

Performance *Corvair* Group Newsletter

Second Quarter 2008

Volume 2 Issue 1

Corvair Olympics in Indianapolis

By Brian O'Neill

Remember when you first heard about NECC events? Maybe you've always had a need for speed, but your first thought was "I don't own a race car". Other thoughts went through your head like, "Even if I did own a race car, I'd probably be eaten up by the veteran drivers".

Or you might be thinking that you've heard the NECC does time trials but you're a drag race fan. Or maybe you're thinking "I'm an autocross guy". Or maybe you're thinking "All those fast guys are weird! I've got a great looking show car. I want people to see it".

Well, here's news for you! This summer in Indianapolis over a three day period at the Corvair Olympics, you can do either time trials on a road course; do bracket drag racing, run a challenging autocross or put your car in a Corvair show. Or better yet do all of them!

Ok, now that you're interested, you're asking things like 'when?', 'where?', 'how do I sign up?'

It's easy, go to 'neecmotorsports.com' for details and to register. Got more questions? Call Brian O'Neill at (973) 729-5586.

P.S. Look for our ad in this newsletter.

California Dreaming

By Seth Emerson

Well the last awards are given out, a 65 Monza was auctioned off, an invitation to gather again in Jacksonville, FL in 2009 was issued. The 2008 Corsa Convention is done. The stories will be in the Communicate shortly, probably with plenty of photos. Since I don't do "blogs", I thought I would, instead, give a short narrative of my week in Southern California.

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PCG Patch – The latest in stylist Corvair apparel is here!!! Kevin Clark has designed a special patch for the PCG. You can contact Kevin at: kevin@kcvairbrush.com

California Dreaming (continued)

This is part one: "Willow Springs"

Last week I had gathered up all of Silicone Wires "stuff", including everything from Steering wheel hubs to Steering boxes, billet distributors to – surprise – ignition wire sets, filling most of the back of my Avalanche. The rest of the space was dedicated to carrying all of the service stuff and wheels/tires/etc for the "Stinger" race car - which I was flat-towing behind - and our personal gear for a week at the CORSA convention. The car was just completed, at least completed enough to take the trip and I was as done working on it as I could be.

We were packed up and headed out to Willow Springs raceway in Rosamond, CA on last Saturday morning. Heading down I5, keeping a low profile 60 mph, everything just hummed along. Climbing the grapevine in 100 degree ambient temps lifted the truck's temp a bit, but was not a concern. We headed East on CA 128, tracing most of the route we use for the Fan Belt Toss in Palm Springs each year. The outside temps kept climbing and as we turned off onto some small roads to stop at the racetrack, it hit 110 degrees F. And it didn't go down soon either!

There were no other Corvairs hanging out at the track, so we drove on into Rosamond and found the motel. Several Corvair folks were there, including Jack Pinard, the organizer, and Warren LeVeque, who had towed a bit further than I – from Indiana. Others drifted in, Jonnie Berkman and Rod Bean among them. As more folks arrived we started a tech inspection on the available cars. One result of that was the finding of a massive oil leak out of the pan

gasket on Ken Burton's car (massive like a big puddle).

Now what to do, on a Saturday evening in a hot small town? Nobody had an extra pan gasket, so he bought some "Gasket-in-a-can" and a few quarts of oil. The car got jacked-up, the rest of the oil drained, and the pan was pulled. Ken cleaned everything off and glued everything together and waited for the morning. He poured in the oil and the goop sealed fine and he ran that day on the track. (He also ran the Convention autocross on Friday. Still holding!)

The track was cooler the next day – but not much! 107F was the eventual temp on my truck's thermometer. We got to the track a bit after 7AM and I set about changing over from the tow tires to the race tires – Old Toyo RA1s. (Hey, these worked fine at Portland in 2005!) The new organization, CAR, is not as organized as the NECC track folks, and it showed. Fortunately, the laid-back California attitude prevailed and everyone got pretty much as much track running as they wanted.

The high temps acted as a restrictor on many of the cars – and the drivers. The three groups were generally broken out by experience and performance potential. Warren LeVeque, Mark Wright and Ray Deegan – in his V8, were the quickest out of the gate – No surprises there! After a few laps my Gen-Fan light popped on and I tip-toed around to the pits with a broken (brand new!!!) fan belt. Like any good Corvair guy, I had a few (5!) spares, just in case. Since I had anticipated high heat, I was running a good Synthetic Racing oil (Red Line brand) and no damage seems to have resulted. My car has the LeVair half-speed fan kit, but I must have not adjusted the belt correctly.

California Dreaming (continued)

After replacement, the new-new belt was fine and remained so throughout the rest of the week.

My car had other problems, the engine sounded more like a threshing machine than a Corvair. But most of the sub-systems worked fine. The ducted and fan-assisted front mounted cooler worked fine, the all-new 4-wheel disks were excellent, even my “iffy” new clutch worked well. The valve train, kind of experimental on my part, was noisy though and I will have to tear it down and find out why. The car handled well on the course. The heavy around town steering lightened up at track speeds and the Toyos, once warmed up, allowed placement of the car wherever I wanted. I played with the pressures a little bit, but it was too hot to do much more. The car can probably use even stiffer sway bars. I went out in the later session and turned my fastest laps in that session (still nothing very quick) and I took Rod Bean for a few laps. He has hundreds (maybe thousands) of miles on that track and gave me several tips. As I pushed harder, the head temps started creeping up, along with the oil temps. As I crossed 400F head temp and 240 oil temp, I decided to bring it in and save some motor for the convention autocross, since it was still sounding terrible.

I talked Rod into driving me around for a few laps in his 2004 Z06 Corvette. He is a good driver and showed me the limits of his Vette. I wasn't quite able to talk him into letting me drive him around in it. (You can't win them all!) As we finished up our time at the track, people departed for the convention. Mark Wright and I planned two different routes to Ventura, trying to determine the shortest route. I filled the Avalanche up in Filmore,

CA, setting a new personal record in dollars per fill up, \$122. I was averaging 17.2 MPG in the Avalanche, while flat-towing. Not too bad.

Part Two – Arrival in Ventura, the convention starts.

Late Sunday we wandered our way down to Ventura from Rosamond. This involved participating in my second race of the day, the “Race to LA”, a common Sunday afternoon occurrence. Trying to hold to 60 MPH in the right lane was a chore! The California speed limit is 55 for all towing vehicles. The temperature dropped just a little as we drove down CA14 to Interstate 5, but then climbed past 100 again as we drove north to catch our highway to the coast. As we drove over on CA 126, the temperature steadily dropped. I gassed up the Avalanche in Filmore, a beautiful farming town, averaging 17.2 MPG flat-towing the “Stinger” behind. We passed Mark Wright and friend, since they had stopped for dinner on the way. We reached Ventura and its balmy 73 degree temps at about 5PM. (I love California!)

Since the “Host” hotel was a host only, and all events were really taking place at the fairgrounds, I had decided we would relax at a local Bed & Breakfast in town instead. It was closer to the fairgrounds than the “Host” hotel, and it was a lovely place, comfortable and full of charm. If it wasn't for the convention, this would have been a honeymoon after 35 years of marriage. We still enjoyed the week. Driving the truck around town with the race car attached was a bit of a pain, so we dropped it in a big parking lot, and went to check in at the B&B. Since the racecar has no parking brake, I nosed it into a diagonal parking space and

California Dreaming (continued)

put it in gear to hold it. I noticed at the time that the brake pedal felt pretty mushy, quite different than at Willow springs. Hmmm?

After hauling all of our stuff into the B&B, and settling in, (5 to 6 PM was wine and cheese with the other patrons – every night) I walked down to the other parking lot and drove the racecar the few blocks to the hotel. The car is registered and insured for use on California roads. The brakes were definitely mushy, and required some pumping to do much work. As I parked it, I noticed fluid under the right rear. Not a good sign.

After the hot race day in Willow and the 100 mile race/tow over to Ventura, we were beat, and a hot shower and long nights sleep did the trick. Monday morning we awoke in plenty of time to have the included full breakfast in the atrium, then drive the truck the five blocks over to the Convention area at the fairgrounds. The night before (Sunday) had seen a concert by some teen-ish group that not only had packed the fairgrounds and their parking lot (our autocross lot!), but had left it with the patina of the aftermath of a rock concert. The parking lot was knee-deep in trash. As we drove in, there were a couple of guys with brooms attempting what to me looked like an impossible task. Other than those two, it seemed rather deserted, until we found out where the Corvair activities were beginning – way around on the other side of the property. As we headed around, a huge sweeper truck arrived and began the real clean-up.

We arrived at the “Santa Rosa” hall, also known as the “Agricultural” hall. Corvair folks were all that were growing there when

we arrived. The registration computers were “on the fritz” for a while, so we unloaded the Silicone Wire Systems display stuff and set up our tables. There were lots of familiar faces around the large hall. Clarks to one side, Underground to the other. Bob Anderson of CIDCO had a big gear display along one wall. Larry Shapiro and John Sweet had a large spread of parts. Some of the smaller vendors were just showing up, along with us. The EZ-Car-lift display was both inside and outside, more about this later. Fred Bybee had a radio and accessories display, lots of model cars were available from several vendors and there were a few displays that weren’t populated until Tuesday.

Monday was the day of the Corsa Board of Directors meeting so those folks were absent. After laying everything out, I caught a lift back to the hotel (Thanks Bill!) and I hopped in the race car and drove it over to the fairgrounds. By now, I really had to pump the brakes, only the front ones had any capability. But it was a short drive and mid-day Monday traffic, which is to say light to none, so things were safe. I parked the car outside and decided that I would not do anything about the brakes – except plan – until Wednesday. Tuesday was the Car display – next to the Concours, and I had planned to display the car in the Racecar group, no matter how ugly the paint was – and it was/is ugly. I was proud of the engineering work I had done on the car, even if the paint had that “lived-on” look. Since I have installed a racing dual master cylinder set-up with a balance-bar, I was able to adjust the pedal to operate about 90 percent on the front brakes which was fine for the moment. I had to fix it before the

California Dreaming (continued)

Autocross, but that was not until Friday, plenty of time! (grin).

We went out for a nice dinner in town Monday evening (after Wine and Cheese). I found a new nice beer, New Belgium 1554. Tuesday morning was a rush to eat, then get the car over into the display area by about 8:30AM, the scheduled time – people were still arriving at 9:30, so why the rush? At least I had a nice spot between Warrens early roadster and Mark Wright's 68 Stinger, even some shade under a palm tree (I love California!). Of course, those cars made my car look even more like a turd on four wheels. I removed the hood and the deck lid and tried to cover over the worst of the side painting – somewhat unsuccessfully – and show off some of the engineering.



I went back inside to my vendor area to relieve my wife. She had brought some of the earrings and necklaces she makes, and was busy selling them to the beleaguered Corvair wives and girlfriends. She advertises them as "Cheaper than most Corvair parts!" It keeps her busy at the convention and pays for her hobby (Sound familiar?) Since I am located in California, as are a couple of my Ignition Wire dealers, I didn't anticipate much sales volume at the convention, and I wasn't surprised. But I got

to display some new items and talk with current and previous buyers and generally have a good time.

In the afternoon, I spent an hour out at the Car display glancing at some of the other cars, Phil Dally's Speed record car was a dazzler, then answering questions about my car. At the end of the day, I gingerly drove the Stinger over and parked it next to the Avalanche. When the vendor area closed, Barbara and I took a shopping center run. She bought some food stuff while I visited a Kragen's (an AutoZone clone) and picked out the parts I would need to repair and bleed the brakes the next day. We almost missed the nightly wine and food at the B&B, but not quite, and that sufficed for Tuesday dinner.

Part Three – Repairs and a Homer DOH! moment

Wednesday morning was my day of reckoning for the brakes. While talking with others at the convention, I had heard about Steve Poe's accident. So when I had to jack up the car to troubleshoot and repair the brakes, safety was high on my list. I borrowed two amazing aluminum jack stands from Jeff Ballard (Thanks Jeff!) and dove into the right rear brakes.

From earlier indications, I was pretty sure something was loose on the right rear. After jacking up the car, I pulled out my few tools, including my tube wrenches and tightened everything again. Nothing seemed loose. I opened up the rear master cylinder – it was dry inside. So I opened a new can of brake fluid and poured some in slowly. Without my touching the pedal, the fluid slowly came dripping out the right rear line.

California Dreaming (continued)

At this point, I have to admit to an earlier error. In this complex 4-wheel disc-brake system, all parts of the system, not including the hard lines, were all new in the last two months in this final build up. There were two exceptions. Two stainless flex hoses, the ones from the rear hard lines to the trailing arms were retained from the earlier system. During the first bleeding of the system, about two weeks before, the left side had immediately leaked at one end of the line. I had two new lines ready to go. I removed the left side and replaced it with the new line. I could visually verify the line was bad, the end-fitting had cracked on the contact face. I should have immediately replaced the other old line on the right side. But I didn't. I just put the replacement line on the shelf. That remaining old line is the one that failed after the track event. My bad! DOH!! Of course, my one spare line was now sitting on my shelf – about 300 miles North.

With advice from Jeff Ballard, I visited a local hydraulic supply place, and, although they didn't have the "-3 line", pretty much a racing-only part, they knew who did. I called "Scott's Hot Rods" in Oxnard, about 15 miles down the coast. They had an almost identical part in stock, a little long, but usable. I brought the part back and, with a friend's help, (Thank You, Bill Sweet!), installed the line, bled the brakes, restored a hard peddle and re-balanced the front rear settings.

Since I had the car up in the air, I installed the race tires for Friday. Doing this work in the middle of the day caused me to miss Bob Anderson's presentation of the Corvair differentials. That is one tech session I really wanted to attend. The engine still

sounded like a threshing machine, but it was still running.

At 5 o'clock, Barbara and I returned to the B&B to change into warmer clothes for the Beach Party. Yeah we hit the wine and cheese again, too. Aside from being a bit chilly, we enjoyed the beach affair. The food was great, and plentiful. We sat and swapped tales with the LeVeques, Fred and Sharon Bybee and others who drifted in and out. The ocean breeze finally got us, so we eventually returned to the B&B and did a walking tour of downtown Ventura. There were six thrift stores on one block in the downtown area. Thank goodness they were closed!



Thursday was the slow day. I spent much of the day helping Tim Chew and others from his club set up the autocross track layout. We had a large open area with only a few centrally located light poles to plot around, and plenty of pylons. Tim's original design included a two-lap run, but it became evident that it would have been too confusing for many. We lengthened the second part of the course and included a few sweeping turns before the straight finish and ended up with a 50-55 second course (for most cars).

California Dreaming (continued)

I missed the Virtual Vairs meeting while working with some customers but managed to attend the V8 Registry meeting in the evening. We even missed the wine and Cheese affair! Barbara went to dinner with the LeVeques and came back just in time to pull me out of the end of the V8 meeting. I was watching a great in-car video of a V8 Vair passing several cars at a track event. Russ Brandenburg did a great job with the meeting. Early to bed on Thursday, because Friday was the Autocross.

Part Four – Autocross and final day events.

Friday was the only day I was unable to enjoy the breakfast at our Bed & Breakfast Inn. That is because I was out at the Autocross course early. This is the first time I have attended the Autocross as the Corvair Society's Autocross Chairman. I was hoping things would go all right at the event. Some things had been properly planned and some had not. But a relatively small turnout, around 40 drivers, meant that small delays couldn't hurt too much.

Only a few cones had been disturbed in the overnight stint from Thursday's course set-up and they were easily reset. Pre-Grid had been laid out the night before as well. Enough of the regulars were present that Technical Inspection, carried out on the grid, went smoothly. Since the timing equipment was taking longer to configure than anticipated, there was plenty of time for Tech inspection.

At about 9:15, a little later than the scheduled start time, Tim Chew, the local autocross chair and I made the decision to go with Plan B for timing. The electronic

timer which had functioned flawlessly at an autocross a few weeks before and had tested fine just two days before, refused to reliably trigger at this event. We had several digital stop watches in reserve and with two eager volunteers, runs in the stock classes began.

Full credit to the drivers in the stock classes – nobody hit a single cone, and there were no DNFs. Everybody got 4 runs, and timing was to the hundredth of a second. Next up were the Modified, Prepared and Specialty cars. By this time a crowd had gathered to watch – and they got a show. Warren and Mark dueled it out for FTD, and V8 Corvairs and Comp class cars made it interesting.

My car was still running the same loud noises from the engine, but no worse than at Willow Springs. Since I had not adjusted tire pressures, my first run had resulted in a dirty corner forcing me to make a tight loop to retain the run as legal. After that run, I dropped the front pressures down a bit, with much better results. (Since I don't have any written record of the times in hand, and I won't guess at them, you will have to look elsewhere for the final times.) I am sure Warren Leveque and Mark Wright won their classes, and Mark took home the Don Yenko award for Fastest Time of the Day.

Just as the fastest cars were finishing up, a pair of Fairgrounds folks came to us and told us that these cars were too fast and we would have to stop the runs. The story changed to not enough insurance, then crowds too close, etc. As the last run of the group completed, Tim Chew exited the trailer and we addressed their concerns and the issue of insurance, which was provided in plenty of time and at their requested amount. To allow the event to continue, we had to move the crowd back from the front

California Dreaming (continued)

row of pylons and move a couple of spectators from the area near the finish line. The Fairgrounds folks left and, at least for the remainder of the time I was there, didn't bother us again. Whew – that was a close one.

As the Improved Stock cars began their runs, I joined my wife back at the vendor area to begin the teardown of our display. Since the banquet was in the same general area, the vendors were to close down early to allow room for the banquet. As it turned out, the banquet was at the other end of the building, but we salute and carry on.

After most of the teardown was done, I drove back to the Autocross to find the event finishing right on time, allowing for a half-hour of fun runs. When I returned to the vendor area, partly with the thoughts of Steve Poe in mind, I decided to buy one of the EZ Car Lifts to bring home with me. To try it out, I used the vendors demonstrator lift to raise the car up and change back to my rain tires (aka my tow tires) Since I had the truck, it wasn't too hard to carry the boxed car lift items home so, with Barbs help, I loaded the Avalanche and added a few more items into the race car, then we drove the truck back to the hotel to clean up for the banquet. Why sure, a glass of free wine at the hotel beat the \$4.50 a glass wine at the banquet, too.

We were a little late returning to the banquet, missing the role call of chapters for the first time in many years. I trust nobody set off any fireworks? The banquet went according to schedule. The car display trophies were “trophy-like” in their appearance. All the other events received wall plaques – I guess. Since the banquet

was on the same day as the Autocross – the first time since 1999, I believe, autocrossers will be receiving their trophies in the mail.

As far as the performance of my car goes, I think it ended up the fourth fastest. Being beaten by Mark Wrights and Warren Leveques cars was understandable, especially for me because I have driven both of their cars before and both cars are killers. On top of that, Mark is a great driver and Warren is still great for an old guy (He is even older than I am!). Marty Scarr also beat my time. The only complaint I heard about the autocross course was that the second half was a bit slow – and those complaining were drivers of fast cars, so it was probably just right, overall.

Thank you to Tim Chew for his perseverance on the course and with the Fairgrounds staff, Jonnie Berkman for her work on the timing watch and a ton of others, including Jeff Ballard, Larry Claypool, Dave Palmer and the folks who worked the course for us all day.

The banquet finished up with an auction of a freshly painted 1965 Monza 4-speed. It was probably worth the money it made for the club. Since it had no visible rust it would have been a bargain for someone back East, but that is a long way from California. I was impressed with the way that the local Los Angeles area clubs shared the workload for the convention. They have a bunch of practice at it, since they rotate responsibility and share the Fan Belt Toss every fall.

Thank you to all the clubs for their effort and see you in Jacksonville, Florida next summer!

California Dreaming (continued)

If you are interested in the information on the Bed & Breakfast where we stayed in Ventura, drop me a note and I will forward you the info. It was a lovely place and less expensive than the hotel was.

On Saturday morning we ate our final (great) breakfast at the B&B, hitched up the “Stinger” and towed leisurely up highway 101 to San Jose toward home. Just before noon, the LeVeques passed us heading North and just pulled away. (Once a leadfoot !) We were home, unloaded and relaxing by dinnertime. We had a great time at Ventura!

WOW!

By Tim Mahler

Getting to race against Corvairs in addition to the regular Camaros, Firebirds, and Mustangs that usually populate the SCCA class C-Prepared is something that I don't normally get to do. So it was with some trepidation that I went to St Louis to compete in round 2 of the SCCA/Midwest Division/R&S/SPS (hope I got all of the acronyms!) series. I had won the opening round (handily, I might add) in Kansas City in mid-April.



Looking at the Weather Channel before I left, led me to believe that the rain might hold off till the trip home on Monday. WRONG !!! Torrential downpours were the

order of the day all weekend. (however, it didn't stop me from having 4 stops at the White Castles in the St Louis area.)



I met Rob Landers (66CP) and Tim Mahler (3CP) as I was driving in on Saturday afternoon (after White Castle stop 1). Tim's car looks like a ¾ scale Dale Earnhardt racecar; Rob's is a beautiful white with blue stripes Yenko look. Mine is the “fullmoon racing” dark blue 99CP, ex George Capp car that (this year) has fluorescent green numbers instead of the hot pink or blue numbers from years past. All cars were modified to some extent, with mine probably the most modified of the three. We all pitted in the same area, and were the talk of the entire grid area when we took the cars to start our heat. Tim got pictures in the grid, and I am searching for on-course pictures from the normal sources and will post them when I find them. Just remember –

Tim's car- 4 taillights; Rob's car – 2 taillights; Dicks car – 0 taillights

Sunday, the course was damp so we worked on using all the RPM's available in each car (the rev limiter chips in each car were different and I won't tell who's is what!!!) But with minor air pressure adjustments and a few shifting pointers, all 3 Corvairs were

in the hunt. I actually led after the second run but ended up 3rd on Sunday, 2 tenths out of the lead and 2 thousandths out of second. Rob and Tim were close behind.

WOW! (continued)

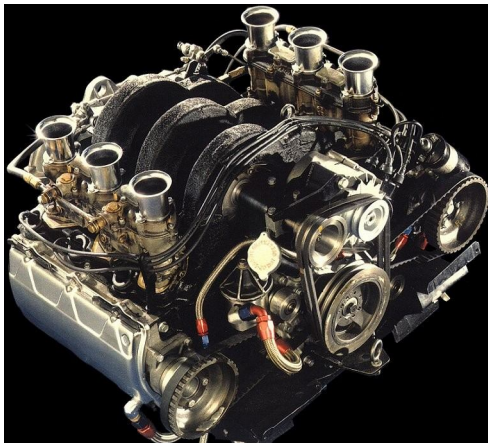
We thought that with better (read “dryer”) weather on Monday, we could all improve.

Hot Racing Tip – don’t believe the weather people; no matter what they say, they are LYING!! The weather was just as bad (maybe worse!) as Sunday, and the course designers removed the driving parts of the track (those places that allowed the Corvairs to stay in contact with the higher horsepower Firebird). So we all were at a disadvantage on the sprinkly, damp but not wet track. Tim improved the most, getting to within a couple seconds of me, while Rob’s car stayed dry in the trailer. So we finished 3, 4, and 5 for the weekend. Imagine a drag race with your Corvair and a Camaro – when they take the twisty’s out, the Camaro/Birds can fly. So on another day, we’ll be there to at least keep them honest.

Thanks to Tim and Rob for making a frustrating weekend into a most enjoyable time with some new Corvair friends...Thanks guys..

Corvair Cammer Engine

By Rick Loving and Others on Virtual Vairs



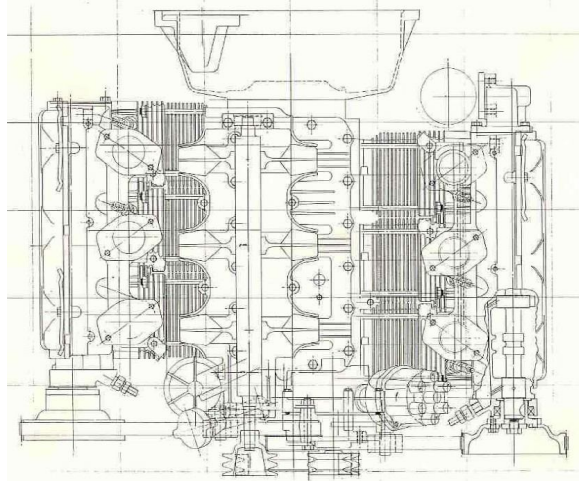
The GM Prototype engine that was displayed as the planned power plant for the Corvair Astro concept car was a significant leap forward as compared to the stock Corvair power plant. The stock bore was enlarged from the stock 3.43 inches to 3.56 inches. Combined with the stock 2.94-inch stroke, the displacement grew to 176 cubic inches or 2,885cc. Although it is truly unique design, the basic form of the Corvair engine is apparent. Changes to the crank case were needed but the basic proven design was carried on. The most noticeable similarity is the fuel pump, oil filter housing, and distributor which appear like stock parts.

The heads, as designed, have nearly hemispherical combustion chambers with inclined valves in a pent roof setup that is similar to a Porsche. The angled chamber smoothes out the port flow reducing the severe bends for both the intake and exhaust that the stock Corvair head flow is forced to take. The valves are operated by two single overhead cams, driven off the crankshaft by a pair of Gilmer style toothed belts. This belt drive setup, coupled with improved port flow allowed for more breathing and rev potential than the production pushrod-operated units ever could.

The crank also served to drive the cooling system and electrical charging system, the crank pulley was a double-sheave pulley using twin belts to drive a trio of centrifugal cooling fans and an alternator. The three cooling fans appear to be a scroll type compressor fan setup, all driven off a single common shaft. They appear to have a focused outlet configuration (instead of a constant outlet like the stock horizontal cooling fan) which presumably makes for

Corvair Cammer Engine (continued)

higher pressure output air. Each fan's airflow cools an opposed pair of cylinders and heads exhausting out the bottom of the head.



The intake manifolds mate the heads to a pair of specially designed GM prototype 3 barrel carburetors. These carburetors were designed based on the Weber IDA carburetor's but were actual GM castings. The use Weber internals and design principles but the bodies have been widened to place the carburetor barrels right over the intake ports, giving the air-fuel mixture a straight shot at the valves. The modification of the carburetors was necessary because of bore-to-bore differences between the Corvair cylinders and the Weber IDA carburetors. The stock Weber IDA's bore centers are much narrower and require the outer intake paths to make a sharp bend to reach the end cylinders when centered on a stock Corvair. Designed as a high output unit, this 2.9-liter flat-six was rated at 240hp at 7,200 rpm rating it at 1.4 horsepower per cubic inch for an air cooled naturally aspirated engine. Here is the story posted about a supposed sighting of the cammer engine.

GM built several of these "cammer" engines. They displaced ~170ci or thereabouts and made some respectable horsepower. No cammer engine was ever installed in the Astro. One of the engines did make the car show tours with the car, but it was mounted on a stand and not in the car. Last time I picked and dug through the Astro-1 it had a 140 engine in it, or at least the engine was sporting 4 carbs, not running of course. The car oddly enough did have an electrical system which you plugged into a wall outlet to work things. It was never intended to move under its own power although it likely could be made to do so with a little (OK, a LOT) bit of engineering work provided someone wasn't afraid to do some mods, which of course will never happen. According to scuttlebutt, GM scrapped the cammer engines when the Astro was done with the car show circuit, supposedly. It's not quite clear how many engines were built, but there were more than just one for sure, likely several more; one person said they'd been told there had been at least 7 engines assembled, but that's just hearsay.

Now: I did some chasing around and digging, picking and poking people's minds as well as scrounging for eye-witness accounts anywhere I could find info, astro what became of these engines. I turned up some odd info from two different people regarding a "back door deal" which involved somehow who managed to sneak one of these engines out and away, whereupon it ended up in a late coupe.

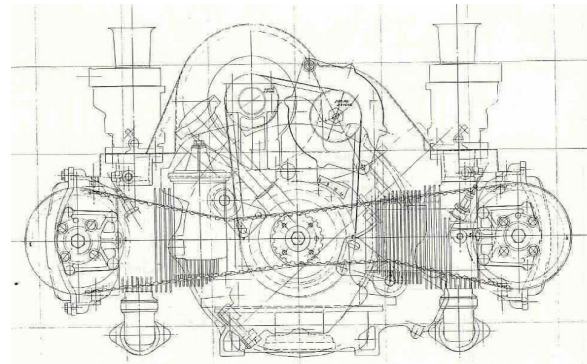
This particular story came from a non-Corvair (Camaro fanatic from Back When) guy who had attended a muscle car get-together and was talking about Camaros with some other people when someone

Corvair Cammer Engine (continued)

brought up Corvairs whereupon the anecdote came up. It seemed this fellow's cousin or someone was acquainted with the person with the Corvair and while "hanging out" with the circle of friends, he'd gotten a look at the engine in the car which had odd 3x bbl carbs and cams in the heads driven by belts, oddest thing he'd ever seen, whereupon I'd perked up big time, and asked for more details. The guy said that his cousin (or whoever, I forget the exact relation since I was sidetracked) had told him that the Corvair guy had relatives who worked for GM or he in fact had worked for GM in some capacity, and wanted one of the engines which along with others were slated to be cut up and recycled.

Supposedly, this guy had gotten access to the vicinity where the engines were sitting on pallets awaiting the choppers, sneaked one of them out and replaced it with a standard Vair engine, figuring that the choppers wouldn't know the difference or care one way or another since they just counted pallets and cut up what they were sent. Supposedly it was a weekend evening foray, Monday the pallets were unloaded and cut up, so said the Camaro guy. He went on to describe the engine in some detail as I listened closely. He asked about when the engine had been available for production Corvairs (I guess he thought it was an option) and I told him that GM never did produce this engine outside of building a scant handful of prototypes and that supposedly they'd all been destroyed and where did this fellow get the engine? Who was he, is the car still around, what's the deal, what was his name whereupon the guy got spooked, clammed up, drifted away from me and disappeared not to be seen

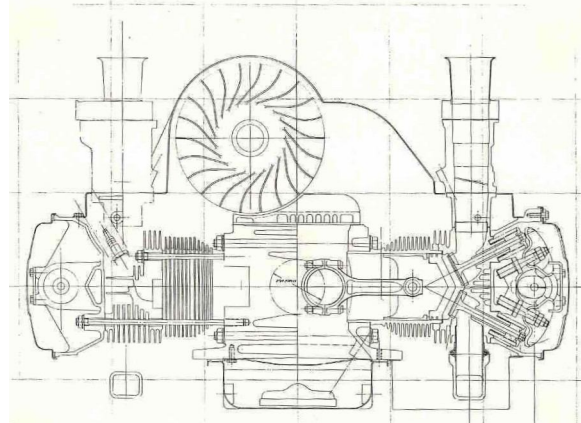
again. I tried to chase him down but he was gone. I don't know whether or not the story was bogus or what.



Later on, about a year or so, I talked briefly to a guy who said he'd seen a Corvair at an autocross (never did say where) many years earlier which had a "special optional 6 carb DOHC engine with three blowers on it" that "ran like stink" and was "originally slated to be a part of GM's race program" or some such most of which was complete embellishment BS. I pressed the fellow for details, being careful not to spook him the way the first guy was, and this 2nd guy talked about the engine, said he'd seen it up close, and was "sure" it had been a special performance option in Corvairs (which of course it was not). When I'd mentioned that the only OHC engine that GM ever built for a Corvair had a single cam in the heads, he insisted it was a DOHC because he'd "seen the gilmer drive belts running the cams in the heads". I didn't pursue the matter. I did ask him about other details and he rattled on about the "triple blowers" atop the engine (the three squirrel-cage cooling fans the "Cammer" engines used?) which I also didn't try to correct. He then started in on how Nader had stopped Corvair production because they were fire hazards (I'm serious) and (of course) they rolled over in corners, followed by an unsolicited description of Corvair engineering, design,

Corvair Cammer Engine (continued)

and history which was pretty much about 50% pure fabrication. The guy was basically a Barney Phife sort, but his description of the engine in the car was suspiciously accurate for the Astro "cammer" engine. I'm still not sure whether to believe his story or not, seeing as how so much of what he'd said about other things was so bogus. Add to this the fact that he looked a little like Burle Ives, only fatter I found him just a little hard to take seriously. Then, a couple years later, I had a chance to talk to Dave Newell at a show and told him what I'd heard, and he related a similar story that he'd dug up,



regarding the "purloined engine" which, according to his info, had by hook or by crook ended up hiding out in the engine bay of a Vair owned by the son of a GM white-collar sort and had evidently been seen on the roads and in public a number of times. This sounds like the story I got from the guy whose cousin knew somebody the Burle Ives guy offered up little or nothing as to details of the car, its owner, or where he'd seen it, only that he'd seen it at an autocross somewhere. Made me wonder autocrosses as a rule haven't really been all that popular as events until the '70s or so, from what I've seen (nothing like their popularity today) and if this engine had

indeed been swiped from GM, it must have been done in the mid'60s making the car in question likely already accumulating close to ten years on the clock by the approximate time "Burle" said that he saw it. It's possible that "Burle" may have simply seen a Weber equipped Stinger and "took that ball and ran with it" when asked about it or maybe he did see the same engine we're talking about. Now, the guy with the cousin said that he'd seen the engine back when Camaros were first coming out, and only noted the Corvair as an item of interest because it "looked like the new Camaro". The timing is about right and the cousin-guy didn't know much of anything about Corvairs so I'd wager that he wouldn't have been privy to details of the Astro or the cammer engine in any event, and that what he was telling me was bonafide. Maybe. Did one of these engines escape the scrapper's torch? I'd like to think so. However, if it did, and if it somehow managed to indeed end up in the back of a Vair owned by some character with friends/family in high places, it hasn't resurfaced outside a few hearsay comments along the way. There's no proof just stories from people who saw something odd in the back of a Corvair. However, there exists some parts and pieces (carbs, for instance) left over from the cammer's days, along with photos, technical specs and engineering details, and some dyno pull data enough to suggest that it certainly had performance potential.

My Car

By Ned Madsen

My interest in Corvairs began shortly after birth; I came home from the hospital in my Dad's new 1960 sedan. My first car in High

My Car (continued)

School was a 1963 coupe. When I finally was in a situation in my life that I could afford the time and money to have a play car, the Corvair was at the top the list.



My current autocross car is a 140 powered 1966 coupe. It came into my position as a 110/PG car in good shape after I hit a deer on the way to the Lexington convention. I swapped all the running gear, suspension and interior from the "Deer Hunter" with help from Terry Kalp and Jim Dallas. Since that time I've continued making improvements to get more speed, reliability and better handling.

First let me tell you about the engine and drive train. It's a 30 over 140 with Total Seal rings and an OT-20 cam, nothing too radical. Steve Goodman rebuilt the heads and used set screws to retain the seats. Steve also CC'd the chambers, removed the bumps and unshrouded the valves. I have the Clark's deep finned oil pan. The carbs have the vent tubes and Michael LeVeque relocated the jets. I use an electric fuel pump mounted under the package shelf. I'm running a Mallory ignition box, triggered by a Pertronix I, firing a Flame Thrower coil. The exhaust is a set of Clark's Ultimate headers. I still have the stock, straight

tubes. I rebuilt the stock transmission and differential myself.

The suspension modifications begin with the motor and transmission mounts. The rear motor mount is a little different. It came from Jeff Brekke in Florida and looks like a tee. The rubber insert comes from a leaf spring. The rubber is in compression instead of the stock rubber in shear. The transmission mounts are nylon from Corvair Motorsports. The trailing arm bushings are polyurethane from Corvair Underground. The front A-Arm and sway bar bushings are stock rubber. I'm using Koni shocks. I've added the heim joint arms from LeVair that maintain the distance between the differential and the rear tire. Basically they remove the play in the axle. I've also added a rear sway bay from Jeff Rapp. I have disc brakes on the front from Stinger Motorsports and Kevlar shoes on the rear from Corvair Underground.



My latest modification was a carbon fiber deck lid from Bruce Carlton. This shaved about 50 pounds from the rear of the car. I also removed the heater and relocated the battery to the trunk. I also had the car painted, silver with a dark blue Stinger stripe.

My Car (continued)

I'm really looking forward to running the car at the Indy Olympics and many other local autocross events. I still have a laundry list of modification that I want to do to the car They're never "finished" are they?

Editors Note – This is the first in a new series for the PCG newsletter. I would like to get similar stories from other PCG members.

Upcoming Events

Having a Corvair Event? Send info to aeroned@aol.com

Editor's Notes

A BIG thank you to Brian O'Neill, Seth Emerson, Tim Mahler and Rick Loving for their contributions to this newsletter!

Vendors!! I would like to make a list of Performance Corvair vendors in this newsletter. Please send me your information, like what might be on your business card. BTW This will be **FREE**, since the PCG has no budget, treasury or expenses.

Now that the 2008 racing season is upon us, I'd like to get articles of you and your Corvair at speed especially with pictures. I can't put out a newsletter without your contributions!

- Ned The Editor

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