed*. There are few in the list that I haven't seen before and are probably unavailable anymore but are still worth keeping an eye out for. Under Tech Topics, Richard Finch explained how to greatly prolong the life of the pushrod o-rings. Essentially he recommends coating the pushrod tubes with a ceramic coating to protect them from the heat of the exhaust manifolds. Larry Claypool continued his "Stock Is" series with a discussion of wheel covers and hub caps. Seth Emerson topped off the technical discussions with a short discussion of the center-mounted 4-barrel carb kits. On a sad note, there was the announcement of Don Yenko's death in a plane crash. He was the creator of the Yenko Stinger Corvair of racing fame. And in other news, there was an announcement of the chartering of the Northern Virginia Corvair Club as an official chapter of CORSA. Capping off the issue was the four pages of CORSA Classified; great variety and prices.

Jumping to twenty years ago, the April 1997 *Group Corvair Comments* discussed the restoration of the cut-away Corvair drive train that the club had acquired. It needed a lot of attention. The good news was that most of the clear plastic parts such as the valve covers were in good condition although needing cleaning and polishing but the chrome parts had suffered from exposure and might need rechroming. John Moody discussed aligning the steering shaft assembly; that is, making sure the steering wheel and steering box were both centered. (This is different than the front suspension alignment and not something the average garage ever checks.) We were still cooking, this time with a recipe for Foolproof Dark Chocolate Fudge! And with the advent of spring we were up to 19 cars for sale.

The April 1997 *CORSA Communiqué* started out with an amusing story about an electric Corvair; apparently the inventor had managed to create what amounts to a perpetual motion machine! His "invention" used the generator to power the starter motor and the faster the starter turned, the more power the generator produced. (Don't forget, this was the April issue...) On a more down-to-earth level, there was a report on CORSA finances including a graph showing that the "break even" point for CORSA was about 4,500 members. Below that level, CORSA's expenses exceeded the income; above that, CORSA turned a profit. As of that date, CORSA had 5,388 members but based upon trends was expecting a drop to around 4,500 by 2001. In fitting with the April theme, there were two articles on custom Corvairs, including "Big Daddy" Roth's Road Agent. This car was mid-engined. In order to handle the reversal, he used a powerglide transaxle turned upside down. That took some work, but it ran well. Al Huston had a two page article in the Tech Topics on front end alignment. Yes, that can be a do-it-yourself project although he did recommend going to a good alignment shop if you believe the rear end needed alignment as well. Finally there were only half the number of cars and parts in the CORSA Classified as there had been 10 years before. But there were still some gems such as Yenko Stinger YS-107 and a '64 Rampside camper for sale, both at good prices.

## Tech Topics

Jim Simpson

**Ever Wanted to Check the Distributor Advance Curve?** If you have the original distributor for your Corvair, consider yourself lucky. Many distributors have been swapped over the years, too often without any regard for matching the new distributor to the engine. According to the *CORSA Tech Guide* there are 34 different distributors, all of them mechanically interchangeable, but each unique. Each of them had a somewhat different ignition advance curve to best match the engine cam, compression ratio, transmission characteristics and emissions requirements.

Normally you can check the part number on the side of the distributor to see if it is the correct one. (The *CORSA Tech Guide* has a table.) But even if you do have the right one based upon the part number, there's still the possibility that it has been rebuilt with the wrong parts or that the original parts – springs primarily – have changed over the years. The only way of knowing for sure is to check the advance curve.

And even if everything is correct from an original factory specification perspective, you might want to make modifications to the distributor advance curve to match a new cam shaft, modern gasoline, or other engine mods. So how do you map the distributor advance curve?

One way is to find or buy a “distributor machine”. These used to be fairly common in the old time garages but they aren’t used that much anymore as modern cars have gone to “coil-on-plug” systems and other designs that don’t use distributors. Garages are now selling them off on e-bay and the like. A quick search shows several for sale in the \$900 - \$2000 range. Given their size and weight, you’d better find one close by; otherwise figure on a pretty high shipping charge. Somehow that doesn’t seem like such a great approach unless you are in the distributor rebuilding business.

John Moody offered an alternative approach back in 1987. Timing lights were coming on the market with adjustable delay circuits. These were intended to make it easier to adjust ignition timing – just set the desired timing advance on the light and then adjust the timing to “0” (top dead center – TDC) rather than try to find a dirty or obscured timing mark on the engine block.

This feature can be used in reverse to map the distributor advance curve. To start, you need a tachometer; luckily many of the timing lights with the delayed flash feature also have a tachometer built in. If not, hook up a tachometer. Next, you need to disconnect and block the vacuum advance. (You don’t want the vacuum advance to confuse the readings!) Finally prepare a piece of paper to record the measurements; you will need to have two columns, one for RPM, the second for timing delay.

RPM	Advance
500 (idle)	
(RPM at which Advance Starts)	
1000	
1500	
2000	
2500	
3000	
3500	
4000	
4500	
5000	

Start and warm up the engine and adjust the idle to something near 600 rpm. Be sure there is plenty of ventilation! You DO NOT want to poison yourself with carbon monoxide!! Carbon monoxide is colorless, odorless and DEADLY. You want to start at a low enough RPM to ensure the distributor isn’t already starting to advance. (Some distributors start their advance at as low as 600 RPM, most start at 800-900 RPM. The big exceptions are the turbo distributors; the advance doesn’t start until 3900 - 4100 RPM depending upon year.) With the engine at idle check the initial engine timing by setting the flash delay to zero. Use it to check to see that the actual timing setting of the engine is correct, that is, use the timing light and see where the TDC mark on the pulley lines up with the timing marks on the block. That should match the engine tune-up specifications. Reset the timing light delay to that value, recheck to be sure the light now flashes at an indicated TDC, and make a note of the delay value. You will use this as a correction factor later.

Now increase the idle until you see the timing start to change. That’s the RPM at which the distributor advance starts. Again make a note of the RPM and timing light delay setting.

From here out, pick some convenient RPM interval such as every 500 RPM and increase the engine speed to that level. (You’ll have to work out a way of propping the throttle open.) Adjust the delay on the timing light until it flashes at an indicated TDC and note the RPM and timing light delay. Continue until there is no further timing advance – all the stock distributors should be fully advanced by about 4800 RPM.

Now go back and subtract the idle delay from each higher RPM value, plot the results as a timing delay (advance) versus RPM, and you have the advance curve for your particular distributor.

You could also check the vacuum advance canister in much the same way. Hook up a hand vacuum pump to the vacuum advance. Adjust the idle to something convenient and note the timing advance. According to the Chevrolet specifications, the vacuum advance should start between 5 and 7 inches of vacuum and be all in by about 17 inches. Start pumping the vacuum pump until you see the first hint of a change in timing. Make a note the RPM, timing and amount of vacuum. Note that you will have to keep adjusting the RPM as you increase the vacuum since the timing is changing. It is important to keep the RPM constant so that your measurements are not affected by the centrifugal advance. Increase the vacuum in 1 or 2 inches of mercury increment and again note the RPM (adjust as needed), timing, and amount of vacuum. Once you reach the point where there is no further change in timing – somewhere around 17 inches of vacuum – you are done. Plot the results and you have the vacuum advance curve.

Of course if the vacuum advance doesn’t hold steady, you have a leak somewhere, possibly in the vacuum advance diaphragm itself. If so, replace the vacuum advance. Have fun!

**Do You Own a 1964 Model?** If so, congratulations, you have the improved rear suspension with the traverse leaf spring. And if so, too bad, you need to pay attention to the rear suspension. The bolts that attach the ends of the leaf spring to the rear lower control arms do rust off! When this happens, the leaf spring ends drag on the road and driving just a few hundred yards will wear the ends down enough to ruin the spring. It would be wise to check this hardware for rust and wear. (You may have to remove it to check for hidden rust.) If there is any noticeable rust or wear, replace it! The bolts and nuts should be grade 8.

## Vair Vendor

**Still For Sale:** 1964 Spyder Engine, best offer. Contact Bob Wildes, 410-778-8184 for more information.



Someone needs to save this engine! While the seller hasn't said so, I suspect it will end up in the dump if no one makes an offer.

**For Sale:** 1961 Corvair 900 (Monza), 4-door, 21,000 original miles. Excellent condition inside and out, never any rust. Repainted a teal green (acceptable, but not a great paint job) with the original blue/green interior. Powerglide automatic, resealed engine with later model magnesium fan and alternator, fresh carburetors. Have all original books and paperwork as well as receipts for parts from Clarks Corvair Parts. Asking \$7,000. Contact John Mays, 410-221-8735 for more information.

## Clark's Corvair Parts

**Clark's Corvair Parts** is keeping up with the times and going "green". Their 2017 Supplement is now on line on the Clark's Corvair Parts web site: [www.corvair.com](http://www.corvair.com) It includes their SALE PAGE on page 26. Clark's will provide a printed copy if you request one with your next order. You might also want to check their web site to see which shows they will be attending (they won't have their big display at the CORSA Convention this year but will be taking orders and providing a show discount on those orders).

*Group Corvair welcomes anyone in the Washington, DC area who has an interest in the Chevrolet Corvair. We sponsor a variety of events including shows, tech sessions, and social gatherings. Dues are \$12.00 a year, payable to Group Corvair and sent to the treasurer's address. Group Corvair is a chapter of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA), P.O. Box 607, Lemont, IL 60439-0607, website: [www.corvair.org](http://www.corvair.org) CORSA memberships are available at various levels with corresponding dues. As a member, you will receive the award-winning CORSA Communiqué and be eligible to attend all CORSA national events, including the annual convention.*



This sleek Chevrolet Impala Convertible and a saucy red Corvair by Chevrolet find new room to roam via the Seattle-Winslow ferry



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Corvair powered Kelmark (kit car) at the 2010 CORSA Convention