

# The SIXTY - NINER

The quarterly newsletter of The 1969 Corvair Group

Volume Three Number One January, 2004

Mark Ellis, 8322 Soft Wind Drive, Mechanicsville, VA 23111

corvair 69@earthlink.net

804--746-7245



## THE TALE OF THE TWO BROWNIES



Inside, Don Colburn's story of his two Burnished Brown 1969 Corvairs. The coupe, #2604, was purchased new by Don in December, 1968. The convertible, #5246, was discovered in Michigan in 1999 and has been beautifully restored. Burnished Brown is one of the most unusual '69 Corvair colors, rarely seen. A highly metallic dark color, similar to two other '69 colors (Burgundy and Dusk Blue), it seems to change color under different lighting conditions.

**2004 MEMBERSHIP** As we begin 2004, our membership stands at 94. Renewal rate to date is 97%! Thanks for your continued support and we hope to continue sending out quarterly newsletters with interesting features you'll want to read. A current treasurer's report is in this issue. Note that we have an excellent balance, with more than \$900 "in the bank". As you have requested, we will be using color covers on every issue with color centerfolds once or twice a year.

1969 information is probably the most obscure of all Corvair data, so it's nice to be with a group of folks who enjoy being part of this ultimate Corvair trivia game. Maybe there is some perverse pleasure in our '69 hobby, but there is probably a bit of ego involved too, since we own a very low production automobile. Obviously not for everyone. Some have compared us to Alcoholics Anonymous, but I don't think we're been that addicted, have we? Well..... uh, maybe a few.....

**GROUP & NEWSLETTER NAMES** The votes are in, and it was really no contest at all. "The 1969 Corvair Group" and the "Sixty-Niner" will continue. Here are the final tallies from those who voted on their renewal or new membership forms :

1969 Corvair Group	50	81%
The 69ers	12	19%
The Sixty-Niner	53	79%
The Side Marker	14	21%

**2003 ROSTER ADDITIONS** Enclosed with this newsletter is a two sided 5" x 8" laminated card listing all additions to the 2003 roster printed last January. There are 44 additional cars, as received throughout 2003 and printed in the four 2003 and this January, 2004 newsletter. We thought this might be a more convenient way to keep track of additions thus far. Rather than flip thru past newsletters, this sheet can be inserted into the roster for easier reference. Ownership changes, data additions and corrections have not been listed. Assuming we continue to receive additional cars, we will print a new card every January until a new master roster is completely redone.

**FROM GROUP PRESIDENT DICK SHANK**  
A MYSTERY 1969 CONVERTIBLE

Imagine the thrill of stumbling onto another '69 convertible. We've already found over a half of the 521 produced, so the odds are getting slimmer to find any more! While attending a car show last November in Zepherhills, Florida, I made it a point to visit the cars for sale section. Not that we were in the market, but it's always fun to look. As we walked along the row, we saw this sad looking late model convertible sitting all alone with no attention. As we drew closer I noticed the '69 front marker lights. Well HELLO, what do we have here? The VIN turned out to be #5628, with a body build date of 05A - the first week of May. Wow, this is a late one! The Dusk Blue paint and white top appeared to be original although quite tired. It had a dent in the drivers front corner, damaging the bumper and fender. The blue interior was covered in mildew but looked like it might clean up. The 110HP engine had all the original pollution equipment, although some was in the back seat. Powerglide, AM radio, and bumper guards were the only other options. The odometer read 70,000 miles. The sad part was that there was no other information with the car - no owner's name, address, phone number or asking price. If anyone can help with this information, please let us know.

This little story should serve as a reminder to all of us that there ARE additional '69s out there to be found - yes, convertibles too. It's up to all of us to find them. Please don't assume that someone else has already reported a sighting. Most of the reports we get are from one person only, even though the car is found through a highly visible source like E-Bay or the CORSA website. We would rather have multiple reports which usually means we will have more information. Where to look? Car shows, E-bay, local newspaper ads, rag sell-it's, used car lots, junk yard and museums. Don't forget to ask your local Corvair club members too. Thanks for all your efforts.

Enjoy the newsletter with the latest '69 news and look forward to seeing you in June at the CORSA National in Lexington. We're cooking up a very special '69 meeting this year with a few surprises. Join us!

## LETTERS

Back in the mid-seventies, I remember taking parts off a Hugger Orange '69 Monza coupe, sitting in a junkyard here in Louisville. Almost everything of value was already stripped, but it had been loaded with a 140, AM/FM and Multiplex sound system (*not a factory option*). Before I left, I rummaged thru the glove box and found the original Protect-O-Plate registered to the "Lost Cause Press". Back in the early sixties, former Louisville Mayor and US Congressman Charles Farnsley attempted to market a luxury '62 Monza sedan with full leather interior, padded leather top and wire wheels. It was called the "Lost Cause". The venture flopped and only one car was built (*now owned by Jeff Barrett in North Carolina*). The '69 obviously was one of his Corvairs as well. Was the Hugger Orange a factory paint job? It sure looked like it, with no overspray or unpainted areas.

I just received my first issue of the **Sixty-Niner** and I am mighty impressed! I drove my '66 Corsa to the CORSA national in Pennsylvania last June and had a great time at my first convention in 23 years. It's great to be back in Vairs and I can't wait to get another '69.

-- Ken Maxwell, Louisville, Kentucky

*There were three special '69 Chevrolet Sports Department colors available for Camaros, Chevelle and Nova SS's, etc. - Hugger Orange, Rallye Green and Daytona Yellow. All were very bright, "with-it", hip sixties colors. Not advertised for Corvairs, they were available on special order, since they were already "in the pot" at Willow Run for the Novas. Only two are listed in the 2003 Roster : #3980, a coupe painted Daytona Yellow and #4729, a convertible painted Hugger Orange.*

*It's really neat to have Ken with us. Ken was a "major player" with '69s back in the early and mid-seventies. He owned five then - three are still accounted for : #2547 owned by Tom Schrum in Arizona, #2549 owned by Mike McCormick in California and #5856 owned by Don Schneider in Ohio. Quite a coincidence to own #2547 and #2549, both of which Ken says used the same ignition key ! Here's another former Corvair owner who just couldn't kick the habit and is back home again. There are a lot of us "older" Corvair guys who have traveled the same path in recent years.*

*Somewhere in the Maxwell garage is a list of '69s with VIN numbers that he kept track of in the seventies. Now, that is real "buried treasure" for all the '69ers and we look forward to including those cars in our roster. Keep diggin', Ken.....*

## THE TALE OF TWO BROWNIES

2604 & 5246

by Don Colburn, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

In September of 1968 as the new 1969 Chevrolets were being introduced, I had a feeling this would be the very last year of Corvair production. Looking over the new '69 Corvairs, there was very little change from the 1968 models. While I still could, I decided to place an order for a new 140HP, 4-speed Monza coupe with an array of options. The decision was made to order it with a brand new Chevrolet color called Burnished Brown. A convertible was on my mind, but for some reason - maybe the long cold winters here in Wisconsin - a coupe seemed more sensible. On November 3, I placed the order. Forty-five days later on December 18, a call came from the dealer that the car had arrived. On Saturday, December 23, just in time for Christmas, I took ownership of my first new car. It was VIN #2604. Before I drove off I noticed an oil leak, which turned out to be a leaking ignition coil. A new one was quickly installed and I was on my way. It was a cold snowy afternoon, but the excitement of driving a brand new Monza made the 45 mile trip home much more enjoyable!

The first 2000 miles with the car were not a pleasant driving experience. Poor acceleration, backfiring and two broken fan belts convinced me to remove all the smog equipment, which solved all the problems. In the spring of 1970, as I was leaving a self service car wash, the engine started to miss terribly with little power. Number two cylinder had no compression. The local Chevy dealer replaced both the piston and cylinder at no charge, honoring the warranty, even though the car had 21,000 miles ! That was the only major mechanical problem I have had with the car. I drove it carefully through three Wisconsin winters, then decided to limit its use to help preserve the car.

In 1975, I drove it to the CORSA National Convention in Seattle, Washington. Other than a broken fan belt while driving on an interstate on a hot 95 degree day, the car ran flawlessly on the 4000 mile round trip. At the end of that trip the odometer read 49,500 miles. Over the next 28 years, the car has been driven only 5,300 miles, for a current total of 54,800. It still runs great and the interior is like new. It has always been garaged, but the paint is weathered, so I do plan on giving it a very high quality paint job in a year or two.

MORE ⇒

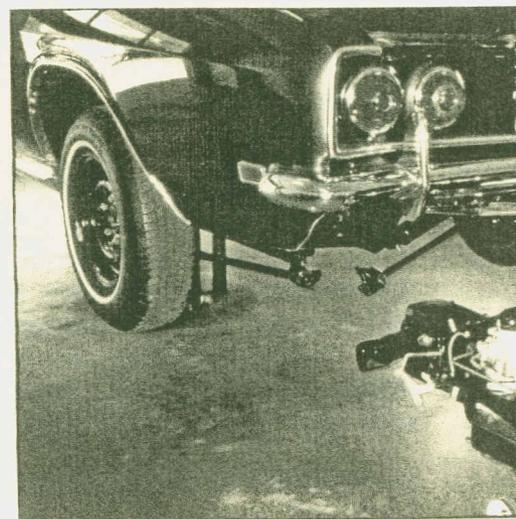
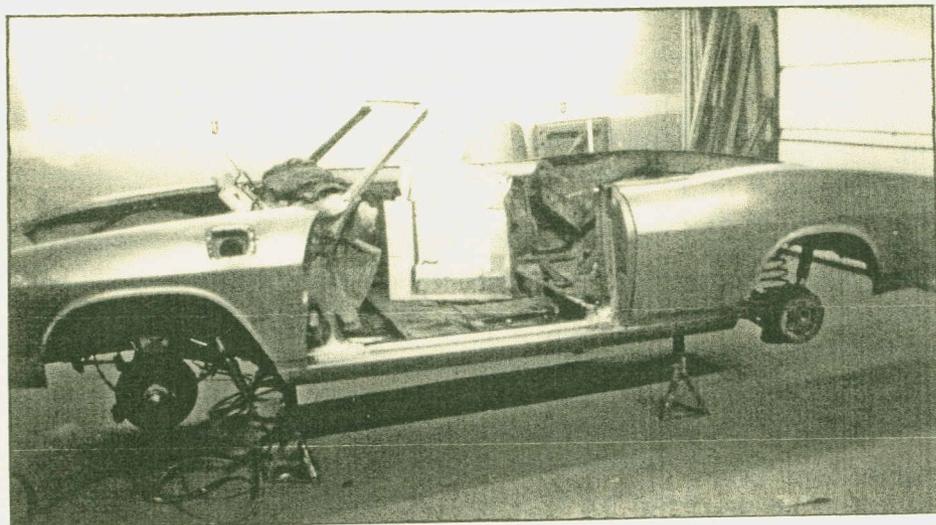
Years ago, still remembering the day I almost ordered this car as a convertible, I thought I would keep my eyes open for a matching Burnished Brown convertible and have a pair. Well, after over twenty years of checking out 1969 Corvair convertible for sale ads, plus never even SEEING one in Burnished Brown, I was almost giving up hope of ever finding one. When the first *Finger Tip Facts* book came out in late 1996, it listed only three brown convertibles known to exist! One was owned by super '69 collector Don Smieszek in New Jersey (not for sale), one in California highly modified & repainted red and one in Michigan.

The Michigan car was a 140 4-speed, still in good condition, but a check with the owner, a retired GM tool maker, resulted in "I don't think I want to sell it". I kept bugging him and after two years, I finally got a phone call from him - "How would you like to buy a 69 brown convertible?" Three days later, on October 2, 1999, a Corvair friend and I made the trip to see the car. It was 200 miles from Eau Claire to Lake Michigan, across the lake on a four hour ferry ride and 140 miles into Michigan. After over twenty years of treasure hunting, there it was - #5246 with 52,700 miles. After a short test drive and a little dickering on the price, the car was mine. I drove it the 340 miles home and it ran super all the way. Even got 24.5 MPG!

The car came with the original owners manual, warranty book with the Protect-O-Plate, dealer invoice dated May 5, 1969, the car shipper form, the instruction sheet for the dealer installed

optional luggage rack and even the \$150 rebate certificate. The original selling dealer was Jim Wernig Chevrolet in Almont, Michigan, about forty miles due north of Detroit. I made a call to Mr. Wernig and believe it or not, he remembered the car! He said it was not special ordered for a customer, and that he ordered it for stock. When the car arrived, the paint job was terrible, with thin spots and primer showing through in some areas. He had to repaint about half the car to make it saleable. On May 18, the car was sold to a loyal customer with the understanding that it would be traded back in at a later date. The buyer bought the car for his wife to drive. I called her and she had fond memories of it, never giving her any trouble. She still has a picture on her dresser of her kids sitting in the car! In 1973, they traded it back to Wernig Chevrolet, using the \$150 certificate for a new Chevy pickup. The car then had 48,000 miles. Wernig had gold pin stripes painted on both sides of the car and the hood. He then put the car in storage for the next fifteen years. In 1988, it went to a used car dealer in Bay City, Michigan. In June, 1988, it was sold for \$5,040 to an older gentleman in Bay City, who drove it only 600 miles during the next six years. After his death, it was sold in August, 1994 for \$3500 to the man I purchased it from in 1999.

Even though the car was very presentable, I wanted to make her new again. Just one month after I brought it home, it was completely dismantled. Stripping it down to bare metal, a complete restoration began. The body itself was pretty good except for the front floor boards and



rocker panels. Both were replaced with the excellent Clark's repros. Many hours were spent sandblasting the undercarriage getting it ready for repainting. After five months work, the body was ready for paint. The correct color formula to match the original code #61 Burnished Brown was achieved. Many new parts were installed including all new brakes and lines, fuel tank and convertible top. The seats and carpeting are still the originals and are very much like new. After the restoration was complete, a new window price label was reproduced. The car is all stock with the exception of a complete set of restored Kelsey-Hayes wire wheels. A big thank you goes out to Mark Ellis and Dave Newell. Without their hard work in producing *Finger Tip Facts*, #5246 would STILL be only a dream for me. Some fun facts on the two brownies :

Both cars are 140HP 4-speeds  
Both have a full set of bumper guards  
Both have rear antennas  
#2604 has 54,832 miles  
#5246 has 53,445 miles  
2604 times two equals 5246 - well, almost!

*A nice story and we're happy to play just a minor part in making it happen. Of course, the keynote in Don's tale is the Burnished Brown exterior color. Serious students of the '69 roster will note that there are only twenty cars listed with this color, just 2% of the 1000+ cars. Very scarce, indeed! As Don mentioned, this was a brand new color in 1969 for all Chevrolets, but apparently wasn't too popular. It's similar to a 1963 Chevy dark brown exterior color called Cordovan*

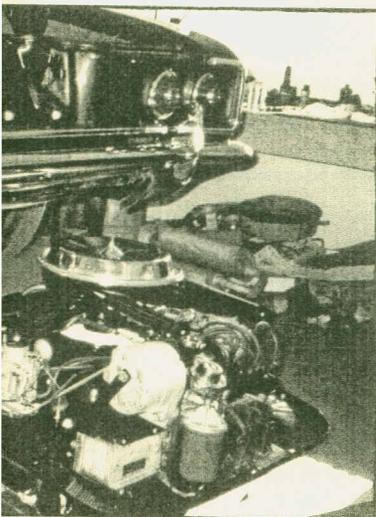
*Brown which was offered for the '63 models only.*

*Burnished Brown Monza coupes are also owned by '69 Group members Bob Bentz in Florida (#3924) and Joey Smiley in Massachusetts (#4156). Joe Gauer in Michigan owns #4258, a brown 500 coupe special ordered by his mother with the 140HP engine and a green interior. Two Canadian '69s and #5187 in Illinois have also been documented with the Burnished Brown and green interior combinations.*

*Our 1969 roster nows lists specs on 273 of the 521 convertibles produced (about 52%), so the odds are there were probably a few more Burnished Brown convertibles than the three we have documented. One more has been reported by Bruce McIntosh in Elkhart, Indiana, but we don't have its VIN#. Here's Bruce's story on that car, just updated last month :*

The Burnished Brown convertible that I know about was owned by a mechanic at Nelson Chevrolet in LaGrange, Indiana. When I last saw it in 1975, it was a high mileage car with much cancer and was driven daily. The serial number was very early or possibly in the 1900's. It was a 110HP 4-speed with a black manual top. I did talk to the owner then and learned he owned eighteen Corvairs at the time. He died years ago and according to his son, who I talked to four or five years ago, all the Corvairs were parted out and scrapped years before.

*One final tidbit - Don's #5246 is the last Corvair painted Burnished Brown of which we are aware.*



Additional vehicles for 1969 Corvair Finger Tip Facts roster								January 1, 2004
VIN	MODEL	BODY	DATE	EXT	INT	ENG	TRANS	OWNER or STATUS
0003	10537				707	140	PG	Dustyn Foster, ?
0734	10567			59	707			Jim Weber, Norfolk, VA
0872	10537	123929	09D A	52	701			Don Wilson, Dunnellon, FL
1891	10537	160149	10B A	52	701	110	PG	E-Bay sale 11/03, OK
2313	10537			50	707	95	4SP	Pete Marrs, Florida
2583	10137			52	700	95	3SP	E-Bay sale 12/03, NJ
2932	10537	208970	01A D	53	704	110	PG	Doug Wilson, Mt Pleasant, PA
3089	10537	208829	01A A	10	701	140	4SP	Paul Chapman, Salem, IN
3223	10567	209708		52	701	140	4SP	Tom Thomason, Miami Springs, FL
3825	10537	304333	02C D	53	704	110	PG	?, Kentucky
3913	10537	PLATE MISSING		53	704	110	PG	in New Ringgold, PA junkyard
5628	10567	380750	05A D	51	704	110	PG	?, St Petersburg, FL
5635						110	PG	scrapped - engine data only
5810	10537			59	701		PG	E-Bay sale 10/03, CT
5888	?							Joe Sims, Parkersburg, WV

#### Data changes & additions to 2003 Roster

0301	10567	PLATE MISSING	
5593	10137	04D A	

#### Ownership changes to 2003 Roster

2039	Michael Dougherty, CO	3517	Andrew Basti, ?
2786	Donald Aycock, ?	5533	Marvin Crook, Monroe, NC

#### New Members -

(Total membership now 94 - 182 '69s)

Marvin Crook	2703 Secrest Short Cut Rd, Monroe, NC 28110	704--289-4197	5533
Jimmie Eanes	6299 Steeple Chase Ct, Greensboro, NC 27406	336--674-9309	0351
Craig Griffin	7 Mendon Dr, Howell, NJ 07731	732--730-8175	2993

#### Treasurer's Report -

Balance as of 4/30/03	\$432.00
Membership Dues (17 new @ \$196, 68 renewal @ \$802)	\$998.00
Newsletter expenses (paper, labels, envelopes, color copies)	\$241.00
Postage (newsletters #5 & #6, new member packets)	\$112.00

**BALANCE AS OF 12/31/03** \$977.00

**Cars For Sale - #2607** Garnet Red convertible, black interior, 110HP, 3-speed, Positraction, 73,000 miles, needs crossmember, \$2000. Duane Gest, Madison, Wisconsin. 608--246-0851

**Corrections - 0085** - This very early car does NOT have the pre '69 style front brake line clips above the gas tank. It does have the normal '69 style brake lines clips with screws protruding into the trunk area, but the screws are not the sheet metal type and are retained by small plates. The car also has black cowl vent panels repainted dark blue with the '68 lighter blue plastic vent knobs. Apparently, Chevrolet's supplier had not delivered the new '69 color items to Willow Run in time for production to begin!

**4807** - In the October issue, reporting on this car at a 1999 Minnesota auction, we listed it as Tuxedo Black. It was originally Cortez Silver, repainted black at some time before the auction. Thanks to Don Colburn for the correction.

SPECIAL '69s     More stories on interesting cars

3223    Monza convertible    140HP 4-Speed    Garnet Red    Black Interior  
Captain Tom Thomason, Miami Springs, Florida

I purchased this car last Summer from a local Corvair club member. He found it at a body shop in north Florida where it had been sitting for quite a while. I was happy to find a restorable convertible to replace a '67 Monza coupe I owned from new. I parked that one in 1989 for a few months while I was on assignment in Europe. Things changed and when I returned ten years later, it wasn't in very good shape, so it became a source for parts. The main problems on the '69 were rotten rocker panels and a shredded top. The rest of it managed to clean up fine with a few bits and pieces. The motor exhibits the mandatory oil drips in the garage. The points were recently replaced with an electronic ignition. I have always like the styling of the late Corvairs but am not married to the original factory accurate authenticity. Thus, my heretical paint change from "arrest me" red to dark titanium with a black back panel. It looks good with the black top and interior. Next - may Pete Estes forgive me - the Monza instruments will be replaced with the full dial setup from an earlier Corsa. The center dash area will have a good radio/CD player, a clock and a GPS/compass. The ashtray will be history until the next owner wishes to restore the car and I might work in a console between the seats as well. I'm a captain for Carnival Cruise Lines based in Miami. The Corvair is not my daily driver, but it does take the kids to the beach regularly and runs weekend errands. The trunk makes a superb ice chest for a small keg. Great car !

4399    Monza coupe            140HP 4-Speed    Dover White    Black Interior  
Ron Kolb, McHenry, Illinois

I bought #4399 on E-Bay from a local gentleman so I was able to see the car before I bid. When he bought it in June, 2000 it had 7,449 miles. Before it was put up for bid in August, 2002, the car got new radial tires, mufflers, gas tank and a going-over at Larry Claypool's Vair Shop. He had a Rampside and a silver '69 500 coupe also for sale (#5270, sold to Tim Ramsell in California) and wanted to get one of the little car/boat Amphicars. When I was talking to him, his wife said, "For all I care, you could drive the *Corvair* into the river!" I guess some women just don't understand the Corvair thing..... #4399 has the original paint, but the bottom of the doors were never painted and there is a little nick on one door where a plant worker drove a door hinge bolt in too far pushing some paint off. I bought it because my first car was a '66 Monza coupe, white with a black interior just like the '69. I also had a silver '69 convertible, 4-speed and AM/FM that I special ordered in 1968. I remember it took a long time - six months? - for it to finally arrive at the dealership. I was in the Air Force stationed in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and had lots of problems with the car that the local dealer couldn't seem to fix. They had to replace one of the pistons and even the distributor since the teeth were chewed up. I couldn't get to work because it wouldn't start or would break down, so with tears in my eyes I traded down to a '67 Chevelle. I heard one of the B-52 mechanics bought it and was able to fix it. I don't have the VIN number and I wonder a lot whatever happened to it. I love my '69 coupe but wish it was my old convertible.....

5533    Monza convertible    110HP Powerglide    Dusk Blue    Blue Interior  
Marvin Crook, Monroe, North Carolina

After looking for a '69 convertible for some time, I was contacted by Leon Brown in Boulder, Colorado who had owned #5533 since 1975. Leon took great care of this car and the original mileage is now only 47,777. After waiting about a month, it arrived by carrier in North Carolina. I'm the fourth owner and hope to keep the car as long as Leon did - 28 years.

*Those '69ers attending the 1999 Virginia Vair Fair in Richmond may remember that Leon and his wife Keturah DROVE #5533 all the way from Colorado to attend the special thirty year '69 Reunion. Their total mileage was 1,750 earning them the long distance award. To top that off, #5533 was also voted the best '69 convertible at the Reunion !*

## MORE LETTERS

Enclosed is my check for \$50 for my renewal after my dues expire in July, 2004. This is for one year. I know dues are only \$10, but please keep the extra \$40. You are doing good work and I cannot imagine \$10 a member will cover costs. -- Len Armstrong #0534, Santa Cruz, CA

*WOW, thanks Len ! Your fifty bucks is most appreciated and will motivate us to keep the **Sixty-Niner's** coming with '69 articles you like. With more contributions like Len's, we could probably run full-color issues, with a lot more color pictures of individual '69s.*

---

You and your associates are doing a great job. The **Sixty-Niner** is a great newsletter - brief and informative. Please retain the present size which will induce most members to read all the pages. We have examples that bigger is not always better: 1969 Corvairs and the 300+ HP, 6000 LB SUV's. Thanks for reviving interest and recognition for one of the most advanced and outstanding automotive designs from the 20th century.

-- Richard Keller #1622 / #5398, Ventura, CA

---

I'd like to suggest a roster change in engine listings. List the original engine first, than the current engine. My 500 originally had a 110 and now has a 140, so it's listing would read 110/140. This would eliminate confusion, help historians and keep track of the current status of cars. -- Steve Poe #1055, Speedway, Indiana

*When we first started the '69 project back in 1994, we thought it best to list just the original specs on the roster - colors, engines, options, etc. exactly as the car left the Willow Run factory. Keeping up with owner changes, not to mention the most important task of tracking down additional '69s, takes up a large part of our Corvair time. However, listing replacement engines seems like a worthwhile roster addition. Would everybody like to see it included ?*

---

I was over at the paint shop in Ypsilanti, Michigan some months ago checking on the progress of my '65 Corsa. The shop is on Route 12, not far from the old Willow Run Corvair assembly plant. What should I see flying, not 250 feet straight over my head, but a B-24 bomber built of course during the war years at Willow Run. Not every day are you able to see one of these old warbirds, especially flying. It probably came from the Yankee Air Force Museum, directly

across the runway from the Willow Run airport. The museum has an excellent collection of war planes. It was just a nice Corvair moment. Here I was with my Corvair, near Willow Run, not one mile from the old plant, and a B-24 flies by. I could almost believe it was 1965 when I toured the plant to see my Corsa being built.

-- Frank Parker, Saline, Michigan

*OK, I know it's not really a '69 story, but I hope it gives you a bit of the flavor of the Ypsi/Willow Run area. If you're a serious car guy, it really IS worth a Detroit vacation trip to see the old plant and the Heritage/CPF Corvair Museum in Ypsilanti (two '69s on display). Go in August and take in the Woodward Cruise and the Detroit CORSA chapter's Homecoming as well.*

---

What is the deal with front cross members on '69s? Is there a serious safety issue I should consider and resolve ?

--Will Weissheimer #5908, Grayslake, Illinois

*The front cross member is of course the same design on all Corvairs, but the '69s have a little "improvement" which can cause rust out problems as the cars get older. A small plate was welded to the rear of the cross member to prevent the top and bottom flanges from penetrating the gas tank in the event of a major front end collision. It is open on both ends so junk, debris, moisture, salt, etc. can get between the plate and the cross member to allow rusting to form. The cross member itself has some openings as well. Though we haven't documented it, since there have been so many reported failures over the years, it appears there was a bad batch of cross members installed on the '69s. Whether it was bad steel or bad construction, the little flimsy plate combined with ZERO paint or rust treatments, all equals an abnormal failure rate.*

*Best thing to do is jack up the front end of the car, place it on secure jack stands and "attack" the cross member with a screwdriver or pick to see if you have rust which may be OK or rust-thru - not OK ! The rear plate may be rusted thru but that is not really important. If there is rust thru, the best option is to replace the entire cross member. However, there are kits available which weld new sheet metal over and around the center section between the spring towers. Either way, it's a major job, but not too technically difficult. New or used replacements and kits are available from Clark's Corvair Parts and other vendors. When ordering, don't forget the six attaching bolts and special cage nuts as the bolts usually snap off when they are removed.*

---