



## Cool 500

*Greg "Goyo" Vargas*

This is one of the fastest transformations/restorations we have seen in the South Coast CORSA club. Walt Pickett has himself one cool ride! It was November 2009 when Walt Pickett cruised his late model to an SCC meeting and joined the club. I remember it well, because his '65 was already looking pretty cool. In particular, I noticed the wrap-around lower scoop on the front end of the car, part of which Walt fashioned himself. I thought it was a nice personal touch.

Pickett owns a 1965 Corvair 500 series (not to mention a couple other cool rides I had the pleasure of seeing). The 500 was the low-option model of the new Corvair body style for 1965. *Car and Driver* magazine said, "It unabashedly borrows from the best of the already established foreign and domestic coachwork without losing any of its identity as a Corvair," and highlighted smooth-flowing rounded lines, a "venturi" shaped profile with the same sleek shape as the Corsa and Monza, and a pillarless hardtop look on all closed body styles. At 2,365 pounds, the '65 Corvair was also two inches wider than before,

somewhat lower, and about three inches longer end-to-end. Curved side glass was another innovation. The base Corvair 500 series included Sport Coupe and Sport Sedan. Trim consisted of a horizontal front panel molding, red in color, set directly below the feature line, with a Chevrolet badge at its center, Corvair script above the left-hand headlight housing, and rectangular parking lamps to name a few other details. Additionally, it came with a stock 95 horsepower engine, bench seats, three-speed floor shift, poverty hubcaps, radio delete, and not even backup lamps, wheel well trim, nor the luggage rack now on the car. It was as bare bones as you can get, with a base price roughly at \$2,000. 36,747 500 series cars

were produced. Walt owns one, and he has made this car his own, personalizing it all along the way as he wanted.

Pickett bought the car in 1975, and it has traveled with him from Los Angeles to Houston where Walt worked for a handful of years. The Corvair was originally white, then wine/burgundy, and then Porsche Guards Red. Within the last year, Walt fixed some rusted areas with metal and fiberglass resin (no welding involved), and painted the car the two-tone color it now has: Liquid Silver (2004 Jaguar color) on the top half, and Long Beach Blue (2006 Honda color) on the bottom half, with a pinkish accent pinstripe between the two colors. Pickett painted it himself, and did an amazing job!



Walt wanted to get the car ready for the 2010 SCC car show, so he could enter it in the show. He started with the front suspension and moved around the car until he had things the way he wanted them—quite an accomplishment in such a short period of time.

The car now runs with an installed 140 HP, four-speed manual transmission (which was previously installed). Greg Petersen, Corvair Specialties, worked on the car to get it running well, and it sounds great and drives smoothly. The car has Clark's Corvair headers and baffles in the mufflers, and 14 inch tires on Slot Mags with drum brakes.

Some of the other personalizations about the car include a center console from a 1993 Ford Explorer that fits snugly



between the seats from a 1992 (or '94) Dodge Intrepid; the seats are electric and adjustable! There are armrests installed on the side panels from a Subaru. The rear seat is a reupholstered stock Corvair seat. The lower front scoop is from Clark's and the side pieces that wrap around the front end are hard plastic mud flaps fashioned around the sides.

All in all, Walt has customized this car in a way that epitomizes how we all make our cars reflect our individual needs for comfort, a sense of personal aesthetics, and our personality in the finished product. Now, that's what owning a Corvair is all about. Nice job, Walt! ⊕

