

Rarefied Air

by Terry Shea

A former Goodyear test car, a 1969 Yenko Stinger now tests one man's skill on the race track

from Hemmings Classic Car, March 2013

It's hard not to root for the Corvair. Perhaps no other American car embodies quite so purely the spirit of a true sports car in the European sense than Chevrolet's air-cooled, rear engined beauty. As engineering exercises go, the lightweight, unit-body Corvair, with an engine largely made from aluminum and the first post-war American use of four-wheel independent suspension, blazed a trail well ahead of its time.

Everything about it remains unconventional, particularly when compared to contemporary American cars - and practically every other model on the planet, really. Bob Dunahugh of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is one of those forward-thinking souls who first saw the light in 1967. "We had just purchased a Chevelle in the summer of 1967," Bob says, "when I saw an ad for a 1964 turbocharged Corvair Spyder convertible. I took it for a test drive and loved how the car handled. I was able to trade a 1961 Triumph that I wanted to sell straight up for it."

At the time, Bob, a fan of drag racing, also owned a 1957 Chevrolet with a 327-cu.in. V-8 and a four-speed. The Chevelle and Corvair became his regular cars to take down the strip, but driving a quarter-mile at a time didn't hold his interest for too long. "Drag racing is cutting a good light and shifting at the right time," he tells us. "That was just totally boring to me. You would spend all day at the track and then you would spend, what, under a minute actually racing? If you were making 15-second runs and you made four of them during the day, that's a minute." Instead, lured by its promise of a lot more track time, Bob turned to road racing, a challenge most suited to the lightweight, low-slung Corvair.

Bob started autocrossing - and loved

it. Going to college and raising a family stalled his amateur racing career, but autocross kept its hooks in him. In 1985, he started racing again and, soon after, began looking for a Yenko Stinger, a car literally made for the track. With only a few more than a hundred made, and none after 1969, it wasn't going to be easy finding one. On top of that rarity, Stinger owners seem to



really want to hold onto their cars - finding one is still easier than acquiring it.

To Chevrolet fans, the name Don Yenko mostly conjures up the Camaros, Chevelles and Novas that wore the Yenko Super Car badges. But before the big-block COPO cars, Yenko Sportscars, operating in a small shop out of the Yenko Chevrolet dealership in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, produced a handful of potent Stingers, Corvair-based sports cars built with the singular purpose of going racing.

Yenko achieved success at the track, winning two Sports Car Club of America production-class titles in a Corvette, along with helping manage several other title winners in addition to selling and preparing cars for other competitors. But Carroll Shelby's Cobra and Mustang GT 350 arrived and brought their winning ways to the party. A fierce competitor, Don Yenko wasn't happy about that at all.

In the June 1966 issue of Sports Car magazine, Yenko wrote, "Towards the end

of the 1965 season, after repeatedly looking at the rear bumper of Mark Donohue's Mustang, I decided the only way I could stay loyal to Chevrolet (they put the food on my table) was to build my own car. When SCCA classified Shelby's version of the Mustang and turned down the Corvair, this seemed to leave an opening for me. We bought a 1965 Corvair Corsa and started playing with it."

And play with it, he did. Satisfied that he could make a proper, decent-handling and quick sports car out of the Corvair, Yenko set to work. Yenko Sportscars had just a few weeks to build 100 complete cars before the SCCA's January 1, 1966, deadline for homologation for the season. GM delivered the bare Corvair Corsa coupes over a short span in mid-December. Yenko and company, working long hours (and every day but Christmas), completed the task on time, getting the SCCA's stamp of approval to race the newly minted Stinger, which had nary a Chevrolet emblem on it. The car was competitive out of the box, and in 1967, drivers in Yenko Stingers claimed not only the SCCA D Production national title, but also no less than 10 SCCA divisional titles. It may have been unconventional, but it was a star.

Chevrolet drastically restyled the Corvair for 1965, giving it a remarkably fresh and balanced design and an overall elegance that made the previous cars look dowdy in comparison. Although the grilleless Corvair shared virtually no parts with any other Chevrolet, the 1965 redesign gave the car's rear haunches a family resemblance to the full-size Impala, another car given a restyled body for 1965. Despite the undeniable good looks of the pillarless Corsa coupe, the Yenko team still saw fit to transform the car's appearance. They fattened up the C-pillars with fiberglass sail panels, created a fiber-

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) for members of CORSA. Add \$3 per person for non-CORSA members. Make checks payable to the Tucson Corvair Association.

Change of Address: Report any change of address or phone number to the Membership Chairperson.

CORSA membership dues are \$45 per year (\$90 for 26 months) and include a subscription to the CORSA Communique, a bi-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.

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TCA 2013 Events at a Glance

May 22, Wed

Regular Monthly Meeting. Parking Lot Bull Session at 6:30pm. Meeting starts at 7:00pm. Golden Corral, 6865 N Thornydale Road (just south of Ina).

Jun 15, Sat

Mt Lemmon Run. Come for a fun day in the cool pines. Meet at the McDonald's on Grant and Tanque Verde at 10:30am. We'll have lunch at the new restaurant in Summerhaven.

Jul 16 - 20

CORSA National Convention, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Jul 18, Thu

Cruise In at Freddy's. 6:30pm. A gathering of over 100 great cars at Freddy's Hamburgers, sw corner of Orange Grove and Thornydale. Bring your Corvair and hang out for a fun evening.

August

Breakfast at Todd's. Ryan Field. Details to follow.

September

Madera Canyon Picnic. Details to follow.

Oct 12, Sat

Cars in the Park, Sierra Vista, Arizona

Oct 19, Sat

Classics of Tucson Car Show at St Gregory's. More details as they become available.

Oct 25 - 27

36th Annual Great Western Fan Belt Toss & Swap Meet. Sunrise Park, Palms Springs, California

Nov 2, Sat

Cops and Rodders Car Show. More details as they become available.



The Club's banner on display at the Chevy Showdown.

April Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the monthly meeting held April 24, 2013 at the Golden Corral Restaurant, 6865 N. Thornydale, Tucson, Arizona.

The meeting was called to order at 7:15pm by President Mike Lake.

Attending the meeting were Charlie and Sandy Evans, Van Pershing, Ron and Lynn Bloom, John and Amy Young, Mike Lake, Jim Mills, Ken Farr, Bill Maynard, Don Robinson, Lynn Marrs, Allen Elvick, and Dave and Patrick Lynch .

Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Chevy Showdown details were covered with Charlie Evans volunteering to help with the judging. TCA will also provide help with parking on the morning of the show which will be held in the parking lot of the Home Depot on Oracle and Limberlost. The Corvair section of the show will have 1-1/2 spaces for each car.

There will be a picnic/cookout at the home of Jim and Terry Mills after the car show at about 4:00pm. Jim took a head count of those who planned to attend.

Future events were discussed including an outing to Mt. Lemmon this summer. President Lake invited anyone with ideas for events to contact a board member.

After a brief intermission the raffle was held. Prize winners were Allen Elvick, Lynn Bloom, Van Pershing, and Bill Maynard.

Tech Talk: Van was able to fix the poor throttle response on the Stinger after he discovered the weld nut holding the jack shaft in the throttle linkage in place was coming loose from the floor of the car. A few tack welds and the problem was taken care of.

Ron Bloom showed everyone the railroad torch from 1895 that he found with some his father's belongings and gave a brief history.

Mike Lake asked if anyone had a spare engine lid latch since he inadvertently through his in the trash.

Jim Mills reminded everyone of the carburetor tech clinic that will held at his home on May 11 start at around 10:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.

Submitted by Lynn Marrs, Recording Secretary



TCA folks enjoying the show

President's Message

I would like to thank everyone who participated, attended or helped out at the Classic Chevy Show. We had a great turn out of Corvairs. Even though it was quite hot by early afternoon, I think everyone enjoyed themselves. The BBQ at Jim's house was a fitting ending to the day. We had a very nice turn out of club members and Classic Chevy club members. The food was fantastic, thanks to all who brought a dish. The steaks were cooked to perfection by our very own Dave "BBQ Master" Lynch. Thanks Dave, for handling that very important function. I would especially like to thank Terry and Jim for their gracious hospitality. We had a beautiful setting to enjoy the evening and discuss the days events.



In June we have our trip up Mt. Lemon on Saturday the 15th. It will be a great way to escape the heat that's coming our way, all the while testing those drum brakes on the way back down.

We will meet at the McDonald's on the corner of Tanque Verde and Grant at 10:30am and we'll plan on lunch at the restaurant in Summerhaven.

Jim asked me to drive his Rampside to the show. It was my first experience in a FC. Let me tell you, the first time I went to hit the brakes, I almost needed to change my shorts! I must say that once I got use to the best Chevy had to offer back then, it was quite enjoyable to drive. Sitting there, looking out over that vast expanse of asphalt out ahead of you at 40 MPH makes you really appreciate the seat belt. I'm just glad I got it there and back in one piece.

Don't forget, we have our club meeting on the 22nd: same time, same place. Hope to see you all there.

The best to you all,

Mike



Ken Farr (left) and Bill Maynard at the Showdown

Goodyear Test Car (continued from page 1)

glass rear decklid with a built-in duckbill spoiler and functional, adjustable scoops, removed all chrome trim and painted stripes down the center of the car.

The transformation also involved body, suspension, interior and engine modifications. They tossed the rear seats, because that was part of the definition of a sports car at the time, per the SCCA. Stiffer rear springs, Monroe double-action shocks and heavy-duty brakes with a dual master cylinder sourced from the Cadillac parts bin all pointed to improving performance on the track.

Back behind that rear axle, the base Yenko engine made 160hp, a bump of 20 over the stock 164-cu.in. engine. Yenko modified the four Rochester one-barrel carburetors, fitted a seven-quart, finned aluminum oil pan from Cragar, Tufftrided the crankshaft, used Moraine connecting rods and bearings and included a fan-belt tensioner, addressing a notorious Corvair weak point. Known as the Stage I, this base model Stinger sold at a list price of \$3,520. For an additional \$500, customers could get the 190hp Stage II, with the addition of a high-performance camshaft, heavy-duty valve springs, modified pistons with notched crowns, a polished crankshaft, a bump in compression to 10.0:1 and a lightweight flywheel, along with gauges for oil pressure and temperature and an ammeter.

Stage III, “for the customer who wants all-out street performance” and was willing to pay another \$400 bump over Stage II, meant a further boost to 10.5 compression, porting and polishing the cylinder heads, forged pistons, adding a high-performance distributor and honing cylinder walls “to racing clearances,” plus a boost to an impressive 220hp.

Full Stage IV for racing meant bored-out carburetors and a few other changes not suitable for a road car, giving the car a legitimate 240hp - enough to make the stripped-down, 2,000-pound Stinger a legitimate contender against Shelby Mustangs and Triumph TR4s, the previously dominant cars in the class. Prices varied on the race-spec cars depending on the options chosen. Customers could also buy individual components from the different stages to build up the Stinger the way they wanted it. Yenko even offered an extensive catalog of Corvair parts for people building up their own cars.

Yenko built approximately 115 Stingers between 1966 and 1969, an even 100 of them in 1966. A handful of customer cars converted to Stingers also received Yenko three-digit serial numbers. These so-called “tag cars” were SCCA eligible. The last Stinger made in 1969 was a dedicated track car that was never intended to race.

Under contract by Ford, of all companies, The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company needed a high-speed testing platform for 13-inch tires - a vehicle that Ford simply didn't have, but Yenko did. In a rather unique set of circumstances, Goodyear purchased a Stinger outright, a Chevrolet in all but name, to test tires for Ford at their proving grounds in San Angelo, Texas. Although prepared as a Stage IV track car, complete with SCCA-approved roll bar, the Goodyear Stinger was not lightened and stripped. After all, Goodyear was interested in testing tires under load, not setting fast lap times. Goodyear took advantage of Yenko's ability to build a car to their exact specifications, including fitting a rather tall 3.27 final-drive ratio as well as an auxiliary 24-gallon fuel tank from the Corvette. A heavy-duty, front-mounted oil cooler with “armored” oil lines to the engine compartment along with an extra-heavy-duty clutch, high-flow carbs, and special heavy-duty valve guide completed the package for Goodyear.

The Goodyear engineers and technicians put a little over 2,000 miles on the car before it made its way to Southern California, where a budding racer covered the original white with a Cadillac pearl white over blue, two-tone paint scheme. But he never raced the car, and it ended up in Wisconsin, awaiting a restoration alongside that owner's two other unrestored Stingers.

Enter Bob Dunahugh. Having already found, bought, restored and modified several Stingers, including a “tag” car that became an 1,800-pound track missile at road courses throughout the Midwest, Bob saw the Goodyear car as the Holy Grail of Corvairs, and certainly the most unique Stinger. After two years of coaxing and cajoling the owner, Bob acquired the unrestored and very well preserved Goodyear Corvair in 2000, though it still wore the pearl and blue paint.

Fortunately, the restoration was rather straight-forward. Bob even found the Goodyear signage still intact under the layer of pearl paint, giving him a good template to

correctly reproduce it. The Corvair's body was in excellent shape, with no signs of weather exposure, and with just over 2,000 miles on the odometer, all the mechanical bits were intact two important conditions that made the restoration that much easier.

Once complete, Bob didn't stick the car in a museum; he went to the track. With its somewhat tall 3.27 gears, aimed at getting the car over 130 mph, the Goodyear car is not ideal for a road courser but Bob still takes it out for his beloved road races. Of course, he shares the car with spectators at car shows, too, though some remain skeptical of his choice to run a machine of such historical significance at speeds regularly over 100 mph, wheel-to-wheel with other drivers. “Some guy told me, ‘You can't take a car and go road-race it and then put it in a concours,’” Bob recounts. “So I put it in a national concours and it got 961 points, and then put it in the Chevrolet Hall of Fame in Decatur, Illinois. It's on loan to them. Right now, it's driving me crazy, because I know he doesn't want to give it up, but I gotta go road race in it. I'm really a terrible caretaker of that Goodyear car in a way. To get ready for the concours, I had to vacuum all of the grass out from inside the engine compartment.”

It's heartening to know that not only is this car driven hard, but also that it's worth sharing in a museum. Bob remains smitten by the Corvair, even some 45 years after his first exposure to it. “It's the handling characteristics of the Corvair that I like. It seems like when I drive Corvettes or Camaros, it's like you're in the car, but not a part of it. These things-Corvairs-have really good road feel. Once in a while on a track day, I can take someone for a ride, and I can guess within 15 pounds of what they weigh by how they feel in the car. I can tell if my tank is half empty or whatever. And the car just has a tremendous amount of feedback and I don't know why. It's basically constructed just like any other American unibody car, but it has a lot of feel to it. You get on a road course and you can feel what the tires are doing.

“It was always an economy car, and when you run with some of these guys with the Porsches and BMWs, you don't have to beat them to hurt their feelings. Just run with them, stay with them. And if you beat'em, it's all the more fun.”

Thanks to Don Robinson for sharing.

Chevy Showdown a Great Success

The 28th Annual Chevy Showdown was held on April 28, 2013 with a nice showing of Corvairs. Many TCA members assisted with the parking of the show vehicles as they enter the arena and with judging the various classes of cars and trucks that attended the event.



Jim And Terry Mills hosted a barbecue after the Showdown with many TCA and Classic Chevy Club members in attendance.



Frank Pella's '68 Monza was awarded 1st place in the Corvair class



The beautiful '66 turbo Corsa of John Young won the 2nd place award.



Van Pershing's Stinger (left) received the 3rd place award and Charlie Evans' V8 Monza (right) received a Certificate of Merit.



Ron Bloom (left) decided he'd try his luck in the Truck Class instead of hanging with the Corvairs and came home with a Certificate of Merit in a tough class. Jim Mills' Rampside received a Certificate of Merit in the Corvair Class.



Jim Mills' '63 convertible and Ken Farr's '64 convertible rounded out the field of extremely nice Corvairs.





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

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

MEETING PLACE:

Golden Corral, 6865 N Thornydale Road (just south of Ina), Tucson, Arizona.

Board of Director meetings are held at 5:30pm before the regular monthly meeting at the same location in the months of January, April, July and October . All members are welcome to attend.

This newsletter can also be accessed at www.corvairs.org



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