



Group Corvair Comments

GROUP CORVAIR'S NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA



VOLUME XLV, No. 8

September 2017



It's car show season again!

Green Turtle in Edgewater

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.)*

September

16 – 42nd Annual Edgar Rohr Memorial Antique Car Show, Manassas Museum, 9101 Prince William St., Manassas, VA. Sponsored by the Bull Run Region, AACA. Contact Darryll Baker, 571-294-7853 (darryllbaker@aol.com) or the flyer on the website: www.bullrunaaca.org

16 – Bay State Corvairs Fall Classic at Clark's Corvair Parts, 9 – 3, 400 Mohawk Trail, Shelburne Fall, MA.

17 – Heart of Maryland Classic Chevy Club 25th Annual Car & Truck show, MVA, Frederick, MD. (1601 Bowman's Farm Road, exit 56 from I-70 in Frederick.) For information contact Ed Zimmerman (301-514-2207) or Butch Riley (301-514-8267). Dash plaques to the first 350 to register. Benefits the Alzheimer's Association.

19 – **Group Corvair Meeting**, 7 p.m. **Fratelli's Restaurant** (the old Howard Johnson's), 5820 Landover Road, in Hyattsville, MD. This is just west of where the Baltimore-Washington Parkway crosses over Landover Road, right beside the exit from the south-bound side of the Parkway, on the north side of Landover Road. As usual, we will meet at 7 p.m. for dinner and then conduct a business meeting.

23 – **Corvair Day at the AACA Museum**, Hershey, PA. Rain date 24 Sept. Hosted by the Central Pennsylvania Corvair Club, this will be a one day show on the Antique Automobile Club of America Museum ground at 161 Museum Drive, Hershey, PA. \$12 registration includes admission to the museum. They are planning on a people's choice car show, "awards", door prizes, scavenger hunt in the museum, vendors, refreshments, evening banquet and "much more". Contact Earl Holmes (717-991-7341), earlzgames@comcast.net for more information. (Jerry Yates and I are considering going. If you are interested in convoying up there, let one of us know.)

23 – UAW – GM All American Car Show. 10 - 2, GM Baltimore Operations, 10301 Philadelphia Rd, White Marsh, MD. \$15 car registration, public free.

October

14 – **Rockville Antique and Classic Car Show**, Rockville Civic Center, 603 Edmonston Drive. Registration opens at 8 a.m. and closes at 11 a.m. with no more cars admitted. Group Corvair is a sponsoring club and has a great area for showing our cars. This is the big finale to the car show season. Huge turnout of cars (538 last year), great venue, free admission to spectators. I can't encourage you too much to come and show your classic car. Come early – the lines can be long at registration.

17 – **Group Corvair Meeting**, 7 p.m., at the **Killarney House** in Davidsonville. This is at 584 West Central Ave., Davidsonville, MD. From the crossroads of Central Ave (Rt 214) and Davidsonville Road (Rt 424), go east on Central Ave about 1 mile and it will be on the left.

21 – Asphalt Angles Fall Car Show, Chili's & On The Border restaurants parking lot, 16401 Heritage Blvd., Bowie, MD. \$20 registration, show runs 9 – 3.

GROUP CORVAIR 2017 OFFICERS and Points of Contact

President: Jim Govoni

12713 Keswick Ave, Bowie, MD 20715
301-262-7017 JKFG717@gmail.com

Vice President: Barbara Torbert

5317 Crittenden Street Hyattsville, MD 20781
301- 927-6029 barbara.torbert@hotmail.com

Secretary: Marolyn Simpson

3845 Wayson Road Davidsonville, MD 21035
301- 262-0978 or 240-232-2820
m.simpson7@verizon.net

Treasurer: Jim Simpson

3845 Wayson Road Davidsonville, MD 21035
301-262-0978 or 240-232-2820 simpsonj@verizon.net

Newsletter Editor: Jim Simpson

3845 Wayson Road Davidsonville, MD 21035
301 262-0978 or 240-232-2820 simpsonj@verizon.net

Merchandise: Gus Torbert

5317 Crittenden Street Hyattsville, MD 20781
301-927-6029 barbara.torbert@hotmail.com

Trolley Museum Outing

Marolyn Simpson

Traditionally Group Corvair has not had a regular meeting in the month of August. However, sometimes we have held a special event such as an outing or a picnic. This year we decided to do a special event.

Bob Hall volunteered to make arrangements for a visit to the National Capital Trolley Museum in Colesville. The hours were 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., so we decided to meet at the museum on Saturday August 26 at 10:00, ride the trolley cars, view the other exhibits, and then go out to a nearby restaurant for lunch.

As it turned out, we got the word on Friday (the day before the outing) that the hours for the museum had changed and were now 12:00 to 5:00. Quick change of plans! The new plan was to meet at the Sole D'Italia Restaurant in Silver Spring at 11:30 for lunch followed by our visit to the trolley museum. Six members met at the restaurant and one more joined us later at the trolley museum.

A few years ago the museum was moved to its current location from its original location in the path of the intercounty connector. It was a relatively short move -- less than a mile, but necessary. Because of this move all of the buildings are new and more “user-friendly” for visitors. (They also took the opportunity to install fire sprinklers in the storage and work areas after a disastrous fire at their old facility destroyed several irreplaceable trolley cars.)



We enjoyed several nice exhibits in the building (including “street cars go to the movies”) and a docent-led tour of the Street Car Hall which housed several cars from different eras, nations, and in various states of repair. But the highlight was riding the old street cars on the two-mile track. While our group was there we got to ride three of the cars including an open-air car (the “boat car”) that had originally operated in the English Blackpool resort. (Photos courtesy of Bob Hall.)

We Participate in Shows

Jim Simpson

Jerry Yates and Marolyn & I have taken advantage of the fall-like weather recently to put our cars in some local car shows. If you follow the local automobile scene, there are an incredible number of car shows you can attend within a twenty mile radius of almost anywhere you live in the Washington metropolitan area. They range from simple cruise-ins to judged events. Here are pictures from the last two events, at Lowes hardware in Bowie, and at the American Legion in Bowie. It seems that Jerry and I swap trophies – apparently the judges can’t stand to give trophies to two Corvairs at the same meet... But both cars attract a LOT of attention and highly favorable comments!

Now we need some more Corvairs to participate! Pick a show and “show the flag”.





Forty, Thirty and Twenty Years Ago This Month

Jim Simpson

Things were picking up in September 1977 for Group Corvair. *Group Corvair Comments* ran five pages plus a flyer for the upcoming flea market that was to be held at Jim McKay Chevrolet. There was a full page listing the various vendors and the items they planned to bring to sell. (How about a pair of 140 heads, with carbs & linkages for \$70?) We had six Corvairs for sale including a 1960 with 19,000 miles on it. Very early production, number 44 to be exact, for \$2,100.

CORSA was still publishing the *CORSA Quarterly* in 1977 and Volume 7, number 1 came out as the late summer/early fall edition. It marked the seventh anniversary of CORSA and appropriately was a stellar issue with great content. It kicked off with a review of the Minneapolis CORSA National Convention with lots of photos by our own Ron Fedorczak. (Yes, it was a "National" and not yet an "International" convention.) There were over 100 cars in the concours, significantly more than we saw at this year's convention. Ron Nordquist contributed an article about the experimental Corvair engine he had acquired. Apparently this engine had escaped from the GM tech center and was designed to address some of the original Corvair engine issues namely oil leaks and improving the intake and exhaust gas flow. Each cylinder was a complete, independent unit with the head an integral part of the casting. Rod had installed one complete engine in his '65 Corsa and found it ran well with lots of torque. Bob Helt had two articles; the first on Corvair engine oil leaks, the second on recognizing "fake" Corvairs. By "fake", Bob meant Spyder engine transplants into new bodies, late Monzas upgraded to Corsas and so forth. But for me, the prize article in the *Quarterly* was the transcript of Robert Benzinger's speech at the '75 Seattle CORSA Convention. He was the senior project engineer at Chevrolet during the development of the Corvair engine and had tremendous insight into the trials and tribulations of that program, including the three-part Corvair flywheel, the Spyder turbocharged engine, and the abortive Delrin fan. The transcript runs nine pages and is split between this and the next issue of the *Quarterly*.

The September 1977 issue of the *CORSA Communiqué* was about equally split between CORSA and chapter news and the Corvair Classified. Personally I find the classified ads the more interesting if only because of the wide variety of cars and parts available at prices that were low even by 1977 standards. For instance, there was a '67 coupe for sale that had been equipped with just about every performance, handling and appearance accessory available for \$1,200. Or a '64 Spyder coupe, unrestored original, for \$950. Ah, those were the days.

Thirty years ago, the September 1987 issue of *Group Corvair Comments* was pretty short. There were two significant activities to report from the previous month; the first was a pool party at Warren Friberg's home in Mount Vernon. (The August pool party became a long-running tradition with the club.) The other was the Fall Flea Fair. It was reported to be a great success with people coming from as far as New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio to the north and west and Virginia Beach to the south. We counted 54 cars in the show and 10 vendors selling Corvair parts. Not everything was for sale at the flea market; we had a half dozen cars and lots of parts in the Vair Vendor.

The September 1987 *CORSA Communiqué* was the Chicago CORSA International Convention issue. This was the first "International" convention; beyond the US and Canadian participants, there were about a dozen Corvair owners who made the trip from Europe to attend! Reading through the reports on the various events, it was clear that the convention was well planned and the participants had great fun. One article by Larry Claypool caught my eye; he ran the operational checks at the convention and his article noted the number of cars that lost points due to obvious and

simple to fix items. For instance, he cited the number of cars that had inoperative brake or turn lights and empty windshield washer tanks. Easy to check and fix. But one perennial item he mentioned is “loose vent window handles”. I have to disagree with Larry on this, but many – if not most – came from the factory that way. My experiences it that most are not “worn out” but rather the vent window handle castings were just sloppy to begin with. The tight ones were the exception. The CORSA Classifieds had only a page and a half of cars plus another page of parts and services. Never-the-less, there were plenty of Greenbriers, Rampsides, Lakewoods, Spyderys and Corsas for sale.

A mere twenty years ago the September *Group Corvair Comments* reflected the normal summer slowdown but also the fall upsurge. So while there was little to report from the summer – a couple of car shows with low turn-out due to the 100+ degree weather – we were in the midst of planning for our Fall Flea Fair. John Moody contributed an article taking auto manufacturers to task for not following the guidance of Maurice Olley and his studies from the 1930s on swing axle cars – make the front end “stiff in roll” and reduce the rear stiffness to prevent oversteer. It wasn’t until the ’64 Corvair came out that Chevrolet followed that dictum. Eight Corvairs were available in the Vair Vendor. You had your choice of an original ’60 sedan, ’61 Lakewood, ’62 Greenbrier, ’64 Spyder convertible, or both early and late Monzas.

Since the August issue had already covered the CORSA convention, the September 1997 issues of the *CORSA Communiqué* concentrated on a potpourri of local and regional meets. They really did cover the nation with events in New England, Minnesota, Florida, Virginia, Michigan, California, South Carolina, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas. Other than some rain here and there, everyone seemed to have a great time and all the clubs planned to have meets again the next year. Unusually, there was no Tech Topics section; I guess we already knew all there was to know about maintaining and improving Corvairs. But they did manage to find three pages of cars, parts and services to advertise. Probably the most interesting car was an all-original, unrestored Canadian built, very well optioned, 96+ point concours senior division ’66 Monza with 44,000 miles on it for \$8,500. Probably worth every penny.

Tech Topics

Clark’s new Turbocharger Vacuum Advance/Pressure Retard Unit

Jim Simpson, Group Corvair

For those of you who own turbocharged Corvairs, I’m sure you know that the distributor on your car’s engine came equipped with a pressure retard instead of the conventional vacuum advance. This was Chevrolet’s means of controlling pinging and detonation in the combustion chambers when the turbo was making boost pressure. (Uncontrolled detonation would quickly lead to a severely damaged engine; by retarding the ignition under boost, the chances were greatly reduced.)

But all other Corvairs were fitted with a vacuum advance, as are just about all other cars in the world. A vacuum advance, as its name implies, advances the spark timing under low load conditions such as during idle and normal driving. Advancing the ignition improves fuel economy and tends to lower engine operating temperatures as well as reducing the “off-the-line” stumble as load is applied.

As a quick tutorial on how a vacuum advance (or pressure retard) works, take a look at the pictures below. A vacuum advance is pretty simple; it is a “can” with a flexible (rubber?) diaphragm in the center. On one side, a hose connects it to the source of vacuum or pressure, usually the base of a carburetor or the intake manifold. As the vacuum or pressure changes, the diaphragm flexes with vacuum pulling or pressure pushing on an arm coming out the far side. That arm moves a lever going into the distributor that rotates the ignition points to change the ignition timing.

It’s hard to fathom why Chevrolet didn’t attempt to provide a vacuum advance on the turbocharged engine. Complexity? Cost? Perhaps they just figured you didn’t need it at the time; after all, gas was cheap and the turbocharged engine was a “performance” engine and who expected economy from such an engine.

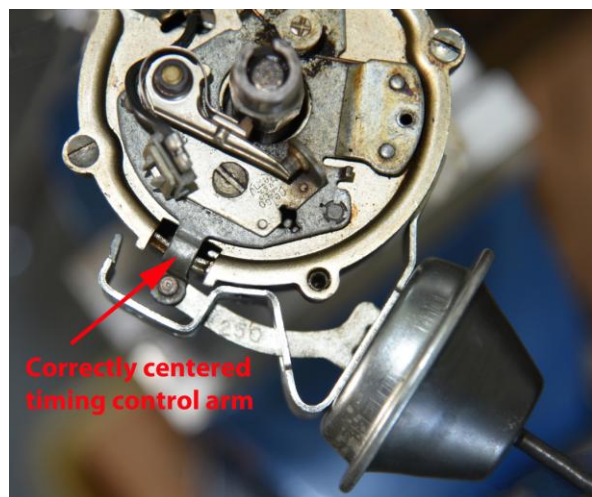
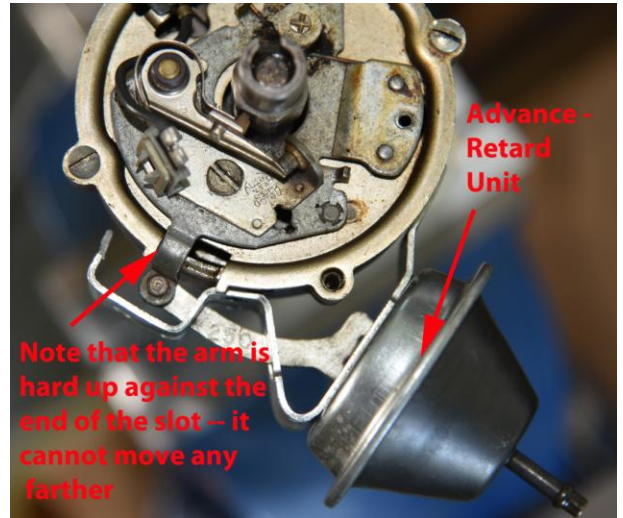
Well, Dale Manufacturing (David “Dale” Langsather) set out to rectify that omission by creating a combination vacuum advance/pressure retard unit. Instead of just retarding the timing during turbocharger boost, it would also advance the timing under light load/high vacuum conditions. People who bought the Dale units have claimed various amounts of improved gas mileage and generally better response.

I purchased one of Dale's units years ago and it seemed to work fine although I never saw major improvements in gas mileage. Unfortunately after several years of operation, the flexible diaphragm that provides the advance/retard motion failed. And unfortunately Dale had changed the focus of his business away from the Corvair to rebuilding harmonic balancers for just about every make and model of car in the world. So I reverted to the stock Chevrolet pressure retard.

Recently Clark's Corvair Parts decided to reproduce the vacuum advance/pressure retard units. I came across one at their display at the recent CORSA International Convention and bought it on the spot. Once I got home, I checked it out with a vacuum and pressure gage; it worked perfectly on the bench. As pressure was applied, the arm that changed ignition timing moved out as it should to retard the ignition and then as vacuum was applied, it retracted so that timing would be advanced.

It was only when I installed it on the car's distributor that I found a problem. As built, it would NOT retard the ignition under pressure boost. (I was testing it using my hand vacuum/pressure pump.) The timing arm from the distributor was hitting the end of the slot on the side of the distributor.

As you can see in the first picture, the timing arm was hard up against the end of the slot cut into the side of the distributor. In that position, turbocharger boost could not push it any farther, hence there would be no pressure retard effect! Vacuum



advance would work fine since the arm would be pulled back. (If you have sharp eyes, you might notice that there are no mounting screws holding the advance/retard unit in place – they were removed to stage the pictures.)

I contacted Clark's and told them about the problem. After the usual "Well, we've never had that problem before!" response, they were very helpful. It turns out that the mounting brackets on the reproduction advance/retard units need to be adjusted a bit to make them fit properly. When I questioned them about just what to do, they sent me one that they had fitted to a turbo distributor. I compared it with my unit and saw what they had done.

It's pretty simple. Take a pair of needle-nose pliers and bend the mounting bracket slightly. You will have to bend it in several places, essentially all the places where it already makes bends and

may have to try a few times to get it right, but the object is to center the timing control arm so it has room to move both in the retard (clockwise or to the left in the picture) and in the advance (counter-clockwise) direction. It doesn't need a lot of room, the arm will only move about a 1/4" under full vacuum or full pressure.

So if you have a turbo engine and buy one of Clark's combination vacuum advance/pressure retard units, check the fit carefully. If it can't move in the retard direction, you are putting an expensive turbo engine at risk next time you put your gas pedal to the floor!

Mounting Spare Tires

Adapted from a note by Herb Karner, Green County Corvair Group in 1977

Did you know there is actually a right way and a wrong way to mount your spare tire on the spare tire bracket? Yes there is! The right way is to use the lug nut upside down. If you take a good look at the holes in the wheel, you will notice that they are beveled from the outside in with the lug nut beveled to match. When the spare is mounted on the bracket, the wheel is upside down. Now if you put the lug nut on the way you would normally use it (bevel to the wheel), it will tend to deform the wheel hole pushing the thin edge of the bevel in. So put the flat side of the lug nut against the wheel while it is mounted on the spare tire bracket.

An Experimental Corvair

Jerry Yates found this picture on the Internet. I did some research and found that it was an actual GM project. Not a new Corvair, but a test bed for an alternative power plant potentially for submarines!

The US Navy adopted nuclear power for its submarines in the late 1950s beginning with the launching of USS Nautilus in 1954. Other countries envied the performance and endurance that nuclear power gave, but couldn't afford the price tag so they embarked on finding alternatives. One of these is the Stirling engine, a design that is inherently very quiet and can potentially be operated on a completely submerged submarine. (In fact, Sweden and some other nations have built submarines using Stirling engines.) GM decided that they should at least explore the concept.

This was their test bed, the "Calvair", a 1964 Corvair extensively modified to allow the engineers to explore the Stirling engine design in a mobile platform. While the project apparently never led to any Navy projects or other sales, it worked very well.



According to an article in Special Interest Autos, the Calvair was ultimately turned over to the Corvair Preservation Foundation Museum. (It was donated after the last time I visited the museum; I don't know if it is currently on display.) For more information:

<https://www.hemmings.com/blog/2013/12/22/sia-flashback-calvair-gms-stirling-effort/#&gid=1&pid=5>

Vair Vendor

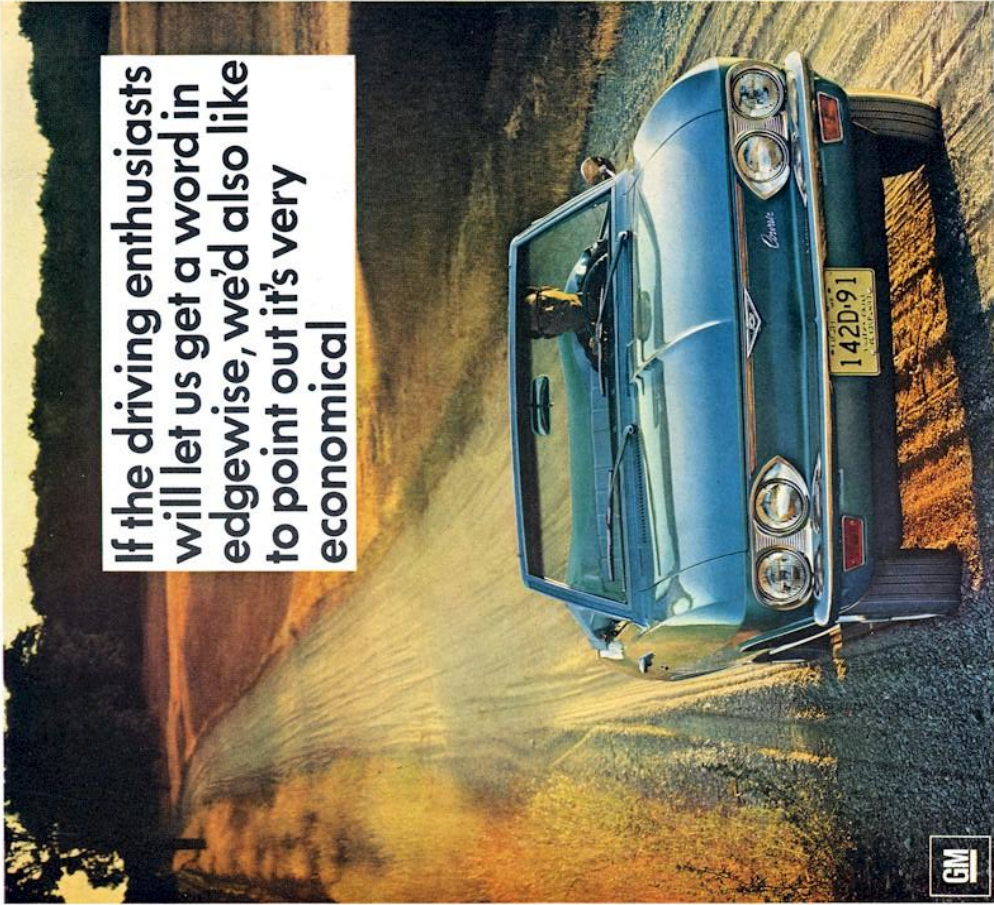
For Sale: 1964 Spyder Convertible parts car. Potentially restorable, but I don't have the time. I would prefer to sell the whole car with complete running gear for the right price but am willing to talk about selling individual parts. It has a nice trunk lid, doors, engine lid, dash (odometer shows 28,000 miles), glove box door, radio with face plate, good glass, nice top frame, very nice SS boot trim. 4-speed w/3.55 positrac differential. Also have a pair of extra turbo heads and many other miscellaneous parts. What do you need? Call Bob Lewis, 301-246-4278 or e-mail rtl1936@gmail.com for info.

For Sale: '61-'69 Gas Tank. Used, but cleaned and sealed by Jeff at the Corvair Ranch. Hasn't been used since, ready to go in your car. Asking \$60 or best offer. (Clark's reproductions are \$170 plus shipping!) Bob Lewis, Nanjemoy, MD. 301-246-4278 or e-mail rtl1936@gmail.com for info.

For Sale: Clark's Corvair Parts replacement late model convertible top rear window – black with zipper. I'm not sure just how old this one is, but it seems to be in excellent condition with the window very pliable. Clark's currently wants \$127.85 for theirs. Make an offer! Jim Simpson, simpsonj@verizon.net, 240-232-2820

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 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.

If the driving enthusiasts
will let us get a word in
edgewise, we'd also like
to point out it's very
economical



Corvair Monza Convertible—new standard safety features include dual front seats, door locks, four-way hazard warning flasher, and many more.

'67 Corvair

the rear-engine road car

Even if Corvair weren't a crisp-steering, flat-riding joy to drive, the savings alone would be enough to make a lot of people happy. The 600 Sport Coupe, for example, is America's lowest priced hardtop. The spunky Corvair 6 has little appetite for gas and is air cooled instead

of water cooled. You save the price of antifreeze and have no water hose, pump or radiator to repair or replace. Among other economizers you've got a Delcoiron generator to extend battery life. An inner skirt under each fender to ward off corrosion.

And aluminumizing to protect your exhaust system. But if you're like most people, you'll get so enthused about driving your Corvair you'll forget all about how economical it is. Until every now and then something like your bank account reminds you.

CHEVROLET