

# Corvairisation

Tucson Corvair Association  
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April 1998



## CORPHIBIAN



TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION

EST. 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 America (COSA \ 857 ).

**MONTHLY MEETINGS** are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month except December. One technical/social event is planned for each month with the exception of July and August.

**MEMBERSHIP DUES:** Initial dues \$22.00 per year for Fa. and \$ 15.00 for singles , (includes name tag) renewable \$ 18.00 and \$ 15.00 and payable to the TUCSON CORVAIR ASSOCIATION through the Membership Chairperson.

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Report any change of address or phone number to the Membership Chairperson. Do not report such changes to the Editor.

**COSA MEMBERSHIP DUES** are \$28 per year and include a subscription to the COSA Communique, a monthly publication. COSA membership is not require for membership in TCA but is highly recommended. See any TCA officer for 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 1st for that month's issue. Mail or deliver all materials to the Editor.

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## ***PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE....***

Hello All,

We made it through the first meeting without any mishaps, except for my whimpy voice. I will work on that. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new member, Rob Pensa. It is great to have new members join and bring new ideas and energies. It was exciting to feel a sense of enthusiasm and cooperation, and I have received some positive feedback and suggestions. Keep it coming. There was some concern and discussion about the outing on April 18<sup>th</sup> with the Cactus Corvair Club about having a place at Picacho. There is a very nice solution to that. Gordon Cauble had volunteered to investigate the accommodations and contacted the park service at Picacho. He found that they recommended having someone there early to get a spot because all reserved spaces were filled. He decided to call Ruth Griffith to inquire about how they had done the space saving previously. It was a pleasant surprise to find out that Vern and Ruth were planning to meet Dave and Mary Ann Nissen Friday night and stay over in their motorhomes to stake out a spot. Soooo...the main thing left for us to do is turn out and have an enjoyable day. We will plan to meet and be prepared to leave at 09:00 from the McDonalds at Ina and Thornydale. I'm hoping that since Dave Baker has installed an electronic ignition, that he may buy some NEW carb parts and have his corvair rolling to Picacho. See you the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Allen

## ***Coming Attractions.....***

**WHAT:** Annual Meet with Cactus Corvair Club  
At Picacho Peak

**WHEN:** Saturday April 18<sup>th</sup>.

**WHERE:** We will meet at McDonalds at Ina and Thornydale  
Leave there at 0900 to be at Picacho at approx 10:00  
Bring a dish to pass for potluck and something to place  
On the silent auction.

**And then.....**

The May outing on Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup> will be a trip to  
The White Stallion Ranch for a buffet lunch. We will  
Meet at Long John Silvers, Ina and I10 at approx 11:00.  
We will take a short tour through the Tucson  
Mts. We will eat at 12:30. Cost is \$7.50 per person  
Payable at the ranch.



## APRIL TREASURER'S REPORT

BEGINNING CASH ON  
HAND.....1079.37

### INCOME: (ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE)

Ads.....	00.00
Badges/Pins.....	00.00
Raffle Tickets.....	20.00
Can Money.....	00.00
Parts.....	00.00
Dues:	
Ray Britton.....	12.50
Rob Pensa.....	15.00
Jim & Bonnie Wright.....	7.50
Barry Cunningham.....	8.75
Al Crispin.....	15.00
Total Dues.....	58.75
Gas Light Theatre.....	214.00

TOTAL INCOME (ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE).....352.75

### EXPENSES: (ACCOUNTS PAYABLE)

Gas Light Theatre.....	214.00
Stamps.....	23.63
Badges.....	12.84

TOTAL EXPENSES: (ACCOUNTS PAYABLE).....250.47

ENDING BALANCE: (CASH ON HAND).....1181.65

Respectfully Submitted,

*Allen Elwick*

# It's a boat, it's a truck, it's Corphibian

by B. Mitchell Carlson



Over a million Chevrolet Corvairs took to the roads from their 1960 model year introduction until the end of production in 1969. Their six-cylinder, horizontally-opposed, air-cooled engine also logged flight time as an obvious choice for an aviation engine with several "experimental" aircraft builders. Could it also have been possible for the Corvair to be even more famous on the water as an amphibious craft than the 1961-'68 Amphicar? It nearly was.

Richard Hulten, of Rochester, Mich., had been interested in producing some type of amphibious craft since the mid-1950s. Automotive technology at that time made it seem very impractical, so he shelved his idea. When the all-new Corvair was introduced in the fall of 1959, his interest was rekindled, but after some preliminary sketches, he felt that, overall, a multi-surface Corvair car would be impractical.

But how about a multi-surface Corvair truck? Chevrolet Division's 1961 line of Corvairs was the epitome of the "shotgun approach." However, as an economy car, it didn't fare as well as the also-new Ford Falcon and Plymouth Valiant. The Corvair did see some success with a sporty Monza package, so its availability was expanded in the '61 model year. Also, its use as a workhorse was tried, so a station wagon (called the Lakewood), and a line of Corvair-powered trucks was added. These included two versions of Chevrolet's first vans, the Greenbrier (a passenger van) and the Corvan 95 (a panel van). Also offered were two pickups. They were the unique and aptly named Rampside (with its curb-side, centrally-located, fold-down ramp built into the box wall) and the conventionally designed Loadside, with just a single tailgate. When Hulten, discovered the Loadside, he figured he'd found a suitable vehicle. He had his local Chevy dealership put one up on a hoist so he could determine if its unibody construction would work in aquatic service, then started planning. In April of 1961 he purchased a Loadside and started modifying it in a rented Pontiac, Michigan garage.



Hulten, hoped to put these vehicles into limited production, so the conversion of his Loadside was more like producing a factory prototype than a weekend project. Front and central belly pans, with access hatches to critical components, were fabricated from fiberglass and secured to the unibody with self-sealing screws. These sealed up the underside of the vehicle and provided buoyancy. It was planned to fill these compartments with flotation foam, making the craft unsinkable even if it were fully awash. The independent front and rear suspensions proved to be real pluses for this conversion, since

they were easily removed and bolted back over the belly pans, then fitted with their own covers.



Hulten, calculated that the craft needed to be extended 18 inches in the rear to accommodate the extra marine-drive hardware and to maintain balance in the water. A fiberglass extension was fabricated from the original rear section of the truck and grafted on. The additional driveline housed in this section consisted of an extension of the crankshaft off the original belt pulley, using a timing chain to drive a simple forward-neutral-reverse transmission. This drove two belts that went off to the sides with each driving a countershaft that was connected at the lower end to a prop housing from a Johnson outboard motor. When operating in the water, the steering was done with twin electric-driven rudders. Engine exhaust and heat (Corvairs are air-cooled, remember) were piped and ducted out through this rear section.



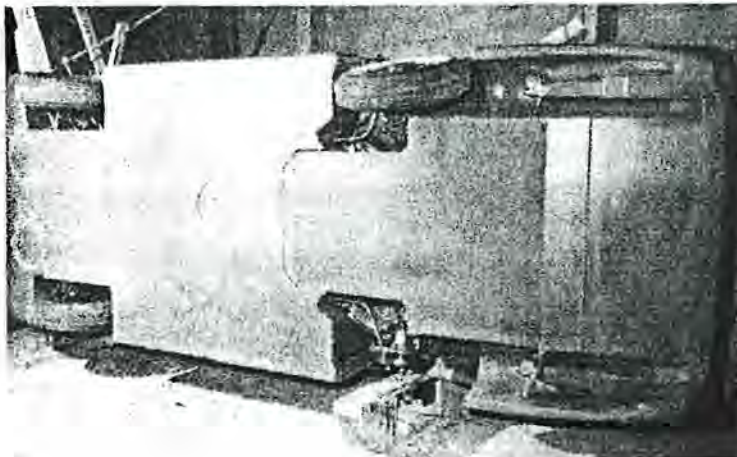
On the water, the craft was operated at the right front of the pickup box by a throttle quadrant mounted to the side of the box. An additional wiring harness was fabricated to independently operate the engine from there or the standard driving position.

The completed Corphibian, to the untrained eye, appeared to be a typical Loadside without bumpers. Its seaworthiness was excellent and it floated on several occasions.

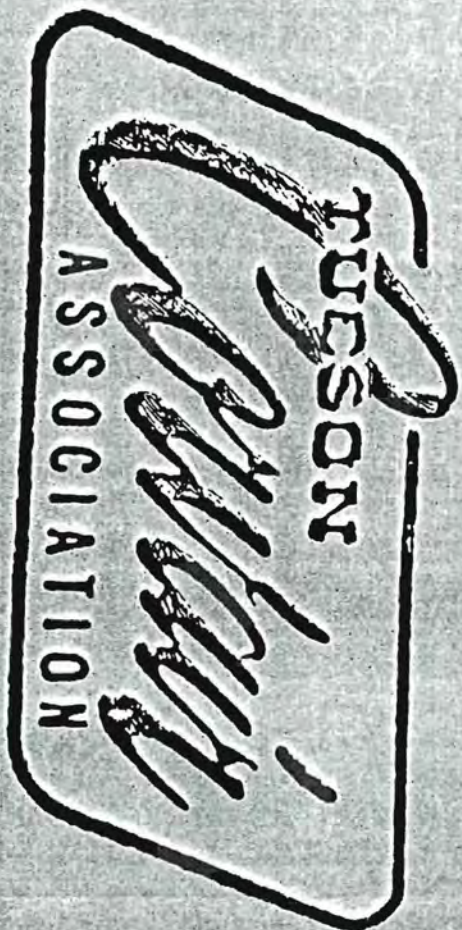
If it was such an excellent idea, why was it not produced? Hulten formed a firm, Hulten-Holm and Co., to design and engineer the concept only, since he didn't have the facilities to go into full-scale production. Even Chevrolet was interested, but encouraged Hulten to have an independent company perform the conversions, since it would be too time consuming for General Motors to do the modifications on its regular production lines. Several companies were contacted to perform the conversions. A few expressed interest, but none came forward to do the work. If a company had done the conversions, they would have been cataloged in Chevrolet's *Silver Book* as factory authorized (such as taxis and ambulances). It was even slated to be featured in a *Popular Science* article during late 1962. However, on the fall morning that the magazine was going to do its photo shoot, Corphibian developed engine trouble. The oil pressure sending unit broke, pumping the crankcase dry and saturating the engine compartment with oil. A replacement couldn't be found that day, so the photo shoot on a local lake was postponed and never completed.

The Corphibian was featured in the December 1981 edition of the Corvair Society of America's club magazine *CORSA Communiqlue*. At that time, Hulten still owned the vehicle, which showed less than 1,000 miles on its odometer and still had its original paint, interior, and tires. No mention was made as to how far it had traveled on water. Recently, it was sold to Wally Wheeler of the Detroit area, and was the feature vehicle at the 1996 Corvair Homecoming.

Perhaps someday, by a Michigan lake, an onlooker will again do a double take from seeing a truck driving on the water.







YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE: \_\_\_\_\_

MODEL: \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_

CLUB: \_\_\_\_\_

OWNERS: \_\_\_\_\_



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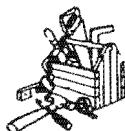
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