

# On the Air

Newsletter of the Arkansas Corvair Club ■ CORSA Chapter 722

September 2005

Volume 18, Issue 9

## ONE GOOD TURN

### Bringing Back the Corvair Steering Box

Ron Ceridono

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It's rather ironic that a pair of Chevrolet's most criticized cars, the Corvair and the Vega, have also provided two of the most commonly used components in street rodding: their steering gear boxes.

And while a huge number of Vega boxes and their derivatives are installed in street rods regularly, the number of Corvair boxes already in service is staggering. Virtually every T on the planet has one, and if you're building a bucket, there really isn't a better alternative.

Over the years there were several incarnations of the Corvair steering box. Some had a one-piece steering shaft, later versions had a short, splined input shaft that used a coupler;

cases were made of cast iron and aluminum. And while there were some differences over the years, all were small, light, and used the recirculating-ball design. That's what made them so popular, even among those who didn't know what recirculating balls were. Just about every other compact steering box available used the old worm and sector or worm and roller layout, which meant harder steering and increased wear.

By virtue of its design, size, and availability, Corvair steering became a big hit with the T-bucket crowd, particularly when someone figured out how to reverse it. That provided the option of mounting the steering

*continued on page 2*

## Corvair calendar notes...

### September 21-24

**8th Annual Petit Jean Fall Swap Meet & Military Vehicle Rally** - There will be a swap meet, arts and crafts, flea market, and collectible car corral, September 21-24, on Petit Jean Mountain. Attendees can simply enjoy looking at the old cars or finding one to purchase. In conjunction with the Fall Swap Meet, the 3rd Annual Military Vehicle Rally includes a display of about 50 vehicles from the World War II era through Desert Storm, including small jeeps to large trucks. Military displays will include the "Fox Hole Radio" and the "Field Kitchen." Rides in a military vehicle will be offered to veterans. The rally also will have military vehicle competitions, games, and a silent auction. Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Admission is free. Museum of Automobiles, Petit Jean Mountain, near Morrilton. For more information, phone 501 727-5427, or visit [www.museumofautos.com](http://www.museumofautos.com).

## We will meet on Tuesday, September 20

The Arkansas Corvair Club will hold a regular club meeting on Tuesday, September 20, at Just Like Mom's Home Cooking restaurant, 3140 E. Kiehl Ave., in Sherwood. During this meeting we'll solicit interest in fall activities. Please join us at 6:00 p.m. for dinner, 7:00 p.m. for business meeting .

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**"Corvairs bring friends together."**

**Corvair Steering Box** *continued*

above or below the frame, with the Pitman pointing up or down.

However, while the little box was popular, there were problems from time to time. When used on heavy cars, the aluminum cases would sometimes crack. And, because the internal components were also intended for a



**Flaming River offers several variations of the venerable Corvair steering box, including completely chromed versions.**

very light car, as time has marched on and the miles have rolled by, wear has become a factor for many of those in use. To further the irony of the Corvair steering box, the fact is that it remains an excellent choice for a variety of applications today (cars with 1,000 lbs or less on the front axle, like T-buckets).

And as most small-production cars use rack-and-pinion steering, the Corvair box is still the most compact, conventional steering gear to be found. As you might guess, good, original Corvair steering boxes, or the parts to rebuild a worn one, are hard to find.

However, thanks to the folks at Flaming River, the search has been simplified. Just give them a call and

order their all-new and improved version.

Flaming River remained fairly faithful to the GM design and kept some things the same: The sector shaft accepts the stock Corvair Pitman arm, the input shaft has the familiar 5/8-inch/36 splines (same as Vega), and the mounting flange is like the original.

From the outside you'd have to look closely to notice any changes, although the cases are now made of cast steel and are thicker and stronger than the OEM versions. Inside it's a different story. The bearings have been revised and improved, and the sector shaft now rides in needle bearings rather than a bushing. In



**Housings for these new boxes are made of cast steel. They're thicker and stronger than the originals and still weigh just 6 lbs.**



**Like the Vega gear, Corvair boxes can be used in cross-steering applications, but they are more often seen in T-buckets. In standard configuration, the Pitman arm points up.**

bearings rather than a bushing. In *continued on page 3*

**Welcome new ACC members - Dannie and Mary Vaughn**

We extend a warm Corvair welcome to new members **Dannie and Mary Vaughn**, of Jacksonville. (P.O. Box 6239, phone 501 605-3868). Dannie owns a 1967 Monza coupe and a 1964 Monza sedan. You may have seen the cars around Cabot. ■

Happy Birthday to our ACC associates born in October.

Brenda Gates  
JB King  
October 6

Fran Gray  
October 21

James Carter  
October 30

Happy Anniversary to the 1960 Corvair  
October 2 (46 years)

Chuck & Mary Jolley  
October 4

Bill & Cathy Smith  
October 11 (30 years)

Ernie & Fran Gray  
October 22

Dannie & Mary Vaughn  
October 23

**ACC Dues Alert**

In an effort to keep everyone informed about the status of your ACC membership dues, we publish a membership *Dues Alert* in every issue of *On the Air*.

The *Dues Alert* lists names of members who are past due and those due for the current month.

Dues are **\$20.00** for regular membership and **\$15.00** for associate members. Please mail payments to: **Arkansas Corvair Club, P.O. Box 627, Little Rock, AR 72203.**

Here are the names that are **past due** and due in **September**.

**Past Due** ..... Joe Gregory  
George Koenig  
Keith LaCrosse  
Bill MacSorley

**Due Sep**            None

Please disregard if you've already paid. Thanks for your generous support.

## ACC August Meeting Minutes



JB King

The Arkansas Corvair Club did not hold a formal monthly meeting at Just Like Mom's restaurant, on Kiehl Avenue, in Sherwood, on Tuesday, August 16.

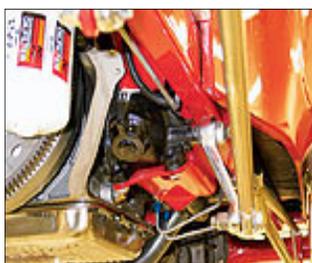
### Clunker Car Night

Instead of a formal meeting, on Tuesday, August 16, ACC members gathered at Ray Winder Field, in Little Rock to attend Clunker Car Night, sponsored by the Arkansas Travelers baseball franchise.

### Corvair Steering Box *continued*

In addition, the worm, nut, and sector are all larger and stronger.

Flaming River offers their new Corvair box in two forms: the normal input shaft orientation and reversed.



In reversed applications, the Pitman arm points down. This is typical of Total Performance T-buckets.

It should be noted that there is one other difference in these boxes, and that's the steering ratio. The reversed

box has a 20:1 ratio while the standard has a quicker 16:1 ratio.

In another bit of irony, those auto-

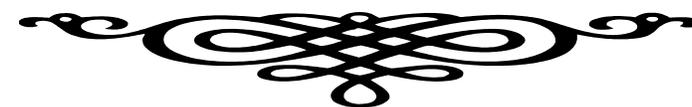


This is the worm and nut from the new Flaming River gear. Compared to the GM original design, this box has larger and stronger compo-

cross and canyon-racing Corvair owners love those fast ratio boxes.

If Ralph Nader only knew.

*Editor's Note: See additional photos of*



Despite the very hot evening we were delighted to have the following members attending: Butch and Meredith Chapman; Ken Franson (accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law); Elvis and JB King; Keith, Cindy, and Emily LaCrosse; Stew, Ronnie, and Ryan MacLeod; and Bill and Cathy Smith.

As in previous years, the baseball game provided a convenient setting to enjoy hot dogs, cold beverages, and Corvair conversation.

And...as fortune would have it, no one in our group was the lucky (or unlucky) winner of a Clunker Car, courtesy of local auto dealers and the Arkansas Travelers. ■

*Flaming River worm and nut, and recirculating-ball steering gear, below.*

This is a Flaming River worm, nut, and sector. When the steering wheel is turned, the nut moves up or down on the worm, which



turns the sector shaft and swings the Pitman arm.



Here's the heart of a recirculating-ball steering gear. The balls fit between the threads of the worm and nut, which serves two purposes: they

reduce friction for easy steering and provide a huge wear surface for a long life.

A common modification to Corvair boxes for T-bucket applications was to reverse them, or swap the input shaft end for end. ■



## Tech Tips

From Corvair Center Forum

[www.corvaircenter.com/forum/](http://www.corvaircenter.com/forum/)

*Published by Rick MacDonald, August 30, 2004*

### Easy tip anyone can use to improve the look of a stock exhaust pipe

I finished hanging my exhaust; I'm using the stock setup from Clark's for my 1963 sedan.

When the car is done, I think the ugly tail pipe sticking out would be well, ugly!

So, I got a simple, round edge chrome tip to put on there, and it looked really nice. But it was way off center and looked like a cheap screw-on extension. (Which it is, but it does look better than the pipe).

Anyway, I slid in some 140 exhaust donuts (I think) that I had around. They fit right in and take up the slack between the inside of the tip and the outside of the tail pipe. Nice and straight, perfectly centered, it looks like it was born to be there.

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*Published by Darrell McCracken, August 31, 2004*

### Dressing up the dipstick grommet

When I put my new powder-coated shroud on my 140, I didn't want to go back and use the worn oil dipstick grommet because it was well...WORN.

Since I was also installing new spark plug wires, I removed the grommet shroud off one of the old wires and used it for a grommet for the dipstick.

It was a little tight going in but, with some careful massaging (no cutting), it fit great.



# On the Air

Arkansas Corvair Club  
370 Windwood Drive  
Cabot, AR 72023-8344

Place  
first class  
postage  
here.

FIRST CLASS

*"Promoting the maintenance,  
enjoyment, and preservation of  
the Chevrolet Corvair."*

## Arkansas Corvair Club Information

### Meetings

The Arkansas Corvair Club (ACC) meets on the **3rd Tuesday** of each month at **Just Like Mom's** Home Cooking restaurant, 3140 E. Kiehl Ave., in Sherwood.

### September Meeting

The ACC will meet Tuesday, **September 20**, 7:00 p.m., at Just Like Mom's, on Kiehl Ave., in Sherwood.

Join us at 6:00 p.m. for food and fellowship prior to the meeting. The club offers an array of merchandise for sale—oil filters, gas filters, hats, decals, patches, T-shirts and more.

### Officers

**President:** Cathy Smith, 370 Windwood Drive, Cabot, AR 72023, 501 843-8413.

**Vice-President:** Meredith Chapman, P.O. Box 243, Jacksonville, AR 72078, 501 676-6693.

**Treasurer:** Elvis King, 21305 N. Mill Rd., Little Rock, AR 72206, 501 888-1224 (evening).

**Secretary:** JB King, 21305 N. Mill Rd., Little Rock AR, 72206, 501 888-1224 (evening).

**Elected Board:** Allan Embrey, 501 834-5373; Ronnie MacLeod, 821-3622; Clyde Jones, 479 774-6789; Bill Smith, 501 843-8413.

**Appointed Board:** Pending.

### Committee Chairs

**Membership:** Elvis King

**Publicity:** Bill Smith

**Newsletter Editor:** Bill Smith, 370 Windwood Drive, Cabot, AR 72023, 501 843-8413.

**Newsletter Advertising:**

Non-members and businesses:  
\$100/year full page; \$60-½ page;  
\$35-¼ page.

**Program & Events:** Open

**ACC Webmaster:** Ken Franson, 608 Ridgelea Ave., Sherwood, AR 72120, 501 835-6005.

### Web Address

**Arkansas Corvair Club Web site:**  
<http://corvair5.tripod.com/acc.htm>

**ACC Mission:** The mission of the Arkansas Corvair Club (ACC) is to promote the maintenance, enjoyment, and preservation of all types of Corvairs and related vehicles, and to advance and improve driving skills, automobile safety, and the Corvair's image.