



Group Corvair Comments

GROUP CORVAIR'S NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA



VOLUME XLVIII, No. 1

January 2020

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST
Motor Trend Award: **Corvair**
by Chevrolet named “Car of the
Year”! No other car even came close.

The editors of the world's largest general automotive magazine were unanimous

in voting Corvair “the
most significant car
of 1960.” Why?

“For engineering
advancement”...

“four-wheel independent
suspension totally unlike any

other U.S.-built car”...a rear engine and transaxle

“allowing a flatter floor and lower roofline.”



Corvair 700 4-Door Sedan

These are a few of the reasons given by the experts in announcing the industry's most coveted award in Motor Trend's April issue. But, unless you've personally driven a Corvair, you can't appreciate the happy combination of compact car economy and big-car ride, room and sure-footedness it all adds up to! Drop down to your dealer's . . . take a trial drive and judge the “Car of the Year” for yourself! CHEVROLET DIVISION OF GENERAL MOTORS, DETROIT, U.S.A.

for economical transportation
corvair
by CHEVROLET

The 1960 Corvair, “Car of the Year”, Sixty Years Ago

Are you paid up? Dues are due! They're still just \$12/year! Please send a check made out to Group Corvair to the treasurer: Jim Simpson, 3845 Wayson Road, Davidsonville, MD 21035.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

January

21 – **Group Corvair Business Meeting**; 7 p.m. We'll meet at the Beijing of Greenbelt, 131 Center Way for dinner (at 7 p.m.) followed by our business meeting. We postponed the election of officers just so you could be there and vote. See you there!

February

18 -- **Corvair Business Meeting**; 7 p.m., location TBD.

March

17 – **Group Corvair** Business Meeting; 7 p.m., location TBD.

April

21 – **Group Corvair** Business Meeting; 7 p.m., location TBD.

May

17 – Corvair Ranch open house. This is a potential **Group Corvair** road trip!

19 – **Group Corvair** Business Meeting; 7 p.m., location TBD.

June

13 – NECC track day at New York Safety Track, Oneonta, NY. www.neccmotorsports.com

16 – **Group Corvair** Business Meeting; 7 p.m., location TBD.

July

6 – 11 – CORSA 50th International Annual Convention, Crown Plaza Hotel, San Diego, CA. For more information, go to the San Diego Corvair Club website: www.sandiegocorvair.com

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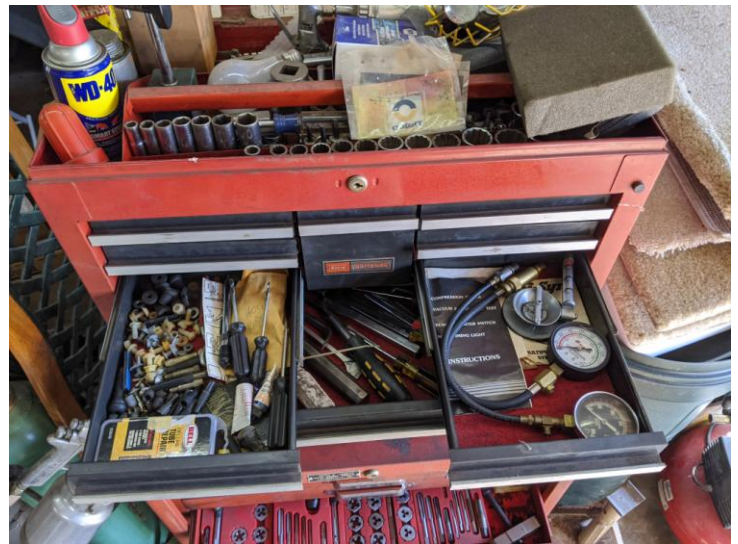
From the Oval Garage

Bob Hall

Group Corvair had a festive holiday dinner meeting at Killarney House before Christmas. As is our custom, and if the budget allows, our club treasury contributes \$10.00 toward each diner's meal tab. We had lots of lively discussion about our Corvairs and what our club goals should be in 2020. Mike Coale and his wife Deb couldn't make our meeting, but he has offered to give us a Saturday tour of his auto repair business and to see his Corvairs. Late January or February look likely and his garage is heated.....we'll let you know when we have a date.

Those of you who knew long time Group Corvair member Pete Frailey know what a great guy he was as well as being an excellent mechanic, musician, singer and master model maker. Pete's wife Barbara has asked Group Corvair to arrange to distribute Pete's tools and parts and some of his models to good homes. In December Jim and Marolyn Simpson and Carol and I were able to get away on a Wednesday to visit Barbara and reminisce about Pete. Afterward we took a quick look at Pete's collection of tools and parts. We will be cleaning the garage and separating what Barbara wants to keep from what is to be sold and then we'll get the word out to Corvair people in the next few months with a date and time for a garage sale. Some photos are attached.

We'll be back in Greenbelt at the Beijing Chinese restaurant for our January meeting when we'll nominate and vote on new club officers for 2020. As always anyone interested in Corvairs is invited to attend. The more the merrier.



Some notes on the tool collection. There are two roll-around tool boxes with one smaller drawer unit on top of one. They contain a variety of hand tools – socket wrenches, flair wrenches, screwdrivers, taps and dies, tune-up tools (including Uni-Syn carburetor balancer), sheet metal working tools, and more). The compressors looks like new, but note that the “6 HP” label is some kind of “peak” Hp; it’s more like 1.6 Hp and runs on 117 vac. There are also some associated pneumatic tools and a paint spray gun. The distributor tester dates back to about 1949 but according to notes left by Pete, it works fine. We also spotted several jack stands, a heavy duty battery charger/starter, an engine stand, plastic drawers of miscellaneous nuts, bolts, screws, springs and an assortment of used Corvair related small parts. And there’s a small oxy-acetylene torch set; the tanks are about ½ full. Jim S.

Minutes of the December Meeting

By Marolyn Simpson

For our annual holiday dinner/business meeting, eight Group Corvair members and one guest met at the Killarney House restaurant in Davidsonville at 4:00 on Sunday afternoon, December 15. The restaurant felt festive with a beautiful Christmas tree and a fire burning in the fireplace. As has been our tradition in the past the club subsidized each member’s holiday dinner by \$10.

After enjoying the meal and conversation, Bob Hall called the meeting to order at 5:45. Gus Torbert moved that the minutes be approved as they appeared in the newsletter. There was nothing new to report from the merchandise chairman.

Jim Simpson gave the treasurer's report. During the last month there had been neither expenses nor income so our club's bank balance remained unchanged.

Earlier in the month, several club members had met at a Bank of America branch in Bowie to add another signature on the club bank account. We thought we had all the required documents but found it wasn't quite that simple. Between the bank going to digital records (our account dates back to 1969!), new banking regulations, and other changes, we needed a federal identification number for the club account. That will be a project for the New Year.

Bob and Jim (along with Carol and Marolyn) had gone to Pete Frailey's house to inventory and photograph his supply of tools. While we didn't find anything uniquely Corvair, Barbara Frailey would like us to "take care" of the tools; she has no use for them. The club will probably hold a garage sale in the spring inviting other Corvair clubs in the area.

Rick Sanford has Ward Bourgondien's '65 500 coupe survivor car up for sale. (This is AACA HPOF Certified Original so this is the car to have if you want to compete in the CORSA Stock Original Class.)

The election of officers is usually held during the December meeting. However, since it was noisier than usual in the restaurant and we had a relatively small turnout, Jerry Yates made a motion to postpone the election until the January meeting. Jim seconded it.

Jim made a motion to meet at the Beijing of Greenbelt restaurant for our January 21 meeting. Jerry seconded the motion.

There was a general discussion of the *Ford vs. Ferrari* movie. The movie focused more on the personalities involved (Carroll Shelby, Ken Miles, Henry Ford II, etc.) than the cars but it really captured that era of racing.

Randy Morris owns Yenko Stinger YS 315. He's stored it for several years. Jerry Yates proposed having a tech session to help Randy get the car back in running condition.

Jim made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:05. Bob seconded the motion.

Tech Topics

Corvair specific tools: For the last few months, we've been asking if anyone had any Corvair specific tools they wouldn't mind listing for use by club members at a tech session or short-term loan. Well, the response has been underwhelming so I decided that I'd kick it off with my list:

- Corvair Tow Bar: This is designed to allow you to flat tow a Corvair. I think it fits both late and early models. You'll have to provide the tow vehicle and appropriate lights.
- Tool J-21928. This is essentially a crowbar designed to adjust the front hood torsion bars safely.
- Piston ring compressor, adjustable between 3.400" and 3.500" – just right for all Corvair engines.
- Steering wheel puller
- Crankshaft damper/pulley puller; designed so you can do it with the engine still installed.
- Tool J-8950. This is the spanner wrench to turn the locking ring on the fuel tank level sender.
- Fan belt tension gage.
- Door handle clip remover/installer.
- Late-model windshield stainless steel trim removal tool. This gets under the trim and pops the clips loose.

In addition, I have a number of other more generic tools ranging from an assortment of "bent wrenches" designed to get at some of those harder to reach nuts and bolts on Corvairs, a 3/8" beam-type torch wrench (the common ratcheting torque wrench won't fit inside the Corvair engine crankcase to torque rod bolts, brake tools, and tune-up instruments.

Let me know if you are planning a tech session and need any of these.

Jim Simpson

And a big “Thanks!” to John Green for sending the club copies of the '65 Corvair Chassis Shop Manual, 1965 – 1969 Body Service Manual, Richard Finch’s “*How to Keep Your Corvair Alive*” (8th edition) and Bob Helt’s “*The Classic Corvair*” (6th edition). These are available for loan to anyone in the club and can be made available at any tech session.

Corvair Preservation Foundation Raffle



The Corvair Preservation Foundation (CPF) is raffling off a freshly restored 1966 Corvair Monza Sport Coupe. The drawing will be held on May 15, 2020. You do NOT need to be present to win! The proceeds from the raffle will help support the new Corvair Museum on historic Rt-66, in Glenarm, Illinois. “Thoroughly reconditioned throughout with new paint, upholstery and many NOS parts.” The car is painted Danube Blue with a blue interior and has 140 hp – Powerglide power train. Tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased directly from the CORSA web site:

<https://www.corvair.org/index.php/merchandise/corvair-raffle>

Forty, Thirty and Twenty Years Ago This Month

Jim Simpson

Forty years ago, January 1980, I became the editor of *Group Corvair Comments*. No, I haven’t been the editor ever since, but it does feel like it. Carol Leinhard had taken over the newsletter a couple years earlier and had given it a fresh, new look, one that we still use today. The January newsletter didn’t have a lot of content – we congratulated the new club officers (Roy Heitman, Hunter Lucke, Mark Holmund and Mike Harrison) and discussed the upcoming banquet. We held the dues at \$6/year but recognized that we’d have to raise them soon. Our banquet was to be at the Sheraton Inn in New Carrollton and the club subsidized it to hold the price to \$8 per person. Apparently no one had anything for sale. And that was about it!

The January, 1980 *CORSA Communiqué* was significantly meatier than our newsletter. Tony Fiore had just taken a trip to Italy and visited the Bertone factory to see the Testudo. This was a one-off styling exercise based upon a 1962 Corvair. The designer, Giorgetto Giugiaro, was “one of the most talented and creative designers of automobiles that has ever lived”. Bertone had just refinished the body, but it lacked a fuel tank so they couldn’t drive the car. Under tech topics, Larry Claypool addressed how to fix the common problem of Powerglide transmissions that leak after sitting for several days. There was a good selection of cars available in the *CORSA Classifieds* including Yenko Stinger YS107. It was described as “Tired body, good mechanicals, fast steering, factory metallic brakes, and HD suspension, engine and transaxle out of car; \$800”. Where do I send the check?

By January 1990, I’d had ten years of practice editing the *Group Corvair Comments*. We still didn’t have a lot of content – probably January “seasonal mood disorder” or something like that – but this newsletter did have the standard notice of the upcoming banquet (Port of Italy Inn, Temple Hills), an article from the club president (Ward Bourgondien) and some tech tips on routine maintenance, particularly checking the transaxle fluid levels and front suspension strut rod bushings. Dick Winchester was selling off a half dozen cars – he’d lost his storage lot! And I’d just gotten a new printer for Christmas and was playing with new newsletter layouts.

The January, 1990 *CORSA Communiqué* focused on low-mileage originals. There were a number of them, mostly with their original owners. (Want a low-mileage, original of your own? See Rick Sanford.) Under *Tech Topics*, Mark Corbin wrote about a rare option, the ’66 through ’68 head rests/head restraints. In ’69, they became standard equipment. The *CORSA Classified* ads were down to a single page of cars and other than a number of Rampsides and Greenbriers, not much of note was available. And it was the same in the Parts for Sale section; it seems everyone was holding on to all the “good stuff”.

January 2000 just doesn’t sound like it was all that long ago, but yes that was 20 years ago. *Group Corvair Comments* noted that the dreaded “Year 2000 bug” seemed to have fizzled – computers still computed, refrigerators still refrigerated and even our Corvairs still ran. But some things had changed. While the *CORSA Classified* ads had shrunk, ads on the internet had exploded as had the use of the Virtual Vairs discussion group. That’s where the action was. In our own newsletter, we had three vans and three cars for sale.

The January 2000 *CORSA Communiqué* led off with the second in a series of articles by Tony Fiore about the founding of CORSA. In his view, 1971 was the first fully “functional” year for CORSA with the first elected Board of Governors, first issue of the CORSA Quarterly and first national convention (3 days, Chicago) among the accomplishments. Kent Sullivan and Dave Newell described a ’66 Corsa built in Antwerp, Belgium, one of only 48 Corsa coupes built there that year. Other than the metric speedometer, it had a floor-mounted headlight flasher (European laws said that you had to be able to flash the cars headlights as a warning without taking your hands off the steering wheel), clear front turn signal lenses, a fire extinguisher, first-aid kit and reflective warning triangle. But there were no seat belts installed! Tech Topics were a bit thin with an article on installing shoulder belts in ’65 and ’66 models that didn’t come with the shoulder belt attachment points. And as noted earlier, the ads have migrated to the internet; the CORSA Classified was down to a page and a half with less than a half page of car ads.

A Car that Might Have Been

Many of you probably already know about the Fitch Phoenix, a Corvair-based, two person sports car. And some of you old timers who were at our 1991 CORSA Convention remember seeing it in person at the convention. (Thanks to Bob and Jane Lewis who hauled it down from Connecticut and back!)

But for the rest of you, here’s some background. John Fitch, retired racing driver and Corvair enthusiast, designed the Phoenix based upon a shortened (by 13” to a 95” wheelbase) late-model Corvair using the then new 140 hp Corvair engine (modified to produce 170 hp) and other Corvair mechanicals but with upgrades such as front wheel disk brakes. (He wanted to be sure the buyer could have it repaired by any Chevrolet mechanic.) The prototype was completed in the summer of 1966 and shown at the 1967 International Auto Show in New York. He reportedly had 100 orders (with deposits) for the \$8,700 car and Intermeccanica Group in Turin, Italy, was to build 500 bodies that would be shipped to John in Connecticut for final assembly. Unfortunately federal legislation – the Highway Safety Act – had been passed and was pending the development of final rules. It wasn’t clear just what the standards would be or if small manufacturers would be able to gain any sort of exemptions. (He wasn’t in a position where he could afford to have a number of cars built just for crash testing for instance.) The uncertainties in the pending regulations led John to cancel production and refund the deposits. Thus the Fitch Phoenix was the only one produced.

John Fitch died in October, 2012. The Phoenix was subsequently auctioned and purchased by Greenwich, CT. resident Charles Mallory so it could remain in the state.



John Fitch and the Fitch Phoenix



Vair Vendor

For Sale: 1965 4-door, Light blue, powerglide, and fair condition. This is the late Ben Petree's daily driver and was last run about 4 years ago. Was maintained by Jack Dempsey until Ben could no longer drive; parked under shelter since then. Asking \$1,000 but willing to listen to reasonable offers. Contact Caroline Inglehart, only between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., 301-775-0379.

For Sale: 1965 Monza 4-door. 26k miles, recent seat covers, repainted about 10 years ago. Asking \$10,000. Denny Shue, 717-818-2904, Dover PA.



For Sale: Doing some house cleaning and there's still some items left: Early model bumper brackets, 8 of 10, not bent or damaged but some surface rust plus 11 bumper bolts, \$10. Late model brake shoes – Clark's relined, full set, front and rear, less than 50 miles on them, \$45. Bob Walker, bobrstn@gmail.com or 703-709-7246.

For Sale: '64 Corvair Dune Buggy. New lower price. It has a Maryland title and "Street Rod" tags as a '64 Corvair. Built in 2009, street legal, tagged as a 1964 Corvair with "Street Rod" tags. Never been off road, street



driven only. Specs: 1964 Corvair 110 HP engine, automatic transmission. Front and Rear Suspension are 1964 Corvair. The frame is square steel tubing factory built for complete running gear from a Corvair and was probably built in the early 60's by Devin of El Monte Calif. Tires are 13" on front and 14" on rear with only have 600 miles on them. Fiberglass body was new old-stock, a Berry Mini "T" 2, built in California by Berry in late 1960 / 70's. I have only driven it about 600 miles, but it is fun to drive! Asking \$3,900 or an offer I can live with?? Bob Lewis, 301-246-4278, Nanjemoy, MD.

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