

## TCA and CCCT Tour Crown Classics

On Saturday, March 11, the Classic Chevy Club of Tucson invited the Tucson Corvair Association members to join them on a tour of Crown Classics near the Marana Costco. After arriving at the Cozy Corner Café and discovering it wasn't open, alternative measures were taken to find a place for breakfast. Then TCA the group trekked over to the Crown Classic facility and hooked up with the CCCT group for a great tour. Visit the Crown Concepts website for more details about all the things they do at [www.crownconceptsusa.com](http://www.crownconceptsusa.com). After the tour lunch was served courtesy of an insurance vendor.



*Some of the many cars on display at Crown Concepts (above). Several Corvairs shared the parking lot (left) with many great cars from the Classic Chevy Club of Tucson (below).*





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 one name tag) Make checks payable to the Tucson Corvair Association and mail to the TCA Treasurer.

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

**CORSA membership** dues are \$45 per year (\$90 for 26 months) and include a subscription to the CORSA Communiqué, 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 2017 Events at a Glance

- Apr 8, Sat** **Chevy Showdown**, Desert Diamond Casino. [Information & Registration Form](#)
- Apr 22, Sat** **Cactus Corvair's Annual Picnic**. Eldorado Park, Scottsdale, Arizona. Click for [more details](#).
- Apr 26, Wed** **Regular Monthly Meeting**. Parking Lot Bull Session at 6:30pm. Meeting starts at 7:00pm. Golden Corral, 4380 E 22nd St, Tucson, Arizona (near Columbus).
- Jun 2-4** **33rd Annual Tri-State Corvair Meet**. Taos, New Mexico. Go to [www.corsaturbo180usa.com](http://www.corsaturbo180usa.com) for
- Jun 22-Jul 1** **CORSA International Convention**. Independence, MO. Go to [www.corvair.org/2017convention/](http://www.corvair.org/2017convention/)

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## New Meeting Place

Starting with the April meeting we will be meeting  
at the  
**Golden Corral, 4380 E 22nd Street**  
April 26, 7pm



## NOTICE

The Corvairsation will no longer be distributed by post office mail. It will be sent by email to all Club members. Please make sure your email address is up to date and don't miss a single issue.

The newsletter is also available at:  
[http://corvairs.org/TCA\\_corvairsation.htm](http://corvairs.org/TCA_corvairsation.htm)

## March Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the monthly meeting of the Tucson Corvair Association held March 22, 2017 at Pizza Hut, 2943 N Campbell, Tucson, Arizona.

In attendance were Rich Scott, Gloria Trejo, Allen Elvick, Dave Lynch, Dean Hawley, Mike Lake and Earlene, Sam Pernu, Frank Pella, Frank Trejo, Ron Bloom, Don Robinson, and Bill Decke

The minutes were approved.

Treasurer's report: Balance as of February 1: \$2754.51 with a balance on February 28 of \$2325.52

Merchandise Report: T shirts still available. We are out of oil filters but more are on order and will be here at the next meeting.

### Old Business:

Ron Bloom reported that Frank Nuñez still has the Club canopy. It may be damaged. Ron to follow up and report.

Ken Farr had the Club microphone. Club voted to disregard.

### New Business:

Mike Lake dropped Van Pershing's transmission on the way to his house. It was located on Silverbell and Speedway with only minor scratches.

Roger Parent linkage assembly area tour and Pomona swap meet were attended by Mike, Frank and Javier

Club breakfast/Crown concepts tours were big hit and well attended.

Chevy Showdown at Desert Diamond coming up. Volunteers still needed to judge and park cars.

April 22nd: Cactus Corvair picnic in Scottsdale. Need to set time/place to meet to drive up.

May event may possibly be a Pima Mine tour at Asarco on the May 6th—more to come

Starting club cruise Thursday or Friday nights was a topic of discussion. Also attending more Thursday night visits to the car gathering at Freddy's.

There are drive-in movies going on in different locations around the city. It was suggested that we look into this.

There will an April 1st photo shoot at Little Anthony's at 7pm.

The 50/50 fan belt toss was won by Scot Rich

Don Robinson was honored at the meeting for his 40 years of service to the Club as the Merchandise Chairperson.

Frank Pella received an email from parent of an autistic young man requesting convertibles to drive them to the prom on April 7th. Ron Bloom volunteered his services.

Welcome new member Bob Decker who has a red '61 convertible.

**Tech Session** included discussion on Ron Bloom installing C4 strut rods on his convertible, Cotvair high beams shutting down after awhile but eventually comes back on, and what to do with the '63 and '64 Club cars—help needs for maintenance.

**New meeting locations** were discussed. Being considered are O'Reilly Chevrolet, Crown Concepts and Golden Corral. Next meeting will be at Golden Corral on 22nd and Alvernon.

*Submitted by Frank Trejo*

## What if?

The theme of a Motor Trend design contest was to redesign a vanished car model for the year 2002. Amr Abdo selected the ever popular Corvair as his subject. As they say in Alabama, "That dog'll hunt!!".



*Bob Traylor's Packard was recently spotted at a Thursday night gathering at Freddy's on Orange Grove and Thornydale.*



# GM's Deadliest Sin, the 1971 Vega

Paul Seyforth, Rocky Mountain CORSA

In 1970 GM General Motors was on top of the world. It was undisputed leader of motor car producers. Cadillac, Buick, Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Chevrolet were all volume leaders in their respective fields. The sixties had been very good years for GM, with one exception. The small car. The Corvair, while a well-designed innovative small car it was not a commercial success. Even though GM had the Nova and the Camaro, it wanted to dominate the growing compact field. Unfortunately, it's choice, the Vega was poorly conceived and even more poorly engineered. The result was GM's Watergate/Waterloo, the beginning of its inevitable end.

It was introduced with so much fanfare which was a tribute to GM's standing in the automotive world. Its coming was hyped by GM for years as nothing less than the reinvention of the small car, GM's version of the Apollo moon shot. Sound familiar? "The best handling car ever sold in America" (Road & Track). Winner of Motor Trend's 1971 COTY. C/D readers voted it the best economy car three years in a row. It won the 1971 C/D six small car comparison. Bill Mitchell styled the Vega to be a mini Camaro, the roofline was copied from the Ferrari 365 GT, but with no glovebox due to cost considerations. A question was why Chevy wanted such a low-slung, "sporty" car with terrible space utilization. The charming Kammback even shared the coupe's extra-low roofline; hardly in the image of GM's big wagons. A competitor was the Datsun 510 wagon, which had the practicality of four doors. GM's President Ed Cole, a former engineer and father of the Chevy V8 and the Corvair, gave the development of the XP-887 "import killer" to a corporate development group. And then he forced the half-baked results on a reluctant John Z. DeLorean, General Manager of Chevrolet.

Chevy's Engine Group already had a conventional small four banger on the drawing table. But the corporate had grander, if cheaper plan in mind. GM had dropped a mint on a huge aluminum foundry operation to build the Corvair engine. The Vega would have an aluminum block because... it's 51lbs lighter than the pedestrian and dead-reliable Chevy II four block". An aluminum head on the Chevy block would have offset the cast-iron head on top of the Vega aluminum block. GM was determined to turn small

car engine design upside down, literally. Since the dawn of the twentieth century, light but soft aluminum has been used for engine blocks along with durable iron cylinder sleeves. That solution would have cost Chevy exactly \$8 per engine. But they were planning to build millions of them and cheapness was the mother of malfunction. So GM and Reynolds Aluminum came up with the idea to incorporate 17% silicon in the alloy, and devised a way to etch the top molecules of aluminum from the cylinder bore surface to expose the hard silicon, and voila! Actually, this was only one part of the Vega engine problems. On top of the aluminum block was a cast iron head. It weighted more than the block. Also it was the other shortcuts like cheap self-destructing valve guides, an undersized cooling system, a small oil pan, etc. Overheating, or oil consumption from the bad valve guides meant that the less-



forgiving cooling system or limited oil capacity conspired with the fragile open-deck block, which often blew up, literally. But that wouldn't be happening on a mass scale until 1973 or so.

The Vega's engine was unusual in other ways too. It had a long stroke and big displacement (2.3 liters) for a four, and was tuned for low specific output (90 gross, 80 net hp) at a lazy 4400 rpm. The result was a big flat torque curve: 136 lb/ft of torque at 2400 rpm, GM wanted the Vega to have that lazy V8 feel, the secret to blowing those pesky, buzzy imports off the freeway. The result was in 1971 terminology, bad vibrations. A balance shaft would have broken GM's profit targets. Another one of the Vega's earliest problems was its seemingly inexplicable tendency to explode mufflers. Severe engine vibration caused a carburetor bolt to loosen, causing the carb cover to jump up and down, causing the accelerator pump to pump, causing raw gas to flow down those less-than-stellarly-sealed silicon bores, causing gas to puddle in the exhaust, causing said explosions. But the torque was there, and Americans love deep-fried torque. The stan-

dard Vega transmission was a three-speed stick, with ratios so wide that combined with a long axle it "feels more like a 6-speed with first, third and fifth gears missing. But the GM engineer's unorthodox thinking worked, after a fashion. The Vega was the second fastest in the C/D test after the wheel-spinning Gremlin (zero to sixty in 12.2 sec.)

Handling and cute looks, (on the pre-safety bumper versions) was always the Vega's one dynamic strong point: "Handling is very good with mild understeer and tolerant breakaway characteristics. The biggest surprise is the steering, which is light and accurate...the Vega is quick and nimble". Klutzy hard plastic moldings and an instrument panel with nothing more than a horizontal speedometer. The floor is wall-to-wall black rubber, and all the controls required exceptionally long travel. But despite the cost-cutting, the Vega was not cheap; in fact, it cost a full 15% more than the other competi-

tors, and weighed some 400 lbs more. Satisfying American's lazy highway cruising habits came at a price.

From this 1971 comparison and vantage point, it's pretty obvious to see how the future played out. But the Vega's self-destructive tendencies weren't the only reason for its demise. Once the Corolla got a bigger

engine and a five speed, it ran circles around the Vega and Pinto. The VW Beetle soon died, to be replaced by the brilliant Simca-inspired Golf/Rabbit. The relatively reliable Pinto soldiered/moldered along, until eventually replaced by the Simca/Golf-inspired FWD Escort. Chrysler jumped into the fray with the Simca-derived Omni-Horizon. And the Gremlin just became an historical oddity.

The Vega had a decent sales start. It sold 270,000 in 1971, 395,000 in 1973. Its biggest sales year was 1974 (450,000), when it hit the top-ten seller list thanks to the energy crisis. But in 1975, sales plummeted, and by 1977 "amnesia Vegetitus acute" became a new national mental health epidemic. Rust was a huge problem for the Vega especially in the east coast and in the 'rust' belt. In 1970 the 'Baby boomers' were hitting college age and first employment age. They formed the largest segment of GM's Vega customers. By then, the Vega was anything but cute. And the Baby Boomers would remember all their problems with the car. The Vega certainly was cursed from the get-go. GM lost its credibility with that group and its payback was coming some 30 years later.

# Universal Joint Neglect

Van Pershing

Keeping those U-joints lubed is an easy item to forget when doing routine maintenance on your Corvair. The early model cars and FCs have two to take care of while the last model cars have four. Pictured here is an example of what will happen to the u-joints if neglected. Either this unit was not lubed properly when installed or, during decades of use, was never regularly lubed. Either way the



results can be shown - stopping. All four u-joints taken from this late model car were in similar condition. One side of each race was grooved by the needle

bearings while the opposite side was smooth which indicate the direction of the half-shafts rotated during forward travel of the vehicle. Since the grooves are not parallel with the bearing axes\*, one can deduce that one or more of the needle bearing turned into dust sometime during use. Had these joints be left in service much longer, the results may have been catastrophically dangerous and expensive. So, don't forget those u-joint when doing maintenance on your vehicle.



*\* I checked the dictionary and the plural of axis really is axes—who knew?*

# Beware the Evil Turbo Fuel Return Line Tee!!

Van Pershing

To insure the YH carburetor didn't have too much fuel pressure, there is a return fuel line from the fuel filter in the engine compartment back to the fuel tank vent tube on most of the turbocharged cars. The factory used a rubber tee between the vent tube on the filler neck and the vent tube on the fuel tank. The original ones lasted for many years—the new repos, not so much. There are a couple of options. California Corvairs sells a brass tee. By adding some connector hoses, it makes a nice replacement. Be sure to use hoses that are intended for gasoline use. Unless you are trying to stay factory stock, another option is to remove the filler neck, drill a 3/16" hole and solder in a tube. Put a 90-degree bend in it and connect your return line to it.

When using an original-style rubber tee, plan on spending 3 to 4 hours every couple of years to replace it. It's a horrible job! If the brass tee is used, you'll still go through the same horrible process but you'll probably never have to mess with it again. The downside is that there are twice as many clamps to be tightened and you will have honed your swearing skills greatly during the whole ordeal. Since you have to remove the filler neck anyhow to install it, you might as well put in a piece of fuel line where the tee used to be and solder in a tube for the return line on the filler neck. It will be quicker, much more dependable, and will involve much less swearing than the other options, assuming you have an easy way to solder the tube into the filler neck.



*This is a rubber tee purchased from Clarks which lasted about two years before it started leaking.*

*This is a filler neck that was used toward the end of production on the turbo cars. A tube can be soldered to the filler neck somewhere in this area as long as it is situated so that it can be hooked up to the incoming return line.*

*The brass tee is nicely made but in some cases it will have to be shortened to fit into the space where it is supposed to fit. Be sure you have plenty of clamps on hand. You'll need 6 in order to put this where it belongs.*



*Don Robinson honored at the March meeting for 40 continuous years of service to the Tucson Corvair Association.*



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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 and the meeting starting at 7pm.

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:**

Golden Corral, 4380 E 22nd Street, 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.

Read this newsletter on line at [www.corvairs.org](http://www.corvairs.org)