



Group Corvair Comments

GROUP CORVAIR'S NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA



VOLUME LIV, No. 8

August 2026



NS Savannah

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

August

- 18 -- Group Corvair On-Line Meeting. 7:30 p.m.**
- 22 -- First State Corvair Club Annual Corvair Show. 8:00 – 2:00,** Limestone Presbyterian Church, 3201 Limestone Rd., Wilmington, DE. Dash plaques, door prizes, music, and food.
- 27 -- Group Corvair Social Meeting. 1:00 p.m.** We'll get together at the Green Turtle restaurant in Burtonsville – 15600 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, MD. While this will be primarily a social meeting, we need to discuss club officers and future direction for the club.

September

- 15 -- Group Corvair On-Line Meeting. 7:30 p.m.**
- 19 -- 47th Annual Corvair Day. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. rain or shine.** Hosted by the Central PA Corvair Club at the Eastern Museum of Motor Racing, 100 Baltimore Rd., York Springs, PA. For more information and to register: <https://www.centralpacorvairclub.org/events-1> Scroll down to the Corvair Day tab.

19 – 50th Edgar Rohr Memorial Car Meet, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m., Historic Manassas Rail Depot, 9431 West St., Manassas, VA. For more information: <https://bullrun.aaca.com/> The web site provides a QR code to scan.

October

17 – Rockville Antique and Classic Car Show. **Registration is now open and you must pre-register. No on-site registrations!** 8:30 a.m. the gates open to show cars; **all** cars must be on the field by 11:00 a.m. when the gates close. 3:00 p.m. show closes. Group Corvair is a sponsor for this show. It's one of the best and largest car shows in the immediate area with typically 12,000 spectators. It's restricted to antique and classic cars (up to 2001!) that represent their period, so no custom rods, trick trucks, or others that would be inauthentic. We'd like to have a huge Corvair turnout; the crowds really seem to love us. Go to <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/services/rockville-antique-and-classic-car-show/> for more information and to register.

20 -- Group Corvair On-Line Meeting. 7:30 p.m.

GROUP CORVAIR 2026 OFFICERS and Points of Contact

President: Bob Hall

4612 Franklin St., Kensington, MD 20895
301-493-8405 HallGrenn@aol.com

Treasurer: Jim Simpson

3845 Wayson Road, Davidsonville, MD 21035
301-262-0978 or 240-232-2820 simpsonj@verizon.net

Vice President: Mark Shiffler

174 Dividing Ct., Arnold, MD 21012
443-770-4719 mshiphity@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Jim Simpson

3845 Wayson Road, Davidsonville, MD 21035
301-262-0978 or 240-232-2820 simpsonj@verizon.net

Secretary: Marolyn Simpson

3845 Wayson Road, Davidsonville, MD 21035
301-262-0978 or 240-232-2820
MarolynSimpson1@gmail.com

From the Oval Garage

Bob Hall

It's time for a Group Corvair election. I'm unable to continue as your president due to other obligations. We've postponed elections during the planning for the CORSA Gettysburg Convention, so it is time to pass the fan belt—so to speak. I'd like to suggest a lunch **social** meeting for 1:00 pm Thursday, August 27th at the Green Turtle, 15660 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, MD so we can use their private room to elect new officers and/or to confirm our current ones. But we do need a new president.

Thanks to Jerry Yates for hosting and catering a wonderful afternoon at his home last month. At the last moment Carol and I weren't able to attend, but I've heard from several club members who attended that it was a very successful get-together with a large turnout. In addition to Jerry's concours 1966 Corsa Yenke tribute, Mark Shiffler brought his concours 1966 Corsa (bronze interior) and new member, Rick Fogarty, drove his '63 Monza 900 Convertible. Both Jerry's and Mark's cars were award winners in their class at the convention. Our monthly social gatherings have been a fun supplement to our monthly meetings and have become a tradition that should be continued.

We haven't heard from CORSA yet, but Group Corvair, as one of the four sponsoring clubs, is eligible to share in profits from the recent Gettysburg convention. We will keep you informed. After the 1991 convention that Group Corvair sponsored we donated profits to both CORSA and a charity. Should we receive anything from CORSA after the final accounting we should have a discussion to determine how best to use the proceeds.

In closing, I'd like to thank Group Corvair members and club officers as well as their spouses and partners for all the work that goes into keeping our club active and viable as a supporter of the Corvair marque—but especially as a meeting place for a group of accomplished, hardworking, interesting and all-around great people. It has been an honor to have been your club president.

Minutes of the July Virtual Meeting

Marolyn Simpson

During the conversation before the meeting started, Randy Ricktor told us about a possible new member, Rick Fogarty, that he had met at a cruise in. [Note: See article in the newsletter.] Carl Kelsen related a story about his adventures on the trip back to Australia—it was long and exhausting. Rob Neighbour added that Carl's convention presentation on his right-hand drive Corvair was extremely well received with a standing room only audience.

At 7:42 pm Bob Hall, President, called the July 21 meeting to order with 14 members participating. Minutes of the June meeting were approved as written in the newsletter.

Jim Simpson gave the treasurer's report. Expenses were for logo shirts and signs for the convention. Titus Stewart, Corsa representative, asked for some of the signs which Corsa will pay for. Convention profits will be divided between the four sponsoring clubs.

Group Corvair had four cars entered in the concours, and all four took awards. Randy ran in the autocross for the first time and said it was harder than it looked, but he had enjoyed it. Jim thanked everyone who had volunteered to help set up the car show. Thanks to our photographers, we found pictures of all the car show winners. Byron LaMotte's Corvair Fitch Sprint was at the convention, but since Byron couldn't make it; he had someone from the Corvair Ranch drive it there.

Randy said that he wanted to participate in the rally but didn't have a navigator. Rob has great navigational skills but didn't have a Corvair at the convention. So, the two got together and drove in the rally. They didn't win but they had fun. Bob and Monica Walker also entered the rally, but not in a Corvair. (We're sure their air-conditioned BMW SUV was quite comfortable...) They got lost but had a great time anyway.

A big thank you to Phil Richardson for running the model car display. Randy was a first-place winner. Also, Phil and Karen won the Group Corvair gift basket.

Rick Sanford was responsible for getting the Motor Week crew to the convention. Since it was raining the morning they were there, they spent most of their time indoors, filming the John Glenn car. We should get a notification when that segment will be aired.

We heard some good comments about the Gettysburg convention. Randy heard from several folks that they thought the car show was well done. Carl thought the convention was a standout of all that he has been to. Part of the success goes to Rick Sanford and Titus Stewart who were in Gettysburg a week in advance working out a lot of details.

There was a discussion about returning some of the profits to CORSA as we have done in the past.

Mark Shiffler gave a report on the Group Corvair tour of the NS Savannah that is currently docked in the Baltimore outer harbor. An interesting detail is that Bob Hall's 1967 Corvair was transported to Germany on the Savannah in 1967.

Byron is helping to organize a Hagarty museum private tour on October 7. Participants can use daily drivers—not just vintage cars. The cost will be about \$50.00.

Jerry Yates announced that he will host a cookout at his house on August 1. No need to bring anything, he will provide the food. [Note: See the article in the newsletter.]

Over the years, CORSA has published a tech guide that's a compilation of tech tips and related articles on various aspects of maintaining, repairing, and upgrading Corvairs. There have been three updates to the original guide; however, they "overachieved" when they printed the second update and have given Group Corvair a box of the excess copies to distribute as we see fit.

We need to start thinking about the election of officers. Bob's term is ending on July 31.

We are planning to have another social meeting around Labor Day. (Note – it's August 27 at the Green Turtle in Burtonsville. See the calendar of coming event.)

If anyone can think of some lessons learned from the convention, write it up and we'll get it to Corsa.

The meeting ended at 8:58 pm.

A New Member

Randy Ricktor was at a cruise-in where he met Rick Fogarty. Rick has a 1963 Monza 900 convertible, red with black top and interior. Rick was a member of Corsa (and attended the convention in Gettysburg) but didn't know about the local club. Randy invited him to join us, Group Corvair! Rick attended the cookout at Jerry Yates's house where he met other members and has now joined the club. Welcome, Rick!

The Future of Group Corvair

Jim Simpson

As I'm sure you've read above, Bob Hall has decided that it's time to pass the Group Corvair Presidency on to someone new. Similarly, Mark Shiffler has decided he will no longer serve as the Vice President. Given how small our membership is, this poses something of a crisis for Group Corvair.

I recently sent out a copy of our bylaws. These were last revised in 1982 when the club was considerably larger. If you look at them, you'll see there are five elected officer positions, another five standing committees, plus two representatives (one of which is to an organization that no longer exists.)

While it's obvious that the bylaws need to be updated, the more immediate concern is, in my opinion, just how we think Group Corvair should be organized and what functions we really need. I call upon everyone to think about this and attend both the upcoming on-line virtual meeting and the social meeting to discuss the club's future.

Group Corvair Tours NS Savannah

While there's not a lot of similarity between Corvairs and the Nuclear Ship Savannah, they are both children of the 50s. That is, they reflect the style and aspirations of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

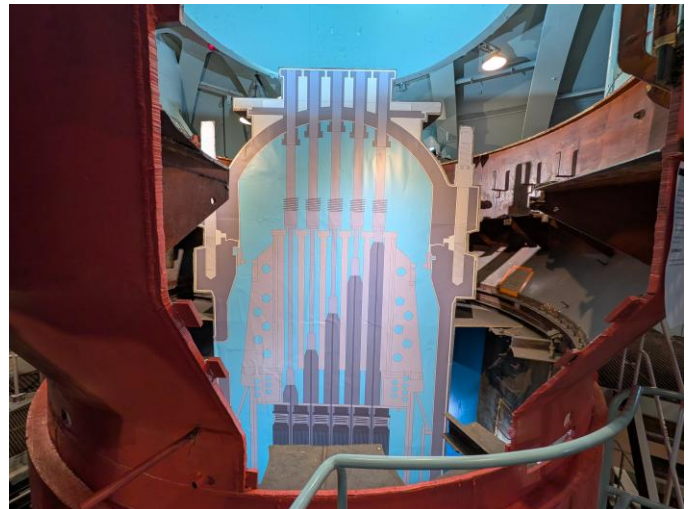
NS Savannah came into being as part of the *Atoms for Peace* program initiated by President Eisenhower in 1953. This was an effort to demonstrate that the new world of atomic energy was not just weapons, but also included peaceful, beneficial things such as nuclear power and medical advances, and in general educate the public about this

new world. NS Savannah was intended to provide an unclassified demonstration of how nuclear power could be applied to something as mundane as merchant shipping.

NS Savannah was launched in 1959 – the same year as the Corvair – and was in service until 1970, essentially the “Corvair Decade”. She was based upon a standard merchant hull and intended to be a “practical merchant



vessel of combined passenger and cargo design”. The major feature was her nuclear power plant which provided all the propulsion and power needed for the ship as well as giving her essentially unlimited range – 300,000 nautical miles at 20 knots on a single load of fuel with up to 60 passengers and 14,000 tons of cargo. And since she was intended to be a public demonstration ship, the accommodations were quite luxurious as were the promenade deck and dining area which were used to show



Mockup of the Original Reactor, the Red Structure around it is the Containment Vessel



Rob Neighbour (right), our Tour Guide

Rob Neighbour is a docent on Savannah and offered the club a private tour which we eagerly accepted. We met at 10 a.m. on a very hot and humid day. Over the course of the few hours, we toured just about the entire ship, from the pilot house (where the ship is steered) to the cargo holds.



Checking to be sure we didn't track any radioactive material INTO the Reactor Compartment

As you can see from the picture above, they take great precautions regarding radioactive materials. Not that they are concerned with any residual radioactivity from the reactor – that's all been cleaned up and removed. Instead, they are concerned that some future inspection will reveal some material that was tracked in from outside!

I found the reactor control room interesting. There are some similarities to the ones I was familiar with on nuclear powered submarines, but also some major differences. While my memories of the submarine control rooms are

off the ship to local VIPs and other visitors when in port. Passengers and visitors could tour most of the ship including viewing the engine room and nuclear control station.

After she was retired, all radioactive components were removed but they left as much of the power plant as possible. She is currently moored in Baltimore; however, the owner of the pier wants it for commercial use and Savannah's future is very much in doubt.



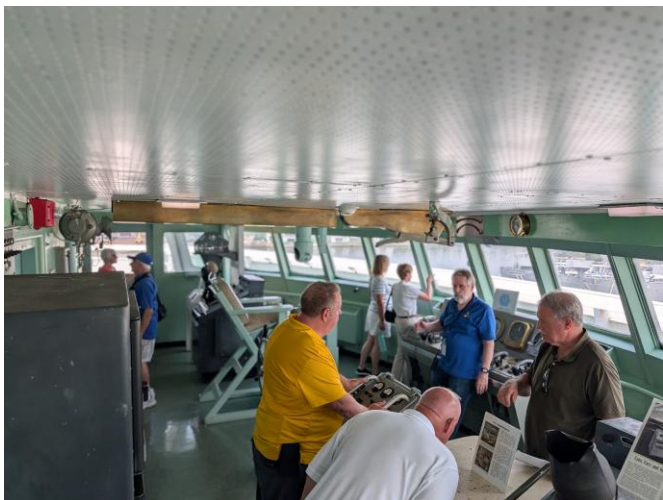
Inside the Reactor Containment Vessel



Reactor Control Room

fading, I thought the Savannah's control room to be more primitive and harder to understand. The instrumentation didn't seem as well laid out, indicator and warning lights were harder to read, and overall less control of the overall propulsion plant operation. Of course, nuclear submarines are warships; NS Savannah was designed to transport people and cargo across a peaceful ocean.

We enjoyed the tour greatly and sincerely hope that NS Savannah finds a new, permanent home. The alternative is that she'll be either broken up for scrap or taken out to sea and sunk as a man-made reef.



Pilot House, otherwise known as the Bridge



Passenger's Dining Room

Group Corvair Cookout

This really should be called the Jerry Yates' Cookout. After the CORSA International Convention finished, Jerry offered to host what has been our traditional "Not Quite 4th of July Picnic" at his home in Bowie. (The name goes back decades to when Al and Peggy Harris hosted the club several times for the "Not Quite 4th of July Picnic" in "Not Quite Manassas". We've tried to maintain that tradition, but the pandemic and other events have interrupted this.)



Jerry told everyone not to bring anything, that he would take care of it all. And he certainly did! He put on a real spread of hamburgers, cheeseburgers, hot dogs, salads, drinks, and deserts. And in the best tradition of Corvair owners when there's a mention of "free food", we showed up in droves. (Well, actually 13.)

Counting Jerry's Yenke tribute, there were three Corvairs present. Mark Shiffler drove his beautiful Aztec Bronze Corsa and new member Rick Fogarty his '63 Monza convertible.

Shoutout to Our Folks on the CORSA Communique Cover

You should have received your copy of the September *CORSA Communique* by now. Group Corvair managed to snag four of the photos on the front cover. Here's a big shoutout to Eileen Clegg, Jerry Yates – who managed to get on there twice – and Byron LaMotte for his beautiful Fitch Sprint.

And everyone from Group Corvair who brought something to compete managed to snag an award. Congratulations all!

Tech Tips Jim Simpson

Semi-Metallic Brake Shoes: When I bought my '66 Corsa turbo, I ran it hard. I quickly learned that the original GM brakes really weren't up to the task of hauling the car down from anything approaching high speeds! A single hard stop from 80+ mph would result in the brakes fading as the car got down to about 30 mph with not much stopping power left -- you just sort of coasted to a stop after that. Certainly not satisfactory for a "high performance" car! That needed to be fixed.

My "bible" of all things Corvair at the time was the 1967 edition of Bill Fisher's *How To Hotrod Corvair Engines*. In the last chapter of his book, "Making It Handle", Bill goes into the brakes noting how the stock brakes were inadequate, but that this was not limited to the Corvair and that virtually all US-made cars suffered from inadequate brakes. The cure was to install metallic brake shoes. These had been a factory option on the '62 - '64 models, but not for the late-model cars. However, Chevrolet had metallic brake shoes available for the Chevy II and Chevelles! And with some modification, they could be used on Corvairs. So, there was hope.

At the time, my go-to mechanic was Bill Hite, co-owner of a Standard Oil gas station in Topeka, Kansas, where we had been doing business for years. Bill was an old-school mechanic, learning his trade in the military during WW-II. He could set ignition points by eye; I'd check after he did a tune-up and sure enough, they were right on spec! He was a hot-rodder at heart and loved helping me with my Corvair. I went to him with my brake issue and sure enough, he came up with a set of after-market (VelveTouch) metallic brake shoes. They were great!

(A technical sidenote. There are both metallic and semi-metallic brakes. Fully metallic brakes are made of sintered iron, that is powdered iron that has been molded into shape and then fused into a solid. These brakes are normally found only on true track racing cars. Semi-metallic brakes use a combination of flaked metals – steel, iron, and copper along with typically graphite – in a binder that produces a brake material that is resistant to high temperatures. A downside to all metallic brake materials is tendency toward increased brake drum wear. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brake_pad. It's not clear if the GM and VelveTouch "metallic" brakes were true metallic or semi-metallic, but I strongly suspect they were semi-metallic.)

100,000 miles later, the VelveTouch brakes were still on the car with very little wear showing. But then there was a disaster – the grease seals on the rear hubs failed and grease leaked all over the rear brake shoes. I thought about trying to clean them, but once oil or grease soaks into the friction material, there's no way to get it out. So those brakes had to go into the trash.

And of course, by that time – the 1990's – VelveTouch was no longer making brakes for Corvairs. And good luck finding any of the Chevy II/Chevelle metallic brakes. In addition, this was a period of transition. All things asbestos – including asbestos lined brakes, the standard for many decades, were being phased out due to the carcinogenic nature of asbestos fibers. So, I settled on something new, Kevlar lined brakes. Chopped Kevlar fibers were being used as a replacement for asbestos in brake linings and that seemed to be the way to go.

Did they work? Yes, they worked, but I was never very satisfied with them. They did wear well, in over 20k miles, there was negligible wear. But the initial “bite” when I stepped on the brake pedal seemed lacking. And they seemed to require a lot more pedal pressure than I was used to. Overall stopping distance was long. There had to be a better way.

And that brings us to the 2026 CORSA International Convention. I always browse the vendors to see what they are offering. When I came across Dave Clemens’ table in the indoor vendors, I noticed some bundles of brake shoes. They had the distinctive look of the metallic brakes I used to have! Dave and I chatted about them a bit and he assured me the linings were an aggressive, semi-metallic material and should be just what I was looking for. The price was right, and I came home with a full set.

I’ve just installed them and while I’m still tweaking the clearances a bit, I’m sold on them. The initial brake “bite” when stopping is much more like what I was used to. And the pedal pressure seems much more in line with what it should be. I will have to try some high-speed panic stops to check fade, but I’m confident that they should be just fine.

One note – I did have to slightly enlarge the hole for the parking brake link on one of the rear brake shoes to allow the link to fit. That was a 10-minute fix with a small triangular file.

So, if you are in the market for a set of metallic brakes, get in touch with Dave Clemens (yenko66@cox.net) and see what he can do for you.

Clark’s Mechanical Fuel Pump Review: Mike Dawson, Heart of Americal Corvair Association, recently reviewed Clark’s Corvair Parts reproduction fuel pumps. Here’s his report:

Fellow Members: The new Clark’s fuel pump arrived today and appears to be a quality product, including reinforced gasket material, centered fuel pump rod, and screws that are long enough to hold it together without stripping threads. HOWEVER, check the attached picture of the lock bolts that may be on your car. The hole in the Clark’s fuel pump is open through to the push rod. [Depending upon which bolt your car has,] the pointed bolt does not contact the side of the tapered hole before it hits the end of the hole just before reaching the push rod. Any excessive tightening will lock up the push rod and stop pump function.

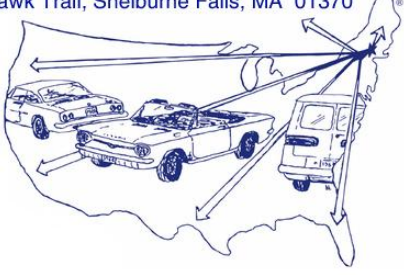
This is easily addressed by cutting off a portion of the pointed lock bolt to match the blunt-end lock bolt that is pictured. Fit your bolt to the tapered hole before installation so that you can obtain good side contact without pushing through the end of the hole. I have no record of when these different bolts were used, so check yours if you install a new [Clark’s] pump. I am also emailing Clark’s.



Check the tip of the locking bolt. It need to be blunt to work properly with the new Clark’s fuel pumps.

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INTERNET: www.corvair.com

CORVAIR RANCH, INC. Gettysburg, PA 17325
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Group Corvair Winners 2026 CORSA International Convention
 Not Shown is Dave Edinger, Winner of the "Improved Stock (IS-2)" Class in the Autocross.

