

## **Prairie Capital Corvair Association**

**P.O. Box 454  
Pawnee, Illinois 62558**

# The Flat Six

April 2023

### 2023 Officers

President -Tim Mahler	(217) 793-3824	Vice-President Jim Allen	(309) 361-5351
Secretary-vacant	(Call Tim)	Treasurer-Glen Rittenhouse	(309) 472-3882
Membership-Chris Hall	(217) 691-6529	Historian/Inventory - vacant	
FlatSix Editor Tim Mahler	(217) 793-3824	Email	PrairieCapital@corvair.org

### Board of Directors

Mike Hall (2023)	(217) 494-7105	Chris Hall (2024)	(217) 691-6529
Jim Collier (2023)	(217) 972-2285	Brian Nicholson (2023)	(217) 891-0808

## From the Prez

Just as I thought Spring was just around the corner, the weather turned cold again. Oh well, by July we will all be missing the cool weather of April.

The Peoria area Early Ford Invitational Car show and swap meet falls on PCCA's regularly scheduled meeting day. So, the group voted to make that car show the PCCA meeting. There isn't a great place to conduct a business meeting, so everyone is welcome to tour the show and swap area at the times that best fits their schedule. I'll be arriving later in the day, after I get a nice long run in (Carmel Marathon in Indianapolis).

After the meeting, Chris Hall noted he needed a tech session to finish installing door hardware on his Greenbrier. So magically, we have a tech program for May. I haven't worked on FC doors before, so this should be informative for me. Hopefully we can pass a tip or two to the rest of the group too.

Spring officially arrived March 20 and the daffodils are up and ready to bloom. Time to get those Corvairs out, washed, and polished up. The Spring show season is here – even that means just parking the Corvair in the driveway in a classic one car show. On my busy road, that works quite well.

Finally, but not least by far, thank you Bill Pierson for a great program at the March meeting. I'm always impressed by your ball playing days.

Stay warm and safe everyone. Tim



Bill Pierson and Glen Rittenhouse have a chat. I think that's Chris behind Glen. Picture by Shelby

# Calendar of Events - 2023

PCCA Home Page may be found at <http://www.corvair.org/chapters/chapter627>



**Directions to the CPF Corvair Museum near Glenarm Illinois.** Take exit 88 from I-55, from either direction, head west – turn right if you are traveling south on I-55, left if traveling north. Follow the road as it curves to the left, south. Go straight at the stop light (turning right takes you to Chatham). The Museum is 1.3 miles from the stop light on the right hand side – just past the Double J campgrounds.

April 8, 2023      **Peoria Early Ford Invitational Car show and Swap meet**  
**PCCA may attempt a meeting during the show.**  
**Glen Rittenhouse is expected to be showing his Rampside at this event.**  
**Exposition Gardens in Peoria Illinois 7am till 3:30 pm (Note: is a spectator fee)**  
April 9      Easter Sunday

May 13, 2023      **PCCA Meeting 2:00-4:00 pm. LOCATION: the CPF Museum in Glenarm**  
Program: Tech Session as the group helps reassemble a Greenbrier (doors)

June 3      Pawnee Prairie Days and Car Show – Pawnee Illinois

June 10      **PCCA Meeting 2:00-4:00 pm. LOCATION: the CPF Museum in Glenarm**  
This may become the Pawnee Prairie day Show in Pawnee.

June 10,11      Route 66 Association Annual tour.  
Corvair Museum is on Historic RT66 and is listed as a stop for the tour.

June 19-24, 2023      2023 CORSA International Convention June 19-24, 2023  
Chula Vista Resort, **Wisconsin Dells, WI**  
**Concours, Road Rally, Economy Run, Autocross,**  
**swap meet, tech sessions, More**



July 8, 2023      **PCCA Meeting 2:00-4:00 pm. LOCATION: the**  
**CPF Museum in Glenarm**

August 12, 2023      **PCCA Meeting 2:00-4:00 pm. LOCATION: the CPF Museum in Glenarm**  
September 9, 2023      **SOS Auto Show, downtown Springfield 8:00am to 3:30pm**  
**PCCA Meeting 1:00pm. At the show.**

Sept 29,30, Oct 1      Great Plains Corvair Roundup. Guthrie Oklahoma (just North of Oklahoma City)  
Car display, Corvair Concours, swap meet, other activities

October 14, 2023      **PCCA Meeting 2:00-4:00 pm. LOCATION: the CPF Museum in Glenarm**

November 11, 2023      **PCCA Meeting 2:00-4:00 pm. LOCATION:**  
**the CPF Museum in Glenarm**

December 9, 2023      **PCCA Christmas get together, luncheon.**  
Current plans: Whit's End, Taylorville IL



For more Corvair Events Check the calendar on the CORSA Web site:  
[www.corvair.org](http://www.corvair.org)

# PCCA March meeting



Bill Pierson presents “life as a fast pitch softball catcher” Photo by Shelby Berta

Curvers, forkballs and other pitches were also mentioned, but the “simple” fastball caught my attention. It, partially, also explains why I could never hit one. The rest of that story is lack of athletic ability (for hitting a softball/baseball).

Bill also caught Eddie Feigner of “The King and his Court.” The team was a traveling exhibition team similar to basketballs Harlem globetrotters. Playing a “regular” game plus an exhibition of various showmanship style pitches. One Bill described was thrown from second base to the plate with Bill holding his glove motionless at his left shoulder. Bull’s eye. Although offered an opportunity to travel and play with this team, Bill declined, maintaining his amateur status.



Bill’s Hall of Fame Plaque, Photo by Shelby Berta

The editor didn’t take many notes, he was busy just listening to Bill Pierson talk about his ball playing days. Wow, Bill was an athlete. His teammates were, according to Bill, even better.

Bill played amateur softball (and some baseball too) for many years post school years. His team won the state fast pitch championships 4 times. They also played in the National fast pitch tourney a few times. Bill was inducted into the Illinois ASA Hall of Fame in 1987 as one of the best defensive catchers in ASA softball history. I think Bill also mentioned that the team made the Hall as well. The Illinois ASA Hall of Fame museum is located in Casey Illinois.

Besides describing many of the team exploits, Bill also described a few of the pitches that were thrown. How a fast ball rises, based on the rotation of the ball when it leaves the pitchers hand was informative. I have listened to the baseball broadcasters say that was a two or four stitch fastball, but didn’t recognize the different effect those grips had on the ball’s rotation – one leading to the ball rising at the plate, the other sinking. Other grips causes the ball to move sideways. All are basically fastballs using a different grip – the AHA moment...that’s the real reason for the pitcher hiding how he’s holding the ball.



Jim Allen listens to Bill’s spiel. Photo by Shelby Berta.

Bill concluded by stating he could talk about his playing days for hours but thought it was time to conclude his talk. Then, of course, added another story, prompted by Thelma or another PCCA member.

We did enjoy the program, even though it didn’t directly involve a Corvair. Thanks Bill.



*Editor: I sometimes forget what I've saved from the internet. This is from Bryan Blackwell's well done web pages (I saved this some 10 years ago) I wasn't able to re-locate it. The article is from Car and Driver, September 1965. It would have been more fitting in the Feb. Newsletter, but addle minded am I.*

## The Fitch Sprint in CAR and DRIVER

"It's real grand touring on a shoestring, thanks to the old pro, John Fitch" - Car and Driver, September, 1965

Please keep in mind as you read the following article, that it was written in 1965. Otherwise, when you see the prices mentioned, you'll be tripping over things to get to the phone to place a call to John Fitch. Some things don't change; you can still buy a late model Corvair without going broke, and the modifications mentioned in the article are valid even today, thirty-something years later.

I'd like to name the writer for you, but unfortunately, when I checked with the CAR and DRIVER corporate offices, I was informed no records exist of the writer's name. This won't get in the way of your enjoyment, though, so let's move on to a professional's opinion of the Fitch Sprint, and photographs by Tom Burnside.

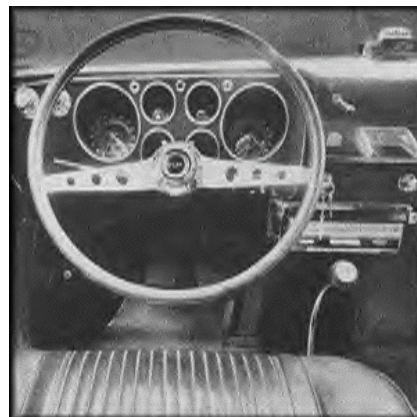
John Fitch has the sort of wispy gentleness more often associated with a high school English teacher than a great racing driver. He's tall and slightly round-shouldered, with a shock of thinning hair and the brand of articulate good manners that makes it difficult to accept his credentials as one of the finest road racing drivers ever produced in the United States.

The passing years and the press of business have ended Fitch's racing, but nevertheless he still drives superbly, with the same effortless, almost casual style that made him so successful with the Cunningham and Mercedes-Benz teams. Should you ever be driving through the rolling country of northeastern Connecticut, with its monotonously picturesque white clapboard colonial houses, you might be overtaken by a nasty-sounding Corvair with a flat black deck-lid and a rakish roof line. Don't bother trying to keep up, because it may be John Fitch out running in a Corvair Sprint—one of the nicest custom styling and performance packages available in today's growing automotive accessory market.

Fitch produces the Sprint in a nondescript four-bay garage in the tiny community of Falls Village, a few miles from the Lime Rock race track. He's been in the business several years now, and the demand for both separate components and completely outfitted cars has reached a point where a small but active staff is being supplemented by a dozen special suppliers in both the United States and Great Britain.

Operating on the thesis that the already-impressive Corvair makes the basis for an outstanding American tourer, Fitch markets a line of nearly 40 special options designed to make the car run faster, corner better, stop more efficiently and look racier. These devices can be purchased individually for any Corvair, but they are specifically intended as the parts of a whole package that transforms a standard 140-hp Corsa two-door coupe into a Corvair Sprint.

Eleven items make up the basic Sprint package. They range from a \$24.00 engine modification job, which adds about 15 horsepower, to a free pair of spiffy polished aluminum nameplates. It all costs \$383.65



installed, \$306.40 if you want to do it yourself.

The engine modifications are simple and effective. Four small air cleaners and a slightly altered crankcase breather are the basic components, though the three degrees of ignition advance which Fitch & Co. add doubtlessly contributes to the increased poke.

The GT suspension—at \$56.00 installed—really works. Included for the front and rear suspension are four progressive-rate, auxiliary rubber springs similiar to the aeon units used on some Ferraris, and a pair of adjustable Gabriel shock absorbers for the rear. The front suspension is set at four degrees positive caster and a quarter-degree positive camber. The rear camber is reset at one and a half degrees negative.

Special, shorter steering arms that have been heat-treated and Magnfluxed come with the Sprint package for \$46.00. They cut the ratio to 15:1 (from 23:1) and, when utilized with the optional steering damper (\$29.50), turn the Corvair steering into a thing of beauty. The damper is the Delco unit employed on the Sting Ray, with special mounting brackets. Should you desire both the damper and the special steering arms, they can be purchased at a unit cost of \$59.00, installed. Everybody knows that GT cars have to have wood-rim steering wheels, and John Fitch makes one available with holes in the tempered aluminum spokes and everything. It will cost you \$59.00 and, though it isn't going to make you a Jim Clark (he uses a leather-covered wheel—Fitch sells those too, for \$9.95) it will do wonders for the interior of your Corsa.

Another \$9.95 will get you a Lucas Flamethrower driving light installed in place of the regular left-handed high-beam unit. Our test car had a pair of Flamethrowers painted with Holt's "Fog Cote" yellow dye for continental driving and the tint added an extremely distinctive note to the front of the car.

When anybody starts to grump about the Corvair, they sooner or later get around to the rather shabby interior appointments, and Fitch has taken several steps to cure this deficiency. The wood-rim wheel, coupled with the fairly adequate Corsa instrument panel (entirely visible tachometer, but no oil pressure gauge or ammeter) takes care of the driver's seat quite nicely, but the back compartment remains a bit stark. He offers, for \$21.95 installed, deep-pile carpeting for the back of the folding rear seat and the exposed rear panel. In addition to adding a note of elegance, Fitch claims some sound damping is provided, while the rug's surface prevents objects from sliding around during heavy cornering.

A neighbor of Fitch's, and a fellow car nut, the famous and successful illustrator, Coby Whitmore, assisted in the design of the "Sprint Fastback 904 Ventop" which costs \$102.00 installed and painted in black satin. The single most expensive item in the Sprint package, the "Ventop" or whatever you want to call it, makes for a striking change in the car's appearance. While it in no way interferes with visibility or aerodynamics, the top gives the car a hunched, mean-looking contour that we think is a real gas.

Add to this milieu of go and show items a \$3.75 Sprint gear shift knob of genuine "rich Brazilian Rosewood" and you've got the basic Sprint ensemble. You can buy another 20 or so items; everything from rear-seat sound insulation at \$4.50 to a \$184.00 special racing suspension. The car we tested had the regular Sprint equipment plus a passenger seat headrest (\$18.95); a \$5.95 headlight flasher; \$35.00 worth of flat-black front-deck paint; a \$12.95 seat bracket to give tall drivers more foot room and a set of four 13 x 5-inch Hands aluminum wheels (\$198.00).

We liked the looks of our Sprint from the start. It was silver, and with the flat-black trim, plus the Hands wheels and the tinted driving lamps, it snared second glances wherever we took it. It had 9500 miles on the clock,



much of it rugged test driving—including Denise McCluggage's round trip to the Bristol Drags (for CAR and DRIVER)—yet we were impressed with the general tightness of the components.

You know right away that this isn't a stock Corvair. The steering, which requires some huffing and puffing at low speeds, is an immediate giveaway. We were also convinced John had done some extensive monkeying with the shift linkage to make it so positive, but he informed us later that a few minutes of simple aligning and tightening make the difference. The cost of the operation is so negligible he does it on all of his conversions for free.



The cornering efficiency is considerably better than the stock Corsa, though the stiffer suspension injects a harshness into the ride that we really didn't expect. As in the production version, oversteer is practically undetectable, and we were able to fling the Sprint around corners with nothing more than faint evidences of understeer. The car had an irritating weakness for road seams, bumps and expansion joints, and contact with any rifts in the highway would cause it to veer off course. Fitch claims that the as delivered tires bear the full guilt for this ugly habit and recommends the installation of Michelin X or Pirelli Sempione rubber as an instantaneous cure.

The brakes were stock, without the optional \$47.00 metallic linings. They seemed to work fine, snubbing the car down from its effortless 70-80 mph cruising speeds without fade or pull. Our only complaint centered on a slight pause between the time the pedal was pushed and the brakes took hold. Fitch claims the problem existed only on our test car (possibly a faulty master cylinder), and, being something less than the optimum, was therefore unsatisfactory to Fitch on principle—and he's taking steps to insure that the problem won't recur.

The 15 extra claimed horsepower were maybe the most amazing additions to the entire Sprint package. They gave the little GT machine tremendous flexibility throughout the rev range and we found the engine capable of healthy acceleration from 2000 rpm in fourth gear. The power is most appreciated in the 50-70 mph range, where a downshift is required for safe passing with the stock version. The Sprint had plenty of steam from 45 mph in fourth up to its top speed of 110-115 mph. Acceleration is more than adequate, and 0-60 times in the high nine-second bracket are within the car's potential. This is impressive, especially when it is recalled that the turbocharged Corsa available from the factory at considerably higher cost won't do any better. The beauty of the Fitch package is its reliability at high revs—in marked contrast to the turbocharged setup, which isn't noted for peak rpm strength.

John Fitch set out to create a distinctive driveable GT car from the Corvair and he has succeeded without letting the price get out of hand. Obviously, the appeal of the Sprint increases in direct proportion to the quantity of accessories that are added, but the basic package is a tempting bargain. We would probably go for the optional tires, but otherwise the Sprint in the form that we tested it is perfectly suited for high-speed touring and is utterly deserving of the appellation "GT car."

We can't think of anything within \$1000 of the Sprint's price range that will do what it will do with comparable handling, silence, maneuverability, economy and comfort. As far as the stock Corvair Corsa is concerned, take it from the quiet gentleman from Falls Village, Connecticut; you most certainly can gild the lily.  
C/D

Glen Rittenhouse follows "bringatrailer.com" results and has reported these to me over the past month.

March 8, 2023	1969 Monza convertible, yellow , 35k miles shown	\$ 8,850
March 8, 2023	1968 Monza convertible, blue, 51k, PG	\$13,000



Note: This is another Mike Dawson Preventive Maintenance Series articles, #168. Mike writes nice articles that are easy to understand. I now go to the Heart of America Corvair Owners Assn Web page to find his articles.

## The Preventive Maintenance Series

Mike Dawson

### Mechanical Fuel Pump Push Rods

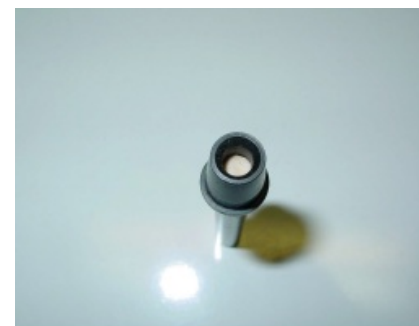
For folks having the original mechanical fuel pump system still in service there is the possibility of issues with the push rod which links the crankshaft eccentric with the pump diaphragm rod. Problems can arise with a combination of age, mileage, lubrication, and the doubling of the fuel pump pressures with associated increased spring rates. Anytime fuel pump failure is diagnosed, the push rod should also be inspected to eliminate it as the reason for loss of pump function.

The original push rod can be removed from the engine with needle nose pliers once the fuel pump is removed. It has several areas to inspect as follows:

- The sides of the push rod can gall from riding in the pressed in sleeve with dirty oil or leaking gas as noted above. The push rod should slide up and down with only light finger pressure.
- The foot of the push rod, which rides on the crankshaft eccentric, contains a small wear check chamfer. This is seldom a problem but lack of oil or prolonged dirty oil can ruin the push rod and the eccentric. Early pumps would allow gasoline leaking from the diaphragm to wash down the parts and cause failure but that was corrected with a center standpipe and vent to the outside of the pump base. If you have a really old pump, it would be worth checking
- The seat where the fuel pump diaphragm rod rides during operation contains a small Teflon pad. Rarely these can break up which shortens the stroke to the point of pump failure.



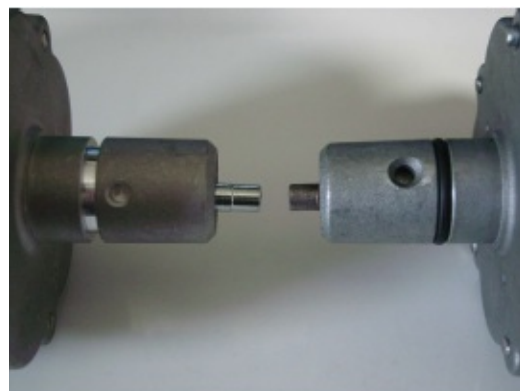
Wear Chamfer



Pad Where The Diaphragm Rod Sits

The overall length of the push rod (not including any spring overhang) should be close to 3.825 and the depth of the pad should be 0.325 or less.

Clarks Corvair Parts is working to bring a (fail-safe) reproduction of the original pump to market in the future, but for now we have one other additional item to stay informed about and pay attentive to. All of the “Made in China” pumps currently on the market that I have seen are fitted with a diaphragm rod that is way too long and which could either damage the pump, the engine push rod, or the eccentric. Note picture .



Editor adds these notes: if you want to replace the fuel pump push rod, be sure to replace it with one with a similar length. A shorter rod will not activate the pump and a too long one will tear the pump's diaphragm. Another note: The late Bob Nicholson told me a story about his non working mechanical fuel pump. The pump was still making the oompa oompa noise when tried off the car and the push rod was the correct length. AHA, the spring to keep the rod on the concentric was broken. Replacing the broken spring fixed his problem, and he continued down the road.

**Per by-laws this could be your last newsletter. Please don't let THAT happen.**

## Prairie Capital Corvair Association (PCCA) Membership Form

If joining after July 31, dues are: Individual \$8.50, Family \$10.00. If applicable, the discount is \$2.50.

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President Tim Mahler brought the meeting to order shortly after 2:00pm leading the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Aside from the collection of Corvairs, including several from Mike Hall's collection, there were no Corvairs driven to the meeting on this chilly, rain threatening March afternoon.

The secretary report for February was printed in the Flat Six, no changes were noted. Treasurer Glen Rittenhouse presented the treasurer report. Checking account starting balance was \$4,809.91, dues received (8) \$226 and expenses for the newsletter and club registrations of \$57.20. Ending balance checking was \$4,978.71 with \$5 in Savings and \$170.63 cash on hand. This brings the overall balance to \$5,154.34. Motion to approve Treasurer's report was made by Rich Grooms, seconded by Bernie Allen, motion was approved. Chris Hall indicated the current membership stands at 47 individuals at 47 households.

Old Business: Programs for March will be a presentation by Bill Pierson, April the group will tour the Peoria Early Ford invitation car show. Glen Rittenhouse Rampsides has been invited to be shown this year. Mike Hall's Tow Truck FC is on reserve if needed. Still looking for programs for May and June (and beyond).

Upcoming events: PCCA is scheduled to meet at the Corvair Museum the second Saturday of the month for the foreseeable future. September 9, 2023 is the SOS Auto Show in downtown Springfield. June 19-24 is the CORSA Corvair Convention at the Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI – a really family friendly place to go. Pawnee Prairie Days is scheduled for June 3<sup>rd</sup> (a week earlier than 2022). Tremont show should be the following weekend. The RT66 Association annual RT66 tour thru Illinois is scheduled for June 10, 11; many could will be stopping by the Corvair Museum on Sunday. The museum is listed as one of the stops with a RT66 stamp for the tourers to collect.

New Business: President with the aid of Bill and Shelby Berta presented the group with two options for the 2023 Christmas get-together, One in Edinburg IL and the second choice in Taylorville. The PCCA board favored the Taylorville location

because it had a separate meeting room. Motion to hold the luncheon at the Taylorville restaurant (Whit's End) was made by Chris Hall with Bill Berta second. Motion carried.

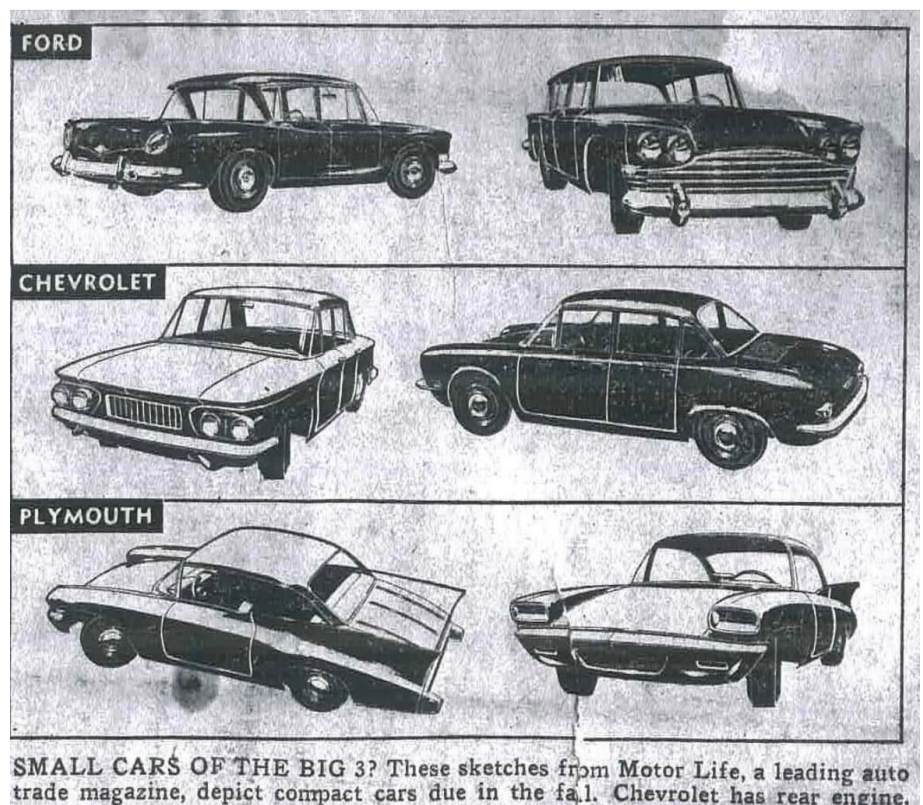
Comments from the floor:  
New (returning) member, Mark Reeves introduced himself. Rita Rittenhouse brought refreshments, Thanks Rita.

Posted to the CPF Facebook pages

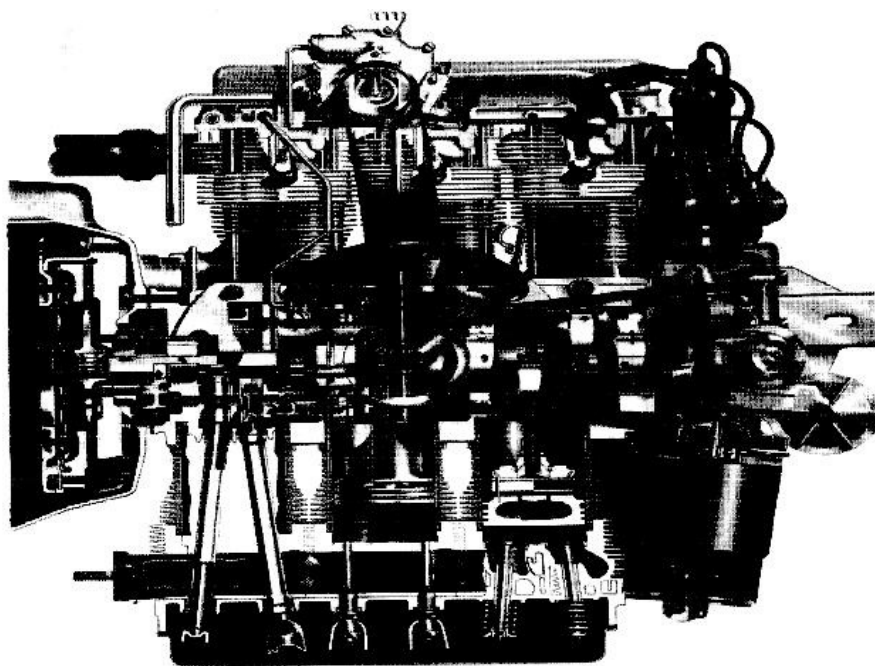
The final results didn't quite match the depicted pictures. The Chevrolet does seem to resemble the Holden "mule" used to test the Corvair engine back in 1959. The front radiator may have been left from the Holden but would not have been needed for the air cooled Corvair.

Ken Kittle · 2d · 📷

New York Times, Sunday April 5th 1959. I found this under my bathroom rug during a renovation!



# The Flat Six



# Prairie Capital Corvair Association



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