



Chapter Chatter
By Daniel Goldberg

Apologies, once again, for the delayed publication of the Hot Air Mail. The weather-related postponement of the February meeting, coupled with some personal and professional obligations, made late delivery somewhat unavoidable.

On Saturday, February 28th, we reunited at Richard Bethard's home in Nokesville and completed the clutch replacement project on his 1963 Corvair convertible. If you recall, last month when we removed the drivetrain from Richard's Corvair and split the transaxle from the engine, we discovered that the differential snout was cracked and the input shaft was slightly bent. Both are indications that at some point in the past the transaxle was removed with the engine still in the car. Needless to say, this is poor practice since it results in the input shaft supporting the full weight of the transaxle.

Rather than replace the differential snout or going so far as to replace the differential itself, Richard opted to have the snout repaired. This was the best choice for several reasons, not the least of which is that the differential is a known

quantity and should be retained. What's more, Richard was able to have the welding done for the super-low price of free. After the weld was ground down the repair was barely noticeable.



With the snout fixed and a new input shaft procured, Bob Marshall installed the new clutch components while the rest of us stood around and made snarky comments. (In all fairness, Ron Tumolo did an outstanding job keeping the engine from turning as Bob tightened the various components.) The highlight (for me, anyway), was refilling the transaxle by removing the top cover. At first blush this has to be the

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The Northern Virginia Corvair Club (NVCC) publishes the HOT AIR MAIL newsletter monthly as a service to its members. NVCC is a non-profit chapter of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA). The \$10 annual dues are payable January 1st, to "Treasurer, NVCC" at the address herein. A prorated amount of \$5 is accepted for periods of less than six months. All other correspondence and submissions can be addressed to the Secretary/Editor. Newsletter expiration date is three months beyond dues anniversary if they are not current. Original material appearing in the HOT AIR MAIL may be reprinted in other non-profit publications with appropriate credits.

most elegant method by which to fill a Corvair transaxle, since you don't have to lay on your back underneath the car and squeeze out viscous, smelly gear oil into a small hole until it comes pouring out onto your face ... except that gear oil began pouring out of the sides of the removed differential because the half-shaft yokes were removed. The irony abounds.

After mating the transaxle with the engine and replacing the rear motor mount, we were able

to reinstall the complete drivetrain with a minimum of fuss using Ron's ATV jack. Although I had to leave a little early, my understanding from those who stayed is that our efforts were successful: Richard was able to drive the car at speed without any vibration! It's also my understanding that the car did not immediately start because some drooling slug reversed the wires to the starter motor.





The Virginia 'Vair Fair is fast approaching! Registration information may be found at <http://www.vairfair.com>, but here's a snapshot of what you need to know:

- Host: Central Virginia Corvair Club
- When: May 29-31, 2015
- Where: Howard Johnson's, 2836 North Lee Highway, Lexington, Virginia 24450 (I-81, exit 195)
- Contact: Wade Lanning, (804) 861-5748, wlanning@comcast.net



Miscellaneous For Sale

40+ year collection of Corvair Parts. Please contact John Getz at jpgetz@comcast.net or 301-717-9452 for a list of sale items. Parts located in Frederick, MD.

Gas Tanks: Six or so good used gas tanks \$30 and YOU pick up; NE Maryland. Harry Yarnell hyarnell1@earthlink.net

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Corvair Underground
PO Box 339 Dundee, OR 97115, (503) 434-1648 or (800) 825-VAIR

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Treasurer's Report

Balance as of 1/31/15	\$2646.69
Dues Income	\$10.00
Balance as of 2/28/15	\$2656.69

Don't forget to visit our Facebook page!
<http://www.facebook.com/NVCCHOME>

ARE YOU IN?

The Corvair Society of America (CORSA) is the #1 Corvair group in the world, with over 4,800 members and 125 local chapters, including Northern Virginia Corvairs.

CORSA supports all sanctioned Corvair Clubs with a wealth of benefits, including event insurance, exclusive Classified Ad access, and their award-winning monthly newsletter "The Communique". Northern Virginia Corvairs encourages all members to join CORSA. Annual dues for active members are just \$45. For more information visit the CORSA website at www.Corvair.org

By Paul Niedermeyer (2007)
curbsideclassic.com [a terrific website you should be looking at if you aren't already]

Fifty years ago, GM's engineers and designers worked overtime to create a radical new economy or "compact" car. Its mission: take on the VW Beetle and a host of European imports flooding the U.S. market. The 1960 Chevrolet Corvair flopped in its intended role. Nevertheless, it went on to become one of the single most influential American cars ever made. Its legacy can still be seen around the world.

The Chevrolet Corvair was a space efficient, low-slung compact with a six-cylinder air-cooled engine. The rear engine promised a low center of gravity, light unassisted steering, superb traction and balanced braking— all the same qualities that Porsche had been cultivating successfully for years. Budget-minded American driving enthusiasts were thrilled.

Unfortunately, the design came with intrinsic liabilities: poor heating, a complex (read: expensive) alloy engine, oil leaks and distinctly un-American handling qualities (read: oversteer). It was the last quality that attracted the attention of a consumer crusader named Ralph Nader, who highlighted the Corvair in his seminal tome "Unsafe at any speed."

The Corvair was not intrinsically unsafe. As long as owners maintained the eleven pound differential between its front (15/19lbs) and rear (26/30lbs) tires, the Corvair's handling remained friendly and innocuous. But Americans were (and are) not known for monitoring their vehicle's tire pressure. Gas station attendants of the time had a mantra: "24 pounds all around." They became unwitting co-conspirators in the Corvair's fall (spin) from grace.

With incorrect tire pressures, a rapidly cornering Corvair driver could easily find the vehicle's back end heading towards the front. The average US driver was simply not prepared to handle that eventuality. Could GM have done more to avoid the oversteer stigma? Yes. GM saved six dollars per car by not making the front anti-sway bar standard. And who knows how much (little) the effective rear camber-compensating spring adopted in 1964 cost.

In 1972, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued a report exonerating the Corvair from Nader's accusations. It arrived too late. Chevrolet had deep-sixed the Corvair seven years earlier. Even without the safety controversy, Chevy knew Ford's highly conventional Falcon was about to eat their lunch. What's more, GM's beancounters had proclaimed that the Corvair was too expensive to make profitably (setting a pattern for small car thinking that continues to this day).

In the fall of 1959, Chevrolet was already cooking up Plan B: the 1962 Chevy II. Utterly conventional (and boring), the bigger Nova was the real anti-Falcon, and the route to compact-car profits. Which left a question: what to do with the Corvair?

The answer was the Corvair's enduring U.S. legacy: the sporty Monza coupe. The model debuted at the 1960 New York Auto Show, complete with bucket seats, a higher output engine and a four-speed manual transmission. The Monza was an unexpected home run. In 1960, Chevy hastily assembled 14k Monzas. By 1961, the Monza dominated the Corvair line-up, and single-handedly created the market for popular-priced American-made performance cars.

But creating a market is not the same as exploiting it. Lee Iacocca's seminal Mustang did that. Turbocharging and quad-carb induction couldn't overcome the little six's limitations against cheap V8 power. The Chevrolet Camaro was quickly pressed into action.

Meanwhile, the clean, elegant and highly-original 1960 Corvair initiated a styling revolution. In fact, it would be difficult to overstate the Corvair's impact on European automotive design. Before the Monza, Europe was overdue for a new design lexicon. Even the conceptually-revolutionary 1959 Mini still wore the styling language of the early/mid fifties. The Corvair's influence on subsequent European small and mid-size cars was unrivaled and unprecedented.

Some were blatant rip-offs: the NSU Prinz/1000, Hillman/Sunbeam Imp, Simca 1000, ZAZ-966, Panhard Dyna Coupe. Others were merely profoundly influenced: Fiat 1500, Lancia Fulvia, VW 1600 L Coupe ("the German Monza") and a host of other early-mid sixties cars around the globe.

Yes, most of these models were narrower and taller than the Corvair. But the Corvair's strong, high belt-line crease, its clean and inward curving lower flanks, airy green-house, under-cut front and strong rectilinear lines make its influence easily identifiable— even today.

Take a look a BMW 5-Series. That strong horizontal crease-line running unbroken from front to rear has long been BMW DNA, but it's a genetic transplant from the Corvair. BMW's renaissance (and styling DNA) is based on their mid-sixties sedans and coupes, including the popular 2002. Their design elements scream "Corvair".

The timelessly elegant, superb handling 1965 Chevrolet Corvair was built past the Camaro's 1967 intro— just so General Motors would not be seen to be buckling-in to Nader and other detractors. But tightening emission and safety standards had sealed its fate; the Corvair died a quiet death in 1969.

Mustangs, Camaros, BMW's. Not a bad legacy, for such a star-crossed little car.

Return To:

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March 2015 Meeting

Saturday, 21 March 2015, 9:00 AM

**Fred Marx
12606 Split Creek Court
North Potomac, MD**

DIRECTIONS TO MEETING

From Virginia: after crossing into MD from VA on I-495 West, take River Road (MD-190), Exit 39 to Potomac. Stay on River Road 7.3 miles, turn right on Stoney Creek Road for 1.5 miles, then right on Travilah Road at stop sign, after a mile on Travilah left on Split Creek Court.