

# NORTHERN VIRGINIA CORVAIRS



**HOT  
AIR  
MAIL**



NVCC, CORSA Chapter 220

Volume XXVI, Number 1

January 2009

## CHAPTER CHATTER

By A. J. Paluska, Jr

Happy New Year!

As you can tell from the officer listing at the bottom of this page, the NVCC has unanimously reelected its current slate of officers for 2009. Your editor was again unsuccessful (for the 7th time!) in his attempt to step down and was reelected, as was President Bryan Blackwell, Vice President Ron Tumolo, and Treasurer Darrin Hartzler. Also, as you can also tell from this issue, the club has fleshed out the meeting schedule through June 2009. With the New Year and an incomplete calendar, now is the time for the membership to address any events they would like to recommend for club participation. It is your club so don't be bashful in making your thoughts and desires known to the officers. I'm sure that we'll be able to add a few more firm dates as the weather gets warmer.

If you didn't attend the December meeting, you missed a good party with a really nice gift exchange. The food was good and abundant and there was plenty of talk about topics other than cars and Corvairs! Jake even had a DVD playing that showed Chevrolet and Corvair promotional material. Some of the things they did with a Corvair were unbelievable by today's standards!

To help out your editor, it was emphasized that meeting hosts would provide "minutes" of their meetings. By doing this, the HAM will be provided with additional views and opinions on the monthly meetings. This action was AGAIN largely ignored last year! Also, this will enable your editor to focus on more stimulating, in-depth automotive investigation, testing, and opinion articles. If you are interested in participating in this activity, just throw your hat, or rather word processor, even typewriter, into the ring. We will welcome any and all of your automotive endeavors.

Don't forget to pay your dues for 2009. As the treasury is still flush, your annual dues will again only be \$10.00 for the year.

For 2009, the club will be enlarging its activities beyond the usual monthly tech sessions. There was some discussion about attending a few local shows and/or cruise-ins as a club and also having a combination meeting and picnic in one of the summer months. What are your ideas for more varied and fun activities. Let us know so that we can consider and plan appropriately for those events.

### 2009 NVCC Officers

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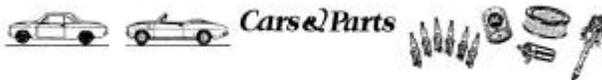
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The Northern Virginia Corvair Club (NVCC) publishes the HOT AIR MAIL newsletter monthly as a service to its members. NVCC is a non-profit chapter of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA). The \$10 annual dues are payable January 1st, to "Treasurer, 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 Convertible:** Red with good body and nice paint. Asking \$6000.00, new engine, condition 3 to 4 on scale of 5. Contact Jim at (540) 465-5066. (6/08)

**64 Monza Convertible:** Red with white interior. 110HP with powerglide. Original, not running, worth restoring. Located in Gaithersburg, MD. Contact Woody Schwartz at (802) 375-6160. (10/08)

**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**

**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 summer. 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)

**STILL AVAILABLE:** 2007 Vair Fair T-shirts. Priced for quick sale. Another can't miss opportunity to own rare Corvair Memorabilia! **HURRY** as they went fast at the 2008 Vair Fair!

**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, [www.corvairranch.com](http://www.corvairranch.com) Email:  
[corvairranchinc@earthlink.net](mailto:corvairranchinc@earthlink.net)

**Wheels Needed**

Looking for a set of 14-inch steel rims and or 15-inch rally wheels. Also a set of 14-inch wire wheel covers. Don Lintvet: [don@lintvet.com](mailto:don@lintvet.com) or (703) 4431801.

**NVCC Calendar**

**17 January 2009, 9:00 AM:** The regular NVCC meeting at the home of Al and Peggy Harris.

**21 February 2009:** The regular NVCC meeting at the home of Ron Tumolo.

**21 March 2009, 9:00 AM:** The regular NVCC meeting at the home of Jason Matthys.

**18 April 2009, 9:00 AM:** The regular NVCC meeting at the home of Greg Walthour.

**8-10 May 2009: 30th Annual Virginia Vair Fair,** Holiday Inn - North, Fredericksburg, room \$89 plus tax. Phone 540-371-5550 for reservations. Mention Corvair Show to get the special rate.

**16 May 2009, 9:00 AM:** The regular NVCC meeting at the home of A. J. Paluska, Jr.

**20 June 2009, 9:00 AM:** The regular meeting at the home of Bryan Blackwell.

**13-17 July 2009, CORSA International Convention,** Florida Corvair Clubs, Jacksonville, FL. Florida Corvair Clubs, Jacksonville, FL. Host Hotel is the Wyndham Jacksonville, 800-996-3426. Mention Corvair Society for \$99 rate. Register online [www.wyndhamjacksonville.com](http://www.wyndhamjacksonville.com), click "Search using Corporate, Promo and Group codes," enter your dates and 0719886CO for Group Code. Contact Sarah Beltrami, 386-615-0072, [sarahvair@juno.com](mailto:sarahvair@juno.com).

**Next Regular Meeting:**

**Saturday, 17 January 2009, 9:00 AM**

Al Harris  
7900 Carrie Lane, Manassas, VA 22193  
(703) 369-1433

**Directions:** Map/directions on the mailing cover.

**Treasurer's Report:**

Balance (11/15/08)	\$3,085.01
Dues	\$40.00
Closing Balance (12/29/09)	\$3,125.01

Reprinted from the October/November 2008 *Corvairations*, the newsletter of CORSA Ontario

"Unsafe At Any Speed" In Retrospect  
by Norm Helmkey

November [2008] marks the 43rd year since Ralph Nader's book "Unsafe At Any Speed" was published. Those of us who are crazy about old cars, especially the Corvair, have heard for years in the press and on TV, how Nader's book killed the Corvair. There's been lots of articles [sic] written to rebut this notion by pointing out that GM sounded the Corvair death-knell in April 1965, six months before Nader's book was published.

GM management (to whom this unique vehicle was just another item on the balance sheet) ordered; "No more development, just do enough to keep the Corvair up with the safety standards." Demise was slow, as Chevrolet continued it until May 1969. Perhaps GM did not want to give Nader the satisfaction of dropping the Corvair too soon, or pending court cases had to be settled.

Possibly, the book did some good. Few are aware the book had a subtitle: "**The Designed-In Dangers of The American Automobile**," the real problem Nader was trying to address. It's clearly time to set the record straight and have the media get the facts straight, without the sensationalism Nader's book generated. Also, those of us with old car interests, should talk knowledgeably, on what the book really is about, and explode the myth of the "Corvair Killing."

Very few are aware a Senate Committee, DOT and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) investigation of Nader's accusations, beginning in 1970 and found those attributed to the Corvair to be "without merit." The investigation was not completed until 1972, three years after the Corvair was killed. A letter from the NHTSA was sent to Corvair owners of record on August 12, 1972, but the letter received little media attention.

The real surprise is; of the American cars, Corvair, Falcon and Valiant the NHTSA indicated the Corvair was the **LEAST** likely to overturn. In the tests, European cars (Renalt [sic] and Volkswagen) were also included and both were more prone to rollover..

Nader's book tells how the US auto industry designed and made cars for years based on style and cost cutting, with no regard for the [sic] safety. His focus zeroed in on cars that had inherent design faults like the Ford Pinto gas tank, the '53 Buick brakes, the '65 Ford suspension, the '64 Chrysler steering gear brackets, the pre-'66 GM Hydramatic shift pattern, etc. that all resulted in potential safety hazards. However, it took an unorthodox design by GM's Chevrolet on which to focus and drive home the point for the public and government to listen.

Corvair enthusiasts have turned some of the so-called Corvair problems into fun names for their club events, like; the Annual Corvair Recall or the Great Western Fan-Belt Toss (a reference to the early Corvair propensity for throwing off the fan belt) or the "O" Ring Flip (making fun of oil leaking early engines).

Few know Nader was riding in Simon Lazarus' (a Washington lawyer) Corvair, when Lazarus was stopped for speeding. Nader feared the reports would delight in the headline: **NADER IN SPEEDING CORVAIR**. Ralph Nader even spoke at the 1991 Corvair Society of America (CORSA)[convention].

In "Unsafe At Any Speed's" five page preface, the word "Corvair" does not appear, but, in the 41 pages of Chapter 1 ("Sporty Corvair"), the **ONLY PART OF THE BOOK PEOPLE REMEMBER**, The word "Corvair" appears 153 times. Many are in a reference context to the point where at, nearly four times per page, it at best becomes boring battology\*\* bordering on alliteration.

Chapter 2 ("Disaster Deferred") mentions the Corvair four times and uses in one place a generic "Corvair-type design" as if the suspension was a Corvair first. Robert Schilling, the German born suspension engineer, used an earlier Fiat 600 design, as the model for his Corvair design.

In Chapter 3, ("The Second Collision") calls-out the Corvair six times, four on page 94 alone. All but one, references steering column safety (a problem of the times in **all** cars), the dashboard and other objects that an unrestrained occupants could hit, The Automotive Crash Injury Research program at Cornell University started by Hugh DeHaven in 1952, is covered by 13 of the 65 pages in Chapter 3. Canada has a unique part in auto safety as a result of a 1917 mid-air crash of two Canadian-made Curtis JN-4 airplanes. DeHaven, the only survivor, wondered why he alone was not killed.

The last mention of the Corvair in the whole book is on page 103. The next 262 pages or 72 percent of the book deals with all manner of other automotive subjects. Chapter 4 ("The Power To Pollute") covers automotive contribution to air pollution.

In Chapter 5 ("The Engineers") the automotive engineers are taken to task for not developing safer cars. Ken Stonex, a GM mathematician, did comparisons between a 1910 Oldsmobile Limited and the 1955/60/64 models to show how much safer the newer cars were. Nader concedes all companies had adopted; better brakes, easier starting, safer glass, longer lasting tires, smoother reliable suspension and in general a much safer car than our grandfathers knew. The "Engineers" get 40 of the books 365 pages, with no mention of the Corvair or its innovations.

"The Stylists" get their lashes in the 22 pages of Chapter 6. The list of cars is a run down of the industry like the Cadillac tail fins, Buick, Chevelle, Chevy II, Oldsmobile, the old La Salle, Plymouth Satellite, Lincoln Continental, Fords Model A, Model T, Falcon, Fairlane and Mustang are all there, but not the Corvair, which in 1965 was voted as one of the top 10 best styled cars ever.

Chapter 7, ("The Traffic Safety Establishment") with 63 pages and Chapter 8, ("The Coming Struggle For Safety") with 52 pages cover nearly a third of the book. These chapters cover highways, traffic control, driver behavior, education, maintenance, inspections, state laws, accident statistics, lawyers, medical profession, the insurance industry and the inaction of groups.

The last chapter relates the first recorded traffic fatality was in New York in September 1899 when Henry Bliss stepped off a trolley and was killed by a car (wrong). Three years earlier on August 17, 1896, Bridget Driscoll, 44, was killed in London, England by a car being demonstrated by the Anglo-French Motor Car Company. At the inquest, the coroner said he hoped such an accident would never happen again. Some wish! There are published accounts of five people killed in 1834 when a steam carriage overturned in Glasgow, Scotland. What makes this report so tragic, is the accident was caused by the Turnpike Trustees (the authorities) who had an 18-inch bank of stone dumped across the road to stop the steam carriage service.

The final irony, in Nader's book "Unsafe at any Speed" the Corvair does not appear in the index.

Some excellent nostalgic reading on the Corvair is a 14-page article in the Automobile Quarterly (Vol. 8, No. 4) written by Karl Ludvigsen, in 1970 just a year after the demise of the Corvair titled, "Remember The Corvair? - Here's A Look At What We Lost."

How prophetic he was!

(\*\* Battology - old English word for repetitious)