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My Corvair "Love Affair" began sometime in the summer of 1963, I had been out of high school for two years, and was still living at home with my parents, a sister 2 years younger than I, and a baby sister that was only 1 year old. I had a full time job, and was driving a baby blue and white 1955 Oldsmobile 4 door hardtop. Somewhere along the way that summer, the bug to buy a new car bit me. I looked at all of the dealerships in Boone, but as time went by, I was faced with two problems. First, I didn't have enough money to buy a car without financing, and I wasn't 21 yet, so I couldn't get a loan without a co-signor. I worked a few more months and saved, finally in the fall after the new models had arrived (Remember how the new models were a big thing in the old days, the new body styles, new features, etc.) I had given up on purchasing a mint green Dodge Dart convertible, it was just too expensive. But a visit to Vogeler Nieman Chevrolet-Buick turned up a holdover (from the previous model year) 1963 Corvair Monza 2-door coupe. At the time, I didn't know much about a Corvair, but it was an affordable vehicle. Finally in November, just 2 weeks prior to my 21st birthday, I was able to make a deal and arrange for the finances with my father co-signing the bank loan. I was the proud owner of my very first new car. Not a worry in sight! Things went well that winter, the little car was fine to drive in the snow. Not a worry in sight! Then one early spring morning as I went to work at the C.L. Percival refrigeration plant, there were no empty parking stalls in the main parking area, as I circled around, I started to drive past an empty semi-trailer that was parked in an adjacent area. All of a sudden, CRASH! One of the other employee's wife had just dropped her husband off, and was leaving on the other side of the trailer. We hadn't seen each other coming on opposite sides of the trailer. My shiny new car had suffered a serious injury, the right front fender was badly damaged, but she was drivable. After a few days, she went to the body shop for the needed repairs. But upon return, she just wasn't the same. The paint didn't match as quite often is the case with silver or gray, and the fender had several ripples and waves that were very noticeable. As if that weren't enough, it wasn't long until I received that familiar greeting from Uncle Sam that says, "Come join us".



Memorial Day weekend found me boarding a bus to Webster City. From there it was a two day train ride to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Just prior to receiving this greeting, I had been experiencing back problems. After being processed and assigned, I reported this condition to my CO (as recommended by my local Dr., and was sent to the infirmary. I spent the next several weeks in the hospital barracks waiting for the decision. Finally, I was told to go home. After returning to Boone, a decision was made, that it probably wasn't good for me to continue working at the Percival plant and I should get an education. Having always been good with numbers and liking accounting, arrangements were made for me to attend A.I.B. in Des Moines that fall. This meant I wouldn't be able to continue making payments on the Corvair. Mom and Dad were helping foot the bills for the education, so it was decided that they would take over the loan and ownership of the little car.

Over the next several years, it was used as a family vehicle, training wheels for my mother and younger sister as they learned to drive, and in later years as a work car for my father. As the years passed, the little car ended up sitting in the garage most of the time, accumulating a good coat of dust, boxes, and other articles that seem to be attracted to an unused vehicle. By this time the little car was in less than perfect condition. Large rust holes over the headlights, very little paint (the original grey had mostly been blown off and the red primer and rust had replaced it), the ripples in the right front fender, torn seat covers, stained headliner and several mechanical problems.

In the early '90s, my parent's collection of vehicles totaled 5 cars and pickups and 2 Cushman motor scooters. They decided 2 people didn't need this many vehicles and they would be trimming down the fleet. Dad told me they would be selling the Corvair. My heart sank to the floor! He followed up by saying that I could have her back if I wanted her. Against the wishes of my wife, it wasn't long before the little car was hauled to Denny Christensen's shop here in Ames. A few days later the car was running again. She was basically in sound condition, but needed a lot of TLC. After receiving things like new brakes, steering box overhaul, and a new set of radial tires, the car was again drivable. Eventually the body was repaired and given a coat of silver metallic paint, new seat covers, and headliner. Finally she was back to a respectable state.



Since the restoration, she has been driven in several parades, entered into several local car shows, nursing home show and shines, the National Convention in Chicago in 2001, and made trips to Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota for various events.

I am very proud of my Corvair. I look forward to driving her more now that I am retired. I never get tired of hearing, "A Corvair, my grandma had one of those, I owned one of those when I was in college, or my buddy had a Corvair, we used to -----." Most people are surprised when I tell them that I bought the car new.

Until next time, Happy Vairing.



Before Restoration



During Restoration

