



THE HISTORY OF THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CORVAIR CLUB (WPCC)

A work-in-progress by Al Friend, founding chapter member

According to General Motors records, in the early 1970's western Pennsylvania ranked 2nd only to the Los Angeles region for overall Corvair market penetration. Aside from our region's established enthusiasm for Corvair racing, the Corvair's economy-price and designed-in capabilities for traction and handling in day-to-day driving, important vehicle assets on our snow-covered roller coaster roads, were very likely major factors as well. So it was only appropriate that our area would develop a fond appreciation for the Chevy Corvair and that a Corvair enthusiast group would eventually be founded.

In March, 1973, the Western Pennsylvania Corvair Club was officially chartered as the Corvair Society of America's 158th chapter. The new chapter's 1st President was the late Ivan Clever of West Leechburg, PA. A Corvair enthusiast in his own right, Ivan was a critical and driving force in the club's formative years. He did pretty much everything from promoting the club to working on member's Corvairs to even publishing the chapter's first newsletter, a simple one page publication. Ivan even owned an auto repair shop that also served as our first meeting place. His shop was conveniently surrounded by a yard of his own "retired" Corvairs, so, if you needed a part, you would search the lot, remove what you needed, and buy it from Ivan at a very reasonable price.

A few years later, WPCC began meeting at Devereaux Chevrolet in Freeport, PA, thanks to Devereaux's Parts Manager and Corvair enthusiast John Costantino. John owned a beautiful '64 Monza coupe, and, much like Ivan Clever, chapter members could pre-order parts from John who would have them ready for pick up prior to the meetings.

By 1975, WPCC had grown to a roster of 88 family memberships. Typical early meeting locations became centrally-located area restaurants, including one named "The Brewery". The club even met for a while at a church, so you might say that, after the Chevy dealer, we ran the meeting gamut from a church to "The Brewery"!! For the last several years, the club has met bi-monthly at one of 2 restaurant locations in equal rotation.

WPCC has been privileged to have a few nationally-recognized Corvair "celebrities" amongst our membership. To name a few: The late Donna Mae Mims, secretary of Yenke Motors, and of SCCA racing fame; Bill Artzberger, author of the book, "Corvair, A History & Restoration Guide"; the late Vaun Hamlin, auto repair shop owner (specializing in Corvairs) who was turning eleven seconds at the drag strip in his super-charged Corvair station wagon; and long-time member John Sweet, who served as CORSA's Eastern Division Director in 1982 & 83, CORSA's Parts and Repair Chairman for 8 years, and to this day still serves as CORSA's Internal Affairs Chairman. And while we regularly invited Canonsburg resident and the father of the Yenke Stinger, Don Yenke, to join, we just couldn't quite get him to pull the trigger.

WPCC sponsored three, all-Corvair "Steel City Concourses" in 1976, '77, & '78. The '76 show was held at the Pittsburgh Region's GM Training Center, and featured Bill Artzberger's Corvair-powered "Avenger", a perfect 60 coupe; a 64 coupe with under 5,000 miles on it; and the last 69 Corvair sold in the Pittsburgh region. Best of

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CORVAIR CLUB

History of WPCC Presidents

1973	Ivan Clever*
1974	John Constantino*
1975	
1976	Bates Murphy
1977	
1978	
1979	
1980	Dick Brier
1981	Wayne Rockhill*
1982	Iaadore 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	Daver 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

* = Deceased



Original WPCCC Logo

show went to Don & Alice Schneider, from the “Friends of Corvair” chapter, and the Toledo Shriners stole the show with their beautiful late model Bicentennial flag Corvairs! Seeing those Corvairs as a group was an unforgettable sight.

In early 1979, 6 years after receiving CORSA charter status, WPCCC finally filed its incorporation documents with the state of Pennsylvania to officially become The Western Pennsylvania Corvair Club, Inc.

In the 80’s we enjoyed many WPCCC days at the local drag strip, where current WPCCC Officer Don Cekus was a regular, and also regularly held our own autocrosses. Moreover, members Don Baker, Les Walter, and Bill Artzberger kept us deeply involved in the annual “Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix”, and continue to do so today. And, while detailed records are not available, it is believed that this was also the period during which our club reached its membership apex as a recently-discovered December, 1984 chapter roster listed 127 family memberships with an estimated 200 Corvairs!

From the earliest days of the club, WPCCC members have had the good fortune to enjoy expert mechanical advice and service from within our membership. In the early years, these members included the late John Greenwald and Vaun Hamlin. Today, we can still count on current members like John Sweet, Don Cekus, and Bob Heiber, just to name a few, to offer sage advice and mechanical services. Over the past few years, the club has also re-established an annual Spring Tune-Up event to help members learn important fundamental DIY wrenching skills while also shaking the winter storage dust off their Corvairs.

Our newsletter, “The Vair Street Journal”, has had many wonderful editors over the years. The VSJ received its name per a suggestion from founding member and early newsletter editor Al Friend, a stockbroker during his career and an avid daily reader of The Wall Street Journal. Al handled editing duties for about 7 years in the late 70’s/early 80’ and today serves an important role as WPCCC’s resident chapter historian. Laurie Maglietta kept us well informed for over ten years, after which Charles Lucas took over for an amazing 16 years, even earning CORSA’s prestigious Tony Fiore Award for best chapter newsletter along the way.

Today, WPCCC boasts a steady roster of some 40-50 individual and/or family memberships, including a handful of remaining original chapter members. Club Corvairs cover the full lineup of models with conditions ranging from projects to concours’ show cars. At a time when too many CORSA chapters have folded and others are struggling to maintain relevance, WPCCC seems to be enjoying a resurgence thanks in part to our increased online presence via Facebook and website, and new member energy and ideas. A new generation of driving enthusiasts are discovering the Corvair, and we seem poised to continue our passion for all things Corvair well into the 21st century.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Please contact the editor at link below if you have any corrections and/or additional information to help us make our chapter history as accurate and complete as possible. Thanks.

[WPCCC EDITOR](#)