The Tale of the Rescue of one 1968 Corvair 2 Door Coupe

BY CASEY SCHESKY

As a Corvair owner, I am always on the lookout for a good deal! So in September of 2014, when YAHM Museum member Pete Koehler told me he had found and purchased a nice 1968 two door Coupe, with a 110hp motor that moved with a wrench and 4 speed transmission, with a great interior, for $500, I was interested to see what he had! Pete always finds some wonderful things (or they find him)!

He told me the story about how he found the car on Craigslist and the owner had stored it in 1987, just 500 miles since he rebuilt the engine. It was stored in his garage, down by the lake, in Commerce Township.

The owner had piled all kinds of stuff on the car over the years and also the garage was down a hill on a long driveway. So after a time working with the PO who had “invented” a custom mechanical winch that he insisted on using to pull the car out of the garage, Pete Koehler and fellow Corvair owner, Bill Johnson managed to get the car on Pete’s trailer and home it went.

“Come over and see this car and let’s see if we can get it running!” was the statement from Pete to me.

So off I went to see latest acquisition in the “Cavalcade of Corvairs” rescued by Pete Koehler.

Needless to say, I was a little surprised when I saw the “beauty” on the trailer. It had been in a front end collision and the PO drove it into his garage (it still ran and drove!) and left it there! Yikes!!
Still the rest of the car did look pretty good and being a “freshly” rebuilt 110 hp motor with a 4 speed, it was interesting. The previous owner had gotten it as a High school graduation present. He had rebuilt it, got it painted and drove it. In 1987, he had hit a post, but the car still worked, lights, horn, turn signals, steering etc and he DROVE IT HOME and parked it. I guess “ran when parked” did apply to this wreck!

So Bill Johnson lent us his marine gas tank. We disconnected the fuel line from the in-car tank, and hooked it up to Bill’s small tank. With a little gas in the carbs and a good battery, it started right up!

So Bill, Pete and I began cleaning it up a little bit. Pete started working on the interior and it really looked good. Then he looked in the glove compartment and found a gas mileage book and a Detroit Area Corvair Club (DACC) membership brochure from the 1980’s. Actually on the windshield were both a CORSA (Corvair Owners Society of America) sticker and a DACC sticker. The owner had been a member of our local club way back when.

Now it really gets interesting! The gas mileage book was addressed to Poly Andrezick on Coventry Lane, Grosse Ile, Michigan. My wife grew up on Grosse Ile and Poly lived two doors down from her parents on Coventry Street! They even remembered Poly having the car!

Now I was really interested in the Poly 1968 2 door coupe! When Pete agreed to sell it to me for $600 (got to cover rescue and transportation costs!) I jumped at the chance to get to my “dream car”.

Casey Schesky is Treasurer of the Detroit Area Corvair Club and Member YAHM

So after 2 years of work at WCC on Poly (that’s what I named the car, after it’s previous owner), I have my dream car (or at least one of them!). Through four semesters of classes and a lot of guidance and help from the instructors at WCC, I got the job done. I pulled the car out on WCC’s Super Chief rack, cut out and replaced the front panel with a new fiberglass one (also found by Pete on one of his hunts), filled the various dents and fixed some small rust areas, repainted it black, and now it’s done!
My First Corvair

BY PETE KOEHLER

My Dad always bought Plymouths. Big, boring, no-frills Plymouths. Station wagons. Base engine with the standard three-on-a-tree manual transmissions. He felt that options, any options, were a bad idea because that just meant more things to break and cost money to repair. So when I became car-owning age my sights were just a bit different. Enter the Corvair. I don’t remember how I heard of this car. The example in question was a light blue four door sedan called a Monza. I knew Monza was a famous race course in Italy. Was this Corvair Monza a race car?

A trip to Fishkill, New York answered that question. No, it wasn’t a race car. But it was cool. A little four door sedan with two bucket seats up front. Dad’s Plymouths were never this cool. The car was only five years from new but there was a problem. I learned that Corvairs were like the VW beetle that Dad drove to work - engine in the rear. This Corvair was supposed to have a rear engine but there was a gaping hole back there where the engine used to be. What the heck! I was 16 and the car was only $10 and get it out of my garage. So we hooked up a chain to the trusty Ford 9N and dragged it back home to a field behind a friend’s house.

Once in the field reality set in. What are we going to do with a rear engine - no, make that a no engine car? Some other kids in the neighborhood had a similar Monza. It was definitely a “Field Car” and you could tell by the custom bodywork inflicted by various rocks and trees and brush that used to be in their way. Their engine ran and at least they had an engine! Since my Corvair looked better than their Corvair and their Corvair ran better than my Corvair a plan was hatched to marry the best of the two into one. For trading material I had a 1960 Rambler American that the other kids thought was cool. It was a station wagon (yuck!) but they had plans to cut the back portion of the roof off and make a version of an El Camino truck. Can you say El CaRambler? The deal was done and now I had to figure out how to extract the engine from one and put it in the other Corvair. Let the fun begin!

Step one we figured was to roll the running Corvair over on it’s roof to ease the removal of said engine. I’m pretty sure that is not how they say to do it in the Factory Manual, but it did work. Next we had to jack up my sedan so we could slide the new engine in under the rear bumper. Problem was we were kids with no money for proper tools. Solution: use cut down tree stumps in place of jack stands! That worked fine until the friend’s pet goat (Oscar, as I recall) came over to see what we were doing in his driveway. A little head butting later (I guess that is what goats do) and my Corvair was on the ground again. Thanks, Oscar!!

Somehow we did get the engine out of one and into the other and it ran. Now I had a Corvair with bucket seats AND an engine. Super cool! But it leaked oil. Lots of oil. I was clueless so I went down to my local Chevy dealer and asked the guys in the Service Department what could be done to cure this ailment. They knew exactly what the cause of the oil leak was. I guess they had seen this same problem before. A lot of before. The Service Manager quoted me about $30 to replace the O-rings on the pushrod tubes. Thirty dollars! I only paid ten bucks for the car in the first place! He could see that I was not what you would call a monied customer, so he turned me over to the Parts Manager who sold me the requisite seals for a little more than $3. That’s a little more like it. Back to the field and another new Corvair repair experience. Once again we were successful and now I had a Corvair with bucket seats, an engine and no more oil leaks.
All of this happened fifty years ago this coming Summer. That was my first Corvair. I have owned several since. In fact, a whole lot of several. I love them! They are easy to fix once you get used to them. They are a blast to drive. And the best part is that they are still affordable. That might be why I count fifteen in my collection currently. And most of these examples were built right here in Ypsilanti at the Willow Run Assembly Plant by local workers. One of mine is on display at the Museum along with a few other air-cooled rear-engine Corvairs. If you are in town stop by and check them out.

Pete Koehler is an ardent Corvair collector and a member and supporter of YAHM

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**Excerpt from 1959 Chevrolet Motor Division, General Motors Corporation, Car Report**

- Unpack Power Team—engine, transmission and axle are combined in a compact low-weight unit in the rear.
- Turbo-Air—America's first modern aluminum engine; aircraft-type; horizontally opposed cylinders, forced-air cooling; 80 b.h.p., 125 lb. ft. torque.
- Transaxle—this component of Unipack combines transmission and rear axle drive gears; choice of standard floor-shift or automatic transmission.
- Unistrut Body by Fisher—this is a unistrut body-frame design; rigid, all-welded steel construction.
- Dual-Flex Suspension—all four wheels independently suspended by big coil springs isolated from body by extra-thick rubber bushings.
- 6-Passenger Seating—ample head room, leg room, shoulder room, hip room—both the front and rear seats.
- Low, Virtually Flat Floor—comfortable seating, ample foot room—all thanks to rear engine design.
- Front Trunk Compartment—key-locking; totals 15.6 cubic feet including storage space behind the rear seat; counterbalanced trunk lid.
- Spare Tire and Wheel—conveniently located under front hood; easy to get at.
- Special Insulated Rear Bulkhead—help prevent heat and engine sounds from reaching the passengers.
- High-Level Ventilation—fresh air intake is located above low-lying road frames and dust; double-thick steel core gives added strength.
- Front-Mounted Fuel Tank—away from engine and exhaust system heat; protected by massive front cross-member; 11-gal. capacity.

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Funds will go to enhancing the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum
President’s Report

This issue is dedicated to Rear End vehicles that we display at the museum. Two of the stories that are featured in the newsletter are from long time Corvair collectors.

As I have said before the museum is always a work in progress. Recent changes in the museum are the Willow Run Assembly Plant display. So, please come by and check it out.

Upcoming Events – We start our weekly Thursday Night Cruise Nights June 7th (weather permitting of course) through August 30th. We close the streets at 5:00 pm and start at 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm. Starting June 14th through August 9th on Cruise nights the Yankee Air Museum again will choose two vehicles to receive a free show registration for their Willow Run Victory Car show on August 12th along with Air show tickets. Check our website for the theme night dates and you can always call the museum for any information (734-482-5200).

Don’t forget to mark your calendars for September 16, 2018 for the Orphan Car Show. The registration forms have been mailed out. If you didn’t receive one and would like one check our website www.ypsiautoheritage.org and download the form or call and we will mail you one.

Thank you for supporting the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum and hope to see you soon.
YPSILANTI AUTOMOTIVE HERITAGE MUSEUM

100 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
734.482.5200

MUSEUM HOURS
Tuesday-Sunday
1:00 to 4:00 P.M.
Monday
Closed
Admission $5.00 adults
Children 12 and under are free when accompanied by an adult

CONTACT US
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