

## And a Merry Christmas It Was!

If you weren't there you missed a great Christmas party. On Saturday evening at Cody's Beef 'n Beans the Tucson Corvair Association members were there in force. The traditional white elephant gift exchange was a big hit. A nice batch of food for the community food bank was collected, and a silent auction netted the Club treasury a few well-needed dollars.

A couple of Club members, who shall remain nameless, went behind President Lake's back and arranged to give him the "man of the year" Gordon Cauble Award. Mike has served the Club as president for the last two years and has kept the wheels turning. He is always willing to help any and all Corvair folks with their problems, needs and issues.

President Lake presented an "I love you" award to Frank and Gloria Trejo. As you may recall, Frank presented Gloria with a '69 Monza convertible for her birthday this summer. It was a brave thing to do since he wasn't quite sure how she would react. For his extreme bravery and her extreme love and patience, the award was present. See the August 2014 issue of the Corvairsation for the full story.

President Lake also presented a custom-made personalized Corvair coaster to each of the Club officers with the opportunity to earn a full set during the next year.

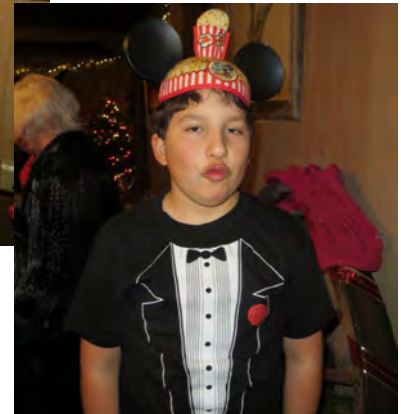
Ken and Heidi Farr received a Special Award even though they were unable to attend the party. Ken and Heidi have represented the Club at dozens of events and car shows over the years. They are always willing to go the extra mile in putting out the good word of our beloved little cars by showing off their Corvairs.

Van Pershing was presented with an award for being "the man of many hats".

It was an event to remember. And so ended the 39th year of the Tucson Corvair Association.



President Mike Lake (above) received this year's Gordon Cauble Award. Javier Trejo (right) was in a very festive mood as he took charge of the white elephant gift exchange. Frank Trejo expresses appreciation to Gloria during the presentation of the "I love you" award (below).



**Happy New Year to All!**



2014 TCA Officers (from left to right): Van Pershing, Sam Pernu, Ron Bloom, Mike Lake, Allen Elvick,



Ken and Heidi Farr received a plaque for their contributions to the Club over years. Mike Lake presented Van Pershing with a "man of many hats" award. (right)





**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 Comminique, 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 2015 Events  
at a Glance**

Jan 28, Wed

**Regular Monthly Meeting.** Parking Lot Bull Session at 6:30pm. Meeting starts at 7pm. Kettle Restaurant, 748 W Starr Pass, I-10 & 22nd.

Jan 31, Sat

**21st Annual Collector's Car Show,** Tubac Golf Resort, Tubac, Arizona, 10am to 3pm. Online registration and info at [www.carnuts.org](http://www.carnuts.org)

Feb 28, Sat

**2nd Annual Caliente Clowns Car Show.** Caliente Casa del Sol, 3502 N. Pinal Parkway, Florence AZ. Set Up: 9am. Show: 10am - 2pm. We'll join the Cactus Corvairs for the event.

March ??

**Franklin Museum Tour & Picnic.** 10:30am at 1405 E Kleindale, Tucson. Come for a tour of the museum and enjoy air-cooled cars of a different era. More details to follow.

Apr 25, Sat

**30th Annual Chevy Show-down,** 9am to 4pm. Home Depot Plaza, Oracle and Limberlost, Tucson, Arizona. Sponsored by

**TIME FOR DUES**

Yes, it's time to get those dues paid for this year. Please send your check made payable to "Tucson Corvair Association" to: Allen Elick, 4210 S Preston, Tucson, AZ 85735. \$15 for individuals or \$18 per family.



## Affordable Classic: 1964 Chevrolet Corvair Convertible

When Sporty Cars Reached Their Nader  
By Scott Burgess, *Motor Trend Magazine*

Bet you didn't know: The Chevrolet Corvair, 40 years after its introduction, might well be responsible for the second Gulf War.

Here's how that goes. The groundbreaking Corvair, with its air-cooled, rear-mounted, horizontally opposed flat-six engine, was initially a success for General Motors. But problems with the car's swing-axle design, exposed by then-unknown attorney Ralph Nader in his book "Unsafe at Any Speed," eventually helped kill GM's baby, while boosting Nader's career into the stratosphere. Ultimately, in 2000, Nader made a third-party bid for president, which played a significant role in killing Vice President Al Gore's chance at moving into the White House. Thus, one can conclude: No Corvair, no Nader. No Nader, Gore becomes president, America never invades Iraq.

So the Corvair continues to carry a certain amount of notoriety, but it also happens to be a great little runabout, with proportions as unique as its design. Chevrolet built 1.7 million of them during the car's 10-year run. Today, Corvairs are easy to find and range in price from a few thousand dollars to more than \$15,000 for mint models. There's also a large network of owners, many of whom have joined clubs such as the Corvair Society of America, which boasts nearly 5000 members.

I know this because last year I plunked down \$5300 for a white 1964 Corvair convertible. I knew I wanted a '64 -- it's the last year of the original body style, and engineers had corrected some of the swing axle problems by installing a transverse leaf spring across the rear. Many owners suggested I avoid buying a turbo. (The Corvair was one of the first mainstream production cars to offer a blower.) As one put it, "That thing will run great once, and then you spend the entire summer trying to get it to run like that again." I heeded the advice and bought a Monza with the base 110-hp, 164-cubic-inch flat-six.

Maintaining the Corvair has been easy, in part because the engine has a mechanical simplicity all but impossible to find today. I've also replaced the clutch, rear shocks, both mufflers, and a few other parts, totaling \$1100 and giving me an all-in price of \$6400. The work wasn't essential, but every bolt I wrench makes the car a little more mine.

Even if I end up spending an additional \$400 for a new roof, it's been worth every penny just to take the Corvair down the road, its engine tick-tick-ticking along. In Detroit, the land of classic cars, the Corvair still draws thumbs up from passersby and more than its fair share of stares.

The Corvair's four gears are perfectly spaced; you can cruise at 45 mph in third all day long. The small drum brakes on all four corners, however, mean the driver should keep his eyes out for everything in front. Torsional rigidity is frighteningly poor -- you can see the car squirm back and forth over even the smallest bump -- and the whole thing rattles as if there's an open toolbox hidden inside the body panels.

But, man, is a Corvair convertible fun to cruise in -- it's low to the ground and it appears three-quarters the size of everything else on the road. Dollar for dollar, my Corvair cost \$2.55 a pound, meaning it's cheaper by weight than Nader's book. More important, this unique little car represents a special place in automotive history. The Corvair demonstrates what can happen when a car-maker takes risks and moves in a totally different direction. For better or worse.

## President's Message

Once again, we had a great turn out at our annual Christmas Party. Lynn Bloom did an amazing job with decorating the tables. Frank suggested that we do a white elephant gift exchange and he and his son Javier did a great job running it. I do believe everyone enjoyed it. For those who missed it, you missed a good time with friends.

Think about being there next year.

Today, January 1, I had the opportunity to participate in a cruise around the perimeter of Tucson. This was an informal gathering of car people who brought vehicles ranging from antiques to one off exotics and everything in between. I arrived at the meeting location about 45 minutes prior to departing time. As I exited my car,

I was met by a small gathering of people who wanted to tell me about the Corvairs that they had in the past or currently own. One gentleman was the original owner of a Fitch Sprint, bought it new off the showroom floor in Michigan. He said he loved that car and that it was a blast to drive. Another gentleman has a '65 convertible he is restoring back in his home state. Yet another owned a '63 Spyder that he put a set of cheater slicks on and drag raced it on the street. He said he surprised a few people with that car. While I stood there listening to these gentleman, I couldn't help noticing that my Corvair was the only car drawing a crowd. Mind you, there were cars there that cost as much as my house, paint jobs that were outstanding, and interiors that cost five figures. What I realized at that moment was that it was not my particular car that was drawing the crowd, but it was people connecting with a fond memory from their past. Not many cars can bring back fond memories like the Corvair. The early Mustang, the Model A and the Tri-Five Chevy's come to mind. That puts the Corvair in a select group of vehicles and that's pretty cool!

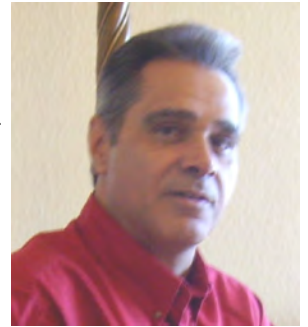
Also, today I just found out about a car show in April that you are not going to want to miss. I believe it's on the 18th, so mark that date off on your calendar. It's in a location in Tucson that couldn't be more fitting for a car show. I will fill you in with the details at our meeting. I will give you hint as to the location: We will be among many air cooled engines.

Once again we embark on a new year. I think the past year was pretty good. Lets go get 'em this year.

I would like to remind you all to keep Ken and Heidi in your thoughts and prayers.

Take care, See you at the meeting,

*Mike*



## Corvairs In The Corners

By Eric Schakel from *Denvair News*

The Corvair was never intended to be a sporty car. GM was instead seeking to produce the American Volkswagen fighter, a unique family economy sedan. With a half-century of hindsight to draw upon, we now know that the Ford Falcon, Studebaker Lark, Rambler American, and Plymouth Valiant all generated better fuel economy numbers than Chevy's economy car. And because of higher-than-planned production cost, the Corvair was sort of drab, in comparison.

On the other hand, the Corvair was designed with two features that were very rare in the day: A rigid unibody structure, and independent rear suspension. During those early years of the European sporty-car proliferation, those two features gave the Corvair cornering capability that clearly exceeded other economy cars, and even encroached on Chevrolet's Corvette!

### Blessed Lateral Acceleration

While the Corvair was forever challenged in forward acceleration, the brand rapidly gained a reputation for unique handling. It was not a very good thing for doofus drivers (Doofi) who found the limits of lateral acceleration by accident, as demonstrated when the rear ends of their Corvairs abruptly passed the front upon braking in corners, or while maneuvering at excessive speeds on wet pavement.

Motoring enthusiasts, on the other hand, explored the limits of lateral acceleration in great sweeping drifts around cloverleaf ramps, or whipping up on lesser handling cars in parking lot autocrosses. Car people refer to great handling, cornering power, grip, suspension compliance, and myriad other terms to describe the way their cars feel going around corners.

### Mission Creep: The Corvair Monza

Chevy did what any good capitalist organization would do: They rushed the Chevy II to market as a copy-cat to the domestic competition, and nudged the Corvair upmarket with the sporty Monza. The poor man's Porsche was born. A handling package brought the early model into the forefront of cornering performance, and the Spyder turbo soon gave the Corvair some additional oomph to better use the suspension capabilities.

### History of Lateral Acceleration

During the Corvair decade, cornering power became a mainstream topic because of those dreaded European sports cars. Into this world came the Corvair, with driving characteristics that were not at all like Aunt Tilly's Rambler American, or Grandpa's Plymouth. Road tests began reporting 0-60 and quarter-mile elapsed times and speeds.

Corvair drivers knew the cars had different cornering capabilities, but there were no objective reporting measures. That was slowing changing, however, as an engineer named Zora Arkus-Duntov was gaining influence within the Corvette program, and GM was now using a new measurement to quantify cornering: Lateral acceleration.

Lateral acceleration is a simple calculation. A car is driven around a circle of a known diameter (200 feet is a common skid pad diameter) at the edge of traction. The elapsed time of each revolution is recorded, and plugged into a formula. The result is lateral acceleration expressed in g-force.

Early lateral acceleration data suggest the 1960 Corvair cornered at .60 g (30 MPH) on GM's Milford Proving Ground skid pad. The Corvette, their flagship sporty car, cornered at .61 g (30.2 MPH). A Biscayne sedan would likely have been around .5 g (27.5 MPH).

It was quite a quirk of fate that the plain-Jane Corvair economy car was nearly as capable as the Corvette in corners. Domestic economy cars like the Ford Falcon, Studebaker Lark, Rambler American, and Plymouth Valiant fell far behind the Corvair in cornering performance.

In 1964, the Spyder (with revised cross-leaf rear suspension) was known to pull a then-astounding .68 g (32 MPH) in

steady-state cornering. The Corvette? With the new 1963 Sting Ray chassis and fully independent rear, it managed .69 g (32.2 MPH), barely edging out the Corvair. In 1965, the Sting Ray rear suspension showed up in the heavily revised late model. Corvair, and lateral acceleration was an amazing .70 g (32.5 MPH). Perhaps lateral acceleration numbers were not published because the GM execs didn't want customers to know that the Corvair actually generated higher cornering speeds than the Corvette!

### Cornering Power Today

Fast-forward 50 years, and witness top-of-the-line sports cars such as the Corvette routinely generating 1.0 to 1.05 g on the skidpad, which was once considered impossible. To exceed a full "gee", credit goes to specially-designed performance tires, which conform to the tiniest pavement irregularities to maximize traction.

New SUVs and pickup trucks routinely generate lateral acceleration numbers in the .75 g, with most cars of sporting pretense showing g-force ratings between .8 and 1.0 g. Corvair owners will find that modern performance radial tires, assuming suspensions in good repair and proper tire pressures, will allow their cars to corner as well as modern cars.

I can attest to at least one 1966 Yenko Stinger that generates 1.05 g (39.7 MPH) on a 200' skid pad, which keeps it right up there with today's Corvettes. That's one of the most amazing attributes of Corvairs: Even 50 years later, they can still ride and corner like new cars. That's what attracted enthusiasts to the cars in the Corvair decade, and it's what keeps many of us hooked today.



Note right side tire deformation, air under LF tire at 1.06 g

# 2014 in Review





## Monthly Newsletter - January 2015 - Vol. 39, No. 7 Corvair Society of America Chapter 857



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

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

### MEETING PLACE:

Kettle Restaurant, 748 W Starr Pass (I-10 and 22nd), 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](http://www.corvairs.org)



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**Order your New Club T-shirts now.** Available with pockets and in V-neck. Contact Van at [tucsoncorvairs@yahoo.com](mailto:tucsoncorvairs@yahoo.com) and let us know how many and what sizes you desire. Order cut-off is January 11. Cost will be about \$12 each; pockets will cost a buck or two more.