



Chapter Chatter
By Daniel Goldberg

The month of May is a busy time within the discrete confines of our misunderstood and much-maligned subculture, as we busily make last-minute tweaks in preparation for the 'Vair Fair and the CORSA national convention.

On May 16th we met at Bryan Blackwell's house and tinkered with his 1962 wagon and 1966 Monza coupe. On the coupe, several of us (to include Doug Jones and Vernon Wested) replaced the engine compartment perimeter seal, while Bryan made some progress replacing the steering column lower bearing. Perimeter seal installation with the engine already in the car isn't exactly plug and play – sometimes gentle persuasion is all that is needed, while at other times it helps to be less subtle. In any event, the seal went in and so hopefully the engine compartment won't be covered in road detritus and pollen.

Despite removing the old bearing, Bryan reports that the steering column is still separated from the vehicle. As for the wagon, I can't recall that we did anything to it, so it must have been perfect.

The two weeks between the meeting at Bryan's house and the 'Vair Fair were spent making last minute fixes. Personally, I replaced the leaky shift shaft seal on my '65 Corsa (unbeknownst to me, the original seal was still in my trans – funny story about that); tinkered a bit with the carbs and timing to make the car a bit more responsive (I don't think one of my spark plug wires was fully seated); and finished installing my newly-purchased RetroSound radio so I can listen to more than just AM while out on the open road. I'm also happy to report that Bob Marshall resolved an unending nightmare with his '66 Corsa's subframe.



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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.

The 'Vair Fair, which was hosted by the Central Virginia Corvair Club, was fairly well attended. NVCC regulars who showed up included Bryan, Doug, Ron Tumolo, Greg Walthour, Frank Duval, Bob (for about six minutes), and me. Best in show was the Crocus Yellow 1965 Monza coupe pictured below.



Greg Walthour's '63 Greenbrier camper:



Why, yes, that's Bryan Blackwell playfully mocking me while I tend to my starter on the show field. Turns out the connection for the battery cable was a bit loose, as was the screw holding the solenoid onto the starter body.





A colleague of mine owns the *other* air-cooled, rear-engined, flat six car made in the late 1960s – in this case, a 1969 Porsche 911E (pictured here). After months of talking we finally went for a drive.

Although I'm not unbiased, I came away a little less than completely impressed. Knowing that you could buy my '65 Corsa convertible with the same powertrain in 1969, the following comparison really puts things into perspective:

- 1969 Porsche 911E: 2.0 liter flat six, MFI, 5 spd, 156hp @6500 RPM (Price new: approx \$7,200)
- 1969 Chevrolet Corvair: 2.7 liter flat six, 4x 1bbl, 4 spd, 140hp @5200 RPM (Price new: approx. \$2,600)

Did a 1969 Porsche deserve a 2.5x price premium over a Corvair? At first blush, yes. It's simply a better finished automobile. The materials are more robust (compare, for example, my hubcaps to his alloy rims) and the car, in stock form, is more maneuverable. Even from the passenger seat, handling felt precise and up to modern standards. What's more, the 5 speed, MFI, and disc brakes were exotic bits 45 years ago.

What struck me, however, is how ... Volkswagen-y the thing is. It's positively gutless going uphill – gutless in a way that would make any Corvair (including an FC) seem turbine-like in comparison. Even on flat surfaces, the Porsche was still kind of pokey.

Maybe this is a little unfair. I read somewhere that a new Camry is faster in the quarter-mile than an '80s Lamborghini Countach. We don't expect old cars to perform like new ones because driving dynamics have improved immeasurably over the course of the past half-century. Instead, we accept our cars' shortcomings because their imperfections make us feel a certain way. For that reason alone, speed isn't everything.

But I'm not comparing an old Porsche to a modern car. I'm comparing it to a Corvair, a much cheaper car with similar engineering that was made concurrently. And whereas the price differential may have been justifiable back then, I don't know that it is today, now that vintage Porsche prices skyrocketed with no end in sight.

Perhaps, one day, we can look forward to a similar Corvair bubble.



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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NO JUNE MEETING – GO TO THE CORSA CONVENTION!