



# CORVAIR RACER UPDATE

## CORVAIR ALLEY NEWS, by Rick Norris



Hope all had a bountiful Thanksgiving holiday. I didn't eat as much as I could have but still more than I needed. I blame it on the basket of warm rolls sitting in front of me right beside the butter tub! It was calling my name, honest!

I'm still working on the rewire job for the DunVair buggy. Hope to get it finished soon. I keep thinking about things to do with the race car.

As I was tabbing through some of my huge file of Corvair racing photos I ran across the photos I took at the 2001 Corvair Convention in Chicago. I attended with my then "new" 1966 Corv8 as I was not yet racing. There were several race cars present which I photographed and inspected closely which also kept the fires of my desire to build and race a Corvair burning. I also found some earlier pics of the Rob Fike car before it had a roll cage installed and became a real race car. They were from the 1996 Mini Convention in Columbus Ohio and I posted those on the Corvair Racers Face Book page last Friday.



As usual I was trolling for some inspiration to write something for the Racer Update. One of the unplanned events at the 2001 gathering was the famous "parking lot rebuild" of Rob's GT-3 race car. Reviewing the photos got me to thinking about how the racing community comes to the aid of all who need it. It may be something as small as needing to borrow a fan belt to borrowing a

complete race engine which occurred at this year's big event at Road America. I can cite more than a few times I've seen this happen and have

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been the recipient of the same help. I have even loaned my race car for an SCCA driver's school and was more than happy to do it. So here's the story in Robs own words.

We had been at Blackhawk Farms on Thursday with the convention for the track event. Warren LeVeque was co-driving my car when the crank broke. Al Huston and I pulled the drive train thinking it was the clutch. When we saw it was the crank, we just put it back together. Al was ready to drive back to Indy to get the spare engine, but Friday night at dinner, Bob Coffin asked what the problem was. I explained it to him and he said, "Hell, we can fix that". So Saturday I was going around getting parts as a group of about 13 pulled the engine. We used the guy's open trailer next to me to disassemble, and rebuild my "new" engine. I had a points paying race at Blackhawk on Sunday. We put the car on the pole, and won the race. I knew I couldn't let the guys down!

If you are going to have an issue with you Corvair, there is no better place than at the National Convention! All the parts are there along with a wealth of knowledge and talent not to mention anxious hands to do the grunt work. I was witness to this and shot the following photos.



This is the flywheel end which is where they will normally break, so it behooves one to make the rotating mass as light as possible and balanced to the inth degree. When I broke my crank at the 2010 Mitty, it did not break clean in two, just most of the way. The engine would still run but shook the car like a washer on spin cycle with an off center load. The worst one I've seen was David Clemens. The next group of photos shows his break.



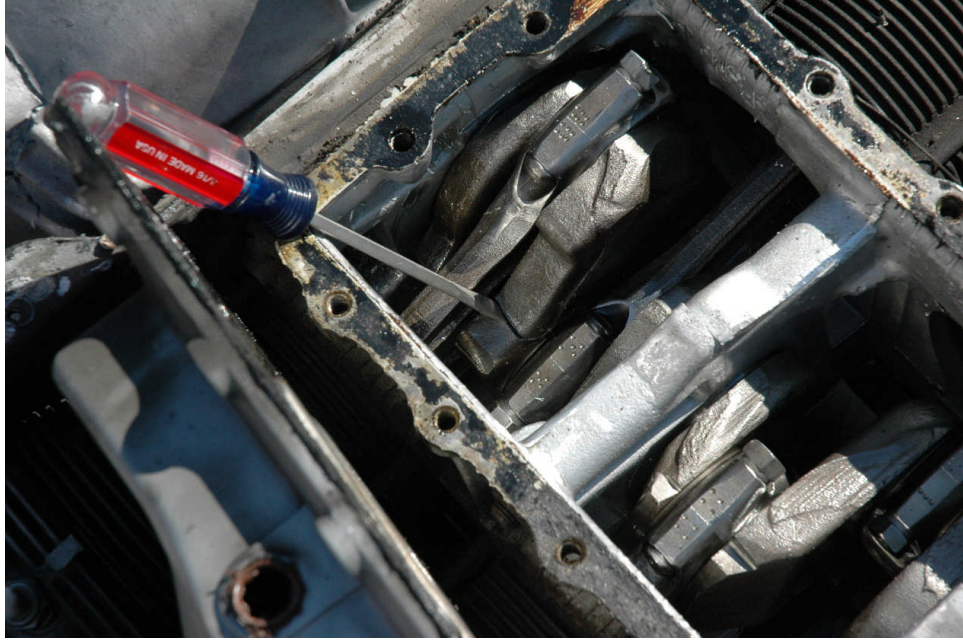
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Back in the fall of 2011 at the ProdFest held at Virginia International Raceway, there were three of us participating. David Clemens, Michael LeVeque and me. Although it was cold at night, the days were cool bright sun shine filled gorgeous fall days. As I like to say it was perfect weather for old fat guys in fire suits and air cooled cars. All three of us were having issues but David's was the most spectacular in terms of visible damage.



2011 David Clemens at Virginia International Raceway for the ProdFest





The screw driver tip is stuck in the cracked crank.



The fly wheel and clutch wobbled hard enough to break the bell housing.



The violent wobble also caused the differential snout to break off! It's always a crap shoot, as the fifty plus year old crankshafts of unknown origin were never designed to do what we are subjecting them to under racing conditions, so this is expected to happen eventually.

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John Whitely sez:

Now that Thanksgiving and racing season in the cooler regions of the country is behind us, let me turn back the calendar a few weeks. RMVR's last race for 2016 took place in late October at PPIR. Though I'd had my car on track several times late in the summer, RMVR's annual "Spooktacular" was only my second race since getting the car running again and receiving my comp license.

PPIR is a banked oval with a 5-turn infield section located a few miles south of Colorado Springs. Originally built for Indycar and professional series racing, the track is typically run in the CCW direction. To mix it up for the weekend the track was run in the CCW direction on Saturday and in the opposite CW (anti-NASCAR) direction on Sunday. Now then, I've run this track in the "normal" direction many times but never in the CW direction. There was no warm-up, no practice, and no qualifying session scheduled for Sunday – just the 3 races. I was a bit anxious on Sunday morning with the prospect of starting a race on an

unfamiliar course. Fortunately, at the morning driver's meeting the race director announced that he would allow "the uninitiated" 10 minutes for a few orientation laps prior to the start of the first race of the day.



I was the only Corvair there (typical) that weekend but had fun running with the less-fast MGs and Triumphs in the small-bore Strip group. As the weekend progressed I gained more confidence in the car at speed on the banked turns of the oval. There is a dip on the lower half of the track between NASCAR turns 1 and 2 that can unsettle a car though never seemed to bother my Corvair much when driving the CCW direction. Going the opposite direction however caused the rear sway bar mounts to bottom. Short term fix- goes high; solution – reposition low-hanging mounting brackets over the winter. The highlights of the weekend for me were learning a “new” track and racing through the banking four-wide toward the finish line on the last lap of the weekend’s final race.

The car ran well throughout the weekend but continued to be plagued by oil leaking onto the headers - producing smoke that was especially notable under hard braking or turns. Previous attempts to fix the issue had been focused on valve covers. I really didn't think it could be any of the O rings. After all, I had recently assembled the engine and was careful when installing them! It has been difficult to identify the source of the leak because gravity, undercar airflow



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and cooling fan airflow do an excellent job of distributing the oil along the bottom of the engine. After idling the car for an hour after cleaning everything off had failed to produce any noticeable leaks. I really didn't want to start tearing things apart without a plan.

I decided to press on while I still had a decent chance of good weather and track availability. I procured some UV leak detecting stuff, added it to the engine oil and headed out to High Plains for the last open track day of the year. The plan: take a single lap and check for leaks. After one lap around the 2.5 mile course and back into the paddock I could see that oil had already made its mark on both headers. Using the UV light and glasses the source of the oil was immediately apparent. Fluorescent green stripes ran down the underside of several oil return tubes. And so that's where I'll direct my attention next.

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### **2017 Historic Sportscar Racing (HSR) 2017 Race-Event Schedule\***

March 15 - 18: 65th Annual Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring HSR Exhibition

Sebring International Raceway - Sebring Florida

April 20 - 23: 40th Anniversary of The Mitty

Road Atlanta - Braselton, Georgia

May 25 - 27: VIR Historic Races

VIRginia International Raceway - Danville, Virginia

July 6 - 9: Sommet des Légendes

Le Circuit Mont-Tremblant - Mont-Tremblant, Quebec, Canada

September 14 - 17: Atlanta Fall Historics

Road Atlanta - Braselton, Georgia

October 25 - 29: Savannah Speed Classic

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Grand Prize of America Course on Hutchinson Island - Savannah, Georgia

November 8 - 12: Classic 24 Hour at Daytona and Daytona Historics

Daytona International Speedway - Daytona Beach, Florida

November 29 - December 3: Classic 12 Hour at Sebring, Pistons and Props, presented by the Alan Jay Automotive Network and the Sebring Historics

Sebring International Raceway - Sebring Florida

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## TOTAL SEAL MODERN RINGS

Although most of us racers use custom pistons that are fitted with these smaller metric rings I thought this would be good if you are using Clark's or other older style forged pistons which I currently have in my backup race engine.

As automotive technology and engineering practices have improved over the years, the design and shapes of the piston rings being used have also improved to perform more efficiently within the laws of physics. As most horsepower hunters are aware, parasitic loss is an output killer, and one area where this is painfully obvious is in the piston and ring market. A large number of enthusiasts with classic cars or stock-restricted drag race and circle track class builds have been unable to take advantage of the newer and thinner piston ring technology, now available due to the large ring grooves of their factory pistons. Keith Jones, of Total Seal, created the video above to explain how the company's Advantage Ring kit works.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jhsp1ea-jI>



The kits are designed for use with pistons that are required to have a ring groove combination of 5/64, 5/64, and 3/16-inch or 1/16, 1/16, and 3/16-inch width. With the use of specially designed rings and spacers, the Advantage kit allows these enthusiasts and racers to now take advantage of the narrower, lighter weight, and low drag rings that professionals have been using for some



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time to reduce the rotating friction and drag in the cylinders, and since it is thinner it also follows bore distortion better for a tighter seal. For example, the kits have the option of including a .016-inch spacer, .030-inch spacer, or .046-inch spacer, there's almost an endless combination of sizes, depending on the thickness of the ring you wanted to use and your ring groove depth.

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Corvair Racer Update is published by the Performance Corvair Group (PCG). We accept articles of interest to Corvair owners who are interested in extracting high performance from their classic Corvair cars and trucks. Classified advertising is available free of charge to all persons. Commercial advertising is also available on a fee basis. For details, email our club President. Email address shown in the Officers section on the back page of this newsletter.

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PCG is one of the many regional chapters of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA), a non-profit organization that was incorporated to satisfy the common needs of individuals interested in the preservation, restoration, and operation of the Chevrolet Corvair. Membership is free of charge. To join, please use the handy form on our website: [www.corvair.org/chapters/pcg](http://www.corvair.org/chapters/pcg).

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