



the fifth wheel

MARCH 2025

[HTTP://WWW.CORVAIR.ORG/CHAPTERS/LVCC](http://www.corvair.org/chapters/lvcc)

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A NEW WAY TO WORK FROM CHEVROLET CORVAIR 95 TRUCKS

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FUNCTIONAL STYLING! • THE NEWEST LOAD-PULLERS SINCE HORSES WENT OUT OF STYLE!

Next Membership Meeting:

Place: America on Wheels Museum

Date: Saturday March 15, 2025

Time: 10 AM to Noon

The Fifth Wheel is published monthly by Lehigh Valley Corvair Club Inc. (LVCC), a chapter of the Corvair Society of America. We accept articles of interest to Corvair owners for publication. Classified advertising of interest to Corvair owners is available free of charge to all persons. Commercial advertising is also available on a fee basis. For details, email our newsletter editor, Allan Lacki, redbat01@verizon.net.

Meet the Makers - Forward Control

Source: Eva McGuire, Corvair historian and author of a series of articles named "Meet the Makers of the Chevrolet Corvair". Photos and images courtesy of the Stu Shuster family and General Motors.

Shown on the facing page are rare GM photos of a wooden body buck of a Forward Control Corvair Greenbrier truck dated March 19, 1959, along with four pre-production rendering images of what future FC trucks would look like.

These images came from the personal collection of the late GM Designer, Stu Shuster, who was a fan of Corvair. If you look closely at the FC buck photo, you'll notice several of the renderings in this post are in the background hanging on the wall in the GM Styling Studio. It was called GM Styling back in the day before it got changed to GM Design. What a rare treat for us to see these up close.

FUN FACTS: Back in the day, it was forbidden for GM designers to take home any of their sketch/art work. This would be grounds for immediate dismissal. The art work performed by designers while employed by GM (and other car companies) were considered "corporate secrets" and the bosses didn't want the competition to see what future vehicles they were working on.

Many years later, GM gave immunity to the car designers and asked those who still had any of their original sketches while employed at GM design to step forward so they could take photos/scan the artwork and place these digitized images in their GM Archives.

(Funny story: While interviewing some car designer friends, they told me of hearing stories of co-workers rolling up some of their sketch work and "sneaking" them out inside their umbrellas to avoid getting caught. Clever.)

The first Corvair FC trucks (vans and pickups) were introduced in 1961. The vans were produced from 1961 through 1965 and pickups from 1961 through 1964.

The gentleman credited for the unique front end peaked nose theme design (that runs down each side) of the Corvair FC was GM Senior Designer, Ken Genest. He also coined the phrase and created the word "Corvan."

Mr. Shuster purchased a 1969 Corvair Monza in 1970 which briefly formerly belonged to none other than GM Designer, Ned Nickles, who was the major contributor and who oversaw the Advanced 1 Studio responsible for the design of the first generation (1960-1964) Corvair, had design input to the late generation Corvair (1965-69) and whose studio produced

the proposed 1970 Corvair design (which only made it to a full size clay model). This Monza is currently owned and cared for by Mr. Shuster's son, Bill.

Rich Greene Speaks! Presentation Review by Al Lacki

Saturday February 27, our own Rich Greene delivered a presentation in the auditorium of the America on Wheels Museum.

Topic: "Did Ralph Nader Kill the Corvair? Plus Other Myths and Facts about the Corvair". If this were true, then why did Ralph Nader kill it? Or did he?

Rich Greene has been working in, on, and around Corvairs for nearly thirty years. This, combined with his role as the Philadelphia Corvair Association newsletter editor for close to twenty-five years makes Rich an ideal presenter on the historic Corvair.

Almost all of the folks in the auditorium were members of the museum who were curious about Corvairs but not necessarily fans. But by the time Rich got through, it was apparent there were a number of converts!

Did Ralph Nader kill the Corvair?

Wounded it, but in the big scheme of things, there were other more important factors.

Rich traced the development of the Corvair series of cars and trucks, year-by-year. He contrasted this with the rise of competitors in the marketplace including other models in Chevrolet's model lineup such as the Chevy II and Chevelle.

Rich pointed out that, right out of the gate in October 1959, the Ford Falcon trounced Corvair in sales and continued to do so through the early 1960s. That, and the fact that the Falcon was undoubtedly cheaper to manufacture, must have shocked GM executives, for in December 1959, Chevrolet was given the green light to design and build a car that could better compete, and thus came along the Chevy II. It was a good decision; the Chevy II began to outsell not only the Corvair but the Falcon, too.

What to do with the Corvair?

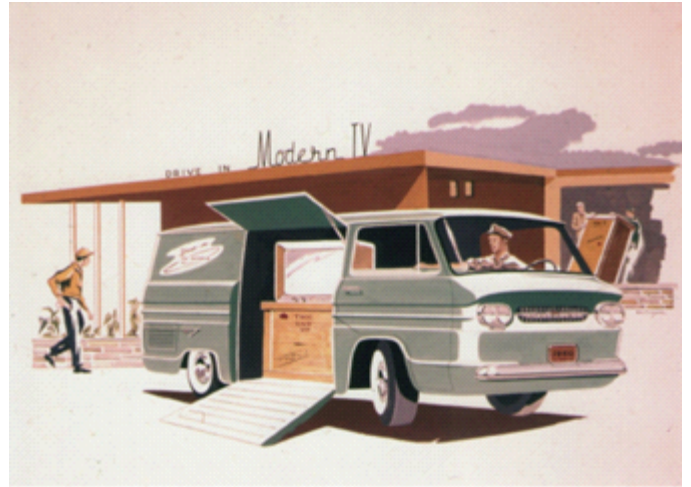
Too much capital had been invested in its development.

(Continued on page 4)

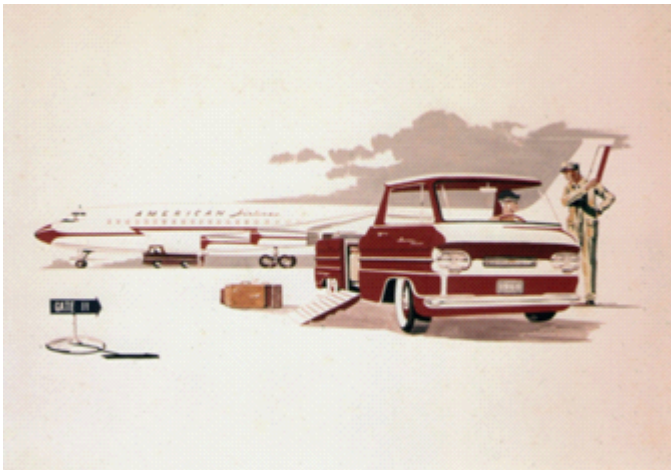
From the personal collection of the late GM Designer, Stu Shuster



Wooden body buck. Photo dated March 19, 1959.



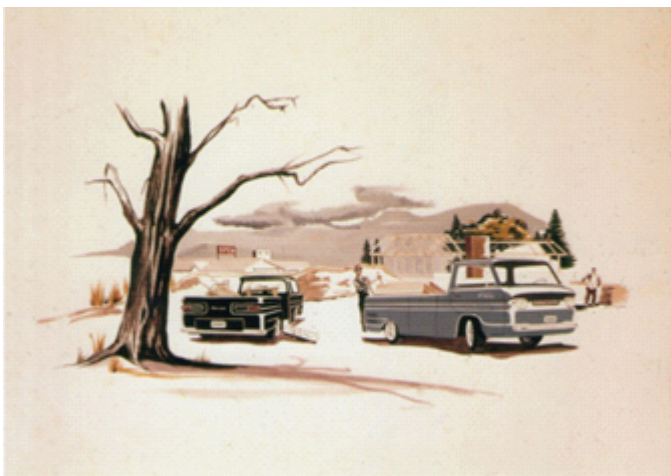
Proposal. Corvan with ramp and flip-up door.



Pre-production sketch: Rampside.



Greenbrier with family! Note the engine intake position.



This appears to be a Loadside. (No evidence of ramp in this sketch).



Corvair 95 FC truck designer, Ken Genest, posing with author Eva McGuire's Corvan. (Photo by Eva).

Chevy couldn't let it go. Coincidentally, a market was growing for foreign cars; not necessarily fast or fancy, but more accepting of different concepts of all kinds: front wheel drive, two-stroke engines, swing axle suspensions, and of course, air-cooled engines located behind the rear axle. Often, they were nimble and fun to drive. Corvair fit this niche perfectly, and with the introduction of the sporty Monza coupe in early 1960, the Corvair was saved.

But another shift in the market was brewing. Sporty mid-size coupes and convertibles equipped with powerful V8 engines, led by the 1964 Pontiac GTO, took over the youth market where the Corvair had just established a presence. Chevrolet fired back with the turbocharged Spyder. It was the image leader in the Corvair line-up, but it didn't have the macho credentials of GTOs, 442s, Super-Commando Mopars, etc.

Then came the Mustang. Although it came standard with a meek 200 hp six-cylinder engine and three-speed manual transmission, a wide array of options was available, with luxury items - like air-conditioning and vinyl-roofs - and performance options including V8s with up to 271 horsepower. And the styling, with its long hood and short deck, appealed to just about everybody.

The introduction of the second series Corvair in September 1965 bumped Corvair sales back up, but the totals were nothing in comparison to those of the Mustang. Once again, Ford Motor Company skunked the Corvair with a simpler car that was price-competitive, cheaper to manufacture - and this time - a winner in the looks department.

Other Myths and Facts

Rich proceeded to talk about Corvair myths like flying fanbelts, weird handling, uncontrollable oil leaks, stinky heaters and more. To the extent these maladies became apparent, they were either corrected by improvements introduced by the factory or proper maintenance performed by the owner. A question-and-answer session with the audience ensued during the second half of Rich's presentation. It certainly covered all the bases.

At the end of the presentation, Rich received words of thanks from the museum's Associate Director Nate Wambold and a full round of applause from the audience. It was fun!

After the presentation. Rich Greene in blue shirt. Ken Klingman in yellow cap. >>>>>



Rich Green doing his PowerPoint presentation. The photo is dark because the lights were turned down.



Jeff Strausser and other members of the audience.



Guess Who's 95?

The Dittrich fellows – father Bill A. and sons Bill D. and Greg S. - joined LVCC a few years ago when they moved from New Jersey to Pennsylvania. They have been active in our club ever since. Greg notified us that Bill A. turned 95 on March 1st.

You may recall Bill drove the Lehigh County Covered Bridge Tour with his lovely wife Marge in their 1966 Corvair Corsa convertible.

Happy Birthday Bill!



Bill and Marge taking off for the tour in their '66 Corsa.

Minutes Lehigh Valley Corvair Club Membership Meeting February 15, 2025 Allentown, PA

The America on Wheels Museum announced it would be closed on what-should-have-been our February meeting date due to an incoming snow storm. The short notice made it impractical to make other arrangements and so we decided to cancel the meeting. We'll be back in March!

Treasury Report by Joan Lacki

Beginning Balance (Feb 1, 2025):		\$ 1,885.83
Receipts:		
Membership	\$ -	
		\$ -
Expenses:		
Photocopies newsletter	\$ (12.72)	
Other	\$ -	
		\$ (12.72)
Ending Balance (Feb 28, 2025):		\$ 1,873.11
Membership Dues Breakout		
N/A	\$ -	\$ -
		\$ -

Shrunken Corvair Named Kumquat by Mike Bumbeck

Source: February 2025 issue of The Leaky Seel, the official newsletter of Corvair Minnesota. The author, Mike Bumbeck, is a prolific author whose articles appear in Hemmings, the Drive and other automotive periodicals.

From the West Coast division of the Corvair shortening department comes this 1963 convertible dune buggy variant of the American air-cooled rear engine sports car. The car originally rolled off the assembly line as a factory turbocharged Spyder in 1963. An accident that buckled and creased both

doors landed what was left the Spyder languishing engineless behind a gas station until 1971.

What was left of the turbo convertible was purchased for 50 bucks to acquire a still complete dashboard. The catch was that the entire car had to go with the dashboard. Where it went began the journey of car shortening, engine transplants, and an orange paint job that lent the shrunken Corvair its name.

Bob Ballew tells us that his brother Jim Ballew was the man with 50 bucks worth of Corvair in 1971. The dented shell got hauled to Bob Ballew the elder's backyard in Twentynine Palms, California.

Dad Ballew, also named Bob, looked at the dashboard-less and front seat-less once-turbo coupe and thought the remaining back seat looked a lot like a deluxe sofa with built in ashtrays.

The smashed doors were removed. The unibody floor pan was shortened up accordingly. A little welding, and presto! Rear seats were now front seats.

Since the body was already rough from whatever accident crumpled the doors, a can of Bondo and a few coats of Fruehauf Orange finished out the exterior.

The now orange body needed an en-

gine. A naturally aspirated 164 cubic-inch air-cooled flat six cylinder was put together as a class project at Copper Mountain College led by Bob's wife Grace Ballew. With a few of Bob's tested upgrades built-in, the engine kicked out more than its factory rated 150 horsepower. This same engine still runs great today.

Early test drives around town had residents yelling "Hey, Kumquat!" as Bob and Grace motored by. The name stuck. A roll cage and larger rear tires were joined by a 4:11 ratio ring and pinion in the four-speed manual trans-axle with the intent of taking the Kumquat out to the sand drag races. The car wasn't competitive against the lighter fiberglass-bodied Volkswagens, so all the street-legal stuff went back in.

Bob and Grace motored about in the Kumquat on and off the road for years. While tanking up one day the car was spotted by an entertainment scout. The Kumquat passed the screen test. The 1978 movie "Just Me and You" stars not only Louise Lasser and Charles Grodin, but also features the Kumquat in a cameo role.

The shortened Corvair rolls up to the flat tire stranded couple, and carries disgruntled girlfriend Louise Lasser away from the scene. A hapless Grodin is left alone in the high desert.

In the real world the Kumquat was capable of travel over paved roads or no roads at all, and could lift the front wheels off the ground at any stoplight with proper use of the gas pedal and clutch.

Around the same time the Kumquat was created, son Bob Ballew was 800 miles away in South San Francisco putting the finishing touches on a shortened 1956-57 Chevrolet two-door Handyman wagon. Bob and his wife Diane motored down to Twentynine Palms in the just finished Shorty to surprise his Dad.

When the couple pulled up in the shrunken Chevrolet wagon Bob's Dad fell over laughing. Once Dad regained his composure, he walked over and pulled the cover off the recently painted Kumquat. The father and son had unbeknown to each other simultaneously built shortened Chevrolets!

While Bob and Grace Ballew have since passed on, the shortened Corvair is still with us. When son Bob went to the high desert to gather memories and the Corvair, he found a completely rebuilt show quality Corvair engine in the garage with a note on it that read save for Bobby (Kumquat four-speed).

The Kumquat is ready for more, and still wears a factory turbo emblem to keep 'em guessing.



Lehigh Valley Corvair Club

All-Corvair Swap Meet

Saturday, April 12, 2025

rain or shine
9 AM to 3 PM

at Egerton Farm
2510 Community Drive
Bath, PA 18014

FREE for sellers
FREE for buyers
FREE admission
FREE parking

REFRESHMENTS (okay, they're not free)
50/50 Raffle (that's not free, either)

Corvairs, Corvair Parts, and Corvair-Related items only, please.
Sellers, bring your own tables or tarps or canopies.
Buyers, bring cash!

See our Facebook page for details
Lehigh Valley Corvair Club



LVCC Classified Ads



A&L Corvair Parts: New Parts: Brakes hoses, air filters, oil filters, tune-up parts, brake shoes, shocks, tail light lenses, gaskets, plugs, cables, choke pull offs, and much much more. Used Parts: Too many to list. Contact Larry Asheuer for pricing. Phone (267) 994-1569 or email: a-lcorvair@msn.com

Sky King Automotive Services: Now offering Corvair head work. Valve-seat grinding, Pro Flow grinding/ polishing, cleaning-cutting head gasket surfaces, de-flashing , thread repair. (I have measurement equip to confirm correct gasket surface depths). HV carb rebuilding. Top engine cover modifications for one gasket, no more leaks! Sound proofing, gas tank replacements, as well as rear and front axle bearing units. Late rears in stock! Bob King kcorvair@ptd.net or text/call to 610-442-2873.

Jeff Marvill's Suspension Services: I have over 45 years of suspension experience and I'm extremely experienced with the Corvair suspension systems as well as all other makes of vintage cars. I also have a computerized alignment system here so all repairs can remain in house. Now that I'm retired, I have more available time to repair these great cars. I can be reached at 267-424-4911 .Jeff Marvill, Perkasio, PA.

CORSA Founder Richard M. Langworth CBE, 1941-2025

Richard Langworth, founder of the Corvair Society of America, passed away on February 20, 2025. Many years ago, in 1969, he ran an ad in Car & Driver magazine, asking readers who were interested in forming a Corvair club to get in contact with him. The response was overwhelming. Soon after, in March 1970, he chaired the CORSA's first organizational meeting at his home in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania.

After CORSA got up and running, Mr. Langworth went on to other pursuits involving different car clubs, especially Packards. He was editor of *The Packard Cormorant* magazine from 1975 to 2001 and was a Trustee of the Packard Motorcar Foundation in Detroit, Michigan.

He became a distinguished author, having written at least 45 books (not counting magazine and journal contributions), including several about the life and times of Winston Churchill for which he was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE).

RIP Richard Langworth



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LVCC Calendar of /Events



Cruise Nights

Interested in doing a cruise night? Go to <https://carcruisefinder.com/> It's easy to use and lists more cruise events than we could possibly fit in this newsletter!

Corvair Events, Car Shows, Etc:

Saturday, April 12, 2025. LVCC All-Corvair Swap Meet

Location: Egerton Farm, 2510 Community Drive, Bath, Pennsylvania 18014. Time: 9 AM to 3 PM. FREE for sellers. FREE for buyers. FREE admission. FREE parking. REFRESHMENTS (okay, they're not free). 50/50 Raffle (that's not free, either). Corvairs, Corvair Parts, and Corvair-Related items only, please. Sellers, bring your own tables or tarps or canopies. Buyers, bring cash!

Wednesday April 23 to Sunday April 27, 2025. Spring Carlisle

Location: Carlisle Fairgrounds, 1000 Bryn Mawr Rd, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013. Admission: Daily Price: \$13* (Sunday is FREE), Kids 12 and under are FREE (*Online tickets discounted.) Hours are 7 AM to 6 PM every day except Sunday, which is 7 AM until Noon. Known as one of the world's largest automotive flea markets, the event fills the Carlisle Fairgrounds with 8,100 vendor spaces, offering a wide range of automotive parts, collectibles, accessories, memorabilia and classic & collectible cars for sale in the Car Corral. In addition, the Manufacturers Midway adds another layer of excitement, showcasing the latest and greatest products and services in the automotive world.

Across the street at the Carlisle Expo Center, the Spring Carlisle Collector Car Auction runs from April 24-25. This auction, held alongside Spring Carlisle, offers enthusiasts a chance to buy and admire classic cars. More than just an event, Spring Carlisle is a destination where passion meets commerce, ensuring every visitor finds something to fuel their love for automobiles.

Contact Info: Phone: (717) - 243 - 7855. Email: info@carlisleevents.com

Saturday, May 3, 2025 – Blue Mountain Classics Car Show

Location: Bicentennial Park West, 5351 Park West Lane, Bethlehem, PA. Time: 9 AM to 4 PM. Day of Show Price: \$15 per show car. Rain Date: 5/4/25. Includes trophies, door prizes, muffler rapping contest, flea market, tricky tray, 50/50 raffle, food, etc. All vehicles are welcome. Email: info@bluemountainclassics.com. Website: www.bluemountainclassics.com/car-show/

Saturday May 17, 2025 Wheels On The Canal Car Show

Location: Canal Street Park, 531 East 4th Street Rear entrance, Northampton, PA. Time: 10 AM to 3 PM Price: \$20 cash only per car, day of show. Pre-registration available for \$15. This event welcomes all types of vehicles, including cars, trucks, and motorcycles, and features a live band, DJ entertainment, and various crafters and vendors. Proceeds benefit Mission 22, a National Veteran Non-Profit Organization. wheelsonthecanal@gmail.com

Sunday June 1, 2025. GM on Display Car Show

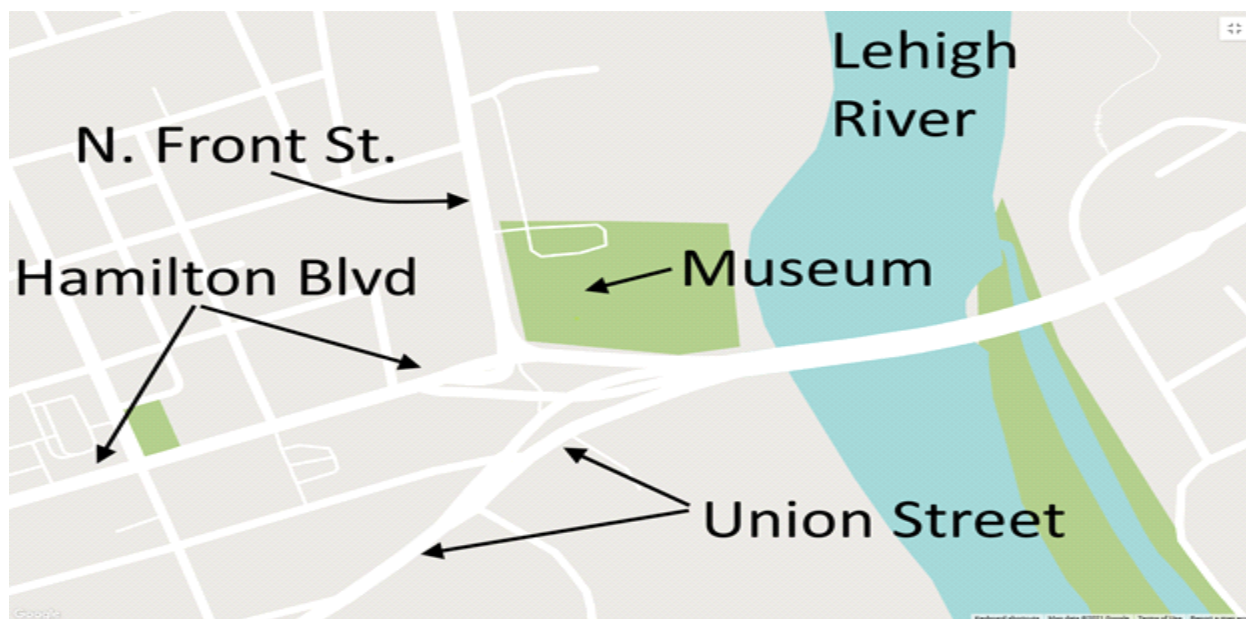
Location: Macungie Memorial Park, 50 N Poplar St, Macungie, PA 18062. Time: 9 AM to 3 PM. Rain or Shine. Day of Show Price: \$20 per car. No judging or trophies. High quality dash plaques for the first 100 registered vehicles excluding cars for sale. Door prizes will be awarded by drawing. Flea market featuring General Motors parts and literature.. For Sale signs are not permitted on the show field. Vehicles for sale will be the same price as show vehicles and parked in the Car Corral. Coffee, donuts, and a hot breakfast will be available in the park until 11 AM. A variety of hot and cold lunch items will be served after 11 AM. A variety of music will be provided by our DJ. Info: Tom Wright, 61 Elmar Circle, Royersford PA 19468. Phone: (610)587-3468 Email: tommjw22@yahoo.com

Next Meeting. We Meet Here!

Next Meeting Date: ***Saturday March 15, 2025, 10 AM***

Place: America On Wheels Museum

5 North Front Street, Allentown, PA 18102



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LVCC Officers & Volunteers

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Treasurer: Joan Lacki Phone: (610) 927-1583 Email: joantlacki@verizon.net



LVCC's Instagram Account, [lehigh_valley_corvair_club](https://www.instagram.com/lehigh_valley_corvair_club), is maintained for us by Ryan Cengeri, halfmile@gmail.com
Contact Ryan to have your favorite Corvair photos posted on Instagram!