

## Why the Chevrolet Corvair Corsa Is Collectable

By Yoav Gilad, March 14, 2014

It seems you can't mention the Chevrolet Corvair without mentioning Mr. Ralph Nader. Yes, his consumer safety campaign effectively killed the car and yes, there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the car. So, now that we've mentioned him, let's move on and discuss the Corvair. Simply put, it was revolutionary for an American car in that era.

Detroit effectively had one kind of car in the early sixties, the kind that was so massive it generated its own gravitational field. But the Corvair was conceived to compete with the silly, little imports that some confused Americans were intent on buying. Not only that, but the engine was rear-mounted allowing a completely flat floor pan and an improved interior package. Introduced in 1960 to an eager public, the Corvair soldiered on through 1969 facing stiff competition from all of GM's rivals as well as some of General Motors own products (such as the Camaro). And none of those cars had any negative press surrounding them.

But whether you believe that the criticism was warranted or that people simply didn't know how to safely operate a rear-engined car with a swing-axle suspension there was one special edition particularly worth noting: the Corvair Corsa. It debuted as a special edition when the second generation Corvair bowed, in 1965. The base Corvair had a 95hp powerplant and there was an optional 110hp engine too. But the Corsa was fitted with a 140hp engine (with four single barrel carbs). If this *still* wasn't enough, Chevy offered an optional 180hp (!) turbocharged mill. And there was also an optional four-speed manual transmission when the turbocharged engine was selected.

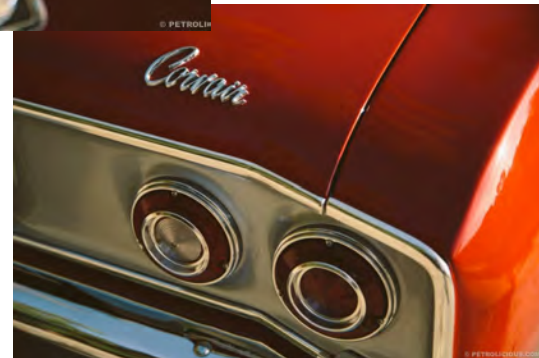
As an aside, the Corvair has more in common with the Porsche 911 than many people know. Besides sharing a basic rear-engine, rear-wheel drive architecture, they were both powered by a flat-six engine and had a swing-axle suspension in

the rear (the Corvair eventually shifted to an independent rear). In fact, the Corvair was frequently marketed and reviewed as the 'Poor-man's Porsche' (despite initially having two extra cylinders).

Not only could the Corsa pack 180hp, but it also included larger brakes borrowed from the Chevelle, a stronger differential ring gear, a Delcotron alternator (replacing the generator), and significant chassis refinements were made. In addition, a Special Purpose Chassis Equipment ("Z17") handling package, consisting of a special performance suspension and quick ratio steering box, was an interesting new option for 1965.

Sadly, the Corsa was short-lived,

remaining in production for only two years. But a relatively short production run coupled with the most powerful engine for the model means that it is the most collectable model and will easily remain so.





# TCA 2019 Events at a Glance

The **Corvairsation** is a monthly publication of the Tucson Corvair Association, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Corvair model of the Chevrolet Motor Division of General Motors. The Tucson Corvair Association is a chartered member of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA) as Chapter 357.

**Membership dues** are \$15 per year for individuals and \$18 for families. Initial dues are \$19 for individuals and \$22 for families (includes one name tag). Make checks payable to the Tucson Corvair Association and mail to the TCA Treasurer.

**Change of Address:** Report any change of address or phone number to the Membership Chair.

**CORSA membership** dues are \$45 per year (\$90 for 26 months) and include a subscription to the CORSA Communiqué, a monthly publication. Rates are \$37 per year and \$74 for 26 months for a "virtual" membership. CORSA membership is not required for membership in the Tucson Corvair Association, but is highly recommended. See any TCA officer for more information.

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

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

## WHEELS AND SPOKES

PRESIDENT

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

VICE PRESIDENT

**Frank Pella**  
520-437-2481  
[corvair68@icloud.com](mailto:corvair68@icloud.com)

TREASURER

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

CORVARSAION EDITOR/  
WEBMASTER

**Van Pershing**  
520-780-7564  
[vpersh@yahoo.com](mailto:vpersh@yahoo.com)

**Apr 16 Tues**

**Regular Quarterly Business Meeting.** 6:30pm. O'Rielly Chevrolet, 6160 E Broadway, Tucson. Meetings are in the 2nd story conference room above the used car office. Enter by the exterior staircase on the west side of the building.

**Apr 27 Sat**

**34th Annual Chevy Showdown,** 9a to 3p. Desert Diamond Casino, 1100 W Pima Mine Road (at I-17), Sahuarita, Arizona

**Jul 23-27**

**CORSA International Convention,** Chicago, Illinois

**Oct 26-28**

**Great Western Fan Belt Toss & Swap Meet,** Palm Spring, California

## FC / Station Wagon Air Filters



Here's an interesting way to have stock-looking air filters if a 140 engine has been installed in a forward control truck or a station wagon.

As can be seen here, a carefully executed fabrication using a couple of regular air filter housing results in a very nice looking system that very well could have been what the factory would have done if the 140 had been offered in either of these vehicles.



## Big bylaw changes ratified by membership

A brief TCA meeting was held on Tuesday, February 19, 2019 to vote on recent proposed bylaw changes. The proposed changes were published in the February issues of the Corvairsation in accordance with the rules for changing them. A vote by the regular membership of the Club was required to ratify the proposed changes.

A vote was taken and the changes unanimously passed and took effect immediately. In attendance at the meeting were Allen Elvick, Mike Lake, Ron Bloom, Van Pershing, Doug Scott, Howard Fisher, Jim Mills and Bill Sala.

The new bylaws usher in a new phase for the Tucson Corvair Association which is hoped will breath new life into the Club.

## 2019 Dues are Due!

As of the end of March only 12 people have paid their dues for the 2019 year.

Missing in action are:

Al Brown  
Jonni Berkman  
David Carter  
Cody Coonts  
Fred Daigneau  
Greg Davis  
Mitch Dunn  
Barry Foster  
Sharon & Lance Gillingham  
Vic Howard  
Jerry Knapp  
Dave Lynch  
Fred Nuñez  
Sam Pernu  
Harry Ransom  
Wes Reynolds  
Don Robinson  
Mike Strong  
Robert & Amy Vanslyke  
John Young

Since we have restructured the Tucson Corvair Association the dues are now only \$5 per year. To keep your membership current simply mail a check to:

Tucson Corvair Association  
Allen Elvick  
4210 S Preston  
Tucson, AZ 85735

## Additional information on the Classic Chevy Club of Tucson

*Since our monthly meetings are now held in conjunction with the Classic Chevy Club of Tucson, we would like to share the follow letter from their President. This information will give a flavor of the activities and events that CCCT is involved with and will hopefully create some enthusiasm to join their Club in order to be able to participate with them in these activities. There are be many TCA members who have already joined CCCT is no need to worry about being the loan Chevrolet Orphan owner in the group. In fact, the current CCCT President is a Corvair owner!*

### A welcoming letter from the President of the Classic Chevy of Tucson.

Hi everyone, my name is Frank Pella and I would like to welcome you all to become members of our club.

The Classic Chevy Club of Tucson opened its doors in 1984. At first, we were only a club with 1955 through 1957 Chevys. With many of us seeing the writing on the wall, in 1996 we changed our bi-laws to include all Chevys from 1955 through 1972. In 2018 our club changed its bi-laws one more time to open up our arms to now include all GM vehicles 1972 & older. So that means we are now open to all Chevys, Oldsmobiles, Buicks, Cadillacs, Pontiacs and GMC trucks. We dropped the 1955 and changed it to each car divisions earliest beginning!

We currently have 50 members and have monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of every month except December. For our December meeting we have a Holiday Party at a local restaurant to celebrate the forth coming holiday season.

Before I let you go, I would like to briefly let you know some of the fun activities that we did as a club in 2018. We showed our cars at two assisted living facilities which brought lots of joy to all their residents. We had a Poker Run around Tucson, with a pot luck lunch afterwards. Our club paid for the main course. We all met for breakfast, driving our classics, for a great social hour. Each year we cruise to a vineyard for a little wine tasting and then to Patagonia for Pizza, that is paid for by our club. During the summer our club event went in-doors to bowl at a local bowling alley with our club paying for all. In October we all met at one of our members house and had our annual Classic Drive-In event. A very, very fun time for all. (Did I say that the club paid for the main course!) After a fun filled year, we had our annual Holiday Party / White Elephant Exchange at a famous Steak House. What is so unique with that is you will get back your club's yearly dues if you attend this event.

So, for lots of fun club activities I hope that you will give us a chance and join YOUR new club!

Best Regards,  
Frank

# Forward Control Throttle Cable Fix

Van Pershing

On forward control models a 10-foot plus cable and its housing run from the gas pedal all the way back to the carburetor cross shaft. After 50 years of hard use the cable sometimes builds up a little resistance causing problems.

Several years ago there was a discussion on corvaircenter regarding this cable. Ken Hand suggested that rather than put a heavy return spring at the cross shaft, replace the light factory spring at the front of the cable with a nice heavy spring with a light spring at the cross shaft. No information on what exact spring to use but Ken mentioned the words “clutch spring” in his comments! The point he was making is that it has to be a nice healthy spring.

In order to solve the problem on a '63 Greenbrier, the search was on for a suitable spring to do the job. While wandering through the Home Depot I ran across a packet of springs manufactured by Everbuilt which included 2 each 7/16” dia x 1-1/2” long with a .047 wire diameter and 2 each of the same spring only 2-1/2” long. Both springs are rated at 11.46 lb/in. The pack of 4 cost around 4 bucks.

Using one of the 2-1/2” springs, the loop on each end was trimmed for ease of installation. Once installed it seems to have solved the problem for my situation. The stronger spring up front pushes the cable with the light spring at the cross shaft helps by pulling.

This fix may not work for every situation but it's worth a try. New cables/housing are almost impossible



*The springs are available at Home Depot. The new spring (above is shown with original spring (below).*



*The new spring attaches in the stock original location. One end of the spring has to be trimmed off to about to slip into the sheet metal in the front. The other end has to be trimmed as well the able slip into the hole in the throttle lever.*

# Why isn't the 1960-69 Chevrolet Corvair worth more?

by Paul Duchene //March 26, 2018

Depending on your point of view, the Chevrolet Corvair was either one of the most creative or most foolhardy steps in the history of the U.S. auto industry. It was designed to combat the Volkswagen Beetle and adapted the air-cooled, rear-engine concept to American scale and style.

Its handling was no worse than the Beetle, but ambitious politician Ralph Nader exploited it for his own ends. In 1971 the National Highway Safety Transportation Board declared the Corvair as safe as any car in the early 1960s, but it was too late to matter.

Still, with 1,839,439 sold over 10 years, including 130,362 trucks, the Corvair was hardly a failure. It's among the least expensive ways into the U.S. collector car world and the best convertibles seldom surpass \$25,000. Corvairs are relatively easy to fix, with a reliable parts supply. Survivors are common outside the Rust Belt.

So why aren't they worth more?

First a compact history: Chief engineer Ed Cole aimed the Corvair (combining Corvette and Bel Air) at the Beetle in 1956. During development, the sedan was camouflaged as a 15-foot, six-passenger Australian Holden, with a rear-mounted, 140-cubic-inch, air-cooled flat-six-cylinder engine, and GM's first fully independent suspension. Corvair production began on July 7, 1959 and it was *Motor Trend's* 1960 Car Of The Year.

Initial models were 500 and 700 4-door sedans, followed by a Monza coupe in April 1960, a four-speed option for 1961, and turbocharging in 1962. Target price was \$2,000, but heater, radio and a Powerglide transmission added up to \$2258 plus shipping—only \$341 less than a full-size Impala coupe. Claimed mileage was 26 mph highway, but a gas-powered heater reduced that, and a forced air heater was offered in 1961.

A Corvan, Greenbrier passenger van, Lakewood station wagon and Rampside pickup arrived in 1961; convertible and

Spyder packages in April 1962. Turbocharging bumped horsepower to 150 and opened up a sporty market in 1962, but the April 1964 Mustang launch rendered that short-lived. Even a 1965 Corvette-influenced redesign with improved rear suspension couldn't halt the pony cars, and sales dwindled until the final year of 1969.

The Corvair lost its driving force in 1961 when Ed Cole was "kicked upstairs" to head the GM car and truck group. Despite Corvair-based concept cars like the Sebring Spyder, Monza GT, Astro 1, and John Fitch's Phoenix, resources were redirected to conventional models.

Larry Claypool is a lifelong Corvair aficionado and technical editor for the national club magazine for 25 years. He ran a Corvair repair shop in Frankfort, Illinois for 42 years, and points out that a several factors conspired against the Corvair's acceptance.

"It's still a niche vehicle, not a mainstream Chevy," he said. "There were lots of them, but it's unconventional, with an air-cooled rear engine and limited performance potential. Even turbocharged, the hottest stock Corvair performed like a base V-8 of the day."

Claypool noted that once Cole was gone, the Corvair was an orphan. "Most dealers might have one junior mechanic who worked on them. If he was off, they'd tell you to schedule an appointment later." As an economy car, many were not well-maintained, he said. Spares were common through the 1980s—even at dealers—but body parts have dried up. Doors, trunks and hoods can be found, but everything else is welded together, making replacement pretty expensive.

While mechanical parts are available, a Corvair owner

needs to know "the guy" nearby who can work on his/her car—or be handy themselves. "There are a lot of hands-on owners, but probably only a dozen Corvair specialists in the country." With prices low there's little incentive to specialize. "In most places it's easier to get a Ferrari correctly repaired," he said.

Partly due to low values, numerous barn finds survive, and are easy to revive in rust-free zones. Running coupes and sedans can be found under \$1,500, but don't expect any investment appreciation. Convertibles can be found for \$12,000-\$15,000, but rusty projects may be uneconomical to fix.

Claypool believes the 1965-66 Corsa coupe and convertible have the brightest future. They offered 140 hp with four carburetors (tricky to set up), while turbocharging delivered 180 hp, but the engine is happiest over 3000 rpm. Bill Mitchell's redesign was Corvette-like, and only 27,621 hardtops and 11,495 convertibles were built.

"A lot of major collectors now have a Corvair, and in the last five years people have been looking for these," he said. "You're much better off paying \$25,000 for a good, fully sorted one, than buying a project for \$2,000 and putting \$50,000 into it."

[\*Hagerty Insurance Magazine\*](#)





# 1965 Corvair Sales Brochure



## CORSA/style and scat as new as its name

To set off its stunning looks, the new top-of-the-line Corsa bears truly distinctive exterior trim: special Corsa emblems on the front fenders and rear quarter panels; bright metal engine air exhaust grilles; striking new wheel covers with special center inserts; and a silver-painted rear cove area. And Corsa has red-blooded go to complement its looks. The standard power plant is a new 140-hp Turbo-Air engine, or you can specify the sparkling 180-hp Turbo-Charged version. The latter has many quality features. The induction tubes, fuel and oil lines and air cleaner are all chrome-plated. Exhaust valves are super-alloy; exhaust valve guides are designed for exceptional heat dissipation. High-alloy aluminum-face intake valves provide added durability. There's also a special camshaft, and a single air cleaner and side-draft carburetor supply the fuel and air mixture to the exhaust-driven turbo-supercharger. Next, stick with the standard 3-Speed Synchro-Mesh transmission or order the fully synchronized 4-Speed version; either way, you'll have a whole lot of action on your hands. Corsa's finishing touches are also up to you: select from 15 Magic-Mirror exterior colors (13 of them brand-new) with Evening Orchid, Crocus Yellow and Glacier Gray exclusive with Corsa and Monza. And if a convertible catches your fancy, you can get the top in white, black or beige with any exterior color.

**CORSA INTERIORS** - You'll find Corvair's finest blend of luxury and function inside a Corsa. Both sport coupe and convertible models boast front bucket seats, special Corsa emblems and a deep-recessed instrument panel housing speedometer, trip odometer, manifold pressure and cylinder head temperature gauges, plus an electric clock with sweep second hand. And it's easy to slip behind the wheel: wide door openings to climb through and ample hip room inside. Plenty of shoulder room, too, thanks to curved sideglass. In the rear passenger compartment, there's also spacious entrance, hip and leg-stretching room. Deep-twist carpeting, smart steering wheel with distinctive Corsa emblem.



*Editor's personal note: In 1965 at the age of 20, I was in the middle of serving a two-year period in South America. A friend sent me this brochure for my first view of the 2nd generation Corvair. I immediately fell in love with the Corsa...the love affair has never ended!*



Monthly Newsletter - 2nd Quarter 2019 - Vol. 44, No. 1  
Corvair Society of America Chapter 857



Regular Monthly Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month in conjunction with the Classic Chevy Club of Tucson at 7pm.

**MEETING PLACE:**  
O'Rielly Chevrolet  
6160 E Broadway, Tucson

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