

Amblewagon #1

George W. Johnston

I first became aware that Corvair 95 vans were professionally converted to ambulance use when one was offered for sale in Madison, Wisconsin in 1988. I contacted the owner who said he did not have time to do the necessary restoration and would like it to go to someone who would be able to undertake this project. It was purchased at that time.

A sketchy history was obtained which included years of daily use by a contractor in northeast Wisconsin, and back to its sale at auction in 1972.



"Amblewagon" is the trade name for a series of vehicles converted to ambulance, handicapped, and funeral car use by Automotive Conversion Corp. of Birmingham, Michigan. Corvair vans were only one of several chassis used. Those vehicles were ordered through dealers and then sent directly to A.C.C. for conversion. A.C.C. ceased to do business about 1982, so information regarding this vehicle was difficult to obtain. Recently Dave Newell sent me a copy of a letter from Chevrolet's Milwaukee zone manager offering for sale one Amblewagon ambulance that was built for the 1962 dealers' introductory show. This vehicle, VIN 2R125F10001, was the one I had purchased. I was able to locate the past president of A.C.C., Mr. John Bell. He informed me that all the corporate records including production records had long since been discarded. He did recall the Corvair conversion and stated that it was one of his favorites. He put me in touch with Mr. Kyle Bess, who was in charge of production of these vehicles. Mr. Bess recalled the Corvair conversion well and sent me diagrams of option layouts and how the conversion was constructed. Later he came across several old negatives showing Corvair conversions in more detail. His help has been invaluable in this project. Mr. Bess recalled that fewer than twenty Corvair conversions were made. I have been unable to locate any others and conversation with Dave Newell indicated that this is probably the only remaining vehicle of its type.

My Amblewagon is a 1962 Corvair chassis with full window option, not a Greenbrier. Its VIN indicates that it was the first 1962 Corvair 95 chassis off the assembly line. Equipment installed by A.C.C. includes heavy duty electrical circuits, four corner red flashing lights, Federal Signal roof mounted light-siren com-

CHEVROLET MOTOR DIVISION

GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION
4066 NORTH PORT WASHINGTON AVENUE
MILWAUKEE 12, WISCONSIN



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TO ALL DEALERS:-

During the 1962 model National Sales Convention, there was on display a model R-1205, Corvan. This unit, which bears serial 2R125F-100001, has been equipped with an Ambulance conversion by the Automotive Conversion Corporation, Birmingham, Michigan. The unit, as listed below, is available for immediate delivery.

521A White
482A Full Width Seat
138J Heater
355A Windshield Washer
674B Tires
2003A Windows
2003V Windows
988277 Locking Gas Cap
988346 Dome Lamp
988285 Mirror

Fire extinguisher - 10 lb. dry chemical
Resuscitator with two oxygen cylinders
Two thermos bottles - one quart size
Portable First Aid Kit - 36 unit
Elevating heart patient cot with mattress
Collapsible emergency stretcher with wheels
Extra oxygen cylinder - E size

Special dealer net price on the above R-1205, F.O.B. Birmingham, Michigan	\$2,070.89
Special dealer net price on ambulance equipment	<u>1,567.43</u>
Total Special Dealer Net Price	\$3,638.32

Any one interested in the above described unit should contact the writer immediately.

Very truly yours,

L. K. Donoho
Zone Truck Manager

LKD/gys
#62-243

Trk. #332

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ination, ventilating roof fan, dual spotlights, and Ferno-Washington ambulance cot and hold-down. Interior cabinetry was constructed to conform to original specifications. An attendant's seat is mounted just inside the rear side door. Fire extinguisher and first aid equipment including resuscitation equipment is installed. Radio equipment was optional.

When I purchased this vehicle it had suffered many Wisconsin winters and tough use as a work vehicle. First on the schedule was sandblasting the undercarriage, all seams, and the interior which had a heavy coat of house paint (brushed). After this, many rust holes and rotted areas were evident. It spent one year at the body shop where NOS and fabricated panels were welded in place. Gradually it looked more like a van again. Filling imperfections and blocking seemed to be a never-ending process but eventually it was ready for paint. The interior paint was mixed to match the original color used in 1962 vans. The exterior was painted white with a red beltline stripe as it was originally.

In July 1990 it was ready to tow home. Replacement of window mechanisms, windows, weatherstrips, new channels, fuzzies, etc., took many evenings and weekends but by now it was really taking shape. Replacement of brake cylinders, lines, and shoes was also necessary. The engine and transaxle were in good condition so not much other than detailing was necessary.

I constructed the interior cabinetry to allow the ambulance cot to be rolled in from the rear over the engine compartment and cabinet on the driver's side. This cabinet and the floor were covered in white vinyl tile. Aluminum angle edged all of these pieces. The front bench seat, sun visors, arm rests, ambulance cot pad, and attendant's seat were covered in matching red vinyl.

Before exterior trim was installed and lights were in place, a trip back to the body shop for final buffing was made. This time the trip was on its own power.

Finally the exterior emblems, emergency lights, and remaining trim were installed and decals applied. This project, which took over two years, numerous evenings and weekends, many challenges, and a few dollars, was nearing completion. Amblewagon #1 was ready for duty.

My thanks go to Kyle Bess of Automotive Conversion Corp. for his diagrams, photos, and other helpful advice on specifications. Also to Dave Newell, for the literature and historical data he provided. I also appreciate the help from Federal Signal Corp. in obtaining the correct NOS light-siren. Most of all I thank my two daughters, Jennifer and Natalie, who tolerate if not completely understand my involvement with Corvairs and the time I devote to this hobby. ☺

