



Group Corvair Comments

GROUP CORVAIR'S NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA



VOLUME XLIX, No. 10

October 2021



Kinda, Sorta a Corvair

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

October

16 – Rockville Antique and Classic Car Show. CANCELED

19 – **Group Corvair Zoom Meeting**, 7:30 p.m. Details will be sent the weekend before.

23 – Potomac Day Classic Car Show; 9 – 3, awards at 2:30, 10220 River Road, Potomac, MD. \$20 registration.
Contact: Jennifer@potomacpizza.com.

November

16 – **Group Corvair Zoom Meeting**, 7:30 p.m. Details will be sent the weekend before.

December

21 -- **Group Corvair Zoom Meeting**, 7:30 p.m. Details will be sent the weekend before.

July 2022

12 – 16 – CORSA International Convention, Peachtree City, GA. Host hotel is the Crowne Plaza Atlanta SW Peachtree City Hotel and Conference Center. Convention rates are \$119 + taxes; the hotel is taking reservations via IHG reservations at 877-227-6963. Use the Group Name: CORSA and the Group Code: TUS for these rates.

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From the Oval Garage

Bob Hall

Unfortunately, now that the Rockville show has been cancelled (again), three years will have passed between the last Rockville auto show in 2019 and the next possible date in October 2022. I understand the reasoning for cancelling the 2021 show, but we were really looking forward to a day of car talk with car people and educating the public about Corvairs this month. Rockville refunded our preregistration fee promptly and I trust others have received their credits as well.

While digitizing old slides and negatives I came across some photos from the fall of 1981 that reminded me that so many of my Corvair memories centered around some specific cars owned by other enthusiasts. Even today, when I recognize a Corvair at a show I will admire the work that most recently was done by the current owner, but I still think of it as the original owner's car and remember the repairs and improvement that they had done years back. Most of us didn't have the kind of money then (even adjusted for inflation) that we now spend on a dwindling supply of Corvairs. Even though I am still skeptical of V8 mid-engine conversions one of those cars was Mike Harrison's Corv8. He did what I thought was a first-rate small block Chevy installation. Instead of the more common one-piece engine cover with seat inserts he built a hinged, aluminum framed, insulated cover that did an admirable job of isolating engine heat and noise and still provided engine access. He installed real seats. It had a beautiful paint job in a medium gray metallic and Mike cut white plastic backers that he installed behind each body emblem. The car in the photos looked finished to me and it sounded wonderful. I understand that he disassembled the car and had plans for an even better iteration before he died and that his son inherited it. I would love to see it again.

Minutes of the September Virtual Meeting

Marolyn Simpson

At 7:30 on Tuesday, September 21, six Group Corvair members starting logging into the virtual meeting. While we were waiting for the meeting to start, there was a discussion about the sale of YS-121 by Dave Edsinger which led to a discussion on both car and other projects. (Dave has the Yenko plates for YS-18 so he still has a Stinger.)

The first item on the agenda was the approval of the minutes of the August meeting as they appeared in the newsletter. They were approved with no changes.

Jim Simpson gave the treasurer's report: There were no new expenses nor income and the balance is unchanged.

Bob Walker brought us up to date on his problems with the lifters in his newly built engine. He'd heard a "squeak" from the rocker arms and after investigation, found there was no oil being delivered via the pushrods. He pulled one of the lifters and found that it had essentially frozen. These lifters were new ones that he'd carefully saved for many

years. He's going to replace them all with new production lifters and when he has a chance, dissect one of the bad ones to see just what happened.

Bob Hall is planning to rebuild a 110 engine. He wants to make it better than the original. Bob has a set of balanced rod and piston assemblies to use in this engine but is a little concerned about the amount of metal that was removed from the connecting rod caps to balance them.

There have been several Corvairs for sale on eBay. Ward Bourgondien's Rampside, which is currently in St. Louis, is one of those Corvairs. At the time of the meeting the bid was \$50,000. [Note: There have been further developments, see the article below.]

Shortly before the meeting we heard that the Rockville Antique and Classic Car Show has been cancelled again this year due to Covid.

Jim gave a report on the use of his new tire pressure gage—the one that was included in the tech tips in the September newsletter.

Bob H. reported on reworking windshield wipers which led to a general discussion on other tech tips.

Jerry Yates had recently participated in the All-GM show in Annapolis Junction. There were two "Corvairs" in the show—Jerry's Yenko tribute and another V8 car that was still a work in progress. The parts that were finished were beautifully done, but the only thing Corvair about it was the outer skin. There was also a beautiful red '64 Spyder in the visitor parking area. The owner had arrived too late to be included in the show.

Bob H. had contacted Don Hibbard about a possible meeting at his house, but no decisions have been made on that.

There was a general discussion on old cars, in particular the Lotus.

The meeting ended at 8:52.

On the Show Circuit

Jim Simpson

I say "On the Show Circuit" advisedly. Marolyn and I have been to exactly one car show since the pandemic hit with full force. And we didn't show our car. But we did go to the "All GM" car show in Annapolis Junction that was sponsored by the Camaro club and found either two or three Corvairs there. I say "two or three" because it depends on just how you classified one of the cars.

Jerry Yates was the sole representative from Group Corvair. He showed up with his beautiful '66 Yenko Stinger tribute and of course the organizers didn't really know how to classify the car. After all, it wasn't a Camaro, Corvette or Chevelle! So, they found him a spot over to one side, sort of "out of the way."



But at least there were some shade trees over there. Jerry explained the judging to us; we'd never run into anything quite like it before. The organizers ran two

parallel judging systems – the common "People's Choice" and the equally common "professional judges" points system. The "professional judging"



was optional and supposedly you were still eligible for a People's Choice award. The problem was that if you were professionally judged, you had to move your car to the lineup for judging and thus were not really in position for the people walking around to look and mark their ballots. In any case, Jerry did well, coming home with a "Heart Beat" trophy. Congratulations Jerry!

Just as Marolyn and I were getting ready to head home, another Corvair showed up. This was a beautiful red '64 Spyder convertible. It was truly show quality. Unfortunately, the owner was profoundly deaf, and we weren't able to communicate well so we never got his name. We did provide our Group Corvair contact information but haven't heard from him (he is a CORSA member).

The third "Corvair" was still a work in progress. I put quotes around Corvair because I'm not quite sure how to define the car. Essentially, it's a late model Corvair shell,



Interior of the V8 car on the Front Page

minus all elements of the Corvair drivetrain, suspension, floor panels, interior and most structure, draped over a custom-made chassis and drivetrain. The front and rear suspension use late Corvette components, narrowed to fit within the limits of the Corvair body shell. Similarly, the drive train uses a Corvette LS-series engine bolted up to a late Corvette transaxle. The chassis was built using 4" square tubing. The interior was completely custom; not even the Corvair dash was retained. I've seen many mid-engine V8 conversions, but they have all retained much more of the original Corvair than this. That said, it was a pretty car and from the front and side looks like a customized, late-model Corvair. (From the rear, it's a different story since the owner used a Pontiac Firebird rear panel and taillights.)

And Talking about Corv-8s

Jim Simpson & Bob Hall

While we're on the topic of V8 conversions, Bob Hall provided me with some photos he took years ago of the late Mike Harrison's Corv-8. For those of you who don't remember Mike, he was a perfectionist when it came to cars.



When he decided to build his V8 Crown conversion, he started with an excellent '66 Corsa. While Mike used the Crown conversion parts, as Bob Hall pointed out in his column, Mike constantly had his eye out for how he could improve on the design. And he was never content with the result – there was always room for improvement.

I remember looking at the paint job at one of the Group Corvair flea market/car shows. It was a fabulous medium metallic gray. Certainly, good enough to take top honors at any car show. But Mike wasn't content with it; he later stripped it down to bare metal to do even better. Similarly, he wasn't content with the overall car. Take the original steering box; no, he didn't care for GM's

recirculating ball design and wanted to go to a rack-and-pinion system that would change from the Chevrolet's design with the steering arms going forward to a trailing arm configuration. That required a custom, short, rack design. And in turn that also required modifying the gas tank to give the necessary clearances.

And this quest for perfection continued to the rest of the car. I recall Mike coming to one of the Group Corvair meetings with his newly created brace for the engine alternator. The original Chevrolet design didn't meet his approval, so he made his own.

Unfortunately, Mike passed away before he was able to complete the car. (Actually, I doubt he would have ever actually finished the car – there would always be something upon which he could improve.) The last we heard, the car was in Mike's son's possession.

Caveat Emptor

Jim Simpson

Bob Lewis brought this to our attention some time ago. The late Ward Bourgondien, a long-time member and past president of Group Corvair, owned a '63 Rampside, white with red stripes. It's easily identifiable by the Group Corvair window decal in the passenger's vent window. (I strongly doubt there is another Rampside with one of



Note the Group Corvair window decal in the vent window.

these exceedingly rare window stickers in existence.) Bob noted that the Rampside was in North Carolina and up for sale on eBay Motors. Eventually it sold for “best offer,” but we don't know the actual amount.

If you have been following the prices of Rampside and Greenbriers in recent auctions, you'll have noticed they've gone crazy! Perhaps it's the Jay Leno effect – he has a Rampside in his collection – but a Greenbrier recently sold in a Mecum auction for \$103,400. And the Rampside is even rarer.

It looks like Ward's Rampside was bought by a speculator with the intention of “flipping” it. At the time of our last meeting, it was up for sale on eBay with a current bid of \$50,000. (I believe it closed at \$50,099.99.) In any case, it looks like that sale fell through and it is again up for sale on eBay. As of noon on Oct 9th, the bidding was up to \$31,800 and the reserve had not yet been met!

It is listed with only 908 miles on it! But if you take a close look at the photos, while it looks decent from a distance, it's obvious that it could use a fair amount of TLC. And some of the description doesn't match the photos,

they seem to come from some generic descriptions of Corvairs. For instance, it is described as having the gear shift on the dash (as do powerglide cars), yet the photos clearly show a floor mounted manual gear shift.

The bottom line on all of this? I think there are a couple of lessons. First, the day of the \$100 Corvair is gone. Corvairs in general have achieved some level of respect in the special car market. Second, the market is crazy right now and if you are interested in buying a Corvair, or for that matter any special interest car, do your homework! It is very much "Buyer Beware"!

Evening Orchid Comeback?

Bob Hall

I have to admit that the 1965 Evening Orchid color is impressive in the early morning and in the late evening. But it's never been a favorite of mine as an everyday color. However at least one customer of this paint and body shop in Long Beach, California likes it enough for this LM air-conditioned coupe.

Does anyone know the owner?



CORSA News

In case you don't get the periodic notes from CORSA, here are a couple highlights from their October release:

CORSA Wants You! They have a special membership offer -- \$25/year for on-line membership. Go to their website (www.corsa.org) to join.

CORSA Monthly Zoom Meetups. In case you've missed them, they are available on the Corvair Society of America YouTube Channel. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCf2gOckRq2GL0HDhHBgvTXA>

Corvair Preservation Foundation (CPF) Window Clings: They're available on the CPF website www.corvairmuseum.com

CORSA publicity material: Go to <https://www.corvair.org/index.php/home/corsa-chapters/corsa-brochure/file/1018-corsa-brochure> (You have to use this link, I could NOT find it on the CORSA website.)

Don't have a CORSA membership list? Need to find a nearby member while out on the road? If you are a member of CORSA, log into the web site and find the "Contact CORSA People Tab." This might be a great resource if you have a breakdown away from home.

From Other Newsletters

(Corvair Minnesota Newsletter, "Leaky Seal", Oct 2021) Fran Schmit had an article on how to convert your Corvair distributor to use adjustable points just like many other Chevrolets used to have. It's a two page article you can find in their newsletter at:

<http://www.vv.corvair.org/pipermail/chapters/attachments/20211001/01b82077/attachment.pdf>

(Rocky Mountain Corsa Corvair Club, "The Denvair News", Oct 2021) If you are planning a trip in your Corvair, you might do worse than to use Mike Dawson's trip check list. There's nothing startling in the list, but it's

a good place to start. The one thing that needs to be updated is to include the link to the CORSA people finder I noted above. <http://www.vv.corvair.org/pipermail/chapters/attachments/20210927/76ac7fe0/attachment.pdf>

(Heart of America Corvair Owners Association, “VairCor”, Sep 2021) In another article by Mike Dawson, he gives some tips on late-model window track issues. Apparently as the lubricants dry, the rather weak factory spot welds can fail on the window tracks down inside the doors. He shows where to tack weld them to prevent problems. <http://www.vv.corvair.org/pipermail/chapters/attachments/20210921/af1328aa/attachment.pdf>

(Lehigh Valley Corvair Club, “The Fifth Wheel”, Sep 2021) Joe Darinsig reported on finding a Chrome plating shop that does excellent work, just north of York, PA in Manchester, PA. Chrome plating is becoming harder and harder to find due to the cost of dealing with environmental issues. He says they can handle large to small items and will do chrome and nickel plating, aluminum color anodizing and stainless steel and aluminum polishing. They do NOT do repair work to bumper and trim (straightening, rust repair, etc.); the items must be delivered to them in good condition.

B&B Metal Finishing Inc.,
Plating Specialists
401 N. Main St.
Manchester, PA 17345

Website: www.bbmetailfinishing.com Phone: 717-764-8941

Did You Know The Ford GT40 Used Chevy Taillights?

By Chris Demorro, dated August 11, 2011

Taken from the Internet “Street Muscle Magazine”

Among hardcore Blue Oval fans, there is one car that stands atop the performance charts; the Ford GT40. It was a battle of Ford versus Ferrari, and the Company that Henry founded defeated the mighty Enzo and his fleet of Ferraris on the racing circuit time and again. The Ford GT40 was the pinnacle of automotive racing technology at the time, and it pulled together all the resources Ford had at its disposal...including a little unsolicited aid from crosstown rivals Chevy.

[Jalopnik.com](http://jalopnik.com) reports (The Ford GT40’s dirty little Chevy secret) that in a bid to build the lightest race car possible, Ford installed the taillights of a Chevrolet Corvair on the Ford GT. Who knew?



Weight is the enemy of speed, and Ford designers were singularly focused on defeating Ferrari in the upcoming 24 Hours of Le Mans. That meant changes in design up to the last minute, keeping builders Kar Kraft busy with the ultimate project car.

Since there was no time to build custom taillights, a shop assistant was sent to an auto parts store with a scale, and told to weigh out and find the lightest taillights available.

He returned with the taillights of a 1960 Corvair, which are little more than the bulb a plastic covering, and a very small bezel. Perfect for the GT40’s purpose. Guess the Thunderbird taillights were just too heavy, but Ford’s win at Le Mans wasn’t just a win for the Blue Oval. It was a win for America, proving that embarrassing the Europeans takes precedence over silly rivalries.

Clark's Corvair Parts®

Our catalog lists over 15,000 parts for your Corvair. We carry engine parts, body panels, upholstery and much more! There are 1,000's of reproduced items available, pages of technical information and lots of other helpful hints.

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