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CORSA – The “Caveman Corvairs, The 1960 Group” is a special interest group (SIG) within CORSA, The Corvair Society of America. CORSA is an international organization with many chapters and special interest groups worldwide. Founded in 1969, it is one of the best single marquee clubs in the world. To learn more, visit <http://www.corvair.org/>

The “1960 Caveman Corvair” Group on Facebook - The 1960 Corvair Group on Facebook was created as a place for members to chat and share photos of their 1960 Corvairs. There are currently 58 members of this group. The 1960 Corvair Group on Facebook has more 1960 Corvair photos than any other website. Visit us at:

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The “Caveman Corvairs, The 1960 Group” Page on Facebook - The 1960 Corvair Page on Facebook was created as a place for people to find information on the 1960 Corvair. Currently 29 people have “Liked” this page. This page has more information on 1960 Corvairs than any other website. Visit us at:

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The 1960 model is distinctive among early model Corvairs because of the concave panel between the headlights (hence the nickname of “CAVEMAN” for 1960 Corvair owners), and the Corvair “wings” grill bar. The 700’s accessories included wheel trim rings, side view mirror, and bright trim around the gas hatch. Some other accessories; back-up lights, bright trim around

the rear license plate recess, and a chrome extension on the exhaust pipe. If you opted for a heater, the only one available was a gas fired unit designed by South Wind.

2013 ANNUAL MEETING will be held at the national CORSA convention in Kalamazoo, Michigan on Thursday, July 18th, 2013 from 8:30 pm till 10 pm in the Crane room of the host hotel.

Early Corvair Memories

by JOHN ZINK

My father, a GM executive who was instrumental in some of the Corvair development work, had ordered a Corvair for delivery on introduction day. On that day I became the proud 16-year-old driver of a Horizon Blue Corvair 700 four-door sedan. Only the four-door models were available at first, and the 700 was then the top of the line. Ours was “loaded” with automatic transmission, padded dash, backup lights, chrome wheel trim rings, the fantastic gas heater, AM radio, etc.

As with any new design, the Corvair underwent a continuing series of engineering design changes as the company and its customers gained experience with the cars. The very early 1960 models were, perhaps, notable for the number of changes and backfits that were made before the end of the model year. The following are a few of my experiences with my introduction-day Corvair.

First Fan Belt Experience

The day we took delivery, October 2, 1959, I had driven the car home from the dealership in our small town in southern Indiana, and parked it in the garage. A cousin, who was an engineer at Cummins Engine Co. in nearby Columbus, came for dinner and - mostly - to see the Corvair. The cousin and my father took the car out for a short spin in a nearby neighborhood, and we soon received a phone call that the car had broken down. My father had called from the nearby home of another man who



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worked with him at the local GM plant and requested that somebody come pick up him and my cousin. The plan was to leave the car parked in the neighborhood street where it was until after dark: Dad didn't want people to see the brand new car, which was still an "iffy" design in the minds of many of the public, being towed home.

Ultimately, we took our behemoth 1959 Pontiac station wagon and pushed the car home -which, as I recall, did a bit of damage to the front bumper of the Pontiac and to the back body panel of the Corvair. Once the car was safely back in its garage, the problem became obvious: the fan belt had come off.

I don't remember how the belt got put back on, or who did it, but that is the only time I have had the classic problem of a Corvair belt coming off.

Parking Brake

The parking brake on the very first Corvairs was a ratchet arrangement that the driver "pumped up" until he felt it was engaged tightly enough.

Usually, it took two or three strokes of the parking brake lever before the brake was tight enough, and the brake lever



always returned to its original spot, out of the way

and under the dash. To release the brake, one simply pulled the "T" brake lever.

It didn't take many applications of the "pump-up" brake, however, before you would have an experience where the ratchet gave-way during the pumping process. When this happened, of course, the brake released completely and you would have to begin the

process all over again. Sometimes it would be frustrating when you would have to repeat the process three or four times before the ratchet would hold. It could also be dangerous if you didn't realize the ratchet had let go and the parking brake wasn't really set. So, one of the earlier engineering backfits was a replacement parking brake mechanism that simply required one stroke to set it. The disadvantage, of course, was that the brake lever was then sticking out a bit from under the dash and became somewhat of a hazard to the driver's shin upon entry and exit. No doubt, the shin-knocking was what the engineers were trying to avoid by the original design.

Carburetor Icing

In January of 1960 my family moved from southern Indiana to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. After the moving van had left our Indiana home late in the afternoon, we began our trip to Milwaukee with a caravan of three cars: two 1960 Pontiacs and I in my 1960 Corvair. As we progressed northward the weather became steadily colder. By the time we got to the Tri-State Tollway around Chicago, we found ourselves driving in fog with the temperature hovering around freezing. I noticed that, as we went along, I was having more and more trouble keeping up with the Pontiac in the lead. I had to keep giving the Corvair more and more gas just to keep up, and finally, I just couldn't do it anymore. Even with the gas pedal down to the floor, the car kept going slower and slower until I found myself going less than 40 mph on an Interstate highway.



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I was able to signal the other cars to pull off so we could figure out what the trouble was. We opened the Corvair's hood and were amazed to see balls of ice where we ought to see carburetors. After we had stopped for a while, the engine



heat finally managed to melt the ice off the outside of the carburetors and, we had to assume, also off the inside. We got back underway, but it wasn't much more than another half hour before the same thing happened again. So, again, we simply had to pull off the road for a while until the ice melted off the carburetors. Fortunately, we eventually got out of the cold fog and into the colder, dryer air of Wisconsin, and the problem disappeared.

We soon discovered that Chevrolet engineers had experienced this problem, also, and had a backfit kit available. This provided two aluminum washers to attempt to conduct heat up to the carburetors from the engine, as well as a duct which conducted hot air from around the finned cylinder heads up to the top of the engine and directed it into the single air cleaner. This duct was placed in the center of the car, just behind the firewall, and had a damper on it that the owner was supposed to close in the summer so the car wouldn't overheat.

Snowmobile

Our house in Milwaukee was a converted "banked" barn, with the garage underneath it. The driveway was cut through the "bank" of dirt on which the barn was built. Naturally, during the Milwaukee winters, the wind deposited lots of snow in that nice little pocket made by the driveway.

I got really tired of having to shovel my way into the garage every afternoon when I came home from school. But even worse, I was really tired of having

to get up extra early in the morning to shovel my way out of the garage in order to go to school. I decided that the Corvair, with its excellent traction in the snow, might make a good snowplow. So, one night I backed the car way into the garage so, the next morning, I could get a running start at the snowdrift and blast right through it without having to shovel.

All did not go according to plan, however. The next morning I took my running start at the snow bank and, instead of blasting through it, I "floated" right up on top of it. The full pan under the front and passenger compartment of the Corvair made it act like a boat on water. So, there it was, with all four wheels off the ground. It would have been much easier to shovel a bit of snow than it was to try to shovel all the snow out from under the car so it would, eventually, have its wheels on the ground, again.

No Horn

Another experience I had with my early '60 Corvair was that the horn didn't work very often in the winter. Driving in the Milwaukee snow-covered streets, which eventually became slushy and generally messy, always loaded-up the lower portions of cars with lots of nasty frozen snow, ice, sand and salt. If there was a break in the weather and I could wash my car, the horn would usually work for a while, again - until the car started to collect snow, again.

The very early Corvairs had the horn behind the front lower-body panel (below the front bumper) and there were slots cut in the panel in front of the horn so the sound would come through better. It didn't take much snow and ice to go through those slots and pack the horn solid with frozen "yuck". That was

enough to stop the horn from working. Eventually, with Engineering Change # (who knows what?) the horn slots were eliminated and, finally, the horn was moved to the front fender and protected with





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a baffle. Apparently, Detroit winters were also enough to stop-up Corvair horns and Chevrolet engineers had come up with a redesign.

The Super Monza

On August 15, 1960, while helping my family move into our new home in Birmingham, Mich., I heard a distinct Corvair sound in the street. I looked out in time to see a purple-blue Corvair coupe with a white vinyl top and beautiful chrome wire wheels. Immediately, I recognized this car as the Super Monza which was featured on the cover of that month's Motor Trend magazine.



Needless to say, I was very excited at this introduction to the neighborhood and didn't know what other interesting cars of note I might see in the future.

I eventually learned that Wm. Mitchell, the GM vice president of design, lived just a few houses away. The Super Monza was from his house and was usually driven by a rather cute blonde about my own age - his daughter.

Over the years I learned to pay frequent attention to that house, as it was often surrounded by fascinating cars. Mitchell frequently drove home various GM "dream" and custom cars, including the original Corvette



Stingray, the Corvette Shark, the Corvette Mako Shark, the Corvair Sebring Spyder, the Corvair Spyder SS, the Corvair Monza GT, the



Monza SS, and a beautifully customized 1963 Buick Riviera, among others.

I spent many hours walking around the block - which gave me the opportunity to get a good look at the many fascinating cars in the Mitchell driveway as well as giving me "quality time" with Mary, the girl next-door, who would walk with me. And now, 50-plus years later, Mary still puts up with my love of cars.

The proud 16-year-old and his Corvair

