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# Corvairsation

Letting the Good Times Roll Since 1975

August 2017

Volume 42 Number 2

## CORVAIRS: WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE PURCHASING ONE

from Ebay Buying Guides, September 24, 2006

The Chevrolet Corvair is one of the most unusual and unique vehicles ever made. Because of this you **MUST BE WILLING TO LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN BEFORE YOU CONSIDER A SPECIFIC MODEL.** I will say this and possibly some may be offended by these remarks,; **THERE ARE NO 20,000 mile Original miles cars available, Corvair, Mustang, Corvette, Pinto, Porsche, etc.,** It does not matter what the make, **DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT ANY CAR OVER TWENTY YEARS OLD HAS NOT BEEN DRIVEN A GOOD NUMBER OF MILES IN EACH OF ITS FIRST EIGHT TO TEN YEARS, CAVEAT EMPTOR (Buyer Beware).** I don't believe that there are any vehicles the age of Corvairs or certainly older than 25years that haven't gone one rotation of the odometer, **THAT IS OVER 100K MILES.** Remember that prior to the 1980's , it was not uncommon for some dealers and wholesalers to dial back the numbers. In the 1960's and early 1970's it was even more likely as there wasn't any federal enforcement or major penalty for doing so. I would be highly suspicious of any vehicle claiming original miles, unless the seller is the original purchaser, (not an Agent), every service record/ receipt is there, and you personally have known the seller and the vehicle **SINCE IT WAS PURCHASED NEW!** With that said lets discuss **CORVAIRS** and what you must know about them. Much if not all the important details will be outside of this guide, I simply am trying to point you in the right direction. First thing to do is learn about the two huge parts suppliers, Clark's on the east coast in MA and Corvair Underground on the west coast in OREGON. Get both catalogs from **BOTH** suppliers immediately. Why? Well besides seeing what all is available for the Corvair, Each Catalog contains many pages of detailed technical details, insight, tips, and general knowledge that is essential. Both have the finest Corvair technical experts that are most helpful in answering ques-

tions and providing helpful answers. Please remember that these are businesses and fine ones at that, so do waste their Tech experts time by calling with frivolous questions. Both Clarks and Corvair Underground have been in business since the early 1970s and both are probably solely responsible for maybe all of the reproduction parts. **THE NEXT THING YOU SHOULD DO IS** obtain a copy of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA) **TECH GUIDE.** The complete tech guide is a huge compilation of member's technical solutions to overcoming the limitations/faults of the Corvair in its factory form. It is hundreds of pages which are well organized much like a shop manual by topic. You should consider joining CORSA or at the very least one of your regional clubs of CORSA. For any Corvair newcomer , the cost benefit in new knowledge about all Corvairs **FAR OUTWEIGHS THE MEMBERSHIP DUES.** You also get outstanding tech help, a monthly magazine, and events which are great fun. My advice is to attend a CORSA event, either local or national prior to purchasing or deciding on which model of Corvair to purchase. You need not be a member to attend and you do not need to own a Corvair, and there is no charge for being a spectator. My advice is attend, armed with a camcorder or at the very least a small tape recorder. Don't worry about being a Doofus carrying a camcorder or a tape recorder, only a big Doofus would carry a tape recorder right , **WRONG!** The point is to meet the Corvair owners, politely talk with them about their cars, ask them if they would mind if you recorded the audio/video of the conversation in order to learn more about Corvairs. Ask questions and listen to their answers without interrupting them, you will be surprised how much you can learn in one day. It is important that you do your homework prior to attending by gaining minimal knowledge of Corvairs, **BUT THIS IS NOT NECESSARY BUT IT WILL HELP YOU , SINCE YOU WILL ALREADY**

**KNOW A LITTLE, SO THAT YOUR QUESTIONS CAN BE MORE SPECIFIC,** and there is only so much time in one afternoon. You will find that Corvair enthusiasts are some of the nicest people you will meet anywhere. Basically, and these are generalizations but historically Corvair owners are typically thrifty , hands on, shade tree mechanic types who are passionate about their cars. You can read that as being "cheap" and "doing their own repairs in the driveway", with the if it ain't broke yet don't replace it view towards parts replacement! See, Corvairs have historically been the cheapest collector car and this is still the case. Yet, doing a proper engine rebuild with all new parts will be around three thousand dollars if not higher. Clutch replacement will be close to one thousand. These examples assume that you do the labor yourself. Yet Corvairs are worth relatively little in dollar value as compared to their 1960s competition. A Corvair that is properly redone and maintained will be a fun to drive, reliable automobile. The key is to learn what is necessary in making this happen. There is far too much to this subject. The book called **HOW TO KEEP YOUR CORVAIR ALIVE BY RICHARD FINCH** originally published around 1975 and reprinted in many editions since then is the best. This along with the **CORSA TECHNICAL GUIDE,** the factory Chevrolet Shop Manual, Clark's Catalogs and Corvair Underground's catalogs are required reading and reference material. Before setting off into your journey into Corvair land learn and gain as much knowledge before considering or purchasing any Corvair. Get your Corvair degree, so to speak. Do not get your education from The School of Hard Knocks. Numbskulls and Knuckleheads can disregard this and proceed at their own risk. Learn about the differences in the early (1960 thru 1964) and late (1965 thru 1969) model Corvairs. Each specific year

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# TCA 2017 Events at a Glance

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.

**Business Mailing Address:** 4842 W Paseo de las Colinas, Tucson, Arizona 85745

**Website:** www.corvairs.org. Email address: [tucsoncorvairs@yahoo.com](mailto:tucsoncorvairs@yahoo.com)

## WHEELS AND SPOKES

### PRESIDENT

**Dave Lynch**  
861-4348  
[V\\_2davl@hotmail.com](mailto:V_2davl@hotmail.com)

### VICE PRESIDENT

**Mike Lake**  
520-979-0310  
[mls56@g.com](mailto:mls56@g.com)

### RECORDING SECRETARY

**Van Pershing**  
h520-743-9185; c780-7564  
[vpersh@yahoo.com](mailto:vpersh@yahoo.com)

### TREASURER

**Allen Elvick**  
4210 S Preston  
Tucson, AZ 85735  
520-883-4437  
[amelvick@pcpeople.com](mailto:amelvick@pcpeople.com)

### MEMBERS AT LARGE

**Frank Trejo**  
480-459-6308  
[essedave@gmail.com](mailto:essedave@gmail.com)

### MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

**Ron Bloom**  
Tucson, AZ 857  
520-891-7542  
[bloomaz@msn.com](mailto:bloomaz@msn.com)

### CORVARSAION EDITOR/ WEBMASTER

**Van Pershing**  
H:743-9185 C:780-7564

### ASSISTANT EDITOR

**Chris Cunningham**  
520-240-9035  
[arizaim@hotmail.com](mailto:arizaim@hotmail.com)

### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

**Bill Maynard**  
3605 N Vine  
Tucson, AZ 85719  
520-325-8497  
[bill.maynard66@gmail.com](mailto:bill.maynard66@gmail.com)

### LIBBRARIAN

**Bill Maynard**  
520-325-8497

### MECHANDISE CHAIR

**Gloria Trejo**

- Aug 23, 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).
- Aug 26, Sat** **Little Anthony's Car Show.** Registration 5-6pm. Show 6-9pm.
- Sep 28, Thu** **Freddy's Car Show.** Orange Grove and Thornydale. 5pm-8pm. Come join in the casual display of all kinds of cars and trucks. No fees. Bring a car for display and get a ticket for a free custard at Freddy's or a free drink with your meal at Firehouse Subs.
- Oct 21, Sat** **Classics of Tucson Car Show,** the Gregory School. See [tucsonclassic-scarshow.com/](http://tucsonclassic-scarshow.com/) for details.
- Oct 20-22** **Great Western Fan Belt Toss & Swap Meet,** Palm Springs, California.



*Afternoon at Little Anthony's with Gloria Trejo's convertible*

## July Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the monthly meeting of the Tucson Corvair Association held July 26, 2017 at Golden Corral, 4380 E 22nd Street, Tucson, Arizona.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by President Dave Lynch. In attendance were Dave Lynch, Patrick Lynch, Allen Elvick, John Young, Mike Lake, Van Pershing, Ron Bloom, and Doug Scott.

**Treasurer's Report:** Allen Elvick reported that the opening balance for June was \$2,568.72 with a closing balance for the month of \$2,574.46

It was proposed that the Club order more T-shirts. Van Pershing volunteered to put together a few designs and present them for consideration.

**Membership Report:** Ron Bloom reported that there are a couple of new member prospects in the work. Our newest member is AJ Myers who owns a '63 Monza.

Vice President Mike Lake reported that the breakfast outing at the Cozy Corner Café went very well. There was great service and good food. Fourteen members and 3 Corvairs attended the breakfast. He reminded everyone that the mid month activity for August will be on the 26th at Little Anthony's. The Nam Jam event will be on September 16 at Chuy's on 22nd from 10am to 3pm. It was asked if the Club wanted to attend the Cars in the Park Show in Sierra Vista this year. The answer was a resounding "NO". The judging of at the Show has been extremely biased over the years and TCA member have had enough. On September 30 there will be a Speedway cruising event from 6pm to 10pm. The Tucson Classics Car Show at Gregory School will be on October 21. The GWFBT&SM in Palm Springs will be October 20-22. Mike handed out entry forms to those who are planning to go.

**Tech Issues:** Mike Lake had a fuel pump failure on his turbo car. After he replaced it, the car ran terribly. He runs a stock fuel pump along with an electric pump to achieve the volume of fuel he says he needs. John Young also had an electric fuel pump failure on his way to the Cozy Corner breakfast. A new replacement unit fixed his problem. Doug Scott inquired about what oil he should use in the new high performance engine he is building. An oil discussion followed. Another discussion followed about the difficulty of installing a new transmission shift cable on PowerGlide cars.

Club members were asked to think about suggestions for Christmas party locations.

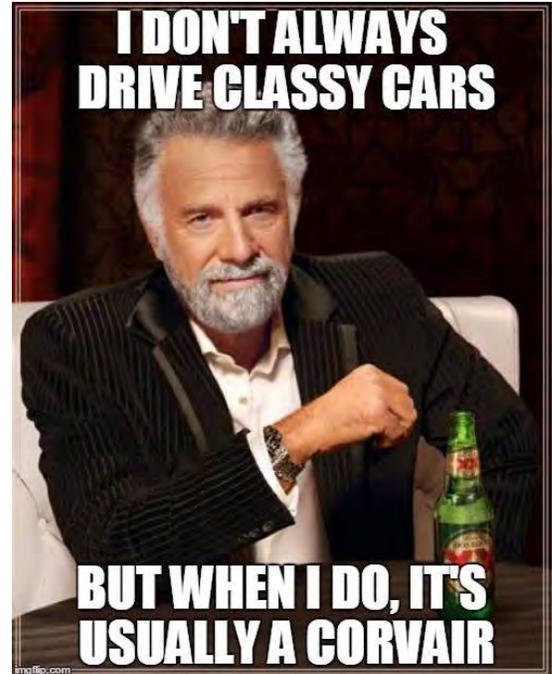
The mid-month activity for September will be a casual meet at Freddy's on Orange Grove and Thornydale on the 28th.

Meeting adjourned at 8:07pm.

*Submitted by Van Pershing, Recording secretary*

## Cozy Corner Breakfast

The breakfast outing to the Cozy Corner Café on July 22 turned out to be a nice adventure. There were three Corvairs in attendance along with Aileen Hurtado, Bill Maynard, Frank and Gloria Trejo, Tomas and Jet Trejo, Fred Nuñez, Allen and Marianne Elvick, John Young, Bill and Diane Sala, and Mike Lake with his son Christopher.



### **CORVAIRS WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE PURCHASING ONE** *continued from page 1*

model has different engine options and transaxle types with have their own Pros and Cons depending on your desire for speed or economy. Learn which engine will suit your needs, the 110hp, 140hp and 180hp all require premium fuel of 93 octane. The 140hp has a slightly higher tendency to over-heat if certain provisions are made. What can be done to allow the car to run on 87 octane pump gasoline? These subjects are covered in great detail in CORSA. What engines interchange? Which engine is best for a truck? How do you deal with oil leaks? Why are certain year carbs considered superior to others. Why is the folded fin oil cooler considered the finest and what years was it used. WHY DO YOU ONLY WANT TO USE A BOLTED FLYWHEEL and not a new OEM RIVETED ONE? WHY DO MOST CORVAIR EXPERTS FAVOR USING AN ELECTRIC FUEL PUMP? I certainly do! You need to know all this prior to Corvair ownership and much more. Any year Corvair can be made into a good reliable solid DRIVER if you follow the recommendations of CORSA experts, Richard Finch, Clark's and Underground. You also must know that many of the vehicles that have become Trailer Queens and Parade Vehicles will require MUCH CAREFUL ATTENTION and SERVICE before being reliable for use as a Daily Driver. YOU MUST EXPECT TO PUT A GOOD BIT OF WORK INTO EVERY OLD CORVAIR, NO

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# Why You Should Buy a 1960s Corvair Right Now

by Hannah Elliot and Chris Rovzar

Sept 2016

Ralph Nader published his auto-safety takedown *Unsafe at Any Speed* 51 years ago.

Since then, the bestselling book has become synonymous with national crash-protection standards and GM's uncommonly dangerous (as Nader saw it) Chevrolet Corvair.

The notorious compact car saw two generations of production from 1960 to 1969; it had an air-cooled flat-six engine placed in the rear, rather than under the hood, which made it susceptible to spin-outs, and it lacked a simple roll-bar to protect passengers in the event of a flip. Its single-piece steering column would impale a driver upon impact, Nader said.

## Devoted Following

But descriptions of its lethal design were overblown. In 1972, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued a 134-page report clearing the Corvair of Nader's accusations. ("The 1960-63 Corvair compares favorably with contemporary vehicles used in the tests ... and is at least as good as the performance of some contemporary vehicles both foreign and domestic," it said.) GM also redesigned the suspension in 1965 models. In recent years, the average prices for Corvairs from any year have reached an all-time high.

"What Nader did was start an era during which there was more awareness of safety and the manufacturers. The product itself almost became irrelevant at that point," said Tom Libby, an automotive analyst for IHS. "The book was the major pivot point for the industry."

It's difficult to find a group of owners as devoted to their chosen collectible as those who love the Corvair. The cars are in

movies, at low-rider rallies (they're cheaper to buy and modify than the more-popular Impalas), and in Jay Leno's garage.

"Corvair enthusiasts love their cars," said Jonathan Klinger, a spokesman for Hagerty, a Michigan-based company that insures collectible and vintage cars. "Part of it is probably they have always been in defense mode, having to explain that the

expose the manufacturers in general about things the public had not been aware of," Libby said. "If it wasn't that car, it would have been another."

And, thanks to the passage of decades of road time, Corvairs are better understood now than they ever have been in the past.

"When they first came out, the service stations didn't know how to work on them, and now after all this time you've got this tremendous dedicated group of Corvair people, and any quirk the car may have is fully understood," Klinger said. "They are a very easy vehicle to work on. That's what makes them beautiful and fun to drive."

## Rear-Engine Wonders

Chevy made the first Corvairs as simple, four-door sedans (in 500 and 700 trim levels) with a three-speed manual transmission that came standard. A two-speed automatic was optional. Soon after, two-door coupe versions arrived, plus a 900-series "Monza" edition that had sportier seats and a more athletic, four-speed, manual transmission. By the end of its run, the series included coupe, convertible, sedan, and four-door station wagon body styles, plus even a van

and pickup truck variant.

Americans bought them as fun drivers that had a particular style behind the wheel, because of their independent suspension and a rear engine configuration that was unique for an American car. They cost well under \$3,000 brand-new. They even earned the nickname "the poor man's Porsche."

The Corvairs looked different from anything on the market at the time, too. They didn't have the pony-muscle curves and powerful V8 engine of the popular



*A '63 Monza at the Skyliner Motel on Route 66 in Stroud, Oklahoma*

car isn't as dangerous to the general public as it is made out to be, because the Corvair is certainly not the death-trap that Mr. Nader was trying to illustrate."

In fact, Nader's book contained just one chapter that discussed the Corvair. And numerous vehicles throughout automotive history were similarly configured and potentially dangerous to drive. Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen, Porsche, and Triumph used similar swing-axel designs in their cars at the time, for instance; if you don't know what you're doing, a 1970s-era Porsche 911 Turbo can be extremely unsettling to drive.

"The focus on the Corvair was a way to

*Continued on page 5.*

# A trunk to be proud of

Larry Starr of the Cactus Corvair Club showed off the trunk work on his '65 coupe that handles his air conditioning needs. He is using the Clark's Corvair front mount A/C condenser setup. Much of the installation including the ductwork and below bumper air scoop are of Larry's own design and show some nice planning and execution of his ideas. Local vendors helped form the aluminum and stainless components to Larry's drawings. The condenser uses two 9" electric fans for extra cooling when sitting in traffic. The fans are triggered to operate anytime the compressor is active. This is sure to relieve some of the heat load on the engine while also providing much better A/C operation under our desert conditions.



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## Buy a Corvair Now.... *Contributed from page 4*

Mustang, and they were smaller than the heavy, cruiser sedans that GM and Ford were making otherwise. Plus, the turbo-charged engines in later models and compact bodies made them seem faintly foreign, more like something from Wolfsburg, Germany, than from Motown.

There were valid complaints about the cars: The heating system would sometimes leak noxious fumes into the cabin; the cars would leak oil like sieves; the tires were often overinflated in order to compensate for dicey handling; and the polished metal dashboards would blind drivers when the sun hit them. Those idiosyncrasies have failed to deter modern buyers.

"This is a wonderful road car," Jay Leno said on his YouTube show about his '66 Corvair Yenko Stinger. "A lot of people put down the Corvair, but I consider it one of the 10 best General Motors cars of all time because it was just so different from anything else they built. They really handle. They're built nicely. They're a lot

of fun."

### Affordable and Aplenty

I first became aware of the obsession while talking to Brandon Pendleton, a DJ friend who lives in Miami. The guy owns a café racer motorcycle, runs his own music production studio, and rides expensive fixie bicycles. He could afford to own plenty of vintage cars, but the Corvair seeped into his veins before anything else.

"I don't drive too fast—it's just a cruiser," Pendleton told me. But his care for the car pays off: So far, he's not had to deal with any big maintenance problems on it.

According to Hagerty, the average price of a mid-level Corvair in satisfactory and drivable condition today is \$6,600, with later models of the 500 line averaging closer to \$9,700. Examples in mint condition can run to \$20,000 or even, very rarely, \$30,000.

Values have leveled a bit in recent years, but Klinger doesn't expect a plunge. The best idea is to buy one, work on it, have fun with it for a year or two, then sell it for as much or a little more than you paid

for it. Despite a slight dip in value for earlier models, Corvairs made from 1965 to 1969 have risen nearly 12 percent in value, on average, since 2011. Corvairs from 1968 are up 23.78 percent over the same period, with models from 1966 and 1967 up in value nearly as much.

More important, now is the time to buy. (I like this red, 102-horsepower soft top with chrome and a new stereo that will go on sale in Mississippi in October.) Car prices are generally higher in the spring, when people are thinking of road trips and summer rallies; early autumn leaves many collectible owners debating whether to pack their vintage babies up for winter or just sell them before the cold comes, in order to avoid the hassle and expense of storage.

"For someone looking for a very reasonably priced collector vehicle a little different than what you typically see, the Corvair is an excellent candidate," Klinger said. "It's not a vehicle that you would want to buy in hopes of tremendous price appreciation, but it's a fun, honest, simple collector car. I hope to own one myself some day."

## **CORVAIRS: WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE PURCHASING ONE**

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MATTER HOW NICE IT APPEARS. YOU WILL NEVER GET WHAT YOU PUT INTO IT IN TERMS OF DOLLAR RESALE VALUE. You must simply consider it a sunk cost but you will get many happy miles and much enjoyment of driving your Corvair if you proceed with a game plan and some knowledge. Corvair ownership is certainly affordable and enjoyable if the proper steps are followed, if not followed, I guess you could end up with a unreliable money pit, The Choice is Yours. GAIN KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THESE WONDERFUL CARS BEFORE DIVING OFF THE DEEP END. I hope I have given some helpful tips on how to proceed. I suggest joining CORSA. I also think that you may want to obtain a copy of the MAY 1965 issue of POPULAR MECHANICS which had a PM Owners Report, a national survey of owners of the new late model (1965) Corvair. This six page report is the most telling about the Corvair automobile. It is most telling on the frequent likes and dislikes of the brand new 1965 Corvair. It also highlights the chief complaints such as water leaks,

workmanship, carburetor trouble, and gas mileage. Note that workmanship or build quality is foremost a major issue. Well this was the 1960's and what was deemed acceptable by the manufacturers, especially GM for a low priced vehicle was minimal. They figured you would trade up within two years anyway. The quality standards of the day were nothing like what the latter day imports would introduce and strive to constantly make better even on their least expensive cars. Does this mean that Corvairs are pieces of trash and should be avoided? No, it just means that, it is not a fix it and forget it type of vehicle. You will certainly want to consider following the many recommendations laid out in detail in the previously mentioned publications in order to have a reliable, safe, fun vehicle that will be much better than what was offered by Chevrolet, new from GM back in the 1960's. Failure to follow such recommendations will guarantee that your Corvair will be at best only as reliable as it was from GM back in the 1960s and more likely, that is highly probable that it will be far less reliable and much more problematic given the passage of time and the deterioration of key components and materials. Trust the knowledge and wisdom of

the experts (CORSA Members) who figured out solutions to many problem areas and against the odds helped make a neat looking, fun to drive car much more reliable than anyone would have thought decades ago. Clarks and Underground are hugely responsible for reproducing and improving mechanical parts far superior to the original equipment stuff. Today there are more parts available and at a much higher quality than just twenty years ago. Buy smart, know what to buy, (Do your Homework, beforehand) and have an organized game plan on how to proceed after the purchase. Budget and spend wisely on the necessary parts, do not be stupid and refuse to replace a minor part such a seal or bearing while doing a resto and then have to do everything again when that old part fails a short time latter. Use quality materials and methods with attention to cleanliness at all times, Do Not Be In A Rush, Be Patient AND DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME. Good luck Ebayers and may your Corvair experience be filled with pleasure! Happy Trails. DRIVE 'EM IF YOU GOT 'EM! This was written by the crazy Corvair Nut, still rocking and rolling down the highway.



### **Monthly Newsletter - August 2017 - Vol. 42, No. 2 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

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