

# Whales on Wheels

Number III

Volume XXII

## Inside:

- Rally Report , Kent ..page 1**
- Rally Report, CORSA...pg 1**
- Griggs old RV.....page 3**
- Piche S/N 389..... page 4**
- Lake Ontario Rally...page 5**

## 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!

### Rally Report, Kelson's Museum ----Kent, WA. by Graham Dell

"As you will see from the report in the upcoming *Ultra Sounder*, we had a busy and enjoyable time. ...fifteen ultra Vans were on track to attend, but with three unable to make it, we had an even dozen for the event ....." ( ed. note: no photos or other info was received. Graham Dell is Vice President and co-event chairman of this CORSA event).

### Rally Report,...CORSA National , St. Charles , IL. by Diane Galli

There were 5 Ultras, Helmkeys, Davidson, Rogers, and Galli .One Silver Stream trailer, Christy Barden, and one mini-van. Ken and Penny Wildman, Tom and Caroline Silvey

Walt led the CORSA Tech Sessions, Bob Galli took part in 2 second day sessions. Jim Davis did a tech session on carburetion, Norm Helmkey on alternators and Tom Silvey talked on a host of subjects, stress risers, hydrogen embrittlement, bolts and fasteners, their torque, & why and harmonic balancers.

On the first day, Walt Davidson moderated a round table discussion engine teardown and rebuild with Larry Claypool, Warren Leveque, Robert Durbaugh and Bob Galli.

On the third day, the last day of the tech sessions, Walt Davidson and Stan Light talked on Powerglide/ torque converters, rear wheel hubs and differentials.

All three days of tech sessions were well attended. Our grandson, Paolo Galli, came for his first Convention and had a very good time and met many new friends. The banquet was very good and well attended

We arrived on Monday, July 23, 2001 and departed the Hotel ,Eastbound on Sunday July 29, 2001. Stayed overnight in a KOA in Michigan before going on to Clyde and Kay Stanton's place in Middleville, MI. where we were soon joined at the Stanton's "campground" by Jerry Dute and Holly Hawley, on their way home from the big fly-in at Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Thursday, we (Clyde) drove over to Zeeland where some folks are restoring a "Futureliner" that was in the GM Parade of Progress back in the 1940's and 1950's. What an awesome sight that is!..... I will have Clyde forward some print pictures of it when he gets his film developed.

So now we are on our way to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and on to Wisconsin, and wherever else the map takes us to.....by Diane Galli , UV S/N 504

### Group Ultra Van , a CORSA Chapter # 002, Annual Meeting Notes

by Diane Galli.....  
The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by President Bob Galli. He made a few remarks on the Ultra Van and Group Ultra Van. It was announced that the newsletter *Whales on Wheels* had earned another Golden Quill award for Christy Barden.

Questions and Answers followed. Jim Rogers spoke on an engine conversion he is doing for his Ultra Van. Discussion followed. Jim Davis told about the new A-frames being fabricated for our Ultra Vans. Ken Wildman talked about the importance of the Ryerson Manual, his WEB site and the links from the WEB site.

20 people attended the meeting and 2 new members were signed up. The new members are Tom Berg and Doug Daniels. Welcome to you both !!!  
Minutes submitted by Diane Galli.....

## WOW Editor Wanted (Again !)

The club officers are actively seeking a new editor for this publication called " *Whales on Wheels* ". The prospective candidate should be able to prove proficiency in desktop publishing, including possession of the office equipment ability to scan photos into e-mail messages, to receive e-mail photos and text and convert e-mail text into camera ready copy.

The candidate should be able to travel to at least four CORSA / Group Ultra Van events per year and photograph and report on those four events. Other requirements may be added from time to time. If you are qualified and interested in the job, (It doesn't pay any money ! ) contact one of the three club officers listed below:

Bob Galli-----President

Graham Dell--Vice President

Louis Griggs---Secretary-Treasurer

Their addresses can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

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## I Give Up ! -----by the Editor

I apologize to the club membership for giving up as Editor of this fine publication that was started by Christy Barden many years ago. I am only the second editor to do the job in all those years. With this newsletter edition, I will have published the newsletter for 1 year and three months.

The reason that I am giving up, is that in spite of the fact that I have been in the book publishing business for over 26 years, my publishing office is not equipped with the modern equipment that the club officers prefer to use in producing this newsletter. I can't receive electronic pictures, I can't print incoming or outgoing e-mails and I can't surf the net for fodder ( PHOTOS ) for the newsletter.

A small number of potential newsletter contributors will not put a stamp on an envelope and mail a story and a couple of photographs from a one-hour photo place to me. They believe that the editor of this fine publication should be equipped to receive those stories and photos over the internet. And they are right. Any modern desktop publisher should be well equipped, and I am not.

Therefore, the stories and pictures that you see in this edition of " *Whales on Wheels* " were provided to me by thoughtful, friendly people who sent me the stories and pictures by way of the US Post Office. I thank those thoughtful folks and I want to encourage them to continue to send

newsletter material to the next newsletter editor. This newsletter would get very boring if all the information came only from the editor in each issue.

In my own defense, I ask this question " If the newsletter editor can lick , stamp and mail about 150 newsletters each quarter during the year, why can't contributors lick, stamp and mail just one letter to the editor during the year ? " .

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## Missed Trip -----by the Editor

In the Spring 2001 issue of this newsletter , I wrote that Gayle and I were planning a month-long trip to the Kent, Washington CORSA / Orphan Car Show and Museum Event. But we didn't make it.

About two weeks before departure time, I got a huge order for books, and business simply must come before pleasure. For over 5 years I have been the number one selling author for HP Books Company and for nearly 4 years I have been in the best sellers list of Motorbooks International . I have been an author for HP Books continuously for over 26 years. Those numbers are why we can afford an Ultra Van and gas to put in it for trips.

The book order that came in late June amounted to a year or more of income and since I am not independently wealthy, I had to take care of my publishers before I could even think of taking off on a pleasure trip. Although part of the Washington State trip was to include selling books for 5 days at the Arlington, WA EAA Airshow, it was more expedient to stay home and work in order to have business next year and the year after.

If you do not know about the books I sell, go to any Home Depot Store and look in the tool department for " *Welder's Handbook* " by Richard Finch. Also look in Motorbooks International Best Sellers List for " *Performance Welding* " by Finch. And in the MBI Catalog, look for " *How to Keep Your Corvair Alive* " by Finch, and another book in the same catalog " *Converting Auto Engines for Experimental Aircraft* " by Finch. You can also access the WWW, World Wide Web and look us up there too. We are listed in Amazon.Com, Walden Books, and all other WEB Site book sellers worldwide. These books are our retirement income. And we are thankful to God for the income they provide.

So, you can see why business must come before Ultra Van Rallies for the time being. Maybe in a couple of years we can be on the road as "Part Timer RV'ers" .....r.f.....

**Seen at Knoxville, TN.**

Contributed by Maybel and Louis Griggs, S/N 334.....

This picture was in our newspaper a while back. Thought maybe you could use it in one of the WOW issues.

We got back home from our Rally Around the Lake. It sure was wonderful, Louis "held up" under the stress. Sounds like you have a wonderful summer planned. Enjoy while you can. We are taking it easy for a few days before we get into the work mode.

Have a wonderful Summer. Ultra Love, Louis and Maybel.

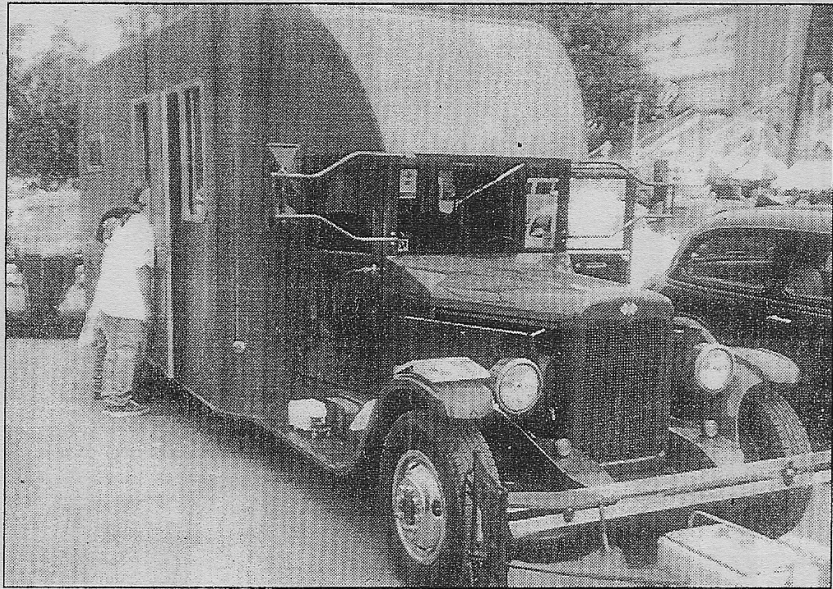
*editor's note: The two pictures on this page came from the Thursday, May 17, 2001 issue of the Cumberland, Maryland Cumberland Times-News. The article that accompanied the pictures stated the following:*

" A gentleman from North Carolina displayed his 1927 International Motor Coach. Inside, which was open for the curious to visit, were all the comforts of home, roaring '20s style, from the gas lights to the stained glass windows to the

bed pan placed near the 4 poster bed.

The owner teaches auto restoration at a community college.

The "high wheeler" bike was built by his students.



This 1927 International Motor Coach boasts all the amenities available for this "Home on the Range" back in the roaring '20s. Mostly hand-built on a late model Chevrolet truck chassis with small block power, the copper-clad beast is the result of an original

half-ton pickup found in a field in Kansas. The builder, a restorer from North Carolina, used the cab for a pattern, constructing a new one, larger, to better fit the dimensions of this long wheelbased beauty. Note the "high wheeler," also hand-built.





**A very wrinkled Ultra Van S / N 389 sits waiting for Paul Piche to buy it for \$550 and restore it.**

**editor's note:** In the Fall 2000 issue of WOW, on page 2, I showed a picture of Paul Piche's Ultra Van S/N 389 at the Amana, Iowa UVMCC National Convention last September. At the time, I did not know who the owner was.

Paul later wrote to me and sent in this first of a series of 6 articles about his Ultra Van. You can also see a finished picture of it at the "Rally Around Lake Ontario" Event this year, page 5 of this issue. It is a really neat unit and Paul has done a spectacular job of reviving it.

### **In the Beginning**....by Paul Piche # 389

**M**y friend, ( and I am sure you have one too ) couldn't stand to see me taking it easy and just goofing around. So this friend has to find something for me to do. A project so to speak. He knows that I thrive on them. As a youngster I built carts and carts and carts. Concrete dams. Barns. Repaired cars and engines. Then when I turned 18 I built a 1,200 sq. ft. home. Started a contracting business doing fire and windstorm repairs, buying old equipment and making it new. I built another house when I was 31. This one was a 2,700 sq. ft. Took 14 months part time.

The house sat on a large hill so I built a rope tow to pull you up the hill on an inner tube. It is so safe to go down a snow covered hill on an inner tube ! Then on to get a patent for a lock safe!

Took up flying. Always wanted to fly but scared to death of heights. I stuck it out and eventually received my pilot's license. Started another project for special saw horses. Worked on a patent but field trials showed a problem we couldn't resolve.

This was the time my friend took me to see my very first Ultra Van. It was raining as it does a lot in Michigan in March. It was (the Ultra Van) locked up sitting their driveway. I laughed. "Are you kidding Dave?" " I might need a project but this one is beyond repair, banged up, dents, bad everything. Does it run ? I don't know." "I think it starts though. It is a Corvair engine. What a Corvair !" " David, have you lost your mind ?"

So, anyway. I peeked through the filthy window, and I'm a little touched. " What do they want for this egg? " "\$550." Dave says. "Naw, I don't think so. Anyway, I'm getting wet." "Dave, we had better head home.

On our way home after leaving Dave's, Barbara says "Where did you go with Dave?" " He took me to see this motor home, looks like an egg. It's a disaster." But then I'm attracted to disasters, to an overwhelming feeling of making something run again, bring it back to life sort of.

Laying in bed, I can't get the egg out of my mind. So, in the morning I said to Barbara, "Let's go back and take another look." When we arrive, there is a young man in the garage, I said "Do you mind if I look at the motor home." yes, it's OK, but it's been sold!.....**to be continued !**

# 'Round Lake Ontario Rally Report

June 17 - 24, 2001.....by Nancy Pratt



At the Seaway Trail Discovery Center---Sackets Harbor, NY 6-19-'01  
Ultra Van on the left, Helmkeys-----Ultra Van on right, Piche  
For a "before" picture of Paul and Barb Piche's Ultra Van, see the previous page !

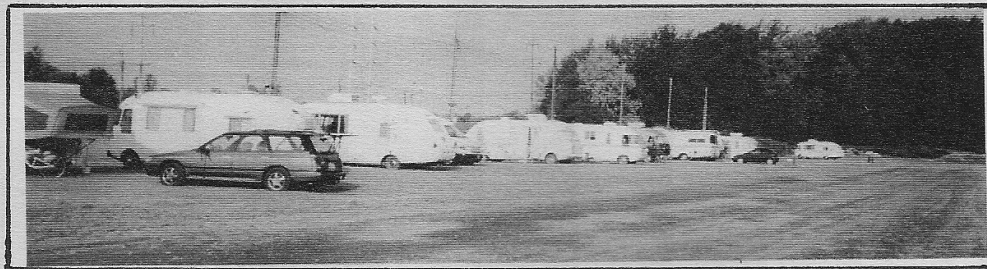
Pictured from left to right: Clyde and Kaye Stanton, Ann and Bob Cole, Marion and Norm Helmkey, Esther and Carl Potter, Nancy and Doug Pratt, Margie Fitzgerald, Paul Piche, Barbara Greeson, and Pat Fitzgerald.

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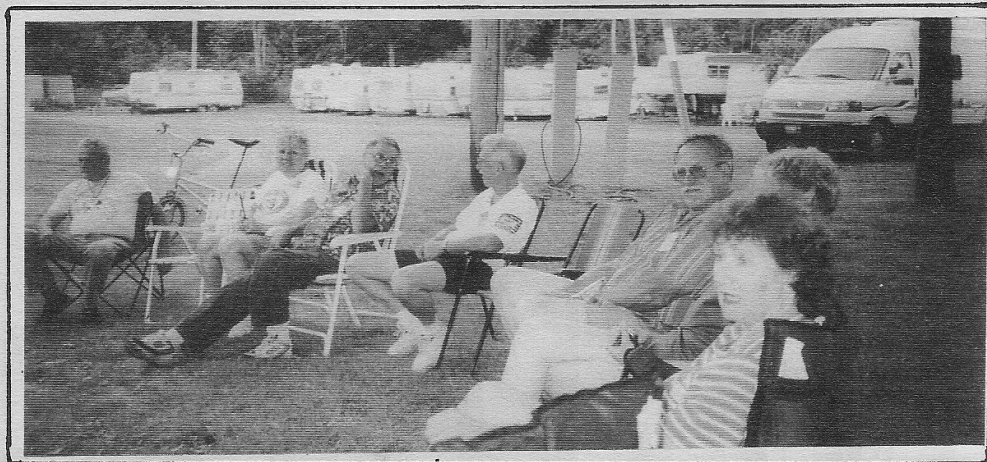
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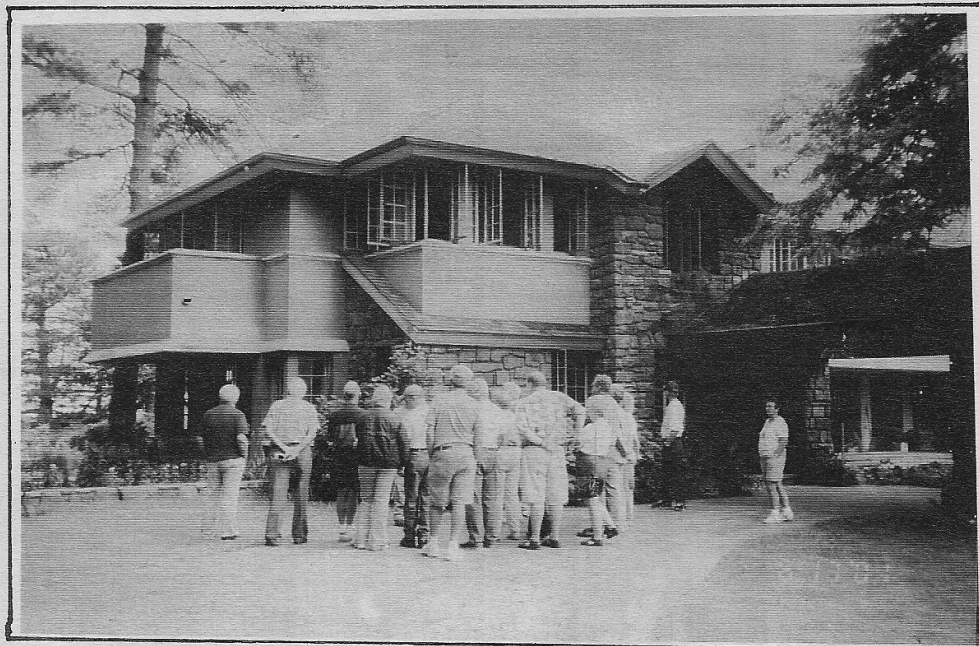
Beginning the Rally Round Lake Ontario at The Erie Co. Fairgrounds, Hamburg, NY

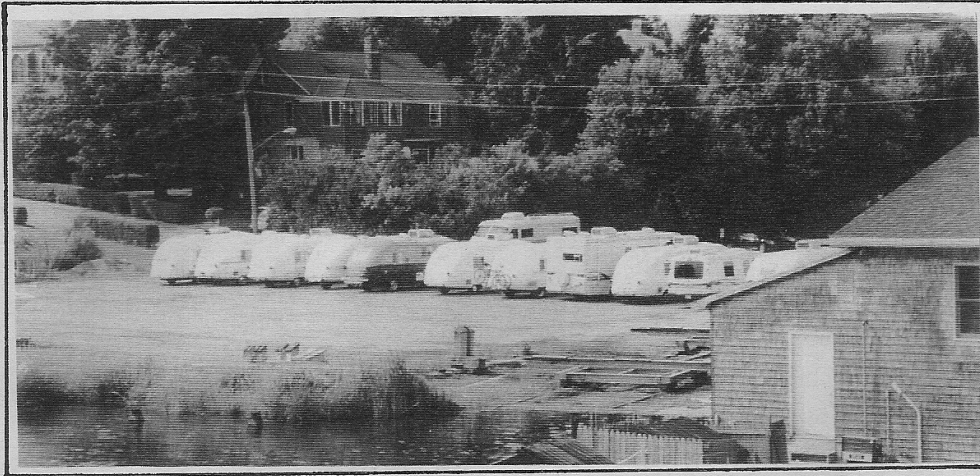


Rally Round Lake Ontario, June 19, 2001 @ Black River Bay Campground-Dexter, NY. From left: Don Richards, Barbara Greeson, Paul Piche, Vern & Debbie Hammer, Marsha Bosso. Background: lots of Brand X campers in storage + Fitzgerald's Rialta.



Rally Round Lake Ontario, June 17, 2001 Touring Frank Lloyd Wright's House, **Graycliff**, Derby, NY

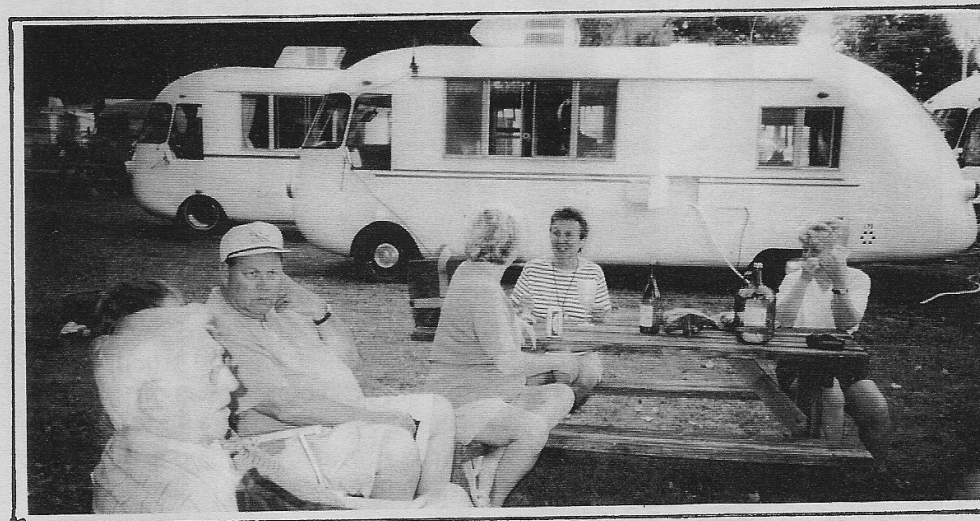




We made quite an impression coming in to town !  
 Line up of Ultra Vans in Alexandria Bay, NY. Ready to go on a boat tour of 1,000 Islands.  
 editor's note: Great picture Nancy !



At the Bicycle Museum, Orchard Park, NY. June 17th. Doug Pratt, left, Howard Bosso, Vern Hammer & Marsha Bosso, rt.



The Davis and Hammer Ultra Vans in the background. Black River Bay Campground, Dexter, NY. from left: Pat Fitzgerald, Art Moore, Roy Davis, Marion Helmky and Marilyn Moore.

# E SAM BOAT TOURS



The whole gang ! at Uncle Sam Boat Tour, 1,000 Islands Tour, Alexandria Bay, NY. Pictured are: in front kneeling: Doug and Nancy Pratt, Don Richards, and from left to right : Carl Potter, Vern Hammer, Esther Potter, Debbie Hammer, Paule Piche, Barbara Greeson, Debbie Griggs, Marion Helmkey, Maybel Griggs, Jim Davis, David Griggs, children - Rusti Griggs, Gwen Griggs, Roy Davis, Norm Helmkey, Art Moore, Marilyn Moore, Kaye Stanton, Clyde Stanton, Mickey Richards, Marsha Bosso, Howard Bosso, Ann Cole, and Bob Cole.

Time for some repairs to Coles Ultra Van S/N 555, replacing a front shock adsorber. Pictured from left: Jim Davis supervising, Howard Bosso supervising, Bob Cole working, Art Moore, inspecting, Doug Pratt ?

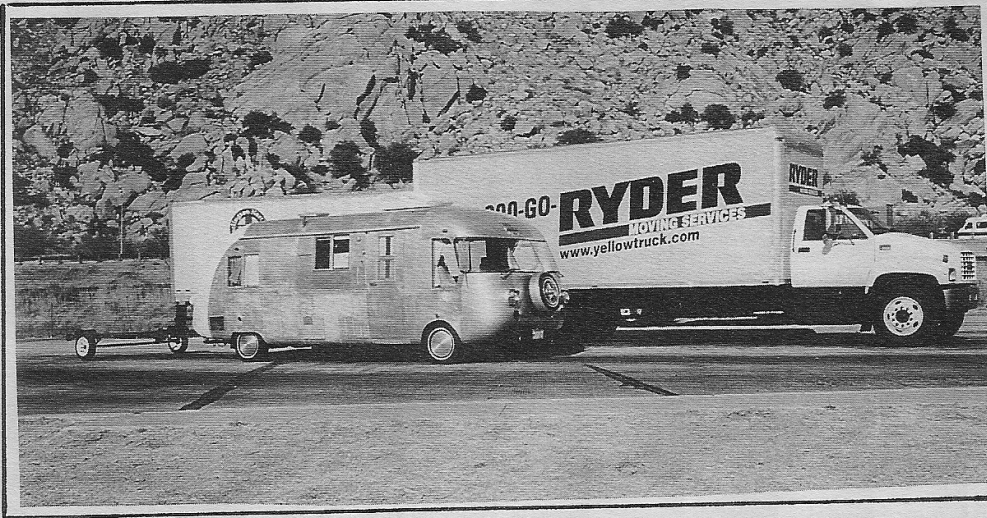


Nancy Pratt reports that there were 10 Ultra Vans, 3 brand X, and 1 car in attendance at this event. Pete and Rose Schuler were not able to join the group because they suffered a blown head gasket in Pittsburg, PA. The tour was on the local news in Watertown, NY. Those in attendance were the Pratts, Helmkeys, Bossos, Davisis, including son Roy, Fitzgeralds, Griggs, Rusty and gwenn Griggs, Hammers, Moores, Richards, Stantons for a total of 28 adults and 2 kids.



## Letters to the Editor

## Classified



Pictured above is Ultra Van S/N 443 at the Arizona rest stop at Texas Canyon in January 2000

Since there were no letters to the editor this edition, (at least there were no letters that I could print here), I thought I could fill the space with a story about a cross-country trip with our Ultra Van accompanied by the brand-new GMC Ryder truck pictured above.

The trip was our second of three trips, moving from Santa Barbara, CA to Tularosa, NM. Our friends Barry and Teresa Vincent were driving the Ryder truck through for us, hauling furniture and office equipment to our new home. They wanted to help us move because Barry and I once worked at White Sands Proving Grounds together in the 1960's. Barry and Teresa live in Turlock, CA.

Each time we stopped for gas on the trip, the Ultra Van would get 18 mpg while the 7 liter GMC V-8 would only get 6 mpg. Barry and I were traveling with walkie-talkies and even on level roads, Barry would have to call me and ask me to "slow down". We were trying to maintain 65 mph, but the Ultra Van was always wanting to go faster. On several mountain passes, the Ultra Van was so much faster going up hill that I thought Barry had stopped altogether. But not so, his GMC was just shifted down into 1st gear with its 6 speed Allison automatic transmission. I was pulling the small 2-wheel trailer behind the Ultra Van and Barry was pulling a car dolly with Gayle's '91 Chevy Cavalier Convertible on the car dolly.

On the two day, 20 hour trip, the Ultra Van probably could have arrived 5 or 6 hours ahead of the Ryder truck if we had just driven our best speeds.....(editor)..

**Ken Wildman** is looking for a set of fiberglass bumpers like Dick Grainger used to build. If you have a set or know where Ken can find a set, call him at 1(419) 634-4874. Or e-mail Ken at : k-wildman@onu.edu

**Mary Foust** wants to sell her Ultra Van. You can contact her at her home in Rockwood, Pennsylvania. Her phone is: 1 ( 814) 352-7435

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

## Rallies

November 2-4, 2001. Great Western Fan Belt Toss and Swap Meet. The best Corvair event on the West Coast. Reserved Ultra Van Parking (dry). Call Eugene at 1-909-780-7880. Don't miss this great event !!

November 9 - 10, 2001. Corvair Affair, Central Florida Corvairs. In America's Oldest City. Radisson Ponce DeLeon Golf & Conference Resort. Hotel reservations call 1-904-824-2821 or call Sarah Jones for Ultra Van parking, 1-904-258-7161

May 24 - 27, 2002, Lake Cachuma Campgrounds Campout, Solvang, CA. Teardrop Trailers, British Motorcycles, Sidecar Motorcycles and Ultra Vans. Over 200 people expected. Contact Richard Finch for Ultra Van info. (note: this was to be a UVMCC event but UVMCC officers recently cancelled their participation in the annual event.)

June 26-29, 2002 - CORSA International Convention! Flagstaff, Arizona, Host Hotel, Little America. 1.800-352-4386 for hotel reservations. Grand Canyon, Route 66 shops and restaurants, Meteor Crater, Sedona and Oak Creek Canyon. Ultra Vans welcome! Contact Tom Schrum, 1-602-841-1580 for entry forms.

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, Editor  
1418 Apple Avenue  
Tularosa, NM 88352

Pictured here to the right is Ultra Van S/N 228, owned by your former editor Christy Barden. Under the Ultra are: Christy, my brother Roger Finch, and my sons Rocky Finch and Dean Finch. They are all "helping" Christy fix his spun differential! The photo was taken in 1977 in front of my house in Santa Maria, CA.....(editor)



FIRST CLASS MAIL

SUMMER

2001

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