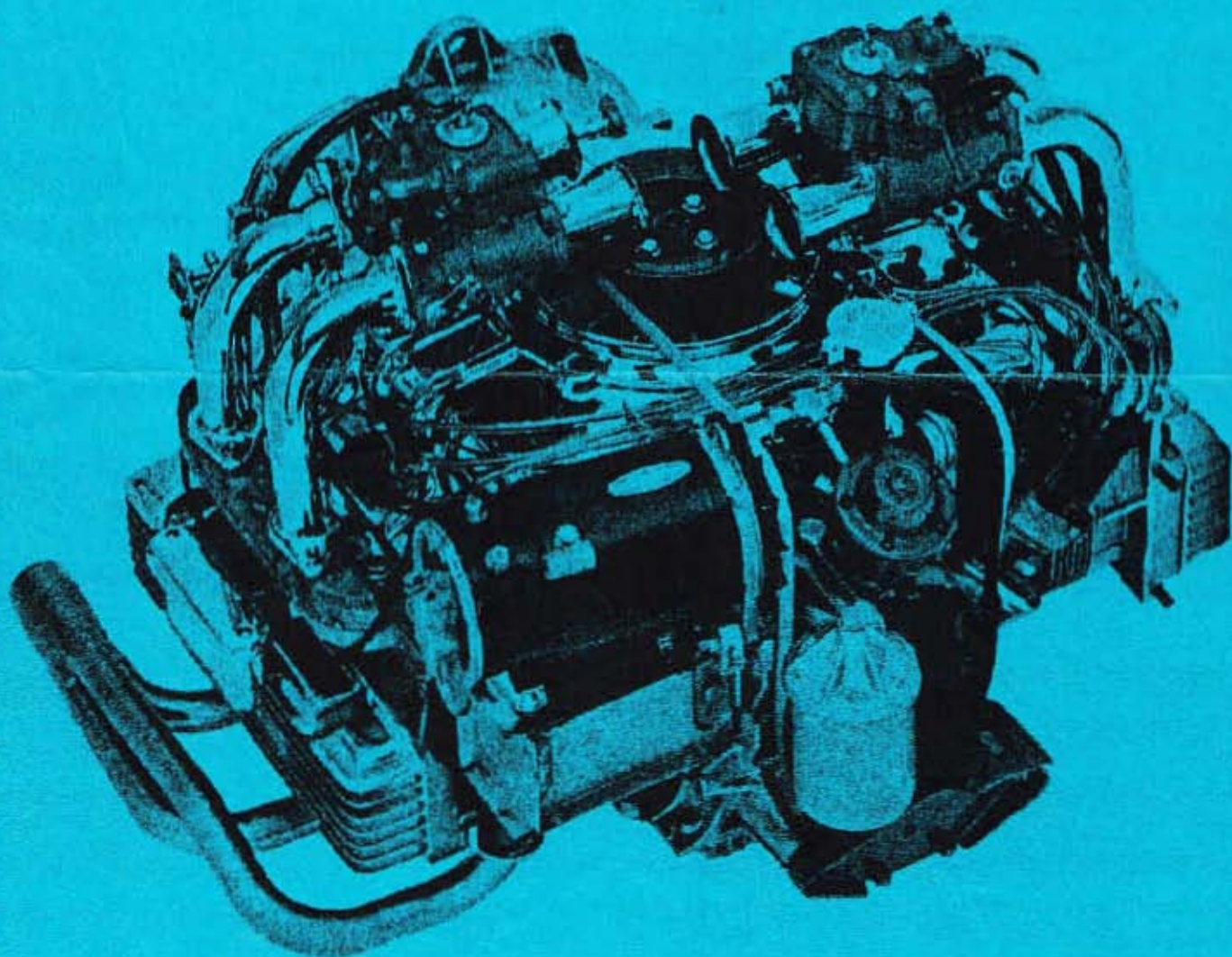


# Corvairisation

Tucson Corvair Association  
Volume 25, Number 3

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May 1999





**Tucson Corvair Association**  
**Established 1975**

**Corvalsation** 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), Chapter 857).

**Monthly Meetings** are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month except December. One technical/social event is planned for each month except August.

**Membership Dues** are \$15 per year for singles and \$18 per year for families. Initial dues are \$15 for singles and \$22 for families (includes name tags). Make checks payable to Tucson Corvair Association.

**Change of Address:** Report any change of address or phone number to the Membership Chairperson. Do not report such changes to the **Corvalsation** Editor.

**COSA Membership Dues** are \$27 per year and include a subscription to the **COSA Communique**, a monthly publication. COSA membership is not required for membership in TCA, but is highly recommended. See any TCA officer for more 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 **Corvalsation** is the 10<sup>th</sup> for that month's issue. Mail or deliver all materials to the **Corvalsation** Editor.

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## *The Presidential Procrustean*

*Yes, we're going to make the Tucson Corvair Association a dynamic and viable organization. If we have to use force, we'll do that too. Would anyone volunteer to be the "Enforcer"? Well, maybe we won't need him for a while. We'll just try having good, fun and informative meetings and exciting mid-month activities; for now, that is.*

*Le Car, that's French for those of you that espouse the language. Yes, we own a 1964 700 four door. It's red with a white top. Our plan is to fix and shine then raffle, sell, give, donate, ignore or convince a recycling firm to accept it. We'd really like the club to fatten it's coffers as a result of it's next destination. VOLUNTEERS— We need help to fix, shine and clean. Gordon Cauble is in charge of the project. Call him to offer your contribution, whatever it may be.*

*Cyberspace, you betcha! We're right up there with the todayers now. We have a web site thanks to Paul Dunn and our money. The URL is — [www.corvairs.org](http://www.corvairs.org). We're working on the content and format now. We should have it up and running toute suite (more French). We'll let you know.*

*We had fun at the April meeting with "Guess the Part". Bring a part, a Corvair part, that is, to the May meeting and we'll do it again. Be sure to remember where you got the part and how to reinstall it.*

*Don't forget the Gas Light Theater on the 28th of this month. Call Allen.*

*TAHOE—Time's getting short. I have application forms and the schedule of events.*

**DAVE BAKER**

## **Minutes of Membership Meeting – 4/26/99**

President **Dave Baker** called the regular meeting of TCA to order at Denny's Restaurant at 7:42:41 PM by announcing that he missed the Picacho Peak event because everybody met on the West side of MacDonald's instead of the traditional East side. No one bothered to look around the corner to see if anyone was there. Guests were: **Dave Thompson**, a former member who may rejoin. **Randy Griffith's** cousin **James Lanham**, owner of a '65 Corvair. He also is considering joining. Previous month's minutes approved with a correction: The Picacho Peak event was on April 18, not April 17 as reported. Apologies to anyone who was inconvenienced. Also neglected to note that Dave presented Certificates of Appreciation to **Allen Elvick**, Past President and **Larry Dandridge**, Past VP. Larry's certificate was given to his mother, **Ethel Moore**.

**Treasurer (Allen Elvick)** – Previous month's balance = \$1502.47. Income = \$121.00, expenses = \$659.83. New balance = \$1063.64.

**Membership (Beverly Baker)** - Trying to figure out how to contact all Corvair owners in Pima County. Probably cannot do it through registration data, but still thinking. Anyone have a good idea?

**Library (Dave Baker)** – Continues to be full of good stuff, including tools for loan. See Dave to check out items. Need to get the club tow bar back from Ron Bloom.

**Merchandise (Don Robinson)** - Final call for new logo shirts with the TCA insignia. Price is \$15 from **Jim Wilson's Creative Stitching** in Grand Junction. Order will be sent in next week.

**Corvairsation (Don Robinson)** – Need to update the club mailing address in the CORSA Communiqué. All members are requested to submit editorial material, even if you have to make it up. Deadline is the 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **Activities (Barry Cunningham) -**

**Past: April 17: Picacho Peak Picnic with Cactus Corvair Club.** Another successful joint activity. Lots of food was available to feed 17 folks from Tucson and about 23 from Phoenix. Lots of interesting cars to gawk at, including an early model convert with fender skirts and a continental kit. In a solemn ceremony, **Larry Dandridge's** ashes were scattered in the Desert. It was the common belief that Larry would always be with us now whenever we have a picnic at Picacho.

### **Future:**

**May 28: Gaslight Theater - The Three Musketeers.** Doors open at 6:15, Show starts at 7:00 PM. Money must to Allen by two weeks before the event. \$11.77 for adults, \$6.42 for kids if we have 20 or more. **IF you intend to go to this, you must get your money to Allen immediately if not sooner!**

**June: CORSA International Convention at Lake Tahoe.** So who's going?!

**July/August:** Nothing planned. May go dark for the summer.

Tune-up clinic will probably be held in November (per Barry).

**Old Business** - Dave and Gordon went to see the car that has been donated to the club. It's a '64 700 4-door, red with white top. Had a flat tire. Got the engine started, but needs a carb overhaul. Left front wheel is locked. Gordon holds an open title, but the car belongs to the club.

**New Business** - None

**Program/Tech Talk** - **Moe Herman**, owner of **Oldies And Goodies Classics** was our guest speaker. Moe came to the meeting in a blue early model convertible that he restored in his shop. He's been involved for many years in antique cars, restorations, dirt track racing, etc. Has been in business in Tucson many years. Was one of the first Corvair mechanics in town. Now specializes in all kinds of chassis and body work, particularly hot rod building. His shop is located at 3138 E. President St., 85714, (520) 294-1918.

**Raffle:** Winners – Barry: oil filter, Jennifer McElreath: Sponge/carwash, Ethel: Shop Towels./Sunshade, Allen: Plastic Bags. Next month's prize donors: **Dave B, Jennifer M, Barry C, Ethel M.**

**JOE:** None, thank goodness!

Meeting adjourned sometime around 8:59:00 PM, more or less.  
Respectfully submitted,



## MAY 99 TREASURER'S REPORT

BEGINNING CASH ON HAND.....1063.64

### INCOME: (ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE)

Ads.....	00.00
Badges/Pins.....	00.00
Raffle Tickets.....	15.00
Can Money.....	3.36
Picacho 50/50 Raffle proceeds.....	45.00
Larry Dandridge memorial.....	<u>20.00</u>

TOTAL INCOME (ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE).....83.36

### EXPENSES: (ACCOUNTS PAYABLE)

Stamps.....	19.80
Badges.....	0.00
Copier Repair.....	90.00
Larry Dandridge memorial collection to Ethel Moore.....	<u>20.00</u>

TOTAL EXPENSES: (ACCOUNTS PAYABLE).....129.80

ENDING BALANCE: (CASH ON HAND).....1017.20

Respectfully Submitted,

*Allen Eluick*

from the editor.....

If you missed the April regular club meeting, you missed the report on the joint mid-month picnic with Cactus Corvair at Picacho Peak. What a great picnic!! There were more than 40 people and at least 25 Corvairs– beauties they were. The food was so awesome I thought I was at a Methodists' potluck!! Anyway we had a great time because the turn-out was exceptional.

Our next regular meeting is May 26 and the May mid-month activity is May 28; which is the *Three Musketeers* at the Gaslight Theater. Hope you have your tickets already!

We need to "grow" our membership in the Tucson Corvair Association. Somebody else said it first when they suggested providing a real interest in the car to our peers, siblings and friends. How about it? Think about it! Bring someone to the meeting this month, next month, a son or daughter, brother or sister, granddaughter or grandson, your grandmother, the neighbor or the kid down the street .

Lots of good historical info in the feature articles this month. Can you identify the beautiful engine on the front cover?

#### 20 YEARS AGO

Brian Lynch was President of TCA. We were very fortunate to have him with his great sense of humor and his generosity and kindness. The club had just been to Picacho and Brian wrote about it. Jim Wright was a new member having just joined in January. Frank McKenna wrote his regular column *Frankly Speaking* with a detailed primer on restoring the Corvair glove box. John North wrote his column *What's Doin' On Cars* and Don Bortle had a tech tip on securing that outside mirror. Barney's Auto Service was still fixing cars. Jay's Da Nite was selling auto parts and Jerry Bishop had a salvage full of Corvairs.

#### 10 YEARS AGO

Who is this guy, Dave Baker? He was president and there was a pool party potluck at the Baker home. TCA was meeting at the Piccadilly where George from George's Transmission demonstrated the working of the Powerglide two speed tranny in April and a paint and body man was scheduled to speak at the May meeting. Vic Howard was the treasurer. Bob Thomson was vice president and his son Dave was member-at-large.

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# **A New Family of Vehicles to Fight the Imports**

A look back at one of the first of the breed: The Chevrolet Corvair

BY LINCOLN MERRIHEW

Middlesex News May 2, 1996

Back in (insert any time period since about 1958), executives at (insert U.S. car company name) were concerned about the growing intrusions by import automakers into the (insert the name of some portion of the U.S. light vehicle market). In response, said company developed the (insert vehicle name).

This Story is about one of the first such encounters and the resulting vehicle: The Chevrolet Corvair. The Corvair was a new small car (actually a family of vehicles) designed to fight small foreign entries like the Volkswagen Beetle. Just like Saturn was designed to fight competition from Japan.

Like Saturn's cutting-edge plastic body panels, the Corvair was overflowing with innovative ideas. First, the engine was in the rear and the rear wheels were the driven ones. Just like today's front drive/front engine cars, this means no drive shaft slicing through the passenger compartment. The engine itself was a flat six (like those of the Porsche 911 and Subaru SVX). Further, it was air-cooled like the Beetle, meaning no radiator leaks and no need to find room for the radiator in the design.

Also interesting was an automatic transmission gear selector that was mounted on the dashboard. The selector switch looked like the sliding switches used to adjust the heating and air conditioning on many of today's cars, except that the switch moved up and down instead of left and right. The Corvair was also the only American car at the time to offer a 4-wheel independent suspension.

In 1960 (its first year of production) GM produced more than 250,000 Corvairs. That's a quarter of a million in year one. Saturn didn't beat that number until its third full year of production despite today's market being much greater than the market in 1960.

Like countless companies since the Corvair, Chevrolet really leveraged the Corvair platform to get the most for its money. It started with a base sedan, then added a sporty coupe. Then came a convertible and a station wagon (like the Cavalier). GM then developed a minivan and pickup based on the Corvair as well (like Chrysler basing its minivans off the original K-cars and VW based its Microbus on the Beetle). They all used the same platforms and engines. The result was a whole family of vehicles within the Chevrolet lineup (not unlike Geo). In 1962 came the turbo charged Monza Spyder with a 150 hp version of the flat six, a tachometer, and heavy duty suspension. The 1996 Ford Probe GT only bests that number by 3 horsepower.

The Corvair hit a previously undeveloped market niche head on: in 1963 sales of the coupe version alone hit 120,000 units. The small sporty coupe came years before (and may have been the inspiration for) the much heralded Ford Mustang. It would not be too much of a leap of faith to say that the Corvair was the inspiration for all modern U.S. sports coupes with snazzy styling, performance options and a sharp looking convertible.

For the 1965 model year, the Corvairs got striking new sheetmetal. The sporty image was also boosted by cranking up the horsepower on the turbo model to a healthy 180 (above the Acura

Intega GSR's current 170). Gone were the station wagon, and the Greenbrier minivan left by the 1966 model year. With the new body style came some real hot rod activity. A Yenko Stinger racing version was tearing up tracks and do it-your-selfers could buy kits that allowed installation of a mid-engine V8.

But the writing was on the wall: GM declared that no more development money could be spent on the Corvair except for that needed to meet safety requirements. One of the reasons for the cutback was that GM needed money for a quick and poignant response to the Mustang. The response came in the form of the Camaro. Look closely at the profile of the first Camaros and you can see quite a bit of Corvair coupe. But there seems to be a disconnect here: why would GM cut funding for a vehicle that had been selling over a quarter of a million units a year and that was just restyled? The answer is the publication of Ralph Nader's book titled "Unsafe at Any Speed." This book focused on the early Corvair models and what the book deemed dangerous handling characteristics. In 1972 a U.S. government investigation found that the Corvair was indeed stable as long as drivers kept the tires properly inflated. But of course this blessing came after the end of Corvair production.

The source of the handling oddities was in part the weight of the engine. While designed to weigh about 290 pounds, it ended up being more than 360 pounds. Because the engine is at the extreme rear of the vehicle (mostly behind the rear wheels) and the suspension was designed for a lighter powerplant, the extra weight caused the unusual handling characteristics. Compounding the problem was that in a cost-savings move GM decided not to equip the Corvair with antisway bars. In 1962, an improved suspension became available. In 1964, GM really nailed the problem by adding a transverse rear camber-compensating spring, but again too late as Nader's book honed in the 1960-1963 versions.

Sales in 1966 fell to just under 90,000, followed by further decay to less than 30,000 cars in 1967. For 1968 only the coupe remained and sales officially ended in May of 1969.

My first car was a maroon red Corvair Monza sedan with the normally aspirated engine. I bought it with a good friend for \$100 in the late 1970s. It was indeed a handful to drive until you learned when to throw the cars weight and in which direction. We invested \$15 for hubcaps and sold it a few months later at a Corvair Club meeting. That's right, at the meeting of a club devoted to a vehicle that hadn't been in production for about a decade. Even today there are still parts suppliers that specialize solely in Corvair parts, and many enthusiasts remain.

The Corvair was one of the first efforts by the Big 3 to take on the import name-plates and one of first to offer a complete line of vehicles (cars and trucks) and performance options on a single platform. Hats off to the conceptualizers and the stylists. Thumbs down to whoever was responsible for not opting for the sway bars and camber springs right out of the gate.



*Editor's Note: In the late 70s John Wipff published a couple of volumes called The Compleat History of the Corvair for the Corvair Nut!! In Volume I he presented several chapters of information that we would like to share (or reshare, as the case may be) with you over the next few months.*

## **AIN'T MONZA A LITTLE TOWN JUST NORTH OF DALLAS?**

Introduced in January, 1960, were two coupes, the Corvair Club Coupe, (527) priced at \$1,810, and the Corvair 700 Club Coupe (727) at \$60 more. Exterior and interior appointments were the same as their sedan counterparts, options and accessories continued as before. But the light at the end of the tunnel was beginning to appear.

And that light was in the form of the Corvair Monza 900 Club Coupe (927). Priced at \$2,238, this jazzy 'sporty' car, inspiration for its own nemesis, the Mustang (although Stude Hawk nuts will dispute this) had an all-vinyl interior, bucket seats in red, turquoise, blue or green. Standard on the Monza was: carpeting front and rear, fold-down rear-seat, back-up lights, stainless-steel trim on upper door-frames and rear window openings, stainless-steel rocker-panel moldings, wheel covers, chrome-plated simulated air-vents on the rear deck, and a Monza nameplate on the lower front fenders.

Other standard features were: a deluxe steering-wheel with horn ring, white vinyl headliner with two sun-visors, special door and window handles, rear-seat ash trays, chrome trim on the domelight and rear-view mirror bracket, cigarette lighter, glove box light, chrome-based front arm-rests, anodized glove-box door applique with chrome frame and Monza name in gold. Optional whitewall tires were narrow-band design and paint options included no two-tones, but all the other nine solid colors. The 95 hp engine cost \$27 more and four-speed cost \$65. These options were also available in the standard line.

And to help sales, Chevy put on display at the Chicago Auto Show an experimental-version of the Monza, complete with sun-roof, wire wheels, an interior that brings to mind the '62 Skylark, front 'bumper grille,' dual exhaust (from one muffler, are you listening, Mustang?) and other goodies designed to make the populace drool even more. And from May through the end of the model year, the Monza sold only about 2,500 fewer than had the 500 version of the same car all year.

And the Corvair, after birth problems to rival a male pregnancy, was on its way.

## **HOW TO GO FROM ECONOMY TO PERFORMANCE IN ONE EASY YEAR**

In 1960, Falcon sold 435,000 units, Rambler sold 332,000. And Corvair? Well, Virginia, seven more than a quarter of a million ain't bad. Or is it?

Chevy wasn't used to taking second place, let alone third place in sales (except in 1957 and 1959, when it gave up first place in auto sales to Ford) so something had to be done. One thing, as already mentioned was the crash Chevy II program. But another was diversification of the line.

From a somewhat pathetic lineup of two four-door sedans in the fall of 1959, the 1961 Corvair line expanded to thirteen distinct candidates for the consumer dollar. New this year were: the 500 and 700 Lakewood wagons, a Monza 900 sedan, two Greenbriers, two pickup trucks, and the 95 Corvan panel truck. If that couldn't woo that fickle beast, the public, nothing would.

But, the public saw only the Monza Club Coupe. Of the 280,000 passenger cars sold in the Corvair line, the MCC accounted for almost 110,000.

Of course, there was very little change in the '61 model. The major difference was in the motor. It was an almost complete detail change. The former cooling fan collar was gone, as was the choke in the air cleaner. The displacement went from 140 cid to 145 by an increase of 1/8" in. bore. The horsepower rating stayed the same, however, on the standard engine. The horsepower rating on the optional Super TurboAir was now 98 hp. The cooling system added damper-doors to the lower-shroud, controlled by two thermostats, one per shroud. A hand-operated choke now graced the carburetors, operated by a single cable from under the dash and the battery was moved from the right side of the engine compartment to the left, the air-cleaner was changed to two individual units connected by a cross-over duct with a central air-intake. Those changes made way for the mounting of the spare tire in the engine compartment, the weight of which, in that place, was about as necessary as "tits on a boar", as my grandfather used to say. (Add the condensor and compressor of the new-for-'61 optional air conditioner and you had approximately 35/65 front-rear weight ratio. Good luck!)

With the removal of the spare from the trunk, not only did trunk space increase (0.2 cu. ft. plus the volume of the spare) but gasoline tank capacity increased from 11 to 14 gallons.

While the gasoline heater was still an option, there was a new Forced-Air heater, made possible by the ducting change around the motor. The gas heater became a dealer-installed option and few were installed.

A word about the optional 98 hp engine is in order. This engine had a 9:1 compression, a HP camshaft, larger valve springs, revised ignition timing, modified carbs, 1/2" larger exhaust and tail-pipes, and a smaller (!) clutch disc, theoretically for better shifting. This rip-snorter required premium gas, as did the standard engine when installed on the Monzas with Powerglide. (The same heads were used on both engines.) Falcon people had a chuckle over this choice tid-bit, since all Falcon engines ran on regular. Plus in the '61 Mobilgas Economy Run, the Falcon got 2 mpg better than the Corvair. And Falcon outsold Corvair again in '61.

Taking a look at the sales figures for the year, the least popular models in the Corvair line were the Lakewood 500 wagon and the Loadside 95 pickup truck, 5600 and 2500 sales, respectively. The Monza, on the other hand, with 110,000, seemed to be leading from utilitarianism to sportiness.

The fickle beast was again pointing the way for Corvair. While 500's were backing up on dealer's lots, Monzas were selling like mosquito spray at a nudist picnic.

## **Vairs and Spares**

**1962 Spyder coupe. Complete ,green, with turbo but need TLC. \$500 Call Randy, (520) 887-4734.**

**1969 chevy 3/4-ton. 396, AT, Pwr Disc Brakes, PS, AC, Cruise, Stereo, Shell, Carpet, Air suspension, Custom seat, Dual spots, 3 tanks, Dual batteries, Telescoping bumper, HEI, CB wiring, Trailer brake controller, Manuals, Spare parts, Ugly paint. \$1/pound obo (That's \$5050, I'll start at \$4750). (520) 751-9500 eve, (520) 663-9122 day. (Note: This truck has been to seven CORSA National Conventions and has towed Corvairs to four of them.**

**For sale: 1967 Monza 4 door sedan. Restorable. Minor front end damage. No rust. \$500 OBO. For more info call Eddle (520) 748-8507 or (520) 740-1234 or call Gordon Cauble (520) 299-1122.**

**For sale: 1965 convertible 110/auto, new mist blue paint new white top and upholstery, good tires. \$4300/make offer, call Don Henn (520) 743-3346.**

**For sale: Corvair parts—large outdoor yard full of great Corvair parts. Call Barry Cunningham at (520) 747-9028.**

**From one Corvair lover to another...**

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