

NORTHERN VIRGINIA CORVAIRS



**HOT
AIR
MAIL**



NVCC, CORSA Chapter 220

Volume XXIV, Number 12

December 2007

CHAPTER CHATTER

By A. J. Paluska, Jr

The November meeting was the first of the fall season to be held under less than ideal weather conditions. As a matter of fact, it almost wasn't a meeting. Your editor was the first to arrive, about 10 minutes earlier than the normal 9:00 AM start time. To his surprise, he was the first member on the scene. When he knocked on Darrin's door, he came right out but stated that he had forgotten about the meeting. He thought that it was to be the next week. As November started on a Thursday, the third Saturday only seemed like it was the second Saturday. Anyway, Darrin had two projects planned so there would be something worthwhile to do. As it was getting a little late, it looked like Darrin and your editor would be the only attendees when Ron Tumolo and Bill Leeman arrived. Wow, that took the pressure off of your editor to do the heavy lifting. Actually, there wasn't that much heavy lifting, only the driver's side rear door of Darrin's 1961 sedan. The door wasn't closing correctly, so the first job was to get it closing properly. You would think that with four members available with some years of experience and the assembly manual that it would be a piece of cake, or donuts, which were provided by Darrin. Well, like they say, it is always easier when they do it on TV!

We didn't have a TV available outside, but Darrin did have National Public Radio playing in his kitchen, and there were two guys with a car show on! After several tries and some shims, the door was better, but not 100%. And that took over an

hour or so. After that, the meeting dissolved into a technical discussion of assorted topics.

On a different note, the Club Library was increased by a collection of CORSA *Communiques* and some assorted articles and a technical manual, provided by Bill Leeman.

December is Christmas Party and election month. If you desire to run for any office, please inform any of the current officers of your desires. Also, the editorship of this authoritative automotive publication can still be wrested from your editor. Just throw your hat, or rather word processor, even typewriter, into the ring. **NO** experience necessary! Training will provided to any volunteer. Also December completes our dues year so please pay your dues for the 2008 calendar year.

For the party, members should bring a side dish and/or a dessert. Call Ron or Karen Tumolo to coordinate your contribution so that there will be a variety of dishes. We have traditionally had a voluntary gift exchange at the December meeting. If you desire to participate, bring a wrapped package containing a Corvair or automotive related item. Expense limit is up to you (Usually not more than \$10.00).

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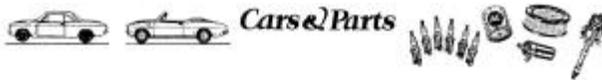
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The Northern Virginia Corvair Club (NVCC) publishes the HOT AIR MAIL newsletter monthly as a service to its members. NVCC is a non-profit chapter of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA). The \$10 annual dues are payable January 1st, to "Treasurer, 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.



*****AUTOMOTIVE CLASSIFIED*****

63 Greenbrier: Powerglide, white/blue exterior with blue interior. 115, 000 miles, runs well, good condition, no rust through, a few rust spots. Manuals included. \$2500.00. Call Jeremy at (703) 964-6999 (4/06)

63 Convertible: Red with good body and nice paint. Asking \$2500.00, condition 3 to 4 on scale of 5. Contact Jim at (540) 465-5066. (9/06)

64 Coupe: F&A Auto Sales at (804) 224-0588. (9/07)

65 Convertible: 140 HP PG, 44K miles, maroon and black. \$15000 OBO. Call Bob at (304) 263-2763. (7/07)

Parts/Miscellaneous For Sale

Late Model Parts: 1, new 195/15-50H BF Goodrich Euro Radial T/A: \$25. Free 65 front cross member. Call Curt Shimp at (540) 955-1516. (2/06)

Parts: From our club's 65 coupe parts car: Right hand door, 4 Monza Wheel disks. Call Venice Cox at (703) 791-6517. (1/05)

Parts: Darrin Hartzler has parts to clear out this spring. Does anybody need either a transaxle or a complete PG with transaxle? How about a late model 3 speed manual transmission? If so, let him know. Very cheap. (301) 365-7332 (2/06)

RARE HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS LOCATED!

Take this unusual opportunity to purchase a piece of Corvair history. Available for a limited time. Genuine 2003 Virginia Vair Fair T-shirts. A steal at \$8.00, two for \$15, in sizes S, M, L, XL. Hurry, this rare find won't last for long! Call Curt at (540) 955-1516.

COMING SOON: 2007 Vair Fair T-shirts. To be priced for quick sale. Another can't miss opportunity to own rare Corvair Memorabilia!

Corvair Parts: Large parts lot available. Will not be sold separately. For information contact Kim at kimpjasonp@juno.com or whitetiger@hereintown.net.

Corvair Vendors and Services

Clark's Corvair Parts, Inc.
Route 2, 400 Mohawk Trail, Shelburne Falls, MA
01370-9748 (413) 625-9776

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

Corvair Ranch, Inc
1079 Bon-Ox Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325
(717) 624-2805

NVCC Calendar

15 December 2007, 300 PM: The annual NVCC Christmas party and elections at the home of Ron and Karen Tumolo.

2-4May 2008: 29th Annual Virginia Vair Fair, Tidewater Corvair Club. Williamsburg Ramada Inn, Virginia Beach, VA.

23-27 July 2008, CORSA International Convention, CORSA West of Los Angeles: Ventura, CA.

Next Regular Meeting:

Saturday, 15 December 2007, 3:00 PM

Ron and Karen Tumolo
905 North Amelia Street, Sterling, VA
(703) 430-6582

Directions: Map/directions on the mailing cover.

Treasurer's Report:

Balance (10/22/07)	\$3,268.19
Northeast Corvair Council Dues (\$20.00)	
Closing Balance (11/25/07)	\$3,248.19

Reprinted from *Live Journal* on the Internet.

Rebel yell.

There is no American car of its era more controversial than this one. It's the car that launched the career of Ralph Nader and led to the rise of federal safety legislation. There are few American cars of *any* era more unusual in their mechanical design: rear engine, air-cooled, independently suspended, even turbocharged. Automotive writer Michael Lamm called it a martyr; others said it should never have been built at all. It was deeply flawed, at least in its original iteration, but it was also amazingly daring. We're talking, of course, about the Chevrolet Corvair.

Once upon a time Chevy, Ford, and Plymouth were known as "The Low-Priced Three." This did not, however, mean that they were particularly *small*, and they kept growing year by year. A 1939 Chevrolet sedan was 190.2 inches long on a 112.25-inch wheelbase, weighing a bit under 3,000 pounds. In 1959, the last year there was only one "standard-size" Chevy, a Chevrolet Bel Air sedan was 210.9 inches long on a 119-inch wheelbase and weighed around 4,000 pounds.

Chevrolet chief engineer Ed Cole, who became the division's general manager in July 1956, knew even as the '58 and '59 cars were being designed that something had to give. He launched the development of a new compact car that would eventually be called Corvair, after a 1954 show car.

The Corvair was not Chevrolet's first stab at building a compact car. Around the end of World War Two there had been plans for an inexpensive light car called the Chevrolet Cadet. Largely the brainchild of Earl S. MacPherson (who subsequently defected to Ford), it would have been a four-door sedan on a 108-inch wheelbase, weighing about 2,200 pounds and powered by a 133 cu. in. (2.2L) version of Chevy's Stovebolt Six. It would have been small, economical, and, most importantly, cheap, with a target price of \$1,000.

For a variety of reasons the Cadet was never built. The postwar economy was a seller's market, with buyers eager to pay full sticker price and more for any car they could get. Since the Cadet wouldn't have been significantly cheaper to build than a regular Chevy, it would not have been a profitable item, and there was little will to produce it. As the fifties dawned the idea of a cheap, dowdy economy car seemed positively un-American.

The Corvair might have met the same fate if not for the "Eisenhower recession" that hit in the middle of 1957. Like most recessions, this one hit middle-class buyers hard. Sales for most 1958 cars, which were bigger, glitzier, and thirstier than ever, sending sales plummeting. Buyers looking to economize suddenly turned to small, imported cars like the Volkswagen Beetle, discovering in the process that some of these cars were better built and more fun to drive than the big American iron. The import market, which had been negligible a few years earlier, suddenly grew to worrisome proportions. Worse, even though the domestic automakers had mostly rebounded for 1959, the imports' share of the American doubled, as did the sales of American Motors, whose bread-and-butter product was the compact Rambler. In September 1957 GM's president, Harlow Curtice, gave the go-ahead for Ed Cole's compact Chevy.

The biggest threat -- and most obvious target -- among the small imports was Volkswagen. Less than 15 years earlier Ford Motor Company had looked at the fledgling Volkswagen operation in Wolfsburg and proclaimed it worthless. Now the Beetle was selling 120,000 units a year. It had a growing, well-

organized sales and service operation, a new ad agency (Doyle Dane Bernbach), and a brilliant new marketing campaign. Volkswagen seemed like the one to beat.

In a number of major conceptual respects Chevy's new compact was an American version of the Volkswagen. It would have a rear engine and transaxle, allowing the powertrain to be installed as a single module, freeing the front end and interior for passenger and cargo space, and enabling easy steering without power assist. The engine would be a lightweight, air-cooled unit with horizontally opposed cylinders -- "flat" engines cancel their own secondary shaking forces without the expense of balance shafts or heavy counterweights. Rear suspension would be a simple swing-axle arrangement, with the axles angled in the trailing direction by about 40 degrees.

The Corvair would be bigger than the Volkswagen, of course, more suited to American tastes and not far from the size of the Cadet, about 180 inches long on a 108-inch wheelbase. Thanks in part to monocoque construction (GM's first North American unibody design), it would tip the scales at only 2,450 pounds. Since that was still more than 500 pounds heavier than a Beetle, its air-cooled engine would be a six, rather than a four.

It must be noted that this was not Chevy's first venture into air cooling. Back in the early 20's engineer Charles Kettering had developed a unique "copper-cooled" four, which was finally launched -- against the advice and better judgment of Alfred P. Sloan, then on GM's advisory committee -- in early 1923. The engine proved to be difficult to assemble and disastrously unreliable, and fewer than 800 were built. Only about 100 were actually sold, all of them recalled. According to legend, many were actually dumped into Lake Erie, although one survives in the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn.

The 1923 debacle was not exactly an encouraging precedent, and Robert Benzinger, who led the engine development team, said the flat six was "probably about the blankest piece of paper we'd had in a long time." Its development was protracted and fraught with problems. The engine made extensive use of aluminum, the machining of which was still something of a black art at that time, and everything from the design of its cooling fins to the selection of gasket materials able to withstand its operating temperatures was troublesome. (Continued Next Month)

ATTENTION

PRESTIGIOUS POSITIONS AVAILABLE IN JANUARY BENEFITS COMMENSURATE WITH EXPERIENCE

Four positions available in dynamic enterprise: President, Vice-President, Secretary/Editor, and Treasurer. Only cheerful, friendly, car-crazy persons need to apply. Must have working knowledge of Corvair automobiles, vans and trucks. Helpful if applicants also understand Corvair race cars. Must like people. E-mail helpful but not necessary. Stellar office hours: about four per month. Additional time required as circumstances dictate. May be called upon to evaluate party sites and communicate with others with like interests and goals. Current office holders cite perks such as contact with a wide range of similar-minded people throughout America, being greatly appreciated and supported by the group you lead, and enjoying delicious food at each office session. Also included is interesting conversation in many settings. Salary includes hundreds of happy hours with others that love Corvairs. Amount determined by applicant. Interested parties may contact a current office-holder, listed at the front of this newsletter, because there is no committee set up for interviews at this time.