



the fifth wheel

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

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Husk

Wes Heiss



my father's chevrolet corvair, steel, plastic, motor, electronics, chairs, looped video. 2007.

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 (CORSAs), 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.

Husk. Story and Sculpture, by Wes Heiss

Editor's Note: For those of you who don't know, LVCC Member Wes Heiss is not only a devoted Corvair enthusiast, but also an artist whose creative works have been exhibited worldwide. His absence from club meetings is easy to explain, for he is often in residence at various art communities that have the space and facilities he needs to create his interactive art projects, which are often huge in size and scope. Here, Wes' writes about his fascination with Corvairs, the inspiration for "Husk".

In March of 1965 a young and determined Ralph Nader appeared for the first time before the United States senate and began his assault on the automotive industry. It was the beginning of sweeping changes in America's attitudes towards safety and a significant event in the nation's building distrust in both their government and large corporations.

At the center of this controversy was the Chevrolet Corvair. Nader accused General Motors of designing an unsafe car that, due to its unique suspension and rear engine, would easily roll over during casual driving. Even worse Nader claimed that executives at GM knew of the dangers and had consciously decided not to fix the design. Changes would have proven too expensive and the car was already over budget.

Generally accepted as the most radical car ever to be produced by a major American auto manufacturer, the Corvair was both an unprecedented risk for General Motors and an easy target.

With its air cooled rear engine and long list of other first time innovations, clean styling, and nearly 30 MPG; the soul of the car was more European than American.

Unfortunately it was not really the Corvair that was "Unsafe at any Speed". Statistically it was actually far safer than other more popular cars of the time and yet these facts went completely unnoticed. The truth is that the whole industry was plagued with questionable attitudes and needed a shakeup in order to instigate change.



The facts surrounding Nader, the Corvair, and the public are a complicated and seldom told story. But in the end these issues are not what's really important. Through his attacks on the Corvair Nader had both unwittingly convinced consumers and the American automotive industry not to embrace any more wild and new ideas, and permanently damaged the image of General Motors. In an era of massive change the

most powerful corporation in the United States decided it should start playing it safe.

In 1969 my parents bought a dark green 1966 Corvair Corsa. It had only a few thousand miles on it and they got it for a song. The original owner was a Wisconsin farmer who had accidentally backed his corn picker into the car's right side. After having the fender repaired it became my parents second Corvair and, with its purchase, wholly solidified a family obsession with the notorious automobile. By this time Ralph Nader had long been famous for his mission to retool Detroit and had already started moving onto other things.

As if searching for something overlooked to believe in my parents were attracted to the uniqueness of the Corvair and wanted to prove that the car was not flawed. They went on to learn everything about their cars; fixing them, showing them, racing them, and contributing to the founding of the first Corvair Club in Chicago.

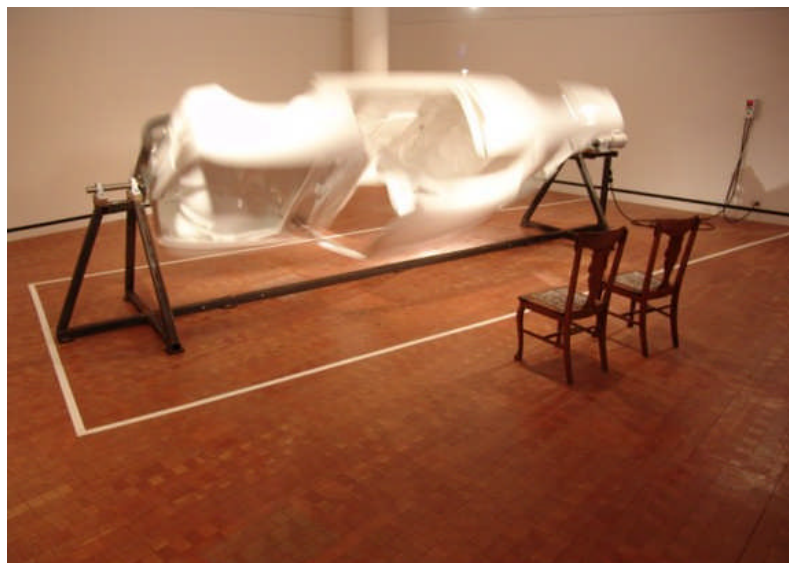
Of their two Corvairs they drove the green Corsa less often as it was the rare top of the line model. I remember being told stories that transformed it into a perfect and magical thing. How they drove through Ontario on the first night of their honeymoon and accidentally hit a bear. How it would always gather a crowd because of the sound of its perfectly tuned motor. How the left headlight was illegally bright as it came from the landing gear of a B-52 bomber. How my father had made engine parts for it in the chemistry lab. The machine had personality and was allowed to grow, bit by bit, into a member of the family.

In my installations, sculptures, and interactive works, inanimate objects are often used as metaphors for emotions, fears, and longing. By questioning our dependency on, and fascination with, "things" this work examines the deep vein of magical thinking and nostalgia that informs the American experience. In almost every case the pieces themselves perform work in a way not too distant from their design. This focus on function, as well as potential, is often extended in directions that are simultaneously absurd, fantastic, obsessive, humorous and darkly prophetic. Indeed the work often appears to hover in a twilight zone between the living and the inanimate, holding attributes of both and illuminating in the process our continual and collective quest in seeking meaning in the world. Wes Heiss

Although the places where the child seat attached are still visible, I can only remember riding in it once. It was the last time it ran on a dark and cold November in the late 70s. I remember my father swearing as we limped home. He had just fixed something that had broken again almost instantly. Rust had eaten a large hole under the drivers floor and was spreading quickly like cancer across the once show winning car's body. Looking over his shoulder I remember watching the pavement sliding effortlessly just inches from my father's feet as we coasted into the driveway.

At the time nothing seemed all that monumental about the drive. It was however the final straw. My parents decided to park their frustration until they had the time and money to fix it. It sat for 29 years.

My parents lost interest in trying to fix the car but could never bring themselves to get rid of it. I always thought of it with a special reverence and it became as much of an heirloom as anything could be. Not knowing the engine had permanently rusted in place I would show it off to my childhood friends when they came over. Sometimes I would eat my dinner in it to get away from a family fight or sit in it while it rained imagining what it would be like running and restored. I felt like we had let it down and allowed it to die slowly in our hands.



'Husk' installation at the Sarah Lawrence Heimbold Visual Arts Center, Westchester County, NY. Literally "rolling art", it automatically cycles between spinning for 1 minute and resting for 12. You can see it operate online at <http://wesheiss.com/126>

We would pump up its tires and push it around once or twice a year as it was always sinking into the asphalt. I remember my older brother religiously rolling the windows down every day as if that would keep it nice inside. It didn't. The upholstery had burst open everywhere and hemorrhaged material that was relaxing back into the world of plants and animals. My brother always seemed the likely candidate for the privilege of restoring the car. However, by the time it was clear I would have the responsibility it was far too gone. After having been driven only 42 thousand miles, it would gently slip away....

The Heiss family Corsa was beyond conventional restoration, but Wes gave it new life as "husk", a new wave art form.

Saint Augustine Travel Tales! by Dick Weidner

Dick Weidner and Jerry Moyer participated in the 2013 Corvair Affair in Saint Augustine, Florida.. Here is Dick's report!

'Made it to the St Augustine show earlier this month. It rained pretty hard in the morning on Saturday, the day of the show. The People's Choice was canceled in the morning. The rain slowed pretty much by noon and the show was moved to the autocross site in the afternoon.

Jerry Moyer brought his Rampside to the show and got 2nd place FC People's Choice behind James Law's Senior-Division Rampside.

I got first place Early Closed. There was tough competition for me. I was the only Early Closed there!

I also received the long distance award, having traveled a total of 2,125 miles.

I also stopped a couple of days in North Carolina to visit Earl Jones on the way home 'Had a fun time getting a new FC windshield in the back of my coupe.

I just received my January copy of Hemmings Classic Cars. On the cover is Cal Clark's Rampside. There is a six page spread about the restoration of the truck. There will be a second part to the article in the February issue.

NECC Update! by Al Lacki

The NECC Board of Directors had a meeting on November 10th at Tim Schwartz's house in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey. The purpose of the meeting was to plan events for the new year.

This is a two-step process. Every year, around November, the NECC reps get together to propose a slate of track days. Assignments are given out to follow up on the proposals. Then, in January, the reps reconvene at another



Banquet and autocross photos from the November 2013 "Corvair Affair" in Saint Augustine, Florida. LVCC Members Dick Weidner and Jerry Moyer are in these photos. Dick's '64 Coupe and Jerry's Rampside are there, too. See if you can spot them! Photos by George Jones - East Orlando, FL.



meeting to discuss their findings and pick and choose the events that have the best potential for success. After that, NECC President Brian O'Neill and NECC Treasurer Tom Ludwig contact the track managers, lock-in dates for the events, and negotiate contracts for track rental.

Corvair time trials have been NECC's claim to fame ever since 1974, when the club was formed. Every year, like

clockwork, NECC rented the famous Lime Rock sports car racing track in Connecticut and ran time trials for Corvairs. The event was always held on a Saturday in June, followed the next day by a Corvair car show at the nearby Interlaken Inn. It was wildly successful for over twenty years. Back in those days, you could bring your old beater Corvair and, as long as it passed tech inspection, you could run it on the track all day long.

The Corvair hobby has changed since then. Most of the old daily-driver beaters have been either restored, left to rot in a field, or simply junked. And it's no secret that the young guys and gals who got their kicks in the 1970s have slowed down a bit. To counteract the diminishing number of Corvair drivers, NECC opened its time trials to other makes and models of cars. Meanwhile, Lime Rock priced itself out of reach, and so NECC now runs its events at other tracks, like Virginia International Raceway, Summit Point, BeaveRun, and Pocono.

Each NECC Board of Directors meeting includes a review of the club's finances, and while the checking account has a nice balance, many of the track events barely break-even financially. This was a hot topic at the November meeting. Ray Zabinski of Capitol City Corvairs and Dan Schmidt of Blue Mountain pointed out that other clubs conducting high-performance driving events have no trouble selling out their events every weekend, and yet they don't necessarily advertise their events any better than NECC.

During this discussion, one thing came to light: NECC is unique in that it advertises its events as "time trials". All the other clubs advertise their events as "driving schools", "high performance driving days", or "track days". Ray and Dan speculated that the term "time trials" implies a full day of hanging around, waiting for your turn to go out for a lap or two. Of course, this isn't the case with NECC time trials,

where drivers get hours of open track time before they go out for their timed laps. New drivers consistently compliment our events after they have experienced them, but the emphasis on the term "time trials" in our advertising may be turning off potential drivers who would otherwise join us.

And so, at the November meeting, the NECC club reps made a unanimous decision to advertise its events as "track days" rather than "time trials". As in the past, we'll continue to run open track sessions in the morning and early afternoon and timed laps in the late afternoon, as we always have. This will be made clear in our advertising materials. But the event titles will be changed to "track days" rather than "time trials".

The reps also made a decision regarding Corvair-oriented events. Several years ago, NECC instituted a rule that required the installation and use of shoulder belts for all cars participating in time trials. This was a prudent safety decision, but it effectively barred all stock Corvairs except for the very few that were equipped with shoulder harnesses from the factory after April 1966. This rule applies to NECC's high-speed track events, but there is no such rule for autocross, drag racing, or rallies. And so, for Corvair-oriented events, NECC will conduct one of the latter types of events - those not requiring shoulder belts - rather than time trials.

Brian O'Neill announced that he has been in contact with a new sports car track named the "New York Safety Track".

Aerial view of the turns at the New York Safety Track in Harpersfield, NY. Possible venue for an NECC track day in 2014. Imagine driving your Corvair on this track!



This is a brand-new track located near Cooperstown in New York State. A few weeks before the meeting, Brian visited the track, checked out the facilities, and discussed rental possibilities with management. Brian reported that the layout looks great, prices are reasonable, and the track's schedule has openings for 2014. The club reps authorized Brian to lock in a date at the New York Safety Track for NECC, preferably a Saturday. (After the meeting, Brian reserved May 24th for an NECC track day there. This reservation is subject to the signing of a formal rental agreement).

Other possibilities for 2014 include running an autocross in conjunction with one of the Pennsylvania Corvair clubs, doing another track day at Virginia International Raceway (VIR), and assisting with a high-performance driving event during the CORSA Convention at Tacoma.

Brian O'Neill offered to get in touch with Ken Hand, who is one of the Tacoma convention organizers. Dan Schmidt volunteered to check-out alternative hotels for VIR.

The meeting adjourned around 2 PM after a tour of Tim Schwartz's big 6-car Corvair garage, which is home to a couple of Greenbriers, a '65 Monza coupe, a Fiat Multipla, and a Subaru 360 van. The NECC Board will meet again in January.

The Corvair-Powered Dumpster, by Bob Marlow

Recently, Sue and I took on a home remodeling project, redoing the master bath in our house. On a shoestring budget, with careful comparison shopping and with the help of a talented and understanding builder, we gutted the room to the studs and built an all-new bath for *half* the cost quoted to us by a highly-rated remodeling company.

Part of our savings was realized by *not* renting a dumpster for the demolition and construction debris. Instead, we made three trips to the local dump with our 1963 Rampside. This proved to be a highly efficient way to accomplish our disposal tasks.

At the dump (more correctly termed the "Hunterdon County Transfer Station"), each vehicle is weighed on the way in and again on the way out. According to the scales at the dump, the Rampside weighs 2900 pounds empty, and according to Chevrolet it's 9-foot-long bed is rated to carry 1800 pounds. Our first trip across the scales rang in at 4,880 pounds, a mere 180 pounds over the rated capacity. Sheetrock, tile, and fixtures can add up! Being able to dispose of trash at the dump does not come free. We may have saved on the cost of a dumpster but we still had to pay to unload our truck each time. The fee is based on the type of vehicle (private passenger car, pickup truck etc.) and the aforementioned weight. For our three trips we had to pay a total of \$22!



When I first bought a Rampside in 1973 I thought, how did I ever live without a vehicle this useful? Now that I own one again I am reminded of that thought regularly.

Our Next LVCC Meeting!

Our next meeting will take place at the LANTA Community Center, (our usual place) on Wednesday, January 22, 2014 at 7:30 PM.

The November and December meetings were cancelled due to the closeness of the holidays. We tried to reschedule our meetings several years ago and found that we can only have the meeting room on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Rather than attempt to find an alternate meeting location for just two months, we simply suspend our meetings during the Holiday Season. But we'll still have newsletters for November and December. 'See you in January!



This Page: Photos from the Riegelsville's 23rd annual Fall Classic car event on Sunday at the Riegelsville Ball Park on Route 611. Corvairs were shown by David Main, John Shoemaker, and Al Lacki. Yeah, that red car isn't a Corvair, but it was almost as pretty!



Next LVCC Meeting: Wednesday, January 22, 2014

LVCC Calendar of Events!



Friday through Sunday, January 17-19, 2014 :::: Auto Mania.

Location: Allentown Fairgrounds, 302 N 7th St, Allentown, PA 18104. Gate Times: Fri 12pm-9pm, Sat 9am-6pm, Sun 9am-3pm. Adult Admission: \$10 Daily. For more than two decades, Auto Mania has been Pennsylvania's biggest indoor heated swap meet. The 59,000 square foot Agricultural Hall at the Allentown PA Fairgrounds plays host to a wide array of vendors and attendees annually. This is the perfect setting to buy, sell and trade all things automotive. Auto Mania not only has a swap meet, there is a car corral too. There's a great array of parts, literature, services and more.- See more at: <http://www.carlisleevents.com/carlisle-events/automania/default.aspx#sthshash>. ElyzkDR2.dpuf

Wednesday, January 22, 2014 :::: LVCC Membership Meeting.

Regular LVCC Club Meeting. 7:30 PM at the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) office building in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The LANTA building is located at 1060 Lehigh Street Allentown, Pa 18103. Directions: From I-78: Take Exit 57, Lehigh Street. At the end of the exit ramp, go east toward the City of Allentown. Follow Lehigh Street of approximately 2 miles - past the Parkway Shopping Center on the right and Faulkner Volkswagen on the left - until you reach the LANTA entrance on your left. It is at the intersection of Lehigh and South Howard Streets, right across from a Hess service station. Drive around to the auto parking lot and enter through the office entrance. Our meeting room is on the second floor.

LVCC Classified Ads!

FOR SALE: Four Michelin X Metric 185/70Rx13 tires mounted on 5.5x13 5-bolt Corvair rims. DOT date code indicates the tires were manufactured in 2001. Used, but plenty of tread remaining. No punctures, no plugs, no patches. Never run flat. No dents in the rims. No rust on the rims. \$100 for all four. Call or email to arrange pickup. Contact Allan Lacki. Phone: (610) 927-1583. Email: redbat01@verizon.net.

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

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