



# Group Corvair Comments

GROUP CORVAIR'S NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA



VOLUME XLVIII, No. 12

December 2020



**Group Corvair wishes you and yours a Merry Christmas!**

## **CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS**

Check with sponsors on all events for the foreseeable future!

### **December**

15 – **Group Corvair** Business Meeting, 7:30 p.m. Normally we'd have a Christmas Gala event, but it looks like we're going to continue our Virtual meetings (Zoom); perhaps everyone can dress up for the occasion or we can sing Christmas carols! Watch your inbox for info.

### **January 2021**

1 – It's time to pay your **Group Corvair dues!** \$12/year, payable to Group Corvair and sent to Jim Simpson at 3845 Wayson Road, Davidsonville, MD 21035.

19 -- **Group Corvair** Business Meeting, 7:30 p.m. Even with the advent of the new coronavirus vaccines, it looks like we're going to continue our Virtual meetings via Zoom! Watch your inbox for info.

20 – Inauguration Day! Normally there would be a parade, but not this year so don't look for invitations to participate.

## February

15 – Group Corvair Meeting, 7:30 p.m. We're still going to be Zooming right along. Watch your inbox for info.

March

16 – Group Corvair Meeting, 7:30 p.m.

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**Group Corvair Zooming in on a meeting**

# **From the Oval Garage**

**Bob Hall**

Best Wishes for the holiday season to everyone. As the coronavirus has restricted travel and visits we hope all of you are still able to safely “gather” with family and friends. Three generations of our family will be using Zoom, Microsoft Teams and/or Facebook Messenger to share Christmas and New Year celebrations though we will be as much as 2,500 miles apart.

The 2020/21 Corvair Convention in San Diego may well happen now that several vaccines will be coming available soon. Carol and I took a “walking tour” of the San Diego area around the hotel on YouTube recently to familiarize ourselves and are looking forward to a great convention if the pandemic allows.

Jim Simpson, Jerry Yates and I have reviewed the spreadsheet listing Pete Frailey’s garage and wood shop tools to be sold along with the reserve prices agreed to by Pete’s widow, Barbara. Group Corvair will accept payment from the winning bidders on Barbara’s behalf and provide an accounting and single total payment to her when the sale is over. Winning bidders will have a date and time frame available to pick up their purchases from the Frailey home. Look for an email soon.

## **Minutes of the November Virtual Meeting**

**Marolyn Simpson**

Our November 17 online Zoom Group Corvair meeting was scheduled to begin at 7:30 pm. There was some general conversation while we waited for everyone to connect to the meeting. Ultimately we had eight members join. One of the conversation topics was racing at Upper Marlboro which we have discussed at several previous meetings.

Bob Hall, president, called the meeting to order at 7:45 pm. Jim Simpson gave the treasure’s report: no income and no expenses during the last month. Our total yearly expenses are minimal, mostly stamps for several newsletters and Corsa chapter dues.

There was a discussion on membership numbers of various Corvair clubs and how we could gain, or at least retain, membership. In the earlier days of Group Corvair, we had numerous moving events including autocrosses and rallies. In those days most members had daily drivers and enjoyed the moving events. Today most of the cars are show cars so the moving events are not as popular. There are still some autocross events to be found but they are run by individual clubs since the MWCSs (Metropolitan Washington Council of Sports Car Clubs) has been disbanded.

The discussion turned to the work members were doing on their cars. When life returns to more or less normal, Jerry Yates offered his garage for holding tech sessions.

Byron LaMotte said the rally he had planned this fall was a big success. The whole thing was socially distanced with 60 cars participating. He would like to try another rally which is now planned for September 18, 2021.

Membership was the next topic for discussion. Several ideas were mentioned but everyone agreed that we need to get a web site – probably through Corsa.

Jim S. has been working on his project of digitizing all of the Group Corvair newsletters. So far, he has done 505 of them, but there are a few newsletters that he has not been able to locate. Right now, he is storing the digitized copies on his personal archive; we are looking at ways of making them more available to the club.

Jim S. wants to start a feature in the newsletter about getting to know our club members better. Club members would answer questions such as: What got you interested in Corvairs? How many Corvairs have you owned and how many do you currently own? and What projects are you currently working on? Bob Walker “volunteered” to be the first “Getting to Know Our Members” article.

Byron started a discussion on electrifying the Corvair. This has been done several times with varying degrees of success, but with the availability of parts from wrecked Teslas and Chevy Bolts, there are a lot of options.

There was a proposal to put some of our social events in the Northern Virginia club newsletter or inviting them to join us for a Zoom Meeting.

Bob H. said he was planning to get the spreadsheet for the Frailey sale out by the end of November. [Note: The sale has expanded to include some woodworking tools and the timeframe has now slipped to December.]

Group Corvair elections were discussed. The current officers who were on the Zoom call all volunteered to serve again. Barbara Torbert was not on the Zoom meeting; Bob Hall said he would contact Barbara Torbert to see if she would be willing to serve again.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15.

## Newsletter Archives

As noted in the minutes, I've been digitizing and archiving the Group Corvair newsletters and membership rosters. It's not entirely clear just how many newsletters Group Corvair produced since its founding in 1970. (At least I believe it was in 1970; I don't have any literature with an earlier date.) Currently I have 505 on file. Potentially there could have been 612 newsletters produced if there was one every month from the beginning of 1970 to the end of this year. I know the total is lower since there were skips where two or more months were combined and, particularly in the early years, they may have been issued only every other month. And complicating this further, the numbering system has not been consistently applied.

But I also know that I'm missing several newsletters, particularly from the first half of the 1970s. If you have any from between 1970 and June 1976 or the following: 7/78, 9/78, 3/79, 4/79, 6/79, 10/79, let me know and we can work out some way for me to scan them into our files.

## Forty, Thirty and Twenty Years Ago This Month

Jim Simpson

Closing out 1980, the December issue of *Group Corvair Comments* noted that we hadn't yet picked a location or date for our holiday banquet although it had been determined that it would be in Northern Virginia. We'd been busy in the moving events though and had qualified to host two championship autocrosses and a cherished date rally under the Metropolitan Washington Sports Car Clubs umbrella in 1981. Not too bad; these can be real money makers. Our Fall Flea Market went well; the best indication of turnout was that we sold 90 chili- and regular hotdogs! The 'Vair Vendor listed two cars (both '64s) for sale plus a NOS turbocharger and an AM/FM stereo radio.

The December 1980 *CORSA Communiqué* focused mostly on recent and upcoming events including the plans for the 1981 Denver CORSA convention. Particularly impressive was the Corvair turnout for the SCCA Solo II championships in Salina, Kansas – 10 cars with 15 drivers competed with four scoring either a first or second place in class. Under the Tech Topics, there was an article close to my heart, using an SU carburetor on a turbocharged engine. I'd love to do it and have all the parts, but... The CORSA Classifieds didn't have any exotic cars other than a dune buggy, but there were lots of what appeared to be excellent daily drivers and perhaps show-worthy cars at what would today be bargain prices. And there were parts, lots of parts, including things that are no longer available at any price.

Ten years later the December 1990 issue of *Group Corvair Comments* made it obvious that we were fully into the CORSA convention planning mode. We were anticipating as many as 2,000 people converging on what was then the Sheraton hotel in Hyattsville. We'd already had one practice rally; the autocross location was fixed, and we'd submitted two articles to the *CORSA Communiqué* to advertise the event. We had one car for sale, a '65 Monza 4-door, \$600 OBO.

The *CORSA Communiqué* for December 1990 had our first article on the convention which outlined the location and our planned activities. Since Washington is such a great tourist destination, we'd planned several tours and suggested activities for our guests. The rest of the issue was largely devoted to member's experiences with their cars including Earl Wright's building a 12 second ¼ mile dragster and then returning it to the street. Under the Tech Topics, there were two articles of interest if you are working on your car's carburetor; one listed common drill sizes that are suitable for setting carburetor clearances and the second listed all the thread sizes of the carburetor screws. Ten years of inflation didn't seem to affect used Corvair prices, but the variety and availability was down sharply.

According to the December 2000 issue of *Group Corvair Comments*, I had been club president for four years! Thankfully the club came to its senses and December was the end of my reign. Reading my final column as president gives a certain sense of déjà'vu in that we are still discussing the same issues – membership, relevance in the “internet age”, transition from sports car to show car, and the inevitable march of time. We had four cars for sale including a '65 coupe with the full Fitch Sprint treatment. The late Pete Frailey was cleaning out his Corvair stuff; he had two Lakewood parts cars, a rust-free late-model coupe body and a '67 – '69 quick steering box with arms! (I was the newsletter editor and somehow none of that made it into my collection of parts!)

The mailing cover of the December 2000 issue of the *CORSA Communiqué* had an obituary of GM designer and artist Bob Caderet. He had a major influence on the '60 & '61 Monza exterior design, the Monza and Lakewood names, as well as the Impala's famous triple taillights. But I remember him most for his painting of the Corvair GT, prints of which were sold by the Corvair Preservation Society. I have one framed and hanging on my wall. Interestingly, there was a continuation of Earl Wright's 1990 *Communiqué* article on his street-to-dragster-to-restored street/show car story. In this segment, he's achieved his goal of gaining a Gold award and senior division status for his '65 Corsa turbo at the Daytona Beach convention. There was also a long article on the legal defense of the Corvair by William Stanley. It gives you a good idea of the issues that were raised during the case. CORSA Classifieds were only two pages with less than a page of cars. Prices were up, but selection was limited.

## Reminiscences of the Marlboro Races

Bob Walker & Jerry Yates

Jerry Yates and I remember watching Corvairs and Yenko Stingers race at Marlboro Raceway back in the 1960s. We have put together some remembrances and information about those times to share some Corvair and local racing history with the club.

Marlboro Raceway was located in Prince George's County, just outside Upper Marlboro, MD. Originally built in 1952, Marlboro Raceway started as an all-dirt oval track. For the 1954 season, the owners added a paved road course that they later expanded to 1.7 miles. The facility also featured a karting track in the infield of the oval.

Marlboro Raceway was a primary sportscar racetrack for the Mid-Atlantic area and was used for Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) sportscar racing, NASCAR oval track racing, and motorcycle racing. The track was also a regular site for autocrosses, some of which used significant portions of the road course.

Marlboro Raceway closed after the 1969 season and local SCCA racing moved to the Summit Point Motorsports Park due to safety concerns and issues with Marlboro Raceway's management. The remains of the track are still visible from US Route 301 and the entire track layout can still be seen in modern satellite imagery.

The first Corvairs in SCCA racing were early models racing in the local sedan class as SCCA did not have official classes for sedans before the mid-60's; the SCCA focused on sportscars only. With the development of the SCCA Sedan classes, defined by engine displacement, the Corvair was in Sedan Class A. This was for engines over 2.5 liters up to 5 liters, so it included compact V8 American sedans where the Corvair was at something of a disadvantage. To promote sedan racing, in 1961 the local SCCA Region initiated an annual 12 hr. endurance race for sedans only, the “*Marlboro 12hr*”. This 12hr race was run for the next 5 years and was very popular drawing at least 25 entries and peaking at nearly 50 cars in 1964 in the starting field.

I went to Marlboro in the 60's to see selected SCCA races. I was mostly interested in the sedan endurance races, but also went to a couple of SCCA National Championship races and a regional race. Unfortunately, I missed the 1961 and 1962 Marlboro 12hr races. The 1962 race was notable for a Corvair Spyder driven by Charlie Hayes, a well-known sportscar racer, who started on the pole and led the race until the transmission developed a problem. The Spyder eventually finished 11<sup>th</sup> and was credited with the fastest lap of the race (1:48 minutes with an average speed of 57 mph).

The first race I attended was the third Marlboro 12 hr. in 1963. I remember my father went with me since Marlboro, Maryland was way far away on the other side of the world from where we lived in Virginia. We went in our sporty 1962 Ford Falcon Futura, which had bucket seats and the upgraded engine. I wanted to see the Holman & Moody Falcon Sprint V8s and the factory (Ford UK) Cortina GTs. There was a Corvair Spyder, co-driven by Don Yenko and Ed Lowther, which finished 17<sup>th</sup> overall, but took 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Sedan A class. The factory Cortina GTs finished 1 and 2 overall with one of the Falcon Sprints taking 3<sup>rd</sup> place. I was impressed watching the Cortina GTs demolish

the competition. I was so impressed with the dominating Cortina GTs, I bought a new Cortina GT in June 64. A really fun, but very basic car.

Next year, I was back at the 1964 12hr by myself this time. The Corvair Spyders were back in force with three in the race this time. The Don Yenko co-driven Spyder qualified 3<sup>rd</sup> behind two "Team Lotus" Lotus Cortinas which had replaced the Cortina GTs of last year. Don Yenko's Spyder finished a respectable 7<sup>th</sup> behind the dominating Lotus Cortinas. The Lotus Cortinas were as impressive as the GTs, 3 wheeling around the course to a 1-2 finish. The other Spyders had problems; one driven by Donna-Mae Mimms retired very early and the Spyder co-driven by one-time Group Corvair member Dave Roethel finished 18<sup>th</sup>.

Also, in 1964 there was an SCCA National race where I watched the Cobras beat up on the Corvettes. I liked to stand by the fence next to where the cars exit the oval onto the road course. The cars in the left lane would have a jump and get 2 or 3 wheels off the ground while passing the cars in the right lane. Get a pack with a couple of Cobras and several Corvettes and the ground shakes when that pack roars by.

In 1965, I was back for a 6-hr. endurance race for sportscars and sedans in July and the 12 hr. in August. There was one A Sedan class new Corvair Corsa in the 6 hr., but only ran in the accompanying sprint races, probably preparing for the 12 hr. Sure enough that Corvair Corsa was one of two in the 12-hr. entry list. It was driven by Marius Valsmis, Doug Diffendorfer and local racer and one-time Group Corvair member, Dave Roethel. The second Corvair Corsa was driven by Costley and Bynum. Unfortunately, the Valsmis/Diffendorfer/Roethel Corvair Corsa had mechanical problems and was out early. I took some lap times for grins and found the Costley and Bynum Corvair, which finished 11<sup>th</sup> overall, 2<sup>nd</sup> in Sedan A class, was well off the pace of the fastest cars. The Corvair had times of about 1:55 minute laps (average speed 53 mph) and the factory Lotus Cortinas were at 1:47 laps with an average speed 57 mph. I tried taking some pictures from the fence with a cheap camera, and while you could see there were cars in the distance, that was about all you could tell in the photos.

My Cortina GT had been serving me well except for a couple of not-so-minor problems. The problems could have been handled, but my father leveraged those to get me to buy American. So, what was a good, sporty 'small' American sedan in 1965? A Ford Falcon/Mustang would have been his pick (we were on our 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 Falcons). My research led me elsewhere and the Cortina GT got traded in on a new 1966 Madeira Maroon Corvair Corsa, delivered mid-November of 1965. This was a definite step up from the Cortina GT and far better handling than the Ford Falcons I was used to driving.

In 1966, I attended 2 races where Corvairs were running, the 12 hr., now part of the Trans Am series, and a regional sprint race weekend. There were two Sedan A Corvairs in the 12 hr., one driven by Tony Delorenzo and Don Eichstaedt and one co-driven by Donna-Mae Mimms. They were unfortunately well back of the factory supported Mustang/Cougar/Barracuda/etc. teams, finishing 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, respectively. An Alfa sedan won the 12hr, beating all the factory backed entries. At the sprint races, H. Shaffer entered a Yenko Stinger in DP; but I believe a TR4 won the class.

I attended some races in 1967 but missed any that had a Corvair or Yenko Stinger entered. But the shortened Trans Am races were pretty good. A Dodge Dart was 1<sup>st</sup>. And finally, in 1968, I attended an SCCA National race where Dave Roethel entered his Yenko Stinger in DP. My jinx held for the racing Corvairs that I go to see, so Dave didn't win. His Stinger was a bit under-prepared compared to a Yenko fully prepared race car.

That's what I saw of Corvairs racing at Marlboro. More involvement with Corvairs and racing would have to wait until my trips to Summit Point Raceway a few years later. However, Jerry Yates had a good day at the Marlboro sports car races in 1966 which he will now tell in his own words.

*(Jerry): In 1966, I had only been married for six months at that time, and I was still bonding with my new brother in-law. Both he & I were into cars & racing, me more into stock cars which I grew up around, and he was a sports car fan. One day we decided to attend a sports car race at Marlboro Speedway. That was Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1966. I remember both of us were standing in line for the tickets when we looked over to our right and about 20 yards away, we saw people pouring through a hole in the fence large enough that you could have driven a truck through. Oh well, we paid for our tickets and went in legally. Sometime during the race, I spotted it...a Corvair Yenko Stinger. While I owned a Corvair at the time, I don't think I knew what a Stinger was at the time, all I knew was it was a Corvair. I jumped from my seat and yelled "It's a Corvair, it's a Corvair!" My brother in-law and I were both excited, even though I thought the oil cooler looked a little out of place hanging on the rear fender. We*

*cheered the little car as it seemed to be holding its own against the likes of a full race, factory backed TR4. We later found out that the TR4 was a Group 44 TR4 driven by the great Bob Tullius. Eventually the Stinger rolled to a stop with what turned out to be a throttle linkage failure. That Stinger was driven by the famous Flying Dentist, Dr. Dick Thompson. I can't say for sure if it was #43, my memory's not that clear. I owned a '64 Monza with powerglide then, but just three months later I traded it for a '66 Monza coupe, 110 hp and 4-speed. (It has since morphed from a blue Monza to a white Yenko Stinger clone.)*

A good day at the sportscar races! Thanks Jerry. It should be said that the "Group 44" racing shop name was the inspiration for Group Corvair's name, most of the original members being autocrossers.

I will end with a picture I got from the internet of Yenko Stingers at Marlboro. The Yenkos appear to be getting winners checkered flags for winning D Production, but I don't know why there are two. The Porsche right behind the Yenkos is driven by Bruce Jennings, one of the top Porsche 356 drivers in the country, and a frequent winner of E Production as he appears to be this day.

In the future, I plan to do an article on Corvairs in autocrossing in the Washington-Baltimore area. We will mention Marlboro Raceway again as it was a regular venue for autocrosses as well as racing until it closed in 1969. Corvairs with a number of different drivers have a long history of winning several different classes in the late 1960's, the 1970's and the early 1980's.



## ‘Vair Vendor

**For Sale: Two Sets of 13" Custom Wheel Covers.** Remember "Racing Covers", "Moon Covers" or "Baby Moons"? From Pete Frailey's estate, there's a new-in-the-box set of spun aluminum "Racing/Moon Covers" including the original instruction sheet. Asking \$30 each, OBO. Proceeds go to Barbara Frailey.



**Spun Aluminum "Racing/Moon Cover"**



And I also have a set of "Baby Moon" covers, same price (\$30 each, OBO) for sale. Contact Jerry Yates, 301-262-8428 or [yatesj@verizon.net](mailto:yatesj@verizon.net).

**For Sale: '64 Corvair Dune Buggy.** New lower price. Built in 2009, street legal, Maryland title, 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 600 miles on them. Fiberglass body was new old stock, a Berry "Mini 'T' 2", built in California by Berry in late '60s / early '70s. 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.



**For Sale: 1964 Spyder Convertible. This one needs to be saved! **SOLD****

**For Sale: '65 Monza Convertible.** Owner has health issues and needs to downsize. Purchased in Florida 8 years ago, repainted from red to current light blue. 110 engine, rebuilt 5 years ago, powerglide transmission. 67k miles; been sitting under cover last 3 years. It will start, but not keep running, probably old gasoline. Asking \$7,500, contact Tim Stefan, 410-960-3229 or [tim.stefan@verizon.net](mailto:tim.stefan@verizon.net). Fallston, MD.





**For Sale: Set of four 1965 13" wire wheel covers with three prong spinners in excellent condition plus matching set of six 13" x 5 1/2" steel rims. \$750 plus shipping. Don, 302-313-5552 or [Don.lintvet@gmail.com](mailto:Don.lintvet@gmail.com)**



**According to Jerry Yates, this is your fearless newsletter editor at the first CORSA Convention. Frankly, I can't remember that far back!**



**Tis the Season**

