



the fifth wheel

APRIL 2020

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

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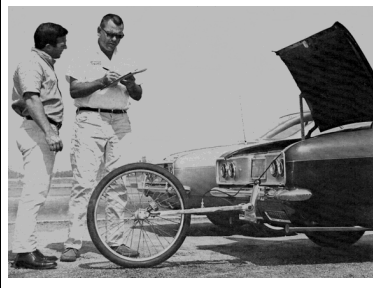
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No April Meeting due to COVID-19

Message from Governor Tom Wolf April 14, 2020

Pennsylvanians are making great sacrifices to bend the #COVID19 curve, and we're making progress.

Thank you for practicing social distancing and for staying home.

One day we will arrive at a new sense of normal, but right now we must keep doing what we're doing to save lives.

In keeping with the Governor's message, LVCC will continue to comply with the stay at home policy until the pandemic is deemed to be over.



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.

Taking up where the Corvair Monza left off...

Taking up where the Corvair Monza left off.

Those were the words offered by Car & Driver magazine in an introductory article about the then-new Chevy Vega. It was advertised as the little car that does everything well, and the pundits sang praises about it when it was offered for sale to the public.

A Deadline and a Decree.

In 1968, General Motors Chairman James Roche decreed that Chevrolet would be introducing a new small car to fight the imports in two years, and so it had to be. Looking back, it may seem that assembling the Opel Ascona in America would have been the logical way to meet the stiff deadline while avoiding exchange rate fluctuations.

But instead, Ed Cole – who had moved up from Chevrolet to the vice presidency of GM during the 1960s - decided it would be better to start from a clean sheet of paper. And so, the Vega was hastily designed by a band of fifty engineers working in GM's central engineering group, not Chevrolet. Their task was made more difficult due to Cole's insistence on developing an all-new engine to power their all-new car.

Hypereutectic Alloys and Other Delights.

The Vega engine was unique among engines in the General Motors lineup.



By the end of the 1960s, no GM engine was cast in aluminum and no GM engine employed an overhead camshaft. Buick's aluminum block V8 and Pontiac's OHC six had quickly come and gone, both being regarded as too troublesome and too expensive to manufacture. But the Vega engine employed both these features.

The 140 cubic inch Vega engine featured a block cast in a hypereutectic aluminum-silicon alloy that did away with the need for cylinder liners. The camshaft was in the cylinder head which was cast in iron. The use of an aluminum block topped by a cast iron head was unusual, but it avoided the need for steel valve seat inserts that would have been necessary if the head had been cast in aluminum like the block. And with the liner-less aluminum block, it was probably inexpensive to manufacture unlike its Buick and Pontiac predecessors.

Inexpensive. Not Cheap.

Perhaps learning from the Corvair, which was a complicated automobile in comparison to the competition, the GM engineering staff did just about everything to make the Vega as simple as possible. For example, the Vega sedan had just 578 body parts, 418 fewer than its full-sized Chevrolet counterpart. The headliner was a single-piece molding as were the door panels in the interior. Front and rear seats were full-foam, eliminating the need for springs in the frames. Even the oil filler cap was simplified. It was just a rubber plug.



This is not to say GM skimmed in all respects. All Vegas were equipped with four-link rear suspension rather than the semi-elliptic leaf spring arrangement used on Novas. All had side guard beams built into the doors to protect the driver and passenger in the event of a collision. Front disc brakes were standard.

A lot of thought went into the manufacturing process as well as design. Chevrolet's Lordstown Ohio assembly plant was revamped for Vega production. Ninety percent of the body welds were done by Univac robots. The bodies were subject to a full-dip rust proofing bath that promised to protect them from corrosion. Sub-assemblies were modularized to ensure uniformity and simplify installation.

Vegas were four-passenger cars. The lineup included a two-door sedan, a two-door hatchback, a two-door wagon and a two-door delivery van. It had a wheelbase of 97 inches and was 169.7 inches long, 65.4 inches wide and 51.9 inches tall – a little bit bigger than the Ford Pinto which was introduced the same year. The styling of the hatchback was especially attractive.

Plaudits from the Pundits

The Vega first went on sale in Chevrolet

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Chevy Vega Photo Gallery



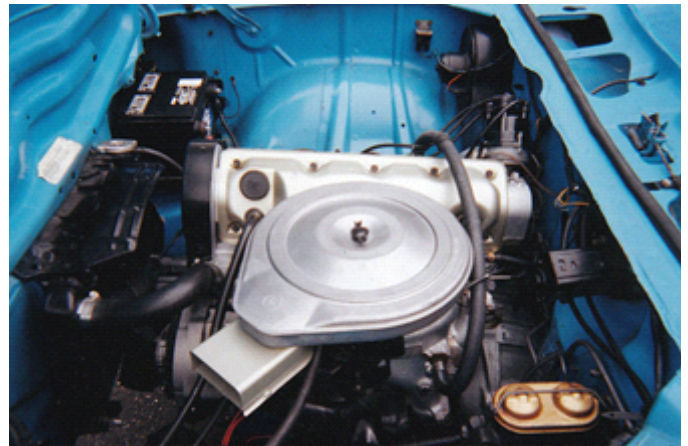
1971 Vega 2-door sedan with optional white wall tires and trim package.



Vega GTs came in either hatchback or Kammback styles. Here is a 1973 trim package.



Vega Kammback wagons were surprisingly popular. This is a 1972..



Troublemaker: The 140 CID Vega 2300 engine gained a reputation as an oil burner.



In 1974, the front styling was revised to accommodate the federally-mandated 5 MPH bumpers.



End of the line. 1977 Vega GT. Underlying H-body platform served as basis for Chevy Monza.

(Continued from page 2)

let dealerships on September 10, 1970 and was well received. Car magazines raved about its features, especially its handling, which was nearly as good as the Chevy Corvette when equipped with the GT option. Motor Trend named the Vega "Car of the Year". Car and Driver rated it number one in a comprehensive road test that compared it to the Pinto, Gremlin, Toyota Corolla, Volkswagen Beetle and Simca 1204. Road & Track, Hot Rod, Road Test and others joined the chorus. True, straight line performance was not spectacular. It was an economy car, after all. But gas mileage was great, averaging in the high twenties around town and up to 40 MPG on the highway.

Sales zoomed. 277,705 Vegas were sold in the first model year and steadily climbed to 460,374 in 1974. The Ford Pinto, priced for less money, outsold it every year, but nobody could argue that the Vega was a success in the market. With the 1973 OPEC oil embargo, it seemed to be the right car at the right time.

Haste Makes Waste.

Nevertheless, there were problems right out of the gate. Complaints about rust arose almost immediately. Apparently, the dip in the rust proofing tub didn't reach into various air pockets inside the unit body structure and, among other things, the fender tops rusted from the inside out. GM reported spent millions on warranty claims for replacing front fenders.

Labor Pains.

In addition to design deficiencies, assembly issues quickly arose. In October 1971, soon after production began, the General Motors Assembly Division took over the Lordstown assembly plant from Chevrolet and embarked on a cost cutting program. According to GM, 370 jobs were eliminated. According to the United Auto Workers, 800 workers had been laid off. No matter the real number, management insisted that line speed be maintained. Lordstown's production line was the fastest on the planet, so labor relations went south in a hurry. Management

accused workers of sabotaging cars by leaving off parts and doing shoddy work. The UAW countered with a wildcat strike in March 1972 that lasted a month. Quality suffered.

Corvairs Leak. Vegas Burn.

It's no secret that Vega engines quickly gained a reputation as oil-burners. The oil consumption problem was often attributed to the fact that the aluminum blocks had no liners, but that was a secondary effect, for the root cause was often faulty valve stem seals and overheating.

Ed Cole and his engineering squad believed that aluminum transferred heat better than cast iron and therefore aluminum block engines could survive quite well with smaller cooling systems. And so, Vegas were equipped with tiny two-tube one-foot square radiators. This turned out to be a mistake, for when the coolant boiled off, the engines were prone to overheating, which in turn, led to blown head gaskets and cylinder distortion. Cylinder distortion led to piston scuffing, which in turn, led to oil consumption.

Why were these engines prone to cylinder distortion? It was because of the open-deck configuration of the cylinder blocks. Open deck is completely acceptable design practice, but in the Vega, it made a bad situation worse.

It's Too Late Baby But We Really Did Try to Make It...

By 1976, Chevrolet had resolved these and other problems but the damage had been done. Word was getting out. After a year of stellar sales in 1974, the count dropped back to 207,764 in 1975 – a decline of 54%. Sale kept dropping in succeeding years. 1977 was the last year for the Chevy Vega – the small car star that had such promise in the beginning.

Sales Comparison

Year	Pinto	Vega	Volkswagen	Honda
1971	352,402	277,705	544,106	9,870
1972	480,405	394,592	515,660	20,355
1973	484,512	427,300*	523,171	38,957
1974	544,209	460,374	386,624	43,119
1975	223,763	207,764	318,627	102,389
1976	290,132	160,524	235,251	150,929
1977	225,097	78,402	297,160	223,633
1978	188,899	0	280,699	274,876
1979	199,018	0	335,426	353,291
1980	185,054	0	337,587	375,388
Total	3,173,491	1,579,361	3,774,311	1,592,807

Vega sales exclude H-body variants, namely Chevy Monza, Pontiac Sunfire, Oldsmobile Starfire and Buick Skyhawk.

Volkswagen & Honda sales include all models sold in the USA.

(Continued on page 7)

Vega 2300 versus Opel 1900

Buick dealers sold the Opel 1900 and its sister car, the Opel Manta beginning in 1970. One is led to wonder why GM chose to develop a completely new subcompact car, the Vega, when the Opel 1900 was already available. The Ford Pinto was largely based on the English Cortina. GM could have done the same.

Chevrolet Vega 2300	Opel Ascona 1900
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Notes:

The Opel Ascona was sold as the Opel 1900 by Buick dealers in the USA.

Statistics shown in this table are from Wikipedia.



Overview

Manufacturer	General Motors	General Motors
Also called	Vega 2300	Opel 1900 (USA)
Production	1970–1977	1970–1975
Assembly	Lordstown Assembly, South Gate, California, United States, Sainte-Thérèse Assembly- Quebec, Canada	Germany: Bochum

Dimensions

Wheelbase	97.0 in	95.75 in
Length	169.7 in	164.5 in
Width	65.4 in	64.375 in
Height	51 in	54.5 in

Body and chassis

Body style	2-door sedan, 3-door hatchback, 3-door wagon	2-door sedan, 4-door sedan, 3-door wagon
Layout	Front-engine / rear-wheel drive	Front-engine / rear-wheel drive

Power train

Engine	140 CID OHC Inline 4	116 CID CIH Inline I4
Horsepower	90 hp / 110 hp SAE Gross	88 hp DIN
Transmission	3-speed manual, 4 speed manual, 2-speed automatic. (3-speed automatic added in 1973)	4-speed manual, 3-speed automatic

Vega Variants. The H-body lived on.



In 1975, Chevy, Oldsmobile and Buick were treated to this new body style. Aside from emblems, they were nearly identical in appearance. The Pontiac version was similar but got its own special nose and taillight treatment.



Pontiac got its own special version of the H-body. Here is a '78 Sunbird coupe.



Front view of a 1976 Buick Skylark hatchback. Chevy was same. Olds had a split grill. The difference was barely noticeable.



Soon after Pontiac was granted the notchback body style, Chevy got it, too. This is a 1980 Chevy Monza Town Sedan.



After a few years, each of the divisions got their own nose treatment. This is a 1979 Oldsmobile Starfire hatchback.



1979 Buick Skyhawk with "Road Hawk" stripe package.

(Continued from page 4)

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A Word from Your Editor.

As you can imagine, it's been a bit difficult this month to assemble a decent newsletter. No club meetings, no car shows, no public events and not much Corvair stuff on the internet.

And so, we bring you a feature article about the Chevy Vega, the successor to the Corvair in the Chevrolet model lineup. The Vega was smaller, but like the Corvair, it was intended to be an import fighter.

Both cars had the same father in the person of Edward N. Cole, and so it is fitting that they shared Cole's penchant for innovative engineering. It may be said that both cars were a reach too far.

This is not to say the Vega was a total failure. It spawned several variants including the Chevy Monza - the Monza with the engine in the front. The others were the Pontiac Sunbird, Oldsmobile Starfire and Buick Skyhawk. Although the engines were different, they all shared the same basic platform underneath through 1980. Customers were none the wiser.

There were performance versions of the Vega, too. The Cosworth Vega was an in-house model that featured a

twin-cam sixteen valve-cylinder head designed by Cosworth Engineering of England.

Don Yenko got into the act too by offering a COPO Vega with special aftermarket equipment. A total of four hundred were built between 1971 and 1972. They were supposed to be offered with turbochargers but the turbo version couldn't pass federal emission tests. And so, Yenko offered the turbo parts separately for those owners who wanted to install them after they received their cars.

Incidentally, Yenko's Vegas were named "Stingers", just like the Corvairs he offered in 1965 and '66.

So remember, when your bench racing with your buddies, be sure they understand you're talking about Corvair Stingers, not Vega Stingers!



Performance Versions



Cosworth Vegas were offered for sale from 1974-76. Price was nearly double that of a base Vega.



Yenko Stinger Turbo Vega. Due to exhaust emission rules, you had to install the turbo yourself!

2020 CORSA Convention Postponed to 2021

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the San Diego Corvair Club and CORSA President Mike Hall made a joint decision to cancel the 2020 CORSA Convention that was scheduled to occur in San Diego. However, there is a silver lining. Please keep reading....

SEE YOU IN SAN DIEGO NEXT YEAR!

We are happy to announce that the Crowne Plaza San Diego - Mission Valley, has agreed to host our convention next year. So mark your calendars. New dates: July 27-31, 2021.

WHAT IF I ALREADY REGISTERED?

In terms of reservations, please consider the 2021 convention to be a completely new affair. Your current hotel reservations will need to be voided and your convention registration fees will need to be refunded. Here's how we'll handle this:

1. Regarding your 2020 hotel reservation. Please contact the Crowne Plaza San Diego - Mission Valley and cancel your reservation. They may have already cancelled it for you, but call them to make sure. The phone number is (619) 297-1101. Also, please cancel your airline tickets, train tickets and rental car reservations if you haven't already done so.
2. Regarding your 2020 convention registration. Convention Coordinator Harry Jensen is canceling all the registrations made so far. If you paid the registration fee, we will refund it. So, you should not need to do anything with regard to your 2020 Convention Registration with CORSA.

CORVAIR – THE NEXT GENERATION

As of April 14, the CORSA mini convention known as "Corvair – the Next Generation" is still scheduled to occur in Springfield, Illinois from June 17 to June 20, 2020. Complete information is available at this address:
<https://www.corvair.org/chapters/chapter627/mini2020.htm>

Get your reservations in for the hotel and register for the Mini. It is shaping up to be a fun filled 4 days with your friends and your Corvairs.



Clark's Corvair Parts®

Our catalog lists over 15,000 parts for your Corvair. We carry engine parts, body panels, upholstery and much more! There are 1,000's of reproduced items available, pages of technical information and lots of other helpful hints.



Parts Interchangeability...



Question: Vega GT wheels are 6 inches wide, 4-lug and look really cool. Will they fit my 1960 Corvair or any other early series Corvair?

Answer: Unfortunately, they won't fit. Although they're four lug, the lug spacing is different. Here are the numbers:

1960-64 Corvair wheel bolt pattern:
4 x 114.3mm

1971-77 Vega wheel bolt pattern:
4 x 101.6 mm

However, it's a fact that a Vega radio speaker is a perfect replacement for the speaker in a 1965-69 Corvair!

Did You Know?



Sold in Canada beginning 1974, the Vega-based Pontiac Astre arrived in the USA in '75. It was continued through 1977, just like the Vega, but was equipped with Pontiac's Iron Duke engine during its last year.

Calendar of Local Events



CORONAVIRUS UPDATE! If you plan to attend any of the events below, please contact the organizers to see if they are still "on". Almost of all the listings include contact information, so give 'em a shout.

RESCHEDULED to Sunday May 17, 2020. :::: Cars & Coffee Lehigh Valley: Season Opener

Location: SteelStacks, 101 Founders Way, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18015. Time: 9 AM to 12 PM. Price: Free. This event repeats every month. Up to 500 cars show up. Hosted by Cars & Coffee Lehigh Valley and SteelStacks. More information available on Facebook.

Tuesday May 19, 2020 :::: DVVR Cruise Nights

Location: Falls Township Community Park, 9125 Mill Creek Rd Levittown PA 19054. Time: 6 PM to 9 PM. Price: Fee. Rain Date is the following Tuesday. All makes & models of cars, trucks, and motorcycles welcome. 20 plaques awarded each cruise. Hosted by Delaware Valley Road Runners Car Club. This event repeats every month. See website for details. <https://www.delawarevalleyroadrunners.com/>

RESCHEDULED to June 17 - 20, 2020 :::: Spring Carlisle

Location: Carlisle Fair Grounds, 1000 Bryn Mawr Road, Carlisle, PA. Admission: Daily Wed- Sat: \$12. Sunday: \$7. Event Pass: \$35. Kids 12 and Under Free. Event Hours: Wed- Sat: 7AM- 6PM. Sunday: 7AM- 12PM. Spring Carlisle is one of the largest automotive flea markets in the world and one of the best opportunities to get your hands on all things automotive. With 8,100 spaces of vendors selling a vast array of automotive parts, accessories, cars, collectibles and memorabilia, it's almost certain that you won't go home empty handed. <https://carlisleevents.com/events/events-detail/index?id=spring+carlisle>

Sunday, May 24, 2020 :::: 27th Annual Lake Lenape Jamboree Car Show

Location: Lake Lenape, entrance on Constitution Ave, Perkasio, PA 18944. Time: 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM EDT. Price: \$15 Pre-Registered / \$20 Day of Show. Rain or Shine. Dash Plaques for the 1st 100 cars. Trophies, vendors, Chinese auction, DJ. goodtimemotorvators@yahoo.com

Sunday June 21, 2020 :::: 34th Annual Father's Day Rod Run

Location: Oley Fairgrounds, 477 Main Street, Oley, PA 19547 (enter on Jefferson Street). Time: 8 AM to 3 PM. Price: \$15 day of show. Rain or shine. All show cars and trucks welcome. Dash plaques to first 200 vehicles. Door prizes, vendor spaces, raffles, games, NSRA safety inspection, etc. Contact Rick @ 610-678-3948 or Fran @ 610-944-5515.

Sunday June 21 2020 :::: 18th Annual Silver Creek Father's Day Car Show

Location: 2943 Route 212, Springtown, PA 18081. Time: 8 AM to 3 PM. Rain or shine. Price: \$10 day of show. Food, entertainment, 50/50. Voting 12:30 to 1:30 PM. Trophies at 2:30 PM. (No Corvair class). SilverCreekAA@gmail.com. www.silvercreekathleticassociation.com

Friday through Sunday, July 31 through August 2 2020 :::: Das Awkscht Fescht

Location: Macungie Memorial Park, 50 Poplar St, Macungie, PA 18062. Pre-registration required! Deadline: July 1. Price: \$15 per car per day. Das Awkscht Fescht is a three day automotive festival featuring cars, flea market, music, arts and crafts and entertainment for the entire family at beautiful Macungie Memorial Park near Allentown. On Sunday, LVCC participates in club day joining 40 other marque car clubs for a day of fun and fellowship. For a registration packet: Randy Kohler, 3010 Woodlane Ave, Orefield, PA 18069. Phone 484-239-2067. Email rjkvair@aol.com. Website <https://awkscht.com>

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