



Happy New Year!



Well, the New Year is here - 2012! Where does the time go? I hope you have all had a good 2011, and hope your 2012 is as good or better.

We have lots going on this year. We have the '12 CORA Convention in Sturbridge, MA. If you haven't made your reservations, you may want to do so soon! It's filling up fast. I'm also hoping to do a few more get-togethers this year; perhaps a cruise or two along with some lunch get-togethers?

Don't forget our annual Launch Party at Goodwins the first weekend of October. Thanks to new member Ted Foss we have another place to meet up at this year, Ted serves as a Director of the Boothbay Railway Village [their collection includes automobiles] and he believes it would be a great place to get together. I will be contacting Ted on a date to do so.

I wish you all the best and Happy New Year!!

Ronnie Tinkham
Gorham

Youngest Dirigo Member

Congratulations to Dana Macewen, Bucksport, and his family on the 12/7/11 arrival of the stylish Sophie Macewen. With a curb weight of 7 lbs 8 oz and an overall length of 22 1/2", she's a welcome addition to the Corvair community in Maine.



Newest Dirigo Member



Ron Tinkham [L] and Ted Foss [R] at the Dirigo Food Drive

We extend a hearty welcome to new member Ted Foss, Durham, ME. Ted has a '65 Monza and introduced himself to the membership at the Dirigo Food Bank Drive in Brunswick in December.

Ted also serves as a director at the Boothbay Railway Village (www.railwayvillage.org), which has a large collection of antique and classic cars. He believes that the grounds of the organization would be a fine locale for future Dirigo events.

From his cheerful manner at the event, it's clear that he's quite the Corvair enthusiast. Welcome aboard, Ted, and thanks for your support of our rear engine wonders.

Dirigo Shepherds A Food Drive



Dirigo Corvairs and two dealerships within the Goodwin Motor Group participated in a food drive for the Good Shepherd Food Bank on December 10.



We gathered together on a chilly Saturday at Goodwin Chevrolet in Brunswick. Jody King, a sales manager at the dealership and a genuine auto enthusiast, had set up a Chevy Colorado in showroom. Dirigo members, as well as

enthusiasts from the Downeast Land Rover Club, filled the bed of the pickup with boxes and bags throughout the day.



Goodwins also had travel mugs and small first aid kits available to those who donated food. Dunkin Donuts donated 6 boxes of coffee and two boxes of munchkins, both of which members devoured with pleasure.

Perhaps the best entertainment of the day occurred when member George Hertlein, Cornville, ME, drove south on Rte. 1 passing the many signs on the opposite side of the road that identify Goodwin Chevrolet. Many of us watched George's pickup but did not know who would drive past a Corvair event towing a Corvair. Our "Two Ronnies" identified him instantly by the Greenbrier on his trailer.



Along with Dana Macewen they stated confidently that George would appear eventually and have an “interesting” reason for driving right past the Corvairs. Indeed, about 15 minutes later, George swept into the dealer’s forecourt. He blamed his errant GPS for providing him with poor directions. His wife just rolled her eyes.



George found the Greenbrier thanks to the active adoption campaign of Jim Westervelt, Tenant’s Harbor, ME. When a Waldoboro friend of Jim’s wanted to sell of his FC collection of a Loadside, a Corvan and this Greenbrier, Jim set the ball rolling, followed by an email blast by Ron Tinkham. Jeff Aronson posted the collection on the “For Sale” section of the DiriGO Corvairs website. Naturally we’re delighted that the Greenbrier will reside in Maine.



Peering inside George’s “new” Greenbrier we saw the advantage of its long-time barn storage. The interior looked quite clean and the seats showed very little wear.



Similarly the engine looked in fine condition, needing only elbow grease and some ignition parts to start it up again.

The Good Shepherd Food Bank picked up the food from Goodwin’s the following Monday. We’re proud of our partnership with the auto enthusiasts of the Goodwin Motor Group. Thanks to the Goodwin family and staff for helping make this event possible.

“Crazy George’s” Greenbrier

George posted his thoughts on his “new” Greenbrier on The Corvair Forum, and we reprint them here:

Well I thank Ron [Tinkham] again. If it wasn't for DiriGO Corvairs I would not have gotten this van. They found it and the '62 pickup as well. They posted it in the newsletter {DiriGO} and I called on the items and said I would take them; bargained priced and nice find for the East Coast. The van appears to be complete and does have some rust issues under the bottom, so down the line. I get to play with my metal brake. There's one small dent in the side door, bumpers are great. This has the window screen (new in box, postage \$1.07 .10 for insurance; being a retired postal worker, I will save the box.



There's a broken signal up front, a new one in a box on the front seat, new rockers in box, two sets of hub caps, some gaskets, plug wires and bumper guards. I know that someone wants them but I will have to wait and see on that. It was Merry X-mas to me. The body is really in good shape, the interior is just wow ok!

There's 71,000 something miles on the van; the last year registered was 1974. Getting it off the trailer with three flats, I noticed a snow tire on the front. I took off three tires and got some back on the car. The brake shoes look new and the drums must have been turned; they look like new with no grooves in the inside other than surface rust. Once through our weather here and get some more know-how around this forum I will post some more photos.

Dirigo Corvairs, thank you and the hard work you guys did in getting us together here in Maine.

Corvair Sighted in Stonington



*I missed this column in the **Wall Street Journal** when it first appeared on August 22, 2010, but since Jonathan Welch's blog has a nice Maine connection, I thought I'd share it here:*

Stonington, Maine is better-known as a center of the lobster industry than as a hub for classic-car fans. But interesting cars show up on the pier now and then. I spotted this Chevrolet Corvair — it looks like a 1965 model — during a recent visit. The more I looked at it the harder it was to believe Chevy was ever adventurous enough to have built such a car.

Sure, the company's Corvette was a stretch and a breakthrough with its unusual fiberglass body and later features like its fuel injection and independent rear suspension that were rare in the 1960s. But the 'Vette was a niche sports that was never meant to sell in mass-market numbers. Its overall layout was also fairly conventional.

The Corvair was aimed at a broader audience and sold more than 200,000 cars a year for several years. Its rear-mounted six-cylinder engine with a horizontally opposed, or "flat" design, allowed a sleek body with a lower profile than the typical car. Furthermore, its long rear trunk area and relatively short hood hinted that there was something fundamentally different about the car. During its production run from 1960 to 1969, the

Corvair looked like nothing else in the Chevrolet lineup.

Designed in part to compete with European models from makers including Volkswagen, Renault and Fiat, the Corvair had decent power, but never to the point of overkill. An optional 180-horsepower turbocharged model was the top of the line, but even the regular models were peppy.

Sales fell sharply in the wake of Ralph Nader's 1965 book "Unsafe At Any Speed," which pointed out alleged flaws in the Corvair's rear suspension design that could result in loss of control and severe crashes. Chevy had redesigned the suspension by the time the book came out, but it was too little, too late. Corvair production ended in 1969.

By the way, does anyone recognize this Corvair? It appears to have Maine antique vehicle plates.

Happy 50th Anniversary

Here's a shout out to the 50th anniversary year for the 1962 models — the Spyder and the convertible. This year also witnessed the deletion of the Loadside and the Lakeside/station wagon models.

This year cemented the Corvair as GM's "sporty car" in the minds of the American car buying public. While Ed Cole saw the Corvair platform as the basis for an entire range of automobiles to meet every buyer's need [a la VW and Renault in Europe] American consumers saw little need to become "first adopters" to this new-to-the-US technology and found more capacious alternatives to the Lakewood and the Loadside pickup.



The Spyder and convertibles, however, became signature cars for the Corvair. The Spyder engine made demands upon its owner/driver uncommon to American-made automobiles. In addition to the handling benefits of mild oversteer, you had to drive with an awareness of turbo lag – actually pay attention when you hit the accelerator. Then, too, you had to shift manually; transmission options included only the three or four speed manuals, no Powerglides.



Ah, the convertible! British sports car manufacturers had always found that their roadster or convertible models sold much better than the coupes or fastbacks in the US market. The MGA Coupe, MGB GT, the Triumph GT-6, the Triumph Surrey Top and the Sunbeam Alpine Coupe always sold in small numbers compared to their soft top brethren. In the minds of 1962 auto enthusiasts, sports cars equated to soft tops.

It's likely that GM marketing executives also noted the impact of the "California lifestyle" on potential buyers. Imported manufacturers found that California buyers alone amounted to 30% of their US sales. The state's booming economy, rapidly growing population, and impact on music, fashion, television, sports and entertainment trends, meant that Californians influenced automobiles, too.

California companies, such as IECO and EMPI, had been producing speed and handling parts for the Corvair since its introduction. GM complimented their foresight by installing its own "speed parts" right from the factory and the dealership. The new direction for the Corvair –one which enthusiasts had recognized from the start – would bring innovation in style and engineering with the '65 models.

GM's "Car Guy" and His First New Car

Eva McGuire, writing in the January 2012 issue of The Aircooler, the newsletter of the Detroit Area Corvair Club, wrote of meeting Bob Lutz, GM's recently-retired executive and "car guy," and author of Car Guys vs. Bean Counters (Portfolio/Penguin, 2011).

"I asked Mr. Lutz if he would be so kind as to autograph my Corvair as well at which he stated, "I don't have anything to do with vehicles that I'm not personally involved with."

"Oh yeah, so you don't want anything to do with the Corvair, huh?"

Mr. Lutz replied, "Oh, that's not true. I really like the Corvair! As a matter of fact, it was the first new American car I ever purchased."

Mr. Lutz stated it was a 1962 Monza (Autumn Gold color), 102 HP, 4 door, 4 speed. He put aftermarket items on it such as ceramic metallic brakes, EMPI camber compensator, Koni

shocks, and Michelin radial tires. He ordered the car from a dealership out in Walnut Creek, CA, and "impatiently" waited 7 weeks for delivery. He said he loved 4 doors...we all shook hands after we spoke and that was better than an autograph to me as having a good conversation with a "car guy" leaves more of a lasting memory."



Lutz started his auto career with GM from 1963-1971 [particularly the European affiliates], spent a few years with BMW in the early 1970's, then to Ford and Chrysler, and back to GM in global operations from 2001-2010. Personally I give him lots of credit for the Dodge Viper but demerits for the chunky Pontiac Solstice/Saturn Sky.

It's neat that Lutz owned and enjoyed his Corvair, but his book also insists that GM's handling of Ralph Nader's assault on the Corvair – hiring a private detective and then apologizing publicly – doomed the Corvair. He blames the publicity from the book for the decision to end the Corvair.

However other Corvair historians have found documentary evidence that GM's corporate dictate to halt all further development of the Corvair came down before the publication of *Unsafe At Any Speed*.

The Bay State's VairForce [January 2012] reprinted a 1982 article by auto historian

Richard Langworth contending that Chevrolet stylists and designers continued to work on a "new model" Corvair as late as 1968; it's also quite possible that the clay mock-up was a sort of "skunk works" program to give engineers and designers a chance to exercise their talents and interests – with little likelihood that something would actually go forward from their efforts.

Got Ideas for DiriGO?

It's 2012 and DiriGO Corvairs plans to continue its entertaining activities for Corvair enthusiasts of all stripes.

If you have an idea for an event, a gathering, a drive, a new locale, a rally, a tech session, a charitable effort – get in touch with any member of the Leadership Team and share your thoughts.

If you're a newer member or prospective member, visit our website, www.dirigocorvairs.org, to download free copies of this newsletter and keep up with club announcements. Members, if you know of someone with an interest in the Corvair, why not forward a copy of DiriGO to them and invite them to join you at an upcoming gathering?

Entering the new year our Leadership Team remains:

- Ron Tinkham, Gorham – President
- Ron Moller, Cape Neddick – Vice President
- Ken Holm, Whitefield – Treasurer
- Kathryn Billington, Norridgewock – Secretary
- Jeff Aronson, Vinalhaven – Editor/Webmaster

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