

Performance *Corvair* Group

Newsletter

Fourth Quarter 2009

Volume 3 Issue 1

2010 Performance Workshop

The date is set, March 13, 2010, the place is set, Performance Driven Shop in Indy (<http://www.performancedrivenllc.com/>). Some of the other details are still coming together. We do have something new this year.

Performance Corvair Group Officers

President: Brian O'Neill

Vice President: Seth Emerson

Sec/Editor: Ned Madsen – aeroned@aol.com



Uncle Brian???

Days of Old Warren LeVeque

I'm currently getting ready to race, most likely (due to expenses and age), my last major road racing event. I've entered the Walter Mitty vintage race at road Atlanta. I'm using my true vintage racer the Bill Thomas/Doug Roe 1960 official Chevy "Skunk Works entry into the original USRRC championship. This is the old swing axle, drum braked car that was used to develop both the big valve performance heads (140 hp) and the turbo charger for production Corvairs Spyderys. Several other Corvairs are entered.

My Excellent Year Rick Norris

Back last winter several of the old racer guys were talking about getting out the race cars and actually going racing. As was stated, we are not getting any younger so now is the time.

My plan at the time was to do just that but, I wanted to take it in steps. I decided to get an SCCA Time Trial license first and see how I might do at that. It was around this time that I made the decision to make my Yenko Stinger clone a real race car. My attempt at a multipurpose vehicle, as in a street, autocross and track car had proved



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

2010 PW (continued)

The new activity this year is the availability of a chassis dyno. We have rented it for 8 hours for \$600. For a fee of \$75 you can put your car on the dyno and find out how much power it really has.. This will provide a minimum of three pulls on the dyno. We need at least eight people paying for this to keep it at the \$75 rate. If there is time left after those that have paid for the use of the dyno, then additional pulls can be done or those that only want a single pull for \$25 will be able to giterdone! Also If we get more than eight people signed up for the dyno, then the costs will come down.

Space for all activities is a little tighter at this facility than last years event. If you are planning on vending, we will need you to bring your tables with you. If you will need tables then let us know in advance of the event so we can locate what you will need. If the weather cooperates the vending will be done outside in a great area in front of the shop. It could be 70 degrees again, or it could be eight inches of snow, either way you will have a place to set up.

Tours are being looked into with nothing firm at this point. The hotel will also be different than last years but do not have pricing info on that yet. Further details will come out via e-mail and on-line Corvair groups like FastVairs as they become available

Registration costs will be the same as last year, \$25 pre-registration, \$30 at the door (\$10 for kids 10 and under). You can pre-register anytime though Ned's PayPal (aeroned@aol.com). You get a continental breakfast and catered lunch with registration. The official PCG annual meeting will also take place.

Days Of Old (continued)

This brings me to thoughts about how I started road racing in 1968. In 1968 I bought an Avenger GT (GT 40 replica) and a junk Corvair to make a neat street car. It had all late Corvair suspension and initially an automatic transmission and a stock rear mounted engine. My brother in law at the time suggested that we take my Sister's Spitfire and my Avenger to an SCCA driver's school. I made all of the safety equipment changes, and moved a 140 hp Paxton supercharged engine to a mid mount location, and a manual transmission.

Days Of Old (continued)

I excitedly entered an Indy Region Driver's school at IRP. My brother in law didn't show of course. The school went well, probably due to my autocrossing experience and the fact that I only used the supercharger for the final race—showing great improvement of course. But



Unfortunately I was hooked.

Looking forward to further racing, I explored classing and found that I would have to run in A/Sports racing with the Can AM cars. In the late 60s and early 70s several Can Am cars were working their way down to regional racing. If you recall they had unlimited engines (alum 427s) and unlimited development. The Corvair engine just couldn't possibly cut it, so I went to aluminum

turbocharged Olds mid engine. It was much better, but obviously still not nearly enough (215 HP).

I ran across a Chevrolet 327cid 350 HP engine out of an Impala, so it was installed into the Avenger. It needed an aluminum intake and headers, and a huge triple core radiator in the front—just like the GT 40s. A rear radiator was tried but the air flow was actually backward at speed. I was a great admirer of Chaparrals at the time so took this opportunity to make the car and open top with zoomie pipe headers coming from the old rear window area which was now the engine cover area. It also got a front dam and rear spoiler on the shortened rear bodywork; at this point I quit calling it an Avenger. Testing showed that it needed more chassis stiffness than the VW pan could provide so a full cage was installed. Any idea of a street car was long past.

In the first race the car was so fast down the straights that I couldn't keep the helmet visor snapped behind the 6" windshield. The drum brakes were inadequate at the increased weight (2240 vs 1900#) and the greater speeds everywhere.

The brake problem was solved by using junk yard 1968 Chevelle front discs. I later proposed this update to the SCCA Governors for the Yenko Stinger and it was accepted. Of course the brakes wouldn't fit under the stock 13" wheels, so 15 x 8" Corvette steel wheels were used with the newly just available racing slicks. I had to buy the hard to find slicks at an Andretti tire dealer.

Days Of Old (continued)

At the next full race at Indianapolis Raceway Park I was entered with two actual Can Am cars and a few other A/SRs.

Because of sorting problems with the much faster cars, I was miraculously on the Pole position for the race. I had no idea what to do. My crew was teasing me about where I was going to go on the start to get out of the way. I figured that I was going to be run over by several 600 hp cars so decided to stay close to the inside rail.

Due to the luck of my gearing I reached the first turn at precisely the engine red line and ALONE! I was somehow able to stay ahead and win my very first race. I can only guess that my autocrossing experience in the tighter turns earned the win. Maybe the Can Am drivers weren't experienced or being very careful---who cares!



My next three races(over two years) were all on shorter tracks and one was in the rain. In all, I won four in a row. I knew that it was impossible to keep this up when the faster cars and drivers became sorted and experienced, so sold the car to the owner of the Mexico City newspaper and Olympic Stadium in 1972. He was going to drive it on street!

Then I went in search of a Yenko Stinger Corvair to race in D/Production where there were actual preparation rules. Thus began the story of YS 160.

The vintage car that I will be running at the Mitty was run in SCCA A/Sports Racing in it's latter days---de ja vu?

My Excellent Year (continued)

to me that, at best it would be a compromise.

In the spring of 2008 I attended an SCCA Time Trial school and timed event at the Talladega G P Raceway in Alabama and got my Time Trial license. I had attended several track days at Beaverun located North of Pittsburg PA where you get some classroom instruction then, some track time and an instructor rides with you. This was my first formal schooling in learning how to drive my car fast. I had been to several track events before and listened to what the more experienced drivers had to say but, I was on my own to learn.

My Excellent Year (continued)

As time passed and winter set in the talk got more serious about racing our Corvairs and the discussion turned to attending a vintage event such as the Walter Mitty Challenge hosted by the HSR and held the first week end in May at the famed Road Atlanta race track. At first I didn't really think seriously about running the event.

We were all wondering what it would require to obtain a license and I was reading the information on the HSR web site. Some of the Corvair guys were currently racing and held a license. Some had raced vintage events before but, it was decided the easiest way to get



qualified was to attend an SCCA double drivers school and get a permit to race. This would be recognized by the HSR and allow us to run their events. It just so happened that a

SCCA double driver's school was scheduled in February at the Roebing Road Raceway outside of

Savannah GA. It was decision time again.

I began to look at what I needed to do to my car to pass the SCCA tech inspection at the school. All I had at the time in the way of safety equipment was a roll bar, racing harness and a hand held extinguisher.

Luckily it had passed the time trial tech inspection and all I had to do was some upgrades.

A full roll cage would be first then, a real fire suppression system. Also I had to replace the belts as the certification had run out. All this and more was accomplished in time to make the race school.

I was told by those who had attended the school before that it would be intense with not much time to do anything to the car between class room instruction and track time. Man, were they ever right!

We were truly blessed by the Corvair racing community in the fact no less than nine people showed up and became our volunteer crack pit crew. They were Bob Coffin (who also instructed), Barry and Patty Ellison, Mike Levine, Kevin Poe, Chuck Sadek, Spence Shepard, Smitty Smith and Al Wicht and last but not least my wife Janet. They all made our school

My Excellent Year (continued)

experience more enjoyable. Also my car ran great with some minor problems that were easily fixed. Others weren't as fortunate.

The school provided me with more track time than I could have imagined and a great boost to my confidence and after four days we all got our novice permit.

It was a milestone for me. There I stood with a permit to legally race my car and an SCCA log book. Something I had only dreamed about for years and way ahead of the schedule I had originally envisioned.

It was decision time again...lots of decisions. With about ten weeks until the Mitty I had what seemed at the time to be a long time to get ready. As we all know time flies and it did.

I needed to go through the whole car including engine teardown and inspection. Also I wanted to change the rear gear to a 3:55. I ran my 3:89 at Roebing and found it to be too short. Road Atlanta was a bigger track with a long back straight.

As the time went by I got all the items on my list checked off and was ready to hit the road for Atlanta. This was going to be exciting!

Finally after an eight hour drive there I was looking at the famed Road Atlanta race track. It looked intimidating. I felt I was dreaming.

Our main man Mike Levine was there and had picked a pit spot to accommodate us all. I got the car unloaded and pit area set up then, awaited the arrival of the rest of the crew.



Being novice drivers for both HSR and the track we had to do the Thursday test day and track orientation. That consisted of some printed handouts, a crammed drive in a big van for three laps around the track then, it was get in your car and get on the track. They put us out there with the fast guys who were practicing! I did a lot of rear view mirror driving trying to stay out of their way.

At first it felt difficult to learn the track but, it flows nicely and actually proved easy to learn and a ball to drive. Again, my car ran very well. I did have several exciting off track experiences but, that's part of the learning curve.

Friday was practice sessions and qualifying and Saturday was more practice and our first race.

My Excellent Year (continued)

There I was for the first time in my life on a real race track in a race car I built with a bunch of other cars getting ready to go out and actually race. To say the least I was anxious. After a few caution laps the green flag came out and we were off! I managed to pass some cars, stay on track and finish the race. Oh, did I mention it rained? That was a great confidence builder. I was really excited.

Sunday came with more clouds but, it didn't rain. We lined up for the start with a lot more cars as some did not run the Saturday race. During the pace lap a car lost a wheel so it took several laps under caution before the race got underway. Again for me it was a very exciting race. I drove harder than I have ever driven in my life and my laps times were some of my best. When the checkered flag flew and I pulled into the pits I was out of breath, sweating like crazy and grinning from ear to ear. I sat there for a few minutes to gather myself and try to process all the emotions I was feeling.



It was a bittersweet moment as it was all over. To spend a long week end at a famous track with all of my Corvair family and six other Corvair race cars was more than my wildest dreams ever conjured up. I felt I was a truly blessed man and I was. At that moment I felt my life could not get any better! Good thing I didn't take any bets on that.

After getting back home and having some time to get my feet back on the ground it was time for the NECC Beaverun Time Trial the end of May.

Again it was great spending a day at the track with all the Corvair family. I had some real problems with the front drum brakes that, up until then had worked perfectly. It cut short our time on track but it was a nice time and the weather was great. My sights were now set on the time trial back at Roebing Road in conjunction with the convention in Jacksonville FL.

So now it's July, I am laid off from work and it's time to make the trip to Savannah for the Corvair time trial. I had decided before I was laid off (I knew it was coming) that I would run the time trial as I was anxious to again run the track I had just spent over six hours on during the drivers school. Attending the convention was out.

I was thinking at the time this would be my last event of the year, kind of an anticlimactic wind down to my racing season.

Arriving at the host hotel the excitement began to build. There was my Corvair racing family and more arriving. While socializing in the parking lot I noticed a tall slender guy walking around. I didn't recognize him until I was introduced. It was James Reeve, a Corvair racing legend. I thought to myself, Man, it just can't get any better than this, more Corvair dreams coming true! I was wrong of course.

My Excellent Year (continued)

Finally the familiar sight of the Roebling Road Raceway came into view. We pitted in the same spot we had during the drivers' school.

By this time I had replaced the drum brakes with a disc setup on the front so, I was anxious to get on track and see how they would work. All seemed well and I got some good runs in before lunch.

During this time Mike Levine came by and we talked about James and his track lap record here in a Corvair. James had come to this event with Mike as a co-driver in his V8 Vair. During the conversation he mentioned we needed to get James in a conventional Corvair. It didn't register at first just what he was fishing for. He left for his area and as I sat there it hit me. He was asking if I would let James drive my car Holy flat six Batman! I had seen James eating lunch at the snack bar so I hot footed over there and interrupted his lunch by asking him if he would like to drive my car. He asked if mine was the Sunoco car then, said he'd go get his gear.

I ran back to my pit thinking about what I had to check out to get the car ready for him. I was excited and apprehensive. What if it breaks? What if he wads it up? What if...hell! It's a legend about to drive my car. I don't care!

James came over, climbed in for a test fit and cockpit check out and was ready to get on track. I told him not to baby it, hammer on it!

I felt like a proud father showing off a newborn!

As we all know, Roebling has a strict sound level limit. Since I had already been on track with my Supertrapps installed on my new long tube headers I knew it passed the sound check but, I had decided for James ride I would uncork the exhaust system to hear what it sounded like and see if it would peg the sound guy's meter.

As James pulled out of the pit I went over to the wall along the front straight to watch and hear.

I still cannot adequately describe how I felt standing there watching the great James Reeve driving my car at full tilt down that long front straight. The sound of the engine was pure music to my ears. It was running great as it always has. The pipes were singing the song of the flat six that we all love.

Unknown to me, Mike Levine and James had concocted a plan for Mike to be on track at the same time for a little "test session". They were racing each other! That's a NO-NO at time trial events. Out came the black flag! Yep, they black flagged James for aggressive driving and exceeding the sound limit YES! It was too loud and an old race car driver only knows one way to drive. Drive to win!

What a time. I still get excited looking at the photos and writing this article.

Never in my wildest Corvair dreams from back in the day when all I had was kids and Corvairs was cheap transportation I could afford would I ever have imagined all that has transpired this great year. I am a blessed man.

Just when I thought it couldn't get any better, it did!

CORVAIRS at the Mitty May 1-3 2009



The MITTY 2009

Rick Norris

Wednesday, April 29

The trailer and truck were loaded the day before and we hit the road for Atlanta by 5 AM.

The weather was not looking too good at home but, as we traveled further south it got better. It took us about eight hours and the trip was uneventful. We went straight to the track and met Mike Levine who is a local guy at the main gate with his V8 Vair racer. He had an area of the pro pits lined off for all the Corvair race cars but before I could follow him in I had to go to registration and pick up our credentials and various passes.

We found our way down to the pit area and the first thing you notice about Road Atlanta is it's on a hill side. I feel at home!

We began unloading and dropping the trailer. Norm Latulippe showed up with his rig and we parked him side ways to the others as the motor home would be Corvair Racing HQ for the week end.

Soon it was time to go check out the hotel and get a bite to eat. Tomorrow is a big day.

Thursday, April 30

It was another beautiful day at the track. Actually, the temp got to 87 degrees with a bit more humidity but with a breeze. It was cool in the low 60's this morning so the three layer fire suit wasn't too hot.

Today will be our track orientation and our first drivers meeting. There was quite a few of us newbies. We had a track drive in an instructors van. It looked like a circus car full of clowns! We did three laps while he explained the tracks various corners at speed. Fun! It must have been a rental! Then we began our group run sessions. They had us on track with the test and tune crazy fast serious guys! Trying to learn the track is hard enough but when you have to drive with your mirrors it's not fun. These guys were twice as fast as we were and passed anywhere and everywhere. I pinched one Porsche guy off because I didn't see him so I got a fist salute. I could have been No. 1.

As the sessions wore on, two in the morning and two more in the afternoon lasting 30 minutes each I began to get a little more comfortable with the track. Also, I was getting used to the Hoosier Street TD's. I miss my R6's!

I got a black flag because they thought my deck lid had blown off and was somewhere on the track. I had to talk to the pit steward. I returned to the pits to find it still in the stand! In my haste to get back out for the session I forgot to install the damn thing after squirting silicone on my fan belt! That's an old Corvair racers trick to make it slip and not fly off at high RPM's. My hold down pins were gone too as I stuck them in the rear grille as is my habit. That's a trick I learned from Seth so I blame him. Nobody was happier than I was to see it still sitting in the stand rather than smashed on the track by the lead foot crowd.

The bad news is, Spence blew another engine and had to come in on the roll back but, the good news is he brought a spare! It looked like Roebing Roads part II! All around pit monkey Barry Ellison was under the car with grease up to his elbows. At least it's on hot asphalt here and not wet sand like Roebing.

Warren, Sharon and Michael LeVeque pulled in this morning and Bob Coffin; the old track pro showed up in the afternoon. More folks are arriving and the vendors are setting up on the hill above us. The NASCAR vintage stock cars are pitted behind us and they are LOUD!

I have the echo cans on the Vair so I'm kind of loud too! Lot's of people stopping by to look at the Sunoco Corvair and the other racers. A video guy came by and shot some footage of the Corvairs. He said it will be in the HSR DVD from this year and will be available at a later date. He said there would be some shots on track too. Well, as usual I'm tired and it's about bedtime, more fun tomorrow.

Friday, May 1

And again another nice day! We had clouds in the morning with a threat of rain but, it was dry all day and breezy. Good weather for old fat guys!

We ran in Group 2 with some cars not quite as fast as yesterday but, still way faster than us. We all took our practice laps. Bob Coffin (#31) was having some electrical issues so he didn't get on track much. Spence Shepard (#66) went back home to Charlotte NC and brought back a third engine. The spare he brought with him smoked so badly when they fired it up last night he knew they would black flag him. He got here late this afternoon and they have the engine installed but have not fired it yet.

Dan Giannotti (#88) was having handling issues. They found the rear toe was out a half inch. Also he bought a new set of Hoosier tires on site and was able to pass some cars on his next session. Tires here ain't cheap! Race fuel isn't either at \$9.13 per gallon for 110 octane.

We had tour the track rides at noon today so I let David Clemons use my car. He said it was hard to get up any speed on the interesting corners! Atlanta traffic man! Warren LeVeque (#361) was having some fuel pump problems but replacing the old pump did the trick. One thing about a track and event like this is they have everything here you could possibly need. Ask Norm about his safety belts. He left them at home! Yours truly (#36) is getting more comfortable on track. I can't say I've mastered anything but, I now enjoy the ride more. I followed Warren out on one session and was thinking how lucky I am. Here I was driving my car on a famous track with a very famous old Corvair that I only knew from magazines and Corvair publications driven at the time by Doug Roe. Speaking of Warren I got to not only see the red mist, I got to taste it! As I said I was following him when he went off course on turn four and sent up a big cloud of red Georgia clay dust. I was blind then I inhaled a mouthful of dust!

Later on in that same corner I had an off track excursion too. It was a case of brain fade. I lost my concentration and got off line. I knew I was going off so I elected to drive off rather than slide. Man! Did I ever plow up the red dirt! The front end bounced several times and I tore the front spoiler clean off and I had dirt in everything. I waited until the corner worker waved me back on track and took off. I ran slowly to test all the systems and see if all was okay before hammering it again. I ran one lap and pitted to see if I was missing anything else. I thought I

may have smashed a header tube. I went back out and ran several more laps then decided I needed to do a more thorough inspection. I found I had bent both the end links on my front sway bar. Luckily Bob Coffin had some spares and Mike Levine (#4) will bring me a new spoiler in the morning. What a bunch of good guys! Speaking of Mike, we got to hear his Corv8 roar to life and run on the track. What a beastie! He hadn't raced in several years but he was in good form and all the new things he tried worked. Norm Latulippe (#41) was looking faster with the change out of his diff to a 3:55.

They flogged on it until the wee hours of the morning. I can't do that anymore! There was way more people here today and I expect more in the next two days. I saw Bobby Rahal today and Bob Tullius of the famous Group 44 racing team. This evening they put on a big feed with had free beer! My kind of people! While I had the car up on the stands I checked all the bolts and didn't find any loose except two of the tail light lens screws were half way out! Racing does crazy stuff to a car, not to mention the driver. Okay, I probably missed some stuff but, I'm tired again and we have qualifying and practice tomorrow. Supposed to rain again too.

Saturday, May 2

It was another fantastic day here at Road Atlanta! The weather however was less than good as it came up a good rain in the afternoon.

It had rained hard last night with high winds but, I was snug in my bed and heard nothing. We had morning qualifying and practice and the track had dried out fairly well when we went out. I had decided I would stand on my previous day's best time so I just wanted to go out for a few laps to make sure the car was running right and I needed to get the feel of the track fresh in my head. All went well so I parked it.

Our race was at 5:30 this afternoon. Mike Levine's race was just before ours. The sky was getting very dark when the race with all the thundering V8's began. By about four laps in it became a down pour! Mike came in to the pits as did the other cars. However several of them came in on the hook! They got ignorant and crashed out. Rain and smooth race tires don't mix well. All racing was on hold until time for us to go out. They were out trying to dry the track and we had one race group go out before us. That is good as they will help dry the track out for us. At first I wasn't going to do it but Norm and I decided to try it. Hell, we paid big money to get here! Dan decided not to go out but Spence did as he got his car going with the third engine in it.

We had to grid on the other side of the pits we were using too. It was really neat. The first few laps were just to see how wet the track was. It had several places with water running across it but overall raceable. I went out next to the last car. Norm was several cars ahead and Spence was somewhere back, I didn't see him. He only made one lap and his front lid blew off. He forgot to put the pins in! It broke the stock hinges clean off! After we got a few laps in it was time for me to go. I managed to pass several cars. The engine was strong and the R6's were holding very well on the damp sections. I learned at the Roebing Road driver's school what I could do on a wet track. Finally I realized I had the track to myself as there was no one close in front or behind so I practiced being as smooth and consistent as I could be.

I ran fast enough that no one caught me from behind and I had a blast! I have had good luck as I haven't had any serious mechanical issues. On my last three laps the throttle hung up at two thirds wide open! No amount of foot work would dislodge it so I just left it in third gear and used the brakes to control it. I made it to the finish line and hit the pits. The brakes were real toasty!

The problem turned out to be one of my long carb vent tubes had come loose and fell down the carb throat holding the butterfly open. I was able to grab it with a magnet and epoxied it back in place. I feel like I am now one of the official Corvair racers. This was my very first real race and I finished! It was great to get all the kudos and hand shakes from all my Corvair peers. Even a crowd of folks on the back stretch was cheering and waving every time I went by. What a feeling! They didn't know me from Adam but they knew the car!

We have one race tomorrow morning and we are done. I will have far surpassed my original dream of road racing a Corvair at a famous track in front of Corvair people...It just doesn't get any better than this!!!!

Sunday, May 3

Our race was scheduled for 9:10 AM but there were some delays. We finally lined up on the grid but not in our qualifying positions. I don't know what happened but the officials seemed confused as to who went where so they lined us up hap hazard and that's how we went out.

There were 36 cars total on track for the pace lap but, there was an off track before we got in half a lap! It seems a 52 Morgan which was several cars ahead of me slid off the track to my left. What I saw was the right front wire wheel he lost bounding across the track! We all managed to dodge it but it took three laps under caution before the race began.

By this time everyone was lined up two abreast, strung out and way out of position. It didn't matter because the green flag flew and it was a mad dash down in to the first turn.

There was brake lights and tire smoke as we jockeyed for position. I backed off and let the smoke settle before getting serious. More than a few cars went by me.

As they say, you can always find someone to race with. After passing five cars which, is a very exhilarating feeling I began catching a black MGA roadster. He was faster than I was on the straights but I was faster in the corners. I was doing my best to pass him. He even waved me by but, I just didn't have the power.

I was starting to set him up for a pass in the corners when the white flag came out so I decided to back off and be sure I finished the race.

I have never driven a car as hard as I did today. When I came in to my pit I had to sit there for a few minutes to gather myself before climbing out. I was drenched in sweat and thirsty as a dog! What a great feeling.

As I sit here writing this a week later I am still thrilled over the whole experience and the historic moment I was a part of. We may never see that many racing Corvairs on track together ever again. I hope I am wrong here. I'm up for next year.

Vairy Dependable John Lanning

Over the years, I have always enjoyed watching the Yenkos and V-8 Conversions participate in autocross events. The muscular sounds from the exhaust and burning tires reminds me of years gone by when I drove muscle cars as everyday drivers.



About two years ago I started looking for my third Vair as the age of 62 was settling in and my second 'mid-life crisis' was starting. I thought about finding another Oldsmobile to match one of my earlier rockets, but the purchase prices were overwhelming. My first Vair, a 66 Corsa Convertible is still a great car, but too nice to change from stock. I wanted something that would be unique, dependable and relatively fast. Most of the

conversion Vairs I checked out were either incomplete project cars with lots of work ahead or full blown racers with uncomfortable racing seats, no leg room, no interior and bulky roll bars. That wasn't for me. Basically I was looking for a street machine with all the comfort features, but retaining the outward appearance of a stock Corvair.

Prior to the Detroit CORSA convention, I made contact with three owners interested in selling their cars and planning to show them at the convention. The first one I drove was a super car, but had some drawbacks including a high price tag. The second one wouldn't start and the owner didn't return the following day as promised. The third car had more drawbacks, but the price was reasonable. I left Detroit without a car. Several friends who attended the convention with me were drawn to the engineering of the third car and reminded me numerous times that it had great potential. I couldn't see the potential at first, but I finally came around. Several weeks later, I called the owner, negotiated an agreeable price and went back to Detroit with my good friend Dave Abell to retrieve my new prize.

The previous owner, Larry Cooper, is a retired GM engineer from Cadillac. As the story goes, Larry gained access, during his career at the GM Technical Center, to a 1990 Cadillac Deville with 347 miles on the odometer that was involved in an A/C plenum fire. A 1965 Corsa coupe from Mississippi was also purchased in 1990. With the help of his father, who had welding experience, the engine, transaxle and rear wheel suspension were removed from the Corsa. The entire Cadillac drive train with the 4.5 liter port fuel injected V-8 and the 4T60 4-speed

Vairy Dependable (continued)

automatic transaxle with overdrive was removed from the donor car and attached to a fully welded sub-frame. The smog pump, A/C compressor and power steering pump were removed. Strut towers were fabricated on the fender wells and reinforced for strength. The drive train was positioned and the sub frame was bolted into place at four anchor points. Although space is limited, this configuration allows the engine to be mounted transversely. The radiator was mounted in the rear using the two stock puller fans supplied with the original Cadillac cooling system. The engine oil cooler and transmission cooler were installed in front of the radiator. This setup provides a 40% front to 60% back weight ratio; not perfect, but still offers better handling than a stock Corvair. The engine is still computer controlled and can be monitored via the ALDL connector located conveniently outside of the engine cover.



The rear suspension is independent a-arm with struts and the stock Cadillac disc brakes were retained. Since purchasing the car, the stock front Corvair drum brakes have been removed and replaced with a GM disc kit supplied by Stinger Motorsports. A dual diaphragm power brake booster from Master Power Brake was added to replace the manual dual master cylinder. With metallic front pads, braking now matches the performance of the engine and makes auto crossing much safer. More updates are planned. Recently the entire cooling system was removed and replaced by Jack Brown Engineering, a local race car builder, to improve high speed cooling. Now the Corsa 4.5L can be opened up. Future suspension and steering improvements should complete the process.

The 2008 Corvair Olympics in Indianapolis was my first experience in any competitive racing events. The Putnam Park track was amazing. Since the car was not yet prepared for road racing, I elected to participate in the 'Taste of the Track' event. Now I know where my heart is. If Paul Newmann (God rest his soul) can race at 83; so can I at 65. The Muncie Dragway event was also my first time on a drag strip. Thanks to Brian O'Neil, I was allowed to make a 'solo' run down the track. The Corsa 4.5L turned the quarter mile in 15.1



Vairy Dependable (continued)

seconds at 89 mph. This was rather exciting. Unfortunately my reaction time was 1.0 seconds; so I could have done better. The autocross event, again my first, was scary. I almost backed out, but after the first run, I was hooked. After the fourth run I had shaved almost 17 seconds off my first run. The Corsa 4.5L was starting to feel controllable.

With its relatively modern drive train, the Corsa 4.5L can be driven without breakdown concerns to events far away. When I drove it home from Detroit, the car registered an amazing 34 miles per gallon. That easily beats any of my other vehicles. Like I said, the Vair offers dependable transportation and fun performance. Like I told Larry, don't ask to buy it back.

Just a "Babe in the Woods"

Tom Miller

Warren has been after me for a long time to put my car on the track, which I have never done. My car is nothing special. Heavy duty springs, 15" by 7" steel wheels and a stage II Yenko motor that all of my racing friends helped me to build with parts, machine work and great advice.

I had participated several years ago in a driving school that Warren did down in Walesboro, Indiana. The program was broken down into sections - slaloms, chicanes, pin turns and a lot of other racing words. I got lost in the chicanes, just a lot of orange cones, couldn't see how there was a path to be followed in that mess. The slalom was more fun, this I understood,-- turn left, turn right, turn left with a pin turn at the end and come back through the slalom. I completed the slalom going down but was traveling too fast to make the pin turn. I had to stop and back up then finish the slalom. By this time the adrenaline was pumping pretty well and I ran the return in first gear, over revving the engine and causing my harmonic balancer to separate. I decided that making the car look good was cheaper than racing.

My next foray into automotive competition was the Yenko reunion at Warren Ohio and the Nelson Ledges course. I had completed my engine build shortly before that and had about 600 miles on the engine at the start of that event. I was extremely excited and nervous about being on a course that would allow me to go as fast as my abilities would allow, in relative safety. The first few laps were excruciatingly slow but I was slowly starting to pick up speed and began to enjoy the inherent good handling that comes with owning a Corvair. Then it happened. I was going into the turns that preceded the decreasing radius turn when it just died. Nothin, nada, zilch. I pulled over into the grass and tried to restart. Nothin, nada, zilch. I did have the honor of being the first car towed in. I decided that making the car look good was cheaper than racing.

Then comes the Hoosier Car Show and Swap meet, which took place on Friday the 18th and Saturday the 19th. I thought, what an added bonus it would be if there was an autocross in town on Sunday, so I proceeded to check the SCCA calendar and there it was, an autocross to be held at Bush Stadium on West 16th street in Indianapolis. It was at the same location as the Corvair Olympics site. Wahoo! I called the president of our club and double dog dared him to go autocrossing, which neither of us had ever done before. He took my dare and we were both sweating it. What had I done. A guy can't back out of a "Double Dog Dare"

Just a "Babe in the Woods" (continued)

The day was forecast to be an all day rain possibility and was raining at the start. There were 90 cars in total and seven of those were Corvairs. Two in Street Modified, four in CP, and 1 in ESP. Three of us had never done this before so the excitement was high.

I was driving my Corsa with the Stage two engine, steel wheels and quick steering arms. The suspension was pretty much stock with heavy duty springs, and stock shocks. Ron Bunten was driving his Corsa with everything stock including a five turn lock to lock steering box and Cathi Clark was driving her YS105 Stinger that had the narrow whitewall bias ply tires.

The race coordinators were kind and grouped all the Corvairs into the third grid. By the time for our stage to run the weather was starting to cooperate and the track for the most part was dry. We all got five passes on the track. Ron managed to get four DNF's and didn't hit a cone. He was getting upset until Warren pointed out that he had been tacking a shortcut. On his last run he managed a clean run and the smile returned. Cathi like us had never autocrossed before and was really excited and anxious to get the program going. Cathi's times improved each run that she made. She said that the car thought that Michael LeVeque was driving it since on the narrow whitewall bias tires, it was kinda wanting to have the hind end hung out a little. She received the first place award in her class of ESP.

I watched others start that were ahead of me and figured I could do this. As I started across the start line I could here the announcer say " That is probably the softest launch of a Corvair that you'll see. Boy is my ego soaring after that comment! My first time was 54.018 and my last time was 47.556. I only hit one cone, which reminds me of a bit of info that Warren gave me. "If your not hitting cones your not driving fast enough" He was right. Wait till next time. The car ran well and I had a blast. Yes it will happen again but making the car look good is still cheaper than racing.

Times for those with Vairs.

Warren ----- 40.163

Micheal ----- 41.479

Paul Fox ----- 50.036

Tim Mahler -- 40.839

Tom Miller --- 47.556

Ron Bunten - 52.820

Cathi Clark -- 54.592

Performance Racing Industry Tradeshow Chuck Sadek

For several years, Seth Emerson of Silicone Wire Systems and I have been attending PRI.

This year, although attendance was down somewhat, there were over 3500 booth spaces sold. Notable displays and presentations include major industry vendors; such as all the piston mfg, Comp Cams, Isky , Jessel, Edelbrock , PAC, Manton, Smith Bros., Simpson, Impact, Sparco, Crower, Carrillo, Manley, etc. All of the performance vendors, their suppliers, transmission and

Performance Racing Industry Trade Show (continued)

oil pump folks, Canton, Barnes, Person, etc. There is a machinery row with operating engine building machinery. CNC machines cutting, welders being operated and so on. Outside there were two or three dynos running. In the back of the convention center, yet inside were very nice trailers, big Kodiak and Renegade coaches, etc. There were also car displays including Landy's Dodges and Sox & Martin cars (Barracudas), all restored. Highlights included the standard nice (and warm) breakfast with guest speaker. This year, the program featured Dave Despaine doing a Wind Tunnel show with Kenny Schrader as co-host, Bob Bondurant and Ryan Hunter Ray as guests. There is a Happy Hour on Thurs eve flowed by a kart race set up in the parking lot behind the center. Along with champion kart drivers, the line- up included Scott Speed, Scott Dixon?, Buddy Rice, a couple other ex-kart now NASCAR drivers, several European champions, etc. Very classy field. The Fri evening short track race wasn't held this year but probably will be next year.

You will need credentials as a vendor or member of a pro racing effort to attend. Those are submitted well in advance to avoid hassle. It is worth going. The international Motorsports Industry Show was held for the first time in Indy; a new show, the first since PRI moved to Orlando about 5 years ago. Tony Stewart is heavily involved in this show. I understand it was a success. Smaller, but well attended by registered folks as well as vendors. Be worth it for you in the region to go, if you can wrangle credentials.

Vair Fab Associates Chuck Sadek

Vair Fab Associates is building rear sway bars, similar to the Otto/ Coffin designs with what we think are some improvements. The current bar can be used with spacers to clear the duct work on heater equipped cars. However, a high-mount bar looks promising for street and heater equipped cars. Yenko Stinger- like landau panels in steel are again in production. Available in Late January to mid-February are the following: Front brake reaction rods with adjustable sleeve, bolt on bracket and rod end. Tubular front upper control arms with correct ball joint plate angle, bushings, hard bushings, or spherical joints. A front coil over assembly. A stock location larger diameter front sway bar. Front lower control arm with inner ends bushed or spherical joint. Modified push rod guides to get the angle right for milled heads-available now-exchange. . Improved four 1-bbl throttle linkages. Large diameter bore carbs: Sleeved, honed, matching custom-size throttle plate w/ correct shape & angle edges, bushed shaft, with correct geometry vertical slot and relocated air mixture needle.

In design and negotiation with vendors; a reasonably priced correct geometry shaft mount rocker system. Light weight trailing arms. The American Flat Six vertical fan assy. A modified upper shroud (turkey roaster) for improved air flow/distribution.

Web site forthcoming. Contact Chsadek@comcast.net

Editor's Notes

2009 has not been a good year for many, me included. I apologize for not getting more PCG newsletters out. The PCG needs a new editor.

- Ned The Editor