



# Group Corvair Comments

GROUP CORVAIR'S NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA



VOLUME LII, No. 6

June 2024



## *Corvair Ranch Open House*

## CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

### June

8 – NECC Motorsports High Performance Driving Event – New York Safety Track. Info:

<https://tinyurl.com/ykn8csks> or <http://www.neccmotorsports.com/>

18 – **Group Corvair Virtual Meeting.** 7:30 p.m. Link details will be sent out the weekend before; check your email.

TBD – **Group Corvair Social Meeting.** TBD.

### July

16 – **Group Corvair On-line Meeting.** 7:30 p.m. Link details will be sent out the weekend before; check your email. Please note, we may be dropping our paid subscription to Zoom in favor of a free or lower cost alternative. Hopefully, it will be essentially transparent to everyone.

20 – NECC Motorsports High Performance Driving Event – Pocono South Track. Info:

<https://tinyurl.com/mw6hzray> or <http://www.neccmotorsports.com/>

21 – 26 – Corvair International Convention, Dayton, OH. The 21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> are not officially part of the convention, but the host club includes them in their schedule. <https://www.daytoncorvairclub.com/gallery>

## August

**20 – Group Corvair On-line Meeting.** 7:30 p.m. Link details will be sent out the weekend before; check your email. Please note, we may be dropping our paid subscription to Zoom in favor of a free or lower cost alternative. Hopefully, it will be essentially transparent to everyone.

**17 – Group Corvair On-Line Meeting.** 7:30 p.m.

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## From the Oval Garage

Bob Hall

June already? Have you signed up for the Dayton CORSA International Convention yet? Carl and Arlette Kelson from Melbourne Australia will be there. (Our *mea culpa* is that medical appointments will keep Carol and I from going).

Following up on our April Tech Session to check and adjust Mark Shiffler's Corsa steering box, Mark has now adjusted his tie rod ends so that his alignment in the straight-ahead position matches the steering box's straight ahead point. (He had previously overhauled his front suspension and steering linkage, and had it aligned. But the steering wheel wasn't in the correct position on the steering shaft.) He reports that his steering is now what he remembers from when we—and our Corvairs--were all much younger.

We were sorry to miss the Corvair Ranch Open House on May 19<sup>th</sup> because of our vacation, but I've heard it was another success. The 2026 Gettysburg Corvair Convention group met afterward for an update on planning. As one of the sponsoring clubs Group Corvair will stay in touch with Tom Rahochick and the other active members. I've requested copies of the agreements that have been signed so far and will pass on an outline of plans to our club periodically as things come together. The next scheduled meeting is August 14<sup>th</sup>, but there will be other conversations in the meantime. As the venue will be in the Gettysburg area (and on the way to the Corvair Ranch) we will have ample opportunity to stop and visit and become familiar with the proposed sites for convention activities.

We still have time to have a June social meeting so if you have any suggestions for a location, please let us know ASAP. When was the last time you had a good crab cake or Rockfish dinner...?

For what it's worth during our vacation in California we stopped by Bob's Big Boy in Burbank on a Friday night for the cruise in. (Remember "doing laps" at your local Hot Shoppes or other teen hang out?) This time there were three Corvairs. A respectable red '64 Monza with '63 hub caps (it sounded good too), a '63 Monza that left after several failed attempts to find a good parking spot, and a nice red Corsa convertible. I had a nice long talk with the owner of a 1934 Packard who, like others there, was concerned about club participation and the growth of car clubs. While discussing the cost of maintaining his Packard I became very, very happy that Corvairs are not nearly that expensive to keep running. BTW, the Packard had been sold to a buyer in Norway for \$120,000.00 and was scheduled to sail from Long Beach to its new home in June.

I look forward to catching up with everyone at our next Zoom meeting.

## **Minutes of the May Virtual Meeting**

**Marolyn Simpson**

Bob Hall, president, was in California and was unable to attend the virtual meeting. Several other members were also unable to attend so the May Group Corvair “business meeting” turned out to be more of a chat session than a meeting. It started at 7:30 pm with three participants and several minutes later we added a fourth member.

Bob Walker told us about a Northern Virginia club tech session planned for Saturday, May 25 to replace a clutch pedal that broke off, something that we hadn’t heard about before, but is apparently becoming somewhat common. The welds between the pedal and the pivot crack and eventually break. He also told us that Dave Edsinger had participated in the Jefferson 500 at Summit Point but did not finish. Instead, he exited in a big cloud of blue smoke. It sounds like the engine failed, but we are interested in learning just what went wrong.

Bob also noted that there is an SVRA event coming up August 16-18, at Summit Point, with a Corvair class. The entry fee for racers is \$0. It is restricted to only licensed racing drivers and race prepared cars. We believe the Northern Virginia Corvair Club is planning an outing to the event; unfortunately, neither the Summit Point nor the SVRA web sites have any details of the event other than it’s part of the “Speedtour” series.

Jim Simpson brought up the discussion he had with Pete Faulkner at the Corvair Ranch open house the previous weekend. Pete is president of Vairtrix, his company that is making modern, electronic instruments for Corvairs. He showed Jim a pre-production speedometer/odometer for Corsas. You can read more about it in the Tech Topics section below, but it, along with the temperature sensor and tachometer systems that he’s already selling via Clark’s Corvair Parts, looks like an exciting development.

The meeting attendees also discussed a “barn find” Corvair that was displayed at the Corvair Ranch open house on May 19. Again, see the article later in the newsletter.

The “meeting” ended at 8:35 pm.

## **Corvair Open House – 2024**

**Jim Simpson**

Marolyn and I attended the bi-annual Corvair Open House on Sunday, May 19. It had rained the previous day and the forecast – at least around our home in Davidsonville – was rather iffy so we decided against taking our Corvair. As it turned out, we were overly concerned, and the weather turned out just great. Yes, there were clouds, but they helped keep the temperature down.

Tom Rahochick handled the registration and was the master of ceremonies for the door prizes and such. He and Marolyn did a count of the registrations and came up with about 50 people attending. Marolyn went around the lot and found 25 Corvairs, a mix that included an Ultravan, a Lakewood, three vans, and at least nine convertibles. Participants included some life-long owners as well as one couple who had just purchased their first Corvair!

One major highlight for me was to meet Pete Faulkner face-to-face for the first time. As you can read in the Tech Topic article later in the newsletter, he’s the President of Vairtrix, a maker of modern, electronic instruments for Corvairs. I got a chance to check out his latest pre-production Corsa speedometer/odometer. I really want to get my hands on one once they are in production!



Jeff Stonesifer talked about a “new” car at the Ranch, a 1966 Corsa convertible. What makes it notable is that it is a Los Angeles plant built turbo Corsa convertible. From the research I did, the Los Angeles plant is estimated to have produced only 30 of these cars in 1966! That makes this one a rather rare bird.



It's something of a barn find and came out of Texas. (It still has Texas tags on it.) While it looks pretty rough and will need a lot of work to even get back on the road, the body (painted a light yellow) is pretty solid with only surface rust showing. (A previous owner put “Spyder” emblems on it to complement the “Corsa” emblems. Chevrolet did have an early late-model styling body with the “Spyder” emblems but decided to drop the name for some reason.)

It has (or perhaps better to say had) a white interior, white top, and has tinted glass all around. At some point in its life, someone added air conditioning, something that factory never offered with the turbo engine. The engine is something of a mess and obviously will need a major rebuild, but the carb looks like it was newly rebuilt. While it will take a lot of work to restore, done properly, this could be an almost one-of-a-kind car.

Tom Rahochick and Jeff Stonesifer put on a great event. The ladies, including Jeff's wife and daughter, put on a tasty spread for lunch. And, as usual, there were door prizes galore. We came away with a couple of useful items ourselves! (One of the quiz questions for the door prizes was “what is the correct torque for the nuts on Corvair wheels?”. I answered 55 lb.-ft. The correct shop manual answer is 55 – 65 lb.-ft, but since no one else had an answer, I won and picked up a pair of scissors for Marolyn.)





Bill Hubbell had a table set up with a display of rare, unusual, and new Corvair parts. Among them was a new, Clark's reproduction of the '64 finned rear brake drum along side an original '64. The new ones look excellent; the only differences I could see were that there were fewer "extra" holes in the reproduction and it didn't have the tack welded-on weights that the originals have. I have no idea what the "extra" holes were for – access to rivets perhaps on some earlier design – and I assume the new castings are better balanced than the originals and don't need the balance weights.

Bill and I also talked about repairing or reproducing the A/C idle solenoids. He had a selection of them and showed where he had found failures. I have a sample and am going to take a look at just how feasible it would be to make repairs.

The Mid-Maryland and Central Pennsylvania Corvair clubs planned to get together at a nearby restaurant after the open house as a "meet and greet" for people who were going to work on the 2026 CORSA Convention in Gettysburg. Unfortunately Marolyn and I couldn't stay so we missed that.

All in all, it was a great day with good company, interesting cars, and cooperative weather and traffic.



## Tech Topics

**Sneak Preview -- New and Improved Speedometer/Odometer** Marolyn and I attended the Corvair Ranch open house on May 19<sup>th</sup>. There I met Pete Faulkner, President of Vairtrix, [vairtrix@gmail.com](mailto:vairtrix@gmail.com). We'd exchanged some emails a few years ago but had never met face-to-face. We had a great discussion of his work on updating the Corvair instrumentation.

First some background. Way back in 2016, I collaborated with Dale Dewald to publish a series of articles on the Corsa and Spyder cylinder head temperature gauge in the *CORSA Communique*. They came out in the May, June and July/August issues. These articles were based upon an investigation into the actual electrical characteristics of the Delco thermistor sensor and the gauges Chevrolet used in the Corsas and Spydors. In these articles we showed that the stock system was marginal at best, with inaccuracies as great as 50 degrees from the actual temperature – and that was with a known good thermistor. (As the thermistors age, they are becoming increasingly erratic and new ones are unavailable.)

A year after the articles appeared, I received an email from Vairtrix. They had read the articles and were working on a solution to both the inherent design flaws of the gauges and the non-availability of the thermistor sensor. They were designing a system based upon a modern thermocouple sensor and a microprocessor to drive the stock gauges while correcting for their inaccuracies. Vairtrix needed our raw data as a starting point for the design; I was happy to supply it. Subsequently they produced a "plug and play" system that replaces the old thermistor and drives the stock gauge. There are two versions, one each specific to the Corsa and Spyder models. These are now being sold through Clark's Corvair Parts.



This success spurred Vairtrix on to address other issues with the Corvair instrumentation. First up was the tachometer. The tachometers, particularly the Corsa tachometer with its 270-degree sweep, are marvels of a rapidly disappearing mechanical art. The meter movement is a combination of carefully wound spiral springs, jeweled mounting pivots, counterweights, and electromagnets. They were pretty much state-of-the-art vintage the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; it was amazing that Chevrolet was able to mass produce them at a reasonable price. But time and technology have moved on. The meter movements are now virtually impossible to repair; it is almost a lost art.

Vairtrix designed a replacement using modern stepping motors and microprocessors that about all modern cars use. They designed a package that replaces everything behind the faceplate of the Corsa and Spyder tachometers. These are now available from Clark's; check the "New Items" tab on their on-line catalog.

All of which brings us back to the Corvair Ranch. Vairtrix in partnership with the Corvair Ranch has now moved on to the Speedometer/Odometer! Like the tachometer, the originals are marvels of engineering and mass production. Automakers just about universally used an electromagnetic induction system to convert input cable RPM to car speed displayed by a needle which in the case of the Corsa can rotate as much as 270 degrees. And by using a series of gears, the input cable drives rotating drums adding up the miles on the odometer. The speedometer depends upon a delicate balance of springs, counterweights, and a calibrated magnet to work. While there are still artisans out there who can repair and calibrate these movements, they are becoming fewer, and their time is expensive. And after all that, you still have only a marginally accurate gauge. Similarly, the components (specialty gears) that drive the odometer are becoming very scarce and the paint on the odometer drums is flaking off. All-in-all, professionally restoring a stock Corsa or Spyder speedometer with its two odometers (standard plus a trip odometer) is getting very expensive. And to top it off, the entire system is calibrated to an obsolete tire size!

Vairtrix has developed a new system. As with the tachometer, it replaces about everything behind the faceplate with modern components. The original cast cradle and rotating magnet are retained as the interface to the car, but now the speedometer needle is moved by a stepping motor controlled by a microprocessor. The odometers are organic LED displays with no moving parts. And you can program it to match whatever size tires you have on the car so the speed and mileage will be dead accurate!



**Original      Replacement**  
**65-66 Corsa**



**During Startup. Note the Copyright Data in the Upper Odometer and that the Needle is Returning from a Full-Scale Check.**

Here are a couple pictures of a pre-production unit installed in a Corsa:

As you can see, it looks remarkably like the original mechanical speedometer and

odometer. Note particularly the odometer display. While



**In Normal Operation. Note the 1/10<sup>th</sup> Mile Counter in the Trip Odometer.**

these are digital displays, the font closely matches the original Chevrolet numbers. In addition, rather than just “clicking” to the next increment, the right-most digit on the odometer scrolls up, simulating the rolling of the old mechanical drum. Take a close look at the photo – the 1/10<sup>th</sup> mile digit on the trip odometer is “rolling” from a “2” to a “3”. Very clever!

While this new speedometer/odometer is still in the pre-production stage, here are some highlights of what to expect:

- Four specific models: Early (including FC), Late, Spyder, and Corsa.
- No special tools or skills needed to install; estimated about 30 minutes of bench time.
- Original needle can be used to match the OEM speedometer.
- You can preprogram it for tire size, or more specifically the number of tire rotations per miles in three ways:
  - Three ways
    - Factory default – 1000 rev/mile early-model, 825 rev/mile late-model.
    - Bench setup – using internal button, enter data via a menu.
    - On the road – after setup, drive one full mile using highway mile markers and save the number of tire revolutions it counted.
- Odometer can be set to current mechanical odometer reading to maintain vehicle mileage.
- Display brightness is user programmable.
- Self-test on startup. Speedometer goes to full scale and then returns. (The needle in the photo above was not installed correctly; it should be exactly on zero.)

The expected cost should be less than a good overhaul of an original mechanical unit

## Vair Vendor

### For Sale: Early and Late Parts:

'64 3.27 differential, \$40; '64 3.27 4-speed transaxle, \$100; '64 Sypder engine lid, \$120;  
'64 Convertible top frame, \$65; '64 4-door NOS left quarter panel (GM # 6279405), \$200  
'64 2 each front cross members, complete with brakes, shocks, springs. Very good condition: one from a Sypder, \$175, other \$150; '62 – '64 Convertible rear quarter window glass, left and right, \$30  
'65 – '69 underbody plastic heater duct, \$30; '65 – '69 Convertible corner weight, \$15  
? year – Engine cover with fan bearing, \$20; 3 standard transmission bell housings, \$30 each.

Prices are negotiable. Contact Bob Lewis, 301-246-4278, [rtl1936@gmail.com](mailto:rtl1936@gmail.com).

(5/23)

### For Sale:

60-61 Corvair distributor, used, complete, includes points, condenser, rotor, cap	\$75
2 Clark's fan belts C5790, new	\$12
Clark's Viton crankshaft seals, new:	
Front bellhousing seal	\$8
Rear housing seal	\$6
2 new Clark's rear brake hoses for 65 – 69 Corvair	\$20
GM AM car radio with faceplate for 65-69 Corvair, not working	\$20
Tune-up parts:	
New WIX fuel filter 3/8 inlet/outlet	\$2.50
New Fram G15 fuel filter 3/8 inlet/outlet	\$2.50
New Borg Warner tune-up set for inline 6cyl GM includes:	\$7.50
Ch-615 plug wires, A-120V point set, G-120A condenser	
68-69 Corvair interior parts:	
1 Dash pad, black, clean, very good condition	\$125ea
2pr Door arm rests, black, excellent condition	\$55pr
2pr Sun-visors, black, clean, very good condition, complete except vanity mirror missing from one visor, mounting plate still attached.	\$45pr
Door & rear side panel sets, Monza, black, cardboard intact, good condition, 1 left, 2 right side sets	\$75/set
Front shoulder harness set, driver and passenger, black, complete including:	



retractors and mounting bolts, webbing good condition but could use additional cleaning \$75

NOTE: Period correct for shows, not recommended for general use due to age.

Contact Bob at bobrstn@gmail.com Shipping is extra (6/24).

**Wanted: Right Front (passenger side) FC wheel arch and rocker panel.** Prefer NOS but a very clean used one would be acceptable. Michael Coale, 443-994-2559 or [mikecoale@verizon.net](mailto:mikecoale@verizon.net) (8/23)

**For Sale: Mike Coale is thinning his collection: 1965 Corsa coupe body**, no drive train, gold interior (with '66 front seats), Corsa dash. Fair condition, but highly restorable. \$1,500 or best offer.

**1965 Corsa convertible body**, power top, Corsa dash, steering wheel, no seats, but has correct door panels. It does have a '64 engine/positrac differential, and empty 4-speed case in it to allow it to roll around. Fair condition, but highly restorable. \$1,500 or best offer.

**1965 Monza convertible**, complete, 110 hp, powerglide. Silver with red interior, older restoration, decent condition. Asking \$3,000.

**1965 Monza Four-Door**, 4-speed. White, fair condition, but highly restorable. \$1,500 or best offer.

**1967 Monza convertible**, 110, Powerglide. Relatively rare – only 2,109 convertibles were produced in 1967. Complete, including the "Protecta Plate." Asking \$3,500. All have titles. Contact Mike Coale, [mikecoale@verizon.net](mailto:mikecoale@verizon.net) or 443-994-2559.

(5/23)

## ***For Parts, Old and New, and All Body, Mechanical, and Suspension Work***

# **Corvair Ranch**

**1079 Bon-Ox Road  
Gettysburg, PA 17325  
717-625-2805**

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***Parts Since 1973 – New, NOS, Used, Reproduction, Rebuilt!***

## **Clark's Corvair Parts**

**400 Mohawk Trail, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370**

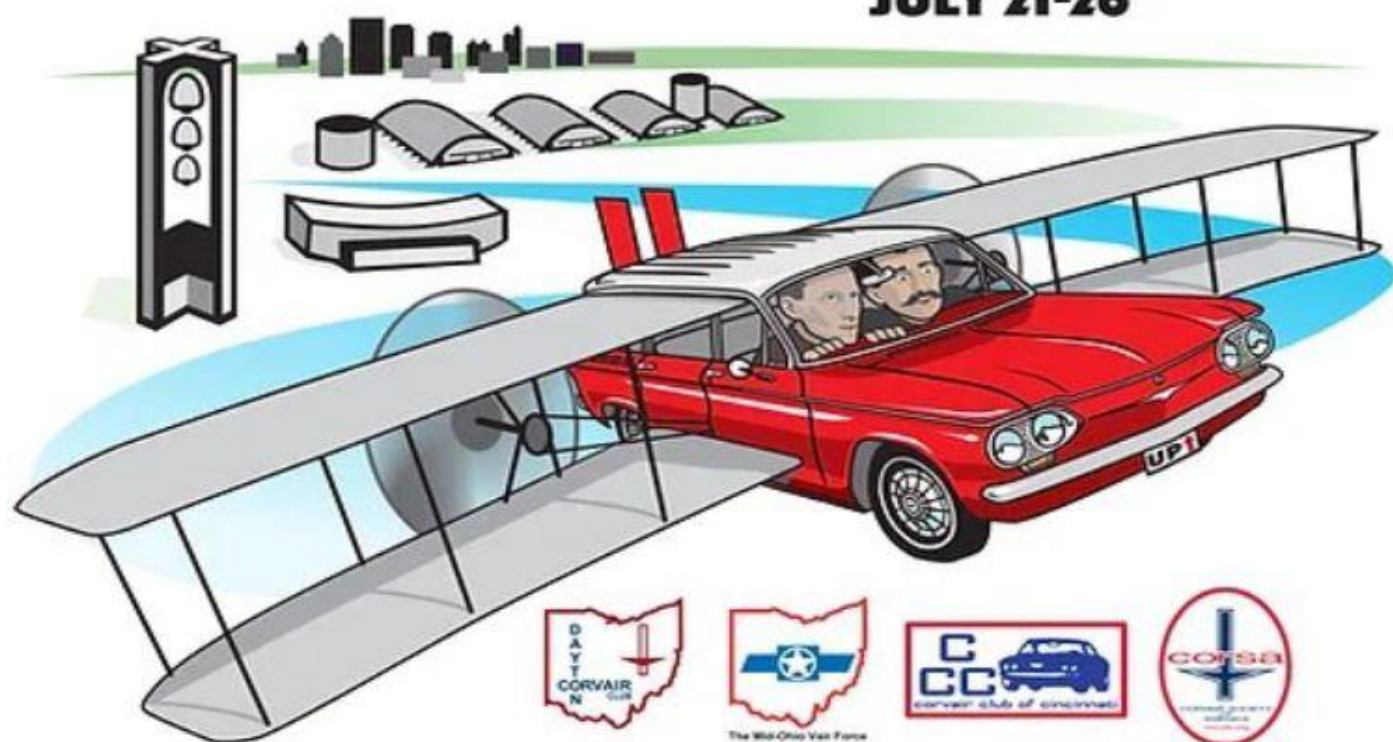
[www.corvair.com](http://www.corvair.com).

Check out their "What's New" page for Clark's newest offerings. There is some interesting stuff there including a modern replacement for the "guts" of the Spyder and Corsa tachometers.



# CORVAIRBORNE!

**2024 INTERNATIONAL  
CORVAIR CONVENTION  
JULY 21-26**



**MARRIOTT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON  
1414 S PATTERSON BLVD - DAYTON, OH 45409**

**MORE INFORMATION ON  
[WWW.DAYTONCORVAIRCLUB.COM](http://WWW.DAYTONCORVAIRCLUB.COM)**



## Into Leather?

purchased the leather cover from [www.wheelskins.com](http://www.wheelskins.com). It's custom size – 16" x 2 11/16". You might want to use 16 x 2 3/4; that might be a bit easier to lace. In addition, consider a more complex lacing pattern (as shown to the right) than the simple loop that the Wheelskins instructions use.

I am into leather, at least when it comes to steering wheels. While I love the looks of the Corvair “wood” steering wheel, they do have their drawbacks.

First, the rim is thin. That was how they made steering wheels “back in the day”, but all modern steering wheels are thicker. A thicker rim just feels more comfortable.

Second the “wood” – actually plastic – is both hard and slick which makes it harder to grip. While Corvair steering is pretty light, I have the factory quick steering option which does require a bit more effort.

This is where the leather wrap comes in. It thickens the wheel and provides a much easier and better grip. Plus it protects the original plastic rim.

This is my “alternate” wood-rim wheel. I'll still use the regular one for concours but this one for regular driving.

If you are interested, I

