

Contact: Art Eller, 3873 Shannon Road, Los Angeles, Calif. 90027.
9213) 665-3457.

UP-COMMING RALLIES

January 17 - 20th, 1991. Fun in the Sun, Phoenix, Arizona. 1726 West Baseline Road, Phoenix, Arizona, 85041. Contact: Dan & Betty Reinhardt (602) 846-6920

January 25 - 26th, 1991. 6960 SW 144th Street, Miami, Florida. Host Lain & Jean Guthrie, (305) 235-2549.

March 10 -17th, 1991. The Florida Lions Camp, 2819 Tiger Lake Road, Lake Wales, Florida 33853. 13 miles East of Lake Wales on Highway 60. Hosts: Walter & Marilyn Davison, (305) 444-1937.

April 25 -28th, 1991. Tehachaip, California.

May 8 - 18th, 17 - 20th, 1991. TULIP TIME '91 FESTIVAL. Holland, Michigan. Reservations and information, Marian Grootenhaar, 1505 Quincy Street, Grandville, Mi. 49418. (616) 896-8630.

June 1991. Eastern rally, Host and place to be determined.

July 1991. Crescent City, California or Pt. Oreford, Oregon.

September 23 -29th, 1991. National rally at Neosho, Missouri.

May and June 1992. Rally to Alaska. Rendezvous '92. We'll meet in northwestern area of the U.S.. From there we'll tour up to Fairbanks Alaska. Passing thru Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon and up to Fairbanks. We may come back on the ferry along the coast. This is the 50th anniversary of the Alcan highway, 1941 - 1992. Big celebrations are planned by all participants along the way. Mark your calendar.



WHALES ON WHEELS

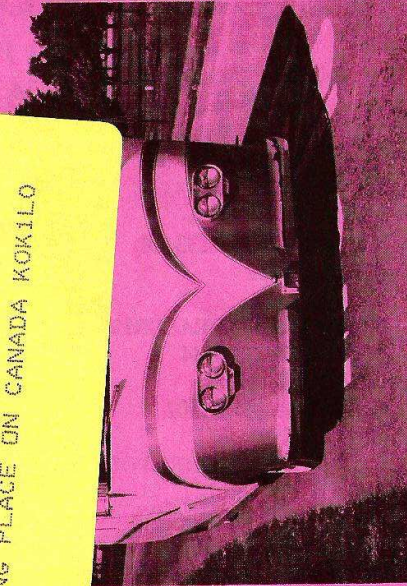
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WHALES ON WHEELS

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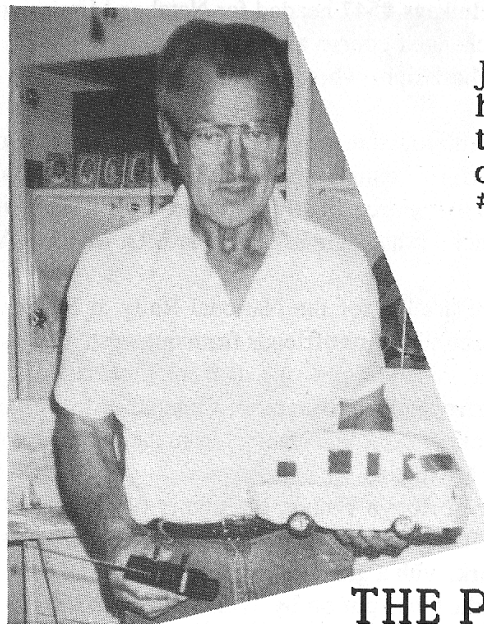
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GROUP ULTRA VAN is a Chapter of the **CORVAIR SOCIETY of AMERICA (CORSA)** and is dedicated to the preservation and use of **ULTRA VANS**. This 22 foot unique motor home was designed by David Peterson and built in Kansas until 1970. About 360 units were built. Dues are \$4.00 annually, please remit to the Secretary-Treasurer. Submit all technical information to the Editor.

COVER PHOTO:

Our cover story is the finding of Ultra Van #101. This photo was taken in 1961. Note the 1960 Corvaair headlight bezels and how the Van tapers at the bottom. The trailer hitch in front was to run the boat down into the water at the boat ramp in the Alameda.

CORSA
P.O. Box 550
Midlothian, Il. 60445
(708) 339-6241



Jean is holding his radio controlled model of his Ultra #330

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Caravaning to the National at Franklin, Texas

by JEAN MCMASTERS #330

September 25, 1990, we all met at Doug and Sandy Toulee's #267 from Cocoa Beach Florida. We had the usual last minute "fix it" items before we could get under way. Al Drigger had #412 (the long one) to get ready. A new paint job by Dick Granger #430. Dick has painted five Ultra Vans this year.

Wednesday afternoon found us at Dothan, Alabama. We stayed at the Westgate Church of Christ. They let us hook up overnight. Walt & Marilyn Davison #366, and Norm & Marion Helmkeys #547 were there when we arrived. We attended Bible study while there.

On Thursday the Driggers #412, Grangers #430, Toulees #267 and McMasters #330 pulled out for Jackson Mississippi. The

Davison #366 and Helmkeys #547 headed for Natchez Mississippi. Then the four of us changed course also and headed for Natchez, bypassing Jackson, Mississippi where Don Richards #379 was to meet us.

Friday we all came together at Wal Mart in Center Texas. Don Richards #379 and Morris & Tennie Randle #328. Here we had a good visit with an old 8th Air Force buddy of mine Gerald & Betty Bellmeyer on their ranch. What a great Texas Bar B.Q. we had. We stayed two days.

On Sunday we headed for the National Rally at Franklin, Texas. We really missed seeing our friends from out west. Only six showed up. 23 Ultra Vans showed up. 8 from Florida; 5 from California; 3 from Arizona; 1 from Ontario, Canada; 1 from New Jersey; 1 from New York; 1 from Maryland; 1 from Alabama; 1 from Missouri; and 1 from Michigan.

Upon our arrival Robyn Follak, the owner of WHITT RV Park, met us with a gift bag full of many items. The RV park was a clean and well laid park, with a great recreation room.

Monday breakfast was put on by Walt Davison #366 (Omelets) and Clyde Stanton #392 (Pancakes). It was really great! Tuesday about 30 of us went to the Mischer Ranch in Easterly, Texas. This is a working cattle ranch with 10,000 acres, and 3,000 head of cattle. Wednesday we had a pot luck dinner. Thursday was the general business meeting and catered banquet. Friday, Georgia & Paul Robinson # 385, entertained us with their round dancing. Saturday we went to Calvert, Texas a small Victorian town with antique shops. Sunday Clyde Stanton #392 led the Sunday worship.

Our caravan with 8 Ultra Vans was a great experience. Some of us ran together, some took side trips and then meet up later. We all tried to help each other, but had no major problems.

After the National Rally we went to San Antonio and stayed with Earl McCrary. Don't ever miss a chance to stop over with Earl. We stayed 5 days trying to get his G.M.C. ready for the Confederate Air Show in Harlingen, Texas. He didn't make it.

The Randles #328 and McMasters #330 went to the Air Show by ourselves. We enjoyed three days at the show. After that we toured the area, San Padre Island and followed the Gulf back to Florida.



At left is the 1/24 scale model of an Ultra Van. This radio controlled Ultra was built by Jean McMasters #330 and Bill Mc Kinley #334. Anyone that is interested in obtaining the basic body in kit form, contact Jean.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.....

Dear Christy:

I've gotten the two copies of "Whales of Wheels". Thanks for including me. I'm enclosing a check for \$10.00 which I believe covers dues for a while, anyway. Frankly, the Whale magazine scared the heck out of me. It appears as though one would have to be an accomplished mechanic to keep a Whale running and, frankly, I don't have much ability in that direction. I do have half a dozen questions that would certainly appreciate somebody in the ownership answering for me.

I drove my Whale back for about 150 miles—the last 50 in a 30 mph head wind. It was very frustrating. I couldn't get over 40 mph out of the machine, and I remember reading the warnings about lugging the engine, so, I took it fairly easy. The two-speed transmission seem, to be a bad piece of engineering. My Whale has a 110 Corvair that was rebuilt 17,000 miles ago, so, I presume the engine is as good as it's going to get. What are owners doing?

I saw the ridiculous engine in the trailer answer, and that doesn't make any sense to me. Has anybody tried to re-gear an Ultra so that the engine does the job it should be able to do? Are there alternative engine configurations that I should be looking at? It seems to me the whole matter of power plant is the single most serious thing wrong with the van, and if that could be solved it'd be a nice piece of equipment. Mine needs new carpet and something done with the front seat arrangement and some cushion work. Other than that either geared or powered so that I can cruise at 50 to 55 and have enough power to go up more than a one percent grade.

Has anyone ever thought of putting a six-cylinder Porsche engine in one? The thought even occurred to me that the entire front running gear off of a Chrysler Caravan might be installed in front of the van and would certainly provide substantially more satisfactory power than the Corvair. I checked with the local Chevrolet dealer and there are Corvair mechanics available on his staff. Their only concern was parts, and I assured them there were parts supplies somewhere.

Finally, does anyone have some suggestions as to how to treat the dashboard and front seat arrangement? It occurs to me it should be possible to get front seats built that would swivel and provide the double bed that was originally intended and still have reasonable safety features.

This seems like a substantial imposition on you, and I don't intend it to be. If you can put me in touch with somebody that can give me some answers to some of these questions, I'd sure appreciate it. I'm going to spend the winter redoing the van for spring, so I have plenty of time to do some thinking and some work on it. I also have a couple of pretty darn good mechanics who are interested in working with me, but I thought there must be people out there who have tried various combinations and some body must have found something that works. Anything you can direct me to would sure be appreciated.

Robert C. Palmer, 2424 32nd Avenue, Grand Forks, North Dakota. Phone (701) 775-3193. *I publish Bobs address and phone number so someone can get in touch with him and discuss the items he has outlined in his letter. Ed.*



Jim Craig "digging out" Ultra #101

THE FIRST ULTRA VAN FOUND BY CLUB MEMBERS

BY JIM CRAIG #549

Mr. David G. Peterson, designer/builder of the Ultra Van has confirmed that the Ultra Van shown in the accompanying photos is in fact the first Ultra Van he built #101. See CORSA Communique, Vol 2, No., 8 April 1980.

The information that followed to finding this very rare piece of Ultra Van history was originally provided by Mory Snyder #487. A long time friend of his, who is an old car buff, provided the information that lead to the finding of the first Ultra Van. Bob Franz #472, Mory Snyder and myself contacted the executor of the estate of the former owner. He arranged for us to see the Ultra Van. At that time we had no idea what kind of an Ultra Van we would be seeing.

After arriving at the executors home in northern California he

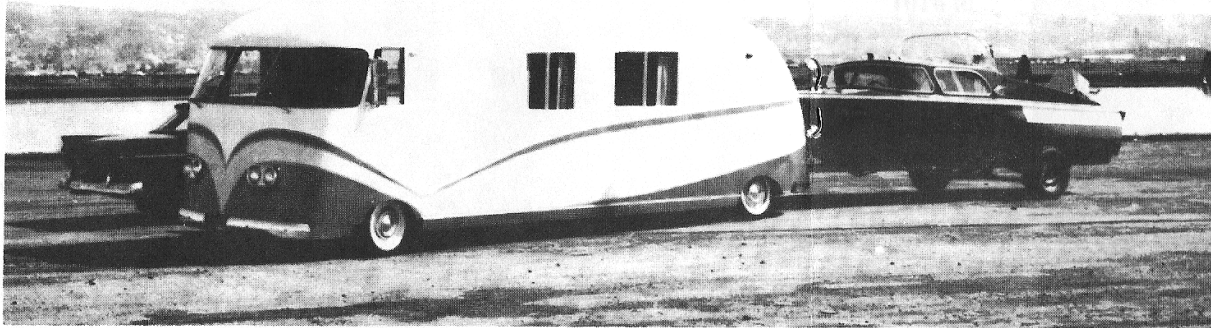


Photo of #101 circa 1961 taken at the marina in Alameda, California. Note the "13" Corvair wheels. Designer Peterson towed this boat regularly with this Ultra Van.

showed us the California owner's certificate which indicated the Ultra Van to be a 1960 model, first sold in 1960. (wow, I couldn't believe my eyes). After a 20 mile trip from his place up a winding dirt roads to his grandfathers place in the mountains, we pulled up to a deserted looking old house and we parked in front of the house, the Ultra Van was parked out back. Now, just imagine this setting, its like you might see in rural Kentucky where a Hatfield or McCoy might meet you at the gate banishing a squirrel rifle and wanting to know "what business you have in these parts". The place was quiet and deserted except for a couple of crows that sounded the alarm of our presence.

The Ultra Van was parked in the grape vineyard in back. At first glance I knew it had to be number one or a prototype. After a few "wows", and "Great Scotts" and some "I can't believe it", I settled down to feast my eyes on its very different shape and construction. Obviously it had set quite a few years, it had sunk into the dirt until it settled on its belly. The wheels were buried up to the brake drums and then some. The local pack rats had piled up a home on top of the engine thinking that someday it might run again and heat up his home. Someone had stripped all of the cabinets and upholstery from the interior, and the floor was stacked up with many old tires and all kinds of other junk. The early Corvair dash panel was intact and it showed 32,000 miles.

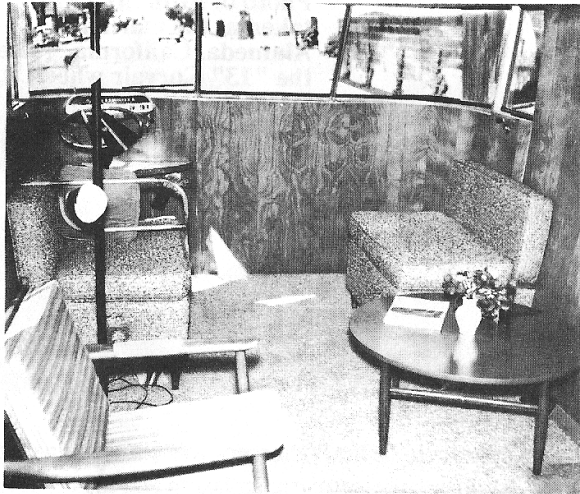
The engine appears to be the 80 horsepower 1960 engine with 1961 carburetors. It had an automatic transmission and the complete early Corvair rear suspension assembly. It had single wheels on the rear. We measured it out to be 24 feet in length.

The body shell seemed to in good condition, except for some magnesium skins on the left and right side that possible salt water had gotten to. Also the front trailer hitch and left front bumpers had been pulled off at sometime, probably trying to tow it. All of the windshield glass was in good condition except for a few cracks in the lower left hand corner of the drivers glass. All other Plexiglass windows were in good condition.

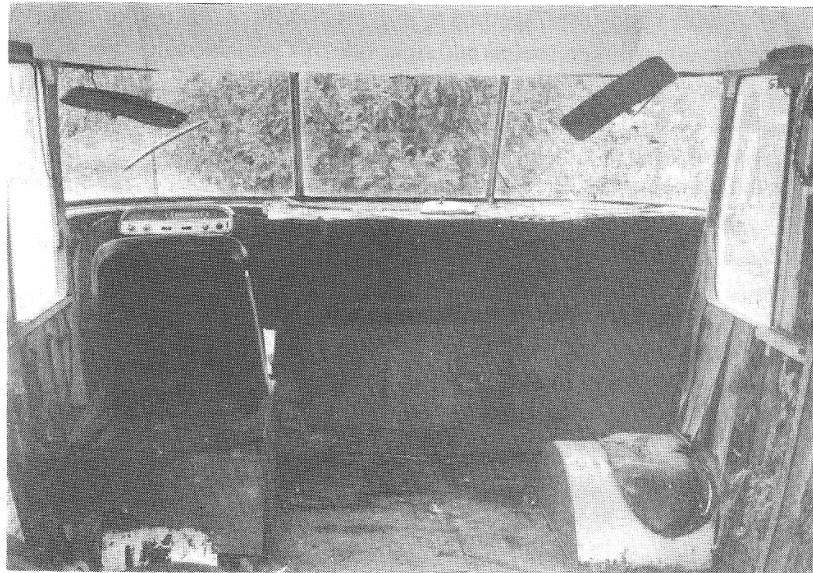
One of the first things that is noticeably different about this Ultra Van is that the entrance door is in the center instead of up front, and that the front and rear ends do not roll under. The corners angle straight down on the front and rear. Also the head light assemblies are from a 1960 Corvair.

Yes, this is a very different Ultra Van, and very rare and important to the Ultra Van history. One that only a few of you have ever seen. The Van is 30 years old. Most of us have only seen photos of it.

Its very restorable and it would be a job for some "dyed in the wool" Ultra Van person to tackle. It is available to purchase. Make



The interior of #101 taken in 1961 and today. Note the passenger side window has been changed to the later style, sliding type.



offers. Photo sets are available for \$5.00 from Jim Craig #549, Phone 619 366 9104.

Mory Synder and I plan to do some minor repairs on the exterior, and make it road worthy and Clean up its interior. It will then be made available to anyone who would complete the restoration.

Sometime in the future a follow up article will be provide to give you more detailed information of this Ultras Vans beginnings, structural make up and other items of interest as we prepare for its restoration.



Cleaing engine compartment of #101 of rodant nest.

Editors note: The first time I saw the number one Ultra Van was in 1973 at the Sonoma Factory site. The Van had been regularly used by David L. Peterson's son David G. Peterson. David G. was living in San Francisco at the time. He had lived in it at several times at his restaurant sites when he was starting them up. "The Rectory" was the name of the restaurant chain he started. I know he lived in it when

he started the Aspen Colorado restaurant, that was in 1966. As things got better for David G. the Ultra Van got used less and less. He left it parked on the streets of San Francisco and would occasionally check for parking tickets. One day he checked and the Van was gone. Hauled away by the city. When I saw the Ultra Van in Sonoma it had just been recovered from the tow away lot. It still had the front trailer hitch (Which David L. used to attach to his boat for launching in the San Francisco Bay) and front bumpers. There were no magnesium panels on it at the time. I asked David L. about it at the time. He had purchased a wrecked 1960 Corvair sedan and used all of the parts he could on the prototype, this also accounts for the 1960 registration date. The length was 24 feet and width was 96 inches at the top of the Van and 86 inches at the bottom. Making it narrower at the bottom allowed little overhang on the rear wheels. On the next Ultra Van built (Mel Dineson #200) he took the 96 inches to the bottom of the van and added dual wheels on the rear to take care of the overhang. It



Mory Snyder at the wheel of #101. Jim Craigs Chevy step van is pulling it to its new resting place. Note the windshilds on the step van are the same that are used by the Ultra Vans. That's where Mr. Peterson got the idea for the front of the Ultra Vans.

didn't need dual wheels but they made it look better. There are some differences in the original photos and the ones that Jim Craig provided. Specifically the forward windows in the drivers and passenger side. Originally they were a standard Chevy roll down type, and the side windows on the drivers side were two separate ones. I called David L. and he couldn't explain the reason. My guess is that he modified the Van at some time after he returned from Hutchinson Kansas., for the windows are exactly what we have on our Vans that were built in Hutchinson. But we do know that there was only ONE Ultra Van built that was narrow at the bottom and that was the first one. So this must be it! The rear section on this and all other Ultra Vans was patterned after Petersons Spartin trailer. Park your Ultra Van next to a Spartin trailer you will see what I mean, window and all! I'm finishing up an article that will include more information on this and subsequent Vans for the CORSA Communique, look for it.

JIM CRAIG-ERNIE AWARD WINNER.



Award winner Jim and his wife Marlene.

Jim Craig #549 was the announced winner of the Ernest Newhouse Award. This is a Silver Medal that is presented each year to the Ultra Van owner that has contributed the most to furthering the use and preservation of the units over the last year. Jim was certainly an obvious choice. He has been president of the club and has done numerous technical articles. He has owned more Ultra Vans than anyone else, and was instrumental in uncovering the Ultra Van number one. (see article elsewhere in this issue). He has been gracious in offering his house for rallies now for several years. If you ever have a problem, he is always there to help. I have heard many stories from other owners about how Jim has helped them, and not asked for anything in return. That's the kind of guy we like to have around.

Jim has always been a mover. He was very active in the San Diego Corvair club. Then he moved to the high desert a few years ago. He is retired from the Navy department at North Island, San Diego. He and his wife Marlene have a grown son and daughter, so he does have some time to spend on his hobbies. These include motorcycles and other type of automobiles. He was instrumental in starting a DKW club for the DKW German automobile.

CONGRATULATIONS JIM for a job well done!

THE ALASKA HIGHWAY

For all practical purposes, the Alaska Highway is now virtually a hard-surface road. We should be able to negotiate the 1488 miles between Dawson Creek, British Columbia, and Fairbanks, Alaska, with little or no difficulty. The *quality* of the road, both in Alaska and Canada, ranges from awe-some to awful. There are some stretches, literally hundreds of miles long, where the road surface is smooth and level, with generous shoulders.

In other stretches you can encounter potholes, broken paving and gravel breaks. The 1989 guidebook for the Alaska Highway showed only two major sections that are still gravel: about 53 miles in the area beyond Fort Nelson and 9 miles south of Smart River. This years "official" unpaved mileage will be even smaller.

I spoke with a friend that traveled to Fairbanks this summer.

He relayed that to road was good. He drove straight thru in 2 1/2 days. In mid summer he said there was some mud. But if we go up in May most of the unimproved areas will still be frozen and hard.

Ultra Van owners I've spoken with have voiced concern about their windshields. There are windshield protectors that can be mounted on the front that should take care of any rocks that may fly up.

There are mosquitoes but not many bears.

1992 will be the 50th anniversary of the building of the highway. Many celebrations will be held along the way. We plan to meet in the Northwest in May 1992 (possibly at an Ultra Van rally site) and continue from there. The exact route to Dawson Creek will be laid out later by the rally master. If anyone would like to be the rally master for this trip to Alaska, please send me (the editor) a note and let me know. Also if you have any other information and ideas please send them on. We plan to return via ferry down the coast, so we will only drive one way. So mark your calendars now, you can go part way with us (Dawson Creek) or stay in Alaska for the summer on your own. Their will be many choices on this rally.

CLASSIFIED

300 ULTRA VAN (maybe) Marks Ultra was hit and run while parked in front of his house on October 30th. The right front was fairly well smashed and buckled back to the heater area. This could be a real job, but its all there and in good condition. The Ultra is not drivable. Mark Hall, 55678 Pubelo Trail, Yucca Valley, Calif. 92256. (619) 365-1106.

ULTRA VAN foam bumpers (original style) . \$49.95 (includes shipping) or \$39.95 delivered to a western rally.

ULTRA VAN fabric see thru windshield and side window covers. Color - white, new hardware included. \$90.00.

Contact: Jim Craig, 7011 Sunny Vista Road, Joshua Tree, Calif. 92252. (619) 366-9104.

WANTED: A fiberglass water tank used in the three tank system on Ultra #412 and up.