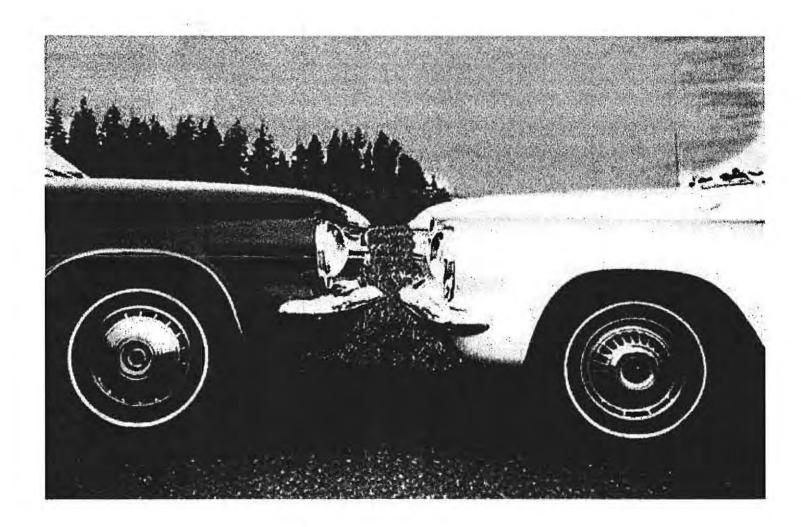
Commission of the Contraction of

Tucson Corvair Association Volume 25, Number 7

Tucson, Arizona September 1999



In this Issue:

- Corvair Corsa A view from Canada
- Chapter 12 of the Compleat History of the Corvair for the Corvair Nut!!

Tucson Corvair Association Established 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 (CORSA), 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 Corvairsation Editor.

CORSA Membership Dues are \$27 per year and include a subscription to the CORSA Communique, a monthly publication. CORSA 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 Corvairsation is the 10th for that month's issue. Mail or deliver all materials to the Corvairsation Editor.

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The Presidential Proclivity

Well, anyone who didn't attend the August meeting missed a hilarious birthday party—my 76th, that is. After the pledge of allegience we brought out a cake that had a large 76 on it's top. We inserted a tall candle and I lighted it with a propane torch. The menbers sang Happy Birthday and cake was served around the table. Seemed like that set the tone for the entire meeting and we told Corvair jokes and laughed til after 10:00 PM We're usually finished by 9:00. It was great to see an old friend, Vic Howard, who is a current member and lives in Bullhead City.

Paul Dunn says that our web site is up and running. I haven't been able to log on so Paul is investigating. I was just on Virtual Vairs and the Corsa sites. They were working just fine.—So far we haven't had much response from the members with their write-ups and photographs. How shall we do this????? I am retired, that is, I don't have to go to work every day and I have a good camera. I would be happy to interview and photograph each member with their car. Like we say, the web is a great recruiting tool and you can have friends all over the world.—Herb Berkman has received E-Mail from a Paul Dupuis-Philipponnet who is a member of the Paris, France Corvair club. Paul expects to be in Arizona in September and may attend our monthly meeting.

Don't forget our September mid-month activity. It's the Wildlife museum at 4800 W. Gates Pass road. Meet there at 10:00 AM Saturday the 18th. Also, our monthly meeting will be at Denny's 6484 E. Broadway-7:30 PM. Come on out and bring a Corvair joke and a friend.

Are we shining our cars and getting ready for the Casas show at Reid Park in October and the Great Western Fan Belt Toss in Palm Springs and also, our Tune-Up clinic in November. That's not all, the Christmas party is coming up like thunder. Gordon is in charge. It should be big, really BIG.

DAVE BAKER

SEPTEMBER 99 TREASURER'S REPORT

BEGINNING CASH ON HAND\$1944.37
INCOME: (ACCOUNTS RECEVABLE)
Ads .00.00 Badges/Pins .00.00 Raffle Tickets (July & August .25.00 Can Money .00.00 25.00
DUES: Rob Pensa 15.00
TOTAL INCOME (ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE)\$40.00
EXPENSES: (ACCOUNTS PAYABLE)
Stamps(June, July, August)
TOTAL EXPENSES: (ACCOUNTS PAYABLE)298.04
ENDING BALANCE: (CASH ON HAND)

Respectfully Submitted,

Allen Elvick

Minutes of Membership Meeting - 8/25/99

President Dave Baker called the regular meeting of TCA to order at Denny's Restaurant at 7:32:27 PM by leading the club members in yet another reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to TCA. Then he opened the meeting with a story about buying an old truck with no keys and brakes on only three wheels for only \$500. Such a deal! Guests were:

Norman Zeller who has many 60-64 Corvairs for sale. He left many business cards, so if you want to buy a Corvair, get a card and call him. Also, member Vic Howard, who now lives in Havasu City, was in town and stopped by. Minutes of the last meeting were approved as published after some haranguing of the Secretary by the President for writing down exactly what was said even if it was wrong (hey, we don't make this stuff up!).

Treasurer (Allen Elvick) – Starting July balance = \$961.83, ending August balance = 1944.37. This was primarily due to selling the car to an anonymous member for \$1000.

Membership (Beverly Baker) - No Report.

Library (Dave Baker) - Nothing new. Last month said will publish a new inventory next month. Said it again this month.

Merchandise (Don Robinson) - Hats for sale @ \$12-\$13. Coffee cups for sale for \$5.

Corvairsation (Don Robinson) – Copy machine had another failure and repair cost \$35 (If every time it fails it costs half as much as the time before, eventually we will be able to afford to fix it every day). There was some discussion of the cost of the maintaining the machine and the high copy count it is showing. Some sentiment expressed that we should get rid of it and just pay for copies.

Activities (Barry Cunningham)

NOTE: The info shown here is not the official calendar. It is only what the Secretary wrote down because someone said it. Check the official TCA calendar before heading off in the wrong direction at the wrong time on the wrong day.

September 18 - A visit to the Wildlife Museum on Gates Pass Road. Meet at 10:00 AM at an undisclosed location. October 23 - Casa de los Ninos Car Show. More info at the next meeting! New procedures will be in effect for park entry. We need a list of cars to be entered.

May 2000 (first weekend) - Cactus Corvair will sponsor a Rally Across Arizona, starting in Bisbee and going all the way up to Route 66. More on this later.

Old Business -

The club car was sold to a mystery buyer for \$1000.

Gordon Cauble volunteered to arrange the Christmas party. Date to be announced.

No progress on the club website.

New Business - It was reported that the Casa car show will change location next year as it has outgrown Reid Park. On October 14, 2000 the show will be held at the Kino Sports Complex.

Dave Baker brought in his own birthday cake to celebrate his 76th birthday. We all ate some. He doesn't look a day over 93.

Cars for sale:

'69 Chevy 1/4 ton pickup. Too much stuff to list. Herb Berkman, \$3250 OBO.

'66 Monza 140/PG Coupe. Restored, Lots of new parts, but not running. Herb Berkman. \$3500

Program/Tech Talk - Barry Cunningham reported on how a defective ignition switch can cause intermittent engine stoppage and result in backfires which can blow out your exhaust gaskets.

Tim Green showed a pulsating buzzer too warn of fan belt breakage. Found at Radio Shack. Can be wired to the warning light circuit.

Gordon Cauble Reported on a visit to Moe Herman's shop "Oldies but Goodies". He reported that Moe is a good mechanic and does good work.

Raffic: Winners - Allen: Hand cleaner and Spare Air, Herb: Flares, Barry: More Shop Towels, Degreaser, Vic: 1/2 valve cover.

Next month's prize donors: Dave B, Barry C, Herb B, Tim G, Allen E.

JOE: No joke (thank goodness!).

Meeting adjourned sometime around 9:36:54 PM, more or less. Respectfully submitted, Herb Berkman, Secretary

CHAPTER 12

MUSTANG, CAMARO, NADER AND PROFIT

Trying to outsell the Mustang was, for the Corvair, like trying to raise the TITANIC with an Erector set.

The Mustang was introduced to the world with an advertising blitz that made the initial Corvair introduction back in '59 look like a laryngitis sit-in at the old-folks home.

On the evening of April 16, 1964, Ford bought the 9:00 p.m. time slot on all three major networks, so 29,000,000 viewers got to see the Mustang's unveiling without leaving their living rooms.

The next morning 2,600 major newspapers carried announcement ads (and articles) for the Mustang. Some 150 auto editors had been invited, as Ford's guests, to the New York World's Fair (it opened that day in New York) and after wining and dining, were allowed the next day, to drive Mustangs from New York to Detroit. This paid off in glowing reports the following week.

Mustangs were put on display in airport terminals, Holiday Inn lobbies, and, of course, dealers' showrooms all over the country. Everywhere, the car's price stood out boldly-\$2,368.

Concurrently, Life, Look, Esquire, U.S. News and World Report, Time, Newsweek and The Wall Street Journal, and most business and automotive journals carried big articles on the Mustang.

And, of course, Chevy dealers were still selling '64's (or trying to) at the time. Sales of all Corvairs virtually stopped. Mustang sold 417,000, with only two models, the first year, more than Corvair had sold in any year (with, at one point, thirteen models). And, the totally new '65 did little to stop the stampede.

Chevy published 'Dealer Aids' comparing the Mustang to Corvair, showing its price advantage (Monza was \$2,347) comparing Corvair's engineering superiority (bonded brakes, more square inches of effective lining, independent rear-suspension, better handling) even quoting glowing reports from journalists (Car and Driver):

"The basic Mustang without any performance equipment is a kind of bargain Thunderbird. It has no particular vices - but it has no great charm either ... with the addition of a heavy-duty suspension and hotter engine it becomes very exciting to drive. Unfortunately, part of this excitement stems from Ford's antique Hotchkiss-drive rear-suspension (abandoned on the big Ford line this year) which allows the back end to slide at a furious rate..."

(Detect any 'arrowhead at the front reasoning' there?) But it was about as productive as shoveling horse manure into the wind. Mustang galloped on.

Then, there were new leaders at Chevy's controls now, and Corvair was just another car, and with its costly engine and those liability actions that were starting over the first series, not a very profitable one, at that. In fact, it has been stated by one of the lawyers who defended GM in several of the previously mentioned suits, that GM lost \$50 on each Corvair made. If that were the case, it's amazing the Corvair continued as long as it did.

Of course, there was R & D work going on. One of the engines in the Monza GT has been a truly remarkable engine, particularly from an American manufacturer. It had separate one-piece cylinder head and barrel-castings for each cylinder. With stock carburetion, it gave 125 hp at 5000 rpm and 144 ft/lbs of torque at 2800. With GM-built Weber-type three-barrel down-draft carbs and 176 cid, it ran like a bear.

And in the '67 Astro I show car, GM unveiled a flat-opposed six with cylinders cast in threes, steel-lined bores, SOHC per bank, driven by a cogged belt.

Output figures for his engine specified 240 bhp at 7200 rpm. It's other unique features included: a single centrifugal blower above each set of opposing cylinders, BWM-type valve gear, and inclined valves in hemi-heads. Its carburetion was similar to the GM-Weber type previously mentioned.

But this engine never propelled even the Astro I, and in fact was only beginning its first dyno-tests when all Corvair development was halted.

I saw the Astro I in St. Louis a few years back, on the same display stand with the then-new Monza 2+2. I photographed the outside from many angles, and was sad to see the condition this car was in. Rubber sealing hung down from the door, one tire was almost flat, and the engine inside wasn't even the one specified above, containing only a stock-looking Corvair motor. The description that went with the display made no mention of the Corvair, only that the car was powered by a six-cylinder, horizontal opposed engine.

One of the other liabilities of the Corvair was, while it would handle with the best Europe had to offer, it was locked into that rear-engine, economy-sized as it was. Even latter-day tinkerers have been able to open it up to only 183 cid, from 164 cid, and that with special cylinders, block finagling, and many dollars of machining.

If there had been money, and time, the standard engine could have been hopped up, but Americans are famous for wanting everything now, and Mustang had power now!! (And looked as if it could out-handle the best Europe had to offer. It couldn't, as many Mustang owners found, as they scraped weeds from the radiator, after dicing with a Corvair over winding roads. But it would go-in a straight line!)

The factory put out a propaganda film for the dealers, showing a Mustang and a Corvair in drag race. The Corvair won, but it was using the turbo engine against the Mustang's lowest hp V-8. When the four-barrel or Cobra engine was used, the Corvair was left in the dust, even with the turbo (in standard form).

(As an aside, to give you some idea of what could have been done, I once had a 166 Corsa turbo that could beat the socks off many large V-8's. This car turned 0-80 in nine seconds flat. It was totally stock, engine and carb, with only a high performance exhaust housing, (Crown A/R ratio: 0.55, stock Corvair: 0.70), a TK-10 impeller and water-menthanol injection.) Granted, this required being careful of detonation, but if the factory had offered this with a similar guarantee as the Cobra engine in the Mustang (90-days) there might have been more Corvairs sold and fewer red faces on Corvair owners.

So began the Camaro development program. Reasons? Besides the fact it could have as big an engine as could be shoe-horned in, it could use many parts from already-produced cars, namely the Chevy II. It didn't have a bad image, it could be just as fast as Mustang and, with its initial production single-leaf rear spring, could handle much worse. And it was cheaper to build though it could sell for a higher price than Corvair because of anticipated demand and a longer option list.

Let the Corvair hang on for another year, (which it did, in almost exactly the same form as '65) 'cause the Mustang-beater would be out in the fall of '66, then the Corvair could just plain 'Go Hang!' Unfortunately (ever notice how that word keeps popping up in this story?) Ralph Nader's book, *Unsafe at Any Speed* was published in November, 1965, so Corvair had to hang on for just a tad longer. Until 1969, to be exact.

Of course, GM officials have denied it, but the consensus of many in the know says the only reason the Corvair wasn't dropped by GM as soon as the Camaro debuted, was because it would have looked as if GM were knuckling under to Nader and the ruckus he raised.

Nader called the Corvair," ... one of the greatest acts of industrial irresponsibility in the present century." Not exactly good press.

Nader was only talking about the '60-'63 Corvair (on rare occasions in his book he specifies the '64) even using the '65 to show how the second-series had been improved, correcting the alleged 'faults' of the first series. Unfortunately (there it is again!) the name 'Corvair' doesn't differentiate between series, so readers, glancing over the first chapter, took it to mean all Corvairs. And he did such a good job of raking GM over the coals that by the time the reader finished that chapter, (and the only chapter dealing with Corvair) he was ready to go sue GM, on general principles.

So with all these coming together, it was just easier to let Corvair 'turn slowly, slowly in the wind.' Instead of infusing money, instead of letting the public know that the alleged problems had been fixed, GM chose to let the Corvair die of neglect.

They still advertised the car, even into 1967, but with the debut of Camaro, the Corsa, along with its 140 and 180 engine was dropped. The 140 was later reinstated, as special order option, but wasn't even included in the Owner's Manual or the Shop Manual supplement of 1967. The reasons for slowing down on Corvair were obvious to even the most casual observer. The Camaro cost less to build, and it didn't have to be defended in court. And why have competition between the higher-rated engines of the Corvair and the lower-rated ones of the Camaro?

But probably GM figured, as with any other headache, if you leave it alone, perhaps it will go away.

So from 237,000 produced in '65 to less than half that in '66 to 27,000 in '67 to 15,000 in '68 to a hand-built 6,000 in '69, the Corvair finally died.

The last Corvair, an Olympic Gold Coupe was completed at 1:30 p.m. on May 14, 1969. It carried a price tag of \$2,868. Something very peculiar happened before it left the plant. The Corvair ahead of it had back-fired and stopped when a worker tried to drive it off, to make way for the last one. It was pushed off the line.

Perhaps the reluctant Corvair was trying to tell us something, was trying to say, "Look, a small, economical, practical, imaginative car like me will be in a great demand in the '80's and forever after."

But by then, nobody was listening to anything the Corvair had to say.

It was a brave little car, a unique individual in today's world of boxy look-alikes. Sadly, we may never see its equal in America again. I wish it good luck.



The introduction of the Mustang had more to do with the death of the Corvair than any other factor.

Corvair Corsa

By Grant Yoxon

In the October 1965 issue of Car & Driver, David E. Davis Jr. wrote, "...we have to go on record and say that the Corvair is - in our opinion - the most important new car of the entire crop of '65 models, and the most beautiful car to appear in this country since before World War II."

This was a strong statement to make considering the competition that year. Both Ford and Chrysler had more traditional front-engine, rear wheel drive cars, like the Mustang and Barracuda to lure sports minded buyers on limited budgets. And if cost wasn't a concem there was an incredible selection of big-block full sized cars, like Chevy's 409 Impala for example, or an all new Corvette Sting Ray to choose from. So why was Car & Driver moved to make such a statement?

"It was the first North American car to use unibody design, the first to use all-round independent suspension (even before Corvette) and the first (along with GM's Oldsmobile F-85 in the 1962 model year) to use a turbo-charger to increase horsepower," says Ottawa resident Gary Aube, who has developed a web site devoted to the Corvair Corsa.

In 1965, Mr. Aube was 15 years old. The family car was a 1961 Corvair 700 four door sedan, making 80 horsepower from its aircooled 145 cubic inch six cylinder rear mounted engine.

But in the Fall of 1964, Mr. Aube's father traded in the sedan for a top of the line 1965 Corvair Corsa, a two door coupe powered by a 164 cubic inch engine that, with four carburetors, made 140 horsepower. It was with this car, that Mr. Aube learned to drive.

I have a similar fond memory of our family's white 1964 Chevrolet Impala sport coupe. Whenever I see one of these, I get the strong urge to buy one. So far it's not been an urge I've been able to act on.

It is the same with Mr. Aube. The right Corvair Corsa has yet to cross his path. But he never lost interest in the marque and over the years gathered a large collection of literature and photographs of the car of his dreams.

Most recently, Mr. Aube's fondness for the Corvair Corsa has been directed toward the development of one of the nicest Corvair sites on the Net. This stylish site, which uses the tail section of a Corvair Corsa as a navigation bar, has over 75 pages of Corvair content, 150 photographs and links to more than 90 Corvair related web sites.

Of course, the Corsa model, produced for only two years, 1965 and 66, is the star attraction.

"I always loved Corvairs, even though I've owned or leased cars like the Lexus SC-400 sport coupe, the Lexus ES300 sedan, the BMW 635CSi and a 5.7 Litre IROC Camaro," said Mr. Aube. "The late model Corvair, which I drove as a teenager, handled wonderfully and looked great. It was free of any of the ills that Ralph Nader claimed existed in the early model."

But there is plenty of information about other Corvair models as well. Particularly interesting are sections devoted to the Yenko Stinger Corvairs, the turbo-charged Corvairs and the Corvair Monza.

The Yenko Stinger was produced by Don Yenko at Yenko Chevrolet in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. Yenko is also known for the COPO (Central Office Production Option) big block Camaro of the late sixties.

There are also some odd Corvairs to be found here as well, like the Crown Corv-8, a Corvair conversion produced in the early seventies in which the original air-cooled "flat" six was replaced by a Chevrolet V-8 located "amidships", where the back seat once was.

And there are more interesting Corvairs in the "X-tra!" section, a grab bag of Corvair stuff like a 425 cubic inch Olds Toronado powered '66 Corvair, a Corvair-powered Lola and a black '65 Corvair dubbed "Darth Vair." You'll also find car show photos, Corvair automobilia and some good history in this section.

And speaking of history, the demise of the Corvair is often blamed on Ralph Nader, who in 1965 published *Unsafe at Any Speed*. The book was critical of the poor handling of the 1960 64 models. However, some have argued that the Corvair was slated for replacement by the Camaro (which debuted in 1967), but General Motors, not wanting to appear to be giving into Nader, kept the Corvair in production longer than they otherwise would have.

Grant Yoxon is an automotive wrtier and editor of CanadianDriver. This article first appeared in the Ottawa Citizen, December 18, 1998. from the editor.....

If it weren't for the hot weather, I wouldn't have much of an excuse for not finishing the lobotomy on the '65 Monza. Well, maybe I should complain a little about the machine shops inability or refusal to press in the rear suspension bushings and wheel bearing races. They claimed they didn't have the necessary fixture and it was too much of a hassle. Instead of going to another machine shop where I knew I would be dealing with a prima donna, I decided there must be a better way, and there was. It was all in the *Corvair Technical Guide*. The bushing went in place perfectly, there is only some assembly remaining.

I got involved in moving a late Monza coupe out of a garage. It sounds easy! It took two of us about three hours to get it out of a very confining place onto a trailer and transport it two miles. The major difficulty was that there was no drive train or rear suspension under the car......a long story but an interesting experience.

What's coming up on the calendar? A trip to the Wildlife Museum Saturday Sept . 18th 10 AM. There's a lot to see! The Casa show is coming up on October 23rd so it's time to shine those Vairs.

November 5-7, 1999 Great Western Fan Belt Toss and Swap Meet CORSA WEST of Los Angeles

Pavilion Field in Palm Springs, CA will again be the site of the 22nd Annual GWFBT&SM. The world's largest all-Corvair parts market opens at noon on Friday, with a welcoming party on Friday night and a banquet on Saturday night. The peoples's choice car display will feature 69's. Host hotel is the Ocotillo Lodge at \$63.00 per night, plus 10% tax. All suites are non-smoking. Call 760/416-0678 or e-mail ocotillolodge@worldnet.att.net. "Corvair Event" rate good until October 15. Smoking and non-smoking rooms also available at the Quality Inn at \$59.00 per night plus tax. Call 800/472-4339. Call Norman Bloss at 323/874-1614 for information or e-mail at gwfbtsm@yahoo.com. Event registration material available about July 15.

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from

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Vairs and Spares

1961 4 door, New Interior, 1965 110 hp Engine, Auto Tran with external oil cooler, Air conditioned, (needs comp clutch), New generator, New Idler pulley and Fan Bearings, \$2200. Call Vernon Griffith (520) 889-7516.

1965 Monza Coupe. 110 hp. Automatic, need carburetors overhauled clear title. \$1200 obo call (520) 325-8591

1962 Monza coupe. White / Red, automatic. Nice interior. Straight, clean body. Numbers match, 80 hp. Needs tires. \$1200 obo. Call Jim (after October 1 please) (520) 886-2635.

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, ITEI, 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 0B0. For more info call Eddie (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...

Corvairs

By

Creative Stitches

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Member of Corsa and Tucson Corvair Association

Ads are free to TCA members. \$2.50 for up to four lines for non-members.

T T T T T TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS T T FOURTH WEDNESDAY of each month (except Third Wednesday in Nov T T and as scheduled in Dec for a Christmas Party) т DENNY'S RESTAURANT 6484 E. BROADWAY. Tucson, Az Т T T 6:00 p.m: Parking Lot Bull Session 6:30 p.m: Dinner (optional) 7:30 p.m: Meeting starts C COMING EVENTS PLEASE CONTACT A BOARD MEMBER WITH C C ANY SUGGESTIONS C C C C C Sept. 18th Wildlife Museum C Oct. 23rd Casa Car Show Tune-up Clinic at Dave's shop (alley behind 4456 E. Nov.13th C 1 PM C Dec. 16th Christmas Party (TENTATIVE DATE) C C Regular Monthly Meeting, Wednesday Sept. 23, 1999 C C TCA Executive Board Meeting: Tuesday Sept.28, 1999 C C DENNY'S RESTAURANT 6484 E. BROADWAY A Tucson Corvair Association A 2044 W. Shalimar Way A Tucson, Arizona 85704 FIRST CLASS MAIL e-mail fourcorvairs@hotmail.com A A A A Van and Vickie Pershing A 4842 W. Paseo de los Colinas A Tucson AZ 85745 A A