

## Daring the Darien

As most of you know, Chevrolet drove several Corvairs through the Darien Gap, a very inaccessible land of swamps and tropical forests that separates Panama from Columbia. The 1961 trip through the jungle was the sequel to the previous year's trip from the United States down through Mexico and to the then-end of the Pan American Highway. The cars used were three red 1960 Corvairs. At the end of the trip the cars were not brought back to the States and it has been said that they may have been used for Taxi service in Mexico.

The Darien trip used three red 1961 Corvairs. These cars took a real beating and were not fit for use after the trip. The story has it that they were left behind in the jungle even though they had less than a couple of thousand miles on each of them. There was a report a while back that someone on an expedition in the area where the trip ended found some of the remains still rotting away.

*Seth Emerson:* Like several other folks, I pay close attention to the Automotive press and keep an eye on references to the Corvair. I never hesitate to jump in to defend the Corvair. As a decades long reader of Autoweek, (since Competition Press times) I have seen the Darien Corvairs pop-up at least twice. In the early 70's Autoweek reported on a team of Land Rovers in a British military expedition traversed the Darien gap. They were reported baffled to winch themselves past at least one Corvair wondering what it was doing there. I, of course, informed them by a letter to the editor. Some time in the 90's a group of American Jeep enthusiasts barged their cars up to the northern most points in Alaska with an eye toward traversing the full

Northern and Southern American continents. They completed the trip to the tip end of South America (Not sure if you would want to attempt that today, politics and drug-culture being how they are.) The Autoweek story proclaimed them as only the second group to traverse the "Infamous" Darien Gap. My letter to that editor offered a copy of "Daring the Darien" video (available for viewing from the TCA library) to prove that not only were they following the British Military Rovers, but a group of Corvairs that had passed through more than 30 years before. In 2000, at the Daytona Convention, I listened to Deac Hundley, a GM test driver who drove one of the Corvairs, tell his account of the trip. I recall hearing that at least one of the cars was shipped back to the US for promotional use, but I could be wrong.



This is a picture of the car that was found around 1990. The car looks pretty good, really, but the fact that someone found a picture and that image made it back to us is really amazing!

# Tucson Corvair Association



Established 1975

The *Corvairsation* is a monthly publication of the Tucson Corvair Association, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Corvair model of the Chevrolet Motor Division of General Motors. The Tucson Corvair Association is a chartered member of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA) as Chapter 357.

Membership dues are \$15 per year for individuals and \$18 for families. Initial dues are \$19 for individuals and \$22 for families (includes name tags). Make checks payable to the Tucson Corvair Association.

Change of Address: Report any change of address or phone number to the Membership Chairperson. Do not report such changes to the *Corvairsation* Editor.

CORSA membership dues are \$38 per year (\$76 for 26 months) and include a subscription to the *CORSA Communique*, a monthly publication. CORSA memberships is not required for membership in the Tucson Corvair Association, but is highly recommended. See any TCA officer for more information.

Classified ads are free to members and \$3 per 4-line ad for non-members. Deadline for materials submitted for publication is the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month.

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# TCA 2008 Events at a Glance

## DEC

3 WED

**TCA Board Meeting**, Franklin Museum, 3420 N Vine, Tucson, AZ. 6:30 pm. All comers welcome.

16 TUE

**TCA Annual Christmas Party**, Cody's Beef & Beans, 2708 E Ft Lowell, Tucson, AZ. 6:30pm.

## JAN

7 WED

**TCA Board Meeting**, Franklin Museum, 3420 N Vine, Tucson, AZ. 6:30 pm. All comers welcome.

24 WED

**TCA General Membership Meeting**  
Parking lot bull session, 6:00pm.  
Optional dinner at 6:20pm. Meeting starts at 7:00pm. Location to be determined

## FEB

4 WED

**TCA Board Meeting**, Franklin Museum, 3420 N Vine, Tucson, AZ. 6:30 pm. All comers welcome.

25 WED

**TCA General Membership Meeting**  
Parking lot bull session, 6:00pm.  
Optional dinner at 6:20pm. Meeting starts at 7:00pm. Location to be determined

## Minutes of the November 19, 2008 Meeting

7:01 pm, Meeting was called to order, a motion was made to recess for 30 minutes in order to finish our recently arrived meals. The motion was seconded and carried by a show of forks & smiles.

7:40 pm meeting Re-called to order. Treasurers report...Beginning balance was \$2,368.88 expenses for the month, Member Name tags total \$10.61. Ending Bal. \$2,358.27

There was discussion concerning the success of the Rotary Car Show & that the proceeds of it all go towards reading & literacy programs in the county.

The mid month activity for January as it traditionally is, will be the Tubac Car Show, indications are that the TCA will be represented by at least 3 examples. This Show is great and we would like to see more participation, it is an easy drive south & a day of unexpected highlights!

There was a report on Ben Maudlin's 1963 under total restoration, all that remains to be done is alignment, interior finishing and windshield glass installed.

A reminder that the Christmas Party/meeting will be at Cody's Beef & Beans restaurant on December 16th promptly at 7PM was made. Dave Baker has agreed to once again read the traditional Christmas Story. The members were reminded to BRING CANNED FOOD to the Christmas Party for the donation to the food bank! ALSO, bring a Wrapped GIFT ....no more than \$20.00 to exchange at the party, the "gift swap" was thwarted last year via decree & is still in effect this year, the season is for GIVING not taking.

There was a discussion concerning re-locating the meeting site more westerly, something north of Downtown and south of Prince, West of Alvernon and east of the Freeway. IF YOU have a place in mind that has a meeting area or is willing to set aside space on a Wednesday night, suited to our needs (30 members max, 15-20 regularly) you are encouraged to contact Bill (either one) Barry or POST it

on the FORUM on the TCA website. We would like to have a new location by the JAN meeting date and be meeting there!

There was no raffle held for the 3rd month in a row due again to memory problems by those who promised to bring prizes, If you promise to bring a prize, please make a note to acquire one before the next meeting, then keep it in your car so that it makes it to it's intended destination.

There was a tech talk roundtable, subjects included brake rebuilding tips, carb problems, point plate degradation, mechanical fuel pump replacement. The President completed the session with a story concerning "doing something because you saw someone else doing it to their car and that made it perform better", and the pitfalls of doing so. It was long and boring and most of the membership had to be awakened afterwards.

The President called for a vote to change the name of the Bryan Lynch Award, after previous discussions at prior meetings. The change was seconded by more than one member and carried by a voice vote. The change has no reflection on Mr. Lynch whose dedication & involvement were legendary and the basis for recognition of a member who has performed for the community, club or an individual, an act or achievement above and beyond normal expectations and who, in the TCA membership eyes, deserves special recognition for outstanding reasons. The formal announcement of the name change will be made at the Christmas Party! Barry will Chair the award committee, who will meet immediately at the culmination of the regular meeting in the parking lot to determine if it will be presented to a member this year and make any necessary changes to the Plaque.

At 8:45 a motion was made to adjourn for the evening, it was seconded and carried by a voice vote and the gavel fell.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Baker  
Temporary Acting Secretary



# Corvair Fuel Pumps

## They don't make them like they used to (except for repair kits)

Richard Finch, SAE, Author and Engineer, retired.

I bought a new 1960 Corvair in early 1960 and its mechanical fuel pump was still working just fine when I traded the car in late 1964. The car and its fuel pump had 99,500 miles on them the day I traded the car for a brand new 1965 Corvair Corsa coupe. I drove that car for 75,000 miles and traded it for a new 1970 Buick Station Wagon. The mechanical fuel pump was still working great when I traded the car off. After only 9 months, I sold the Buick V-8 and bought the 1965 Corvair 4-door that I am still driving today, November 2008. This car has about 500,000 miles on it now and the 4-carb 140 hp engine has never been overhauled. I did have to replace both heads because of dropped valve seats in 1980 and in 1986. It starts quickly and does not smoke! It does use about a quart of Pennzoil 40 wt. HD oil every 1,000 miles. According to my written notes, I did not replace the first mechanical fuel pump until 1992 when the engine had over 290,000 miles on it. Why did I replace the original fuel pump on that car? Because "Everybody was doing it!!" My reasoning at the time was that I did not want to have fuel pump failure while on a long (or a short) trip.

### A Run of Defective Fuel Pumps

My new fuel pump on the 1965 Corvair 4-door (in 1992) lasted about 1,010 miles and then began leaking at the diaphragm area. So, I bought another new fuel pump and began using it, and the second replacement pump began leaking within 1,000 miles also. I cured the problem by installing a used pump. I think I must have installed a good used pump because it lasted me for the next 10 years and at least 125,000 miles. Then I bought at least 4 new fuel pumps from a CORSA supplier. These fuel pumps began to leak at the diaphragm area within an astounding 1,010 miles each. I then did a scientific study of why the fuel pumps were failing and found that there was a simple reason for the failures. The manufacturers were using silicone-based neoprene sheets to make the diaphragms, and the silicone sheets did not have any fabric in the middle as the AC Delco pumps had used. As most Corvair owners know, silicone and gasoline are



**Photo # 1.** This fuel pump mounted on a 1963 Corvair 102 hp engine is one of the "Bad" pumps that failed at 1,010 miles. You can tell by its extra shiny cover and the larger hold down screws. It is also made from heavy pot metal at nearly double the weight of an AC Delco fuel pump.



**Photo # 2.** This is a 1960 stock AC Delco fuel pump with the longer push rod and the light case, that weighs only 14 ounces, the preferred pump to re-build. The cover is only about half as shiny as the "bad" fuel pump.



**Photo # 3.** This fuel pump is the replacement fuel pump that has the silicone diaphragm with no fabric reinforcement. At 26 ounces, it is nearly double the weight of the AC Delco fuel pump. It can be rebuilt with a new kit from Antique Auto Parts Cellar.

natural enemies and gasoline always wins the battle! The gasoline begins to melt the silicone on contact.

### Towed to Lake Tahoe in 1998

Several CORSA members may remember that Gayle and I had to be hauled on the back of a tow truck the last 25 miles down Highway 50 when we were headed to the CORSA National Convention at Lake Tahoe one year. And of course Christy Barden was there with his camera, to photograph us when we arrived at the convention parking lot. The problem turned out to be a defective fuel pump that had, you guessed it, only 1,010 miles on it when it failed. We had driven the Ultra Van to the Fan Belt Toss in Palm Springs, California and some around the state before heading to the National. Our salvation was that I had installed a Facet electric fuel pump to prime the carburetors when the Corvair engine had not been driven for at least a week. One problem with Corvairs is that the carburetors have a tendency to dry out from the heat of the air cooled engine after the hot engine has been shut off. I can even see fuel boiling in the clear plastic Fram brand fuel filter on our 1963 Monza after the engine has been shut down. That is why I use a Facet brand electric fuel pump on Corvairs that are usually parked for more than a week.

### The solution!

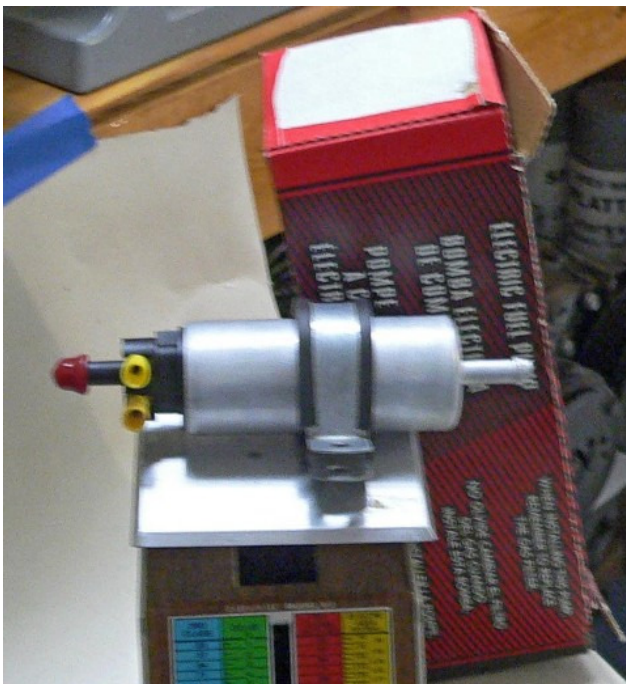
I found a supplier in Massachusetts (not Clark's) who manufactures fuel pump kits to the original specifications, and I bought several of his kits and tested them. What I found was that this kit manufacturer uses

only non-silicone diaphragm material that has fabric reinforcement in the material, and that makes the diaphragm last at least 75,000 miles in my use on my Corvairs. I did have to replace one of these new kits in New Brunswick three years ago while Gayle and I were driving our 1969 Ultra Van to Prince Edward Island in Canada. The kit began leaking at the diaphragm and caused us to smell gasoline, not a safe situation. We always keep at least 3 dry chemical fire extinguishers and one Halon(tm) on board the Ultra Van. Our Ultra Van engine had over 75,000 miles on the new kit at that time.

### Installing electric fuel pumps

I have been told that an electric fuel pump will not suck gas and that they must be installed as close to the gas tank as possible, but I have not found that to be true. We have installed our Facet brand fuel pumps on the firewall bulkhead of our Ultra Van and on the firewall of our 1961 Rampside to act as a backup for filling dry carburetors and even for road operation, and both Corvair vehicles operate just fine with the fuel pumps at least 9 feet from the fuel tanks, 14 feet on the

Ultra Van. Note that Facet brand fuel pumps can be had in at least four different pressures. Coming back from Lake Tahoe, we drove all the way back to Santa Barbara, California with a by-pass fitting on the mechanical fuel pump to keep the gasoline from catching fire as it leaked out of the defective fuel pump. I hate the pounding noise that an electric fuel pump makes, but it can be ignored if you plug your ears with cotton. There are some quiet, gear driven fuel pumps that are available, and I own one, 5



**Photo # 5.** This photo is of an in-line rotary fuel pump that uses rotary vanes. It was purchased from Clark's Corvair Parts at the 2003 Flagstaff National Convention, the price was \$59.95. It should be quieter if the pressure is low enough. For a carbureted engine you need 4 to 8 psi.



**Photo # 4.** This is a Facet brand electric "clicker" fuel pump that works well, other than the constant clicking sound it makes. The cost is about \$45.00.

but I have not installed and tested it yet. All new fuel injected cars use gear driven pumps for quietness. The gears in a Chrysler vehicle fuel pump are about the diameter of a pencil and are very quiet, but most are very high pressure units, such as 60 psi. You want a fuel pump that puts out only 4 to 8 psi for a carbureted Corvair.

**Where to buy the GOOD Kits**

Antique Auto Parts Cellar  
 Tom Hannaford, Jr.  
 P O Box 3,  
 South Weymouth, MA 02190  
 Ph: 781-335-1579  
 Fax: 781-335-1925



**Photo # 6.** Repair Kit. It is a good idea to mount a Fram brand plastic fuel filter just behind the alternator or generator to catch any dirt that could be in the fuel tank or fuel lines. These should be replaced about every 10,000 miles or less.

The price of a kit is \$32.95 each and shipping is now \$12.00 approximately. Tom told me that the kits have been improved some lately, by providing the check valves with more internal clearance to allow for swelling of the neoprene due to the fuel suppliers using acetone and some other chemicals to clean out the factory fuel lines periodically. It is once again possible to have a stock fuel system on our Corvairs and have dependability and safety again!

***Air-cooled Chevy finds a fan in Bolivia***

Everyone, it seems, has a soft spot for Corvairs, even Bolivians.

Although there are very few American cars in



Bolivia, how this Corvair got there remains a mystery. The car is being restored in the town of Tarija, which lies about 6,000 feet above sea level; it's located about 120 miles north of the Argentina border.

Parts are shipped in from the U.S., but the price of having even small trim parts sent via FedEx sometimes is nearly \$300 per shipment. Next time you complain about needing to drive five miles to the auto parts store, just imagine what it would be like to have to wait for something as simple as an air filter to be delivered - and to have to pay more than \$250 just to get it.

*-By Richard Lentinello (Hemmings Motor News)*

**NEW LICENSE PLATE HOLDER LAW**

There is a new law going in to effect Jan. 09' that requires your license plate frame NOT to cover up Arizona at the top of the plate. You should let all your friends know. This new law takes effect Jan1, 2009. Please understand you can have a license plate frame holder as long as it doesn't cover the name Arizona on the top your license plate, if the license plate frame holder covers the name Arizona you'll receive from the

*Submitted by Frank McKenna*

nice police officer a \$130.00 ticket! Unless he's a nice officer and gives you a chance... yea right! This is your responsibility as privileged Arizona drivers to know new motor vehicle laws, the state doesn't send out mailings. So if you have a frame holder that covers the name Arizona on your license plate remove it before Jan 1, 2009 and replace it with one that doesn't cover the name Arizona

# TRIVIA AT ITS FINEST!

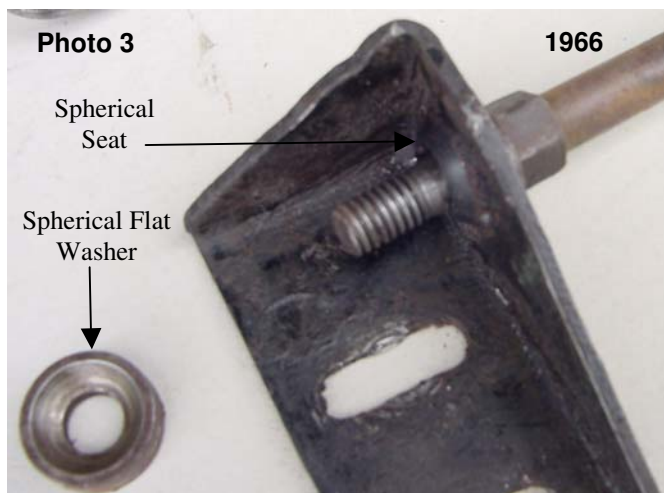
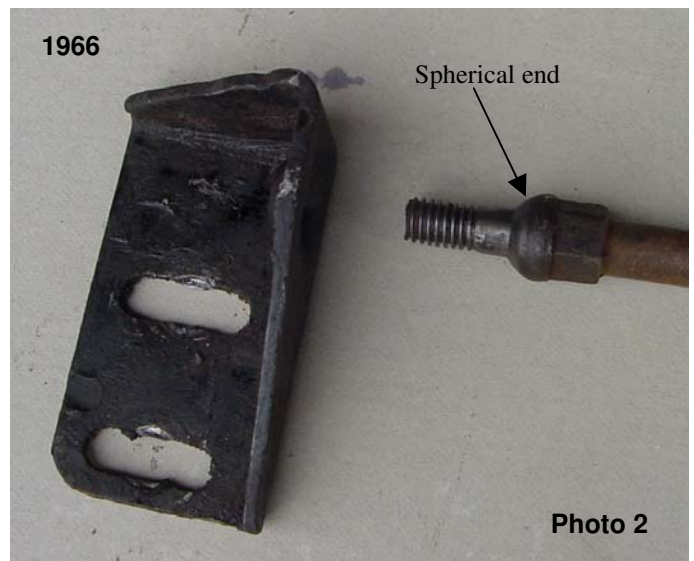
Van Pershing

Okay, how many of you can honestly say you ever noticed the difference between the 1965 and the 1966 shift linkage support rod? Now, how many of you really could care less? I thought so.

I couple years ago I swapped in a '66 4-speed transmission into my '65 Corsa. Interestingly enough there are a lot of things that have to be changed to make everything work. That topic has been covered elsewhere. There was one little difference that I found to be quite interesting. The shift lever transmits its forward and back and left and right motions through a tube which connects to the transmission. Since the engine/transmission is mounted to the body with rubber mounts it isn't really solid. The forces transmitted through the shift tube want to move the whole engine/transmission back and forth, albeit only slightly, instead of using the total movement to shift the transmission. The

Chevrolet engineers provided a rod and a bracket to solidly connect the shift mechanism to the engine/transmission to reduce some of the slop and put all the motion into shifting. On the '65 car, the rod connects to the bracket and the bracket bolts to the transmission cross member which is bolted to the rubber transmission mounts (Photo 1 below). The '66 support rod connects in the same way, but notice that the rod is made with a spherical end and the bracket is made with a spherical seat. Instead of a flat washer, a spherical washer is used (see Photos 2 and 3). If there is even a slight bit of misalignment, the '66 rod will bolt tightly in alignment without putting any undue stresses on the shift tube.

If you do the swap that I did, be sure not to mix the brackets and rods. Wouldn't be prudent....





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**Regular Monthly Meetings** are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month. The November meeting is held on the third Wednesday. The December meeting is our annual Christmas Party.

**Meeting Place for December:**

Meeting is the Annual TCA Christmas Party on Tuesday, December 16 at Cody's Beef and Beans, 2708 E Ft Lowell, Tucson. Contact any TCA Board Member for details.

## TRY THE NEW TCA FORUM

Ask tech questions, get to know other club members, chat, or share your knowledge with others. Go to [www.corvairs.org](http://www.corvairs.org) and click on TCA Forum. Don't miss out on the latest Gossip!!!



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