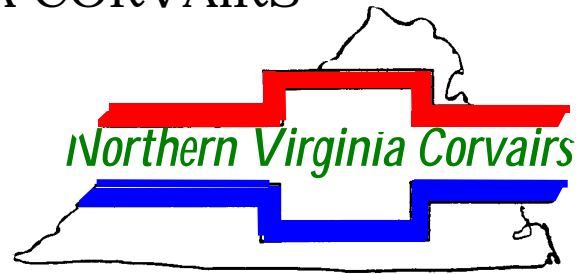


NORTHERN VIRGINIA CORVAIRS



**HOT
AIR
MAIL**



NVCC, CORSA Chapter 220

Volume XXVI, Number 6

June 2009

CHAPTER CHATTER

By A. J. Paluska, Jr

The weather looked like it would cooperate for the May meeting as the rain was forecasted for the afternoon and evening, so the decision was to work on the car in the driveway. That looked like a dubious decision when some light rain appeared shortly after Jake McCahn arrived in his 1962 four door. Fortunately, the rain lasted only a few minutes and did not disrupt the work in progress.

As it turned out, the May meeting was an all early event. Your editor was busy with switching out the heater control box when Ron Tumolo arrived in his newly restored 1964 Coupe. The final attendee was Bill Leeman. Although he did not drive his Corvair, he owns a 1964 four door so that qualifies the meeting as a bona fide early event. As editor and host, I made the official decision to declare the event.

As usually happens the removal of the heater control box was easier than the replacement. Not that it is hard, but sometimes the cables just won't cooperate. In time the conversion was completed and all controls functioned properly.

Despite what most people believe, the star washers holding on the cable ends are not destroyed when removing them, but to be on the safe side, they were replaced with new ones procured from Clark's Corvair Parts.

There was some discussion about the recently held Virginia Vair Fair. Jake McCahn brought back several raffle prizes won by Greg Walthour plus plaques for both Greg and Ron for their wins in the car show. It will be the NVCC's turn to host the Vair Fair next year. The club will have to start its planning as soon as possible. Choice of venue will be the most important decision. We will have to determine if we would want to duplicate the Fredericksburg location or stay with a more local Northern Virginia location.

As President Bryan Blackwell is the host for this month's meeting, we can start the discussion for next year's Vair Fair as well as doing some Corvair work. Come to the meeting and provide your opinions and expertise.

2009 NVCC Officers

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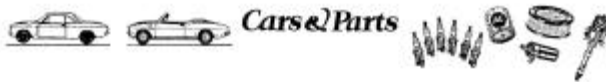
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The Northern Virginia Corvair Club (NVCC) publishes the HOT AIR MAIL newsletter monthly as a service to its members. NVCC is a non-profit chapter of the Corvair Society of America (CORSAs). The \$10 annual dues are payable January 1st, to "Treasurer,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

door, 4 Monza Wheel disks. Call Venice Cox at (703) 791-6517.

STILL AVAILABLE: Priced for quick sale. Another can't miss opportunity to own **HURRY** as they went fast at

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 Email:
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 or (703) 4431801.

TECH SESSIONS: Venice Cox, 4th Saturday of each month, 10 AM to 2 PM. Any member is welcome to assist Venice during these sessions. (703) 791-6517

NVCC Calendar

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. Host Hotel is the Wyndham Jacksonville, 800-996-3426. Mention Corvair Society for \$99 rate. Register online 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.

18 July 2009, 9:00 AM: The regular meeting at the home of Darrin Hartzler.

15 August 2009, 9:00 AM: The regular meeting at the home of Ron Tumolo.

19 September 2009, 9:00 AM: We need a host for this meeting.

17 October 2009, 9:00 AM: We need a host for this meeting.

13 November 2009, 9:00 AM: We need a host for this meeting.

Next Regular Meeting:

Saturday, 20 June 2009, 9:00 AM

Bryan Blackwell
6329 Hillside Road, Springfield, VA 22152
(703) 569-6908

Directions: Map/directions on the mailing cover.

Treasurer's Report:

| | |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Balance (4/27/09) | \$3,263.84 |
| Interest | \$2.41 |
| Dues | \$10.00 |
| Closing Balance (5/29/09) | \$3,276.25 |

Reprinted from the May 2009 *Vairious Times*, the newsletter of the North Cascades Corvairs

40 Years Ago...

Corvair Line Shuts Down

1.7 Million Classics Produced

On The Production Line

Chevrolet's Willow Run, Michigan assembly plant was the sole production facility for all 1969 Corvairs. It was one of 24 General Motors assembly plants operating nationwide in 1969, including 17 building various models of Chevrolet division cars. The plant is in Ypsilanti, a small town of 25,000 in southeastern Michigan, just twenty-five miles west of downtown Detroit and now part of the Detroit to Ann Arbor metropolitan sprawl.

The vast majority of all 1960-1969 Corvairs were built at the Chevrolet and Fisher Body assembly facilities in Willow Run. In the sixties, Corvairs were also built in California (Oakland & Van Nuys), Kansas City, Missouri and in Canada at Oshawa, Ontario. Willow Run was always considered to be the "home" plant. Exactly 6000 1969 Corvairs were assembled - 2,762 500 coupes, 2,717 Monza coupes and 521 Monza convertibles.

The Willow Run plant began building the Chevy II Nova for the 1962 model year running them on the same production line as the Corvair. As the Corvair's production volume dropped each year after 1965, it became harder and harder to build it on the same line with Nova. By 1969, only three Corvairs per hour were coming down the line amid all the Novas and it became a serious problem to train new assembly workers on the Corvair intricacies. Add to that the basic layout differences of the two cars. The job that a worker did at a given station on a Nova may not have been the same job as needed on a Corvair. The Corvair required more work than the Nova before the powertrain and suspension were married to the body, and the Nova needed more work afterwards. This meant the Corvair was getting a free ride for a while on the line, a very inefficient arrangement.

Something had to give and the most logical choice was to get the Corvair off the main line. On October 28th, 1969 Corvair production stopped, resuming on November 15th in a special area in the northeast corner of the plant. This Corvair only assembly line was 400 feet long, manned by 43 of Willow Run's very best workers, supervisors and utility men. Each man was specially chosen because he showed a personal interest in the project, and the Corvair.

There were five assembly stations on the line. Numbers one, three and five had hoists. Station one lowered the carrier cradle, picked up the body and returned the body truck to Fisher. Then, with the body raised, workers began installing gas & brake lines, linkages, heater, and so forth. At station two the carrier stayed in the air and the body was prepared for marriage with the front & rear suspensions and engine-transaxle assembly. At station three, the carrier was lowered by hoist and electrical, wiring, steering column, dash and interior parts were installed. At station four, the carrier was raised up again where the engine and chassis components were brought from their own miniature

line and raised up into the car from underneath. Gas tank, bumpers and tires were installed here as well. At station five, the car was lowered to the floor for fluids, headlamps, aiming, bezels, wipers, etc. Most workers there felt they were privileged to work in the area, feeling it was the best place to work at Willow Run. And they all liked the Corvair. The line ran smoothly. Despite continual parts shortages, those who were there feel the best built 1969 Corvairs were those completed between November 15th and April 21st when all hell broke loose. Production during this period totaled about 2600 cars.

The original schedule for the Corvair room assembly was to build out through July, but orders for Novas had backed up and dealers were screaming for more. This could only be done if Corvair production was finished, adding that manpower to the Nova line. On April 21st, Corvair production was doubled to 51 cars a day, making the last day of production May 14th. The goals were met and the weekly rates did indeed double to over 300 Corvairs each week. In the first week of the new program, 318 were built, up from 145 the week before. It accelerated for two more weeks, hitting 341 and then 364 cars. The very last workweek of Corvair production was only two and one half days long, but they still cranked out 141 Corvairs. How did they do it?

Three ways. The first was to put the entire Willow Run work force on a six day, overtime week, as union rules prevented the Corvair workers from being the only ones to get Saturday overtime. Second, the number of workers doubled. The third and most important change that allowed the rapid build out of '69 Corvairs was the violation of GM's steadfast rule against stockpiling cars. A car was never built unless there was a dealer order on hand, and cars were never built ahead of orders. Leave it to the Corvair to be the exception, and all those unsold Corvairs began to pile up outside the plant. They just couldn't be sold as fast as the speeded up line was churning them out. The rush complicated an already critical parts shortage problem and many of these very last Corvairs were let go to dealers short of parts.

After the dust settled, 6000 Corvairs had indeed been built by May 14th - 2194 on the main line with the Novas and 3806 in the Corvair room. Of those 3806, 1164 were built during the last three and one half weeks. Novas total 1969 model year production was a whopping 283,000. In retrospect, it seems incredible that so much effort went into assembling such a small handful of Corvairs. It once again proved that the Corvair was always the exception rather than the norm.

The Last Day

When Chevy PR issued its press release announcing the end of the Corvair production on May 14th they were well prepared for the flood of calls from the media. The news was on the wire service tickers by 10:30 AM, signaling an explosion of newspaper reports, television & radio spots and magazine articles. Phone calls from reporters all over the country started coming in almost immediately to the Chevy PR staff. Their questions were numerous. They wanted to know the real reasons why, needed more information on the car's history, and even appealed for statements about Mr. Nader. That would never happen from anybody at GM!

The Associated Press, United Press International, and local TV stations were requesting to photograph the last Corvair as it actually came off the assembly line that Wednesday. No plans had been made to have the press at Willow Run and even the ever present GM Photographic Department wasn't going to be there. All GM needed was smug, gleeful reports in the media that the Corvair was finally dead.

With all the requests to see the last Corvair being built, GM relented. A small ceremony would be allowed, which probably assured better treatment by the press than if they'd been shut out. The Corvair room was a high security area at Willow Run and very few outsiders had ever been in it. So it must have seemed strange when newsmen began arriving after lunch on Wednesday, May 14th. The line had been running all morning so the very last cars could be ready for them.

The tone of the day was very informal, with no speeches or statements by anyone from GM. It was a sad day for the assembly workers, foremen and their supervisors who had grown fond of the Corvair and their little team. It surely was no day of celebration for them. Instead, it was a funeral and they were the pallbearers.

The last Corvair, an Olympic Gold Monza Coupe (# 6000), was in its overhead carrier and was pushed closer to the waiting newsmen. The car in front (# 5999) was lowered to the floor, on its wheels for the first time. After receiving its ration of gasoline, this Lemans Blue Monza coupe quickly became as famous as # 6000 itself. 5999 wouldn't start. A loud backfire, and then silence. Some sentimental workers and reporters felt the Corvair was stubbornly holding up the line, refusing to die.

All the evidence points to a "service" or replacement engine, one that would normally be ordered for customers' cars. Due to the extreme shortage of parts at Willow Run for the last Corvairs, a service 140 was probably ordered. This was then installed in # 5999 as its original engine. Engines shipped directly to Willow Run from the Tonawanda, New York engine plant have the distributors installed; service engines are delivered without distributors. Engine line workers, unfamiliar with distributor installation and in a hurry, must have put it in 180 degrees off. BANG!

With # 5999 now pushed out of the way, at 1:30 PM #6000 was easily started and driven a few feet ahead where the Olympic Gold Monza coupe stopped for photographs by the press. At 2:00 PM, # 6000 was driven out of the building, followed by the newsmen, and down a ramp onto the loading dock area. Nearby was a long string of tri-level railroad cars filled mostly with Novas and a few Corvairs. More photos were taken here by the press and plant personnel. And that was that, the Corvair production decade was over.

The narrative above was found on the 1969 Corvair Group's website. It is condensed from three of Dave Newell's chapters in *1969 Corvair Fingertip-Facts*, by Dave Newell and Mark Ellis. It is reprinted here with Dave's permission. To read the full behind the scenes '69 story and learn about the Chevrolet people involved, the book can be ordered from Clark's Corvair Parts.

Dave Newell adds: The articles you sent from the '69 site aren't from our book. They're paraphrased and edited versions taken from three chapters that I wrote for the book, but I didn't write them like that. The really good historic stuff, especially concerning the people involved, has all been edited out. Some words have been changed, like the sentence about the last minute decision to have a ceremony on May 14th: it reads "GM relented" where I wrote "Chevrolet relented" in the book. That's a BIG difference since the division and the corporation had their own PR staffs. I'm not sure how my writing got botched up like that. Most everything there is written by me except some sentences that may have been added to make things clearer to the uninitiated who might happen to stumble upon the site. What's most important, though, is what has been left out, including all references to Joe Casey, who will be a speaker in Jacksonville.