

Whales on Wheels

Number 3

2018



UVMCC was established in October 1967 for all who are interested in Ultra Vans CORSA Chapter #008



Prez Sez:

Summer is officially here. If you haven't taken your Ultra Van on a trip yet, why not? Patty and I have taken three trips already covering just over 5 thousand miles. The last trip to the Northwest EconoRun followed by our west coast rally. We all had a blast. Five Ultra Vans rolling down the road is treat for anyone to witness and not one that many people will ever see!



One thing did become painfully obvious as we traveled through western Canada, not everyone is practicing preventative maintenance. I don't think you should begin a journey in any motor vehicle without knowing the vehicle's health. With the very much improved reliability of modern cars, it's easy to let what were once routine vehicle checks slide. A 50 year old Ultra Van can leave you stranded alongside the road. I've had a few issues on the road myself. I've found that the fan belt should be replaced about every 10 thousand miles based on having to replace a broken belt on the side of the road at about 12 thousand miles. That's only a minor inconvenience if you realize it's come off before you burn up your engine. And if your significant other says she smells hot rubber, it could mean your belt is about to come off! Experience has also taught me that Corvair carbs need to be cleaned about once a year to maintain best performance. And, why do so many people disconnect the chokes? I find that with functional chokes, the engine starts up easier, warms up smoother, and is drive-able sooner. The scariest concern for me is brakes. You need to know how much material is left on you shoes or pads before you start that trip. Doing a quick safety check of your coach can save you a lot of stress.

Just a few things to check, jack up each wheel and attempt to rock the wheel by pushing and pulling on the top and bottom. If it doesn't move, it's probably good. If it does move, the wheel bearing is bad or something is loose; find out what and fix it. E-brake cables become frayed, gasoline and vacuum hoses get cracked or soft with time. More than half the time that I've driven behind an Ultra Van, I see at least one of the tail lights or stop lights has either been very dim or non-functional. I want to encourage everyone to use the coaches as much as you can, just make sure they are as safe as they can be so you can fully enjoy your UV experiences.

INSIDE:

Merchandise/
Event calendar/etc.
[Page 2-3](#)

CORSA Convention
[Pages 4](#)

A Whale of a Motorhome
[Pages 5-7](#)

Ultra Van Diecast model
[Page 8](#)

Western States Rally
[Page 9-10](#)

About UVMCC/
Classifieds/etc.
[Pages 11](#)

Election Ballot
[Page 12](#)

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ULTRA MERCHANDISE



Call or e-mail me to shop or better yet come join us at the next rally!

Patty Mello 541-926-2631
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Item	Price
Club badges	1st one <i>free</i> at rally or \$5.00 for a replacement
Miniature Cloisonné Ultra pins	5.00
Cloisonné Ultra earring set	\$7.00
Cloisonné Ultra pendants (chain not included)	\$3.50
"NEW colors" Ultra Van Coffee Mugs	\$10.00
Ultra Van ball caps	\$10.00
"Corvair Powered" bumper stickers	\$3.00 or 2 for \$5.00
DVD of Ultra Archives	\$5.00
DVD Ultra Coach Owner's Manual by Len & Edy Ryeson	\$5.00
VIN # plates (blank)	\$3.00
Booklet "From Covered Wagon to Ultra Van"	\$5.00
3 1/2" X 4 1/2" Stitched patches w/ Ultra on US map & flag	\$3.00
Tech tips, sets 1 or 2	\$13 + shipping each mailed
Window decals UVMCC with Ultra	\$1.00
100,000 Miles Club plaque (Awarded at rally)	FREE
Postcards and note cards	various prices
Available while supply lasts:	
Tombstone Rally t-shirts	\$15.00
Tombstone Rally magnets	\$3.00

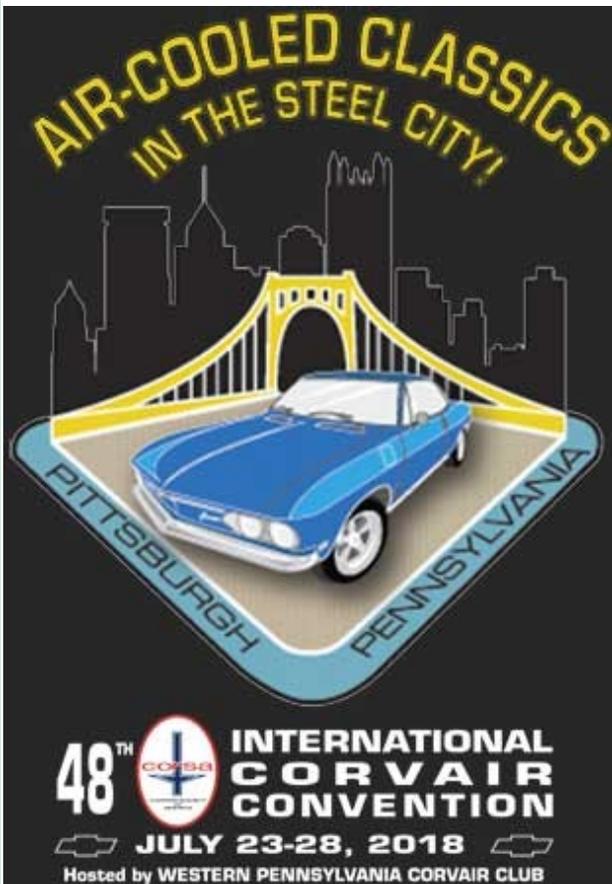
Attention: Special Election—Eastern Director

At the Ultra Rally, along with the annual election (see ballot on the last page), there will also be an election to fill the unexpired portion of the Eastern Division Director seat that expires in 2019. Kevin Coykendall, the former incumbent, is no longer a club member. (Thanks for your service, Kevin.) As this vacancy was unforeseen, nominations for the position had not been sought earlier. We do currently have a nomination for Ken Hand, but Eastern Division members are encouraged to submit additional nominations to Molly Bacon (mollybacon@yahoo.com or 5425 morrow Rd., Gladwin, MI 48624) by July 21. If there are any additional nominees besides Ken, eastern members will be notified by email (snail mail if we don't have your email address) by August 1, which is in time to submit your ballot prior to the Ultra Week rally and business meeting. If no notification is sent by August 1, then go ahead with the existing ballot.

Eastern members please wait to submit your ballot until after August 1!

Don't miss this year's CORSA Convention Pittsburgh, PA

**Ultra Van Meeting, Wednesday, July 25th
8:00pm—9:00pm (right before the movie)**



Convention website

<http://corvairpittsburgh.com/>

Host Hotel—The Double Tree by Hilton, Greentree

Link for making hotel reservations

http://doubletree.hilton.com/en/dt/groups/personalized/P/PITGTDT-CCA-20180722/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG

Link for convention registration

https://www.corvair.org/index.php?option=com_civicrm&task=civicrm/event/register&Itemid=445&id=283&reset=1

See you there!!

Your editor can be found at the indoor vendor area manning the Corvanatics table (look for the big Corvanatics flag) — come by and say hi.

I will have some Ultra merchandise for sale.

Ultra Vans in print

A writer for MotorHome magazine, Ann Eichenmuller, put out a call through Tin Can Tourists for vintage motorhomes to write about. A few of us UV owners jumped on the chance. She interviewed us a few months ago and now, here we are in print in the June issue.

This is reprinted with Ann's permission.

The Classic Ride

By Ann Eichenmuller

A WHALE OF A MOTORHOME

THE CHEVROLET CORVAIR ULTRA VAN EVOKES IMAGERY ASSOCIATED WITH THE MASSIVE AQUATIC MAMMALS, AND OWNERS OF THE RARE COACHES ARE HAPPY CAMPERS

This article is one in our continuing series looking at motorhomes that have stood the test of time and can still make dreams come true. Each has earned the right to be called "the classic ride."

The year 1960 ushered in an era of change in the United States. Upheaval was in the air, from John F. Kennedy's election to the dance explosion of Chubby Checker's "The Twist" — not to mention the naming of the air-cooled Corvair as Motor Trend's Car of the Year. It was this last development that captured the attention of aircraft designer Dave Petersen, who had been dreaming of building a new kind of motorhome. He envisioned a motorhome that would be light and nimble, and highly maneuverable, while providing its inhabitants a wide, unobstructed view. Chevrolet's new groundbreaking rear-mounted power package was exactly what Petersen needed to complete his vision. Four months later, his prototype Ultra Van (then called the Go Home) was born.

For its time, the Ultra Van was remarkable. The Class A

industry was still in its infancy, and most motorhomes were versions of a truck chassis with a "trailer" bolted to the top. The Ultra Van was different. Built like an aircraft, it had no frame or chassis. The rounded front and rear were constructed of a composite material, while the center section was a series of C-shaped ribs to which the aluminum skin was riveted. Cast-aluminum A-frames were mounted in the front wheel wells, doubling as a platform for wide bench-type seats. The engine was tucked under the large back bed, creating open space for a wet bath and a full galley. A unique under-floor design integrated the aluminum tanks into the structure, adding to its strength without substantially increasing weight. The result was a surprisingly roomy 22-foot-long, 8-foot-wide motorhome with more than 6 feet of headroom that could be powered by a minimal 80 hp. All of which would certainly qualify



Photo: Chuck Hansen

The Hansens' 1969 Corvair Ultra Van looks right at home in front of this vintage motel sign in Amboy, California.

Ultra Vans in print (cont.)

The Classic Ride



A true blast from the past — a five-motorhome Ultra Van convoy (including Mini Mo and Whale) turned plenty of heads in the middle of the Arizona desert.

the Ultra Van as a classic ride — even if it didn't look suspiciously like a cartoon whale.

It's a distinction that modern-day owners embrace, referring to their motorhomes lovingly as "whales on wheels" and some even naming them after the marine mammal. It seems that to see an Ultra Van is to love one — at least for all the owners we have met. Carl Jones still remembers the first time he came across one on eBay.

"I said, 'Fran, you've got to take a look at this,'" he remembers.

She came over and looked closely at the screen. After a minute she said, "You know, it's so ugly that it's cute."

It was all the license he needed. Now they are the proud owners of Righteous Coach, a 1968 Ultra Van and the couple's first motorhome. That was seven years ago, and it took three years of what Carl refers to as "rehab" to bring the motorhome back to life.

"It has been rebuilt, re-floored, reupholstered and repainted," he says with a laugh.

It was a renovation made possible by the Corvair's popularity with collectors. Carl notes that, despite its age, several companies still manufacture or supply rebuilt parts for the



Clockwise, from top left: The original retro dash and between seats table on the Mellos' Mini Mo. The Ultra Van's galley as seen in the Jones' Righteous Coach. Chuck and Cyndie Hansen pose with their award-winning Corvair vehicles, including their motorhome, Whale. Lifting Whale's nifty rear door reveals a convenient place to store larger, bulky items.

engine and Powerglide transmission used in the Ultra Van. For Carl, the trick in taking on such a restoration was having the ability to do the work himself — a sentiment echoed by every owner I interviewed.

"When you buy an Ultra Van, you need to understand you'll be in for a lot of work," agrees Chuck Hansen, who purchased his 1969 motorhome, Whale, with wife Cyndie in 2007. "You

have to be adventurous ... and it helps to have a credit card."

In their case, the two were already self-proclaimed "Corvair nuts," but did not know much about RVs. When they picked theirs up, Chuck began by taking it apart until he found something that worked.

"I took it all apart," he says, only half-joking.

Updates included disc brakes, air

THAT SHE BLOWS!

Only 330 Corvair-powered Ultra Vans were produced before production ended in 1969. A dozen or more are currently available on the used market, ranging in price from \$500 for a true project to \$22,000 for a turnkey motorhome. To learn more, check out the Ultra Van Motor Coach Club [UVMCC] website www.corvair.org/chapters/Ultra_Van.

• Turkel, restored by Chris Brown and Molly Bacon to its better-than-original condition.



Ultra Vans in print (cont.)

suspension and a 3-liter fuel-injected engine, rebuilt by a Corvair expert, that has twice the power of the stock counterpart. Cyndie, with the help of the couple's daughter, did the interior reupholstering, and Chuck replaced the flooring and the air conditioner. The original cabinets, stove and generator remain. The Hansens also added a few whimsical touches, like a colorful whale clock, to enhance their themed décor. Along with Cyndie's 1964 red Corvair, Whale frequently garners attention — and accolades — at Corvair shows.

The Hansens aren't alone. Molly Bacon and Chris Brown even got an award for Turkel, their 1968 Ultra Van, at a Volkswagen show. Invited because of Turkel's air-cooled engine, they were competing against 125 VW campers and modified Bugs, and didn't expect to be recognized. Instead, "we got the Host Club Choice Award," Molly says proudly.

It is no wonder. Turkel is a little like a time machine — one step inside and you are transported back to the early 1970s. A previous owner decorated the motorhome with a vintage gold color scheme and shag carpet, to which the couple added period-correct touches like an original lava lamp, a green glass 7-Up bottle, 1960s-era throw pillows and a 1970s camping cookbook. Everything is a blast from the past, right down to the melamine tableware.

Despite its vintage appearance, Turkel is definitely travel-worthy. Purchased in 2014 for less than \$5,000, it had a fresh rebuild on the air-cooled, 95-hp Corvair engine, and the generator and air conditioner have been replaced. For the latter, the couple chose a high-efficiency Coleman unit with a heat pump that could be powered by a lightweight 2.6-kW Kohler. Their power needs are minimal, as they chose to forego a microwave or a TV.

"Simple is better," Chris says, and Molly agrees. "We want to get away, leave some of the world behind."

Getting away is also at the top of the list for Ultra Van owners Jerry and Patty Mello. They bought Mini Mo, their

1968 motorhome, in 2009.

"I've had Corvairs since 1975, so I knew about the motorhomes, but I didn't really want one," says Jerry, who was instead looking for a vintage Corvair Rampside to restore.

The purchase of an Ultra Van was his wife's idea. She pointed out that a motorhome would be more comfortable and functional for travel, and they started their search, eventually purchasing one that was the victim of an aborted renovation. It had been sitting in storage for years, its interior totally gutted — headliner down, panels off, insulation removed — and its exterior in dire need of repair.

Jerry began by replacing all the wiring, adding a second alternator and separating electrical systems for automotive, RV and AC loads. He also added a dual-fuel generator, air conditioner with heat pump, power rack-and-pinion steering, and upgraded the brakes and the suspension. Then he tackled the exterior with the help of his brother, a former aviation metalsmith and body shop owner. They replaced "about half" of the aluminum skin, repaired the compound curves and repainted Mini Mo — a job Jerry estimates at about 500 work-hours.

"I've had every threaded fastener off this motorhome at least once," he says.

The result is more than just a "modern but retro" look — it is a fully functioning motorhome. Last year alone, Patty and Jerry spent 102 nights in Mini Mo on the road, traveling and attending rallies and shows. Because fewer than 80 of these motorhomes are still on the road, owners are on a first-name basis, and most are active in the Ultra Van Motor Coach Club, over which Jerry Mello presides, and Carl Jones calls "Ultra Vans and the crazy people who own them."

It might be true that you have to be just a little crazy to take on a 50-year-old motorhome, but it only takes one look at the Ultra Van to understand why these couples made that choice. With its Corvair heritage and its unique body, the "whale on wheels" is the ultimate classic ride. ■

Ultra Van Diecast 1/43 scale model

Some of us have already purchased these beautiful models, but I wanted to share the information for those who may not have seen them or those who may also want to purchase one. As of publication, they can be purchased at this eBay site, <https://www.ebay.com/itm/Motorhome-ULTRAVAN-CHEVROLET-CORVETTE-1970-1-43-New-box-/352293781051?hash=item5206587e3b>

The example that was used was #555, a 1970 Corvette V8 powered version. The detail is extraordinary.



Western States Rally

The Traveling Tech Talk and Demonstrations

A Western States Rally was held this year in Canada and was a traveling rally starting in Harrison Hot Springs, BC and ending in Victoria, BC which is on Vancouver Island. It was also a traveling tech talk and demonstration as all of us had “issues.” The participants included: Ron and Evelyn Adams of Canoe, BC which is right next door to Salmon Arm, BC, Jerry and Patty Mello of Albany, OR, Doug and Meg Bell of Damascus, OR, Carl and Fran Jones of Sumner, WA and Gale and Gretchen Pfueller of Bellingham, WA.



We all met at Gale and Gretchen's house with the exception of the Adams' (they met us at Hell's Gate, BC). We caravanned to Harrison Hot Springs for a two-day Corvair event known as the Pacific Northwest EconoRun. This is the first time that five Ultra Vans had attended this event and it is in its 45th year. It is held by one of the Corvair clubs in the Pacific Northwest and includes a car show and a 100-mile drive to determine who has the best gas mileage. What a fun event and in a beautiful area of British Columbia. It was hosted by the Western Canada CORSA club this year. The Mellos won the 1st Place Award at the car show.



Immediately following this event we headed for the Vancouver area and the Western States Rally. But wait! What's a Rally without a Tech Demo. We had two the first day of the Rally, two on the third day and one nagging leak the entire trip. All but two of them were solved during the Rally. The first was Ron and Evelyn Adams; u-joints replaced and back on the road. Next were Carl and Fran Jones who lost all of their brakes on the freeway in Langley; only to realize a hub was the bigger problem. The lack of brakes helped keep them from MAJOR damage and potential disaster! Both hub (thanks to a spare carried for 5 years) and brakes were repaired and back on the road. No one broke down on the second day, but Jerry and Patty Mello broke down on the way to the Rally; carbs rebuilt and back on the road. The third day saw Doug and Meg Bell experience compression problems and substantial exhaust smoke. This problem wasn't fixed on the road, but they did make it thru the Rally and are now back home rebuilding their engine. Gale and Gretchen Pfueller, not wanting to be left out of the fun, started experiencing transmission fluid loss. While this problem continued throughout the trip and a potential solution was discussed, the resolution, as of this writing, is still to be determined.



These problems are brought up in this article not to frighten anyone, but to show that problems and breakdowns need not be a reason to keep your Ultra Van parked in your driveway and only use it for storage or an extra bedroom for guests. Problems can be solved on the fly and even in the middle of the night if you have a headlamp, which we did. Problems can also make you more knowledgeable, so eventually you can become a mentor for others. One recommendation to the en-

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

Western Rally (cont.)

tire Ultra Van community I would like



to offer is to travel in a pod whenever possible. Having someone to travel with not only makes for a more enjoyable trip, but also gives you an extra pair of hands, more Corvair/Ultra Van knowledge, and an extra set of tools. I always forget to bring something!

Oh, we did have a great time at the Western States Rally. We started our Rally in Harrison Hot Springs, as I've already stated, but the primary destination was Salt Spring Island and Vancouver Island. We visited the towns of Vesuvius, Chemainus, Lady-smith, Parksville, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Tofino and Victoria. While passing thru these towns we ate and ate and ate. We also experienced the great friendliness of the Canadian people.

Our first campsite was in the yard of a friend of Ron and Evelyn Adams on Salt Spring Island. Our only cost was to help lift the mast of Captain Dave's sailboat onto the boat. It took six strong, burly men but we managed to get it on board. What a wonderful place Dave has in this beautiful part of the world. After our night



around the campfire at Captain Dave's, we headed off for the next ferry and the town of Parksville, on the leeward side of Vancouver Island, for our next stopover by way of a few of the towns mentioned earlier.

Up early for the longest drive of the trip, 149 miles (241.4016 kilometers), we headed out for Tofino across the mountain range that makes up the backbone of Vancouver Island. We stopped along the way to visit Cathedral Grove Forest

which was magnificent. Tofino is THE summer resort community of Vancouver Island. We spent a couple of nights there and took the photo



of the red chairs at our RV Resort. We also took a chartered boat tour north from Tofino an hour and a half to visit some natural hot springs and a small rocky outcropping where we saw hundreds of sea lions basking in the sun.

The end of our trip took us back across the mountains of Vancouver Island to Victoria, which is like a bit of the old country in the new world. We didn't have High Tea at the Empress Hotel, but we did enjoy "order in" pizza and beer at our RV Resort, Yummmmm!

The last full day in Victoria saw the Adams, Bells and Pfuellers leave for home, so the Joneses and Mellos spent a day in Victoria sightseeing. We visited a castle, the inner harbor, a nice Tibetan restaurant, and strolled around downtown while construction took place all around us. Victoria is seeing a great building boom with high rise condos going up all over the place.

Monday afternoon we boarded our last ferry headed to Port Angeles, USA and back home to our other bed. This was a full week on the road with great friends visiting a spectacular island. What memories we will have. We enjoyed the trip immensely and we hope you enjoy the photos we took.

Classified Ads:

Available:

Ryerson Manual

The Ryerson is available in two forms, Printed and on a searchable CD.

Printed Manual \$60 plus shipping

Printed Manual and CD \$70 plus shipping.

CD \$17 postage paid to the contiguous U. S.

Shipping is based on your choice of shipping options.

Please send me your address and I will let you know what postage will be.

Eric Kirven, 3585 Cerritos Ave., Long Beach, CA 90807 Ultravan345@Yahoo.com

UVMCC Membership

E Mail for the Treasurer is at:

uvmcc_membership@yahoo.com

Join Today!

Web Sites:

<http://www.corvair.org/chapters/ultravan/>

and <http://www.ultravan.club>

UV 546 turned up on Instagram with the quote, "we take our camping seriously" Location was identified as Playland at Hastings Park, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada



Whales on Wheels (WOW) is the quarterly publication of the Ultra Van Motor Coach Club, Inc., (UVMCC) a chartered chapter (#008) of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA). Established in 1966, UVMCC is dedicated to the preservation, enjoyment, and use of the Ultra Van, a 22 foot, unique, motor home, which was designed by David Peterson and built in Kansas until 1970. About 365 units were built.

UVMCC is open to anyone with an interest in Ultra Vans. Annual dues are \$5 for an emailed newsletter and \$15 for a mailed newsletter. Application and payment should be made to the Treasurer.

Make checks payable to Ultra Van Motor Coach Club and mail to:

Owen Strawn, 434 So. Lexington Rd., Wichita, KS 67218

Stories, articles, photos, memorabilia, or any other item for publication should be sent to the editor. Send newsletter submissions to WOW by email to the Editor:

Molly Bacon, mollybacon@yahoo.com

Digital submissions are preferred, but even hand written are acceptable. Mail to:

Molly Bacon, 5425 Morrow Road, Gladwin, MI 48624

Authors are asked to submit at least a photograph of themselves for the article with any other relevant photos.

Technical material will be sent to the Technical Editor for review.

Sadly, the Eastern Rally had to be canceled. The timing conflicted with the schedules of some members who would normally attend. Plus, it was probably a little too far north for some others. Maybe we'll look at trying to plan a little something for late summer, early fall.

Please send any suggestions to the editor.



2018 UVMCC Ballot
Ballot is for both members of a household
Write-ins welcome
Please vote



President (2 year term): Newly elected president will appoint a new Technical Coordinator

Jerry Mello (incumbent)
Ken Hand

Vice President (1 year term):

Howard Joseph

Secretary (1 year term):

Molly Bacon

Treasurer (1 year term):

Molly Bacon

Eastern Director (3 year term):

Rick Milne

Special Easternn Director (complete the 2019 term):

Ken Hand

Western Director (3 year term):

Larry Forman

Newsletter Editor (1 year term):

Molly Bacon (incumbent)

Ernest Newhouse Award:

Either email your choices to mollybacon@yahoo.com
(email addresses will be validated with the current roster)

or

send ballots to Molly Bacon, 5425 Morrow Rd, Gladwin, MI 48624
(Please mark "ballot" on the envelope)

or

bring to the 2018 National Rally in Creede, CO.

No ballots will be available at the Rally