



# the fifth wheel

NOVEMBER 2019

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

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**Next Meeting!** Wednesday, January 22, 2020  
That's no misprint!

LVCC Meeting Information: Time 7:30 PM. Place: Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority Headquarters (LANta), 2nd Floor Meeting Room, 1060 Lehigh Street, Allentown, PA 18103. Latitude : 40.587607 | Longitude : -75.474405. Bring a guest!

Don't get locked out. If you arrive late, the main door of the LANta office building may be locked. But the facility is open around the clock, so ask one of the garage employees to direct you to the second floor.

*The Fifth Wheel* is published monthly by Lehigh Valley Corvair Club Inc. (LVCC), a chartered chapter for the Corvair Society of America. 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. For details, email our newsletter editor, Allan Lacki, [redbat01@verizon.net](mailto:redbat01@verizon.net).

# Whoosh!

## An excerpt from Dave Barry's "Complete Guide to Guys"

*Editor's Note: Not everybody knows about the Chicagoland Corvair Enthusiasts' infamous vacuum cleaner wars of the 1980s. Comedy writer Dave Barry included a description of this unique pass-time in his aptly-titled book, "Complete Guide to Guys". Please buy a copy!*

This is why I believe that Nobel Peace Prize Handing Out Committee should consider giving a large cash award to the guys belonging to the Chicagoland Corvair Enthusiasts club, for their pioneering efforts in the area of making vacuum cleaners explode.

I am not making up these efforts: I have personally viewed them on a wonderful videotape that was sent to me by Larry Claypool and Kirk Parro, who are members of the Chicagoland Corvair Enthusiasts.

(Perhaps you are thinking that people who are enthusiastic, in an organized way, about Corvairs are perhaps - to use a psychological term - several drawers shy of a file cabinet. Let me

assure you that you are correct.)

Here's the background: One day Claypool and Parro were reading a publication called CORSA Communique, which is the official magazine of the Corvair Society of America, and they came across an article headlined:

### VACUUM CLEANERS AND SIPHONS DON'T MIX

The article was written by a person named Chess Earman, who recounted what happened once when he was trying to siphon the gasoline out of one of his four Corvairs. He didn't want to get gasoline in his mouth, so he decided to get the suction going by holding the end of the siphon hose up against a vacuum cleaner hose. What this meant, of course, is that he was sucking gas fumes directly into an electric motor, which as you know operates by having sparks fly around inside it. So the next thing Chess Earman knew, there was an explosion inside the vacuum cleaner, and fire was

coming out of the back of it "like a jet engine."

Fortunately Earman was able to unplug the vacuum cleaner before anything really bad happened. But this was indeed a chilling cautionary story about the extreme danger of messing around with gasoline and vacuum cleaners, and when Larry Claypool and Kirk Parro read it their natural reaction, as guys, was : Hey, cool.

"Such a challenge must not go unmet." is how they put it in a letter to me.

And thus it came to pass that, for a number of years during the 1980s, the big attraction at the annual Fourth of July picnic of the Chicagoland Corvair Enthusiasts was the Flaming Vacuum Cleaner competition. I wish you could see the videotape, because it is difficult for me, using mere words, to convey the full flavor of the event. But I will try.

Each year, contestants brought vacuum cleaners, which were grouped into teams under signs denoting their brands (TEAM HOOVER, TEAM ELECTROLUX, etc.). One by one, these vacuum cleaners were brought out into the competition arena where they were introduced by an announcer over the public-address system. The vacuum cleaner nozzle would be placed in a shallow pan of gasoline. Then everybody would retreat to a safe distance, and the vacuum cleaner would be plugged in to a power source, causing the motor to start so the gasoline was being sucked in through the nozzle.

Usually nothing happened for a few seconds: then there'd usually be a BANG and the vacuum cleaner would jump a few inches into the air. This always got a cheer from the crowd.



Various things would happen next, depending on the vacuum cleaner. Some models would emit a cloud of black smoke and stop running, causing the crowd to boo. But other models would send out a jet flame shooting several feet out the back for several seconds.

A few hardy models kept running for several minutes: the longer they'd run the more the crowd would cheer, encouraged by the announcer. Sometimes the flames would stop and inevitably you'd hear somebody - it always sounded like the same guy, a guy who has been drinking a lot of beer - shout "MORE GAS!" Certain canister models - these were the most popular with the crowd, getting wild cheers of approval - would explode violently apart with the tops flying up and out of the camera's range of view.

"The canister tops often exceeded altitudes of thirty feet." report Claypool and Parro.

After each contestant was finished, it would be dragged off and dumped onto a growing, smoking mound of charred and mangled machinery, and the announcer would say something nice about it, such as, "Not bad, Electrolux Number Two!" or "Let's hear it for the Eureka!"

On tape, between contestants, you occasionally see women walk past in front of the camera, on their way to get some more potato salad or something: they sometimes look at the guys, who are working industriously away the way guys do when they're on a Mission, getting another vacuum cleaner ready for action, and the women shake their heads in such a way as to clearly indicate that, yes, they knew guys could be idiots, but they had never realized that guys could be idiots of this magnitude.

Again, these women did not understand that the Flaming Vacuum Cleaner competition was, in fact, a relatively positive activity for guys to engage in - that if the guys didn't have this outlet, they could easily become involved in some-



thing with far more serious consequences. I am sure that none of us wants to pick up our morning newspaper and read the headline that says

**CHICAGO FEARED VAPORIZED  
IN MISHAP INVOLVING EXPERI-  
MENTAL NUCLEAR-POWERED  
CORVAIR.**

No, the Flaming Vacuum Cleaner competition was probably a good thing. I

want to stress, however, that it was also a very dangerous thing, not to be attempted by amateurs. Remember that the guys who did it were not ordinary, untrained civilians: They were Corvair enthusiasts. And they took certain critical safety precautions, such as rigging up a public address system. You must remember that gasoline and vacuum cleaners do not mix, and under no circumstances should you attempt to do anything like this yourself. And

if you do, please let me know where you are.

## ***Don't Try This Author Unknown***

The Chicagoland Corvair Enthusiasts' vacuum cleaner blowups were inspired by an article about someone who tried to start a gasoline siphon using a vacuum cleaner.

The following is about one of the finalists for the annual Darwin Awards. I don't think this will inspire any new CCE adventures, but this guy should have taken a tip from CCE:

"When a man attempted to siphon gasoline from a motor home parked on a Seattle street, he got much more than he bargained for. Police arrived at the scene to find an ill man curled up next to a motor home near spilled sewage. A police spokesman said that the man admitted to trying to steal gasoline and plugged his siphon hose into the motor home's sewage tank by mistake. The owner of the vehicle declined to press charges, saying that it was the best laugh he'd ever had."

## ***Museum is Moving!***

The Corvair Museum, currently located in Decatur, Illinois since its inception two years ago, is relocating. The museum will close on November 20, giving us time to move our collection to our new site on Route 66, south of Springfield, Illinois. We will reopen the Corvair Museum on December 1 at its new location, 10041 Palm Road - a.k.a. Route 66 - in Glenarm, Illinois.

In addition to being much less expensive for us to operate, our new modern facility is expected to draw many more visitors because of its close proximity to popular tourist destinations in the Springfield area. Attractions include the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Lincoln's Tomb

and War Memorial State Historic and more – all just minutes away.

The Springfield area is served by Allegiant, American and United Airlines with multiple daily flights connecting to Chicago, Dallas / Fort Worth, and Punta Gorda Airport.

The museum's new location also has the benefit of being easily accessible from Interstate 55 - the main corridor between Chicago, St. Louis and New Orleans.

Thanks to all who have visited. As we said when we started the Corvair Museum, it will be ever changing!

Mike Hall, President  
Corvair Preservation Foundation

## ***Route 66 Is..... by Allan Lacki***

The Corvair Museum location is moving to Palm Road which parallels I-55. They are right next to each other.

If you look at a modern map, you'll see no reference to Route 66 where the museum will be located. So, is Palm Road actually on the same alignment as the old Route 66?

It's a fact that, when US-66 was decommissioned, almost all the old Route 66 street signs were taken down and the roads on which it traveled were re-named.

Route 66 had at least three different alignments through this section of Illinois over its history.

From what I've read, one of the first alignments, which lasted from 1921 to 1926, is a bit east of Palm Road. It's original name was "Old Carriage Way". It goes from East Lake Shore Drive and New City Road. It still exists. The northern end is still called "Old Carriage Way" and the south end is called Old Route 66. [www.hollandsentinel.com]

Then, around 1926, Route 66 was realigned quite a bit west of Palm Road and took the same path as Illinois Route 4. That lasted four years.

In 1930, Route 66 was realigned once again and, from what I can determine, Route 66 then followed the alignment now held by Palm Road.

To get on the post-1930 alignment of Route 66, you take I-55 out of Springfield, cross over Lake Springfield and then take Exit 88. Make a right onto Palm Road. And that's the post-1930 version of Route 66. [www.historic66.com]

The museum's neighbor at 9683 Palm Road - the Double J Campground - claims to be located right on Route 66. [doublejcampground.com]

Also, if you look closely on Google Maps, there is a very small stretch of a road that's clearly labeled as "Old Route 66". It serves a marina on Lake Springfield. It leads right into Palm Road.

So, take your pick!

## ***Vargo Dragway Show***

In our area, the Vargo Dragway car show is one of the last big shows of the season.

The old Vargo Dragway in Perkasio closed down fifty years ago, but once a year, it becomes alive again with hot cars. The Vargo Dragway Car Show displays over 600 vehicles in all types and models.

Naturally, a number of period-correct dragsters are on display. But this extremely popular car show has something for everybody.

The drag strip was named for Jake Vargo, a contractor/entrepreneur who owned several Indy and dirt track cars. Jake also owned land in Perkasio.

# Vargo Dragway Show. November 2, 2019



Corvair lineup at Vargo.



Larry Asheuer's low-low mileage '69 500.



Marlene showing off the award for her Monzawagon.



Dave Stein's ultra-clean '68 Monza.



What's a drag strip without a dual-engine dragster?



Rich Green's '66 Canadian SS-396 Chevelle.

When approached by the Lehigh Valley Timing Association to build a drag strip on his property, Jake took up the challenge. Construction began in 1958 and the first races were held there in April, 1960.

Vargo soon became a major track hosting such greats as Ronnie Sox, Don Garlits, Dick Landy and lots of East Coast Racers that are still remembered today.

From the start, a handful of residents living in the area of the Vargo property petitioned to stop the track from being built. Years later, Jake Vargo passed away. Mrs. Vargo tried to keep it going, but political pressure finally forced the closing of the track. The last race was run in 1969.

This year, the show was held on November 2. Those who were lucky enough to land a space on the old strip's pavement managed to avoid the mucky wet grass from the previous day's downpour. But as spaces opened up, just about everybody was able to park their car on dry pavement.

The Vargo show was well attended this year by members of the Philadelphia Corvair Association and Lehigh Valley Corvair Club. Larry Ascheuer, Allan Lacki, Paul and Marlene Passini, Dave and Beth Stein, Dave Smith and Bob Weideman were there with their Corvairs. Rich Green brought out his '66 Canadian-build SS-396 and Jeff Marvill brought one of his street rods.

The Corvair people were able to park together on the strip, making for a great display that attracted lots of admirers.

### **Email Scam Alert!** **by Bryan Blackwell** **& Dave McChesney**

Unfortunately it appears someone is doing what's known as a Spear Phishing attack that's targeted at CORSA members. If you are a victim of the

attack, you will receive an email. The text will say something like this:

"I need your assistance I'm out of town. Can you please handle this on behalf of the club. CORSA, needs Gift cards for donation to Veterans at Hospice Care for their Veteran's Day ."

CORSA is not doing any such donation campaign. Further, any CORSA correspondence will come from a Corvair.org address. Finally, donations to CORSA or the CPF are via the web forms at [www.corvair.org](http://www.corvair.org).

Bryan Blackwell  
CORSA Eastern Div Director

I've noticed the same sort of e-mail over the past couple of years... usually made to look like it's from a Club (Chapter) officer, usually to the Club (Chapter) Treasurer... at least in my experience. While they might appear to be from the Club President, a check of the actual e-address will reveal something different than the actual e-address of the club president. I've also seen similar ones regarding a writing group I belong to. I just send them to "spam" and forget about them.

My advice would be to know your fellow club members and their e-addresses, or at least be able to recognize them. Secondly, look to see if the message is plausible, especially as now and then these folks can spoof the sender's address.

Dave McChesney  
Inland Northwest Corvair Club

### **Cylinder Head Combo Socket by Russ Davis**

*Editor's Note: Russ Davis is not only a Corvair enthusiast but also a tool and die maker. One of his latest inventions is a combination socket that enables Corvair engine builders to torque down cylinder heads without pausing to swap the sockets back and forth. That's a neat trick because the upper*

*nuts are 9/16" while the lower nuts (more correctly, the rocker arm studs), are 13/16". Here is what makes Russ' tool so special:*

I have finished the design for my answer to Snap-Ons 13/16" by 9/16" combo socket for torquing the Corvair heads without changing sockets.

It features:

1. USA made by Wright - A 13/16" six point deep socket machined flat on end, 45 RC Hardness, Chrome plated.
2. USA made by Blue Chip Tools. A 9/16" six point deep socket 45 RC Hardness Nickel Plated. Fits over stock and long rocker arm studs. Has 1/32" to 1/16" further length range.
3. The 9/16" socket has a close tolerance hole to fit over rocker arm stud so that the 13/16" socket engages the hex firmly. No rocking side to side or up and down.
4. Slightly more spring pressure than the equivalent Snap-On tool.

I'm taking orders now for shipping to start in 3 to 5 weeks.

Price \$60.00 with \$5.00 for shipping  
Price will increase to \$70.00 October 1

You can send a check to ....

Blue Chip Tools  
c/o Russ Davis  
238 Cranberry Dr.  
Stuarts Draft, Virginia 24477

.... or Pay Pal me.  
[bluechipmach.rd@gmail.com](mailto:bluechipmach.rd@gmail.com)

### **Rick Norris Testimonial**

Whilst assembling the black engine I used Russ Davis combination socket for the first time. I finished torquing both heads in less time than it used to take to do one the old "swap the sockets" routine. If you do your own engine

work you need this tool!

### ***Nominations!***

The period is still open for nominating officers for the coming year.

We are accepting nominations for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, and Activities Director. You may submit nominations for any or all of these positions. You can even nominate yourself!

Please indicate the position for which you are placing a member's name in nomination. When you submit a nomination, we ask you to include your name as all nominations must come from members in good standing.

Submit your nominations by e-mail or postal mail to Dick Weidner, our Secretary/ Treasurer. Here is his contact information:

Richard C. Weidner  
2304 Main Street  
Northampton, PA 18067  
rcwvair@rcn.com.

Elections will take place at our January meeting.

### ***October 23rd Meeting Notes***

Attendees: Rich Greene, John Egerton, Al Lacki, Fred Scherzer, Dennis Stamm and Dick Weidner.

Minutes and Treasurer's Report. Dick Weidner presented the minutes and treasury report. A motion was made to accept both as read. The motion was seconded and approved by way of voice vote.

Previous .....	\$1,638.17
Revenue (Dues) .....	25.00
Expense (Newsletter).....	(32.74)
Expense (Chapter Fee) .....	(35.00)
Current Balance .....	\$1,595.43



## Corvair Cooking Corner

By now, you've probably realized that this column often deals with "car guy food" This time, the topic is Jimmy Buff's Italian hot dogs, a creation from the gritty back streets of Newark, New Jersey. The original Jimmy Buff's was at the corner of 14th Street and 9th Avenue.

My Dad grew up in Newark during the 1920s and 30s, so he was familiar with the local food joints. So, it was not surprising that, when he became a family man, he'd take us to Jimmy Buff's for the culinary experience of our lives. We'd all pile into his 1950 Buick, drive into Newark, order the dogs at the counter and eat in the car..

Over the years, Jimmy Buff's moved out of Newark and opened up a couple of new places in the suburbs. It was, and still is, a family-run business. At one time, they had several stores, but now they're down to just two.

Here's an article about Jimmy Buff's that appears on the Old Newark Memories website. It gives you all the info you need to make your own Italian hot dogs. Beware! Eat at your own risk!

### ***Italian Hot Dogs of Newark*** **by Ralph J. Chin**

Does anybody remember the Italian Hot Dogs of Newark, New Jersey? They used to be made at every respectable pizzeria claiming to be a real Italian food place! I remember eating them during the week but mostly on the weekends.

Sometimes I would cook them late at night as a snack for my Dad and myself on my Mom's gas stove but this effort was never as good as the one's in the pizzeria's because I didn't have the pizza bread they used. I understand they are still being made today at various eateries around New Jersey. Most notably at Jimmy Buff's and Dickey Dee's.



Jimmy Buff's has been credited for their creation around 1932 and so these type of hot dogs have been around a long time but only in New Jersey! Apparently its status in the Italian food chain has slipped over the decades but my taste buds still yearn for the taste of them from the distant past.

So! If you claim to be from Newark and you've never had one of these Italian hot dogs, shame on you! These hot dogs are an experience you just need to try at least once in your Newark life. It consists of an all-natural casing real beef hot dog, sliced potatoes, onions and green bell peppers which are shallow fried in oil with maybe a little seasoning. There was a special round pizza bread which was cut in half and then sliced internally to create a pocket to hold the ingredients.

A side view would show the half circle of the bread with the ends of the hot dog sticking out on each end with the potatoes, onions and bell peppers piled on above the bread line. A squirt of mustard on the top of this heap would be a perfect finish to it. At any rate, the skin of the hot dog and potatoes would be a little crunchy from their frying time in the oil. The peppers and onions would be sufficiently cooked so they wilted into a sloppy mess to form a tasty mouthful as you sank your teeth into the delicious bread and all the ingredients inside of it.

Sounds simple yet at one time it was only made in Newark and certainly today, only in New Jersey. I haven't had one since I left Jersey in 1975 and when I asked for it by name at some the hot dog eateries around Hawaii and Florida during my travels, they looked at me as if I was speaking Yiddish or Chinese to them!

I would suspect its origin was probably someplace in North Newark because this area had a large Italian population at one time but don't quote me on this! It was more common as a lunch meal and big enough to require you to use two hands in the process of eating it. You could get one with two hot dogs or sausages but I never, ever, approached the famine level needed to devour this type of meal!



Discussion. Dennis Stamm talked about Dennis Weaver's collection of Corvairs and Corvair parts. Dennis Weaver passed away many months ago and his widow, Cathy, is now ready to dispose of the collection which consists of six Corvairs in one barn, two in another barn, a Greenbrier at the Weaver house and more. There was also a Rampside that had been left outside for years. Rich Greene and Larry Asheuer removed it from the premises for Cathy. It was beyond restoration but contained many perfectly-usable tools stashed inside.

Dick Weidner mentioned that, in order to transfer titles to new owners, Cathy needs an official attestation of Dennis' passing for each and every car that is sold.

Show and Tell. Tonight was clock night! Rich Greene brought in a number of items to show relating to Corvair instrument panel clocks.

One was an electrically-powered quartz-movement conversion kit for early Corvair cars and trucks. It is offered by Instrument Services, Inc. of Machesney Park, Illinois. The part number is S-3015 and the price is \$85 apiece.

In addition to the conversion kit, Rich passed around an original points-style clock mechanism for Corvair clocks.

Rich also passed around a special pair of tweezers designed for removing and installing the hands on clocks and other instruments. He bought it on Amazon for \$16.99.

Dick brought in more photo albums showing pictures he had taken at past Corvair events including LVCC mall shows, NJACE flea markets, the opening of the original Corvair Museum in Richmond and more.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM

## **Points & Ignitors by Allan Lacki**

*Recently, LVCC members Kyle Regan and Al Lacki exchanged emails about ignition alternatives. Kyle wanted to know if he should switch his '65 Corsa to an electronic ignition system. Here is what Al wrote in reply.*

Hi Kyle,

It's a controversial subject in the Corvair community. There are three alternatives.

1. Points & condenser: They usually need to be replaced every 6,000 miles or so, and when you do it, you need to set the point gap, dwell and ignition timing, which is an iterative process. In other words, the gap affects the dwell which affects the timing. To do it, you'll typically need to go through the process a couple of times to get it just right. Also, you'll need feeler gauges, dwell meter and timing light. They aren't that expensive and they last forever. When replacing the points and condenser, it's a good idea to replace the distributor cap, too. And while you're at it, check the bushing in the points plate to make sure there isn't any "slop", (i.e. excessive play).

2. Pertronix Ignitor: Once you install it, you're set. The Pertronix unit replaces the points and condenser. The Pertronix unit fits inside the distributor cap, so there is nothing to mount inside the engine compartment. Generally, it's a set-it and forget-it proposition. But there are a couple of catches: (1) You'll need to modify the engine wiring harness to by-pass the resistor wire that goes from the main wiring harness to the coil. You'll need to know which wires to "clip" and solder. (I don't recommend those cheezy pinch-type connectors). (2) the Pertronix unit gives no warning when it burns out. You'll simply coast to the side of the road. Some people have good luck with them, in terms of reliability. Other people do not.

3. Fast XR-700. Another electronic ignition alternative. Unlike the Pertronix, it has an external module that needs to be mounted in the engine compartment. On the other hand, there's no need to modify the engine wiring harness. And, from what I've read on the internet, they're more reliable than the Pertronix. More expensive, too!

The electronic units are known for providing easier starting, smoother idle and a touch more fuel economy. But the original points system works just fine when they're properly set up.

My own Corvair uses the original points and condenser system. I don't mind replacing the parts when I do a tune-up because my Corvair is not a daily driver. In other words, it takes a few years before I rack-up 6,000 miles between tune-ups.

With either of the electronic units, you need to be sure the ignition coil is compatible with the unit. Maybe a stock coil will work fine, but I really don't know.

If you go with one of the electronic systems - especially the Pertronix alternative - I recommend that you keep a points plate with points and condenser in your glove box, just in case.

You can buy the parts for any of these alternatives through Clarks Corvair Parts. Points, condensers and distributor caps can be purchased at most FLAPS (friendly local auto parts stores), but I recommend NAPA stores because their stuff is generally of higher quality.

The points, condensers and distributor caps for 1962-69 Corvairs are the same as those used in Chevy inline 6s and Buick V6s made during the 1960s, so there is an ample supply.

Allan Lacki  
redbat01@verizon.net

## ***NEXT MEETING: JANUARY 22, 2020***

*That's right! No meetings in November or December due to the Holidays! See you in January!*

## ***Events Calendar***

### **Saturday & Sunday December 7&8, 2019 :::: East Coast Indoor Nationals, Timonium, MD**

Location: Maryland State Fairgrounds, 2200 York Road, Timonium, MD 21093 Time: From 9 AM Saturday to 7 PM Sunday. With more than 300 vehicles on display and 200,000 sq foot filled wall to wall with various automotive exhibits. If you enjoy the automotive hobby from automotive parts to apparel, candles to custom art work, die-cast collectibles to slot cars there will be nearly 75 vendors, live entertainment, music, food and so much more. Purchase your tickets in advance and enter through our VIP pre-paid entrance at the front of the show and avoid all the lines. Tickets will also be available at the door, but it's cash ONLY at the admission gate the days of the show. ATM machines are NOT available outside of the venue, so please come prepared. Visit [www.eastcoastindoornats.com](http://www.eastcoastindoornats.com)

### **Saturday & Sunday, January 11&12 :::: Dragfest Indoor Drag Racing Showcase, Lebanon, PA**

Location: Lebanon Valley Expo Center, 80 Rockerty Rd., Lebanon, Pa. 17042. Time: From 9 AM on Saturday to 4 PM on Sunday. With more than 200 drag machines on display, automotive enthusiasts from around the local area and afar; come to get an escape from the winter blues. The nearly 100,000 sq. foot facility is filled wall to wall with various automotive racing exhibits. No matter what you sell, from automotive parts, apparel, candles to custom art work, die-cast cars to vacations, there will be nearly 10,000 consumers spending the weekend inside a venue filled with action, activities and live entertainment. <https://motoramaproductions.com/dragfest>

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