

# Wheels on Whales

Number III

Volume XXX

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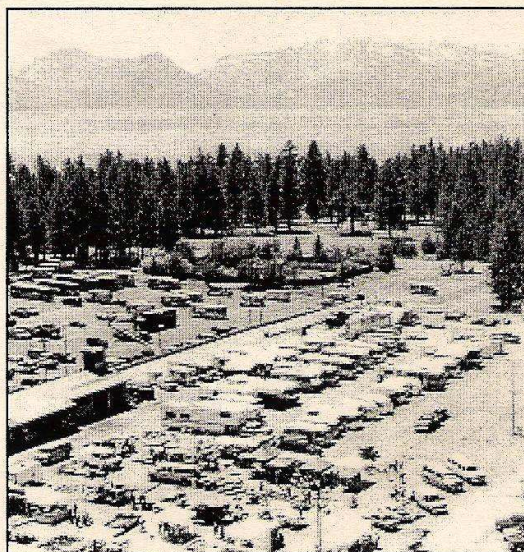


## CORSA Convention at Lake Tahoe

by Diane  
Galli

Bob and I got to Lake Tahoe on the Monday before the actual start of the convention, followed by Jim and Marlene Craig, in their new purchase, Ultra # 604, what a nice coach, congrats to the Craigs. With them was Robert Craig in the "Green Machine", Forrest Gist from Oregon, Dan Davis from Washington, Richard and Gayle Finch,( came in on a hook), Harold and Joann Washmuth, Lew and Shelly Young, yours truly, who drive her Greenbrier, Christy Barden from Colorado, who drove his Suburban, Bob and Roberta Franz, came by way of their new Chrysler Mini-van, Kemp and Shirley Swiney, from South Carolina, in their "Big Brother Coach", Tom and Caroline Silvey from Indiana, they hoteled it with us too, Farrell's from Oregon, and Watkins from California, new members were in attendance too. If I forgot anyone I am indeed sorry.

Harold Washmuth had an accident at home, and thought he was on the mend, but instead, wound







*Group Ultra Van Business Meeting.*

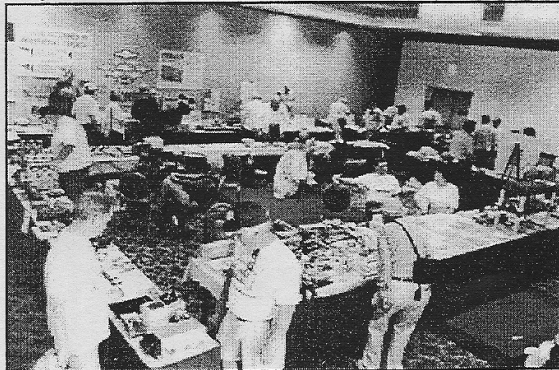
up in the local hospital for the duration of the convention with his leg in the air, and a few IV's. I am happy to report that Harold is well on the way to a full recovery.



*The Craig's enjoying their newly acquired Ultra #604*



*Legs out the rear mean a little early morning maintenance.*



*Pleaty of indoor vendors for shopping.  
Whales on Wheels*

The Sacramento Corvair Group, our convention hosts, provided the Ultra Van Group a room to shower, and watch TV, and relax in generally. Jim Craig was the "keeper of the keys". Plus a spot in the parking lot albeit no electricity, or water, but a very nice place for all the convention goes to come and see what an Ultra Van is all about, and with the usual UV, we had Robert Craig's Travelon, and Jim's #604 for differing types of Ultra Van's. I would say we had a very nice

representational group to see.

For those of you have never been to a CORSA national Convention, it is days of swap meeting, and tech sessions, group meetings, of which Group Ultra Van is one, new parts to buy from the "indoor venders", trips to take, this year we went to: "The Ponderosa Ranch", Virginia City, the old, Harrah's Car Museum, who's new name escapes me, a trip on the lake on the SS Dixie Belle. A lot of fun in general, meeting with old friends, and meeting and making new friends.

The Car show was very well represented by some VERY nice Corvairs, what the convention is all about really, as a Marque for the car, van and truck's to show their stuff.

Next year the convention will be in Daytona Beach, Florida, and I hope to see more UV's there too. Unfortunately I will be driving' something other than, I will be in our "new" Air conditioned, 1966 4 door Corvair, but there are lots of UV's in the Eastern part close to Florida, in Florida, to come in their coaches. So as they say on "the price is right", COME ON DOWN. See you there. Well folks, as Bugs Bunny "sez" "Ththat's All Folks!" See you in Daytona Beach next year.

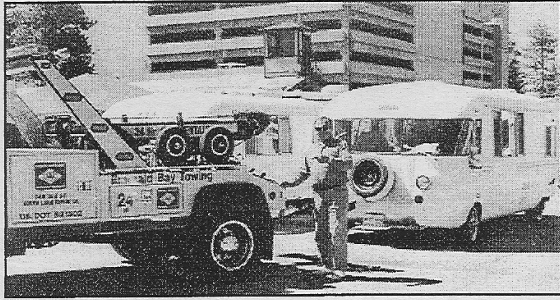
## Tahoe Breakdown

**by Richard Finch**

I elected to not work on our Ultra Van and it's fuel problem until after the Lake Tahoe Corsa Convention was over. That was because I wanted to fully enjoy the Convention and we sure did enjoy all of it. On Saturday evening just before the Convention closed, our fellow Ultra Van owner Dan Davis was having a problem with his Mallory distributor and with his rear brakes, So I knew I would have com-

*Summer 1999*

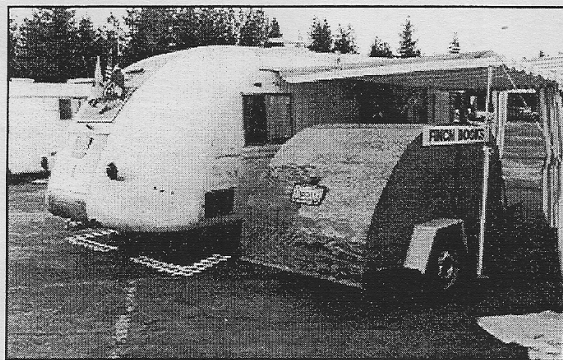




*Richard Finch arriving at the convention behind a tow truck.*

pany there in the Horizon Hotel parking lot on Sunday while I worked on my fuel system problem. Both of us staying there together worked out very well as I was able to rent a car so that Dan and I could go to the parts store together. We both stayed in the Horizon Hotel parking lot until about dusk on Sunday after the Convention ended.

Dan Could not find a set of Mallory ignition points in Lake Tahoe, so he found a set of Ford ignition points that looked a lot like the Mallory points and then he filed the screw holes in them so they would fit the Mallory dual-point distributor. The fix worked great and he made it home to Seattle with out further ignition problems. He also replace the brake shoes on both rear axles and that sure saved him for the long trip home through the mountains of Oregon.



*This is the treadrop trailer that Richard tows behind #443.*

Gayle and I stayed in the Horizon Hotel parking lot on Sunday night after Dan left, and we drove half way home on Monday. We stopped at a beautiful and peaceful RV Park called Casa de Fruita near Hollister, California on Monday night and Then took a leisurely drive back to our home in Santa Barbara on Tuesday. We stopped off in Santa Maria, 70 miles from home and weighed our Ultra Van and Tear-

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drop trailer at a truck stop and they both together weighed 6,265 LB. with Gayle and I inside, just as we would be driving down the highway. We simply must do some "Walt Davidson things" and reduce the weight.

Our fuel problem turned out to be a defective "NEW" mechanical fuel pump. At the parking lot, I flushed out the fuel tank but did not find more than 1/2 of a teaspoon full of sand, water and sealant. Then I pulled the "NEW" fuel pump apart and found that two of the three diaphragms were cracked out completely just as if the fuel pump housing was a cookie cutter. The reason that they were cracked out after only the trip to Palm Springs and 9/10th of the trip to Lake Tahoe ( about 1,000 miles total ) was that the diaphragms were made of plain neoprene sheet without any fabric reinforcement in the material. Any liquid pump that operates on the diaphragm principle simply must have fabric in the pump diaphragm material to reinforce it and to prevent it from cracking out. Luckily, I had installed an auxiliary electric fuel pump in the line, but I could not use it until I by-passed the mechanical pump. That was because the mechanical pump was gleefully pumping gasoline into my crankcase and severely thinning out my 30 wt. engine oil an it was also gleefully spraying gasoline out it's back side onto my distributor and cutting my gas mileage in half. So I removed the "NEW" mechanical fuel pump, pulled out the fuel pump push rod, reinstalled the pump as a hole plug to keep engine oil from spraying all over my freshly overhauled engine, and I of course by-passed the fuel pump with brass fittings that I bought at the auto parts store when Dan and I went there for parts. I also changed the engine oil that was severely diluted with gasoline and put in 7 new quarts of fresh Pennzoil 40 wt. oil.



*Dan Davis being licked by his dog while working on brakes.*



Once I got back home, I installed a demand-only electric pump in place of the full time electric fuel pump, and then I found one of my good old 35 year-old mechanical Corvair fuel pumps with all fabric reinforced diaphragms to use as my primary fuel pump.

In July, Gayle and I drove the Ultra Van S/N 443 to Seattle and points north and put 2,610 round-trip miles on it and the 35 year old fuel pump without any more fuel problems. Gayle and I and Baby Cat drove the Ultra Van to the Arlington, Washington Fly-In and had a great time there. Dan Davis and Graham Dell stopped by to visit us for 1/2 day since they live up there anyway.

One highlight of that trip was putting the Ultra Van S/N 443 on the big ferry and sailing it across Puget Sound to the upper Washington Peninsula just across from Vancouver, BC. and then back again.

I want to say that I am very happy that I had previously installed one of Walt Davidson's "Halon fire extinguishing tubes" through the engine firewall as a precautionary measure, and I would not ever leave home without that important bit of fire protection in our Ultra Van. I presume that Walt has submitted that idea in a previous tech tip. If our engine had caught fire on the way to Lake Tahoe, I could have extinguished it from inside the coach without wasting more than a few seconds rather than having it un-make the bed and raise the engine cover to put out a fire.

## Boxer Ultra Van? or V-8 Ultra Van?

Dan Davis (our western director) writes:

The term "boxer" as applied to horizontally opposed engines has been around for quite some time. It comes from the visual comparison of a prizefighter's hands with the rod/crank motions. Kinda silly, really, but it sounds "cool" As far as I know the first use of the term designated a BMW Twin - the R23 in 1923. There were horizontal engines around before that, but the first application of the term 'boxer' seems to have originated with the R23 I have long been a fan of the inherent benefits of the design as have the engineers in the aircraft, motorcycle and automobile fields. To me, there is no other design that provides the

best weight distribution and the built in stability of the 'boxer' design. in such a compact package. Ferrari used the designation on their model 512 Berlinetta Boxer of 1974. It was powered by the first street car 12 cyl "boxer engine" I have had the privilege of driving a Testarossa, and I will say this "It was a life-changing experience!" What an incredible car. What a fantastic engine! Corvairs are in some fast company.

### Tony Underwood writes:

The Corvair engine is by strict definition a true boxer, unlike some of the other horizontally opposed engines which use a pair of "slamshell" halves as a crankcase which cannot be "loaded" from the top or bottom like a Corvair engine, although these clamshell crankcase engines are generally referred to as boxers as well. (Goldwing motorcycle engines are one example) Lots of engine makers call their water cooled engines boxers. I have a Subaru XT-6 with a boxer which looks a lot like what a Corvair engine could possibly have looked like had it survived in production to current day and become, like the current Porsche boxer, water cooled. BMW has a motorcycle line which features "boxer" engines, distinguished from their inline-engine bikes. Alpha Romeo built a boxer for their Sprint line, and VW has on occasion referred to their air cooled Beetle engines as boxers. Some people think the VW engine's being a boxer design was originally the source of the term, probably because there were so many VWs. I think boxer was also used to describe those very early aero engines which had box crankcases and were horizontally opposed... such as those two and three-cylinder oddities seen on ancient airplanes which looked more like kites than aircraft.

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*Twenty-seven*

*This is a copy of an add that was placed in the premier issue of Motor Trend magazine. That was September 1949. I found it the the September 1999 issue of Motor Trend. They published the original issue page for page. I bet that Pete Petterson (then editor) sold this add to Group Ultra Van member Earnst Newhouse (now 90 years old).*





*Here are the 7 Ultra Vans that attended the 25 anniversary celebration of Corvair Underground in Oregon.*

## Corvair Undergrounds 25th Brithday by Diane Galli



*Linda and Lon Wall cutting the cake with the help of a friend*



*Walt Davison, left, and Bob Galli, center giving a "class".*

On August 14th, members Lon & Linda Wall had their 25th Anniversary party for his business, Corvair Underground in Brooks, Oregon. There were 204 registrants, 72 Corvairs and 7 Ultra Vans (all but 4 in the people's car show) and lots of food. Special thanks to Larry and Maybeth Claypool for the

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great cake! Walt Davidson (Coral Gables, Florida - long distance award winner), Corbin Tayloe and Tom Fricker (flew in from Dallas to represent North Texas Corsas!) Paul and Sharon Lawson won best of show with thier rampside, and MANY others! There were attendees from Florida, Texas, California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Canada!

## From the Editor

This summer took me on a 4,500 mile journey through the west in my RV. I say RV because I did not do this in an Ultra Van. Shame on me! I have traveled all over the United States in an Ultra Van over the last 26 years. I have also lived in an Ultra Van for a number of years. Now it was time for something different. An Airstream trailer! Gasp! How could you? Well I did! I have had a 1974 GMC Suburban with a 454 engine for some years now. Slowly resorting it, engine, transmission, drive train, brakes, etc. It has taken the last 3 years to finish with paint and interior. So I was all ready to tow something. I came across this nice 31 foot Airstream and bought it. The philosophy is a bit different here. With a trailer, you go somewhere and stay for a longer time. Living out of the trailer and using your vehicle to get around. It takes a bit of getting use to. Lets see, 31 foot trailer, 22 foot Suburban and 4 feet in between them, that is 57 feet going down the road. So it is difficult to find a place to park, be careful when driving into an area you don't know unless your are SURE you can back out it. I have a few bruises from that experience. You can't park anywhere for the night. I'm spoiled there, for in the Ultra Van I've only paid for one night parking in all of my travels. So with a trailer you have to be thinking ahead of yourself. Where am I going to spend the



night, can I maneuver into that spot, can I get out of that spot. At 57 feet long I feel I'm maneuvering an 18 wheeler when finding a place to park. You can't just pull into the supermarket parking lot, or strip mall parking. You have to pick and choose. So there we have the drawbacks of pulling a 31 foot trailer.

On the other side, this summer I spent time in just a few places for a longer time span. So parking the trailer in one place and using the Suburban to get around worked out fine for me. Especially in the mountains. If I had had the Ultra Van I would have had to drive up and down narrow mountain roads, and probably would not have gone into those areas, but with the Suburban it worked out fine.

The Airstream tracks fine. I have a Hensley hitch (which acts like a fifth wheeler) experience no sway or fish tailing. With the 31 footer I had more than enough room for living and all my things, I could have taken a family of 5 and it would have worked OK. The cost? Well, hum, yes! The cost! That's the hummer. My 1974, 454 GMC engine pulls the trailer, just fine, up and down hills, but the price. I figured the overall mileage at about 5.8 MPG. That translates to about \$1,250 in gas for my 4,500 hundred mile trip. If I went the same distance in the Ultra Van it would have been a little over \$400 for gas. Big difference! The highest prices for premium gas was \$1.79 in San Francisco, the lowest was \$1.45 in Wyoming.

I also joined the Wally Byam Caravan Club International, Inc. I don't know the membership numbers, there were 2,000 Airstreams at the National convention in Dayton Ohio. They are always over the 4th of July week-end. It's always, hot, muggy and a lack of electricity for your air conditioner. They are mostly a caravan club, caravans all over America put on by one of the 12 regional units. With in a region there are from 5 to 7 clubs. That is where you will find technical information. All of this costs \$60 a year. There is also a Vintage Airstream Club within the organization. Its great to see these old polished trailers lined up at a convention. Well enough of that, I just wanted to share what some of the other organizations are like.

This summer took my to Oakland and a visit with the Peterson's (the creator of the Ultra Van). I parked the trailer in the campgrounds in the park in the Oakland hills and enjoyed a part of the Bay area that many do not know. Glenn & Erral Plymate #499 came to visit me

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in the park. We went down to visit the Peterson's. They had just arrived back from a trip in Southern California to visit their daughter and her family there. David had a heart operation earlier this year to replace a valve (they used a pig valve). He is recovering OK, but doesn't have the same forceful approach that we are accustom to. I hope when I'm 85 I can be doing as well. Because of all of this the Peterson's will be moving to Marin County, north of San Francisco, a smaller community for people who do not want yard work and where assistance is near by. Their son lives in Marin County as well, and being closer to him will be more of a comfort to Lucille. So they are selling off as much as they can. Ultra Van # 601 was sold, the garage sale cleaned out the garage (well, almost). They plan to be moving some time in December.

I also stopped by Anticok to see the Franz's (who were on a vacation) and the Snyder's, who were home. They took me out to dinner and we had a great time. Mory is still doing quite well, get around just fine and is still up on everything. Esther does the driving. They both came to Antioch in the late thirties. Esther use to shop at Bob Franz's parent store when Bob was working there while in college. There is a couple of couples that go back a long time. I loved the photo of Bob Franz and Mory Snyder with both of their Ultra Vans, which was published in the local news paper.

Member Art Eller #422 has been in bed for 5 weeks with a foot injury. While working on the house he fell off a stool, dislodging his calcaines bone to the heal which had to be re attached. He also hurt his shoulder in the fall. He says Ultra Van #422 is 90% complete. The engine and transaxle is out and the suspension is out. He repaired the rear sheet metal and redid the suspension.

I plan to attend the Great Western Fan Belt Toss & Swap Meet in Palm Springs, California on November 5,6,7. Then visit my mom up in Yucca Valley afterwards. See you all there.



*Bob Franz, left, and Mory Snyder, right, in 1986.*

*Summer 1999*





by  
Glenn &  
Erral  
Plymate  
#499

## Truckers Can be Dangerous

Thursday night, November 19, we took a test spin in our "new" 1969 classic Ultra van, #499, to Marina Village in Alameda for dinner. It was a good run, a good dinner, and we made it back home to our starting point o.k. Good going, we thought!

Friday, we felt a little more adventurous and decided to take #499 to Livermore to meet a fellow I'd met on the internet. As we were going up the I-580 grade between Castro Valley and Dublin, we were in the outside lane of 5 lanes of traffic, going about 45 mph as we approached the crest. A CHP cruiser came alongside in the lane next to us but kept on going to get behind an 18-wheeler in the number three lane. He stayed close behind the truck for a short distance; enough for me to remark to my bride, Erral, "Look at that CHP guy tailgating that truck." About the time I got those words out, the CHP turned on his flashing lights and moved halfway into the number two lane so the trucker could see his lights. We then figured out what was going on; CHP was pulling the truck over. Another quarter of a mile and the truck was pulling to the right a few hundred feet ahead of us. He slowed and pulled to a stop on the right shoulder, just at the edge of our lane. The CHP cruiser pulled in front and stopped ahead of him, on the shoulder, well clear of our lane. I was planning my move on passing the two stopped vehicles, hoping I could move to the next lane to my left. No way! All lanes were chock full of traffic, and all were moving faster than us from what I could see in my rear view mirror. All I could do was hug the left side of my lane as close as I dared.

We started passing the 18-wheeler. Whew! It was looking good! I was was by him when BAM! The horrible noise of IMPACT! I had hit something, or something had hit us! The noise came from the rear of the coach. I slowed and as soon as I found a wider spot in the shoulder, I pulled off and stopped. We had been monitoring CB channel 17 and heard several good buddies exclaiming on the air, "Did you see THAT? He opened his door in TRAFFIC!" Erral had seen the trucker start to open his door and yelled to me just before impact. I was busy evaluating my options on getting by

## Letters to the Editor

Christy:

Thank you for the Spring 1999 copy of Group Ultra Van "Whales on Wheels" which I received in the mail today Monday, Oct. 4th., and after reading it, I can certainly see why this publication received a Golden Quill Award. I can see that I will look forward to receiving this regularly. Congratulations to you as Editor, and to all your members, and especially those contributing articles and pictures for publication.

Art Moore UV # 222

## Prestolite Connection from Diane Galli

On our first night out from Ruidoso, NM, we stopped at an RV park in the little town of San Antonio, NM. I had just gotten the coach leveled and stabilized, and was putting out the awning, when this fellow came trotting up and announced "That is an UltraVan, isn't it!!". He said he had some interesting history about them. I took this with guarded skepticism, as I was sure I knew all the UV history. We chatted a moment, he went back to his RV, got his wife and a couple of chairs, and we all talked for an hour or so.

Seems as how, around the years of 1963-64, he worked for Preston Jones (I think) in his company, Prestolite. He worked directly under Preston, and was in charge of the construction of the Travelon's. He worked with Dave Peterson, and spoke very highly of him. He told many stories of his work there. He told of the problems within the company leading to the demise of Prestolite. It was a very interesting discussion concerning a grey portion of UV history. I had wished I had had a tape recorder, as it is easy to forget the details. They loaned us a video to watch that evening. It was about the RV travels of two brothers. It was a REAL hoot. We are going to buy a copy.

He was unaware of what happened to the UltraVan after Dave got the rights back. We just talked, and talked. He is very interested, and interesting. They were Ray and Jane Page, P.O. Box 504, Bethel Island, CA. 94511-0504



the rig, checking my rear view mirror for overtaking traffic, and looking for clear space ahead. My hearing sensors were detuned; giving a much higher priority to my visual sensors at that instant, and I was concentrating on what my eyes were telling me.

After stopping clear of traffic, we got out to see what had happened. The truck's door had touched and scraped the Ultra van's right side about 12 feet back from the front, and about three feet ahead of the rear window. The impact must have swung the truck's door completely open at a point just ahead of the Van's rear window where it dug into the skin about an inch deep. The door then swung past full open and continued scraping along the window and back along the side of the Ultra. The window frame was damaged, the screen was in shreds, and the upper right clearance light had evaporated. But, the most damage was to the aluminum panel and structural rib just ahead of the window.

CHP came up and asked me to move forward on the wide portion of the shoulder (I was already on the wide portion) while he had the trucker drive up to the wide shoulder behind us. The trucker was quite distraught, but showed no remorse. It was his first trip with the truck and he was sure he'd lose his job. He spoke with a slight guttural accent and appeared to be from somewhere in Europe or the Middle East. Age 50 or so. He took a look at the Ultra van as if it were a piece of junk and wanted to pay me on the spot for the damage. He did not want the accident reported to his company. CHP did not seem totally against such an arrangement, but told him I would probably report it to my insurance company, and that he (CHP officer) would have to make an official report anyway. The trucker offered me a hundred dollars to cover the damage. If he'd have said 500, I might have taken him up on it, but I said, "No." He then said, "How about two hundred?" (It looks like the damage estimate may be over a thousand dollars). I turned him down again. \$200 must have been his top bid because he dropped the subject after that, and began appealing to the officer about his circumstance and the prospects he faced of losing his job. The officer appeared somewhat sympathetic and asked the trucker how his driving record was. The trucker said, "Terrible!" He surprised us with such an honest admission. The officer told him it was his lucky day because he was not going to cite him for the violation; only that he'd have to make an official report on the collision. The

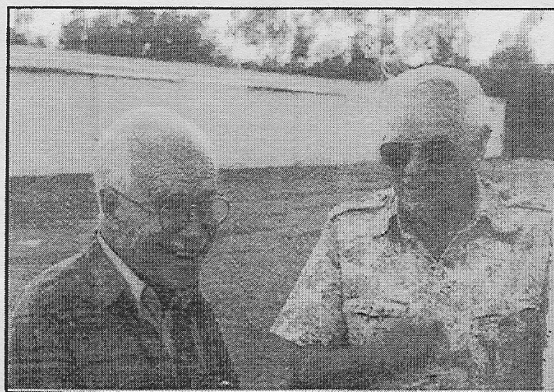
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officer assured me that I had done nothing wrong. The trucker had opened his door in a lane of traffic and it was very clear as to who was at fault. The officer was on the spot and had seen the whole thing. He seemed elated to have been an eyewitness to such a bizarre event.

We continued on our trip, about 45 minutes late to our meeting, and a little drained from the adrenalin rush on I-580. It also caused us to reflect on whether to continue on our quest to use our "new" Ultra van for serious RVing, or whether we ought to forget about RVing in anything at all... old OR new, for that matter. Erral didn't get much sleep Friday night. She laid awake, continually replaying the sight of that truck door opening right in front of her on her side of the windshield. There's several little teething problems with #499 that need to be addressed too. For example, the master cylinder should be overhauled; some re-wiring needs to be done; it could use a new toilet; some interior cosmetics need to be attended to; and, for sure, it needs to be stripped and painted... after the 18-wheeler damage has been repaired, that is. The fact that we were in the Ultra van had nothing to do with the incident; it could have been in any other brand of motorhome. But, God forbid what would have happened if we'd been driving one of those new, "modern" wide-body coaches. It has really given us cause to reflect on motorhoming and our mortality, in general.

The experience won't cripple us, but I know what we'll be thinking the next time we go driving with all lanes full.

#302 has a new home now. Belongs to Tim Reinhardt (Bob's brother) in Las Vegas. He and Bob picked it up and towed it to Vegas. I think it's found a good home.



*David Peterson, left, and Glenn Plymate, right, in front of Davids hangar at the Oakland airport this summer.*

*Summer 1999*



# Classified

**1967 Ultra Van #267**, 110 H.P., Corvair, Powerglide. 4 KW generator, AC, good tires. Stripped to bare metal to repaint 3 years ago. Used as model for movie, *My Girl*. Modified rear allows for extra storage, and step in Back door. \$7,000, Contact Dick Granger, 2795 Tropical Trail, Merritt Island FL 32952 (407) 453-4094.

**1967 Ultra Van #278**, 231 V-6 Buick engine (rear) Radiator in front. Runs great and cool. White with aluminum bumpers. A/C & Evaporative cooler on roof For more details call Howard E. Baso, 1536 W. Roundup St., Apache Junction AZ, 85220. Mon. - Thur. 8 - 5 PM, (602) 288-8166. \$10,000

**1967 Ultra Van #321**, 110 H.P. Corvair, Powerglide. Rjoof Air, Good straight body. \$6,000. Contact Jean McMasters, 916 Lighthouse Drive, North palm Beach FL 33408, (561) 626-0388

**1968 Ultra Van #412**, 110 HP, Corvair, Powerglide. Special 24 foot leinght, factory built. 6,000 miles on new rebuilt engine. Roof Air, Onan 2.8 KW Generator, large refrigerator freezer,, 10 gallon hot water heater. Awnings all around, extra engine, heads, etc. \$8,500 or best offer or trade. Contact, All Driggers, 1671 Point of Pines, Guntersville, AL 35976, (256) 505-0304

**1968 Ultra Van #326**, 110 HP, Corvair, Powerglide. Engine rebuilt May 1999, new rear wheel bearings and dual master cylinder. New polyurethane paint, converted to 3 tank system, rebuilt 3:55 positraction differential. White Ash interior, new carpet and upholstery. Large rear window. Contact: Harold Washmouth, 271 Church Tree Rd., Crescent City, CA 95531. (707) 465-1753.

**1968 Ultra Van #294**, 140 HP, Corvair, Powerglide. Cherrywood interior. Bigger Fridg, generator. No dents, metal bumpers. Needs paint. Has been setting for a while. Widow wants to sell it along with an extra 140 HP engine, 3 extra Powerglide transmissions and a Oldsmobile 455 Tornado engine and transaxle. \$3,500 takes it all. Contact: Hilda Green, 1556 W. 226th St., Torrance, CA 90501. (301) 328-3741.

**1968 Ultra Van #345**, 110 HP, Corvair, Powerglide. New front "T" beams. Clean interior, leaking tanks, dent left rear side. \$2,000. Contact: Robert W. McJones, 1Limetree Lane, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275. (310) 541-3228 E-Mail: Robert@McJones.org.

**1968 Ultra Van, #357**, 454 Olds, Tornado conversion. Polished Aluminum, Interior good, couch, leather seats, Mitchelin Tires, 15 inch alloyed wheels. Been sitting a while. \$6,000. Contact: Robert W. McJones, 1Limetree Lane, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275. (310) 541-3228 E-Mail: Robert@McJones.org.

**1969 Ultra Van #472**, 110 HP, Corvair, Powerglide, 4:11 gears. Beautiful beige & brown trim glossy paint job, radials tires, white interior, blue inside trim, seats, curtains & etc. All glass is good & tinted for sun protection. (Engine has dropped valved seat.) Purchase as is for ONLY \$6495. (If I make repairs to have it roadable, add \$995.) Unit is in otherwise excel condition. Jim Craig 760 366 9104 or jrcraig1@juno.com

**1969 Ultra Van #507**, V/6 Buick conversion, 3sp auto. Very good exterior white paint. radials, solar panel, front disc brakes, 10k on eng conversion, Runs excellent w/ no heating problems, New seat covers and curtains, 3way Dometic, dual bats., Leveling device, 4 w/positions, walnut interior, 12-15 mpg, TV/AM/FM, catl. space heater & hotwater heater. Owner is very serious for selling. Vision problem forces sale. A real buy at \$6995. obo. Ready to travel. No work required to get this Ultra across the country. We will pick you up at the Palm Springs or Ontario, CA. airport.

**1969 Ultra Van #529**, Chevy V-8, (308CI), Atuatomatic. This coach has 29,000 original miles on it, very solid body, but is in need of a full restoration inside and out. This coach had sat in the desert unused for a long period of time. It does run, but needs work on the cooling system. The rear suspension has been completely rebuilt to the Ryerson manual. (Bushings, bearings, welding, rotors, pads, calipers, etc.) The coach is located in Mariposa Ca (Close to Yosemite) 209-742-7469 home, 209-988-2937 cell, 510-293-9155 work ask for Ed Gurr. Price \$2,900.

**1970 Ultra Van #547**, Chevy V-8, Automatic. Many upgrades. Needs paint, \$6,900 Contact Jeff Stonesifer at the Corvair Ranch, (717) 624-2805

**Ultra Vans #300, 365 & 384, PARTING OUT!** Many good parts. Stove, refig, Coleman furnash, windows, doors, alum beams, Structural ribs & other parts, fiberglass panels, bellcrank assys, A arms, frt. hubs, engine, trans, diff. parts, dr. shafts., paneling, Cherry wood, cabients & doors. Fair prices. Jim Craig 760 366 9104 or jrcraig1@juno.com  
**Literature For Sale** Ultra Van Service/ Repair Manual.

New & three hole punched. This is referred to as the Ryerson manual. It is the official manual for the Ultra Van. It cover all aspects of the Ultra Vans, including the late model V/8 units. Price; \$56. ppd. Make a complete package and order the Tech Tip Booklets for an additional \$16. Total \$72.ppd. Jim Craig, (760) 366-9104, jrcraig1@juno.com

**Parts, Tools & Etc. For Sale**, Tools; (New), Ignition switch chrome bezel Remover. Works on both 3 & 4 groove bezels. \$12.95 ppd. Never have to use water pump pliers again.

**TOOL (NEW)**, Rear wheel spindle shaft Remover. This tool threads onto the inner end of the spindle so that it can be pressed out or hammered out. Never damage the threaded end of the spindle again. \$17.95 ppd. Jim Craig 760 366 9104 or jrcraig1@juno.com

**Ultra Van Spare parts**; I have most any part that you need for you Ultra. Structural parts, suspension, brakes, wheel hubs, frt. & rear, windshields, new & used, side windows, tanks, alum. & fiberglass, propane tanks, piano hinge for main door, door latch/lock assy., stoves, refig, blower vents, fiberglass corners, bellcranks. Heim joints, Tie rod ends, Modified & upgraded bellcranks kits. Ignitor ignition upgrade kit. Never have to adjust points again. This replaces them. 8MM spark plug wire sets & Hot coil. Carb rebuilds and many more. Inquire. Jim Craig 760 366 9104 or jrcraig1@juno.com

**Ultra Van Rear Hubs** (late model Corvair) Rebuilt to near zero tolerances for Ultra Vans. \$90 plus exchange and shipping. Contact: Rear Engine Specialists, Inc. 16010 W. 5th Ave., Golden, CO 80401. (303) 278-4889 FAX (303) 936-7420.



## Rallies

**November 5 - 7, 1999, The 22nd Annual Great Western Fan Belt Toss and Swap Meet, Palm Springs, California.** A joint effort of the Southern California Corvair Clubs. The registration form is all you need, it can be sent by e-mail. If you would like a hard copy of the registration packet (includes the Gazette, calendar, map, logo, and form) simply include your snail mail address in your request. Send request to GWFBTSM@yahoo.com, or Norm Bloss, CORSA WEST, P.O. Box 950023, Mission Hills, CA 91395. Host hotel is Ocotillo Lodge, (760) 416-0678 \$63 a night. Next door Quality Inn (800) 472-4339, \$59 a night. The GWFBT&SM features 70+ swap spaces, field UV and RV spaces, a people's choice car show (with a special 69 class), games (including the fan belt toss and the Interorsa Race of Creepers), a welcome party (with in-pool boat races), banquet, and a continuous raffle.

**March 21 - 25, 2000, Eastern Spring Rally, Airstream Park, Christmas, FL.**

**June 15 - 18, 2000, Eastern Summer Rally, Fox Fire RV Park, Milton, WV.**

**July 18th - 22nd, 2000, CORSA International Convention, Daytona, FL**

**Sept 20 - 24, 2000, Ultra National Rally, Amana Colonies RV Park, Amana, Iowa**

## Ultra Vans are Y2K ready!

WHALES ON WHEELS is a quarterly publication of GROUP ULTRA VAN, a CORSA chapter. It is dedicated to the preservation and use of the ULTRA VAN. This 22 foot unique motor home was designed by David Peterson and built in Kansas until 1970. About 365 units were built. Dues are \$6.00 annually, please remit to the Secretary-Treasurer. Submit all technical information to the Editor.

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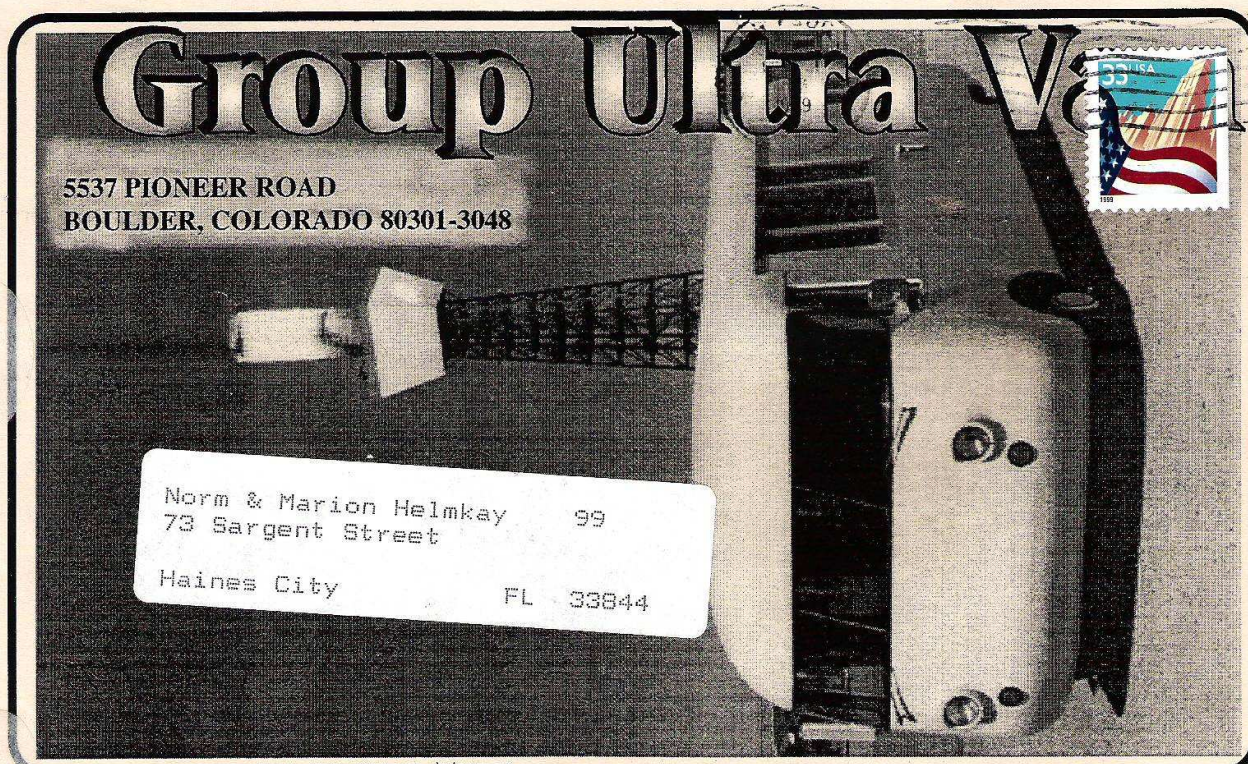
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# Whales on Wheels

Vol XX No IV & Vol XXI No I

Whales on Wheels

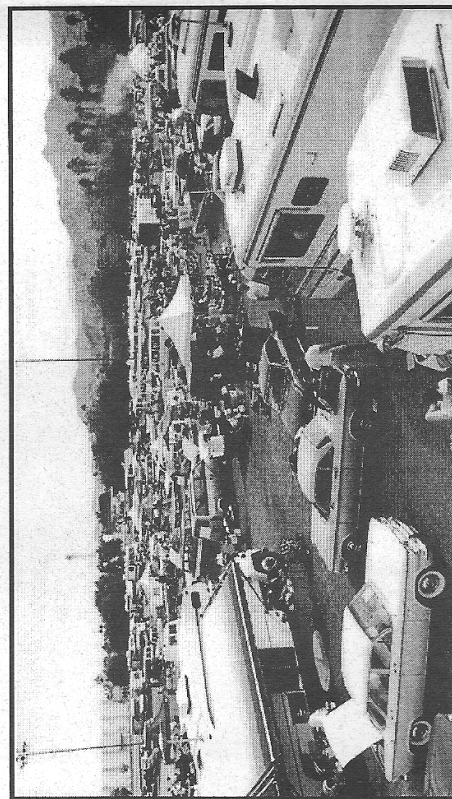
## SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

### GREAT WESTERN FAN BELT TOSS & SWAP MEET PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

1

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Group Ultra Van members gather in front of their Ultras in Sunny Palm Springs.



Fall 1999-Winter 2000





*The Craig's left, first place, the Franz's right, second place.*

## GWFBT&SM

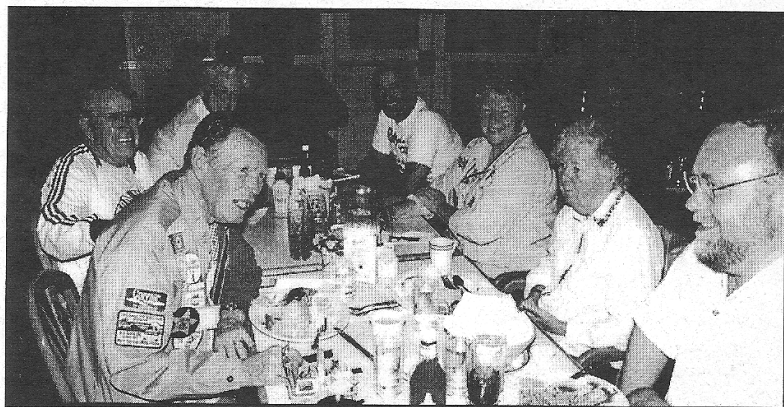
by W. Christy Barden

This was another banner year for the Great Western Fan Belt Toss & Swap Meet. Although there was not a fan belt toss competition, there were some exciting creeper races. Herb Berkman, from Tucson brought two modified "Hot Rod" creepers that were used for elimination heats (like drag racing) with two classes, men and women. Larry Scribner, from San Diego brought his usual good music from the 40's to play over the loud speakers. The non-stop raffle activity kept people constantly pulling out their ticket and checking the board for their numbers. I even won a few things.

The swap meet is still the biggest in the world. It's amazing after 35 years to see so many parts still available. Some of the usual ven-

dors were in attendance: Corvair Underground, from Oregon; Larry's Corvair Parts, from Los Angeles; Southwest Corvair, from Phoenix; Craig's Corvair and Ultra Van Service, from Joshua Tree CA; Marty's Corvair Parts, from Hawthorne CA; The Source, Inc, from Del Mar CA; Ray Sedman from Northridge CA; Silicone Wire Systems, from San Jose Ca.; Ed Corson, from Riverside, Ca. Then there were about 50 other vendors on the field selling Corvair stuff. If you need anything, this is THE place go get it. People ask me, "can you still get parts for those things?" I answer, "yes", Palm Springs in the fall. You can ask Pet Smith (see page 7) owner of Ultra Van #463. He seems to always get what he needed there. I even bought a bunch of stuff. And many thanks to Harlan L Colburn Sr. for bringing all that stuff home in his basement style motor home.

Ultra Van's had their usual coveted parking place at Angeles Field. Along the south fence near the entrance to the field. All the "others" have to park on the other side of the field. There were about 15 Ultra Van members attending.



*Enjoying dinner at Elmer's Steak and Pancake House.*

The car show was large as usual. They had so many they had to park them in the isles. In the Ultra Van category the Craigs with #604 took first place and the Franz's took second with their #472. The banquet on Saturday night filled the large banquet room at the Hilton Hotel. Paul Mazerick did a good



job of taking photos with his digital camera. At the banquet he used his portable computer to display all the winning cars on a large screen on the side of the room. There were two food lines, so the self-serving went fairly well. Norm Bloss was the MC (also he was the chairperson of the event) and did a swell job of moving things right along, including the door prizes. He reported that through the week-end they had about 800 paid admissions to Angeles Field. So plan for next year, November 3,4,5 2000 for one the biggest Corvair and Ultra Van events of the year.

---

## From the Editor

This is a special double issue of Whales On Wheels. Bob Ballew send a detailed of how and why the Corvair Powerglide automatic transmission Governor works. It was of such interest to find out why and how some the malfunctions I've encountered happened. I hope some our you feel the same.

We are looking for a new editor for Whales on Wheels. This is the twentieth year I've been editing Whales on Whales. In looking back over the twenty years I've noticed my spelling is getting better, not the best. My computer skills have gotten better and we have come a long way from the one page folded, typed Volume 1, number 1.

I thought when I retired I would have time to do all the things that retired people do. Well, I'm doing most of them, except I still have to get the newsletter out. So I've decided to stop doing the newsletter. I will be doing one more issue, Spring 2000. Then the next editor will have to pick up with the Summer 2000 issue. If anyone has an interest in doing this, please contact our president Bob Galli.

I've been spending a lot of time remodeling the house. I started 4 months ago, and still have about 4 months to go. It's nice to have an Ultra Van to live in when to much is going on in the house. Having the house torn up is a bit disturbing, but hopefully it will not be forever.

*W. Christy Barden*

## Letters to Editor

Dear Christy,  
Our trip to Ruidoso was rather busy. We used 29 quarts of oil to get there. I bought it by the case at Wal-Marts. On arrival I dug into the problem. A seal under the oil cooler was cocked, and the oil filter was leaking. Fortunately Jim Craig had the seals, and Richard Finch had an oil filter. We got back home using 2 quarts of oil.

On the way out of Concordia, Missouri a strap on the inboard U-joint broke. The drive shaft flailed around, denting the cooling shroud and breaking a couple of pieces out of the bell housing. This happened two buildings from a NAPA dealer, they came up with new straps. A garage across the street installed my new U-joints for me, on a volunteer basis. To my surprise, he would not take any money. There are still some good people in the world, once you get out of Washington, D.C.

I have #334 over my pit in the garage, with the rear jacking up. It is getting to get an newer unbroken bell housing.

On our return trip we stayed four days at a beautiful state park in midwestern Oklahoma, Red Rock Canyon State Park. No Interstate noise, no railroad train noise, and it has an area for RV group camping. We have literature, if any one in the West would be interested for a year 2001 National Rally.

Yours, Louis Griggs.

---

## Earnest Newhouse celebrates his 91st Birthday with Friends

After the GWFBT&SM a group of us took Earnest Newhouse out to lunch. We met at his house and piled in my Greenbrier and drove 3 blocks to a local restaurant. We had a grand time. The wait person sang happy birthday and gave Ernest a Cup cake with one candle for his 91st birthday. Then all 9 of us climbed back into my Greenbrier and drove 3 blocks back to Ernie's. We figured between the 9 of us in the Greenbrier the total age of all of us together was 639 years. The Ellers 5 year-old grand-son kind of brought the average down. He is looking quit well for 91, is helping others



# Memorially

## In Memory of Eugenia Reyburn

Eugenia Reyburn, or Gene as she was affectionately known to the Ultra Van Community, died quietly Sunday, January 23, 2000, at The Atascadero Christian Home; where she and Milt, had been residents for the last 2 years.

Gene and Milt were the original owners of the Ultra Van Bob and I own, love, and drive the heck out of. They were long time UVMCC members, and gave Bob and I our first year membership into UVMCC, saying to us, it was an unwritten rule that when a member sold a coach, they were to pay the first years membership for the new owners. That's the kind of person Gene was.

Gene was 92 years old, and married 70 years to her best friend and husband, Milt. Gene was also the Mother of 2 boys, the eldest, Wayne and I were in the same graduating class in 1950 from, Atascadero High School, and Kenneth was a few years behind. Gene liked crafts, and we are the recipients of some of her handiwork.

A Memorial Service was held Friday, January 28, 2000, at 2 PM, at the Atascadero Bible Church. In lieu of flowers the family was suggesting sending a memorial in Gene's name to either the Atascadero Christian Home, or The Atascadero Bible

Church. The addresses are: Atascadero Christian Home, 8455 Santa Rosa RD, Atascadero, CA 93422 Atascadero Bible Church, PO Box 987, Atascadero, CA 93423 Diane Galli

## In memory of Bill Binney

We were saddened to hear of the death of Bill Binney. He had not been well for some time. So this was not a shock to us. His wife Betty and my mom have been friends for almost 40 years. They use to work together at the Bank of America in Yucca Valley. They day of the GWFBT&SM he went into the hospital and died a few days later, November 10th, 1999, just 10 after his 80th birthday.

Bill was self sufficient craftsman. He was a Snap-On dealer for a while years ago, then when to work for an aero medical company in Palm Springs. He ran the machine shop and kept the equipment running. When he retired he set up his own machine shop at home. There he resorted many cars and his Ultra Van #295 at his home. He is survived by his wife Betty and step-son Mark. Christy Barden



*Photo taken at Earnest Newhouses home before the group piled into the Greenbrier to celebrate his 91st birthday. L. to R. front: George Rakous, Mel Dinesen, Christy Barden. L. to R. rear: Earnest Newhouse, Millie Eller, Roberta Franz, Robert Franz, Art Eller.*

with their tax preparation and volunteering at church and helping the Lutheran University. The Ellers bought his smaller X-plorer camping van. So now he has to use hotels as he travels. He still keeps his Cadillac and uses it quite frequently in his getting about. Than-you Earnie for a great afternoon.





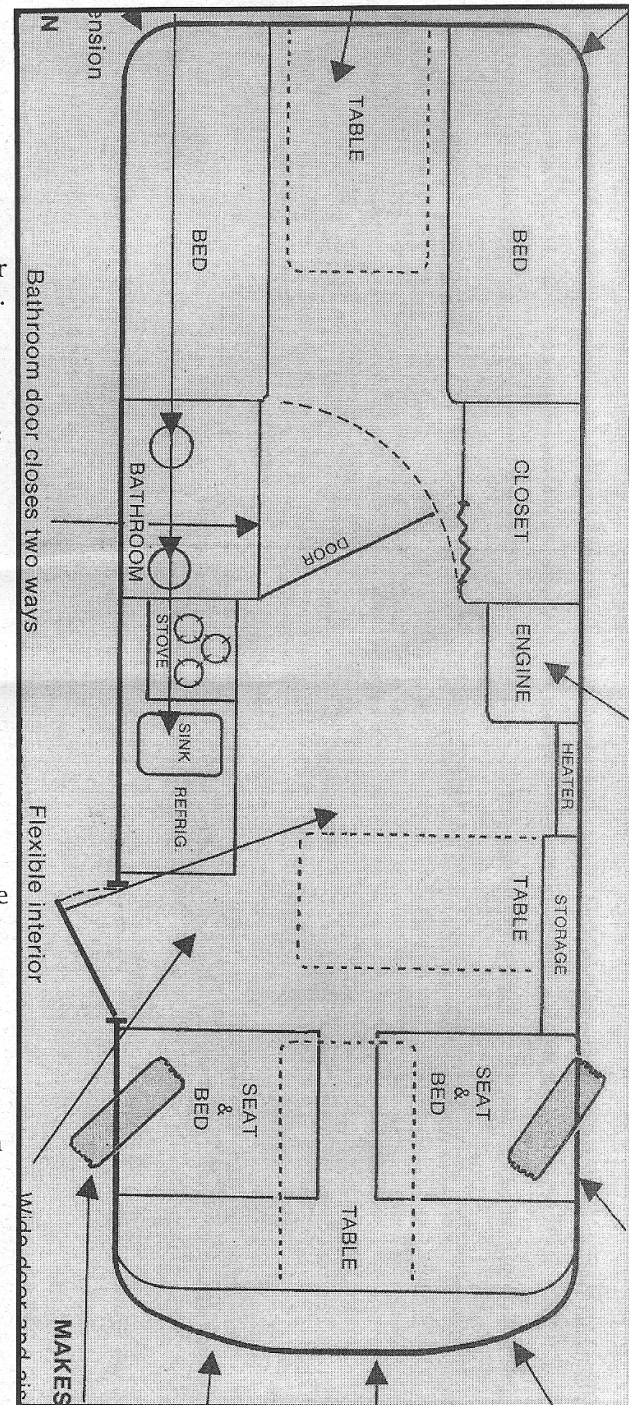
# The 600 Series Ultra Van

by W. Christy Barden

After the Ultra Van production shut down in 1970 at Hutchinson Kansas, David Peterson came up with the idea of a new Ultra Van Series. He used the same monocoque construction used in the earlier Ultra Vans, but a different technique. He had a special aluminum extrusion made to from a base on each bottom side of the Ultra Van. He used aluminum extrusions "U" and "H" channels for the "frame over the special bottom side pieces. Then covered it with .032 aluminum, much the same as the former Ultra Vans, using fiberglass in the compound corners. The prototype Number 601 was built in 1971 - 72. He built it in his Alameda, California shop. He used the same early 1960's Chevy Step-Van window shields. But there was a big differences in this 600 Series, it had a side mounted mid-engine. The unit was 23 feet long (one foot longer than the previous models) and had a solid rear axle. The front suspension was like the old one, a double wishbone "A" arms. The difference was air bag suspension was used all the way around. The combination of a solid axle and air bag suspension made it a very good handling vehicle. Not the tail wagging that happens in some of the older Ultra Vans. The engine was an Olds 350 V-8 marine engine. This will let you cruise at 70 MPH with about 14-17 MPG. Again the aerodynamics is the reason for the good mileage. It has a full body pan under the vehicle and rounded corners that make for a low drag coefficient.

He lent this Ultra Van #601 to FMC to test. They were involved in developing a side mounted engine motorhome at this time. They made 3 prototypes (4 wheel drive), but dropped the idea because of inherent problems. I remember taking some photos of them in the early 1970's, but can't find them.

After this David Peterson decided to build this new 600 series for production. A New Ultra Van Corporation was formed by a friend of Dave's son, Roger Dillon. He capitalized the company and set up business in Sonoma California, with David Peterson as a consultant. They attended many Ultra Van rallies to promote the new company using the Ultra Van # 601 as a demonstration unit.



This is the floor plan of the Ultra Van Number 601 as was published in the sales brochure from 1972.

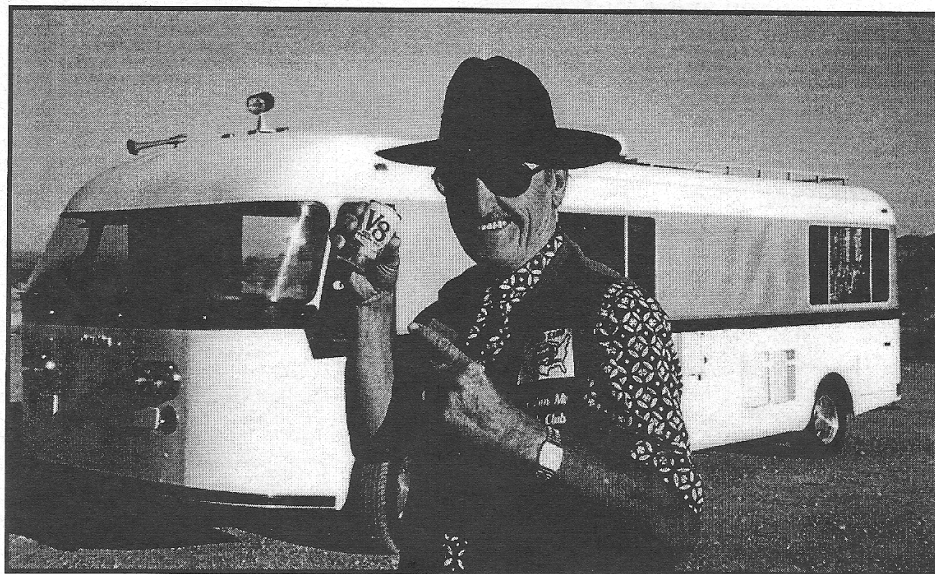




*Jim Craig's #604 rear view taken out in the desert.*



*Note the radiator out let on the lower side ahead of the rear tire. There is another radiator laying flat under the forward side window. The engine is just behind the forward side window. Jim says it runs cool with the two radiators.*



*Jim Craig is saying "Don't you wish you had a V-8". Note the low profile of the Ultra Van.*

During this time David had contracted with Earnest Newhouse and Phil Phillips to build two of these units but in a 26 foot version. They were Number 603 and 604 respectively. He started the units side-by-side in his Alameda, California shop. I remember going through his shop at that time and taking photos (can't find them) of these units before the floor and interior and floor were installed. These units were moved to the Sonoma operation and completed and sold from there. Number 602 is owned by Richard Nelson in Los Gatos, California and he is converting his to a front wheel drive and engine unit. I was at his place



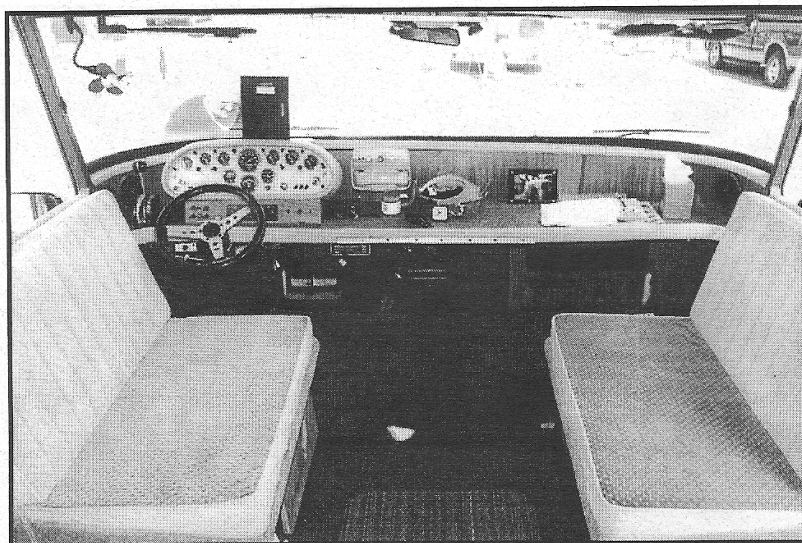
Introducing  
**THE MOST EXCITING  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE  
HISTORY OF  
MOTORHOMES!**



The **ULTRA VAN**

*This is the cover of the 1971 sales brochure. It shows Ultra Van # 601 as it appeared at the Sonoma facilities.*





*Left. The dash has a convenient cluster of gauges. The shifter lever is on the left of the dash. Note the smaller steering wheel, which means that the power steering must work fine.*

*The seats have a table (keep in the back) that is placed between the seats for a dinette. For driving the seats pivot and face forward. This allows full use of this area as a sitting place, driving place, or in a pinch the table drops down and the area can be used as an extra bed.*

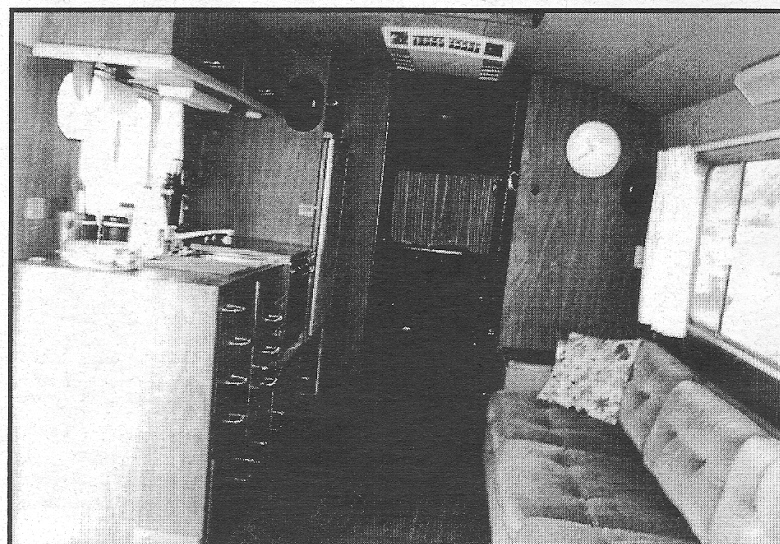
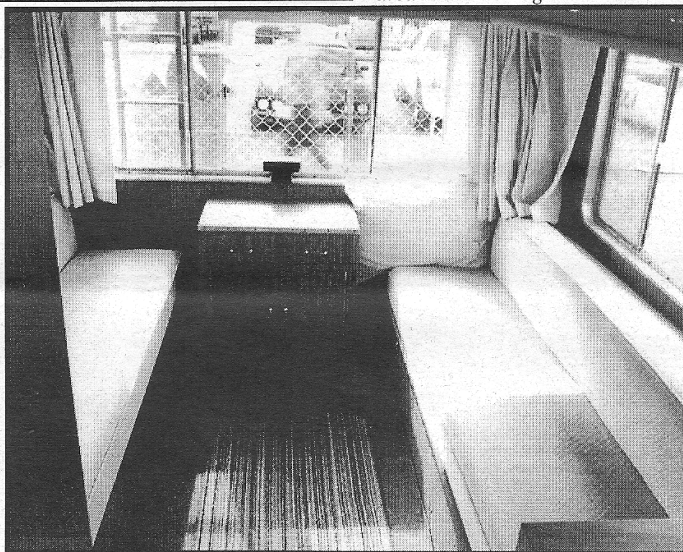
*A hot water radiator is located under the dash to heat the front area while driving.*

*Right. The rear twin bed area. Both beds are located over the rear wheel wells. Behind the wheels, there are batteries on the left and propane tank on the right. The area is presently made up as a sitting area. At night the bed backs fold down and make a nice comfortable single bed.*

*Note the large rear window which makes for good visibility in your interior rear view mirror used in the driving area.*

*The fuel tank is located under the Van behind the rear axle, it has a 30 gallon capacity.*

*The area is well heated with the use of the Suburban 30,000 BTU propane heater which is located under the kitchen sink and piped to other areas of the Van.*



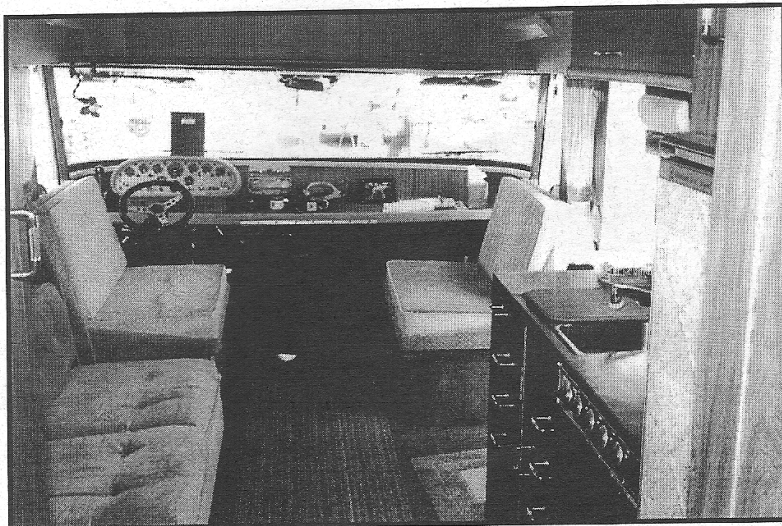
*Left. This is the kitchen area looking from front to back. The sofa on the right folds down into a bed as well.*

*The refrigerator is on the left next to the toilet area. The four burner stove and oven is just forward of the refrigerator.*

*A double sink is located next to the stove top, which gives plenty of room to wash and rinse dishes on the road.*

*There is plenty of storage space above the sink and plenty of drawers under the sink area.*



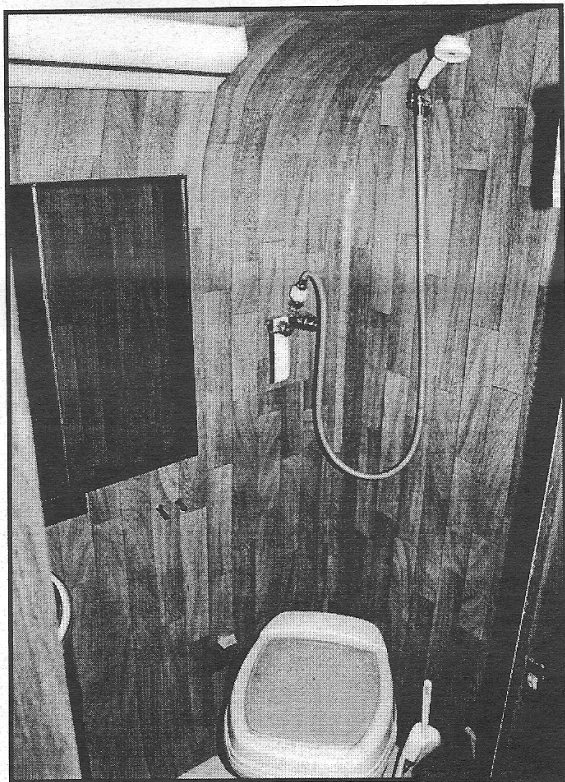


*Left. Looking forward from the back of the Van. A better view of the stove and sink (half is covered with a cutting board). The refrigerator is on the far right.*

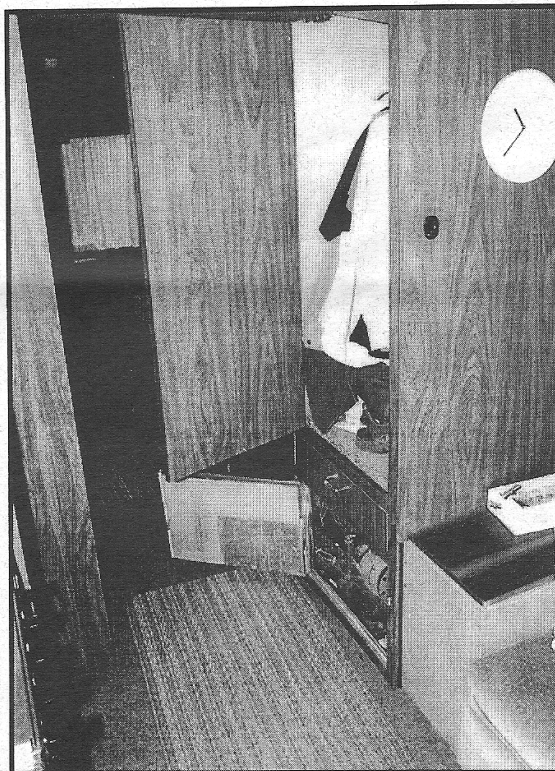
*With the sofa and foward seating area, there is plenty of room to do some entertaining.*

*The fresh water tank and the final holding tank are located under the mid part of the Van on the right side. They hold 50 gallons each.*

*The engine is located below and to the left out of view in this photo. That puts the weight of the engine and transmission on the left*



*The toilet area has a fresh water flush that drops directly into the final holding tank. The wash basin is located at the far left of the photo, just showing the edge. The shower is a hand held hanging on the wall. The drain is in the center of the toilet area and goes directly into the final holding tank. A vanity mirror and medican cabinet is located just above the toilet on the wall. It is a big area and allows for plenty of room to take a full shower.*



*There is a closet on top. The small door under the closet is access to the engine compartment. We are looking at the right side of the Olds 350 engine. You can get to the spark plugs, the automatic transmission fluil level and the distributor with opening a simmuilr door just behind the door that is open.*

*There is an engine access on the left side of the Van to check the oil and add some when necessary.*





*This photo shows the relative small size of the Ultra Van compared to a big rig.*

*This also shows the right side of the Van. The entry door is located behind the front passenger window. It also shows the awning holder that covers the side when parked in a camping spot.*



*Marlene Craig is shown pouring some coffee for visitors. She really loves the convenience and open space of the Van. She & Jim have owned many Ultra Vans and she thinks this one is the best all round one they have had. An recent trip to the races they had a party with about 10 people attending.*

several years ago, but haven't heard a recent update on his progress. Number 605 is owned by Roy Muranaka in Northridge California (he also owns the one off number 700, that is another story), this is a 23 foot unit.

Numbers 603, and 604 were delivered from Sonoma and no further units were sold from there. Number 605 was a work in progress when the Corporation closed it's doors. George Truman bought this unit and did quite a bit of work on it before he passed away (See WOW Summer 1992). His wife sold 605 to Roy Muranaka.

There was a try to interest Winnabego in the Ultra Van project, but it never happened. Would have made a hell of a small unit. Number 603 is owned today by me (Christy Barden), 604 is owned by Jim Craig, and the prototype number 601 is owned by Ed Gurr in Mariposa California.

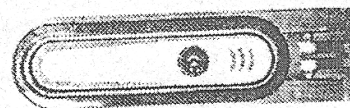
The Ultra Vans were either 23, or 26 feet long. All were 8 feet high and 8 feet wide. The delivered weight was about 6,500 pounds. I have 135,000 miles on mine now and haven't had the heads of the Olds 350 marine engine, yet. I'm planning to place a radiator in front of the engine to see if I can get it to run cooler.



## Flush Door Latch

Locking type. Includes striker. Fits standard 2" width door or has bushings that can be cut to fit narrower doors. Code 8

Cat. No. M-242-000 ..... **\$44.50**



*Richard Finch sends us a source for a new door latch for our Ultra Vans. He writes he ordered one of these NEW, SHINEY, CHROME door latches and it is exactly like his Ultra Van Door Latch. Order from Wag Aero Group P.O. Box 181, 1216 North Rd., Lyons, Wisc. 53148. Phone: 1-414 763-9586; Fax: 1-414 763-7585.*

## Dori & Joseph DeCamillis have an Art Show in Birmingham.



*The mobile studio. Joseph and Dori inside the UltraVan, Wisconsin State Fairgrounds, Milwaukee, June, 1994.*

Dori and Joseph DeCamillis are having an showing of their art work at the Birmingham Alabama Museum of Art, February 13 through April 30, 2000. They have been Ultra Van owners for some time. They have lived in their Ultra Van all over the country doing art work as they go.

Dr. David Moos, Curator of Paintings says of the DeCamillis: The open road is as much about physical travel as it is predicated on imaginary transport. At one point, for instance, they stayed with a 75 year-old woman (Group Ultra Van member Hilda Green in Torrance, CA) in the Los Angeles area, living in their Ultra Van that was parked in her driveway for several months. The painting *For Hilda* (1998) is an homage to this generous woman and a direct reminiscence of that urban segment of the voyage. In this composition Hilda is only vicariously present, represented through her brown, padded easy chair. Nearby are various objects of personal signifi-

cance: atop a side table, framed photographs of family members, various books, and a rug imprinted with monarch butterflies. Beyond this interior environment, where the arrayed objects seem to be placed with the precision of props on a stage, we can gaze out of the cinema-scope picture window and see across the lawn to the street full of traffic. This carefully ordered outside view - which is a reference to the driveway, the neighborhood, and open road - clearly echoes the DeCamillis strategy of treating the domestic environment as a still life, a tableau and template that registers symbolic significances.



*For Hilda, 1998*



## Broken E-Clip in Transmission How to Get Home Without It

By Bob Ballew

Your Low to Drive shift sometimes seems erratic. You suspect that the infamous E-clip may be missing or broken. What if I were to tell you that you can determine for absolutely sure, without ever dropping the Powerglide oil pan or pulling the valve body, or even crawling under the Ultra Van!

This will take a running Ultra Van and a helper. Have your helper fire up you Ultra Van and let it run until the engine is off the fast idle and idling around 500-600 RPM. If it idles faster and has good brakes, that will be okay. Next, disconnect the throttle linkage coming out of the fire wall from the carburetor cross shaft. The air cleaners most likely will have to be removed to get at the linkage. Pull to the rear on the disconnected throttle linkage until you feel it stop as the throttle lever on the Powerglide touches the detent in the

valve body. It is not necessary to pull the linkage through this detent. At this point, have your helper put his foot on the brake and shift the selector to Drive. You should not feel any movement of the throttle linkage. Continue holding the throttle linkage up against the detent and have your helper shift the selector to Low. If you get a sudden pull on the throttle linkage, this indicates a missing E-clip. If no pull, the e-clip is present and doing its job of keeping the throttle valve in the valve body in place. Your erratic shifting is caused by something else.

If it is the E-clip, you can get home by doing the following. Put the selector lever in Drive and accelerate normally. To shift to from the Low gear to High gear, put the selector in Neural then back into drive. This should shift the transmission into high gear.

*The October 1999 issue of the CORSA Communique also has another article by member Bob Ballew. He describes how to drain all the transmission fluid out of your torque converter, using compressed air pressure. Ed.*

## The Powerglide Governor Demistified

by Bob Ballew

THE STOCK CORVAIR GOVERNOR less WEIGHT COVER

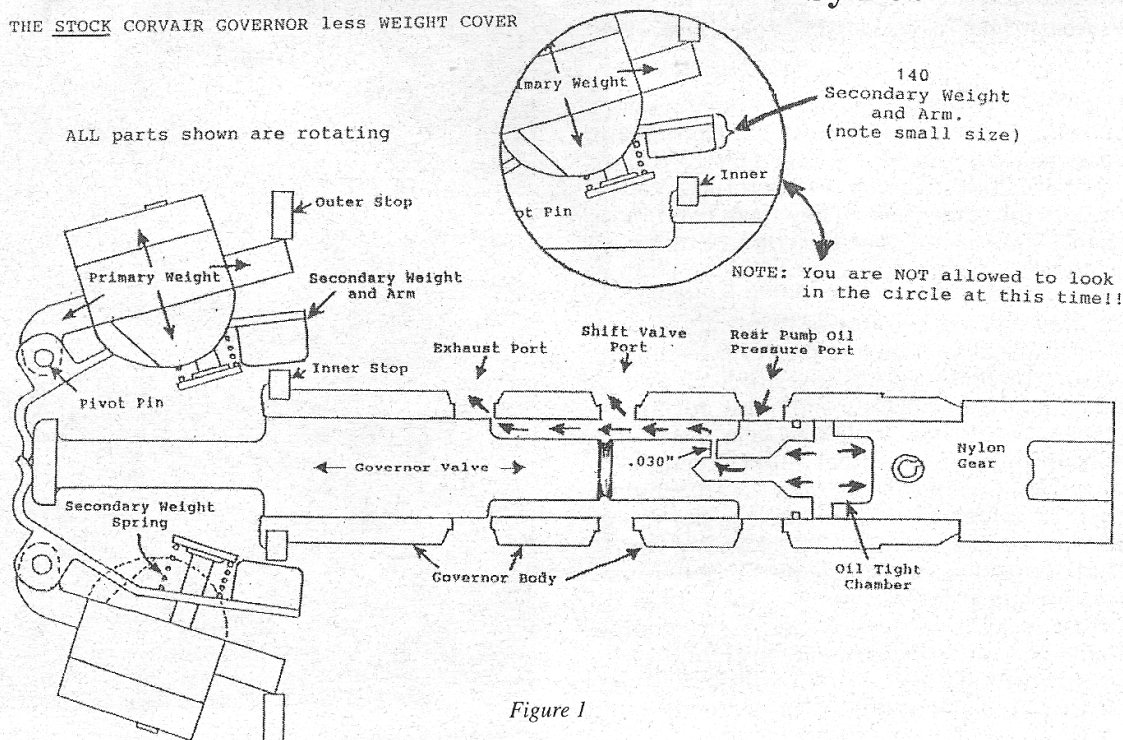


Figure 1



A stock governor in Low at about 20 MPH (Half Throttle). The primary weights are against outer stops by centrifugal force. The secondary weights balance between the left movement of the Governor Valve by the oil pressure in the Oil Tight Chamber, and centrifugal force on it's weights plus compressing it's springs. The drawing (Fig. 1) shows the instant the oil pressure in the chamber exceeded the centrifugal force of the secondary weights and opened the exhaust port. As the pressure drops in the chamber the secondary weights start to move towards the outer stops, moving the valve right, closing the exhaust port and opening the rear pump oil port, and building the chamber back up via the .0303" hole. It's the secondary weights which control the oil pressure which is routed to the shift valve to affect the shift to Drive.

### Three Governor Malfunctions Effecting Shifting.

The cut-away drawing (Fig. 2) shows the Governor Valve, it's body and part of the main Powerglide housing it is mounted in. The weight assemblies and cover which would be on the left are not shown.

The parts marked 'A', 'B', 'C', & 'D' are part of the main Powerglide housing in which the Governor Body and Governor Valve rotates. The drawing shows three malfunctions at the same time.

The first is the Nylon Gear. Due to heat, old age, drying out, or just plain wear, the Gear is no longer a press fit in the Governor Body. It is this press fit that makes the Oil Tight Chamber, "Oil Tight". As you can see from the drawing the oil from the Rear Pump on it's way to the Shift Valve finds the tiny ".030" hole" leading into the Oil Tight Chamber which would normally begin to increase the pressure in the Chamber and push the Governor Valve to the left, which would also pivot

the weight in. Any increase in speed the weights would swing out moving the Governor Valve back to the right. This will result in a balance between the Weights and the Oil Tight Chamber oil pressure. However with the Nylon Gear lose in the Governor Body the oil pressure can't build up in the chamber. Only a lose fit of only .002" is enough leak to prevent the build up. Since their is no way to exhaust any excess oil pressure, the FULL Rear Pump Oil Pressure goes to the Shift Valve resulting in an EARLY shift to Drive. (Bigger the leak the earlier the shift)

The second malfunction is shown as a leak past a badly worn Governor Body Journal between the Shift Valve Port and the Exhaust Port. Strangely enough it is the STEEL Governor Body that wears more than the aluminum. The stock size of the Body Journal is .800". Stock size for the aluminum bore is .801". I have never found a bore worn more than .003", but have found Body Journals worn as much as .011". If you figure the area of that .011", that's a BIG LEAK! Let us assume at this point that the Nylon Gear is okay and the left and right movement of the Governor Valve is balancing out everything in a normal manner. We would now be sending the proper oil pressure to the Shift Valve. However, part of the pressure is bled off by this 2nd leak and much less than the proper pressure is now being sent to the Shift Valve. Only by speeding up can we get shifted to Drive which will result in a extremely LATE shift to Drive. (Bigger the leak the later the shift)

In regards to the two leaks listed above and the resulting malfunctions, if both leaks were occurring at the same time I haven't a clue as to the results, I'm sure it wouldn't be a normal shift.

The third malfunction is shown as a chunk of Nylon Gear missing. This can be caused by two things. First; during the assembly of the

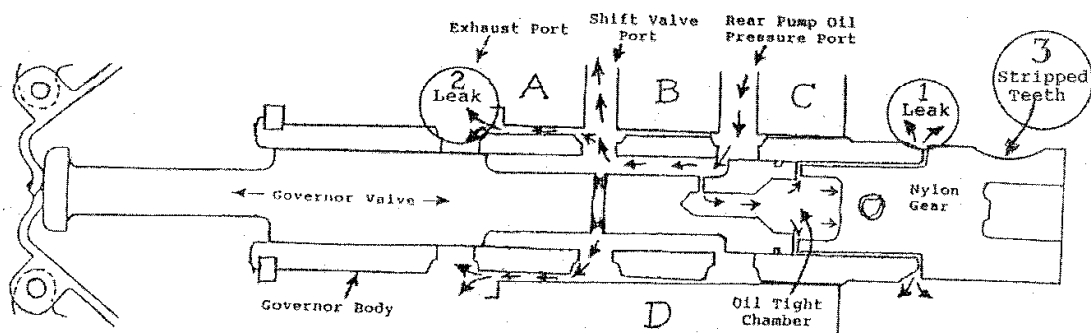


Figure 2



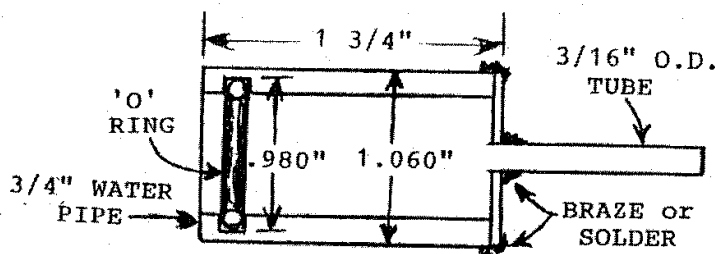


Figure 3

Powerglide to the differential, or during repair done to the Differential the Steel Governor Gear located on the Differential Pinion Shaft, one of the teeth of the Steel Governor Gear was damaged and this burr or dent of the Steel Gear tooth will eat away the Nylon Gear till it strips a section out. Second; the guide pin the Nylon gear turns on in the Powerglide housing is binding the Gear and this friction causes excess heat, softening the gear which eventually results in stripped teeth. In either case, the Governor will no longer turn. However, the car will still move, the rear pump will still pump, but since the Governor isn't turning, the weights aren't turning, the oil pressure from the rear pump can easily move the Governor Valve to the left thereby opening the Exhaust Port wide open and none of the Rear Pump pressure can now reach the Shift Valve so the car remains in LOW range and not shift to Drive.

Checking out you're old Governors. To check the Governor Journal at 'A' (see Fig. 2), that's the Journal just sticking out of the neck of the Weight Cover. A one inch Micrometer will work nicely. The journal is usually egg shaped so measure across at four different angles. Stock size is .800" and ROUND. A couple of thousandths would most likely be okay. Next, a loose or leaking Nylon Gear would be next. If you can wiggle it, you know it's leaking and should be replaced. Some times the split pin will prevent it from wiggling, but still leak. Couple of things you can do their. Drive the split pin out and if the Nylon Gear just falls out, you know it's leaking. If you can't budge the Gear, it's a winner, put the pin back in and tag it. WARNING: DON'T use a vice to hold the Governor Body ain't all that strong.

There's another way to check for leaking Nylon Gear. This doesn't require driving out the split pin, however it does require a couple of special tools. If you have a machinist friend, he can make you a tool to check for a leaking Nylon Gear out of a short piece of 3/4"

water pipe as shown in Fig. 3. The replaceable 'O' ring is a Push Rod Tube 'O' ring. A little oil on the 'O' ring and the first Journal and push the tool on over the Nylon Gear with a twisting motion, attach a vacuum pump and if it can hold vacuum for at least ten seconds it will be okay.

Fig. 4 is a holding tool for the Governor Body made out of a piece of 3/16th" steel. It slides into the Shift Valve Port (the one with the groove). It can be held in a vice while you remove or replace a used Nylon Gear that is quite snug. I have to remove the Nylon Gear when I am checking the Governor to see if it is one of the RARE 140 GOVERNORS (that procedure later in the article). The Holding Tool can also be used to hold the Governor Body vertical in a hydraulic press to install a new or reproduced Nylon Gear. Remember it's a 'Press Fit', not a slip in and you could damage or bend the Governor Body as it ain't too stout.

#### The Pitfalls of Reproduced or Aftermarket Nylon Gears.

If you are the proud owner of a bunch of NOS GM Nylon Gears, you can go ahead and replace them without checking or measuring anything, they are of the correct configuration and will fit perfectly. However if you only have the reproduced ones, their are a few things about them you should check before you press and drill. Fig. 5 is a cutaway drawing of a GM NOS Gear and a reproduced Gear.

As everyone knows, G.M. dosen't waste any money on frills that aren't necessary, with this in mind I would like to bring you're attention to the two parts of the G.M marked 'A' & 'B'. This extra machine work most likely didn't cost much but with over a million units built their must be some reason this extra money was spent. We like to brag about our 200

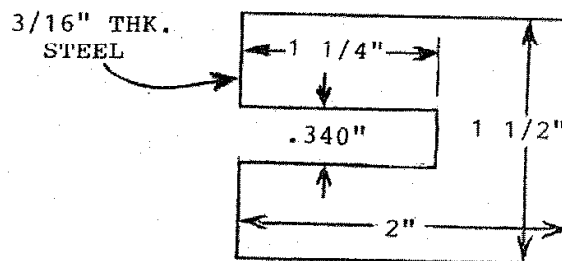


Figure 4



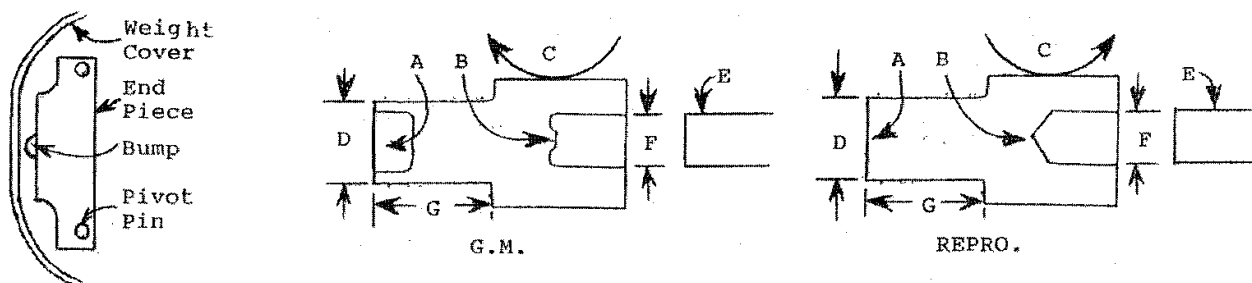


Figure 5

thousand mile bullet proof Powerglides and it's little extras like this that make it possible. The little cavity marked "A" is half of the "Oil Tight Chamber" which between it and the Weights gives us the proper Oil Pressure for Shift Timing. The engineers that designed it wouldn't have put it there if it wasn't needed. The nylon is flexible, it's possible that the Cup lips seal off the chamber better under the Oil Pressure and heat of operation.

Another frill, 'B', a little 'Bump' in the middle of the G.M. Nylon Gear Guide Pin Hole. When you're tooling down the highway the Guide Pin 'E' isn't even touching that 'Bump'. It's as much as  $\frac{3}{32}$ " away from it. What's this, more money being spent for a frill? No, it's designed that way for a purpose. When you're tooling down the highway the Steel Governor Gear 'C' mounted on the Differential Pinion Shaft is turning in the direction of the curved arrow (That's what rotates the Governor). The friction of this turning moves the Nylon Gear and all the rotating parts of the Governor to the left. Inside the Weight Cover (fig 6) their is an End Piece mounted on the two Weight Pivot Pins. On this End Piece their is a 'Bump' which contacts the Weight Cover and this 'Bump' is what the rotating parts spin on (the Weight Cover does not rotate). Now

before everyone shouts, THEN WHAT THE HELL IS THE 'BUMP' IN THE NYLON GEAR FOR!!! Calm down, remember out Corvair back up just like other cars. In backing up the Steel Governor Gear 'C' is not turning the other direction, (shown in 'C' in the reproduced drawing) this friction will now move the Nylon Gear and all the rotating parts to the right and up against the stationary Guide Pin 'E'. However the 'Bump' in the G.M. Nylon Gear Hole is centered on the flat end of the Guide Pin, and can spin quite nicely. Now, take a peek at the reproduced gear. The Reproduced Nylon Gear is being pushed up against the outer edges of the Guide Pin, and any deformities along that edge will start drilling into the Gear. Now a well thought-out design.

Let's go to two other possible problems areas on the reproduced Gear. First, the drilled hole 'F' for the Guide Pin. A new Powerglide pin is .309" (I pulled one out and measured the virgin end) a typical Corvair size. Nothing, absolutely nothing is that size. A  $\frac{5}{16}$ th drill is .3125" (.0035 to big). A  $\frac{19}{64}$ th drill is .2969" (.012 too small. A letter drill "N" is .3020" (.007" too small. Yes, a typical Corvair size!! With a bit of effort I took a  $\frac{5}{16}$ th grade '8' bolt (they are a couple thousands under in order to go through a  $\frac{5}{16}$ th"

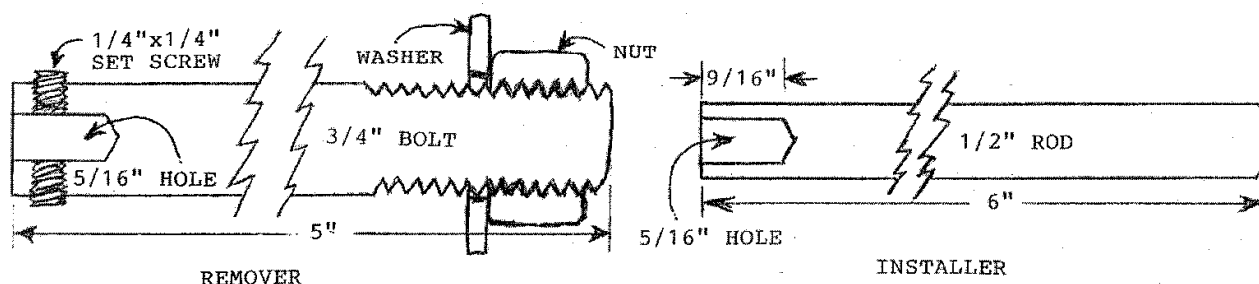


Figure 6



hole. With some emery paper and crocus cloth I managed to make some passable pins.309". Of course bolts are not drill stock, and hand grinding didn't make them perfectly round, so the following testing is not engraved in stone. I have six brand new reproduced Nylon Gears from an unnamed Corvair supplier and of that six only one will accept my.309" pin. It does so with great reluctance and when fully in almost impossible to turn. The other five won't accept even a fraction of an inch of them. Their is good news though. Their are not too many Powerglides with Guide Pins still in mint condition (not worn).

So the odds are with you here. Most of our Powerglides are high mileage units and the pins are worn down to where the reproduced Gears will have a fair chance to fit some. If you are thinking of pressing some reproduced Gears on you're Governors I would recommend checking to see if the Gears will slip on the pins first. I dug out two of my idle Powerglide cases and neither of the pins were worn enough to accept any of the five reproduced Gears. I got the one but could hardly turn it. So, CHECK FIRST!

The second thing that might cause a problem is the length of 'G' (fig.5) the part that presses into the Governor Body. The Governor Valve contacts this when it is in the position to open the port to the Rear Pump Oil Pressure. In most of the Governors I measured, that opening was about.035" full opening. I measured all my old G.M. and NOS gears and all my reproduced gears and found the dimensions of 'G' of the reproduced averaged around.028" longer than the G.M. Gears. This means this extra.028" will only allow the port to open

about.008". Using the old saying 'because of the stack up of parts' their is a possible chance on some governors the port might not open at all. I haven't checked whether by pressing the reproduced Gears in, that the squeezing might make them even longer.

At this point I would like to report one good feature of the Reproduced Nylon Gears, they press in real, real snug! No problem with leaking to screw up shifting timing. However if you plan on pulling them back out to chance something, forget it, as they are really Bearcat to pull out!! The holding tool is a 'must' for attempting to remove the Gear.

What I am doing to modify the Reproduced Gears to get them closer to stock G.M. is as follows. For the cavity 'A', using a 3/8th" two flute end mill go in about.260" deep. While the Gear is still in the chuck, take off about.025" off the lip to shorten the length of 'G'. I am now in the process of grinding off (hopefully) a couple of thousand's off the 5/16th" end mill to enlarge the hole 'F' to fit my homemade.309" Guide Pins. Failing that I might grind down the ends of my homemade Guide Pins that fit in the Guide hole of the Gear to the smaller size to fit the Reproduced Gears. Possi-

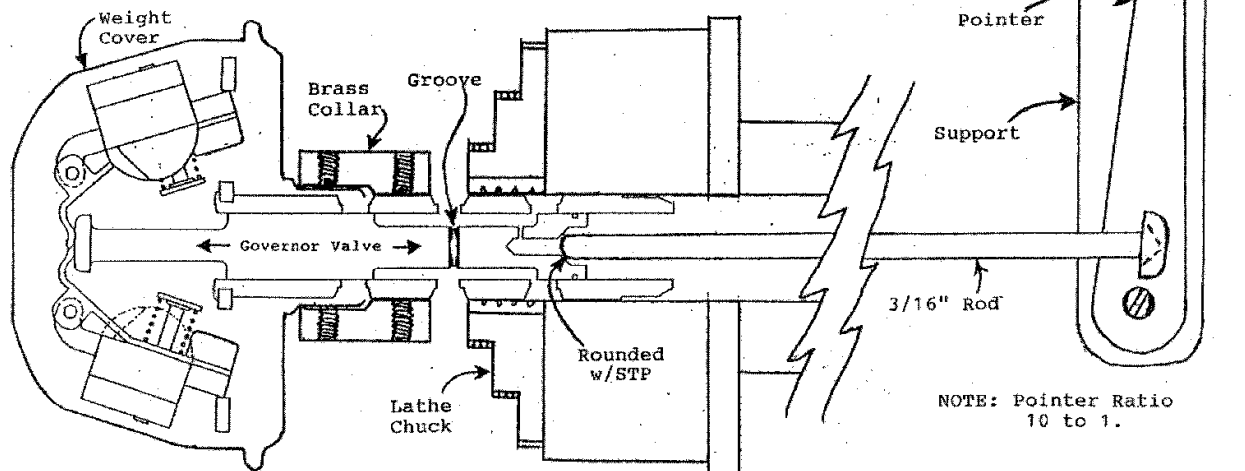
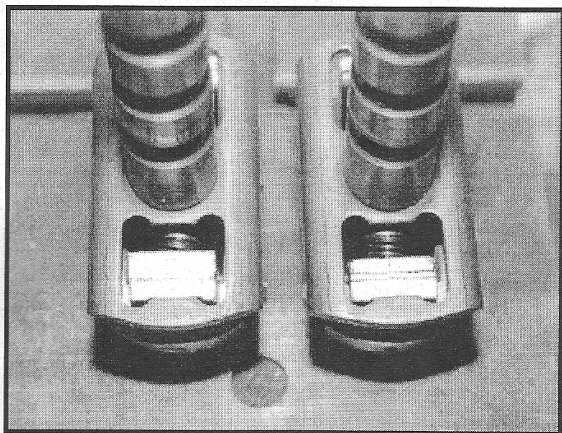


Figure 7

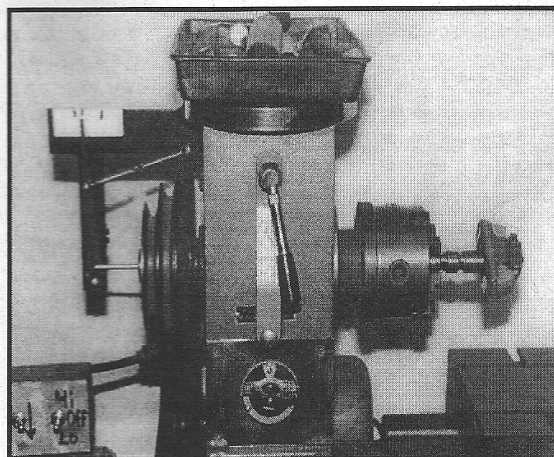
bly machining the ends to fit the 60° drill shape of the drilled hole in the Gears. How do I remove the pins from the case? See Fig. 6. Okay, you can look in the circle of Fig. 1.

### Finding Those Rare 140 Governors.

The only difference between a Stock Governor and a 140 Governor is the 140 secondary weights are about 32% smaller (in size) than the stock secondary weights. The primary weights are the same size in both. All of them are sealed inside a Weight Cover and we can't see them. The difference in size is the 1st clue we have to work with. The outer and inner stops for the weights are the same distance apart on both Governors. That's the 2nd clue we can work with. Shown in Fig. 7 is a Stock Governor being spun at about 800 RPM on my lathe. The Weight Cover is held in place by a brass collar (home made) and 4 allen screws to keep it from interfering with the movement of the weights. At this RPM the weights are swung out to the outer stops, moving the Governor Valve to the right as far as possible. This has pushed the 3/16" Rod to the right moving the pointer to the STK (stock) Mark. When the Governor (less Nylon Gear) was installed in the lathe chuck, it was pushed up against the Rod and the pull of the Spring forced the weights in against the inner stops, the pointer was pushed to the 0 Mark, and then the Chuck tightened. When a 140 is checked, the 140 weights being smaller moves the rod further, moving the Pointer to the 140 Mark. EUREKA!!



Standard weights on Left; 140 weights on Right. The 140 will move the valve further. That difference on the valve is only about .030".



A stock Governor at 800 RPM on Bob's lathe. This is a Governor with the cover off. The camera stopped the action. Pointer at STD. The weights were painted white and are against the outer stops.

## A Pete Smith Special



Pete Smith with his Ultra Van

With great interest I read each issue of "Whales on Wheels". Gleaning every update, problem area, and breakdown by fellow whalers. I have very nearly done it all, and here's the story thus far.

About four years ago I was browsing the local wrecking yard with a friend, looking for some VW parts he needed. Out front set #463 with one rear wheel askew. The sign said "For Sale, Do Not Part Out". We peered inside. Do you remember the first time you looked into your's? I was amazed. It happened that I was looking to build a computer room for my daughters. The Ultra Van had more than enough room, and if I worked it right I could hook up the plumbing and they could even use the bathroom (or I could, ever live in a one bathroom house with three females and



you know how to hold "it!") I could landscape around it, put in a brick path, picket fence, two pink flamingos, it would look kind of kitschy.

I was told the price was \$1,200. Cheaper than the Home Depot bill I would pay to build it myself. Home I went to get my wife and convince her of the enterprise. Miracle's do happen, she agreed! As it unfolded, 1,200 bucks was just the latest bid. I'd have to bid \$1,300, then wait and see. The next two weeks they are called me for another bid almost daily. I topped out at \$2,500. I know nothing of Ultra Van history, the club, parts availability (namely Jim Craig), or their value. I was comparing it to the 2X4's and plywood. I lost the bid. Drat!!! A few weeks later Ecology (wrecking yard) called and asked if I was still interested. Of course, but at what price? Even though we were told that if you won the bid you had to go down there with cash immediately (I had a shoe box full of greenbacks ready), the fellow bidding against me was playing with Monopoly Money. He couldn't come up with it. So for \$3,000 it could be mine. I protested, explained that anyone could have jacked up the price with play money, I had a genuine dollars ready as they requested. We went round and round finally agreeing on \$2,000. The fun was about to begin.

Seems like if you tell a tow truck company that you have a motorhome they see dollar signs. Plus they all want to flat tow it on a dolly. Try to convince them that it would fit on a roll-back rig and they laugh out loud on the phone. Finally I found an understanding company and they come out. They did a good job if you take into consideration that he hooked the aluminum with his cable and filleted the front underbelly.

Home at last. Darned if upon charging he batteries it started. This is kind of neat. Luckily the Ryerson manual and owner's manual were inside. Read pretty neat, and there were addresses for "The Underground" and "Clark's". Parts are easy. I also heard about The Fan Belt Toss and attended. There I met Jim Craig, learned how to fix the suspension, and most importantly saw a dozen other Ultras. I'm hooked! Sorry girls, the computer stays in your room.

Ever have a vehicle with a "salvaged" title? I think Rod Serling's ghost resides in California's Department of Motor Vehicles. Had to get certified sales receipts from the wrecking yard, break and light inspection, and

have the Highway Patrol certify the I.D. numbers. Seems like #463 didn't have enough numbers to suit, plus being a 1969 they wanted me to put all the smog crud on. They wouldn't buy the sheet in Ryerson's manual that outlined the exemption. It took over a year to get everything done. The Highway Patrol had to put their own disgusting serial number plated on, but the best thing was Governor Pete Wilson signed a bill exempting vehicles 25 years or older from having smog checks. Instantly the nightmare was over.

It ran well to begin with, looked like heck, but I ready to hit the road in it. Ruidoso National Ultra Van gathering sounded good, I set sail. Hard to hear it pinging with a 45% hearing loss. It was running pretty bad, but running. I decided maybe I wouldn't make it and turned for home, made it ten feet beyond the turnoff to Ocotillo on Interstate 8, 120 miles from home when it shook, rattled and died. Somehow it started and I made it to an R.V. Park's storage yard. The next day my wife drove over and picked me and my dog up. Again, the Fan Belt Toss was just around the corner. I gathered all my tools, loaded the truck and went back and pulled the engine on #463. Once back home I found three valves seats bouncing around inside the engine. Off to the Fan Belt Toss with heads on my mind. What a great event. I found two nearly perfect heads ready to install. Home again, engine buttoned up, off to Ocotillo again. Ran great!

I'm involved in another unique to the U.S. car called the Mini. An English VW beetle kinda. There was a swap meet for them in San Jose, California, so off I go in the Ultra Van. This time I wanted a dingy, so I put my 500cc Yamaha behind the driver's seat. Went right in. A peculiar thing, with the added 450 pounds the Ultra Van handled great! Wasn't all over the road when a semi went by. I felt like I was on a magic carpet. The meet went fine, people seemed more interested in the Ultra Van than the Mini's, neat how that works isn't it? Well just north of Santa Barbara heading south the gas tank split open. When the wrecking yard acquired my Ultra they couldn't move it due to the broken suspension, so they used a fork lift. The forks crunched the fiberglass tanks which I able to refiberglass (minus the foam), but the aluminum fuel tank had to live with the tank repair goo that Pep Boys sells. Well the constant oil canning effect finally split the tank. No amount of sealer or gum would stem the tide. So here I am 2 feet from traffic along Highway 101 without gas. AAA came (I've since gotten

a cell phone) and gave me 5 gallons of fuel, but I was at such an angle it wouldn't pick up. The center fuel pick pipe was pushed up higher than the ends. The tow truck driver wouldn't rope pull me to flat area, it was tow or no tow. I thanked him and sent him on his way. Removed the gas tank from my Yamaha, sat it on the mattress, ran a hose to the engine and made it home, 3 gallons at a time. It was a long night.

How do you repair an aluminum tank? No one wanted to touch it. Many said to have it hot tanked first, but caustic chemicals in the hot tank would eat the aluminum. Finally I lucked on to a company that said to pour a cup full of Wisk laundry soap in it, plug up the holes, leaving one open, then run a hose into it and let it run until the water comes out clear. I did it twice to be sure. The shop took it, straightened it, strengthened, reinforced it and made it perfect for \$110. I was thrilled.

Ready for another Fan Belt Toss Story? Another year and off to Palm Springs I go. The meet and Ultra are great. Decided to take along way home and go through Anza Borrego, up through Julian. Six miles from home I give it gas and all I get is RPM's and the sound of a meat grinder gone wild. No forward motion. Out comes the cell phone, AAA (be sure to have RV coverage), and soon a rollback rig with an understanding driver. I learned enough to guide him through the procedure. Home again without cost or towing damage. Seems my differential gears decided to duke it out for supremacy. They both lost, shedding their teeth completely. What followed was a quick course in differentials, early vs. late, standard vs. automatic. A call to Jim Craig put me out of my misery, he had a perfect one. In it went only to have the transmission go BOOM! I'm not kidding, it went BOOM! Then nothing. Stumped even Bob Ballew. Ecology wrecking yard to the rescue finally. On the road again.

Off to this year's Fan Belt Toss. Ran perfect, got 16 miles per gallon, cruised at 60 MPH, I'm in heaven. Best part is I made it home without trouble. Felt kind of sheepish because everyone wanted me to park in the Ultra Van area on the field. NO curtains yet, haven't started on the cosmetics. Besides, what if the insulation in the bathroom isn't up to snuff? Know what I mean? People actually wanted to look at mine, no one laughed, I didn't get embarrassed.

I think I'm over the hump, there are a zillion

things to do yet but I look forward to them. I went to college in Santa Barbara, while there I noticed a fantastic airplane parked out at the airport. It was designed to transport the Atlas missiles, and other over size cargos. Looked a great deal like our Ultra Vans. So I named #463 after that plane. It's "The Super Guppy".

If anyone out there needs their drive shafts rebuilt (I think my suspension broke because mine were too long, no play), I found a company that does a perfect job for \$105 each side. If like me you putting together a bullet proof differential and want the gear electron beam welded I found a place to do that for \$200. Or if you need gas tank service as I needed, please call me and I'll direct you to these helpful companies. Pete Smith (619) 463-7292.

## Classified

**1967 Ultra Van #321**, 110 H.P. Corvair, Powerglide. Rjoof Air, Good straight body. \$6,000. Contact Jean McMasters, 916 Lighthouse Drive, North palm Beach FL 33408, (561) 626-0388

**11968 Ultra Van #326**, 110 HP, Corvair, Powerglide. Engine rebuilt May 1999, new rear wheel bearings and dual master cylinder. New polyurethane paint, converted to 3 tank system, rebuilt 3:55 positraction differential. White Ash interior, new carpet and upholstery. Large rear window. Contact: Harold Washmouth, 271 Church Tree Rd., Crescent City, CA 95531. (707) 465-1753.

**1968 Ultra Van # 294**, 140 HP, Corvair, Powerglide. Cherrywood interior. Bigger Fridg, generator. No dents, metal bumpers. Needs paint. Has been setting for a while. Widow wants to sell it along with an extra 140 HP engine, 3 extra Powerglide transmissions and a Oldsmobile 455 Tornado engine and transaxle. \$3,500 takes it all. Contact: Hilda Green, 1556 W. 226th St., Torrance, CA 90501. (310) 328-3741.

**1969 Ultra Van #472**, 110 HP, Corvair, Powerglide, 4:11 gears. Beautiful beige & brown trim glossy paint job, radials tires, white interior, blue inside trim, seats, curtains & etc. All glass is good & tinted for sun protection. \$6,995. Jim Craig 760 366 9104 or jrcraig1@juno.com

**1969 Ultra Van #482**, 110HP, Corvair, powerglide. new water pump, new batteries, and a new Onan generator, AC worked fine. \$5000 firm. Call James Carvin (850) 894-1700

**1970 Ultra Van #547**, Chevy V-8, Automatic. Many upgrades. Needs paint, \$6,900 Contact Jeff Stonesifer at the Corvair Ranch, (717) 624-2805

**Ultra Van Rear Hubs** (late model Corvair) Rebuilt to near zero tolerances for Ultra Vans. \$90 plus exchange and shipping. Contact: Rear Engine Specialists, Inc. 16010 W. 5th Ave., Golden, CO 80401. (303) 278-4889 FAX (303) 936-7420.



## Rallies

**March 21 - 25, 2000, Eastern Spring Rally, Airstream Park, Christmas, FL.** 25525 E. Colonial Drive, Christmas, FL. St. Route 50, Exit 79, 195. Emergench Phone (407) 568-5207. This is a NO HOST rally.

**June 15 - 18, 2000, Eastern Summer Rally, Fox Fire RV Park, Milton, WV.** Hosts: Jack & "Skippy" Irwin, 224 Norway Ave. Huntington, WV 25705 (304) 738-2340. Sowears@aol.com.

**April 13 - 16, 2000, Casa de Fruta Rally, Hollister, CA** Casa de Fruta RV Orchard Resort, 10031 Pacheco Pass Hwy, Hollister, CA. Full hookups \$24.85 for 3 nights. Phone 1-800 549-3813. Hosts: Jim and Marlene Craig, (760) 366-9104, jrcraig1@juno.com.

**July 18th - 22nd, 2000, CORSA International Convention, Daytona, FL** Plaza Resort & Spa, 600 N. Atlantic Ave, Daytona Beach, FL. (800) 767-4471. Sea Side Trailer Part (800) 441-1831 Full hookups at \$30 a night. This is 6 miles north of the host hotel. Group Ultra Van meeting is Friday, July 21st at 8 PM.

**Sept 20 - 24, 2000, Ultra National Rally, Amana Colonies RV Park, Amana, Iowa** Hosts Ron & Martha Zoutendam, 206 N. 7th St., Sheldon, IA 51201. (712) 324-4660

**We need a new editor for Whales on Wheels. Please contact Pres. Galli.**

WHALES ON WHEELS is a quarterly publication of GROUP ULTRA VAN, a CORSA chapter. It is dedicated to the preservation and use of the ULTRA VAN. This 22 foot unique motor home was designed by David Peterson and built in Kansas until 1970. About 365 units were built. Dues are \$6.00 annually, please remit to the Secretary-Treasurer. Submit all technical information to the Editor.

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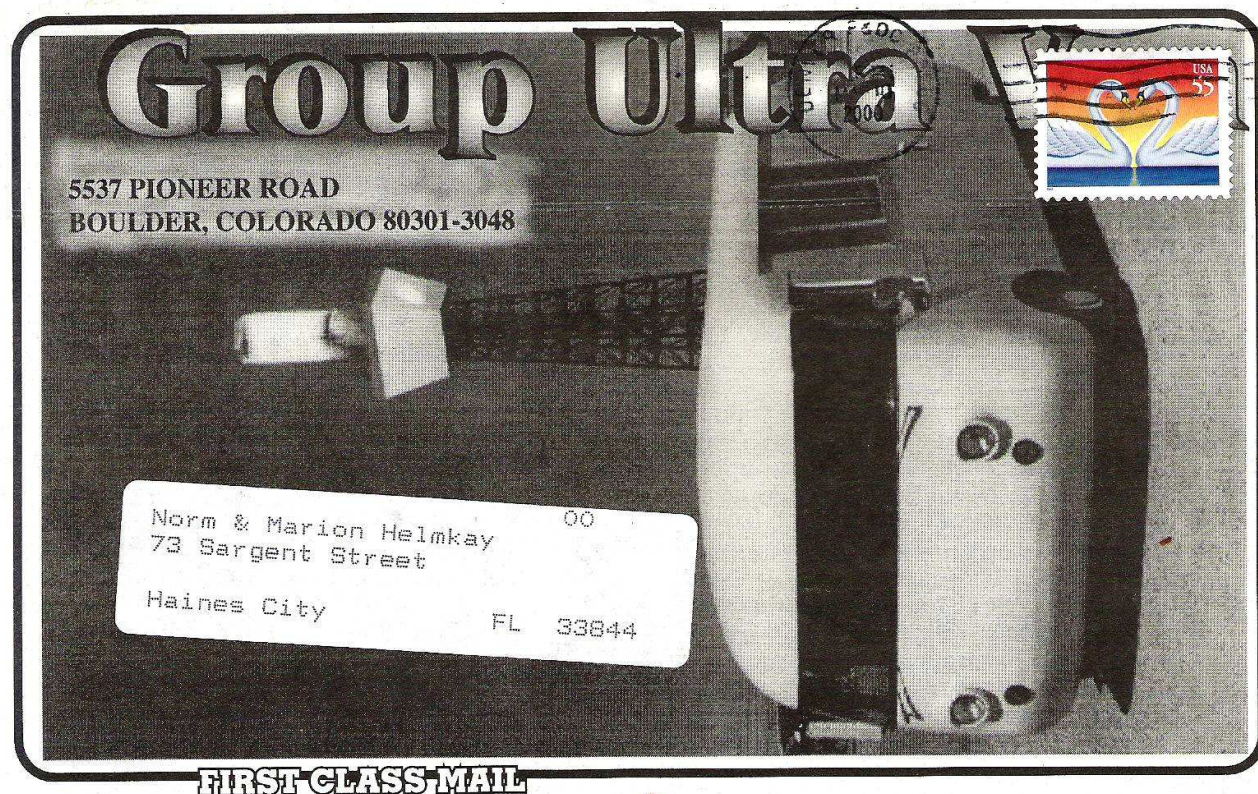
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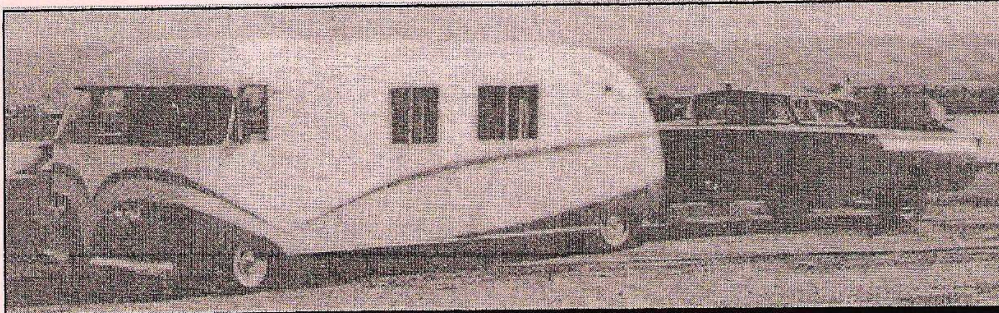




# Whales on Wheels

Volume XXI

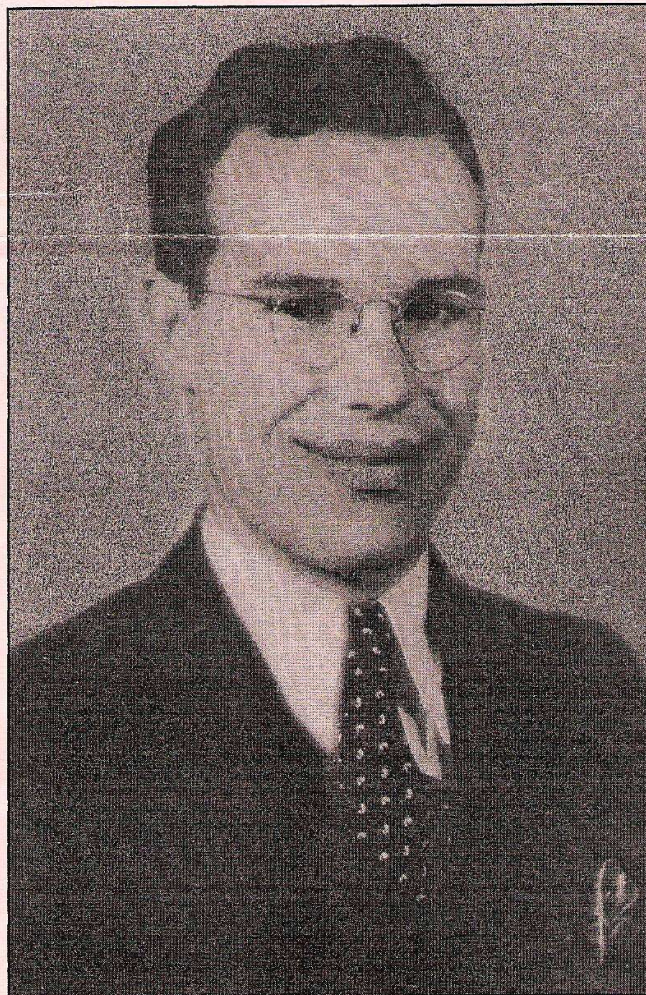
Number II



*This is Ultra Van #101. The first one built. Giving David what he always wanted, to pull his boat with a trailer*

## David Gibson Peterson

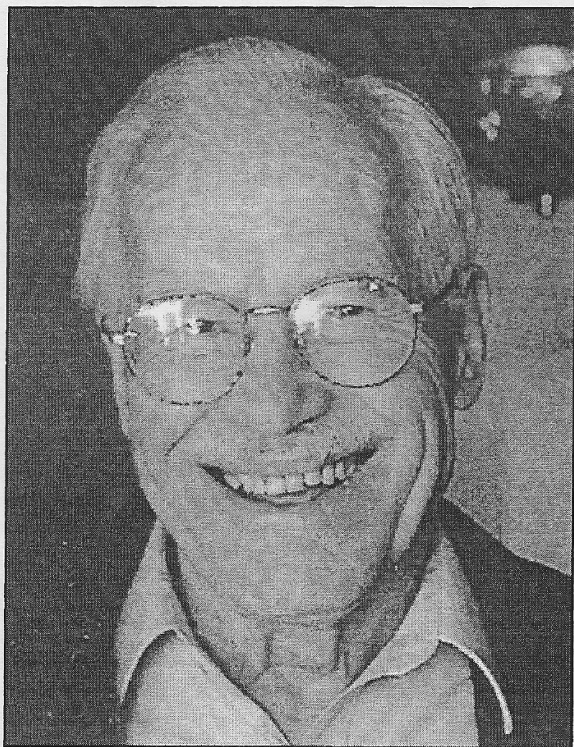
**July 16  
1914**



**June 22  
2000**

*David G. Peterson at age 20 years.*





*David G. Peterson July 1999*

## **Ultra Van Creator passes quietly in San Rafael, California**

David had a stroke on May 19, 2000 and never recovered. He passed away quietly on June 22, 2000.

We all have had him touch our lives in one way or another. We will always remember him as an enthusiastic, hard driving, ingenious person, who made it through the hardest of times. He always had a way to get something done, make it work, or figure things out. We all respected his notion that gave us the Ultra Van, a unique vehicle that is still way ahead of its time.

Our condolences to his family, and the woman that made a lot of things happen in his life, Lucille. She did so many behind the scene activities, that we will never know just how influential she was. His wife Lucille, son David L. Peterson and daughter Patsy Hussman, 5 grand children and 5 great-grand children survive him.

Lucille said the last year they had together was enjoyable, not only to her, but to David as well. Because he had accepted his condition he was able to enjoy their new life at their new home in San Rafael, California. Lucille misses him greatly; they had just celebrated their 65 wedding anniversary the week before. She was happy they did have this last year

together, taking walks, having dinners and just being together with out a lot of business stuff to get in the way.

Some how the world has changed a bit without having that great David Peterson smile around.

Cards will be welcome: Mrs. Lucille Peterson, 713 Deer Valley Rd., San Rafael, CA 94903. No services will be held honoring David's request.

***W. Christy Barden***

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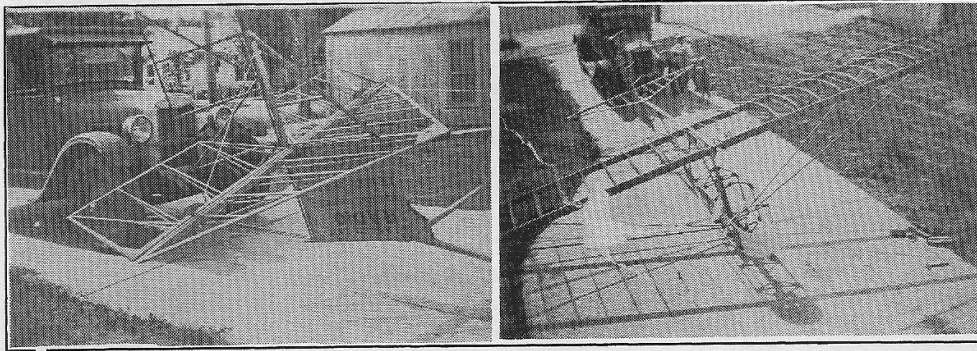
## **The David Peterson Story** by W. Christy Barden

David Peterson was born in 1914 in Minnesota. His father worked for the mill, and was also a preacher. He, his mother, father and sister moved to Blackwell Oklahoma in 1929. David helped his carpenter father build a trailer to tow behind their 1926 Chevrolet for the trip. His father suffered from arthritis and the 50° below zero winters were a discomfort, which prompted the move south to Oklahoma.

David learned the carpenter trade from his father. He relates how he was taught to sharpen the blade of a plane so sharp you could shave with it. He learned that you can do many jobs with a good sharp plane.

His father died when David was 15 years old. He became the sole support for his mother and sister. Being in high school at the time, this was quite a task. He moonlighted projects at the high school wood shop to help pay the rent. In high school, he used his woodworking skills to build a primary glider. This was an inexpensive way to learn how to fly. Using his own design, (sounds like David), based on standards of the day. He wanted to make it easy to assemble and disassemble. This way he could keep it at home and not have to pay tie-down rent at the airport. He was way ahead of his time, for gliders today disassemble for easy transport. The town council liked his glider (and him) so well; they let him keep it at the airport for free. David taught himself how to fly in his glider. While doing this story David showed me a small slip of paper with all the original materials, 1930 costs, totaling \$67.00.

David was a very industrious young man; he did many things well. He was known as the boy who did everything. This has done him well most of his life. Through out his life his yard has always been full of his projects.



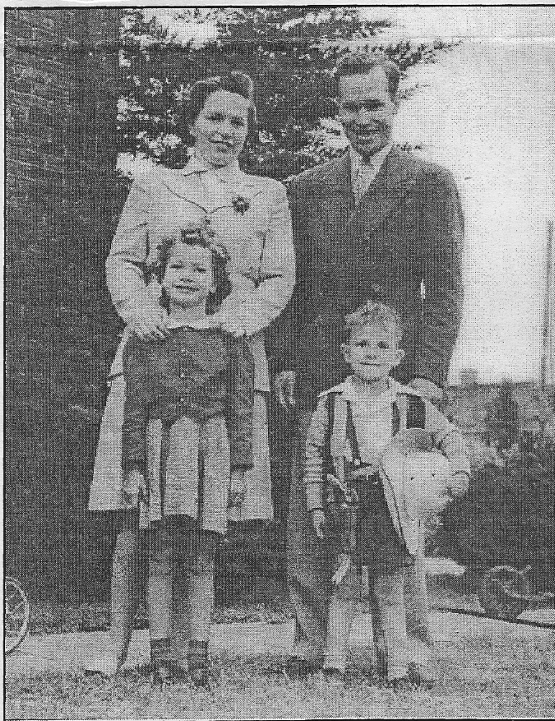
*This is the Glider that David built in his driveway in Blackwell Oklahoma. Note the 1926 Chevy that brought the family from Minnesota and took David and a friend to the 1933 World fair in Chicago.*

This young kid, using the high school wood shop, became the competition of the vendor in the town. The vendor complained and because of this he could no longer use the high school wood shop. A merchant who was impressed with David's industriousness, lent him the money to buy a new machine. This gave David the opportunity to open his own woodworking shop, "Dave's Woodwork Shop", just off Main Street in Blackwell.

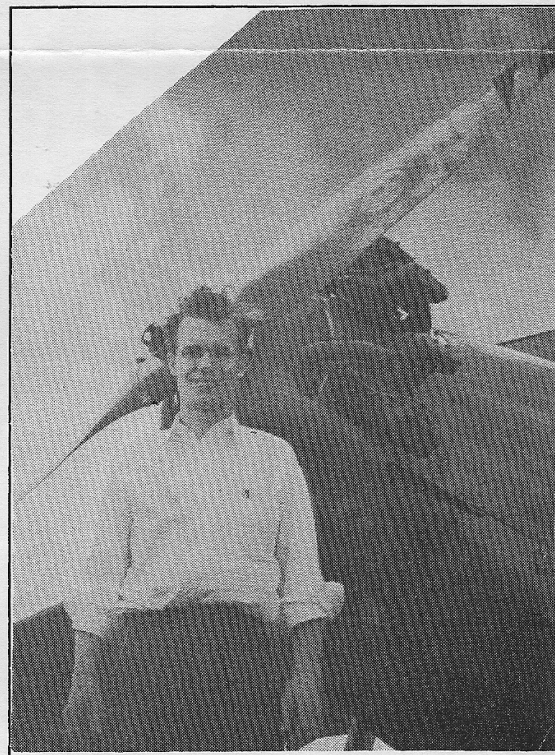
from home on his own.

Being familiar with flying and airplanes, David started doing repairs on airplanes. Usually when a wood spar needed repair, it would have to be removed from the aircraft and sent to the factory and then re-installed. David could make repairs in the aircraft without having to remove the spar. This saved the owners time and money. He kept the shop during the early 30's when the depression was at it's worst. He also did work on an airplane owned by the Harris & Hone

David graduated from high school in 1932. In 1933 he and friend went to the Worlds Fair in Chicago. Being resourceful, they made the entire trip in the 1926 Chevrolet for \$25.00 apiece. Gas, food, lodging, gate fees and rebuilding the battery included. This was David's first big trip away

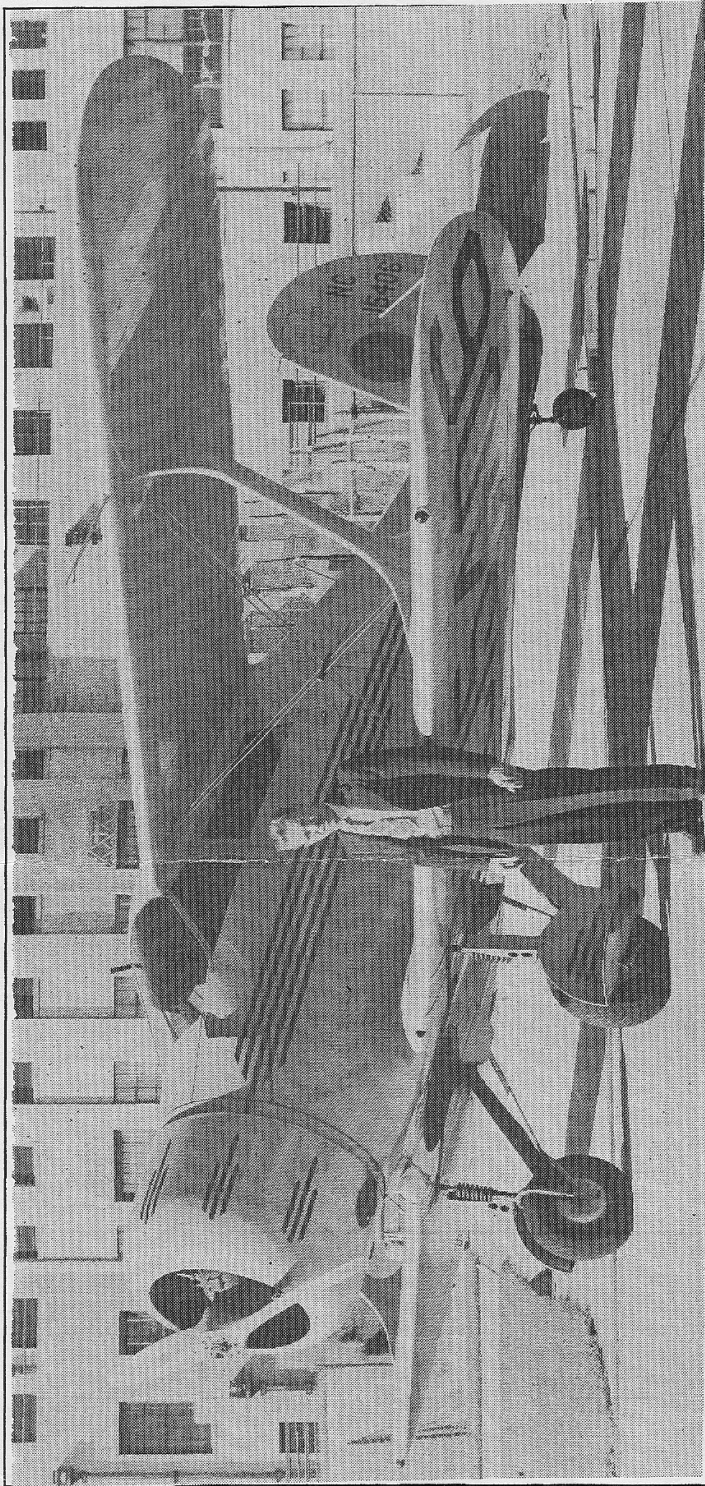


*Lucille & David Peterson with their Daughter Patsy and son David G. in Wichita about 1940*



*A young David Peterson standing by the 1930 model Cessna J67 that his step-father had bought for him.*





*This is the Beech Craft, Stagger Wing aircraft that David bought from Walter Beech in 1938. This was the 35th one built. Today this classic aircraft sells in the \$270 - \$500 range. The photo was taken at the Beech factory in Wichita.*

Oil Company. In return they let him fly it to gain flying experience. During this time, David was dating his future wife, Lucille, and they were married in 1935.

In early 1936, he and Lucille moved to Tulsa Oklahoma. He worked at about five different jobs. Remember this is still the depression and jobs were hard to find, but David found them. His best experience was working for Spartan Aircraft. He built maple wood forms blocks for the tail structure and doorframes of the new Spartan Executive airplane. These were compound curves he was working on.

In late 1936, David and Lucille moved to Wichita Kansas. Lucille was originally from this area so it was like coming home for her. Dave got a job at the Stearman Airplane Company. He worked in the experimental department using his woodworking talents.

During the time from 1930 to 1937 David was still pursuing this love for flying. In 1937 he had accumulated about 150 hours of flying. In my last visit with them in the summer of 1999, we went through his flying logbooks. It was a long time from the beginning to the time he got his pilot's license in 1937. Raising a family during the depression was a job in itself, but he managed to have enough money to fly and get his license. Lucille was also a big help here as well. David got his pilot license number 38268. He used a 1930 J67 Cessna, which his stepfather had purchased. Only a few of these aircraft were built and were outdated by 1937. With his commercial pilots license he started giving rides for hire out at the Wichita airport. He was moonlighting for he still had the job at Stearman.

In 1938, he acquired a Stagger-wing Beech Craft. This happened because a friend introduced him to Walter Beech. It seems that a customer did not take delivery of this aircraft (this was the 35th one produced). Beech asked David what made him think he could fly a Stagger-wing Beech Craft. "What makes you think I can't" was David's reply. With not much money down and a good payment schedule, David went into the Charter business full time. It took a lot of gumption to get into a shaky aviation business at this time. Lucille had her doubts, but David made it by working long hours and using lots of energy. He had only one engine failure using this airplane; he landed in a field with no injury to him or





*From left to right. Daughter Patsy, Lucille, Son David L., David G. Peterson, Davids mother Nellie at 68 years of age. Taken about 1947 in one of the Beech Craft Bonanza's that David had in his Rent-A-Plane business in Tulsa.*

aircraft. Lucille said the children (Patsy born in 1936 and David L. in 1938), learned to walk by holding onto the fence at the airport.

"David Peterson Charter Service" was started in June 1938. He did a lot flying during these years. His logbook showed he hardly had a day off from flying. Walter Beech was very good to him, sending lots of business his way. Later David acquired a Cessna Air Master to his fleet. In 1939 he got his instrument rating in a Culver Cadet aircraft. Not to many pilots had their instrument rating

in 1939, usually only airline pilots.

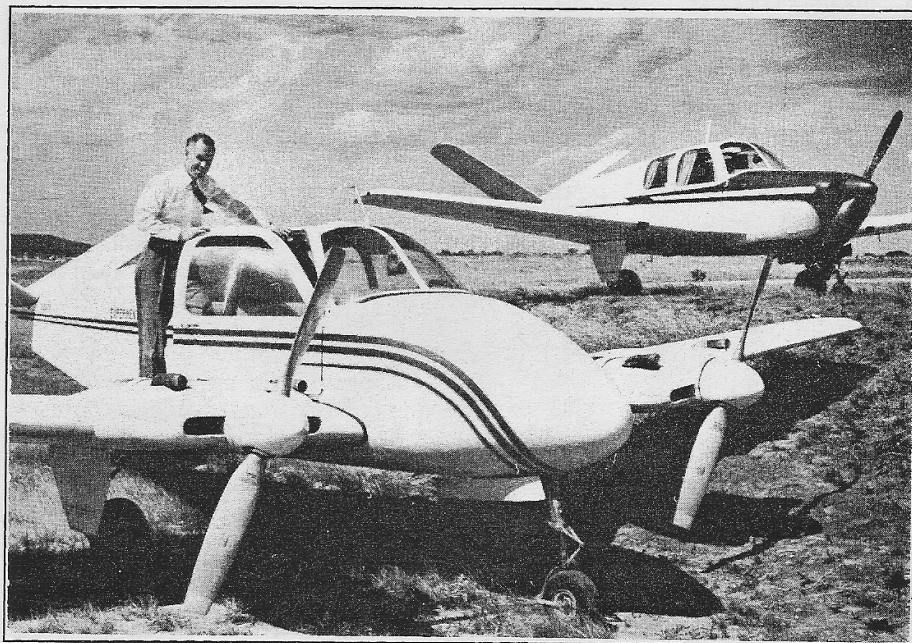
When World War II came, the government took his aircraft for the war effort. David went to work for Boeing Aircraft in Wichita. He went to Seattle for a short time and worked on test flying the B-17 Flying Fortress. This gave him the 4 engine flying experience that he needed. In looking in his flying logs, they flew at least 2 aircraft a day. Then he came back to Wichita and worked on the B-29 project. There he was given charge over final assembly of the B-29 Super-fortress. The independent Peterson insisted on test flying the B-29's as they came off the line. But when the time came for test flights, he tangled with new managers of the program. In today's terms, David might not have been "team player", he had abilities to see what needed to be done, and maybe was not "politically correct" in stating his position. In 1944 he left Boeing and went to work for Beech Craft improving the company's propeller design, incorporating a feathering feature.

Then the story picks up with him getting a job as the first pilot to fly for Sinclair Oil Company (the forerunner of the Atlantic Richfield Oil Company). I quote from the book "Power to fly", by Devon Francis, published by the Richfield Co. in 1986. "Finding a qualified pilot during wartime was no easy

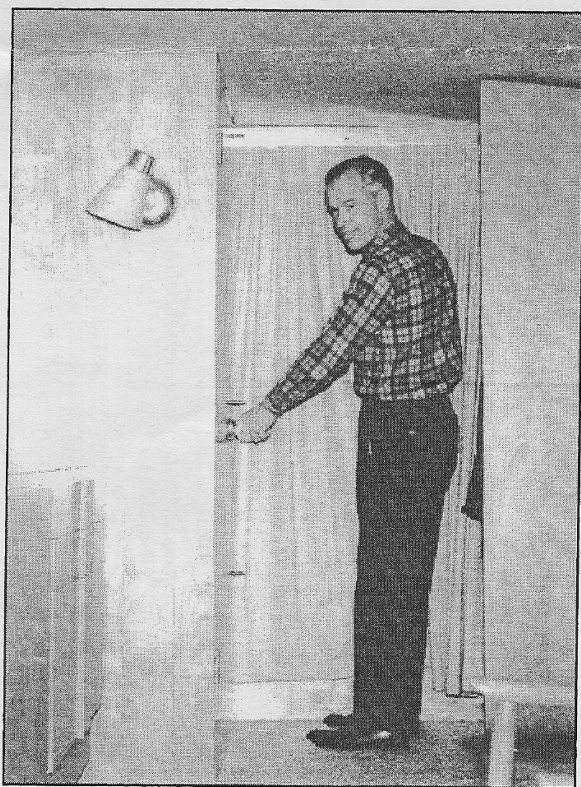


*My favorite photo of David Taken in the early 50's in front of the Twin engine Beech Craft Model 18 he flew for Sinclair Oil Co. It shows a confident young man in charge of his life.*





David standing on the wing of his creation the "Super V" behind is a Beech Craft Bonanza that was used to make this twin-engine aircraft. Photo taken in Tulsa in 1956.



David showing off the prototype Ultra Van #101 in 1961.

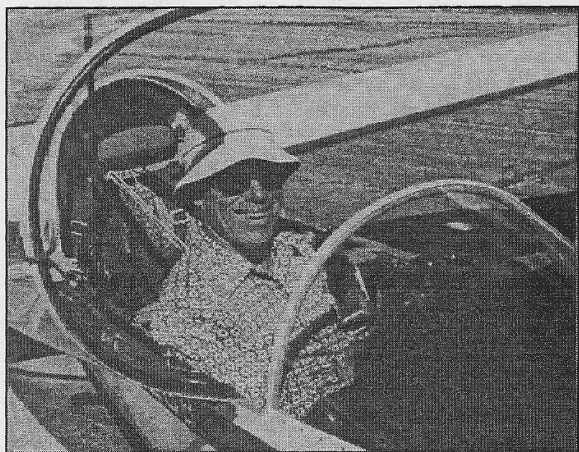
task. Buy Connelley (Sinclair President), remembered flying with an expert Wichita charter pilot who was available. His name was David Peterson. Peterson had an unusual history. When the government commandeered these air taxi-service planes at the beginning of the war, he went to work for Boeing's Wichita division. There he oversaw the construction of the B-29 Super-fortress. When Connelley called Peterson, all he asked about was his drinking habits. Connelley had a pathological fear of pilots whom mixed drinking and flying. When Peterson confessed he was a teetotaler, Connelley hired him on the spot."

After the war, while still flying with the Sinclair Oil Co., David started another Air Charter Service in Tulsa, Rent-A-Plane. He had several people helping him with this business at the time. At one time he had 10 Beech Craft Bonanzas (a single engine 4 person aircraft) flying in charter service. This business was doing quite well, but he was spending so much time there that in 1955 Sinclair asked him to do one or the other. He sold the business.

It was the experience with the Beech Craft Bonanzas that gave him the idea for the "Super V". This was a Bonanza airplane, but with two engines instead of just one. He went to Beech Craft with his idea and they



David and Lucille at a premier showing of Ultra Van #201 which was the second unit built. Photo taken in 1962.



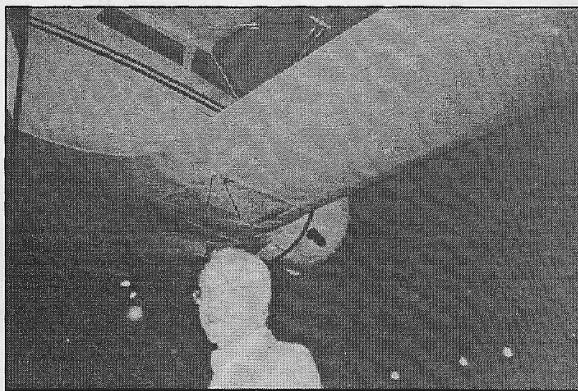
David Flew gliders like this one at Fremont California as well as Hang gliders off the coast of Marin County. Circa 1975.



David behind the wheel of Ultra Van # 601 that has a side mounted V-8 mid engine. Photo taken August 1999



The Peterson family in the early 90's. L. to R. Lucille, David G., Son David L. and daughter Patsy.



David standing in front of a Beech Craft Stagger Wing like the one he flew in 1938 at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

said it couldn't be done. That was music to Peterson's ears. So in 1956 he took a leave of absence from Sinclair Oil Co. to start work on the "Super V" project. With the help of his son, David L. he went to work on the conversion of making a single-engine Bonanza into a twin-engine Bonanza. He upped the gross weight by 600 pounds. By reworking the engines he achieved an engine nacelle that was only 14 inches thick. This was the most compact engine installation in the industry at the time. After the Beech Craft company saw what David had done, they went ahead and developed the Beech Baron; a twin-engine aircraft based on the single-engine Bonanza. This entire project got him into working (hands-on) with aluminum. Learning how stresses and structures worked, (and didn't work). He finally got the project certified by the C.A.A. (today the F.A.A.) He did a few conversions

and sold them to buyers. It was this project that brought him and his family to the Oakland Airport in California. In 1957 he formally left Sinclair after serving as their chief pilot.

While he was doing the "Super V" project, he got the idea for the Ultra Van. Pulling his Spartan trailer into Mexico in 1959, he thought it would be a great idea to leave the car at home. If he had an engine in the Spartan trailer he could pull his boat with him and have all the conveniences of a trailer. Had the



Oldsmobile Toronado been around in 1960, I'm sure he would have done this with the front wheel drive. He was fascinated with the Corvair power plant, so he built a complete new structure around this concept. Using his unique ability to work thing out on his own. The project was completed in 1961. For a more complete story on this, see the CORSA Communiqué, April 1980 (Vol. 2, Num. 8). He will always be remembered in my mind for developing that wonderful (soon to be a cult vehicle) Ultra Van.

David's long experience in working with his hands has done him well. He felt that anyone could do what he did if they are willing to work. He says his secret is energy. Just keep using it and keep going. I might add that he had a lot of ability to go along with it. He never got caught in conventional thinking and approaches. This has gotten him into trouble at times. It also has given him the insight to do such projects as the "Super V" and the Ultra Van. He had personal integrity and he stayed with projects to see them through. Good old fashion values! I remember him working with Lucille on remodeling an apartment complex in Sacramento when they were both in there 70's. That the kind of energy the Peterson family had. He got things done!

## From the Editor

This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of David Gibson Peterson, July 16, 1914 to June 22, 2000, 6 weeks short of his 85 birthday. He was close to us and has effected all of our lives. If you own or have owned an Ultra Van, there is no way out of it. Because he has effected our lives so, we honor the position he holds in our community. He was our chief, our head guru, and the guy who knew what it was all about. We lived in, loved and drove his creation, the Ultra Van. The world has changed a bit now that he is not here, but has left us a lasting legacy, the Ultra Van. These vehicles are now between 30 to 38 years old. Only about 365 units were ever built between 1961 to 1970. The Winnebago built over



*Your editor  
left with David  
Peterson in  
front of Ultra  
Van #601*

250,000 motothomes, which was more than any other manufacturer. The difference between the two is noticeable, uniqueness! The Ultra Van is still way ahead of its time, a body that weights just over 2,000 pounds, without the interior installed. A shape that the air flows around, a full body pan (the early ones) that reduces the coefficient of drag. Recycling of gray water through the macerating toilet uses a garden hose to empty the holding tank. Uses the front compartment efficiently as a driving area, eating area and sleeping area. The lowest profile of any Recreational Vehicle built. AND the best mileage you can get with a vehicle this size. An interior the size of a space ship, with the biggest KING size bed in the industry. This is the legacy of David G. Peterson. He built a vehicle, which will last well into this century. When the internal combustion engine is no longer available we will use electricity to run motors at the wheels, using a hydrogen engine, with solar panels covering the large top to the vehicle. He created a cult vehicle. Ordinary people will not be driving this machine in 50 years, only people that have the appreciation and ability to operate this machine will have them. Our job is to take care of them, so in the year 2050 a young man with a dream and lots of energy will have one to restore and modify and use and he travels the country to find out where he fits in this society. So that is our challenge, to keep as many of them running and alive so that others will be able to remember David Peterson with a fond smile of thanks.

This is also the last newsletter I will be doing as your editor. Our new editor will be Richard Finch. Richard is well qualified for the position. He has written many books, "How to keep your Corvair Alive" (now in its eighth edition); "How to Protect Your Airplane From Destruction by Fire, and Your Passengers From Death by Fuel Explosion and Fire"; "Converting Auto Engines for Experimental Aircraft"; "Welder's Handbook"; "Performance Welding" in book and video. I have known him for about 25 years and found him knowledgeable in many areas. He bought his first Corvair in Abilene, Texas in 1960. With his background as an author, teacher and mechanic I feel he is the best qualified to be our new editor of "Whales on Wheels". He and his wife Gayle have bought Ultra Van #443 last year and travel in attending conventions to sell his books. Welcome aboard Richard Finch!

Because of other commitments I will not be attending the National conventions this year. Both the CORSA convention in Flordia and the Ultra National convention in Amana, Iowa. I hope to see you all next year.

*Christy Barden*



## Meet your new Editor Richard Finch

Back in the mid-1960s, Jim Pittman (current newsletter editor for Corvairs of New Mexico newsletter) and I were young, "handsome" Space Program guys who were in the same sports car club together while we worked at Holloman AFB in New Mexico. Jim was an Air Force Captain and a Veterinary Doctor at the Base and I was a Staff Member of New Mexico State University, collecting data at the High Speed Sled Test Track. Jim owned a new 1966 Corsa 180 HP coup and I owned a Used 1965 Corsa 140 HP 4 door.

I also owned a sport-racing car that was powered by a 3-cylinder Saab engine and transaxle. Stan Laskin was also a SCCA (Sports Car Club of America) race car driver, racing Saab sedans. Stan found me a low mileage; 3-carburetor Saab Monte Carlo engine and Jim Pittman and I decided to drive out to the 1968 SCCA Nationals in Riverside, California to pick the engine up from Stan. Our trip back home was uneventful, but our drive out there was quite memorable because of some bad things and good things that happened on the way.

We decided to drive Jim's 1966 Corsa to Riverside with the 180 HP turbo engine so we could get some data on it's performance on the way out there. Jim was planning to replace the turbo engine with a brand-new 140 HP engine as soon as we returned from California. I began the trip as driver and then Jim took over after the first couple of hours of driving. The bad part of the trip was seeing two separate 18-wheeler truck accidents. By the time we got to Deming, NM, I was feeling really sick because of seeing the two truck accidents, so I asked Jim to take the wheel and drive for awhile.

In our younger days, it seems like we usually drove at 70 mph to 75 mph on open highways and if my 30+ year old memory serves me right, I think that Jim was doing about 75 mph just getting into Mesa, Arizona on that outbound trip to Riverside, California. I was riding in the right seat figuring average mph on the "slide rule" when a big streamlined looking RV passed us, obviously going faster than our 75 mph. In those days, motorhomes were very boxy and slab-sided, like the Clark Cortez and the first Winnabago models. This one was very rounded and very slick looking, unlike any motorhome either of us had ever seen before.

We were both trying to figure out what made it was when we noticed the rear axles were IRS (independent rear suspension) with u-joints at the inboard and outboard ends of each axle. We could easily see the axles spinning as the new motorhome led the way ahead of us. To better see the obvious rear-engine, Jim pulled up as close behind the fast moving rig as he could safely be, and I continued to look for clues as to the powertrain that was pushing this wonderful looking new style motorhome along at such a brisk rate of speed.

Then we saw the very distinctive Corvair 140 HP dual muffler set-up and the one-of-a-kind rear Corvair engine and transaxle under the motorhome! Our first comments to each other were about how fast the Corvair engine and transaxle were pushing that very big motorhome along. The fact that Jim and I were both Corvair enthusiasts made it even more impressive to us that the same basic engine that was propelling our small car along could also push a very large motorhome along so fast too.

That November 1968 sighting of our very first Ultra Van was a very memorable event for us. If memory serves me right, the Ultra Van driver left us in the dust that night.

The next time I saw an Ultra Van was in 1976, 8 years later when your editor Christy Barden had his yellow, orange and brown Ultra Van towed to my house in Santa Maria, California because his differential had spun a pinion shaft. At the time Christy spent three days in front of my house working on his differential unique size and shape of the Ultra Van motorhome. Gayle and I really enjoy ours and we have spent some wonderful miles over the western USA in our number 443.

Little did I know when I saw my first Ultra Van in 1968 that I would someday own and drive and camp in my very own unit!

*Richard Finch*



## Rallies

**July 18th - 22nd, 2000, CORSA International Convention,** Daytona, FL Plaza Resort & Spa, 600 N. Atlantic Ave, Daytona Beach, FL. (800) 767-4471. SeaSide Trailer Part (800) 441-1831 Full hookups at \$30 a night. This is 6 miles north of the host hotel. There will be a FREE secured parking lot about 1 mile west of the hotel with plenty room for the trailers & Ultra Vans to park. The hotel will provide free shuttle service from this lot to the hotel. There are no hookups or facilities. Group Ultra Van meeting is Friday, July 21st at 8 PM.

**Sept 20 - 24, 2000, Ultra National Rally,** Amana Colonies RV Park, Amana, Iowa Hosts Ron & Martha Zoutendam, 206 N. 7th St., Sheldon, IA 51201. (712) 324-4660

**Oct. 21 - Nov 1, 2000, Ultra 101, Restoration Class.** Joshua Tree, CA. Work will be done on the restoration of Ultra Van #101. Contact: Jim & Marlene Craig, Desert Rendezvous Ranch, 7011 Sunny Vista Rd., Joshua Tree, CA 92252 (760) 366-9104 or jcrangel@juno.com

**Nov 3 - Nov 5, 2000, G.W.F.B.T. & S.M. Palm Springs, Ca.** Great Western Fan Belt Toss & Swap Meet, at Angeles Field in Palm Springs. Ultra Vans are a special attraction for this show. Ultra Van Parking is available on the swap meet grounds. More Information later.

**Jan 17 - 20, 2001, Western Winter Rally, Phoenix, AZ.** Hope Church, 4842 North 51 Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85031 (623) 846-7785. Hosts: Dan & Betty Reinhardt, 5201 West Camelback Rd, #A255, Phoenix, AZ 85031 (623) 846-6920.

**WHALES ON WHEELS** is a quarterly publication of GROUP ULTRA VAN, a CORSA chapter. It is dedicated to the preservation and use of the ULTRA VAN. This 22 foot unique motor home was designed by David Peterson and built in Kansas until 1970. About 365 units were built. Dues are \$6.00 annually, please remit to the Secretary-Treasurer. Submit all technical information to the Editor.

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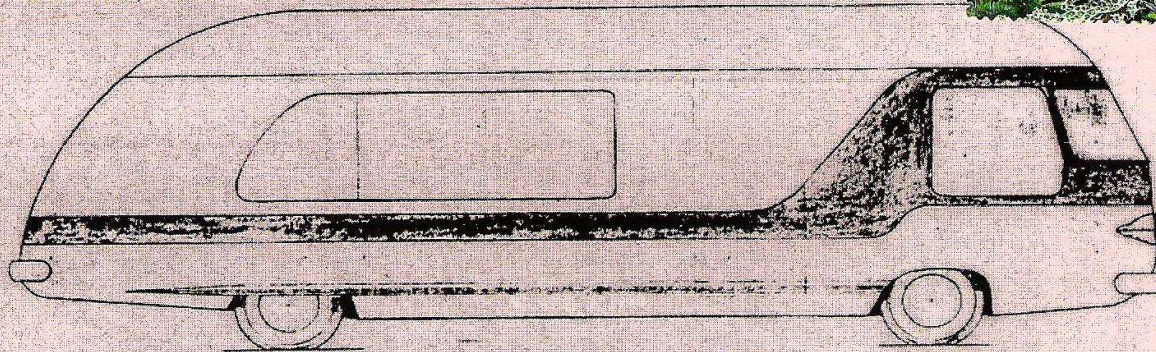
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# Group Ultra Van

5537 PIONEER ROAD  
BOULDER, COLORADO 80301-3048



This is an original drawing done by David Peterson in 1962. It was to be Ultra Van # 201 the second Ultra Van built. Number 201 was destroyed in an accident several years ago.

Norm & Marion Helmkay  
73 Sargent Street

Haines City

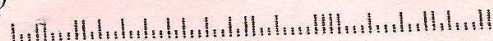
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Spring 2000





*Jean McMasters was able to park his Ultra Van S/N 330 right on the beachfront at the Plaza Resort Hotel . You can see the Atlantic Ocean behind the fence where Jean is parked.*

## CORSA NATIONALS DAYTONA BEACH

REPORT by Richard Finch

The year 2000 Corsa Nationals, including our Group Ultra Van , was the most successful event in recent history with a sold-out crowd at the banquet on Saturday night of over 650 people.

The pre-event publicity stated that there would be NO on-site parking for any RV's and that included Ultra Vans. This stipulation caused Gayle and I to take her air conditioned V-6 Chevy convertible rather than take our Ultra Van and not be able to park at the headquarters site, The Plaza Resort Hotel. That very same reasoning probably kept several other Ultra Vans from attending also.

As it turned out, the heat was so oppressive that many swap meet and flea market participants either opted for air conditioned space inside the hotel with other Corvair vendors , or they just did not bring swap meet parts. This fact opened up many spaces in the back parking lot and the three Ultra Vans that did attend ( Jean Mc Masters, S/N 330, Walt Davison S/N 366, and new member Charles Jasmer, Jr . S/N 458) were allowed to park in empty swap meet spaces. And it was HOT there this year. Every day was 102 degrees and 95% humidity. If you stayed out in the sun for 30 minutes, you would have sweat running into your eyes and down your back. There were no hook-ups there either.

The entire drive from our house in New Mexico to Florida and back was in daytime temperatures of 102 degrees to a hot 108 degrees in Houston and San Antonio.

A new event was instigated at this year's National, Valve Cover Races. You decorate an old Corvair valve cover, put skate wheels on it and run it down a ramp like we Dads used to do with our sons in Scouting Pinewood Derby races. The crowd at the Nationals loved it and there were several high-tech racers built by former and current aerospace engineers. The valve cover races were held on the patio of the hotel by the swimming pool and right by the beach and the Atlantic Ocean

The annual Group Ultra Van meeting was held at 8:00 pm on Friday night with about 25 people attending. President Bob Galli opened the meeting and then turned it over to Walt Davison who gave a very interesting overview and history of the Ultra Van and it's inventor and developer, Mr. Dave Peterson. It was announced at the meeting that several long-time Ultra Van owners , including Mr. Peterson , had passed away. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm to give the room to Virtual Vairs for their mtg.





**Walt Davison was able to park his Ultra Van S/N 366 right beside the beach and near the Plaza Resort and Hotel. you can see the Hotel at the right of the picture.**



**Tony Fiore is talking to Fred Johnson about the relative merits of the various "Valve Cover Racers" sitting on the table just before the races started. Everyone seemed to enjoy this event and it will probably be held again and again at future CORSA events.**



*In the vendor's area in the hotel at the Daytona Beach, Florida CORSA National Convention this year, you could buy a rebuilt Corvair engine of your choice. On the floor here are two 110 HP Powerglide engine long-blocks. There were also a couple of complete engines for sale with carburetors, alternators and all the shrouding in place. The workmanship seemed to be excellent.*

## Vendor's Area

I was not able to get out of the vendors area at the Convention this year, but I did send Gayle on a couple of tours. The first tour was to World Famous Silver Springs and the glass bottom boat cruise. The second tour that Gayle went on was the St. Augustine tour. St. Augustine is the oldest city in America and has some beautiful buildings, many of which were built by Henry Flagler, the railroad tycoon.

The usual vendors were at this show, including Clark's Corvair, Corvair Underground, Silicone Wire Systems, Ray Sedman, and numerous East Coast Corvair OEM and aftermarket suppliers. You could buy nearly anything for your Corvair powered vehicle there.

One new trend in the Corvair collectable hobby is the building of model Corvairs. I wanted to buy a model of a 1962 - 1964 Monza convertible, and I was shocked at the prices that models were going for. The bottom price for a poorly built and partially disassembled 1962 Monza convertible was \$ 55.00 ! The second lowest price was \$ 79.00 for a partly built model. Top price at the convention for an early model **model** in an un-opened box was \$ 275.00 !

Gayle and I had a great time at the convention. The hotel is the same one where the NASCAR Speed Parts show had been held for the past 25 or more years. For all I know, Richard Petty or Bobby Allison may have once slept in the same room as we did there this year !



## Book Review

### **"Home on the Road"**

by Christy Barden

*Home on the Road* is a book written by Roger B. White who is a land transportation historian at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. He chronicles the passion that Americans have had with being on the open road. Shortly after the invention of the automobile, there were those that would take a truck or a bus and convert it to something to live in. With the Model T Ford and the prosperity of the 1920's, many people went camping, using the car to sleep in, or attaching a tent-like canvas to the car, making the car a part of the tent.

Travel was slow in those days. In the 1930's, travel was greatly reduced with the advent of the depression. Travel by car was more reliable, and people used the new tourist courts that began to spring up all over the country for use by the travelers. (editors note: The Motel Inn in San Luis Obispo, California is said to be America's very first travel court for use by people traveling by automobile. The Motel Inn still exists and was in the process of being restored in 1998 - 1999. You can see it when driving North on Highway 101).

During the 1940's, individual motor homes were being built by ingenious people, such as David G. Peterson, for personal use. Motorhomes, essentially motorized house trailers emerged from the booming vacation market of the 1950's as did manufactured van campers and pickup campers. The striking advantages of self-propelled camping vehicles equaled maneuverability and

all-enclosed comfort, rekindled interest for travel by "house-car".

It was illegal to ride in a house trailer, but post-war families who purchased streamlined house-cars, pickup campers or vans enjoyed the intimate experience of riding together in the easy-to-drive home away from home. By the 1960's, fast, straight interstate highways made long trips smooth and un-impeded. Thousands of Americans fell in love with modern factory built motorhomes. Unlike trailers, motorhomes are not subject to reduced speed limits on highways, and drivers could take advantage of speeds of 70 mph or more. In the early 1960's, hundreds of affluent suburbanites became enchanted with the handsome, efficient Dodge motorhome and several other makes (Ultra-Vans) and they easily transferred their rancher or Cape Cod style living to these portable vacation homes equipped with everything from automatic transmissions to forced air furnaces. In the late 1960's, Winnebago became America's best selling motorhome and the most conspicuous symbol of homes that one could drive. Vacationers in the Space Age had discovered the fun of these space capsules on wheels.

Between 1961 and 1973, output of motorhomes soared from 200 units to 65,000 units per year. Gasoline "shortages" and gasoline price increases in the 1970's curbed the growth of motorhome sales. But the motorhome has remained a staple of recreational travel and one of the most prominent symbols of Americans determination to see their country and use their expanded leisure time to the fullest.

The development of motorhomes and trailers followed separate paths. Mr. White's book examines only the self-

propelled Recreation Vehicle. Two threads link the house car fad of the 1920's, the popularity of the pickup campers of the 1950's and the motorhome mania of the 1960's and beyond. Mr. White delves into detail of some obscure motorhomes as well as great detail of the Browns of Michigan who produced the early famous Dodge Motorhome. In his book he talks about the Ultra-Van on page 155 and gives a short biographical sketch on David G. Peterson on page 210. He also credits Norm Helmkay, Jim Craig, Roy Neal, Jim Hinkley and Christy Barden for their information on Ultra Vans. He also credits Larry Claypool and David Newell for information on the Corvair camping van..

If you wish to order the book, call :  
1-800-782-4612 or write to;

The Smithsonian Press  
P.O. Box 960  
Herndon, VA 20172-0960

The hardcover book costs \$ 24.95 plus \$4.50 shipping. You can call and use your charge card as I did..

*Christy Barden*

**Editors note:** For a look at one of the early truck chassis built motor "house cars" described in Christy's book review, look at the Model T Ford in this newsletter.

For the next several issues of "Whales on Wheels" I plan to show a picture of a rare and unusual and old RV that we have come across in our travels. I will not give the particulars in the issue, and I will ask the three questions listed above under the photo. Let's try to see how many of you can answer the three questions and even maybe give some extra facts and particulars.

I would also like to encourage the "WOW" readers to submit photos of rare and interesting RV's that you have seen in your RV travels.



**What is it ?  
Where is it located ?  
What are it's particulars**

---

( The RV in the photo above is a 1924 Model T Ford chassis with a factory built RV "house" built on it. The Model T features a 2-speed planetary transmission with reverse and a 2-speed rear axle, making for 2 reverse speeds and 4 forward gears. The RV is now located at Adam's RV on State Street in Santa Barbara, California. They are asking \$ 2,000. for the unit, un-restored.)

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## Installing a Satellite Dish in your Ultra- Van

by Bob Galli---S/N 504

A **Satellite** dish in our Ultra just sort of evolved. Several years ago we decided that we would like to have a VCR and a TV along with us on our trips. We were not really very pleased with the 12 volt units on the market at the time. They were all black-and-white units with 9 inch screens. We found a handy 13 inch G.E. unit with it's built-in VCR for a very reasonable price at COSCO. It was a 110 volt unit that only draws 75 watts.

I found a 140 watt inverter in the Damark catalog for only \$ 39.00. Upon hooking it up, it would kick the circuit breaker immediately upon turning the TV set on. It seems that there is a capacitor that has to get charged when the set is first turned on, and this takes more current than the inverter allows. However, if this capacitor gets charged by some other means, the inverter will handle the TV and VCR satisfactorily.

I rigged up a resistance device that would allow the capacitor to charge slowly without tripping the circuit breaker. This was a very handy way to turn on the TV. Whatever it takes to get the job done ! Sometime later, Damark was having a sale on reconditioned inverters and I got a 500 watt unit for \$69.00 .It has been satisfactory. Most trailer parks were getting cable TV hookups available, but if you were not in a trailer park, you would have to rely on local TV rabbit ear reception or watch a movie on the VCR .

We are not movie people, so in spite of the fact that we had about 40 movies in the cabinet, we seldom watched one.

What we really missed while traveling were the ball games, be it baseball, basketball, football or golf. I myself enjoy the lades bowling and billiards.

We have had a large satellite dish at our our home since 1983, and we have not scrimped on paying for the programming when it became necessary. Diane had always had dreams of mounting a dish on our Ultra but size-wise this was impossible. Then came the advent of the small dish. My sister and brother-in-law became full timers in a fifth wheel about 4 years ago, got themselves a small satellite dish to carry with them, and came to visit us and "it was all over!". We had to have one!

My brother-in-law's is mounted on a piece of plywood about 20 inches by 30 inches. He sat it on the ground, pointed it, and had a picture in about 5 minutes ! and better than the one we had in our house. I asked him why not mount it solid on top of or on the back corner of the 5th wheel trailer. He said that it was much easier to set it up this way if you were parking near trees or a building.( editor's note. trees and buildings often block the reception of a signal from the satellite)

It took us a year or so to get our small dish and set it up so we could use it in the house also. I made a flat plywood base to mount the small dish on the carport roof. I have marked the roof so I can go right back to where it was each time we take it on trips. When we get ready to take it with us in the Ultra, I just un-bolt it from the carport roof. It fits very nicely on the bed of the Ultra while we are traveling. Upon arrival at a destination in the evening , it is a simple matter to take out the dish, hook up to our outside cable plug, turn on the TV set, turn on the dish receiver, tell the unit

our location to the nearest zip code and it tells us where to point the dish. With a little fine tuning we get a dandy picture.

Tune in to the Cubs, the Braves or the Rams and the 49er's. Diane can set the VCR to record the crafts shows she likes on HG TV or Odyssey to watch later, and fast-forward through the commercials. Roughing it, just like at home !

Bob Galli...

editor's note: Bob helped the Craigs set a satellite dish up in S/N 604 . In a future issue of WOW we will get Bob and Diane to tell us about the details about where to get a satellite dish, how much they cost, if there is an additional monthly charge for using it on the road, and other questions. Send your questions to the editor or to Bob and Diane.  
r.f.

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Power Rating	MSR	Now Price	Model No.	Shipping
150W Power (300W peak)	\$69.99	\$29.99	No. Q9-9084	Ship \$2.50 FREE
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600W Power (1200W peak)	\$199.95	\$89.99	No. Q9-9086	Ship \$10.50 \$5.50
1200W Power (3600W peak)	\$599.95	\$189.99	No. Q9-9662	Ship \$12.95 \$6.50

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**This ad shows what various inverters can do. if you have not tried one, you may be missing out on some affordable modern technology that will make life more fun.**

## Video Review

by Richard Finch

While we were at Jim and Marlene Craig's "ranch" in Joshua Tree, California, just before going to the CORSA Fan Belt Toss in Palm Springs last November, the Galli's showed us all a very funny and educational video about two brothers who were traveling from Mexico to Canada in a Model T Ford truck that

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note; your new editor encourages submissions of book reports and video reports from members.

they had converted to a "Camper". When Gayle and I returned home after the Palm Springs Fan Belt Toss, we called and ordered a copy for ourselves. It is a very good video and a must for anyone who has a vcr and tv in their Ultra Van. We will bring our copy to Amana, Iowa and to Palm Springs. Ask us to borrow it for great entertainment in the evenings. When you call to buy your own copy, ask for video # 3, "Trails of the Mountain West". Here is how to order one:

Don Cooper Videos  
% Ruth Cooper  
P.O. Box 300107  
De Borgia, MT 59830-0107  
ph. 1-406-678-4337



**Jean McMasters** showed a Firestone air-over-hydraulic shock assembly that might work for the front suspension of Ultra Vans. It looks promising but rather expensive at \$ 500. per pair including the on-board pump. Jean, keep us informed about this improvement.

## Travel Destinations

by Richard Finch

About two weeks ago, Gayle and I came home late on a Sunday night and turned on TV to the *Home and Garden* channel. We just caught the last 15 minutes of a really neat program about a place in Bisbee, Arizona that featured a restored 1930's travel trailer park. The owners of the park have not only restored the park but they have also salvaged and restored at least a dozen 1920's to 1950's travel trailers and have parked them in the park.

They have also restored a 1950's diner and hamburger cafe. The operators even dress in 1950's waitress clothes.

The next morning after seeing the TV program, I called the number listed in the

credits and tried to buy the tape of the program. But, H & G TV does not sell tapes of their shows, so they gave me the phone number of the actual RV park in Bisbee, AZ. I called the park and they took my reservation for November 8th and 9th, when we will be returning to Tularosa, NM from Palm Springs and the annual Fan Belt Toss. We will drive our Ultra Van there, take pictures and write an article about the park for a future issue of *"Whales on Wheels"*. For more information about the restored antique RV park, call: **SHADY DELL RV PARK VINTAGE RV's BISBEE, ARIZONA** ph. 1-520-432-3567 ref. H&G TV Episode # 605 "Vintage RV'S"

## MORE TRAVEL DESTINATIONS

By Richard Finch

### Arizona's Kartchner Caverns State Park.

Located between Benson, AZ and Bisbee, AZ, just off US Interstate 10.

Kartchner Caverns is a very new tourist attraction that is located in Southern Arizona. The caverns were not

even discovered until 1988, and they were on private property when they were discovered. The story is that two young college students were scouting out the area for possible caves for their college class in geology when they discovered the caves..

The caves and State Park were just opened to the public in late 1998. Gayle and I will stop by there on our way to Bisbee in November. There is a public RV park at the Caverns with 65 spaces. For more information, contact:

### Kartchner Caverns State Park.

P.O. Box 1849  
Benson, AZ 85602  
phone 1-602-542-4174

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Free 8 Oz Powder Wash and 12 Dry Cleaning Pads with Purchase. This Catalog Only.

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1 yr. Ltd. Warr.  
~~WAS \$39.99~~ **\$29<sup>99</sup>**  
No. Q9-6122 Ship \$8.50 **FREE**

If you have tried one of these pressure clothes washers, write a short review about your opinion of the unit and send it in to the editor for an informative write-up for other members.

## Editor Christy Barden retires!

For about the past 25 years, Christy Barden has been your editor of *"Whales on Wheels"* but now it is time for Christy to take a break from writing and publishing this newsletter 4 times each and every year. Christy will likely find that he gets more projects done without having to publish a newsletter every 3 months.

Like many other CORSA members, I first met Christy at the 1975 CORSA National Convention at Seattle, Washington. At the Saturday night banquet, we people in the audience were being very bored by the door prize presentations. The presenter was really dragging things out and then unbelievably, he said "could someone take over for me for awhile, I need to go to the bathroom"! Now that we all know Christy, that was all he needed to hear in order to take over the very dull meeting. With a very loud voice, Christy said, "I'll do it!" and with that he ran up to the podium and began THROWING the door prizes to the

winners and doing jokes that had the whole crowd laughing constantly.

The next time I saw Christy, he was in the cab of a tow truck with his Ultra Van S/N 228 on the back, sitting in front of my house in Santa Maria, California. It seems that his powerglide differential had spun while he was downshifting to climb a hill a few miles down the road from my house, on highway 101. He worked on the differential problem in the street in front of my house for 3 days and got it running again by installing a differential that he obtained from Dick Campbell in Van Nuys, CA.

A few months later a tow truck pulled up in front of my house again with Christy in the cab with the driver. This time the vehicle on the tow hook was Christy's 1965 4-door Corvair with again, a slipping Powerglide differential. That time, the '65 4-door sat in my side yard for several months while Christy did his job as an airline pilot. I remember that his business card listed his residences at the time, as Paris, France and Boulder,

CO. (I think). Anyway, Christy traveled a lot in those days.

Another time when Christy showed up in my neighborhood was the day I got my private pilot's license. As I was taxiing in to my parking spot in a rented Cessna 150 airplane, the control tower said "Cessna taxi to parking and Christy says congratulations!" The last I had heard, Christy was in Saudi Arabia flying for the Saudis and low and behold, now he was in the control tower in Santa Maria, California waiting for me to park my rented airplane!! Christy and several others took me out to The Far Western Tavern in Guadalupe, CA to celebrate that night.

Another time, Christy and Dick Campbell saved our skin at a Santa Maria Corsa Mini-Convention by buying the local club's 1960 Corvair 4-door raffle car when the raffle fizzled. Last year, Christy showed up in Santa Barbara and called us to come to our house and visit while he was in town for a dance contest. He was driving his Greenbreir on that visit.

CHRISTY, You have a way of making most Corvair events more fun than they would be without you. rf..

## News of members

**Bob and Diane Galli** celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on July 1, 2000 at their home in Atascadero, CA. Congratulations to two special people and their offspring, including their grandson, Paolo.

**Lewis Griggs** had to have a heart by-pass surgery in July and then he was taken back to the hospital with a serious staph infection after the surgery. Our sincere wishes for a successful recovery Lewis.

**Charles Jasmer, Jr.** is a new member of Group Ultra Van and a new owner of S/N 458. Welcome to our group Charles.

**Duane Gest** is also a new member. Welcome Duane.

**Mike Loanes** is another new member. Welcome Mike.

**Bob Brown, S/N 473**, says his really original looking unit featured in "How to Keep Your Corvair Alive", pages 117 & 119, was damaged while enroute to the Corsa Nationals at Daytona Beach, Florida. Bob was not hurt in the accident but he reports that two tires were blown and the windshield popped out of its retainer when a 18-wheeler forced him off the road and over a curb. He reports that side aluminum skin was also damaged. Bob, we hope you get your unit repaired and back on the road again.



## Rallies

**Sept 20 - 24, 2000, Ultra National Rally,** Amana Colonies RV Park, Amana, Iowa Hosts Ron & Martha Zoutendam, 206 N. 7th St., Sheldon, IA 51201. (712) 324-4660

**Oct. 21 - Nov 1, 2000, Ultra 101, Restoration Class.** Joshua Tree, CA. Work will be done on the restoration of Ultra Van #101. Contact: Jim & Marlene Craig, Desert Rendezvous Ranch, 7011 Sunny Vista Rd., Joshua Tree, CA 92252 (760) 366-9104 or jrcraig1@juno.com

**Nov 3 - Nov 5, 2000, G.W.F.B.T. & S.M. Palm Springs, Ca.** Great Western Fan Belt Toss & Swap Meet, at Angeles Field in Palm Springs. Ultra Vans are a special attraction for this show. Ultra Van Parking is available on the swap meet grounds. More Information later.

**Jan 17 - 20, 2001, Western Winter Rally, Phoenix, AZ.** Hope Church, 4842 North 51 Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85031 (623) 846-7785. Hosts: Dan & Betty Reinhardt, 5201 West Camelback Rd, #A255, Phoenix, AZ 85031 (623) 846-6920.

**WHALES ON WHEELS** is a quarterly publication of GROUP ULTRA VAN, a CORSA chapter. It is dedicated to the preservation and use of the ULTRA VAN. This 22 foot unique motor home was designed by David Peterson and built in Kansas until 1970. About 365 units were built. Dues are \$6.00 annually, please remit to the Secretary-Treasurer. Submit all technical information to the Editor.

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# Group Ultra Van

**Richard Finch**  
**1418 Apple Ave.**  
**Tularosa,**  
**New Mexico**  
**88352-2006**

*Pictured here are your new editor, Richard Finch and his wife, Gayle Finch in front of their Ultra Van S/N 443 at the Corsa Fan Belt Toss and Swap Meet at Palm Springs, CA in November 1999. Photo by Dean Olsen*



**FIRST CLASS MAIL**



# Whales on Wheels

Volume XXI

Number IV

Whales on Wheels

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## Your Ultra Van on the Cover of WOW

Would you like to see your Ultra Van on the cover of Whales on Wheels? Then send in a photo, with a short story. The photo should have some artistic value featuring the Ultra Van in a good location. Send your photos and stories to the Editor and have your Ultra Van be a star!



*Part of the group of 60 plus Ultra Van MCC members who attended the year 2000 National Rally are shown here in the Amana Church. Notice that the men are sitting on the right side of the hall and the women are sitting on the left side, just the way that church members were required to do back in the last century.*

## YEAR 2000 Ultra Van NATIONAL RALLY

at Amana, Iowa  
September 19th  
through 24th.

There were 25 Ultra Vans and at least 6 other brands of RV's in attendance at the Amana, Iowa Ultra Van Nat. Convention / Rally this year. With an average of 2.2 persons per RV, we had a very well attended event this year.





*Diane Galli and Nancy Pratt talk to the owner of this freshly restored Ultra Van at the 2000 Nationals. The owner had done the finishing touches on the Ultra Van just the night before he left from Michigan to drive to the nationals. This new editor now realizes why your other editor Christy Barden always walked around with a tape recorder, so he could record names and serial numbers of owners and Ultra Vans that he took pictures of. If the owner of this really nice Ultra Van will write or call me, I will provide information in the next issue of Whales on Wheels. I apologize.*

**T**here were 25 Ultra Vans at the 2000 Ultra Van national Convention this year. There were also at least 6 other brands of RV's there plus numerous cars and rental cars driven in by members such as Graham Dell and his wife who flew in to Iowa from Seattle, Washington. Although the weather was wet most of the week, the group enjoyed being together for the numerous activities planned for us by our hosts, Dr. Ron and Martha Zoutendam.

The photos in this article do not show anything but sunny skies, but that is because your editor did not carry his fancy camera around in the rain. And boy, did it ever rain on us at times! On Friday morning when we were on our way to see the Czech Museum and the Vixen RV Dealership, it rained so much that water ran in over the tops of our shoes while we were walking from the meeting hall to several Ultra Vans that were driving to Cedar Rapids, Iowa to see the Museum.



*In this photo, part of the Ultra Van owners at the year 2000 Ultra Van Nationals week are watching an Amana Colony tinsmith make candle holders and other useful household items from sheets of tin and solder. After this demonstration, the tinsmith donated several of his projects to the drawing that Hosts Ron and Martha Zoutendam provided to the attendees. Gayle Finch won the really nice candleholder.*

Fortunately, most of our activities were inside except for running across the parking lot to the meeting hall and to our Ultra Vans.



One Ultra Van from Florida had incorporated a 4,000 watt alternator-generator in the engine compartment of his unit. The generator was driven off the crankshaft rear pulley like an air conditioner compressor would be driven. We will have to find out if it can drive his roof air unit while he is on the highway. More about that later.

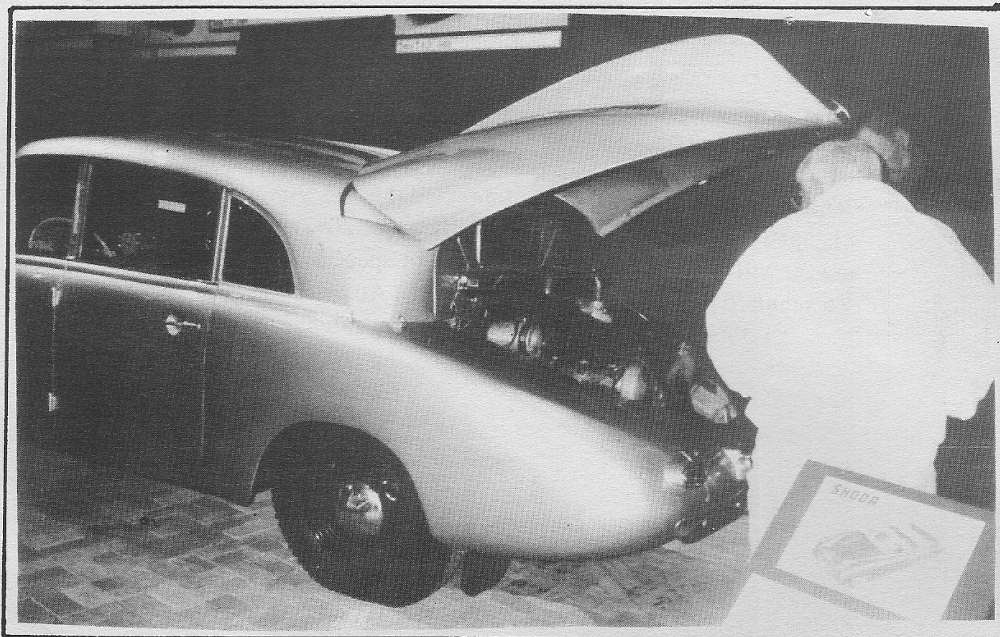


Your editor was privileged to ride in two Ultra Vans during the week at the Amana Colonies. Jean McMasters volunteered his Ultra S/N 330 to carry extra people to Cedar Rapids to the Museum and to Mechanicsville to the Vixen Dealer and I was given a ride in his very high-mileage but very sound RV. Jean has installed a Corvette power steering unit in his Ultra and it works very smoothly. Maybe Jean will write a tech tip again for many of the new ultra Van owners who would like to have better steering in our Ultra Vans.

*"The Hair of the Dog That Bit You" or more accurately, the horns of the deer that hit this Ultra Van are wired to the spare tire rack. Luckily, the spare tire provided most of the protection to the front of the Iowa-based Ultra Van. The left headlight was knocked out of it's socket and the turning signal light was broken, but the deer was not so lucky, obviously. This Ultra Van is powered by a 321 cubic inch Buick V-6 engine, odd-fire version.*

Your editor was also given a ride to the Saturday noon banquet by Clyde and Kaye Stanton in their S / N 392 ultra Van. Clyde and Kaye have made numerous improvements in their RV and it would be great if Clyde or Kaye could write articles about the many improvements they have made in # 392. If you have a chance to take a tour of their # 392, be sure to take a good look because they have really made lots of thoughtful improvements.

Clyde and Kay Stanton have a very nice Ultra Van. The front Ultra Van pictured on page 10, the back cover of this issue of WOW is the one belonging to the Stantons. They have added many conveniences to their unit and your new editor would like to have Clyde or Kay write articles for WOW that describe the improvements that they have made. For instance, they have changed the Ford Econoline parking brake to a driver's seat base mounted Corvair parking brake handle. It looks like it works better than the Ford unit. They have also converted their bed in the rear to a gas-cylinder lifted air mattress and it looks like a factory installation.



*Shown here is a Czech Tatra air cooled V-8 engine powered car that we saw in the Museum in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The engine is mounted much like an early model Corvair power-train with the engine behind the rear axle. CORSA Technical counselor Larry Claypool has one of his restored Tatra automobiles in the museum. It was a 4 door car and was displayed just in front of the Tatra shown here.*

**Ron and Martha Zoutendam** really put on a very good Ultra Week this past September. They had planned the week very well and had events to keep us busy almost every minute. On Tuesday evening, we were treated to violin solos by the very pretty 10 year-old granddaughter of Theresa Vandersteeg (s/n 331 ) and violin solos by 87 year-old Chance Fitzgerald (s/n 286A).

There was a get-acquainted program and everyone was given the opportunity to introduce themselves and tell where they were from.

On Wednesday morning, we had a coffee and cookies meeting and then the men and women were treated to technical sessions while the women were treated to crafts and make-up sessions. There were the mandatory East and West business meetings and a number of club improvements were suggested.

**On Thursday**, the group met to tour the Amana Colonies. First, we assembled at the Amana Visitors Center just across the road from the RV park and we saw a movie about the history of the Amana Colonies.

Then we gathered in Ultra Vans and private autos for the 6 to 8 mile tour around the colonies. Although in the current times, the Colonies appear to be very clean and tidy and prosperous, 100 or more years ago they were anything but free and easy going as we are used to in modern times.

The Colonies were essentially a communal style of living in order to exist and to not go hungry. But they did exist and even started an Appliance factory. All of us have heard of or have owned Amana refrigerators that are made in the Colonies.



On Friday, our group braved the pouring rain and climbed into Ultra Vans and private vehicles for the trip to Cedar Rapids and to Mechanicsville, IA. The Czech Museum is located in Cedar Rapids and the Vixen RV dealer is located just outside Mechanicsville.

While at the museum we saw that Larry Claypool of CORSA, had put one of his TATRA automobiles in the museum. The Tatra is a Czech manufactured automobile that incorporates air cooled engines similar to the Corvair engine an even has V-8 air cooled engines in the rear of their cars similar to our American made early model Corvairs with the swing axles.

We also saw a very pretty 4 passenger motorcycle with a single cylinder engine of about 15 horsepower. It was equipped with two transmissions, presumably for getting into a very low gear for hauling 4 passengers up steep hills.

## VIXEN RV's

One of the neatest activities of the week in Iowa was our visit to the Vixen RV Dealership.

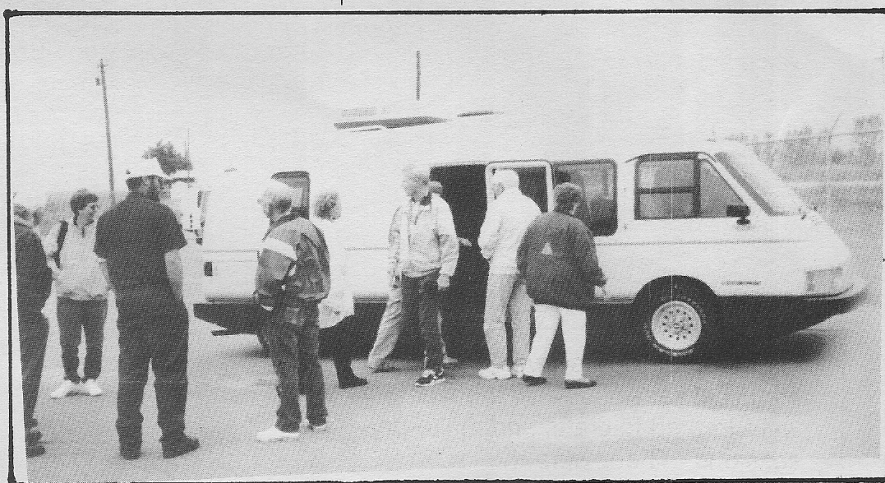
The Vixen is an RV that was designed to fit, if tightly, in a standard garage. It is low enough that it will just clear a standard garage door when it is open and at 20 feet long, it will just barely fit in a standard garage if there is nothing else in the garage before you shut the door.

The Vixen RV's were built with BMW 6 cylinder diesel engines for power, mounted in the rear (just where RV engines belong the editor says!). Some of the last ones built were equipped with good old GM Buick 3800 V-6 engines mounted in the rear with GM Hydromatic transmissions. If you move a front wheel drive engine to the rear, it still makes the vehicle go forward in forward gear. You just have to tie the steering tie rods down so that it does not have rear wheel steering.

The Vixen is a very nice looking, modern design rig, but all of us Ultra Van people that toured the units were impressed that the Vixen has only about 20% as much floor space as our Ultra Vans. And you can not stand up straight in a Vixen. So the Buick V-6 powered unit you see in the picture below had a mate that had a screened-in pop up roof like a VW Van. We all thought that a RV of that status looked cheap with a pop top.

The Vixen makes a very nice airport limo and a nice short trip RV, but none of us could imagine being a full-time RV'er in a Vixen.

The Vixen body is fiberglass and the frame is a very heavy steel structure. We did not find out what the empty weight was, but it is sure a lot more than our 3,500 lb. Ultra Vans.



*One of the field trips at the convention was to visit a VIXEN motor home dealer in Mechanicsville, Iowa. Here, Ultra Van owners look at a Vixen that is powered by a Buick 3800 V-6 engine and GM automatic transaxle mount in the rear. Vixens are very pretty, but we all agreed that they are very cramped inside compared to our wonderful Ultra Vans. No one bought a Vixen on this visit !!*

The Pratts have restored their Ultra Van so that it is almost exactly like it was back in 1968 when it was built in Hutchinson, Kansas.

Their solution to the transportation problem after they get to the RV park and hook up to the water and etceteras, is to carry along a couple of bicycles as you see here in the photo. The bicycles also solve the problem of getting enough fresh air, sunshine and exercise.

You may have discovered that you can see a lot more of the local scenery by walking or riding a bike than if you are riding in a taxi or driving a car. Check with the Pratts to see how they attach the bike carrier to their Ultra Van.



*Here is Doug and Nancy Pratt's Ultra Van S/N 373 with the lovely white oak interior. They usually carry a pair of bicycles on a rack attached to the trailer hitch so they can explore their surroundings without disconnecting each time. The fresh air and exercise is a very good side benefit too.*



*In the last issue of WOW we had an article by Bob Galli about his satellite TV dish. Here is Bob and Diane's Ultra Van S/N 504 with their dish set up behind it and pointed to the East. Another dish belonging to another Ultra Van is also shown in the foreground in this picture. The Jim and Marlene Craigs also had a dish mounted on the ground beside their S/N 604 at the Amana National Rally.*

The Gallis have solved the problem of keeping up with the latest news, sports and gardening tips by adapting a satellite dish to the TV and VCR in their motor home. The solution of how to keep the satellite dish from blowing over in the wind is solved by the placement of two plastic milk cartons filled with water on the plywood sheet that mounts the dish. When they get home from a trip, they simply re-mount the dish on the roof of their carport and then they have satellite TV in their home.

In order to aim the dish properly at each RV stop, they just key in the nearest Postal Zip Code into the Satellite box that comes with the dish.



## The Trip to Amana, Iowa

Gayle and I left our house in Tularosa, New Mexico at 1:30 PM on Sunday afternoon on September 17th, year 2000. The temperature was 80 degrees and there was a slight westerly breeze. We stopped at our local Subway Sandwich shop and bought lunch to eat as we drove to our planned first night stop in Dalhart, Texas.

The Corvair engine in our Ultra Van is just barely broken in since I overhauled it right after we bought the Ultra Van in August 1998. We have driven to Seattle, WA, Fort Worth, TX and to Lake Tahoe, NV since the overhaul, putting about 10,000 miles on the engine.



*Here is our Ultra Van S/N 443 stopped under the awning at a Sonic Drive In in Pratt, Kansas, just 60 miles south-west of where Ultra Vans were built in Hutchinson, Kansas. After we ate lunch here on the way to Amana, Iowa, we drove to Hutchinson, Kansas and drove by the airport where the Ultra Vans were manufactured. One of the Many good things about owning an Ultra Van is that you can drive them almost anywhere that you can drive a car or van because they are compact.*

There had been a hurricane reported in the Gulf of Mexico as we departed New Mexico on Sunday afternoon. As we drove across Eastern New Mexico and into the Texas Panhandle, the weather was pretty nice, but it started getting warmer. We stayed in an RV Park in Dalhart, Texas on Sunday night and then broke camp and started driving down the road toward the Oklahoma Panhandle on Monday morning. We noticed that the wind was picking up and blowing from the South East as we neared Oklahoma.

By the time we entered Oklahoma, I was having to hold the Ultra Van steering wheel nearly 90 degrees to the right to counter the severe cross wind that was blowing. My main thought was that my nearly new tires on the front were being scrubbed clean of all their tread! It felt like we were being pulled sideways on the blacktop highway. As it turned out after the trip, there was no noticeable wear of the front tires. I am still amazed at the lack of tread wear.

We continued across Kansas to a town called Pratt, Kansas and stopped for gas and to eat at a Sonic Drive In. By noon in Pratt, KS, the wind was blowing at 30 plus miles per hour from our right and the temperature was up to 95 degrees. It was not nearly as pleasant as it had been when we started the trip in New Mexico. Just because we detoured at Pratt, KS and drove up to Hutchinson, KS so our S/N 443 Ultra Van could go back home to "her" birthplace. We drove by the airport in Hutchinson, but did not drive to the actual Ultra Van Factory site. Probably next year we will stay a night in Hutchinson.

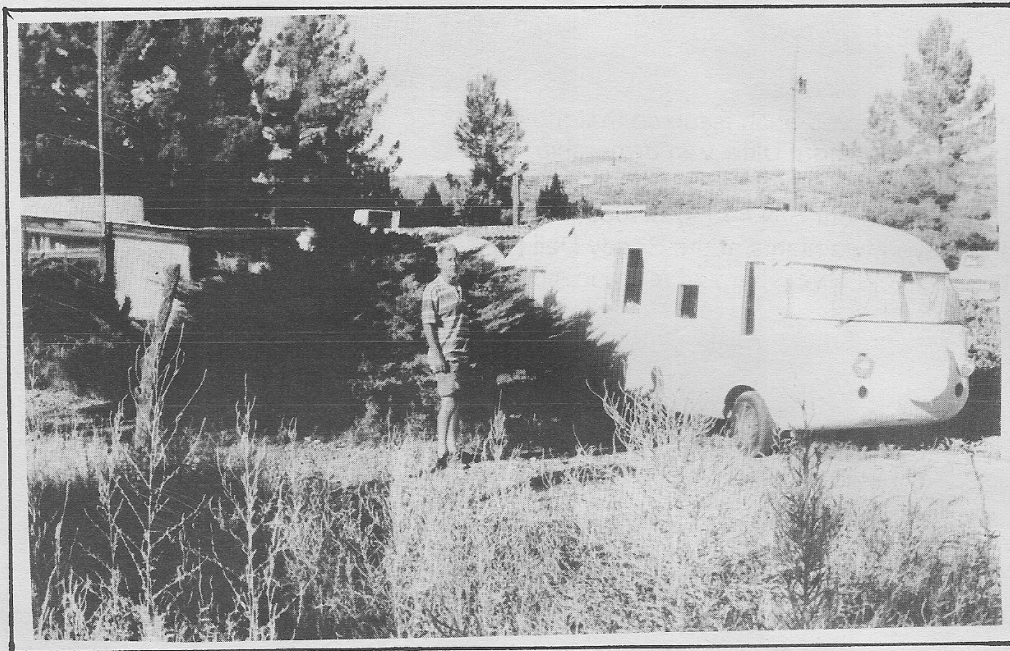
We continued from Hutchinson, KS to Salina, Topeka and through Kansas City, MO, and on to a small town in MO where we stopped for the night again. All the while the wind was blowing 30 to 40 mph from the South-East and the temperature was 95 degrees.

On Tuesday morning, we broke camp, stopped at a crafts warehouse, filled the Ultra Van with gas and headed North-East toward Iowa and the Amana Colonies. As we drove into Iowa with a 35 mile per hour tail wind, it began to rain and turn cooler. Remember the Hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico? Well, that was where the wind was coming from. As we got to Iowa, the rain was steady and the temperature was dropping to the 40's.

On our un-eventful trip home, we experienced night time temperatures in the mid-thirties, and of course, I had forgotten to install the heater hoses before the trip!

**Year 2001 Ultra Van Week** will be held at Minden, Nebraska during September 10th through 16th next year. Minden, Nebraska is in nearly the geographical center of the U.S. and hopefully this location will make it easier for many Ultra Van owners who want to attend because it is closer to many of us.

The attraction at Minden, NB is a museum of American heritage things and it is so big that it usually takes two or three days to see it all. We will be camping on the grounds of the museum and there is a motel right beside the RV park. Gayle and I stopped by there on our way home from Amana, Iowa and it took us about one day to drive home to New Mexico from there.



*Harold "Hal" Pickering of Tularosa, New Mexico stands beside one of his two Ultra Vans and beside his self-built house that is barely visible in this picture. The house is to the left and the second Ultra Van is barely visible behind the one in the foreground.*

## Where is your Ultra Van Stored and Maintained?

**Starting with** this issue, I am going to publish articles about our members and where they store and maintain their Ultra Vans. There should be some very interesting stories about our members and where they keep their Ultra Vans running in spite of the fact that we have no dealers or service centers around the country like the newer brands have.

This edition, we will be able to read about an Ultra Van owner and his wife who do EVERYTHING themselves ! They even built their own house and carved a place to live out of the land. They are Harold "Hal" and Tote Pickering of Tularosa, New Mexico and they own two Ultra Vans.

=====

**Hal and Tote Pickering** who own Ultra Vans S/N 271 and S/N 294, store their two Ultras in the gravel driveway on the East side of their very unique house.

About 18 years ago, Hal and Tote bought several acres of land in the foothills of the Sacramento Mountains near Tularosa, and White Sands, New Mexico. To get to the property, you had to ford a sizable creek and you still ford it but now it is concrete lined so you don't get stuck in the gravel and mud.

First, they moved an antique one-bedroom trailer house on to the property, then they started carving out a floor plan for a house that they would eventually build out of native materials and that would be built partially into a hill side. The North and West walls of the house are built into the dirt and stone hillside. The South and East side of the house are mostly glass and are open to the wonderful New Mexico scenery.

The roof of the house is built out of local trees that form the rafters of the house. Tote and some local craftsmen laid the tile floor. The Pickering's New Mexico house is truly a house built out of local materials.

The coincidental thing about the Pickerings living in this area of New Mexico is that there are only 3 Ultra Vans in the whole State, and with The Finch's S/N 443, all 3 are within 5 miles of each other.

The Pickering's address is 45 Helms Road, Tularosa, NM 88352-0100.

*Note: There are many owners who have special places to work on their Ultra Vans. For instance, one or more owners have drive-over pits to get underneath and there are other owners who have custom built fully enclosed garages for their Ultra Vans. Next issue there will be a photo on a \$2,700. drive on hoist. Please send pictures and a story about your Ultra Van work and storage space.*  
The editor.....



## Letters to the Editor

This section will be reserved each issue so that members can express their views about Ultra Van ownership, operation and to report on interesting trips made in our great RV's. Gayle and I drove our S/N 443 to Bisbee, Arizona this month and stayed two nights at the Shady Dell RV park there. It was a very enjoyable and relaxing stop and in the next issue of Whales on Wheels we will write a report about the visit there. In the mean-time, I encourage other people to send in articles and reports for this quarterly news letter so that you all don't have to read just my reports each issue.

## WHAT IS IT ?

In the last issue of Whales on Wheels, I showed a Model T Ford, 1924 year model, and explained that I will show unusual RV's in future issues and ask our members if they can identify them. In this issue, I will give you a clue about the RV shown below. It sleeps 8 (eight) people. If you know about it, write and let your editor know so that it can be explained in the Winter 2001 issue of WOW.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS VEHICLE IS?

## Classified

**1967 Ultra Van S/N 294** Clean condition, roof air conditioner, 140 hp engine, bumpers, air horns, tow bar brackets, Ryerson Manual, spare engine, spare Powerglide transmission, many spare parts, second owner. Hal Pickering, 1-505-585-2503 Tularosa, NM \$ 7,500.00 obo.

*Wanted to buy:*  
Corvair hubcaps, ( 4 ) 1-505-585-2503

*There were no other classified ads submitted for this issue of WOW. If you have ads to submit, mail the info to the editor ASAP !!!*

## More Classifieds

**1967 Ultra Van S/N 321.** New front end, new brakes, new tires, new three angle valve job. Engine lowered for better u-joint wear, table, factory trailer hitch, 40 K miles, asking \$6,550. Contact Jean McMasters, 916 Lighthouse Drive, N. Palm Beach, Florida 33048. Phone 1-407-626-0338

**Want to buy an Ultra Van.**  
Contact the manager of the Ventura Beach RV Resort, 800 West Main Street, Ventura, CA. 93001. Phone 1-805-643-9137, ask for Sandie Murphy

## News of Members

**Paolo Galli**, 18 years old, and his Dad and Gradndad, hauled Paolo's 24 ft. long Travelon from Joshua Tree to Paolo's home in Atascadero, CA the day after the Palm Springs GWFBT & SM. in November.

**Louis Griggs** continues to be plagued with complications from his recent illness. Write to Louis and Mabel and wish them well

**Corvair Society of America (CORSA)**  
P.O. Box 607, Lemont, Illinois 60439-0607  
(708) 257-6530



## Rallies

**Jan 17 - 20, 2001, Western Winter Rally, Phoenix, AZ.** Hope Church, 4842 North 51 Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85031 (623) 846-7785. Hosts: Dan & Betty Reinhardt, 5201 West Camelback Rd, #A255, Phoenix, AZ 85031 (623) 846-6920.

**April 20 - 22, Spring Fling in the South, Hopkins, South Carolina.** Hosts, Dennis and Linda Radford, & Jean McMasters. More info later.

**April 25 - 29, 2001, Space Odyssey 2001, Tularosa, New Mexico.** Visit the Space Center Museum, White Sands National Monument, a 140 year-old historical village. Room for 12 to 16 Ultra Vans with elect and water hook-ups and dump station. Hosts, Richard and Gayle Finch, 1-505-585-8035, Tularosa, NM.

**June 17 - 24, 2001, 2001 Round Lake Ontario Rally, Lake Ontario, US & Canada.** Four day tour around Lake Ontario, join wherever you want, depart wherever. Hosts, Nancy and Doug Pratt, Marion & Norm Helmkey. More info later, ( sounds great !)

**September 10 - 16, 2001, Ultra Week 2001, Minden, Nebraska** Pioneer Village, site of the 1985 Ultra Week. Visit an American Heritage Historic Museum and Village. Hosts, Richard and Gayle Finch. Send sase for info package, 1-505-585-8035

**WHALES ON WHEELS** is a quarterly publication of GROUP ULTRA VAN, a CORSA chapter. It is dedicated to the preservation and use of the ULTRA VAN. This 22 foot unique motor home was designed by David Peterson and built in Kansas until 1970. About 365 units were built. Dues are \$6.00 annually, please remit to the Secretary-Treasurer. Submit all technical information to the Editor.

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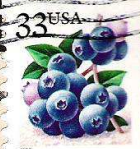
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# GROUP ULTRA VAN

Richard Finch, Editor  
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Tularosa, NM 88352

*A caravan of Ultra Vans is lined up here with owners standing in the street at the left. They are getting ready to visit a museum in the Amana Colonies during the 2000 Ultra Van Rally Week.*



**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

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FL 33844

Whales on Wheels

Fall 2000