



Our original logo.

## THE HISTORY OF THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CORVAIR CLUB (WPCC)"

*Here's a brief history about who we are and how we got here...Special thanks to long-time members Al Friend and Pat Greenwald for sharing their photos and available information.*



According to General Motors records, in the early 1970's western Pennsylvania ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Los Angeles for overall Corvaair market penetration. Key reasons beyond the enthusiast factor for the vehicle's unique design probably included a) the Corvaairs overall "dime a dozen" affordability during this time meshing well with our local economy, and b) the Corvaair's renowned traction and handling capabilities - ideal for winter driving on our hilly, snow-covered roads.



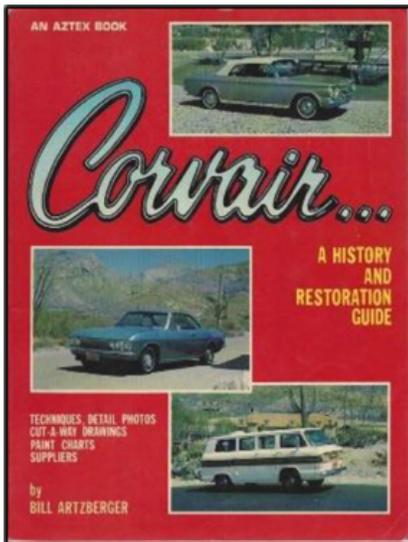
WPC President Ivan Clever entertaining members at a chapter holiday party, circa 1974.

With so many Corvaairs in the region, it was only a matter of time before a group of local enthusiasts would get together to form a club, and in March, 1973, the Western Pennsylvania Corvaair Club was officially chartered as the Corvaair Society of America's 158th chapter.

WPCC's original roster consisted of approximately 50 members and 100 Corvaairs, led by the chapter's 1st president, Ivan Clever of West Leechburg,

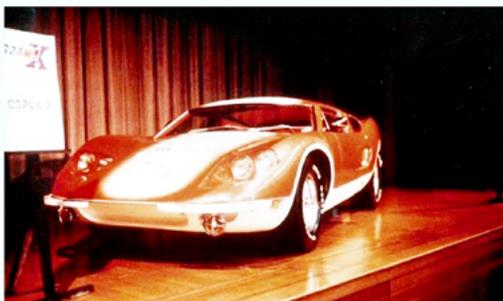
PA, whose own auto repair shop, complete with a fleet of Corvaair parts vehicles, also served as the club's first meeting place.

At the beginning, Ivan did pretty much everything from promoting the club to providing affordable parts to working on member's Corvaairs to even publishing the club's original newsletter - a simple one pager that was mailed to each member.



Within a few years, WPCC membership had increased to almost 90 members/families and 180 Corvaairs (most members had at least 2). Chapter meetings moved to Devereaux Chevrolet in Freeport, PA, thanks to Devereaux's Parts Manager (and another active Corvaair enthusiast), John Costantino.

Much like Ivan Clever, members could pre-order parts from John who would have them ready for pick up prior to the meetings.



Bill Artzberger's Corvaair-powered "Brand-X" on display at the Steel City Concourse, circa 1970's.

Over the years, WPCC has been privileged to have a few nationally recognized Corvaair "celebrity" members including...Donna Mae Mims, "the Pink Lady" SCCA race driver and secretary of Yenka Motors in nearby Canonsburg, PA.; Bill Artzberger, author of the book, "Corvaair, A History & Restoration Guide"; and Vaun Hamlin, whose auto repair shop specialized in Corvaairs and whose super-charged

chopped Corvaair station wagon, aka, "Lightning Express", was turning eleven seconds at the local drag strip. Unfortunately, we could never convince our good Corvaair friend, the well-respected, popular, but very busy, Don Yenka, to join our group.

WPCC	Chapter Presidents History
1973	Ivan Clever*
1974	John Constantino*
1975	Dave Fabyonic
1976	Bates Murphy
1977	Al Friend
1978	Wayne Jones
1979	Walt Moore
1980	Dick Breier*
1981	Wayne Rockhill*
1982	laadore Krouse*
1983	Bob Larison*
1984	Archie Miller*
1985	Bob McCune*
1986	Bill Brill*
1987	Dale Smith
1988	Bob Hieber
1989	Al Friend
1990	Laurie Maglietta
1991	Dave Fabyonic
1992	Wayne Jones*
1993	Don Baker
1994	Al Friend
1995	John Gundlach
1996	Bob Hieber
1997	Don Cekus
1998	Stephen Puskas
1999	Charles Lucas
2000	Jim Heatherington
2001	Wayne Rockhill*
2002	Jim Heatherington
2003	Don Cekus
2004	Stephen Puskas
2005	Don Cekus
2006	Jim Heatherington
2007	Don Cekus
2008	Jim Steigerwaldt
2009	Jim Steigerwaldt
2010	Jim Steigerwaldt
2011	Jim Madden
2012	John Gundlach
2013	Jim Steigerwaldt
2014	Don Cekus
2015	Jim Steigerwaldt
2016	Jim Steigerwaldt
2017	Jim Steigerwaldt
2018	Jim Steigerwaldt
2019	Dan Butchko
2020	Dan Butchko
2021	Jeff Grahovac
2022	Jeff Grahovac
2023	Jeff Grahovac
2024	Jeff Grahovac
	* = Deceased



Race driver Donna Mae Mims was a WPCCC member in the club's early days.

In the 1970's WPCCC sponsored three all-Corvair "Steel City Concourses". The '76 show was particularly special as it was held at the Pittsburgh Region's GM Training Center and featured the last 1969 Corvair sold in the Pittsburgh Region, Bill Artzberger's Corvair-powered "Avenger", and a fleet of custom-painted Bicentennial-themed late-model Corvairs courtesy of the Toledo Shriners. It was an unforgettable sight.



While detailed records are not available, it is believed that the club reached its membership apex in the 1980's, with over 100 registered enthusiasts and approximately 200 Corvairs! WPCCC hosted many race days at the local drag strip, where current WPCCC Officer Don Cekus was a regular, and also held our own autocrosses. Members Don Baker, Les Walter, and Bill Artzberger have also kept us deeply involved in the annual "Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix" since its inception.



Vaun Hamlin's "Lightning Express" Corvair dragster.



WPCCC Corvairs line up at Keystone Raceway, circa 1970's.

From the club's earliest days, WPCCC members have benefited from having expert mechanical support from within the club. In the early years, these members included the late John Greenwald and Vaun Hamlin. Today, active members including John Sweet, Don Cekus, and Bob Hieber, all continue to offer sage advice and experienced mechanical services. The club has also re-established an annual Spring Tune-Up event to kick off the driving season and help members shake the winter storage dust off their vehicles.



Our award-winning newsletter, "The Vair Street Journal", has been around almost since the beginning. The VSJ received its name early on per a suggestion from founding member

and early newsletter editor Al Friend, a stockbroker by trade and an avid daily reader of The Wall Street Journal. Al was one of several talented and dedicated editors who helped keep club members informed and up to date in the years before the internet, chapter websites, and social media. WPCCC member Laurie Maglietta held the VSJ editor's title for over ten years, followed by Charles Lucas, who filled the role for an amazing 16 years, during which time the VSJ was recognized with CORSA's Tony Fiore Award for best chapter newsletter. Today, the VSJ has gone digital, using a new, internet-based format, once again setting a new standard amongst CORSA chapter newsletters.



WPCCC Community Effort...exact timeframe unknown, along with the whereabouts of whatever happened to this parkway sign?



In 2018, the club took on one of its most ambitious challenges ever, hosting the 48th Annual International Corvair Convention here in Pittsburgh for the very first time. The convention was held at the Doubletree Hotel in Greentree, with various activities also being held at Robinson Mall and Heinz Field. Led from the start by WPCC member Jimmy "ALL CAPS" Weppelman and a very dedicated Steering Committee, club members and volunteers pitched in and rallied behind the

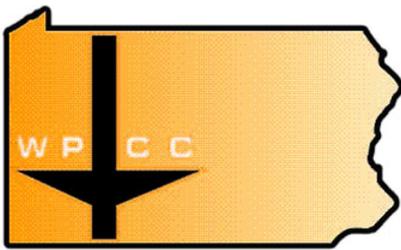


many challenges leading up to and throughout the weeklong event. The club's efforts were rewarded with one of the best-attended conventions in decades (registration ballooned to almost 700 members vs our initial forecast of 425) and estimates of between 300-350 Corvairs arriving from across the country alongside many of our own WPCC Corvairs! The event was truly a moment for our club to be extremely proud.



These are a few of the many beautiful Corvairs on display during the 2018 convention.

Our Current Logo



Today, WPCC enjoys a healthy roster of almost 70 members/families with an array of Corvairs ranging from projects to concours' show cars. In addition to retaining a handful of the club's original chapter members some 45 years later, WPCC is also benefiting from the interest, energy, and enthusiasm of a new generation of local Corvair enthusiasts. We maintain an active online presence with our chapter website and Facebook page, and our beloved VSJ newsletter is evolving into an interactive online format. It seems our club is well-positioned to continue its passion for all things Corvair

and remain relevant well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

And so, our history continues to grow.

