



the fifth wheel

MARCH 2012

[HTTP://WWW.CORVAIR.ORG/CHAPTERS/LVCC](http://www.corvair.org/chapters/lvcc)

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FLYING WING

The Story of the Corvair Sedan Roofline



Dad especially liked 4-door hardtop Buicks. You know, those pillarless sedans that were so fashionable between the 1950s and 70s. He owned three of them over the years, a '56, a '62, and a '71. The convenience of a sedan with the sporty flair of a sport coupe. Roll down all the windows and enjoy the breeze!

So, naturally, when Buick introduced the flying wing roofline on 4-door hardtops in 1959, my Dad thought they were the keenest thing. So modern, so sleek, so jet-age! The flying wing roof!

The roofline cantilevered over the rear pas-

sengers and vanished into the air in a thin wisp, like the rear edge of jet plane wing!

Oh, and it was practical, too, for unlike other rooflines, it afforded plenty of headroom for rear seat passengers. Also, the wrap-around panoramic rear window afforded the ultimate in visibility.

Of course, the flying wing roof wasn't just for Buicks. All the GM cars had 'em in 1959, from the Chevies to the Caddies.

And a year later, they made their appearance on the revolutionary 1960 Corvair sedan. It was perhaps the only GM styling trick the

The Fifth Wheel is published monthly by the Lehigh Valley Corvair Club (LVCC), Inc. We accept articles of interest to Corvair owners for publication. Classified advertising of interest to Corvair owners is available free of charge to all persons. Commercial advertising is also available on a fee basis. Please contact our newsletter editor, Allan Lacki for details.

LVCC is one of the many regional chapters of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA), a non-profit organization that was incorporated to satisfy the common needs of individuals interested in the preservation, restoration, and operation of the Chevrolet Corvair. LVCC caters to Corvair people who live in and around the Lehigh Valley Region of eastern Pennsylvania. This is a very special car club! LVCC dues are \$10 a year for CORSA members or \$15 a year for non-CORSA members.

Corvair borrowed from its big brothers and sisters. And it was a good one.

Anybody who has taken a ride in the rear seat of an early Corvair 4-door will tell you how much roomier it is than the Corvair coupe. Some of this has to do with the height of the rear seat. And much of this has to do with the sedan's flying wing roofline.

The record is a bit unclear as to which designer first penned the flying wing roof. Some people attribute it to GM Stylist Bud Sugano. Others say Bob Canaret. And yet others give the credit to Carl Renner. All these designers worked for Harley Earl and Bill Mitchell in GM's Design and Styling Department.

It is said that Harley wanted the roof panels to be made from stainless steel to further accentuate the high-tech metallic look imparted to this aeronautically-inspired roofline, but it was not to be.

Automotive fashion evolved quickly in those years, and after Harley Earl retired, Bill Mitchell moved GM's design language away from jet-inspired themes. Fins withered away, bumper bombs disappeared, and tail lights shaped like turbine exhaust cones were replaced by more geometric shapes. And with them went the flying wing roofline.

By 1961, this roofline was utilized only by the Buick Electra, Olds 98, and Cadillac 4-door hardtops, and it was a subdued version at that. It also appeared on two sedans: the 1961 Chevy two-door sedan and the Corvair four-door sedan, but that was all. It was gone in 1962 with one exception: The Corvair soldiered on with the flying wing roof into 1964.

Excuse the pun, but Corvair sedans have always taken a back seat to the sportier coupes and convertibles as far as collectors are concerned. Perhaps the two doors look more "modern" because we've come to regard the sedan's "jet age" roofline as a styling anachro-



GM's trend-setting line-up of four-door hardtops all got the flying wing roof treatment in 1959.



Even the Chevy El Camino got the flying wing roof!



In 1961, Chevy 2-door sedans got the flying wing roof. The 2-door hardtops got the bubbletop.

nism. But fifty years later, even the coupes and convertibles are old-fashioned now. And maybe that makes it easier for us to appreciate how fresh and sleek the flying wing roofline must have seemed in October 1959, when the Corvair was introduced.

Desirability of full-size GM hardtops with the flying wing roof line has increased dramatically over the past several years. So it should be for our flying-wing Corvair sedans.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Dennis Stamm chaired our February meeting. Attendees included Dennis, Wes Heiss, Fred Scherzer, Keith Koller, Larry Lewis, Tim Turner, Joe Turner, Randy Kohler, and Allan Lacki. Al read his notes from our January meeting and reported that the club's checking account has a balance of approximately \$1,400.

In new business, Dennis Stamm suggested a club tour of the "3 Dog Garage", a car museum and restoration shop located in nearby Boyertown, Pennsylvania. Owned and operated by Ross and Beth Myers, the museum houses a collection of eclectic and historically significant antiques, classics, race cars and period hot rods, many of which were Hot Rod magazine cover cars in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite its outstanding collection, The 3 Dog Garage has deliberately kept a low profile and is not well known by the general public or even by most car enthusiasts. Tours are by appointment only. Everybody agreed this would make a great club activity.

Randy Kohler offered to host a tech session which will focus on the subtle and mysterious art of tuning a 4-carb Corvair; namely his own! Randy owns several Corvairs, including a lovely 140 Corsa convertible that has misbehaved ever since he acquired it a few years ago. He has swapped carbs, chased down vacuum leaks, tweaked and tuned the linkages, all to no avail. Perhaps



Flying Wing Roof. This 1961 Buick is a standard series Electra 4-door hardtop (model 4739). This car's roofline is an updated version of the GM "Flying Wing" design that first appeared on the corporation's 1959 models. In 1961, this roofline was utilized only by the Buick Electra, Olds 98, and Cadillac. Production of this style fell far below that of the Electra 4-door sedan (model 4719) or Electra 225 Riviera sedan (model 4839), both of which were built in a six-window style. It's a design that is seldom seen, even at the Buick Club of America National Meets.

the rest of us can help, and if not, we would still have fun trying.

Al Lacki talked about the recent 2012 CORSA Convention planning meeting. He confirmed that the convention autocross will be held at Stafford Springs Raceway. He also talked about some new fun-day activities that should keep the guests occupied during the Concours show: they include a teeter-totter competition, slow drags, and a back seat driver gymkhana.

Al also disassembled a Corvair manual transmission shifter assembly for show-and-tell. This was easily done with a piece of plastic pipe! (No special GM tools required). After wiping down the parts, he passed around the shifter base to show how the internal locator pins, which were worn flat, contribute to sloppy shifting.

After the official business was over, the attendees engaged in free-

ranging discussion involving many topics of interest to Corvair owners. Joe and Tim Turner brought in photos of their two Corvair convertibles. One is



(Continued from page 3)

complete except for the engine. The other is complete except for the seats. Dennis provided tips on how to restore them.

Larry Lewis talked about an intermittent ignition cut-out problem he has been having with his Corvair. Fred Scherzer and Al Lacki suggested that the insulation is probably breaking down in his ignition coil. Fred offered to lend another coil to Larry to check it out.

Dennis Stamm talked about the 1963 Corvair Monza coupe he recently rescued from a garage in Reading. It was apparently brought in for repairs by its prior owner. Dennis found that the crankcase was filled with gasoline - a sure indication that the fuel pump was shot. Dennis changed the oil, installed another fuel pump, and reported that this car, which is practically rust-free, is now in fine-running shape. Dennis said he plans to re-spray the paint and offer it for sale soon.

Wes Keller asked for advice on replacing the rear-suspension strut rod bushings for his 1965 Corvair sedan. Al Lacki advised Wes to replace them with original-style rubber bushings. The strut rod ends rotate in two planes and thus the bushings need a a lot of



America's Most Revolutionary Car: 1960 Corvair

flexibility. Use of polyurethane bushings, which are offered by some vendors, will bind the suspension, leading to possible breakage of the mounting brackets that are bolted to the differential.

If you want to learn how to keep your Corvair in fine running condition, come out to our meetings and learn from the experts in our club!

2012 CONVENTION UPDATE

By now, you have probably received your copy of the March CORSA Communique. You are a member of CORSA, aren't you?

Among other things, the March issue includes a detailed schedule of events for the entire convention, and an article describing the featured activities. The convention will take place from July 25 through July 28 at Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts.

Some of you may be waiting for CORSA to open up registration before you book your lodging for the Convention. But we suggest that you book your hotel reservations now,

while rooms are still available in the Sturbridge area.

Even though we have reserved the entire Sturbridge Host Hotel & Convention Center exclusively for the CORSA Convention, all the rooms at the Host Hotel are already booked solid.

Of course, there are plenty of other hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts, and campgrounds in and around Sturbridge Village. It's a big summertime resort area. You can use one of the internet search engines,

AAA, or your friendly local travel agent to find a place to stay.

You can keep up with our plans for the 2012 CORSA Convention by visiting the Convention website and blog. There are three ways to get there:

- Via the CORSA website at www.corvair.org.
- Via the NECC website at www.neccmotorsports.com
- Directly, via <http://www.corvair.org/chapters/necc/convention/>

OPEN HOUSE RANCH

Jeff Stonesifer is hosting the annual Open House at the Corvair Ranch near Gettysburg, PA. The date is Sunday, May 6, 9 AM until "whenever," rain or shine.

Visit the Corvair Ranch and enjoy the friendship and hospitality of Jeff and his gang. Let them help you find that part to keep your Corvair humming along and be sure to tour the complete facility including the Corvair "field of dreams."

Plenty of free food and prizes for everyone and a \$100 gift certificate grand prize will go to one lucky person!

The Corvair Ranch is located at 1079 Bon-Ox Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325.

LEHIGH VALLEY CORVAIR CLUB INC. FINANCIAL REPORT FEBRUARY, 2012

Balance from January	\$1,459.83
RECEIPTS	
2/12 Dues, J McNalley	\$10.00
Dues, J Mc Nalley Jr	10.00
TOTAL	\$20.00
EXPENDITURES	
2/12 Allan Lacki, Newsletter	\$24.46
TOTAL	\$24.46
BALANCE	\$1,431.08

LVCC Classified Ads!

WANTED: 2 bucket seats & 1 rear seat for 1965 Corvair Convertible. White upholstery preferred, but general condition is important. Contact Joe Turner. Home phone: 610-285-2006. Cell phone: 973-722-5714. Email: jptc at ptd dot net

WANTED: Early Corvair Front Bumper. Looking for a front bumper for a daily-driver Corvair. It should be straight and in reasonably good condition, but show-chrome is not necessary, and a few minor dings are OK. If you have one for sale, please call. Dennis Stamm, Mohrsville. (610) 926-4723. Email dmstamm at comcast dot com

FOR SALE: 1965 Corvair Corsa. Project car. This Corsa has a 140 engine which was resealed, telescopic steering column, AM/FM radio, new clutch, flywheel, and pressure plate. It also has all new bushings in rear suspension, new coil springs and new shocks in the rear. In addition, the front cross-member was rebuilt with all new bushings and ball joints. Needs very little body work, but needs paint and much tender loving care. \$2000.00 as-is. Dennis Stamm, Mohrsville. (610) 926-4723. Email dmstamm at comcast dot com

FOR SALE: 1961 Corvair Monza Coupe. 1961 Corvair Monza 900. 2 door coupe. 17,000 miles. Color black, red interior. All original from paint to tires with exception of battery. Have numerous trophies from Corvair events including Best in Show. Price \$8,000. or B.O. I recently moved and now I would be looking to sell my Corvair as I now have other interests. Frank Ferrara, Cell phone (201) 641-6160. Location: Mahwah N.J.

Central Pennsylvania Corvair Club Event

If you missed our own visit to the America On Wheels Museum in Allentown, perhaps you would like to tag along with the Central Pennsylvania Corvair Club, which is planning to go there on April 14, 2012. For information, contact Dave Stiegauf (717) 898-7927 davescorsa@verizon.net - or - John Berkheimer (717) 632-56178 jhbmail1@comcast.net.

Next Membership Meeting: Wednesday, March 28, 2012

Come to our next club meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, March 28, 2012 at the LANTA center in Allentown. Time 7:30 PM. Place: LANTA Community Center, 2nd Floor Meeting Room, 1060 Lehigh Street, Allentown, PA 18103. All LVCC members are encouraged to attend. Feel free to bring a guest.

LVCC Merchandise for Sale!



LVCC license plates and hat pins: \$3.00 each. LVCC T-Shirts: \$6.00 each.
Call or email LVCC Secretary/Treasurer Richard Weidner at 610-502-1414 rcwvair@rcn.com

LVCC Calendar of Events!



Wednesday, March 28, 2012 :::: LVCC Membership Meeting.

Time 7:30 PM. Place: LANTA Community Center, 2nd Floor Meeting Room, 1060 Lehigh Street, Allentown, PA 18103. All LVCC members are encouraged to attend. Bring a guest!

Thursday, March 22 - Sunday, March 25, 2012 :::: Greater Lehigh Valley Auto Show.

15th Annual Greater Lehigh Valley Auto Show, held at the Stabler Arena, Rauch Fieldhouse & West Pavilion. The Stabler Arena is located at 124 Goodman Drive, Bethlehem, PA 18015. - Event hours: Preview Party 6:00 pm - 9:30 pm. Benefits the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital - Pediatric Unit. Hours: Thursday - Saturday 12:00 am - 9:00 pm, Sun 10:00 am - 6:00 pm. Phone: 610-758-9691 Website: <http://glvautoshow.org>

Friday to Sunday, March 23-March 25, 2012 :::: North East Rod & Custom Nationals Car Show.

Advertised as the premier indoor rod, custom & classic car, and motorcycle show in the Philadelphia area. Located at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, in Oaks, Pa. 1601 Egypt Road Phoenixville, PA 19460 (Upper Providence Township). <http://www.northeastcustomcarshow.com/>

Friday to Saturday, March 23-24, 2012 :::: Corvair Performance Workshop, Indianapolis.

Yes, Indianapolis, Indiana. But if you are interested in high-performance Corvairs, this is the place to be! Hosted by Performance Corvair Group. Friday tours at local facilities in Indy that are involved in the performance auto business, evening dinner. Saturday tech sessions, vendors, featured car displays, catered lunch. Registration details at: <http://www.corvair.org/chapters/pcg/index.html>

Wednesday to Sunday, April 25-29, 2012 :::: Spring Carlisle Collector Car Swap Meet & Corral.

Explore 150 acres and 8,100 vending spaces at one of the largest automotive swap meets in the world. Gate Times: Wednesday through Saturday: 7am - 6pm. Sunday: 7am-3pm. Website: <http://www.carlisleevents.com/events/spring-carlisle/>

Sunday, May 6, 2012 :::: Open House at the Corvair Ranch.

Jeff Stonesifer is hosting the annual Open House at the Corvair Ranch near Gettysburg, PA. The date is Sunday, May 6, 9 AM until "whenever," rain or shine. The Corvair Ranch is located at 1079 Bon-Ox Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325.

Friday, July 20, 2012 :::: St. Philip Neri Church 10th Annual Car Show.

Place: St. Philip Neri Church grounds at 1325 Kliner Road, Pennsburg, PA. Time: 6 PM to 10 PM, rain or shine. Registration begins at 5 PM. Food, door prizes, live music, people's choice awards. Contact Shirley Misiak at (215) 679-9275 (10 am-3pm) or Peter Frank at (215) 679-6942. Pre-register by June 30, 2012 for \$10.00. Day of Show \$12.00.

Wednesday to Saturday, July 25-July 28 2012 :::: 2012 CORSA Convention.

The Northeast Corvair Council (NECC), of which LVCC is a part, has been awarded the 2012 international convention for the Corvair Society of America (CORSA), to take place in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. The dates are July 25 2012 thru July 28 2012. Plan on being in colonial Sturbridge, Massachusetts, in July of 2012! See the convention website for details: <http://www.corvair.org/chapters/necc/convention>

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