



<https://www.hemmings.com/blog/2019/03/06/1966-chevrolet-corvair-homecoming-the-good-news-and-the-bad-news/?refer=news>

## 1966 Chevrolet Corvair homecoming – The good news and the bad news

[Don Homuth](#) on Mar 6th, 2019



*The Corvair's body shell awaits bead blasting. Photos by author.*

I have some good news... and some bad news.

First the good news: I now know *exactly* what I have.

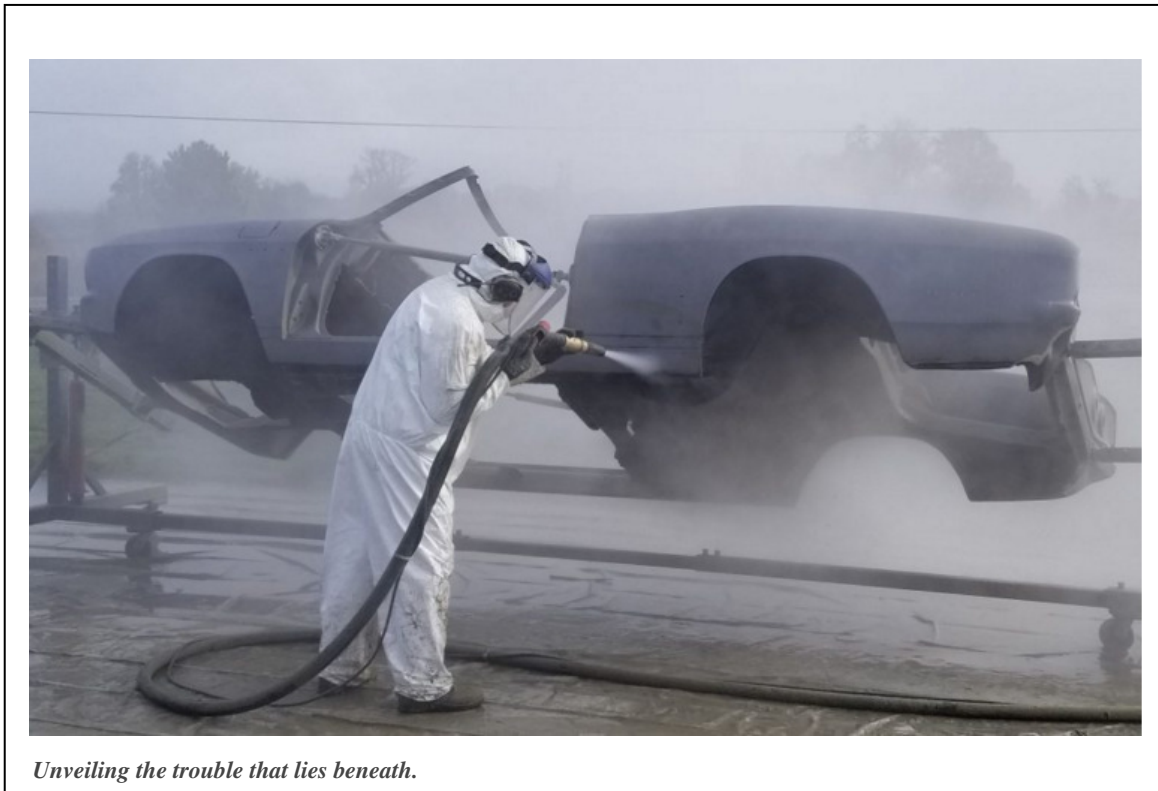
Now the bad news: I now know *exactly* what I have.

In retrospect, I should have done this two years ago. Back then, I really did hope that when the guy I bought the car from told me it was in good shape — and it looked kind of like it was — that it was the truth. That turns out not to have been the case.



I'm sort of *fromaged* about that. I really had hoped that things would be more or less okay. I didn't expect perfection. Yes — I know he thought he was improving the car by putting a turbo engine into it, and by putting a power top on it, and the pride he took in that \$2,000 paint job maybe meant that things were mostly okay underneath.

That is, after all, what car hobbyists do — put in more powerful engines, add some options the car never had, and then try to make it look presentable so they can drive it around. I knew that coming in the door.



*Unveiling the trouble that lies beneath.*

But...

- I knew the turbo motor would be replaced. I never liked them 50 years ago, and don't like them now. It didn't run right when I picked it up, and I was always going to put a four-carb back in.
- The power top is all very nice, but it's just unnecessary. That manual top always raised and lowered easily enough with one person. Even at my age, it still will.
- In an earlier piece, [I showed off that first exterior repaint](#) — all \$6,000 worth of it — while I was still in the early throes of giddiness just having it back at all. It did look really good!

Then I got started on the insides. I should have done that first.



The first pass with a wire brush revealed some of the wheel well corrosion that got covered up with a thick layer of Bondo. Everything pretty well stopped at that point while I took a longer closer look at everything else. It was enough to raise some considerable suspicions about what I might find. So I had it partially blasted.

Suspicions confirmed.

I had no idea that the floor was so corroded that it would not be safe for the bolts to hold the seats securely. Under the back seat was nearly as bad. The front fender wells were corroded through both layers of metal. The bullet holes in the cowl were a surprise.



*Bullet holes (marked with orange spray paint) were not a standard feature on the '66 Corvair.*

Clearly with enough Bondo, POR-15, and other potions, a lot of things that could have been repaired or replaced can just be covered up instead. They were. Patches made of odd pieces of metal and fiberglass cloth, gaps where no gap should be, angle iron where there should be a seam — I found all of that and more. And of course that pink Bondo showed up where it was just sort of glopped in and smoothed over to make it appear as though it was good.

Having two key original pieces destroyed while being blasted didn't help either.

That was the point where I nearly gave up, as previously reported. But I was far too far into the project to do that, so after several weeks of depression and frustration, I decided that pressing on was the way to go.



*The right rear quarter panel will require patching.*

After the last two months of seemingly endless delays from weather, holidays, travel, and the unavailability of getting someone to come out to glass bead the car, there was a one-day break in the weather, the schedules matched, and it got done. More or less.

Here are photos as the work was being done. The corroded and badly repaired places are quite obvious. The donor car provided a floor and area under the back seat. The wheelwells will be cut out of another piece from another car. All of those will be carefully welded back into mine, because those have to do with structural integrity and strength, and so will go in first before other cosmetic repairs are done. The luggage compartment and engine compartment lid from the donor car are quite good.



*And so will the left rear quarter panel.*

It's progress of a sort. As I said above, now I know — nothing is hidden any longer. There will be no more surprises. Still, had I had any idea then what I now know for certain, I wouldn't have essentially wasted some \$7,500 on work and paint that were eventually discarded entirely.

Ah well.

I can now clearly see all, repeat *all* of the corroded places. Many are small and can easily be fixed. Some will require new metal bits sourced from Corvair parts emporiums here and there. In a couple of months, if all goes well, the entire body will have metal where metal should be, welds where welds should be, seams where seams should be and will only then be ready for a complete refinishing inside and out. The pink Bondo and goeey yellow caulking material will be gone.



No more going backward. From now on, there's a clear vision of what must be done going forward from here.

The doors, luggage compartment, and engine compartment lid have been dipped and are clean metal. They will be placed back onto the body prior to painting. The manual top frame from the donor car awaits disassembly, bead blasting, repainting, and reassembly before installation.



*Evidence of a past collision repair, likely done to a price instead of a standard.*

Several sub-assemblies are ready now. The entire front suspension can be bolted back on when it comes time. The rear suspension pieces have been blasted, primed and partially reassembled. The entire driveline — engine, differential, and transmission — is ready to go back in. There's a brand new gas tank, sender and fuel lines. The entire interior with new matching correct vinyl is on a shelf. All 42 feet of stainless trim has been polished to a jewel-like finish. Only a few pieces of chrome require replating — most is done. The radio has been refurbished to a completely stock appearance. There's a replacement "wood rim" steering wheel indistinguishable from new. The new carpet and convertible top material is laying flat on a table in the shop. Door assemblies and window regulators are awaiting cleaning and reassembly. There's a newly made wiring harness. Both front headlight units — NOS assemblies with T-3 headlights already in place — are in a box on the shelf. New badges are still wrapped in boxes. There's a new heater assembly with a new motor properly painted. The long ductwork underneath has been refurbished.

All that work will continue while the car is in the body and painting shop.





Now that I know what I actually have — the good and the bad — I/we can get to a downright perfect refinished car body to bolt everything to, once the weather warms up. That's when reassembly must be done with greatest care, so as to not damage anything. Probably refinish the bottom first – that's where most of the mechanical components will have to go. Then once that's done, the body exterior and interior surfaces can be painted.

One thing at a time.

The next report at the end of April will maybe show progress. That's the main focus right now.











