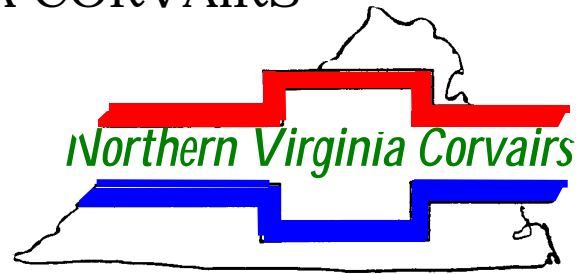


NORTHERN VIRGINIA CORVAIRS



**HOT
AIR
MAIL**



NVCC, CORSA Chapter 220

Volume XXV, Number 2

February 2008

CHAPTER CHATTER

By A. J. Paluska, Jr

Two momentous automobile events were held on the third weekend in January. The first was Mitchell Walthour's Cub Scout Pinewood Derby and the second was the NVCC monthly meeting. Due to the former event, the club meeting had to be postponed until 1:00 PM. When asked by your editor how he did at the Derby, young Walthour answered "Good".

Another good reason to start the meeting at a later time was that the January weather in Northern Virginia could be quite fickle. Some years it is quite warm and other years quite cold. Although inside facilities were available, they were not heated. To add to the suspense another snowstorm was predicted for Saturday afternoon. Needless to say, the weather cooperated. The temperature was in the low 40s and the snowstorm stayed way south and east of the D. C. area.

The project for the day was to drop the drive train from Greg Walthour's Greenbrier factory equipped camper. The camper equipment had been removed and unfortunately the body was not worth saving. It will be subjected to the cutting torch as soon as all useful parts and equipment were removed.

Eight hardy members were in attendance to help with the project. The first objective was to move the vehicle to the work area. Not too easy as it was sitting on three flat tires. One useless tire was switched out for a good one. Another would hold air long enough to move the vehicle and the backend would be supported by a jack. The distance moved wasn't far. Half shafts were removed and all of the other connections were removed and the process was to be completed in short order.

The club will be purchasing T-shirts based on the popular 2007 Vair Fair design. The changes will be to delete all reference to the Vair Fair and to make it a more Unique NVCC shirt. A proposal for club hats was also discussed. Also discussed was the purchase of CORSA memberships for NVCC club members that are not currently CORSA members. This would add members to CORSA and introduce non-CORSA members to the national organization. Additionally, they would be encouraged to continue CORSA membership on their own after the complimentary membership expired.

Don't forget to pay your dues for 2008. As the treasury is flush, your annual dues will again only be \$10.00 for the year.

Also contact Darrin Hartzler to purchase 2008 Vair Fair Raffle car tickets. See ad on Page 2.

2008 NVCC Officers

President:

Bryan Blackwell
6329 Hillside Road
Springfield, VA 22152
(703) 569-6908
bryan@skiblack.com

Vice President:

Ron Tumolo
905 North Amelia Street
Sterling, VA 20164
(703) 430-6582
rvtum@verizon.net

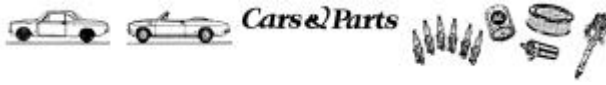
Treasurer:

Darrin Hartzler
8214 Beech tree Drive
Bethesda, MD 20817
(301) 365-7332
dhartzler@ifc.org

Secretary/Editor:

A. J. Paluska, Jr
6839 Brimstone Lane
Fairfax Station, VA 22039
(703) 250-4455
ajjr13@earthlink.net

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)

WANT A "NEW" CORVAIR FOR \$5.00?

If you do, now is the opportunity to try your luck by trying to win the 2008 Vair Fair Raffle Car currently being prepared by the Tidewater Corvair Club. Tickets are \$5.00 each, Call Darrin Hartzler at (301) 365-7332 or dhartzler@ifc.org.

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

16 February 2008, 9:00 AM: The regular NVCC meeting at the home of Al Harris.

15 March 2007, 9:00 AM: The regular NVCC meeting at the home of Ron Tumolo.

19 April 2007, 9:00 AM: The regular NVCC meeting at the home of Darrin Hartzler.

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

17 May 2007, 9:00 AM: The regular NVCC meeting at the home of Mike Puglisi.

21 June 2007, 9:00 AM: The regular meeting at the home of Ron Tumolo.

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

Next Regular Meeting:

Saturday, 16 February 2008, 9:00 AM

Al Harris
7900 Carrie Lane, Manassas, VA
(703) 369-1433

Directions: Map/directions on the mailing cover.

Treasurer's Report:

Balance (12/25/07)	\$3,248.19
Dues	\$70.00
Closing Balance (1/25/08)	\$3,318.19

Reprinted from *Live Journal* on the Internet.

Rebel yell. (Continued from January 2008)

The three new compacts went on sale for the 1960 model year. The Corvair bowed in October 1959, with a starting price of \$2,039. This compared to \$1,910 for the cheapest Falcon and \$2,043 for the cheapest Valiant. (It should be noted that the Falcon was initially available as a two- or four-door sedan, where the earliest Corvairs and Valiants were four-doors; the four-door Falcon started at \$1,974.)

The Corvair's performance was decidedly modest. With 80 gross horsepower, it was capable of a top speed of a shade over 85-mph, 0-60 requiring 17-18 seconds and the quarter mile a little over 21 seconds, which was about the same as its rivals. It would have been quicker with better gearing; *Road & Track* found that the automatic was actually marginally quicker than the three speed, its torque converter helping to make up for its dearth of ratios. It could achieve an easy 20-mpg on regular gas, perhaps topping 25 mpg in gentle freeway cruising, and it could seat six adults in only moderate discomfort. Compared to a Beetle or other small European import, this was not a bad deal.

On the other hand, the Falcon and Valiant could do just as well, despite their comparative lack of sophistication. Worse, the cost cutting program had left the base Corvair, dubbed "500", with a shabby level of interior trim: gray vinyl upholstery, gray-painted metal trim, and black rubber floor mats. The base Falcon and Valiant V100 were certainly Spartan, but the Corvair's designers had clearly saved money in an area that was very obvious to even casual shoppers. The Corvair's engineering novelty won it *Motor Trend's* Car of the Year award, but it offered buyers no clear advantage.

In 1960 the Corvair outsold the Valiant, which was handicapped by oddball styling, but the conventional-looking, conventionally engineered Falcon outsold them both by a significant margin. Even before the first-year numbers were in, Chevrolet management launched a crash program to develop a new, front engine, water-cooled compact that bowed for 1962 as the Chevy II.

The question, then, was what to do with the Corvair. It was far from a complete sales disaster, and its development and tooling costs had been substantial -- there would be no dumping the unsold cars in the lake this time. There were already a host of minor improvements being engineered into the 1961 models (including a relocated battery and spare tire, extensive minor engine revisions, and other detail changes). Perhaps what it needed was a new direction.

The answer came in May of 1960, late in the initial model year, when Chevy introduced the sporty Corvair Monza 900 coupe. The Monza, which cost a fairly hefty \$189 more than the mid-level Corvair 700, had a more powerful engine -- 95 gross horsepower, rather than 80 -- and an upgraded interior with bucket seats and better upholstery. Despite its higher cost the Monza quickly became the best-selling model in the line. In 1961, the Corvair's second year, total sales jumped by nearly 50%, about two-thirds of which were Monzas. Buyers may have been skeptical about the Corvair as an economy car, but as a sporty coupe, Chevy was onto something. The Monza coupe was joined for 1961 by a sedan and for 1962 by a convertible and even a wagon. (The latter proved a miscalculation; only 2,362 were sold, and it was dropped after that single year.)

The Monza may have been more expensive, but it made for a significantly more livable Corvair. The more powerful engine (raised to 102 hp for '62) chopped about three seconds off its 0-60 times, more with the optional four-speed manual, at no great cost in fuel economy. The plusher interior, meanwhile, did a fair job of addressing the low-rent ambiance of the standard cars.

The consequences of the cost-cutting program, however, still lingered, for there was still a problem, a potentially dangerous one. The early Corvair was, as you would expect with its engine and transmission behind the rear axle, exceptionally tail-heavy. Add air conditioning, heater, automatic, and a full load of accessories, and its static weight distribution became close to 36/64. This was wonderful for traction in snow, but not so beneficial to straight-line stability, particularly in crosswinds (although in that respect it was far better than the Beetle), or to handling at the limit.

Tail-heavy cars are inherently prone to *oversteer* -- that is, the rear wheels tend to lose traction first in tight turns, sending the tail sliding outward. On rear-engined cars this is exacerbated by the stiffer springs necessary to support the rear end weight, which increases the roll couple and the weight transfer to the outside wheel. Oversteer is not inherently dangerous -- although it may require more steering correction than the average driver can cope with -- and, in fairness, most every front-engine, rear-drive car of the era would oversteer if given too much throttle while exiting a turn.

What the Corvair needed -- and had, in its original design -- was a front anti-roll bar. An anti-roll bar is a torsion-bar spring whose function is to increase roll stiffness. Adding one to the front suspension induces understeer (a tendency for the front wheels to lose traction first), and would have served to balance the Corvair's inherent propensity for oversteer. Alas, the anti-roll bar, which cost about \$4 per car, was a casualty of the cost cutting program, despite the protests of Ed Cole and others. As a partial compensation the Corvair's owner's manual specified unequal tire pressures, 15 psi in front, 26 psi in back. Lower tire pressure reduces tire grip, which in this case would promote understeer. Unfortunately, it also reduces a tire's load capacity, which could cause a heavily loaded Corvair (which carried its luggage in the front) to exceed the load capacity of its tires. Furthermore, many owners ignored the recommendation and simply used equal tire pressures all around, as they would with any other car.

The Corvair's most serious handling deficiency, however, was not the oversteer inherent in rear-heavy cars, but an unfortunate consequence of the geometry of a swing-axle suspension. In a swing-axle design, the rear axles are hinged at the transaxle. The static roll center of the rear suspension (the imaginary point around which the body moves as it leans on its suspension) is therefore quite high. A high roll center can be a good thing: the shorter the distance between the center of gravity and the roll center, the less the body is prone to lean in turns. With a swing axle suspension, though, the forces generated by the inside rear tire in hard turns cause the halfshaft to act as a lever, hoisting the body upward, an effect known as *jacking*. As the body rises it shifts weight off the inside wheel, allowing it to tuck under the body and breaking the already tenuous contact between tread and pavement. This tuck-under causes severe oversteer, not a gradual breakaway, but a sudden, vicious snap towards the outside of the turn that even a skilled driver would be hard pressed to control. The Corvair's defenders insist that the conditions necessary to provoke this effect are rare, but there was a significant number of owners of early Corvairs who lost control in exactly this fashion and subsequently launched a raft of lawsuits against General Motors. (To be continued next month)