

Corvair Futura Concept Car

by Paul Crowe, March 18, 2007

Even when you think you have seen most of the concept cars from years past, once in a while one shows up, like this Corvair Futura concept car, that has you scratching your head. I had to stop and look because I just don't recall ever seeing it before.

It is listed on eBay as a 1960 which is about right judging from the Corvair styling from those years and it has a center front driver position like some current supercars. The glass surrounding the driver, including a glass sunroof, adds to the feeling of visibility but you have to wonder what would happen in a frontal crash, it looks like the driver might be the very first person on the scene.



There are no pictures of the engine but I imagine it would be pretty standard Corvair power.

Concept cars from the fifties and sixties had a very period style to them, sort of an optimistic jet powered feeling. I love the look.

Herb's YS-317 Looking for a New Home

YS317 was a member of our club for several years and we enjoyed the presence of its company as well as that of its owner, Herb Berkman. After Herb's death, Jonni sold the car to Craig Nicol, a long-time CORSA member, who is now reluctantly looking for a new home for Herb's car.

This post was made on February 9, 2009:

With great regret this magnificent piece of history is looking for a new home. This is Herb Berkman's Red & Black 65 Corsa that he converted to a Stinger with Don Yenko's blessing (have paperwork) many years ago. The car has taken first place in countless Concours and won the Ed Cole twice ('79 and '92). It was awarded 93.22 at the 07 Convention, a couple of days after racing at the Willow Springs track event. It's a fully developed autocross car and of course, it's in great condition. I'm looking for reasonable offers from knowledgeable Corvair people. Craig Nicol, (208) 765-2360.

A most unusual car for people who enjoy the unusual



If you picked up when you turned to this page, our research computer says you're probably well informed, above average income and have more or less "jet" type tastes. That's the kind of person who usually drives a Corvair. But how you can't always go by research. The fellow who turned all this up on our computer, for instance, was a frugal soul who read nothing but technical stuff and drove the same Mack sedan for 15 years. Then one day he showed up in a Corvair convertible a shade redder than the one above. How did he square this with his research? He didn't. That was the same day he asked to be transferred to a job that would get him out on the road more...driving his new Corvair.

'66 Corvair by Chevrolet

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 10th of the month.

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TCA 2009 Events at a Glance

Wed, Mar 25 Regular Monthly Meeting. Parking Lot Bull Session at 6:30pm. Meeting starts at 7:00pm. Last Chance Garage, 3605 N Vine (east of the corner of Prince and Mountain).

Wed, Apr 1 Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00pm, Last Chance Garage, 3605 N Vine (east of the corner of Prince and Mountain).

Sun, Apr 19 Casa Grande Ruins. We'll cruise in our Corvairs (or other less appropriate means) for a picnic at the Ruins near Coolidge, Arizona

Wed, Apr 22 Regular Monthly Meeting. Parking Lot Bull Session at 6:30pm. Meeting starts at 7:00pm. Last Chance Garage, 3605 N Vine (east of the corner of Prince and Mountain).

Wed, May 6 Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00pm, Last Chance Garage, 3605 N Vine (east of the corner of Prince and Mountain).

Sat, May 23 Breakfast Cruise to Ryan Field.

Wed, May 27 Regular Monthly Meeting. Parking Lot Bull Session at 6:30pm. Meeting starts at 7:00pm. Last Chance Garage, 3605 N Vine (east of the corner

February Meeting

Minutes

General Membership Meeting held February 25, 2009:

Members Present: Don Robinson; Lynn Marrs; Barry Cunningham; Van Pershing; John Frugoli; Bill Maynard; Bill L, Allen Elvick; Mike Strong; Dave Lunch; Ryan Green; and new member Ken Farr.

President Lynn Marrs called the meeting to order at 7:05.

Approval of the Minutes for January: Motion to approve the January minutes was made by Barry Cunningham, seconded by Bill Maynard and unanimously approved.

President's Report: Lynn Marrs in her first official act as the club president, reported on the Board Meeting held February 4, 2009 where the year's mid month meetings were determined. Additionally, it was at this meeting that the board established an official policy regarding eligibility for "family membership" recognizing that a family may consist of any member and: spouse; significant other; life partner; and associated minor children. Lynn then introduced newest member Ken Farr, who is owner of a 1964 Corvair convertible in many parts that will be restored over the coming year.

Vice President's Report: Moving from the position of Board Member at Large to Vice President, Bill Maynard announced that March's mid-month meeting would be taking place at the Renaissance Festival in Apache Junction. Members planning on attending will be meeting in the parking lot of the Metro Grill at the southeast corner of Oracle & Magee at 9am. The caravan will be departing at 9:30. It was noted that the prior record for the number of Corvairs attending this event is two. February's mid-month activity was a tune-up clinic at Bill Maynard's Last Chance Garage that featured installation of new shocks in Barry Cunningham's late model.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Barry Cunningham reported a beginning balance of \$2,465.60 and an ending balance of \$2,548.45. Expenditures included stamps for the newsletter and business cards available to all club members. Revenues were generated from dues, which were due January 1, 2009 and the sale of a shirt.

Raffle: Prizes were furnished by John Frugoli, Ryan Green and Bill Maynard and raffle winners included Ryan Green, Lynn Marrs and Dave Lynch. A call for volunteers yielded commitment of prize donation from John Frugoli and Dave Lynch. As is true every month, raffle prize donations are not limited to these volunteers; all members are encouraged to bring a raffle gift to the March meeting.

Tech Talk: Bill L demonstrated the configuration of windshield wiper for a van and the differences as compared to early and late model cars. Bill Maynard exhibited the welded axle of Don Robinson's car in a "how not-to" and John Frugoli raised a question regarding the accuracy and setting of dual carb linkages and asked for assistance in adjusting his steering box.

Miscellany: Barry Cunningham tallied points for both the mid-month and monthly meeting for the proposed award for the member exhibiting the most Corvair spirit.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn was made by Barry Cunningham at 8:41, seconded by Allen Elvick and was carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ryan Green
Recording Secretary

WATER IN THE GAS

Richard Finch's *How to Keep Your Corvair Alive*

On '60 to '64 Corvairs, there is a rubber drain hole in the fender pocket where the gas filler neck goes. If the hole gets plugged with dirt, water will stand in the filler pocket and will seep into the gas tank through the gas cap. To avoid this, keep the drain hole free and open and replace the gas cap with a new one about every 5 years.

If water does get into the tank, it can cause much trouble, including keeping your car from running. Water rusts holes in gas tanks, the steel gas lines, and corrodes the insides of carburetors to the point they will no longer work. Water is heavier than gasoline; and therefore, it sits and the bottom of the carburetors and eats away at the pot metal, and the corrosion plus up all the fuel passages in the carburetor. If corrosion is allowed to continue long enough, the only repair is to replace the fuel tank, fuel lines and carburetors.

Another source of water in the fuel tanks is through the key slot in locking gas caps. When it rains or when you wash your Corvair with a key locking gas cap, water can drip or run into the gas cap through the key slot and into your gas tank. Many locking gas caps do not seal as well as they should where they cover the gas filler neck and this allows water to get into the tank around the cap seal. It is better to put a file cabinet type lock on the gas door than use a locking gas cap because of the chance of water leaking through the key hole in the locking gas cap. You can buy the file cabinet locks at most hardware stores. You will have to drill a 3/4" hole in the gas filler door to install the new lock.



The Last Corvair, Maybe?

Phil Skinner, Old Cars Weekly
January 21, 2009

It must have been a glorious day for Ralph Nader when, on May 14, 1969, General Motors announced that the last of the Chevrolet Corvairs was ready to come off the assembly line at Willow Run. For thousands of owners who were attached to the Corvair, it was a sad day. They knew the car as one of the best-engineered and most-unique American vehicles ever produced, and it was put out of business due to one man's personal crusade.

After Nader's attacks on the early production models of the Corvair in the mid-1960s, sales of this popular compact dramatically dropped.

Despite racing successes posted by the Yenko Stingers, fewer and fewer people were stepping up for the air-cooled, rear-engine wonder. There had been speculation that, at the end of the 1967 model year, Chevrolet would pull the plug on these cars to better promote the new Camaro or Nova as the compacts of choice.

In the fall of 1968, production schedules included a few 1969 Corvairs on the regular assembly line at Willow Run, which was flooded with orders for the new Nova. By Oct. 28, so few orders for the Corvair were placed that production of the car was halted on the line where Novas were being built, and a miniature five-station assembly line was established where hand-built "pilot" production usually took place. A group of 43 hand-picked dedicated workers had the task of assembling these last Corvairs on an "as-ordered" basis.

That last day of production was fairly well chronicled, as the last of the 6,000 Corvairs was to be finished and scheduled to come off the line. The last two units were given excellent coverage by the media, who had rushed to Willow Run when GM had made the announcement, and herein lies some controversy.

In June 2008, RM Auctions offered a green metallic 1969 Corvair 500 coupe during the sale of a large portion of cars from the Art Astor collection. According to published reports, the last Corvair built car-



Once a part of the Astor Collection and sold at auction last year by RM Auctions, this 1969 Corvair "500" coupe carries ID number 101379W705214. Is it really the very last Corvair ever produced?

ried serial number 105379W706000, and was a Monza coupe painted Olympic Gold. The car offered from the Astor collection carried the ID number 101379W705214, about 786 cars shy of the last one built. However, this unit was accompanied by a letter from the Chevrolet Division that stated: "...we have confirmation from Mr. J. Leron, that regardless of the serial number, the unit purchased from our office on November 14, 1975, was indeed the last Corvair to physically come off the assembly line at the Willow Run Assembly Plant." The letter came from Chevrolet's Central Office, dated March 23, 1976, and signed by a G. F. Phillips, Supervisor of Company Car Operations. This unique vehicle was called "sold" and went to a new home for a bid of \$17,000, plus the buyer's 10 percent commission.

We spoke with several knowledgeable Corvair fans and they were, to say the least, perplexed by this letter and claim.

If you ever visit an automotive assembly plant and start to look at the ID numbers of the cars, you will notice that they are rarely in order. In fact, we have seen numbers as far as 1,000 units apart sitting

next to each other on the assembly line. Production can be scheduled to make sure the last car off the line has the highest serial number, as Ford Motor Co. did when the Thunderbirds were built out at Wixom in 2005.

Could that have really happened at Willow Run in May of 1969? Were units No. 5999 and 6000 just for show, and were there other Corvairs held back and built out of the view of the press?

This mystery was resolved when production records confirmed that indeed, the last unit to come off the Willow Run assembly line was 105379W706000, and not this car. This car does have the distinction of possibly being the very last Corvair that the Chevrolet Division actually owned. It was sold to Merollis Chevrolet in Detroit in 1975. While No. 5214 was not the last Corvair produced, it is one of the best preserved examples, showing less than 900 miles from new. It is an all-original example that shows the high quality of fit and finish that these hand-assembled cars were given.

The Last Corvair, Maybe? Not Even!

The following are comments made by Dave Newell regarding Phil Skinner's article in Old Cars Weekly.

This is a very perplexing article. Some of his information is taken from The 1969 Corvair Finger-Tip Facts book, authored by the late Mark Ellis and myself. But the questions that Phil poses in the article should have also been answered by our book, especially concerning his suggestion that additional cars were built after number 6000, the last 1969 Corvair.

Phil's interest in the last 1969 Corvairs is understandable, since their story's one of the most fascinating in GM history. But if he'd contacted the Corvair Society of America we would have gladly given him all the details.

I've personally been researching the '69 Corvair story and the mysteries surrounding it since the 1970s. I've interviewed Gerry Phillips and Jim McLernon, the Chevrolet managers Phil mentioned in his article, plus all those involved with '69 Corvair production and decision making that I could locate. Those men included the engineers who laid out the off-line assembly area where the last 3,806 of the '69s were built, many of the supervisors, plant management, line workers, Chevrolet distribution personnel, auditors, etc. at the time---even GM Chairman Jim Roche, who was directly involved with the last Corvair.

All of the information in Phil's fourth paragraph ("In the fall of 1968...") came directly from pages 46-47 of our book. There's much more to the story, and those interested can buy a copy of our book.

The subject car of Phil's article, 1969 Corvair number 5214, was simply one of the final 2500 or so '69s which were built without dealer orders and stored at the Willow Run assembly plant when production ended. These were then shipped to dealers as orders came in and 5214 was one of the last few 69s left at the plant. Chevy Manufacturing Manager McLernon sent the last few cars to Flint, and 5214 ended up being the last one left there. It was taken down to Chevy's Show and Display garage a few blocks behind the GM Building, where auditors discovered it and brought about its auction to local Chevy dealers.

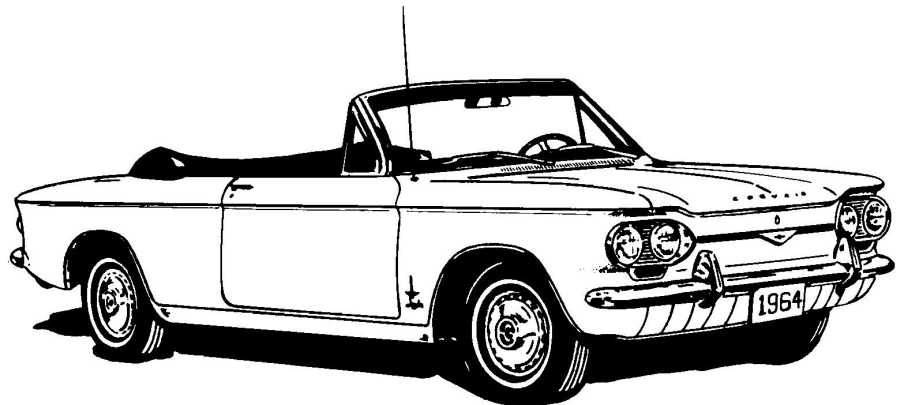
Unfortunately the letter Phil quotes that accompanied 5214 is now infamous among knowledgeable Corvair folks. In the letter, Gerry Phillips stated that "regardless of serial number" 5214 was the last Corvair built. Gerry admitted to me that the car was not the last one built, and that he had confessed the error to an internal GM auditor who made him sign another letter to that effect. The bottom line was that he misinterpreted what was told to him by Jim McLernon, Chevy's manufacturing manager. McLernon also told me that 5214 was simply the last Vair that GM sold.

1969 Corvair #6000 was definitely the last Corvair built. The contemporary rumors of Corvairs being "hand built" after production stopped actually referred to the separate pilot line area where the last 3,806 cars were assembled. Fisher Body built one extra complete Corvair body while their Corvair fixtures were still in place, which may have fueled those rumors. It still exists, with a body number of "XXXX".

Even though you might say the miniature assembly area was GM's first "team concept" the quality was poor and got worse in the last few months. 5214 was no better, and there's nothing remarkable or unusual about it compared to other late 69 Corvairs. It has a Fisher Body data plate showing that its body was built in March, with its body number falling in normal sequence with surrounding cars on the line.

I'm sure Phil is correct in his observations about today's assembly line VIN sequences, and I respect his vast knowledge of Ford and Edsel assembly process. Ford division's were responsible for building complete car including the body but GM had a different arrangement.

When the Corvairs were built, Chevrolet management made every effort possible to build the cars in the correct VIN sequence. Every Chevy plant had an adjacent, autonomous Fisher Body plant. As bodies were received from the Fisher plant, VINs were assigned sequentially and put on the line in that order. This is easily confirmed by comparing build dates, body numbers and VINs, as well as by my interviews with those who assigned the VINs and supervised the lines. The only way a car could get out of VIN sequence was if it was badly damaged on the line or if it needed repair or parts that kept it from proceeding further down the line. In the Fisher plants, sequence wasn't critical, due to factors peculiar to body assembly.





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Regular Monthly Meetings are held on the Fourth Wednesday of every month with a parking lot bull session starting at 6:30pm and the meeting starting at 7:00pm.

The November meeting is held on the third Wednesday. The December meeting is our annual Christmas party with the time and place to be announced.

Monthly Meeting Place:

Bill Maynard's Last Chance Garage, 3605 N Vine, Tucson (just east of Prince and Mountain).

Visit the TCA Forum

Ask tech questions, get to know other club members, chat and share your knowledge with others. Go to www.corvairs.org and click on TCA Forum.



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