

Corvairisation

www.corvairs.org

Tucson Corvair Association

Volume 29, Number 7

Tucson, Arizona

July 2001



The Next Monthly Meeting is Wednesday

JULY 25

Tucson Corvair Association
Established 1975

Corvairsation is a monthly publication of the Tucson Corvair Association, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Corvair model of the Chevrolet Motor Division of General Motors. The Tucson Corvair Association is a chartered member of the Corvair Society of American (CORSA), Chapter 857.

Monthly Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, except December. One technical/social event is planned for each month except August.

Membership Dues are \$15 per year for singles and \$18 per year for families. Initial dues are \$15 for singles and \$22 for families (includes name tags). Make checks payable to Tucson Corvair Association.

Change of Address: Report any change of address or phone number to the Membership Chairperson. Do not report such changes to the Corvairsation Editor.

CORSA Membership Dues are \$30 per year (\$70 for 26 months) and include a subscription to the CORSA Communique, a monthly publication. CORSA membership is not required for membership in the TCA, but is highly recommended. See any TCA officer for more information.

Classified Ads are free to members and \$2.50 per 4-line ad to all others.

Deadline for all materials submitted for publication in the Corvairsation is the 10th for that month's issue. Mail or deliver all materials to the Corvairsation Editor.

BUSINESS MAIL ADDRESS: 2044 W. Shalimar Way, Tucson, AZ 85704

WEB SITE: www.corvairs.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

President: Barry Cunningham, 3725 E. 32nd St., Tucson, AZ Ph. (520) 747-9028

Vice-President: Chris Cunningham, 1026 So 7th Ave. Tucson, Az. 85701 Ph. (520) 670-9676

Treasurer: Allen Elvick, 4210 S. Preston, Tucson, AZ 85735 Ph. (520) 883-4337

Recording Secretary: Tim Green, HC 70 Box 3175. Sahuarita, Az. 85629
e-mail: cpayne@aol.com

Board Member-at-Large: Dave Baker, 6110 E. 5th Street, Tucson, Az.85711 Ph. (520) 747-0840

Membership Chair: Paul Dunn, 8939 N. Midnight Way, Tucson, Az. 85741

Corvairsation Editor: Don Robinson, 2044 W. Shalimar Way, Tucson, AZ 85704 Ph. (520) 297-1356
e-mail: fourcorvairs@hotmail.com

Immediate Past Pres.: Barry Cunningham

Wheels & Spokes:

Feature Editor: Van Pershing, 4842 W. Paseo de las Colinas, Tucson, AZ 85745 Ph. (520) 743-9185
e-mail: vpersh@yahoo.com

Librarian: Dave Baker, 6110 E. 5th Street, Tucson, Az. 85711. (520) 747-0840

Webmaster: Paul Dunn, 8239 N. Midnight Way, Tucson, Az. 85741
e-mail: Paul@md-lasertech.com

Merchandise Chairman: Don Robinson

Tucson Corvair Association

Denny's Restaurant on Broadway at Wilmot

Barry Cunningham called the meeting to order at 8:10pm. In attendance were Barry Cunningham, Chris Cunningham, Sue and Don Robinson, Suzanne and Gordon Cauble, Allen Elvick, Amy and John Torpey. Also in attendance were former Club member Jim Gugerty who was joined by his wife Elissa later in the meeting.

Member introductions courtesy of the President, preceded Jim Gugerty's brief introduction including his interest in obtaining a late model 1965 or '66 car. John and Amy Torpey may have a prospective buyer for their yellow '65 4-speed Monza coupe.

Don and Sue were thanked for the great hospitality they provided the Club for our June mid-month pool party on the 17th. It was at Don and Sue's community pool in Oracle Heights neighborhood.

The local CarQuest auto parts store at 4522 W. Ina, telephone - 744-2596, was able to turn John Torpey's rear drum after AutoZone refused to do it because it was worn beyond their allowable tolerances for drums.

Treasurer Allen Elvick reported the Club's treasury started the month with \$1732.16. It took in \$27.00 and spent \$69.20, ending with a balance of \$1689.96. He also provided all present with the Club's Annual Report. The Annual Report is sent to the Arizona Corporation Commission each year at this time.

~~Chris~~ Cunningham reported on the upcoming activities scheduled for September through December. It was decided that the Club would visit Woody Woodward's car collection (298-2060) on Saturday, September 15. October's mid-month activity will be the 20th Annual Casa Car Show at TEP Park on Saturday, October 23rd. Saturday, November 17 is slated for the annual car show at Little Anthony's Diner on East Broadway. December's annual Christmas dinner will be held at the Officer's Club on DM AFB either Wednesday the 12th or Thursday the 13th. Times to be determined.

Three gifts were donated for raffle prizes. Contributors were Barry, Chris, and Gordon.

Barry opened the tech discussion with a brief description of what he found in the bottom of his bell housing. He passed around a fairly large chunk of metal that broke off of his starter. Flywheel freed, problem solved! Gordon continued the tech talk with horror stories related to him by Ed Segerstrom and his recently purchased convertible. To make a long story short, Ed's car, purported to be a '64 Spyder, has a 3-speed tranny (should be a 4-speed), an engine from a '62 Lakewood with an automatic transmission, hand-made wheel opening moldings and a hand-made front emblem. Ed's car does have the body from a Spyder though. With Gordon's and a few other member's help, Ed was able to purchase a NOS '64 rear grill, a correct front emblem and address some other areas before embarking on a national Chevy meet back east in July. Best of luck to Ed!

Discussion over a new meeting site was initiated by Chris and received enthusiastic support from all present. Stay tuned for a new location announcement...

Gordon delivered a "Joke of the Day" just before Don Robinson motioned for adjournment. Allen seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.

Chris Cunningham

Prez Sez

We have a sizzling summer going on this year; so everyone is mostly staying indoors. We have no mid month activities planned until September when it starts getting a little cooler. This should give everyone extra time to polish up, tune up or do any other repairs needed on your Corvairs.

Get ready for a new season of Corvairing this fall. I personally am putting on new brakes, new tires, replacing gasket seals and doing a tune- up on the '66 Corsa

Hope to see you soon! We still have meetings to attend so see you there on July 25.

Barry



from the editor.....

As Barry says it's a hot one out there! I finally thought I had so much to do that I couldn't wait for cooler days. I got the Rampside engine back together and into the truck before it got really hot. It runs great but the new dual exhausts are too loud ---must change those mufflers. Then the Monza coupes brakes were not right. I should have changed the brake fluid long ago which is a long story, but an easy fix with a new master cylinder. Yes, it was hot out there!

The Corsa National Convention starts in a few days. Wish I were going because I know it will be great. We are promised detailed reports at our regular August meeting from one or two Convention attendees.

Ed Segerstrom just returned from the big Antique Chevrolet Car meet in Springfield, Illinois where he showed his '64 convertible and he walked (or rode) away with the third place ribbon. A full report at the July regular meeting. Congratulations, Ed!

I see Cactus Corvair Club just had its first excursion to Flagstaff on July 14 as they prepare for the 2002 National Convention.

When we are driving our Corvair we don't really think about their being failures, do we? Well, from a marketing point of view that may be. That's the feature article this month. Enjoy!

What's the real reason that the Corvair failed???

See www.vex.net/~guru/corvair

(Read the following with the understanding that it is, of course, just my personal and ever so humble opinion...)

Why did the Corvair fail? It certainly seems to have been because of a combination of factors. Some people and many books blame the success of Ford's Mustang for the death of the Corvair, but of course that really doesn't make much sense - if it were true, a great redesign of the Corvair into a sportier car (as was apparently planned, as described in my [Future Corvairs](#) page) would have solved this problem. (And if GM killed off a car line every time it was beaten in sales by the competition, how many would exist today?) There are those who choose to blame Ralph Nader's book "Unsafe At Any Speed"'s attack on the early Corvair exclusively for the Corvair's demise - though others point out quite rightly that Nader's book may have actually **prolonged** the Corvair's life. Personally, however, I feel that blaming Nader is just blaming the messenger for giving us the bad news.

Unsafe - Thanks To Cost-Cutting

The fact is, no matter how much we try to deny it, there was a definite problem with the 1960-1963 Corvair. And that problem, a weakness in the rear suspension, was not a problem of design - as the original designs for the Corvair in fact took this into account. The problem was clearly that marketing and cost-cutting won out over intelligent engineering. The designers that planned the Corvair knew that anti-sway bars would be needed to support the added weight of the rear-mounted engine. But to save a measly \$4 per car, those bars were not included in the final product, and the inevitable disaster struck.

... Or Just Bad Marketing?

It has been suggested to me that perhaps the failure on Chevrolet's part may have been not so much an error in putting cost over engineering as it was an error in misreading the market that would be attracted to the Corvair. This suggestion is based on the fact that Corvair was conceived and marketed as an economy car, and that the rear suspension that was used could have been seen as being quite adequate for a conservative, "reasonable" driving style. What Chevrolet may not have foreseen was the sporty image that Corvair would pick up, leading to the car being driven in a somewhat "unreasonable" manner! This theory, suggested to me by fellow Corvair fan [Kent Sullivan](#), does make some sense... Not that I think this would excuse Chevrolet for having made this poor judgement call!

A Former GM Vendor Employee's Perspective

A former GM vendor employee e-mailed me to give me his recollections of the Corvair's reasons for failure. Here it seems that the cost-cutting blows to the vair went beyond even what I expected...

Having worked for a GM Vendor in the late 60's, we were told to cut cost from the Flat opposed six cylinder engine. It seems it had a \$6 cost penalty when compared to the Cast Iron water cooled sixes in production. I'm sure all aspects of cost were being reviewed by other groups. It was rumored if a Chev-II or low end Full size were sold in place of the Vair there was a \$300 Per Unit greater profit. (tenths of cents are debated) This penalty was realized early on and the car would have died a normal economic penalty demise, except for a nasty book claiming faulty engineering. Dropping the car would not look good. A renewed effort to cut mfg cost ensued thru 68'. No real breakthroughs appeared to meet the critia "It has to be as good or better and cost less" . Better at same cost was unacceptable. Cut the ads & promo's and you can have a natural non-eventful demise. Make the \$\$ on the lower cost to mfg models.

Basically, there wasn't enough saleable profit. Then came the low cost XP-887. That's another story of MoTowns \$\$ first thinking and critical area cost cutting to a good technology.

Car And Driver Saw The Problem Coming

Here's an interesting quote from "Car And Driver"'s 1959 article on the Corvair (the complete text of which can be found at [the Car And Driver Web Page on the 1959 Corvair](#)):

Let us be honest, as usual: The Corvair is fundamentally a profound oversteer. With 62-percent of its weight on the back wheels it could only be otherwise if very ingenious suspension techniques had been called into play. This was not the case. As cornering forces on the Corvair chassis increase there is an initial very mild understeer tendency, probably attributable to the rear suspension geometry, but then, well within the average driver's range of slip angles, oversteer sets in in a gradual way that is easily countered by the excellent steering-whose very lightness, of course, is in part a function of the oversteer. Having heard that Uncle Tom himself had declared that he "tried but just couldn't lose the Corvair", I asked Chevy's affable engine development engineer Bob Clift to keep a path clear to the basement while we tried some very fast turns. By making extremely deep corrections it was possible to hold the car on a line but, as in any automobile ever built, there was a point beyond which it wasn't prudent to proceed. For a moderately skilled driver the Corvair is a genuine ball to drive, it being possible to hustle hard into tight corners and bring the tail around with just a twitch of the wheel, counter-steering until the slide stops and the time for acceleration arrives. This is not, of course, everybody's way of driving.

Chevy spokesmen have said that they didn't feel a front anti-roll bar was needed because the car's center of gravity was so low that it doesn't roll much. This is true enough, from that standpoint, but such bars are also powerful tools for adjusting handling, and one of the first things that should be done to this car is to replace that anti-roll bar. Since this would only actually counterbalance the difficulties that exist at the rear, however, thorough redesign should commence at that end. With the conventional design methods used, the high spring rates needed to support the rear end weight have resulted in unduly high roll stiffness at the rear, a sure harbinger of oversteer. A solution like that on the Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster is called for, having a single central coil or a pivoted transverse leaf spring to support loads without affecting roll. For all its novelty the Corvair is surprisingly naïve in this major respect.

In The End...

Whatever the reason for the problems, by the time that the '65 redesign fixed all of Corvair's shortcomings (except its relatively high cost to build), it was too late - Corvair's name was mud with the public. This would not have been an unsurmountable problem had Chevrolet believed in the Corvair, but the fact was that several Chevrolet executives of the time did not like or understand the Corvair, and as a result Chevrolet's solution to the PR problem was to kill the line... a sad, and completely unnecessary course of action, but perhaps perfectly in line with GM's tradition of picking the lowest cost solution over the most innovative or intelligent.

Spares & Vairs

For Sale: 1962 4-Door Monza, automatic, factory air conditioning, 85K original miles. \$3250. Call Dick (520) 299-4723.

For Sale: Corvair parts - Large outdoor yard full of Corvairs and parts, Call Barry Cunningham at (520) 747-9028.

For Sale: 1963 Monza Coupe, Red, 4speed, completely restored in and out. Brand new interior and tires. A beauty. \$11,000 invested. Sell for \$3700. Call Don at (520) 743-3346.

For Sale: 1948 Packard Call Gordon at (520) 299-1122.

LOCAL CORVAIR PARTS

from

TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION

TCA has a large stock of new and used parts for all models of Corvairs.

Support the Club and save a little money!



Contact Al Crispin
722-9445

From one Corvair lover to another...

Corvairs

By

Creative Stitches

2710 Cancun Court

Grand Junction, Co. 81506

(970) 245-4722

Member of Corsa and Tucson Corvair Association

CORVAIR ENGINE REBUILDING

Denny Wycoff

Motor Machine and Supply

1401 W. Glenn 85705

(520) 792-1156

Ads are free to TCA members. \$ 2.50 for up to four lines for non-members

