

Corvair

TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION

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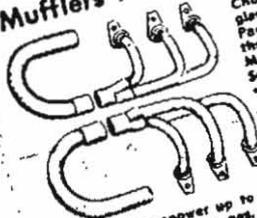
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See Index for Other Items

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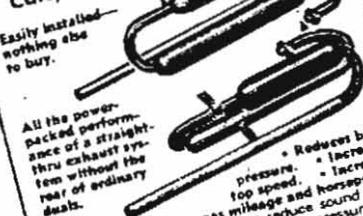
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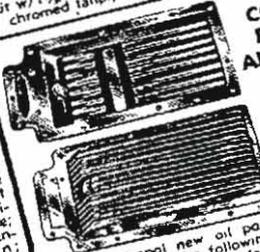
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TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION

CORVAIRSACTION is a monthly publication of the **TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION**, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Corvaire model of the Chevrolet Motor Division. The Tucson Corvaire Association is a chartered member of the **CORVAIR SOCIETY OF AMERICA (CORSA)**.

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WHEELS AND SPOKES

PRESIDENT

Dave Baker
7041 Arrowhead Drive
Tucson AZ 85715
(602) 296-1392

VICE PRESIDENT

Al Crispin
6850 E. Edgemont Place
Tucson AZ 85710
(602) 722-9445

TREASURER

Marty Kuluski
2311 N. Tucson Blvd.
Tucson AZ 85716
(602) 326-5770

RECORDING SECRETARY

Verne Cauble
5950 N. Camino Arizpe
Tucson AZ 85718
(602) 299-1122

BOARD MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Barry Cunningham
3725 E. 32nd Street
Tucson AZ 85713
(602) 747-9028

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

(Dues & Change of Address)
Marty Kuluski
2311 N. Tucson Blvd.
Tucson AZ 85716
(602) 326-5770

LIBRARIAN

Dave & Beverly Baker
7041 Arrowhead Drive
Tucson AZ 85715
(602) 296-1392

CORVAIRSACTION EDITOR

Van Pershing
4842 W. Paseo de las Colinas
Tucson AZ 85745
(602) 743-9185

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Alan Atwood
4287 N. Limerlost Place
Tucson AZ 85705
(602) 888-4433

MERCHANDISE CHAIRMAN

Don Robinson
2044 W. Shalimar Way
Tucson AZ 85704
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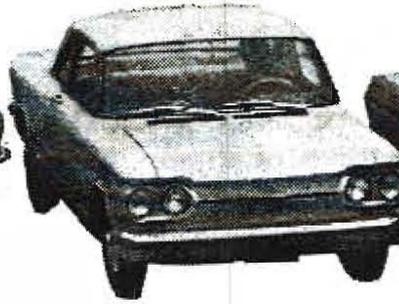
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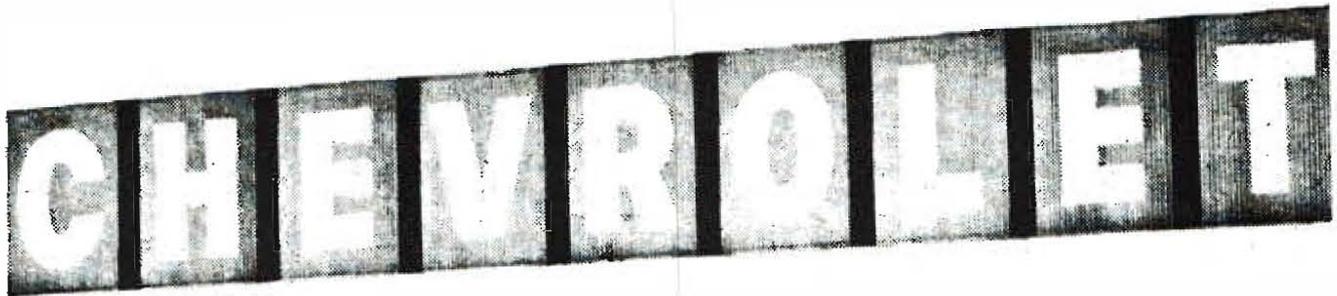
CORVETTE STING RAY



CORVAIR MONZA



CHEVY II NOVA



Break down the many models that are available and you have about 150 different cars—and each one of them is every inch a Chevy

By Angus Laidlaw

TIME was when you could buy a Chevrolet and you got a Chevrolet. You got the same motor, brakes, wheels, sheetmetal, and everything else any other Chevy buyer got. The front bumper would be the same whether the car was a beach wagon or a convertible. So was just about everything else except for the body back of the windshield. And even that would turn out to be the same length and fit on the same frame.

Time was, but them days is gone forever. Now a Chevy is a Corvette with genuine sports-car racing potential; a Corvair which is still a really honest compact; a Chevy II which is not quite a compact; the brand-new Chevelle which may become the new standard-sized American car; and a Chevrolet is an Impala, the largest selling American car.

Even this brief run-through doesn't hint at the true model picture because each line comes in multi-model variety. Pick one style in just one line, and you can still have it in

just about forty-eleven different ways.

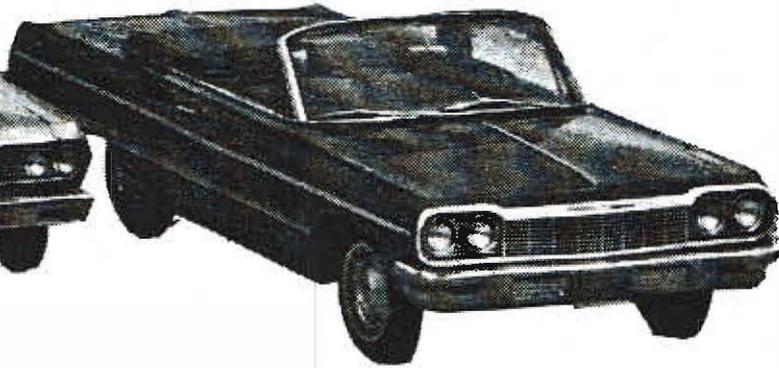
So, in the face of so much confusion in the marketplace (and Chevrolet is not alone in offering skatyeight really different cars) just how can CAR & MOTOR pick a "best family car" and a "best sporting car"? In nearly three months of driving every new Chevy available and talking Chevies with any other car nut or Chevy owner, or salesman, or editor around, I came to the conclusion that the Corvette Stingray was, predictably, an easy choice for "best sporting car." The "best family chariot" was much harder to pick, but I plumped for the Chevy II sedan.

Here's the evidence.

Chevrolet Corvette. There can be no question about the deliberate sporting image around which this car was designed and built. As the only American "true" sports-car, it is both a success and a failure. It offers jazzy looks, two individual seats, minimal luggage space, pretty fabulous road holding,



CHEVELLE MALIBU 55



IMPALA 55

FIVE Chevies - Which one is for You?

brakes to go with its high speed and acceleration, race winning potential, and even great docility in blizzard-jammed traffic. The combination of these qualities undoubtedly makes for unquestioned success and rightful inclusion in the ranks of the true sportscars.

Yet the Corvette is not the complete success as a sportscar that it could and should be. It lacks that elusive quality, essential to differentiate between "motoring" and merely "driving," that distinguishes a car as a transportation appliance from a sportscar, a piece of sporting equipment. The missing quality is "feel."

Driving the new Corvette Stingray on wet roads, dry roads, snow, or even ice is an exciting experience, but it is also alarming. The car has amazing traction and holds the road amazingly well in nearly all conditions. But it becomes alarming when you can feel no difference when you round a turn at 60 mph, and then retrace your steps and go around the same turn at 10 mph. In either

case, the Stingray holds the road neatly and drives effortlessly and without feeling any difference at all around the turn. Surely, at 60 you are closer to the edge of adhesion than you are at 10. Yet the car tells you there is no difference. For me the Stingray simply does not have the eager, exciting feel that many sportscars do have to tell you when you are pushing them near the limit, when you can try a little harder, and when you definitely should not push through that turn any faster.

This lack of "feel" does not take anything away from the very fancy chassis engineering that gives this car the ability to go around almost any bend you care to try at almost any speed you dare to try it. In over 500 miles of driving, much of it on snow, the car did not skid once. As a driver accustomed to cars that do not hold the road this well, I guess I just never quite cared to work up to the point to which this one would slide.

Aside from the lack of driving feel, the

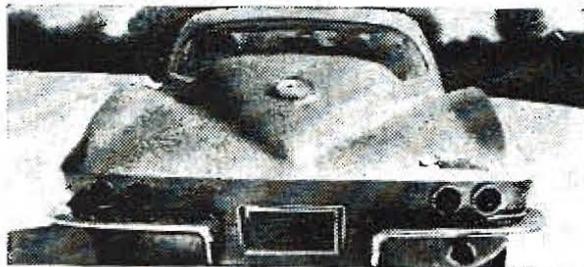
Five Chevies

Corvette Stingray is just about everything an American sportscar should be. It is comfortable on a long trip for both long and short drivers. It goes effortlessly at turnpike speeds and is very un-tiring to drive under these conditions (perhaps a by-product of the lack of steering feel). Other Corvette drivers may even wave at you. At rest or fuel stops, other motorists notice you and your car, (and they notice in the way Cadillac ads say they will but they don't really—for Cadillacs).

If one coined word could describe driving any car, "Daliesque" would be the word for the Corvette Stingray. Remember the famous painting of the folding watches? It kept coming to mind as I drove the Stingray. The combination the super-compound curve in the rear window and the slight bend in the rear-view mirror had a weird effect on the cars behind you. Watching one come up and pass was an experience. The distance was not distorted, but the passing car first looked squat, then as it got closer the wheels became almost stilt-like, and finally, just before it pulled left to go around you, the left headlight and front grillework seemed to swell in a lopsided kind of a way. The distortion was not great, and it did not seem to change the relationship of cars behind you, only their shape. So this trait was only disconcerting at first, then as you get used to it, the funny shapes of the passing cars become fun. This feature may even be a safety factor in so far as it tempts you to drive the car a bit more slowly than you otherwise might.

Another "Daliesque" feature was the needle on each instrument of the very complete panel for the driver. The dials are flat, but each one sinks back in the center with a conical depression which is indirectly lighted. The needle pivots at the center of the dial, creeps up along the side of the cone, and then bends around the edge to point at the figures on the gauge. The instruments were easy to read, well lighted, apparently accurate, and their completeness definitely added to the pleasure of driving the car.

Still the only honestly two-seated American sportscar, the Corvette Stingray does well by its owners in nearly every department they can expect. It also comes through with 17.24 mpg (manual 4-speed with 300



FORE AND AFT views of Corvette show sleek styling and sporting image. Bend in rear window and mirror create odd visual effect.



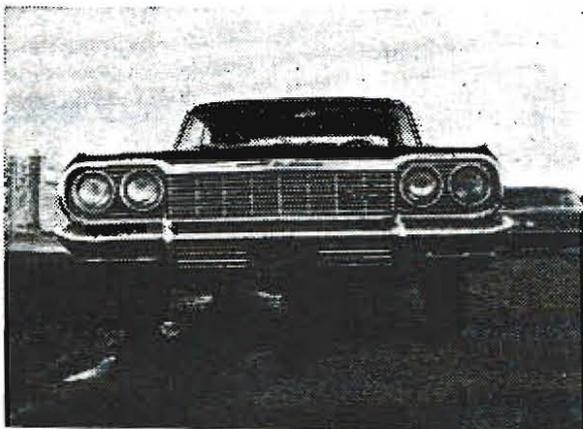
IMPALA left something to be desired when it came to handling. Steering was a bit slow, $5\frac{1}{2}$ turns from full right to full left on wheel.

hp engine) in long-trip driving.

Chevrolet Impala. This automobile is a completely different kettle of fish than the Corvette. It comes as a great surprise that many of the mechanical parts including the engine are identical or close to it.

In its own way the Impala is just as successful as the Stingray, but this car is the perfect example of the kind of car I like to call a "transportation appliance." The car is neat enough looking, it runs under adverse as well as perfect conditions in a very unexcited, unexciting way to get you where you want to go and it brings you back.

The very qualities that make the sedan CAR & MOTOR drove seem no more inspired than a chain-restaurant meal on a turnpike are the ones that make it a success (even as



IMPALA'S performance was generally satisfying, but wheels spun on slick surfaces.

more people seem to like the bland food of the turnpike chain). And certainly, the car does not lack for optional equipment to spice it to your personal taste.

The seating was comfortable both back and front, there was room for everything you could possibly want to carry in the way of passengers and/or luggage (short of a grand piano, and three-little-league teams at the same time).

Performance on the limited access highway was equal to any reasonable passing or braking situation you would plan to meet. The car certainly seemed to accelerate with traffic and pulling out from an entrance ramp became a simple matter of glancing astern and stepping on the gas.

Perhaps it was the extreme goodness of many of the same qualities in the Corvette that made the Impala show in a bad light, but in handling, particularly, the car just did not have it for a standard sedan. The one C&M drove was equipped with manual steering, so I felt that it should have had some road feel but it just wasn't there. The steering was slow enough, at 5½ turns from full right to full left, but no easier than most other non-power steering systems. I had that same dead feel many motorists have come to associate with powered systems.

This car could well have used the limited-slip-differential option of the Corvette. The least snow or slickness of the surface and the wheels spun, the car simply slithered. On dry surfaces, though, there was no hint of poor traction at any reasonable highway speed.

Despite not liking many things about the Impala, my overall feeling was that it was a good, all around, family car. There are options available that might well cancel most of the complaints about the car tested, and



YOU GAIN something in styling in the Chevelle over the standard Chevy—and pay for it.

as a workhorse millions of drivers have found in this car, or its basically similar predecessors, an ideal, reliable form of solid transportation.

Chevrolet Chevelle. This is a completely new line of Chevrolets that falls half-in-between the standard sized Chevy Impala and the semi-compact Chevy II. It shares some mechanical features with both its bigger and smaller siblings, but it really is a brand new automobile. It does share many unseen body structural parts and some mechanical assemblies with GM cousins like the Pontiac Tempest, Olds F-85 and new Buick Special (each of which is more closely related to the Chevelle mechanically and structurally than it is to its namesake of 1963).

While the Chevelle shares many of the mechanical parts including some engines, transmissions and rear axles with Big-Brother Impala, it feels like a totally different car. This is a car that not only does a very professional job of being an automobile, it even enjoys driving a little.

You gain something in styling over the standard Chevy and pay for it, just a little, in seating room, head room, and trunk room. The payment doesn't amount to much that you will notice unless you customarily spend 8 hours a day in the car with five passengers plus full baggage. The gain in convenience over the larger model more than compensates for any slight losses in interior space.

Outside the Chevelle is exactly the same size as the 1955 standard Chevy in every dimension except overall height. Clever layout and interior design gives you all the space that car had to offer, and performance is improved in every department including fuel economy because the Chevelle weighs a bit less.

(Continued on page 125)

Five Chevie

(Continued from page 101)

For my taste (and yours may be quite different) the Chevelle was a much surer and pleasanter automobile to drive than its big brother. This car would not worm through VW sized holes in traffic, but it also did not feel that a Mack truck sized opening would be too small. Other motorists knew you were there and accepted the fact so you had neither the small car driver's fight for recognition nor the limousine chauffeur's ponderous problems. Both in the city and in the open, the Chevelle easily held its own with other traffic.

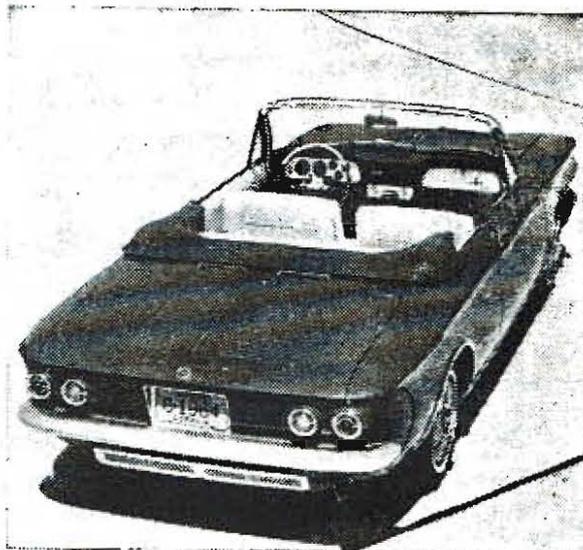
As with the Impala, the straight six engine looked as if it would be a snap to service. Even with power steering pump, power brakes and air conditioning there was room to reach essential service points like plugs, distributor, carburetor, and oil filter. The V-8 was nearly as easy until you add the air-conditioner. Then things begin to get a bit tight.

Chevrolet Chevy II. The name may not be inspired, but it is sort of catchy and so is the car. For my money as a family man, the Chevy II line makes far the most sense for an only car than any other Chevrolet. If you live in, around and with your car the way most families do, the Chevy II makes the life more pleasant, the cost less, and the comfort more than any other Chevrolet.

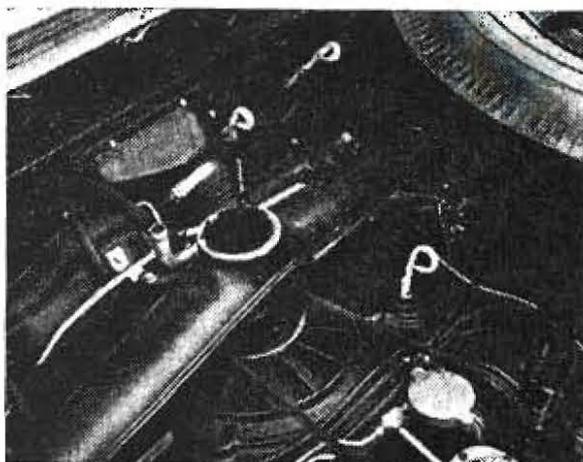
Both front and back seats have plenty of leg room so long trips will not curl your toes. The driving position easily adjusted so a 6-footer, and my 5-foot 1-inch wife felt right at home. So did I at 5 feet 8. The car is high enough so it is easy to enter and leave without learning special tricks about where to put your feet or how to duck your head. On short trips this can make quite a difference in your attitude towards your car, and most family jaunts are short trips, many of them very short trips.

On the road, I liked the feel of the car despite objectionably slow power steering. Full right to full left took five whole turns of the wheel (compared with 3½ for the Corvette's power steering), but the car seemed to know where it was going and be happy about getting there (the very feeling that was conspicuous by its absence in the Impala's manual steering).

Chromed mouldings that were not placed around the windshield could not cause the



CORVAIR SPYDER convertible gives driver much of the flair and fun of a sports car.

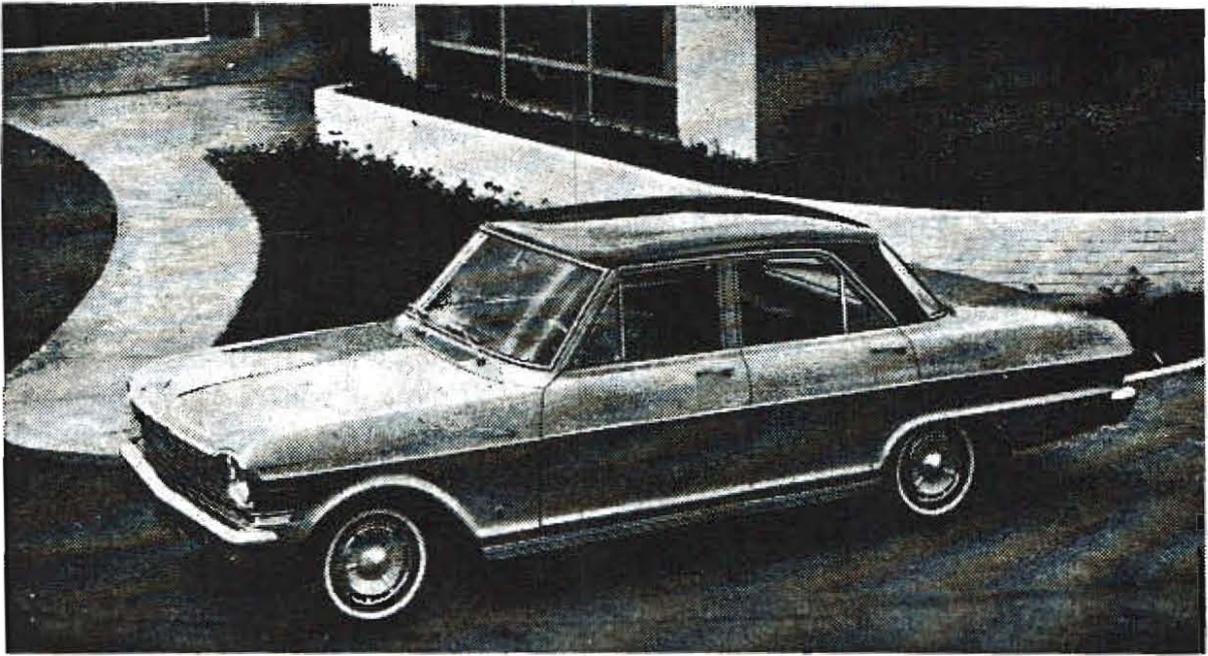


CLOSER CONTROL over fluid levels is maintained by adding dipsticks to check transmission (left), rear axle (top) and engine.

annoying reflections found in some lights in the Chevelle. However, the same simple trim package did not include a padded dash. So, right in front of the passenger's forehead Chevy II has a smoothly arced expanse of very hard-feeling sheet steel.

In a four door station wagon model, there were a couple of neat design features that might make this car particularly attractive for families. The rear seat folded forward and locked in place with an ingenious arrangement of sheet metal that also formed a flat bed long enough to spread an air mattress for camp-out sleeping. And the spare tire was neatly tucked into the right rear fender in such a way you could get it without removing everything in the back of the car to get at it. Details, but nice details that you grow to appreciate more and more the longer you live with the car.

This year the Chevy II offers a V-8 en-



CHEVY II NOVA 4-door sedan is an ideal family car, with plenty of room for comfort. It's available with V-8 engine this year for the first time, though six is fine for most general use.

gine for the first time. With 195 hp it must make this light car very lively indeed. In general suburban driving, I was quite happy with the 120 hp of the smaller six, but for trailer towing, heavy hauling, or just the fun of it, the V-8 could be just the engine to pull this car out of the compact class in performance.

The sixes both have plenty of service room in the engine compartment so the do-it-yourself mechanic should have few problems. Even the V-8 presents no serious accessibility problems. Even if you never come closer to your car's engine than to watch the service station attendant check the oil, this serviceability will pay off for you in lower tune-up costs.

Other long service or service free parts include the unique single plate rear leaf springs. Since there are no leaves to rub against each other, there are no squeaks and no lube problems. U-joints are sealed and exhaust systems aluminized for long life.

Corvair. This radical little compact has come a long way since it was first introduced. For 1964 the body styling remains much the same as in past years, but handling takes quite a step forward with both front and rear anti-sway bars.

More than any other Chevrolet series of autos, the Corvairs combine sedan utility with sporting car flair and feel. However, awkwardness of entering and getting out of hard top models, plus limited rear seat space

in some models makes the Chevy II the better family car. For the Chevy buyer who cannot afford a Corvette, but who like the flair and fun of a car that handles and is more than a transportation appliance, this may be the ideal automobile.

The flat six, light-plane-style, opposed air-cooled engine continues with outputs of 95, 110, and 150 hp in different stages of tune. The spare tire still lives in the engine compartment where you might expect oil fumes, ozone, and heat to damage it, but it seems to thrive on these rubber killing conditions. The nose still offers far more trunk-room than you might expect. On the whole the Corvair continues with very minor mechanical changes.

But these changes have been sufficient to gradually change the car over the years from a dubious handler with very little room to a specialized semi-sporting machine with very good handling indeed and more room than is to be found in most other similar automobiles.

There is the round-up in Chevrolets. The one you like because it does your job may be quite different from the one for me or the one for the man down the street. Now, at long last the Chevy fancier can pick just the right car for every Chevy is not exactly like every other except for the area between the back of the windshield and the front of a rear-mounted spare tire. Them days is indeed gone forever. ■



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New TCA Dues Structure

effective January 1, 1992

Due to rising costs of operating the Tucson Corvair Association Association, the Board of Directors passed a resolution to increase membership dues.

\$12.00 per year: Family Membership

\$15.00 per year: Initial Membership
(includes one name badge. \$4.00 for
each additional badge.)

TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS
FOURTH WEDNESDAY of each month (except December)

Piccadilly Cafeteria, 6767 E. Broadway, Tucson

6:30 pm: Parking Lot Bull Session

7:00 pm: Dinner (optional)

7:40 pm: Meeting starts

COMING EVENTS

Regular Monthly Meeting: Wednesday, January 22, 1992

TCA Board Meeting: Wednesday, Jan 29, 1992 at JB's Swan & Speedway, 7:30pm

Tucson Corvair Association
P.O. Box 50401
Tucson, Arizona 85703



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