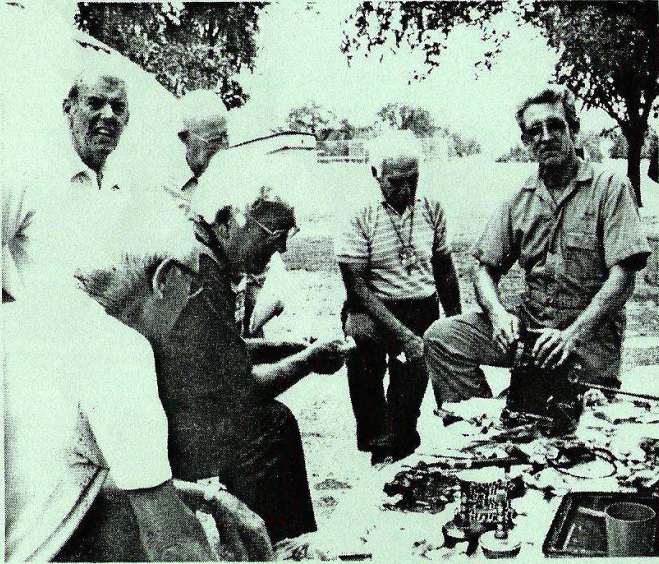


Vol 5 # 4  
FALL 80



George Truman (R) watches Arnold Steenburg (L) #507 change his front coil spring at Fredricksburg.



Howard Bess gives unscheduled tear-down clinic on Dean Mitchels auto transmission. Thru CORSA, a rebuilt one was found only 70 miles away.

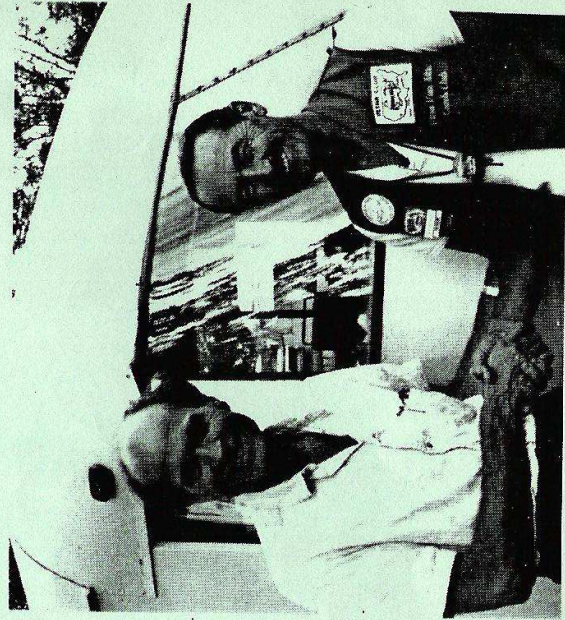
1199 Dunsyre drive  
LAFAYETTE, CALIFORNIA  
94549

## WHALES ON

## WHEELS

~~FALL~~ 1986  
FALL

CHRISTY BARDEN (L) HANDING OVER THE  
PRESIDENTIAL REINS TO JIM CRAIG (R)



## ULTRAVAN

TO:

VOLUME V NUMBER 4

FALL  
WINTER 1986

WHALES ON WHEELS IS A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF  
GROUP ULTRA VAN, A CORSA CHAPTER.

PRESIDENT

Jim Craig #65  
7731 Peacock Drive  
San Diego, California 92123

VICE-PRESIDENT

Jim Bents #466  
6571 Spring Path Lane  
San Jose, California 95120

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Louis Griggs #334  
626 Brookfield Ave.  
Cumberland, Maryland 21502

EDITOR

CHRISTY BARDEN #228  
1199 Dunsyre Drive  
Lafayette, California 94549  
Typed and assembled under the supervision of  
Leona Campbell

Group ULTRA Van is a CHAPTER OF CORVAIR SOCIETY OF  
AMERICA (CORSA). Dues are \$4.00 annually, Submit  
all technical information to the President.

GROUP ULTRA VAN is dedicated to the preservation and  
use of ULTRA Vans. This 22 foot unique motor home  
was designed by David Peterson and built in Kansas  
until 1970. About 360 units were built. For a full  
story, read the April 1980 (Vol. 2, number 8)  
CORSA Communique. For this issue please send \$3.00  
to CORSA., 2506 Gross Point Road, Evanston, Illinois  
60201. Phone (312) 475-7300

GROUP ULTRA VAN HAS A NEW PRESIDENT

Jim Craig has accepted the position of President of  
Group ULTRA Van. Jim has also been President of the  
San Diego Corvair Club. He brings with him much  
administrative experience.

Jim was born in Amarillo, Texas. When he was four  
years old his family moved to Oklahoma City where  
he grew up and finished high school.

In 1948, he joined the navy and was stationed in San  
Francisco. He was trained as a ship damage control  
man, carpenter rate.

In late 1952, he finished his hitch in the navy and  
took a civil service job with the Navy department  
at North Island, San Diego. He started as an ap-  
prentice metalsmith for four years. The last fifteen  
years he was an Aircraft repair specialists estimating  
repair of damaged or old aircraft. He was at North  
Island for thirtytwo years and retired last year.

Jim met his wife, Marlene, in 1953 and they were  
married in 1955. They have a grown son and daughter.

Jim got into Corvairs back in 1967. He bought a 1960  
4 door sedan with a burnt valve. Next was a 1961  
Greenbrier. In all, Jim has owned over 80 Corvairs  
and now he's down to about four. His first CORSA  
convention was in 1973 in Anaheim, California.  
Corvairs got him interested in ULTRA Vans and he  
has two at home now. Although one is for sale.

Most of you will remember Jim for his column "  
Corvair Corner" his sharing of tech tips with all  
of us.

Welcome aboard, Jim!

## WELL ATTENDED FREDRICKSBURG, TEXAS RALLEY

Fifty one ULTRA Vans (plus a few X brands), converged in Ladybird Johnson Park, three miles outside of the old German settlement of Fredricksburg, Texas. There was quite a bit of history in the town. Lots of good German restaurants, bakeries and beer gardens.

Full hookups were available, freshly cut green grass, toilets and showers and a meeting room. This room was handy with the rain that came on Monday and Tuesday. The Tech sessions were scheduled every morning and at the same time craft sessions were held.

### The craft sessions were:

- Christmas decorations with Neva Brining
- Tatting with Nell Morgan
- Toys with Clare Hoffman
- Wreaths with Theresa Vander Steeg

### Tech sessions were:

1. Spark plug cables (availability and type)
2. Engine and compartment safety
3. Rear wheel (spindle axles)
4. Tail lite (improvements)
5. Painting the Vans (hazards involved)
6. Oil filter (replacement and modifications)
7. Interior paneling (replacement and care)
8. Windows and Windshields (improvements and replacements)
9. Air jacks (use and availability)
10. Tanks for the ULTRA Vans (replacement and improvements)
11. Shock absorbers (available makes)
12. Air conditioning (how to and types of compression)

There was a factory tour to the Mooney Aircraft Plant in Kerrville, about 25 miles away. We drove our ULTRA Vans in caravan to Kerrville (about 25), that impressed the locals as well as us.

Also a field trip was taken to the LBJ ranch, the home of our former President.

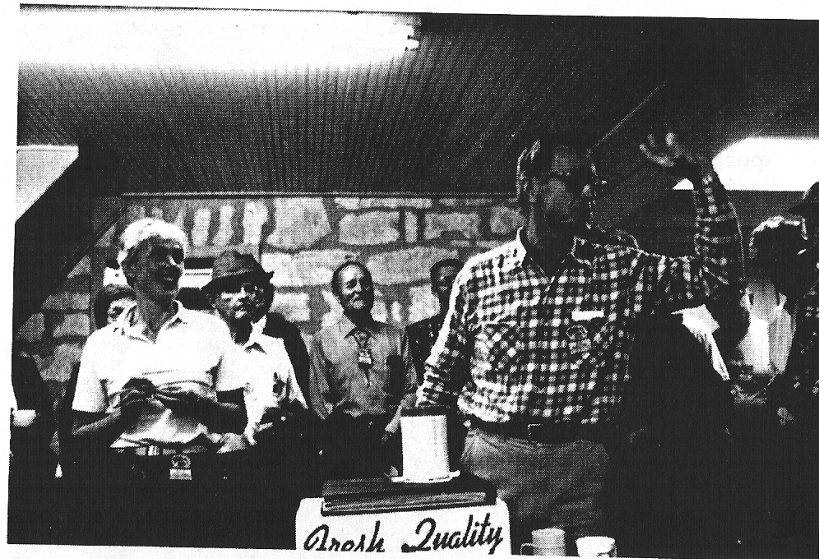
## FREDRICKSBURG CONT.

Friday night dinner was held at the Britsch Family Steak House, with entertainment by the Old Tyme Theater Group.

Co-hosts Marian Grootenhaar and Jean McMasters did a bang-up job. Everything went so smoothly. Marian held a drawing for prizes at every gathering. By the time the rally was over, everybody had "won" something. The prizes were the best I'd ever seen at any gathering anywhere. She gave away Sony Walkmans, radios, private telephones, briefcases, tool sets, crystal china. It was a knock out.

In future issues, we'll publish some of the Tech session material so it can be shared by all.

Christy Barden



Co-hosts Marian Grootenhaar (L) and Jean McMasters (R) calling name of one of the prize winners.

FROM THE NEW PRESIDENT: JIM CRAIG #65

Yes, here I am starting out on another adventure in Corvair land. Your past President, Christy Barden and founder of this club, "Group ULTRA Van," asked me if I would take the reins for awhile, so here we go.

I have noticed that many of the club members in referring to this club, call it "Whales on Wheels." Some really don't realize that the actual proper name is "Group ULTRA Van". Group ULTRA Van, is this clubs official name and chapter title of the Corvair Society of America. (CORSA). So when telling a friend about the club, please proudly call it, "Group ULTRA Van."

Whales on Wheels? That name is the title used on the clubs quarterly newsletter. Group ULTRA Van! Group ULTRA Van! Easier to say than write.

The clubs dues will remain at \$4.00 a year for the present time. Tell a friend about us and sign him up. Send all applications to the club Secretary/Treasurer, Louis Griggs.

Approx. thirtyfive members of the club attended the National Rally of the other ULTRA Van club at Fredericksburg, Texas. We all had alot of fun and learned some new things about our ULTRA'S. The technical sessions were different each day, really outstanding.

Sorry you missed it but plan now to attend the next one at Hot Springs, Ark, Oct. 5-11, 1987. Watch for more info as the year progresses. In the meantime, attend the local Corvair clubs events and be sure to take your ULTRA. Also, I might mention that the other ULTRA Van club has six regional rallies at different times across the U.S. You didn't know that? Well, send \$10.00 to our Secretary/Treasurer Louis Griggs, tell him you want to join the ULTRA Van Motor Coach Club and you will start receiving the newsletter that will give you dates and locations of all of their rallies.

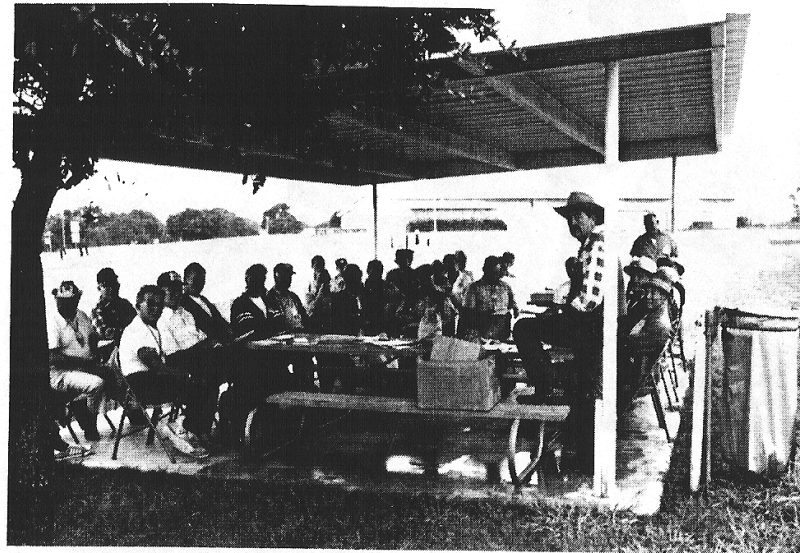
My first goal for Group ULTRA Van is to develop a

club logo, which we will use on the newsletter, windshield decal, jacket patch and etc. Development of the logo is open to all members of the club. Submit your idea to me. Your club officers will vote on and select the one most appropriate. It has to contain the word "Group ULTRA Van." Can, if you desire contain "Chapter of CORSA" wording. Indicate the colors you desire for lettering, background and etc.

That's all this time. Happy Ultraing.

From the middle of Texas  
Jim Craig

P.S. Help us represent "Group ULTRA Van" at the Great Western Fan Belt Toss and Swap Meet rally at Palm Springs, Ca., Nov 7-9, 1986. Location Angels Stadium. "Always alot of fun."



Jim Craig directs discussions at one of the many Tech sessions.

SMITHSOIAN INSTITUTION MOTORHOME SHOW:

"At home on the road" (an exhibition). Auto, camping, motels and the rediscovery of America.

Place is the National Museum of American history. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. The dates are 15th November to January 11, 1987.

If you are in Washington, D.C. during this time, this would be a good exhibition to see.



Mr David Peterson accepting the 20 year plaque of appreciation.

"David Peterson's address to ULTRA Van get-together in Fredricksburg, Texas"

(The following letter was read at the gathering by Christy Barden in lieu of David Peterson being there himself.)

I'm terribly sorry to have to miss this twentieth anniversary of the founding of the ULTRA Club. Two business deals developed problems, one that has been lingering, past due, for over eight years, has been in bankruptcy for nearly four years. It now appears that it will finally be paid sometime during this week between the sixth and tenth.

I first want to take this opportunity to thank all of the people who have contributed so much to keep the ULTRA Van alive for these 20 years. I won't attempt to go through the list because, sorry to say, I haven't kept close enough to know them all, but I especially want to thank the two couples who I think have contributed most.

Without Ernie and Edna Newhouse, I doubt if the ULTRA Club would have prospered as it has. In addition to the social and educational value the club has offered the incentive to keep our ULTRA Vans in good running condition and looking good. Without an incentive it is so easy to let the little things go. The paint job, the upholstery and draperies deteriorate so gradually that you really don't notice until you think of who may see it at the next rally. The 100,000 mile plaque, I'm sure has encouraged many to show off how well they have maintained their coach for so many miles

Without Len and Edy Ryerson, we wouldn't have the maintenance manual and many would have given up due to maintenance problems. If you are on the road with problems especially when you need help from a mechanic not familiar with the ULTRA Van or need a part or if you call me, the manual makes it so much easier to communicate. Let's have a good round of applause for these two dedicated couples. I think they deserve a standing ovation.

I, of course, am proud of the ULTRA Van and the fact that it has stood up so well without any major basic structural problems, even though the empty weight has skyrocketed from my original specifications, with the use of foam in place of spun glass for insulation and the structure carrying the V8 engine are the two big ones. The turnbuckles on the A frames added alot of weight and actually are not as strong as a tube, due to the deep cut threads.

When I designed the ULTRA Van, I didn't plan it for more than our own use. We have never enjoyed air conditioning so I have not been an advocate of air conditioning and the required AUX power in the motor home. I do realize, however, that air conditioning is absolutely necessary in some parts of the country. Many people are carrying much more in provisions and spare parts than I ever considered. I designed the ULTRA Van to gross at 4,600 lbs, and there are many that weigh more than that empty. Anyway, the bottom line is that it has stood up to alot of punishment.

Incidentally, for those that are carrying lots of weight, I highly recommend that you get rid of the turnbuckles and if you still have the cast beam above the front coil springs, you should replace it with the I beam, same as in the rear over the springs. It is not a real difficult job and is covered very well in Len Ryersons manual, Section 9. If you replace the turnbuckles you should be sure that the attach points have the slots and cam washers so that you have an adjustment. If, due to errors in dimensions in the rear, you run out of adjustment, using the cam washers you can add shims between the bearing housing and where it fastens to the A frame with the four bolts, to gain additional adjustment. Another point to watch, if you are running with a gross over 4,600lbs., is where the ball joints fastens to the lower front A frame, I used SAE "fine thread" bolts, Hutchinsonson used US Standard cap screws threaded into the aluminum casting, Len Ryerson, covers this point very well. I'm sending a page from Len's manual that shows a tube connecting the trunion points at the base of the rear A

frames. I am not sure what serial numbers do not already have it. I had it on the units that were delivered from Hutchinsonson in mid 1966.

The fact that pleases me most is that ULTRA Van owners are such knowledgeable people. Everytime I talk to an owner for the first time, I just have to ask them what their line of work has been. I'm real proud to have this type of person choose the ULTRA Van.

Now I understand that I'm to concentrate on how the ULTRA Van project got started.

I have to go back to Blackwell, a little town in Oklahoma where I went to High School. My family moved to Blackwell in 1929 to get away from the 50 degree below zero days in Wisconsin. Blackwell had an airport and two World War 1 airplanes. It was my first opportunity to see airplanes up close.

Since I was exceptionally talented working with wood, I not only realized that the structures being used would be simple to repair, but also simple to duplicate. Hardly a year had gone by until I was making repairs on planes and of course wanted to learn to fly. There was hardly enough work to trade for enough flying time to learn by hands on flying so I decided to build a glider. The glider was a great success, about thirty young men learned to fly it, some went on to flying careers.

Airplanes have been my major interest ever since and the expertise that I learned from the aircraft industry is what made it possible to do the light weight streamlined motor home project.

We will skip the details on the 30 years between Blackwell and the ULTRA Van project, except to say that I got a great amount of aircraft experience. During WW 2, I was superintendent of final assembly of the 29. This experience was responsible for the light weight streamlined concept of the ULTRA Van. I actually did not have experience to make it any other way. In 1963 the Chairman of the Board for Clark Equipment Company paid me well to go to

Lansing, Michigan so their engineers could see the ULTRA Van. He then wanted to hire me to help them reduce the weight of the Cortez. I told him I would not know where to start or how to proceed on their design.

It is now 1960, 26 years ago. I've been deep into airplanes for 30 years. I have sold an airplane project to people in California who were planning large scale production. I had agreed to go to California to transfer my knowledge and expertise by working for the purchaser for a reasonable time.

After completing my agreement with them, I had a rather good income from the airplane project. I made some investments and half way retired to play with my toys in California. I had a ski boat, had learned to sail. I really loved all sorts of water sports, was a pretty good snow skier and really enjoyed the mild climate of Oakland, winter and summer.

One of my toys was a Spartan trailer which was about midway in size between what we now call a travel trailer and a mobile home. How nice it would be if I could drive the unit instead of towing it with a car and be able to tow a boat. I would save nearly half the weight. I started converting the Spartan, planning to put an engine in the front and leave the rest of it pretty much as it was. I couldn't find an engine and drive system.

It's a good thing that the Olds Toronado was not available or I would have been able to carry out the original plan and the ULTRA Van probably would not have been born. In the process of looking for a suitable power plant, I looked at the Corvair. The concept was so perfect except the amount of power available would not handle the Spartan. I decided that I could start with a whole new design, strictly from my airplane experience and build a unit with nearly as much space and cut the weight in half again.

I rented a building and started construction September 1, 1960. January 2, 1961, I got the

vehicle license, they were issued on an annual basis at that time and started driving it. The empty weight was less than 1,800 lbs, 24 feet long, full eight feet wide, 75" tall inside. Five times the cube of the VW Van and 400 lbs lighter. Even before the interior was finished, I took it to the mountains to test it's sustained climbing ability and the project was on the way.

The reason that the light weight and streamlined shape was so easy for me was my overall aircraft experience, plus the static test program that I had just completed on the airplane project. It is really amazing how a box carries a load. I like to go through the shoe box demonstration to get people thinking. You see how flexible it is without the lid. With the lid on it is very strong and in fact you can cut some pretty big holes in it and it is still very strong. You must, however, leave a good beam at the top or bottom or you lose it all. Most motor homes, built on truck chassis, have a load carrying door latch so that the door is part of the structure. Due to the relatively heavy weight of the chassis that is torsionally very flexible. This concept requires an even stronger box than if it didn't have the chassis. The problem here is that you can't open or close the door unless you are on a relatively level surface.

I had planned to have a question and answer period at this time so if someone will write down the questions from the audience and mail them to me, I'll try to get the answers into the next news letter.

Again, I want to say that I'm sorry to miss this memorable occasion.

TECHNICAL TIPS (Send all Tech Tips to the President)

Drapery "eye" slides ( the kind used when redoing the curtain that slides around the front windshield.) Can be found at:

Parks Trailer Supply  
University and Cocotilla Sts  
Apache Junction, AZ 85220  
Phone (602) 982-2378

Item: Drapery eye-slides, white nylon #3050, 50 each for \$6.50, tax .39, postage 50. Total \$7.39 delivered. Or check a marine supple store in your area. This is where Mr. Peterson initially obtained the eye-slides. Those of you who haven't replaced the front sliding curtain don't know what we're talking about. Those who have replaced it, do know.

Walt Davidison #366

#### BRIGHTER TAIL LIGHTS

New lense covers for tail lites, ask RV store for Reflecto-O-lite 110-150 SAF IA-S-T-L-69. These covers are the same size but require a different placement of the screws, which is no problem.

New lite bulbs. The 1986-87 Gold catalog at Clarks Corvair Parts has on page 92, special brighter bulbs for our ULTRAS. The candle power is 20 more than the stock stop lite and the running lite is 10 candle power brighter.

Use aluminum foil from the kitchen to give a good reflection to the bulb.

Clyde Stanton #392

WIPER MOTOR ASSY (ULTRA TYPE) available from:

H.G. Makelin Co, (dist.) 219 S. Shaw Rd., S. San Francisco, Ca. 94080, (415) 873-4743. Write or call them for retailer nearest you. P/N is WWF12-1-710 (1" shaft) approz. \$60.00 or a junked early AMC Pacer has the same wiper for the back windows.

Jim Craig #65 and Clyde Stanton #392

ULTRA WATER/WASTE PUMPS: Available from Proven Pump Corp., 1440 N. Spring St., Los Angeles, Ca. 90012. (213) 223-4296. Also have kits P/NSRK-2, \$6.50 ea. and postage.

Dan Renebardt

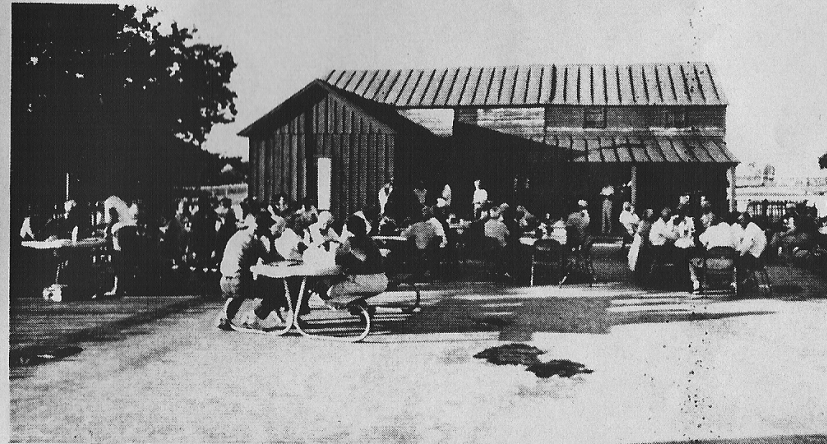
#### CLASSIFIED

Bendix vacumn brake booster for single system.  
\$10.00 plus shipping.

Gerrit Grootenhaar #503  
1505 Quincy  
Grandville, Mi. 49418  
(616) 896-8630

Used Corvair parts. Engine and body are available from:

Charlie Dye  
2902 N. 60th Dr.  
Phoenix, AZ. 85033  
(602) 247-3272



Wednesday pot luck dinner in front of club house at Fredricksburg.