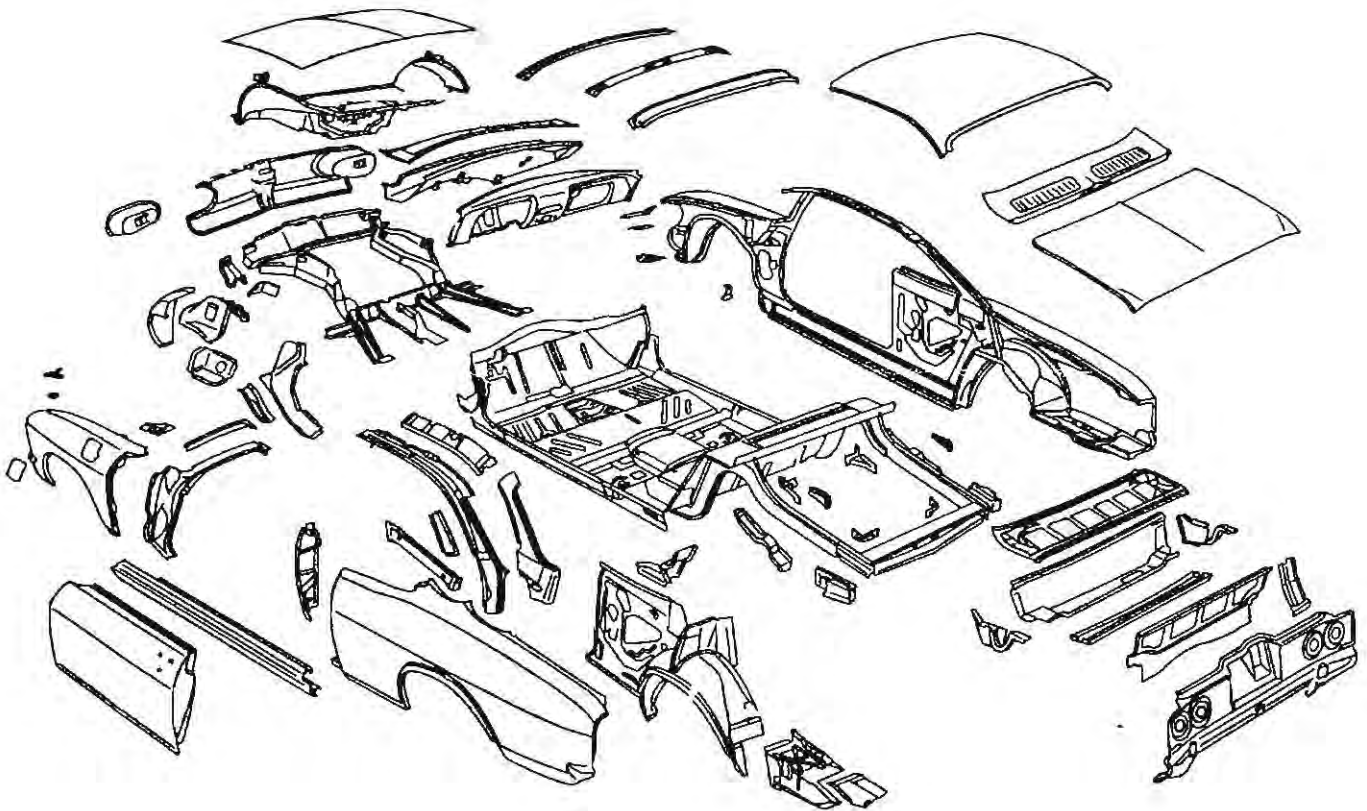


# CORVARIATION

TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION  
VOLUME 24 NUMBER 4

TUCSON, ARIZONA  
JUNE, 1998



FOR SALE: '65 CORSA, totally disassembled, complete, ready for assembly, will sacrifice, wife not happy with project. Make offer - please!!  
Call BR549 for details.

## TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION

EST. 1975

**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 (COSA \ 857 ).

**MONTHLY MEETINGS** are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month except December. One technical/social event is planned for each month with the exception of July and August.

**MEMBERSHIP DUES:** Initial dues \$22.00 per year for Fa. and \$ 15.00 for singles , (includes name tag) renewable \$ 18.00 and \$ 15.00 and payable to the TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION through the Membership Chairperson.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Report any change of address or phone number to the Membership Chairperson. Do not report such changes to the Editor.

COSA MEMBERSHIP DUES are \$28 per year and include a subscription to the COSA Communique, a monthly publication. COSA membership is not require for membership in TCA but is highly recommended. See any TCA officer for information.

**CLASSIFIED ADS** are free to members and \$2.50 per 4-line ad to all others.

**DEADLINE** for all materials submitted for publication in the Corvairsation is the 1st for that month's issue. Mail or deliver all materials to the Editor.

**BUSINESS MAILING ADDRESS:** 4072 E. 22nd St. #197, Tucson, Arizona 85711

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## *PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE....*

Hello All,

First of all, I would like to welcome a new member, Roger Finkenbine into the Tucson Corvair Association. It is always nice to have someone new join the group and bring fresh ideas and support.

I would next like to thank Cecil Alex for the great tech session last meeting. His demonstration of the process for replacing the throttle shaft in our corvair carburator was very well done and very informative. I feel like I might even dare give it a try. I just have to check with Cecil about the dimensions of the reamers that he uses so I can be on the lookout for them when I am shopping around. Thanks again Cecil.

Just a "heads up" notice. There will not be a Corvarisation next month. The editor will be out of town vacationing as will the editor's helper. Also, it was agreed at the meeting to not have a midmonth activity for July since a number of members will be out of town. Some of the members will be going to the national convention. For those going to the convention, that is one major midmonth activity. It sounds like the Berkman's, Cauble's, and possibly the Baker's will be attending the convention. Dave is having second thoughts, however, so if anyone is interested, he would like to sell his plane ticket. It sounds like he is ready to wheel and deal.

*Allen*

The Whale Put Jonah      Down The Hatch      But Coughed Him Up  
Because He Scratched      Burma Shave.....

## *Coming Attractions.....*

**WHAT:** A trip back in time to Old Tucson Studios

**WHEN:** Saturday June 20th

**WHERE:** We will meet at the Cactus Bowling Alley on Alvernon Between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Meet at 9:00 am and caravan out Ajo Way to Kinney Rd. The cost is \$12.95 for adults \$8.95 For children. A Frys VIP card will get you an additional Discount. (amount unknown)

And then.....

NOTHING PLANNED FOR JULY.....

## JUNE TREASURER'S REPORT

BEGINNING CASH ON HAND.....1092.60

### INCOME: (ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE)

Ads.....	17.50
Badges/Pins.....	00.00
Raffle Tickets.....	14.00
Can Money.....	00.00
Merchandise.....	<u>00.00</u>

DUES: Roger Finkenbine (new member).....15.00

TOTAL INCOME (ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE).....46.50

### EXPENSES: (ACCOUNTS PAYABLE)

Stamps.....	00.00
Badges.....	00.00

*TOTAL EXPENSES: (ACCOUNTS  
PAYABLE).....000.00*

*ENDING BALANCE: (CASH ON  
HAND).....1139.10*

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Allen Elwick*

Tucson Covair Association

May 27, 1997

In the absence of Herb Berkman, Beverly and Dave Baker volunteered to write the minutes.

The meeting was called to order by President Allen Elvick at 7:15 PM at Denny's Restaurant , 6484 E. Broadway, Tucson, AZ.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as printed in the Conversation.

The treasurer reported a balance of \$1,092.60 in the bank.

Don Robinson has a lot of hats for sale.

The Librarian now has the latest Clark's catalog in the library.

The luncheon at the White Stallion Ranch was very successful.

Lynn Bloom, editor of the Conversation, requested that the reports be in her hands on time for publication. This is the 10th of the month. She also reported that the Corvair club of Payson, AZ, would like to be included in the next trip to Picacho Peak along with the Phoenix club.

It was agreed that this association would host the monthly car show held at Little Anthony's on January, 9, 1999.

Under new business, the next outing will be Old Tucson on June 20th . The National Covair Convention is July 28th to 30th in St. Louis, Mo. The Cactus Corvair Club is planning a car show in September and the Casas de los Ninos event is scheduled for October. Our own Christmas party will be at the D.M. Officers Club.

As only two gifts were brought, Barry Cunningham won the license plate drawing and Allen Elvick the other. Don Robinson, Barry Cunningham, Ron Bloom, and Allen Elvick will provide gifts at the June meeting.

Thanks to Cecil Alex , we had an exceptional and productive Tech Session. After all, why do we come to meetings? To be entertained, to laugh and to learn about Corvairs of course. What else? Cecil demonstrated the nylon bushing method of repairing worn carburetor butterfly shafts. He drilled and reamed out the carburetor base then installed the nylon bushing and shaft. Good fit!

Respectfully submitted by the Bakers.





# Tucson announces its first Master Heat Pump Technician



**Ron Bloom, owner of Bloom's Air Conditioning in Tucson, is the first technician from Tucson to complete the Master Heat Pump Technician program offered by the Arizona Heat Pump Council.**

---

BY DAWN HOSKINS  
HVACR TODAY

---

**E**ven with his more than 30 years experience in the industry, Ron Bloom was humbled to be named Tucson's first master heat pump technician.

Bloom, owner of Bloom's Air Conditioning, completed the six classes of the Tucson Master Heat Pump Technician program in April.

"I highly recommend it [the program], he said. It makes a person look back and wonder how they got along without it."

Started in Phoenix in 1990, the Master Heat Pump Technician Program includes the following classes:

- Refrigeration Theory and Systems Diagnosis
- Charging, Piping, and Dehydration

- Electrical Fundamentals for Heat Pumps
- Control Systems for Heat Pumps
- Customer Relations and Selling Skills
- HVACR Code and Safety
- Air Flow Dynamics

Mark Gaylor, vice president of Environmental Air Conditioning, said the program's cornerstones of technical, safety, code and customer service issues, were conceptualized by Howard Leonard, an educator in the program and president of Howard Leonard & Associates.

"It's [the program] a step in bringing a level of sophistication to the industry," Gaylor said.

Katherine Fields, executive director of the Electric League's Southern chapter, said the program expanded to Tucson in September 1997 and includes all classes except the newest class: air flow dynamics.

Contractors must complete all course requirements and receive 80 percent or higher to become certified under the program.

Fields said the program assures customers of competent professionals.

"The benefit of the program is to show customers [the contractor] has gone the extra step," she said.

Bloom agreed.

"That's what it's all about, to be the very best technician possible," he said. "You can go into a customer's home and be confident that you can do a good job."

Bloom said he was impressed with Leonard's teaching skills and urged students to actively participate.

"I admire his [Leonard's] teaching skills, I really do," he said.

For more information on the Master Heat Pump Technician Program, call The Heat Pump Council education at (602)263-0115. \*

# JOHN FITCH'S SPRINT

A world-famed racing driver tailors the Monza for torrid cross-country travel.

BY OCEE RITCH



THE Rolls Royce is no longer the 'in' car of wealthy "Easterners," says a squib in a recent news column devoted to the foibles of the upper cultured. "It has been replaced by an American compact."

That the compact referred to is the Corvair Monza will come as no surprise to readers of this publication. For some indefinable reason, the car has snob appeal and has been spoken of as the first domestic product to capture the "European feel" (seemingly favored by those who look beyond our shores for inspiration) since the halcyon days of Duesenberg and Stutz. Whether this is the answer, or whether it is merely because Monzas are handy little cars with distinctive styling, they are cluttering up the roads of Connecticut, upstate New York, Maryland and Florida like gnats at a Labor 'Day picnic.

And an ever-increasing number of these sporty coupes bear twin contrasting stripes and padded tops indicating that they are a special breed completely new in America - the proprietary-production GT. In this case a hybrid called the John Fitch Sprint.

John Fitch, for those whose interest in road racing may not extend back very far in time, was the first American driver to gain International fame after World War II by competing as a member of a European racing team - in this case, Mercedes-Benz. He participated in the famous *Carrera Pan Americana*, the Mexican Road Race, with Mercedes and won numerous national events as a driver for the Cunningham stable. Fitch also played a significant part in the development of the Corvette. His efforts and those of Zora Arkus-Duntov at Sebring in 1956 transformed the Corvette from a nice touring car into a Mercedes beater. He has since been a consultant to GM and was well aware of the Corvair program, even though it was labelled as an economy car, rather than a sporty one which would be in John's field directly.

Naturally he was an early Corvair owner and early in the game discovered its limitations as Corvette-type material.

When it became apparent that the Monza was being purchased by a lively segment of the population which seemed more interested in styling and agility than economy, it occurred to Fitch that there might be commercial possibilities in packaging the changes he had made to his own personal car-changes designed to improve some of the Corvair's good qualities and eliminate some of the objectionable ones. These modifications were nothing radical, merely a few engine and chassis alterations, but which added up to transform the car into a much more enjoyable (and safer) machine.

Having access to the road race course at Lime Rock, Connecticut, (an enterprise of which he has been a director and moving force) John had spent considerable time on it analyzing and correcting the Monza's handling attitude to suit his own vigorous style of driving. Out of this came the spring and shock absorber units which are used to get away from oversteering tendencies. Likewise, the fast steering action to give more positive control and road feel.

"I didn't want a race car," says John, "if I did I'd buy something for that purpose. But I did want to feel more confident when behind the wheel that the car would go where I pointed it."

Once he attained this much to his satisfaction, Fitch felt that if the Monza's lack of power could be corrected without too much sacrifice of reliability he'd enjoy it even more. After investigating and trying all the available hop up offerings, he settled on the four-carburetor method as being able to do the most for the engine for the least amount of money, demand the least maintenance and create the fewest problems in service. He goes on to say, "I like the idea of a blower on this engine since it is inherently a poorly-ventilated unit. But, while I was

experimenting with hot rodding it, I began to get the feeling that the average Corvair owner, who does not want to be concerned with an installation once it's made, is not going to appreciate the necessity for the degree of attention a supercharger calls for. The slight additional power available with the blower comes pretty high, too, and even at the time I was working on my car, friends were asking me to see what I could do with their Monzas, so I actually had price and maintenance for the non-enthusiast in mind pretty early."

Fitch also had a marketing concept in mind pretty early the idea of a package, a converted automobile merchandised under a distinctive name, rather than selling a group of related or unrelated accessories.

Thus, the "Sprint" and its appearance extras - the stripes, the padded top, wood-rimmed steering wheel, "Flame-thrower" driving lights and so on.

Fitch's trademark "Sprint" antedated the use of it by Ford for its Falcon model, incidentally, and there are those who will wager that the Monza Sprint will be around when the Falcon's name has been changed. Much of this depends on General Motors and its plans for the Corvair, however. Right now it looks good for the enthusiast and the Sprint. Changes in 1964 have not eliminated the need for more suds in the engine. Handling, while improved, can still be sharpened for the rallyist and GT fan. So as long as Chevrolet has an eye on the housewife as well as the high school student, the Corvair will probably need the improvements that Sprint mods can make and John Fitch will continue to crank out his distinctive coupes for a good market.

The market is a wide section of the Corvair-owning public ranging from wealthy rich millionaires with money who get kicks from new toys to members of Monza Owner's Clubs who are rabidly in love with their cars and will do anything to make them even more distinctive and vigorous. In between are those who just drive for pleasure, former Porsche owners who have been forced out of their beetles by enlarged families, VW owners who step up in class and miss the quick response of their Wolfsburg terrors, sports car drivers who want a bigger second car but wouldn't be caught dead in a Detroit Barge, rallyists who find the Monza coupe ideal for all their gear and a lot of people who fall into no particular category but just happen to like the car after seeing and driving one.

"The only designation for it is *Gran Turismo*," Fitch says. "The Sprint is not an all-out competition coupe. To build the Corvair into one, as my old friend Bill Thomas has done, is a costly time-consuming process and the end result certainly would not be anything you could drive on the street. But, it is capable of cornering as fast as common sense highway driving allows and is extremely comfortable to drive for long stretches of time. Top speed could be upped, true, but I can show you 110 mph on any road where you feel you want to go that fast. The big factors in the Sprint are better acceleration, more power for hills and passing, improved handling and better stability at speed-the attributes of a GT car compared with a family car of the same general configuration."

To check out these claims and examine the methods by which they are attained, our test crew converged on the facilities of Sprint Pacific, 1716 Silverlake Blvd., Los Angeles, John Fitch's West Coast representatives. Here we were provided with two

"full house" Monza Sprints, both 1963 models, differing only in final drive gear ratio and told to enjoy ourselves.

The Sprint is distinguished by an optional chromed rock (or bug) screen, black vinyl plastic covered hard top and a pair of four-inch stripes painted along the hood-fender break and the deck lid, so one is easy to pick out in traffic. Needless to say, we were stared at and questioned considerably during our test drive-which proved to be about as enjoyable as John Fitch had proclaimed.

The first impression as you slide under the wheel is gained from the wheel itself-a dished, aluminum-spoked hardwood rimmed beauty with a man-sized heft to it. The rim is thicker and heavier than the plastic model it replaces and affords a superior grip, at least for the male contingent. Appearance-wise it is a vast improvement, looking almost opulent (a feeling which may stem partly from the fact that the wheel is priced somewhere around \$60 retail) and taking away from the vast expanses of *ersatz* which characterize the modern car.

Good impression number two came from the short throw of the floor mounted shift lever. In contrast to the long, rubbery and vague motion of the stock Monza four-speed lever, this job has at least a 20 percent reduced travel in all directions from neutral and, moreover, is elevated by a couple of inches which puts the shift knob in a highly convenient location. As one engages the gears and moves off, the sense of tautness and controllability is heightened by the quickened response of the front wheels to the motion of the steering wheel. Now reduced to 2½ turns from lock to lock (stock is nearly four turns), steering is almost in the sports car category but not so overdone that the car feels strange or awkward. There is more pressure required than in the production Corvair but with the car's rearward weight bias, it is far from objectionable. In fact the touch is still light but positive.

On anything up to a 90-degree corner, the driver does not have to shift his hands on the wheel and most curves can be negotiated with a fractional motion of the wheel. This is pleasant for mountainous country touring but more heartwarming to the sporty driver who likes to be able to hang the rear end out. The arms-straight-ahead position can be maintained under nearly all conditions. For the navigator, or the chicken-livered, we suppose, there is a chromed sissy grip, or grab rail, attached directly under the glove compartment. (In the summertime this embellishment could also be used as a towel rack, no doubt.)

Also decorative, but functional, is the tachometer mounted below the instrument panel to the left of the steering column. This is a good-sized electronic type, quite accurate according to our wheel dyno check, and sensitive enough to show up a miss which developed when we lost one of the little caps used to plug vacuum connections on the added carburetors. The tach is pretty revealing, too, of the improvement worked by the engine modifications. At 3500 rpm the needle makes a sudden sweep up the dial to match the surge the driver can feel in acceleration - something which doesn't happen with the stock Monza.

Zero-to-60 time varied slightly between the two cars, but was consistently within the 10-second bracket by stop watch. This is in full street condition with no strip tricks, such as removal of spare tire, loose fan belt, etc., and with no attempt to really blast off. The variation was attributable to the fact that one of the



demos was equipped with 3.89 to 1 rear end gears while the other carried 3.55's. The 3.89 car would leave the other from the standing start, but past the 60 mph mark the higher geared vehicle was alongside and would pull slightly ahead in third when both drivers were using 5500 rpm as a shift point.

The engines in both cars would wind to 6000 rpm easily enough but the fan noise at this point is enough to cause the cautious driver to back off. Lower ratio fan pulleys have been installed, which is perhaps responsible for a little extra at the top end and in acceleration. No cooling problems have been encountered with the slower-turning fans, according to Sprint people.

Added punch at cruising speed was the most-noticed and most-remarked-upon attribute of the Sprint engine. At 65 mph to 80 mph (3500 to 4200 rpm), throttle response is extremely gratifying. We had no opportunity to try top speed, but the stout pull of the engine at 80 mph makes it apparent that it will hold considerably more than the stocker. On the freeways, where pulling into fast-moving traffic is mandatory, and in the mountains which surround Los Angeles, the Sprint is an absolute joy to drive. The flexibility of the engine eliminates a lot of gear changing and the reserve of power helps maintain a positive approach to driving rather than a continuous feeling of frustration often experienced where passing slower cars is a tedious business.

During extremely severe cornering we were able to provoke two conditions which are the only flaws discoverable during our comprehensive road test: It is possible to make the rear end chatter and you can make the carburetors starve or flood. Now, these cars are equipped with factory tires - certainly not the kind of equipment a driver would choose if he was going to indulge in the kind of shenanigans we pulled - and Monza owners who have discarded the "economy" skins and mounted a premium grade of tire tell us that decent rubber puts an end to the chatter caused by skipping tires. Under all but these wild-eyed slides, the rear end sticks admirably and is under control.

The fuel starvation occurred at the same time but it is impossible to believe that this type of maneuver would ever be indulged in short of racing, and the Sprint is not being touted as a race car. So, let it be said that you have to go pretty far to make the automobile look bad.

The suspension changes which have been made are in the way of a substitution of different rear springs and shock absorbers. The shocks are adjustable, but Sprint Pacific reports that, so far, 100 percent of their customers have specified the firmest setting, and this is the way the demonstrators were arranged. Front springs and shocks are left untouched, except in the case of those patrons who prefer an even firmer ride and for them an optional set of front shocks is available. This suspension bears no resemblance to the factory's optional heavy-duty suspension (stock on Spydors) and when a Spyder Sprint is ordered, the entire suspension is changed over.

Steering is speeded up by means of altered Corvair steering arms. These are stock forgings cut and welded to Aircraft Certification specs, then shot-peened and magnafluxed. "These steering arms are more expensive than several others which are available to us," said Sumner Williams who makes most of the suspension changes at Sprint Pacific, "but when the component is as vital as it is in a steering system, we don't believe in taking

any chances. In addition, these arms can be positioned so that there is no increase in the turning circle. We found that as an objection with other arms."

Engine modifications center around the four-carburetor installation and power tuning with additional work on the distributor if the customer specifies that he is interested primarily in initial acceleration. The four-jug set up is the simplest of all the kits being offered and makes it possible to keep the price on an engine conversion to reasonable limits (approximately \$150 if done separately). In this arrangement the carburetors are not turned sideways, but use stock linkage and have automatic chokes.

"If you turn the carbs around to eliminate the one tenth of one percent chance that you'll ever encounter starvation," says George Trevett, engine expert in the operation, "then you have to Mickey Mouse something, such as installing a long manual choke cable or do without. Even in Southern California there are plenty of times when you need a choke, and don't let anybody tell you otherwise. I like the feeling that I can turn on the key and fire the engine up anytime I want to because I do that several times a day. I seldom pitch a car into a turn so fast that I have to worry about getting out of it."

With the four carbs comes a set of four individual air cleaners. The Fitch setup is unique in that these air cleaners do not interfere with the mounting of the spare tire in its accustomed place above the engine. Although many Sprint owners prefer to move the tire to the front compartment to assist better weight distribution, the ability to retain the spare in the rear helps with luggage space.

An integral part of the engine hop up is a tuned-trombone exhaust system originated by Dave Mitchell of BesTone in Pasadena. This pair of mufflers and long pipes gives the Corvair a definitely husky sound, plus picking up a couple of horses. With the sharply-tuned Sprint engine the exhaust note is crisp and clean, adding, it must be admitted, to the driving pleasure.

All of the components are available separately as bolt-on items as well as installed on individual cars in groups or singly from John Fitch or any of his representatives. This facet of the business is now beginning to rival the original concept of the "package," it seems, although ordering a "Sprint," as such, from a representative or the home base is still the prime point in Fitch's advertising.

A Sprint, such as one of our test cars, delivers on the West Coast for just over \$3000. If you want the performance options and decide to forgo some of the dress-up accessories you can bring the price down to around \$2800. A complete choice of colors and normal factory accessories is available. So the Sprint offers a chance to eat your cake and have it, too - performance and individual styling but with no sacrifice of reliability or comfort. And, to those who have gone the imported car route, the most important plus of all - service in any village or hamlet in the country-where there is a Chevrolet dealer or mechanic.

Yes, Rolls Royce is a great car, but they can't make that statement. Maybe the upper cultured have the right idea with an assist from John Fitch.

*Editor's Note: This article was part of a Petersen publication entitled "Corvair Performance Handbook", Ogee Ritch, 1963.*

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\*\*\*\*\*NOTE--- Ads in Vairs and Spears are free to TCA members. Non-members can place a four line ad for \$2.50.  
Send ads directly to Corvairnation editor\*\*\*\*\*

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

DENNY'S RESTAURANT 6484 E.BROADWAY. Tucson,Az.

6:00 pm: Parking Lot Bull Session

6:30 pm: Dinner (optional)

7:30 pm: Meeting starts

COMING EVENTS

PLEASE CONTACT A  
BOARD MEMBER WITH  
ANY SUGGESTIONS

Regular Monthly Meeting, Wednesday June 24, 1998  
TCA Executive Board Meeting: Thursday, June 30 1998  
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A 4072 E. 22nd St. Suite 197  
A Tucson, Arizona 85711  
A Fax [520-745-5454]



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