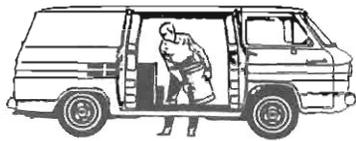




RAMPSIDE



CORVAN



LOADSIDE



GREENBRIER



VOL. 31, NO. 3

MAY / JUNE 2003

# CORVAN ANTICS

A CHARTERED CHAPTER OF CORSA, CORVAIR SOCIETY OF AMERICA

## AN ALL CORVAIR FAMILY



We have decided to drive and own only Corvair vehicles now that we don't have to go to work from 8:00 to 5:00 every weekday. Back in the days when reporting to work at all hours of the day and week was necessary in order to keep our jobs, it was easier to go buy a new car than it was to maintain a 40+ year-old collector's car. So, Gayle and I both drove new GM and Chrysler work cars, but still drove our Corvairs as long as they did not need serious work to keep them dependable. But, a couple of years ago, we decided to drive only Corvairs for the next 20 years of our retirement.

In late 1960, the Chevy Dealer in Abilene, Texas loaned me a brand new 1961 Corvair Ramp-

*(Continued on page 4)*

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CORVANANTICS is the bi-monthly publication of Corvanatics, a Chartered Chapter of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA). Established September, 1972, Corvanatics is dedicated to preserving and enjoying America's original and most innovative small vans and light trucks, the Chevrolet Corvair 95 Series.

Membership in Corvanatics is open to any CORSA member with an interest in Forward Control Corvairs. Membership applications are available from the Secretary/Treasurer, Diane Galli, 5000 Cascabel Road, Atascadero, CA. 93422-2302.

Dues are \$6.00 per year and must be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer. Sending them to any other address will only slow your renewal and possibly cause you to miss an issue.

Stories, articles, photos, memorabilia, or any other item for publication should be sent to the editor: Garry Parsley, 402 Forrest Ave. Cleburne, TX. 76033-5343. All of these can also be sent by e-mail to: geparsley@att.net. Technical material should be sent to the Technical Editor for review.

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## EDITORIAL DEEP THOUGHTS...

Wow, what a difference a day makes! Barely 24 hours after the last edition of CorvanAntics went to the printer, three large articles arrived, complete with pictures. Thanks guys and gals, for all the support. A couple of them are in this issue, watch for the other in coming months. Don't however assume this means you don't have to write!

Speaking of printers, I must apologize for the quality of the photos last month. After dropping the newsletter of to be done, I learned that the printer I had been using could no longer do the job for me because I upgraded my publishing program, and they would not! So much for loyalty. I had to grab any printer I could, and was not aware that they were only going to copy the sheets. At least they were cheap! Soooo, the search for a new printer goes on. Hopefully this issue will show some improvement.

I'm putting the finishing touches on the "Center of the Universe (dash) pictorial coming up, so if you would like your center to be featured, get the photos along with name, year, model etc. in now! Till next time....

*Garry Parsley*

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# RIDING WITH THE PRESIDENT

Here we are right around the corner from our next Corsa international convention in Carlisle, PA. I have read about all the good stuff that the Mid Atlantic Corvair Club has planned and I can't wait for this convention. If you haven't made plans to attend, it's not too late to make your arrangements.



The Corvanatics group meeting will take place on Friday night, July 18th, between 9:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. During this meeting we will have tech tips, door prizes, election of officers, more door prizes, and a good program. Speaking of election of officers, due to the fact this is our one time a year meeting, if you would like to run for office of a director position just let me or a current officer know in advance and your name will be put in place for election.

Check out your last issue of Corvanatics under officers and directors and let us know where you would like to fit into Corvanatics.

It is also that time of the year when all the car shows are in full bloom. Check out the shows in your area and show off your forward control. You may be surprised how much some people enjoy seeing these neat vehicles.

Well, that's it for now, and I must take about two hours cleaning my wire wheel hubcaps for a show next week.

Until next issue,  
*Corbin Tayloe*

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## REMEMBERING BOB KIRKMAN

The news of the recent death of longtime member Bob Kirkman was sad news. However, it brought to mind the many pleasant times spent working with Bob when he was the Technical Editor for Corvan-Antics newsletter. Please allow me to review those times as Caroline and I remember them to indicate to you what great people Bob and his wife Adel were and the loss to Corvanatics.

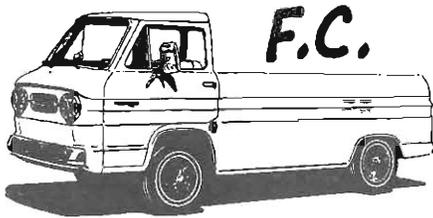
I was president of Corvanatics for a number of years starting approximately in the late seventies [We are winter travelers and have no records with us]. We really did not meet Bob and Adel until the Corsa Notional Convention in Detroit. However, in our communications it was discovered that Bob had been the factory engineer from Chevrolet engineering. He worked with the stamping plant in Indianapolis and the assembly plant in St Louis to work out the production problems during the production life of the Corvair Forward Control model. Therefore no one was more qualified to help us plan the Corvanatics meeting agenda for the Detroit convention than Bob. Other than the business part of the meeting nothing was of more interest to most members than the technical session..

The meeting progressed about as usual, then it was Bob's turn. He started out in his usual soft monotone voice, giving us his background in order to show that he was qualified and experienced enough to answer the many questions to come. It initially appeared that this could be a rather unexciting meeting, perhaps even boring. Then it happened - Bob shifted into high gear, still with his monotone but pleasant voice, he told us about the production problems, how they were solved, and provided us with large photographs to illustrate them. This definitely was the most interesting tech seminar that I had attended at a Corvanatics or Corsa meeting.

This tech session was so interesting that no one left the room. Just the opposite, the room started to fill up and when our time ran out the hall outside the meeting room was crowded with people trying to get near the doors in order to hear what Bob had to say. I have wished many times since that we could have recorded what he said and even better wouldn't it have been great if video taping had been available then?

A few years later we planned to go to an event the Detroit Corvair club was planning. When Bob heard that we were planning to attend he invited us to stay at their home, which we did. They were excellent hosts. Their beautiful home was like a model home. We had great food and much Corvair talk. Bob had answers to almost all the Corvair question that I could think of and he also had documentation to backup his answers. His basement and garage work shops were spotlessly clean, well organized and everything had a place. I have never been in a better

*(Continued on page 7)*



## (FEATURED COLUMNIST)

(Continued from page 1)

side to try out on my job as appliance manager at a Gibson's Discount Store. When Mr. Gibson saw the Rampside, he immediately ordered new ones for several of his stores in Texas. It sure was easy to deliver washing machines, clothes dryers, gas cook stoves and many other things in a Rampside.

Then, in 1975, I rescued a 1963 Corvan 95 that was about to go to the crusher in Santa Maria, California. I drove the van for several years and thoroughly enjoyed it, but during that time in my life, I owned about 12 licensed and running vehicles, and just could not keep up with all of them, so I sold the van to a young couple who later customized it and made it into a plush street machine.

Then, at the Palm Springs Fan Belt Toss a few years ago, my little wife noticed a really nice Rampside, probably the one owned by Ed Corson, and she announced to me that she wanted to buy a Rampside to use as her daily driver. You see, she often comes home from grocery shopping with 3 or 4 bags of potting soil in the trunk and at other times, she comes home with the back bumper sitting on the ground because the Chrysler Le Baron is loaded with used bricks or paving stones. Yes, she (and I) really needed a Rampside!

We had been talking to Rafee - Corvair Specialist about one that he was planning to sell, but each year it would not be ready to sell. Rafee even had volunteered to deliver it to us in New Mexico, because that is where he was born, but things changed regarding the sale and delivery.

When we pulled into Angel's Field in Palm Springs this past November, Gayle saw a nice, freshly painted Rampside with a For Sale sign in the window. And it belonged to Ultra Van friends, Howard and Marsha Boso who are from Apache Junction, Arizona. While I parked our Ultra Van, Gayle talked to Howard and Marsha and took a short drive around the baseball field in the Rampside. About 30 minutes later, she came and told me that she had indeed bought the Rampside!

Our trip plans called for stops in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, California, then on up into Medford, Oregon

to visit my brother and his family, then back to New Mexico by way of Flagstaff, AZ. But since we now needed to bring back the Rampside, I told Howard to tow it back to Apache Junction and we would pick it up in a week on our way back from Oregon. Now, mind you, we are driving a 4,500 pound Ultra Van that is powered by a 95 hp Corvair engine and a Powerglide 2 -speed transmission.

About a week later, we made it back to Apache Junction, spent the night in the Boso's back yard and hooked the Rampside tow bar to the back of our Ultra Van. After a short 'round-the-block tow to test the handling of the two vehicles tied together, Gayle and I set off for Tularosa, New Mexico. To avoid the Phoenix Freeway traffic, we took the back way, Highway #89 to Tucson. At Tucson, we encountered a major bicycle rally with at least 5,000 bike riders, but the traffic control officers decided to hold up the race and let us pass through. Therefore, we had a very easy first-day trip to Benson, Arizona, where we spent the night in a really nice RV park. And every time we slowed down or stopped, dozens of people took pictures of us! You just can't drive a Forward Control Ultra Van while towing a Forward Control Rampside without being noticed.

The trip from Apache Junction to Tularosa was trouble free. We cruised at 55 to 65 mph on level roads and only once did we have to stop and let the Rampside help push us over a mountain pass. That was about 90 miles from home at the San Augustin Pass, East of Las Cruces, NM. Gayle got into the Rampside and warmed up the engine, and we went over the pass at 40+ mph! If you are ever driving from Florida to California by way of Alamogordo, NM, the San Augustin Pass is the steepest mountain pass on the entire trip. All other mountain passes can be driven while towing another vehicle with no problems.

Once we got the Rampside home, we began driving it to the grocery store, to eat out, to church and to the post office. We don't have any more Rampside Pickups in this part of New Mexico and the one we have sure does attract attention. The next step is to sell the Chrysler 4-door and the Chevy Cavalier convertible. We will then be driving my 1965 Corvair 4-door, the Rampside, and our Ultra Van. We also have a 1964 Monza Convertible in the restoration workshop. And oh yes, all 4 Corvairs will be air conditioned. We need air conditioning here during the summer months. The air conditioners are aftermarket units from Southern Air and Vintage Air, except for the 1965 4-door which is GM factory air.

And one nice thing about driving only Corvairs, is that I can "borrow" parts if one car needs a part to make it run to go to town.

**Richard & Gail Finch**



## "A day in the movies"

This event happened to me on April 11th, 1999 and I have always wanted to write the whole thing down to let you know what it was like to be a part of movie making just for one day.

It started with a phone call from my mother in law saying she just saw an article on TV requesting photos of cars from the 60's that were needed to make a movie in Harrisburg, PA. At first I hesitated then I thought what the heck and sent one or two photos of my Corvan 95 to the address she gave me. Well, one thing led to another and on April 11th 1999 I took that Thursday off work and at 8:00 am my van and I found ourselves parked in front of the old state mental hospital in Harrisburg, PA. It wasn't for admission, although sometimes my wife thinks it would have been for the better.

Anyhow back to the story, this was the starting point for the filming of the movie "Girl Interrupted". Briefly it was about a girl who has a sordid life and admits herself for a stay at a mental hospital thus causing an interruption in her life.

After parking, I found myself next to a 60's VW van completely restored down to an interior that encompassed every kind of Jerry Garcia memorabilia imaginable. It was really cool. Then there was a late Mack "R" model truck complete with decals and state plates just as if it drove right out of the 60's working life it once led. There was a 67 Dodge Charger, a Rambler convertible and more cars than I can now remember.

From that meeting point we were led to a predetermined side street in the Harrisburg area that had a concrete bridge with an overpass surrounding the area. It was about 9:00 am now and all of us were given a catered breakfast and legal forms to complete our connection with the making of this movie.

The purpose of the next scene was to film two taxicabs passing by each other on the same point in the road. They were the Checker variety complete with meters, new paint and decals. The girl in the movie was, in her mind visualizing herself in both cabs as they passed each other on the street. The one she was in was the one going to the mental institution and in the other was her double leaving the institution after being released. All this was to take place in a made up traffic jam located on this side street with slow moving cars. The preparation for just this one small section of the movie was very interesting. First, as I was sitting in my parked van you began to see a small army of make up people roaming the area. You saw artists recreating Graffiti Peace signs and the words "Boston Pigs" on the cement pillars. We were slowly being put in another place and another time. It was supposed to be Boston, 1969, in the fall of the year. That was appropriate because none of the trees around the area

had any leaves. Wow, this is really getting cool! These movie artists completely transformed the surrounding area in less than 30 minutes, with water base paint, of course. Then about 20 actors who seemed to be college students dressed in authentic clothing from that time period began to appear on the street corners, the curbs, and under the bridge. Some were even smoking, but I didn't care to go over there to find out what it was. Then a make up guy came over to me and said he needed to make my van look "used", which most commercial vehicles were back then. He said not to worry because what he was using would easily wash off with water. He first sprayed the entire vehicle with water. Then he powdered all the sides with a dusty looking substance that had the consistency of face rouge. Then another guy went down the row of cars and put magnetic Massachusetts's license plates on every car there. The director and these make up people made me think of scruffy carnival people who really don't have a life or a place to call home. They just travel from place to place making a living in this fashion.



At this point the action filming began as the two opposing line of cars proceeded to pass each other. The entire line up of cars I'm guessing was about 1/8 mile long total. After each take the whole line up of cars had to back up to the same starting point. After about two takes a make up person asked some of the drivers including me to follow. I was asked to sit in a chair. Then this lady put a cape around me and proceeded to cut my hair to fit the time period. I thought what next, oh well it should grow back. Actually I still have it cut that way. I think it made me look younger. Enough vanity talk, get back to the story. During the breaks throughout the day the star actress, Winona Ryder stayed behind a partition to keep people from taking pictures and generally looking at her. I thought this was dumb but then again I definitely wasn't the star actor either. I did get to talk to her double who was in the opposing taxicab that was only two cars ahead of me. I was very near the close up the filming crew was trying to capture.

Well, 15 takes later the filming crew was having trouble catching the scene. Everyone was getting frustrated and by then it was 3:30 so everyone stopped for a catered buffet lunch of just about everything from Mexican to plain old macaroni and cheese. While eating I noticed the caterers had California plates

*(Continued on page 7)*

# The future was theirs... at least back then

By David Gooley



Corvair vans and pickups used a "forward control" design that allowed the driver to sit above the front wheels, since the engine was placed in the rear. Note the rampside door on the passenger side of this 1961 model. (David Gooley photo)

Corvair fans will argue forever about what finally caused the demise of their favorite vehicle. The rear-engined autos and trucks, manufactured during the 1960s, caused a furor in government and automotive circles. The Corvair turned out to be ultimately famous for two main reasons: It was a revolutionary vehicle as far as American design was concerned, and, perhaps more importantly, it became the subject of hard-hitting commentaries by Ralph Nader, propelling him to stardom and eventually sending the little Corvair to the bottom of the scrap heap. As with many vehicles that went through short periods of production, the Corvair has become something of a collector's item. Strangely, the Corvair has also come to represent everyman's rejection of government infringement upon personal freedoms.

Corvair vans and pickups, produced in relatively small numbers, have become definite collectibles with notable resale values in recent years. The trucks were built between 1960 and 1965 and included panel models, pickups, and closed vans. The pickup that eventually became the star of the fleet of trucks was the Rampside model, so named for the aircraft-type loading ramp on the passenger side of the pickup bed. It was built in limited numbers and is now one of the most sought-after of American trucks. Total Rampside production numbers only hover around the 17,786 mark after the four years of production. In 1961, out of 13,262 Corvairs of the truck variety, the Rampside numbered 10,787 units out of that total. During

1964, the last year of the truck production, Rampside accounted for only about 900 units. Certainly, this pointed out the drop in popularity that Corvair was having with the American public. It would seem that the pickups were experiencing a severe decline in acceptability. The growing popularity of the Ford series of trucks also added to the eventual disappearance of the Rampside from the scene.

It wasn't always so sad a vision for the Rampside. In fact, things were pretty rosy back in those early days when the rear-engined six-cylinder pickup was part of the General Motors Motorama fleet of futuristic dream cars and trucks. It was the mid-1950s, and the *L'Universal*, which was to become the Corvair Rampside, toured the country that had only gotten hints of the magic European manufacturers were performing with air-cooled, rear-engined vehicles. "Well," figured the American public, "if Volkswagen could make a lightweight carry-all, we could make one even bigger and better." Remember, it was the 1950s, and Americans thought, "Anything they can do, we can do better." Little did anyone realize that the Corvair would eventually stand for everything that went wrong with American auto and truck production.

Chevrolet made different Corvair trucks that would end up considerably "rarer" than the single Rampside (officially designated the FC for "forward control"). These included the double Rampside (no one knows how many were made for sure), and the rarest Corvan model, the eight-door van. Only 150 of these models were built

by Chevrolet, and they are nearly impossible to find in good shape. The Rampside pictured here is from the Hillcrest Cadillac Collection in Beverly Hills. It was with the help of Hillcrest's Jimmy Duffy, Corvair collector Jim Butler of Bakersfield, and radio car show host Len Frank that we were able to scrape together some facts on the Rampside.

Unlike the Econoline, the Rampside was available with a four-speed, almost a necessity in any kind of trucking. The four-speed in the Rampside was essentially the same as that found in the auto, but a bit heavier duty and with a ratio of 4.26:1 for first gear; 2.55:1 for second; 1.68:1 for third; and 1.00:1 for fourth. Reverse has a ratio of 4.27:1, about identical to first. The gears were cut out with hauling a load in mind.

The engine on the Rampside, fully accessible through a removable metal panel on the rear deck of the pickup bed, is identical to the auto's engine, except for the location of the dipstick for oil. It is a six-cylinder in the familiar horizontally opposed Corvair fashion, with dual carburetors and an inventive intake blower that served as a fan for the engine. The light weight of the powerplant (only 332 lbs.) helped it in providing about 80 horsepower at 4,400 rpm from a displacement of 145 cubic inches. A compression ratio of 8:1 and a bore/stroke of 3.43 x 2.60 made the economical motivator a gas saver. Of course, it ran on regular fuel with no smog attachments. Incidentally, the turbo-charged version of the engine, available only on the passenger cars, turned out a claimed 98 horsepower. The fuel tank carried 18.5 gallons of gas, enough for almost 300 miles of

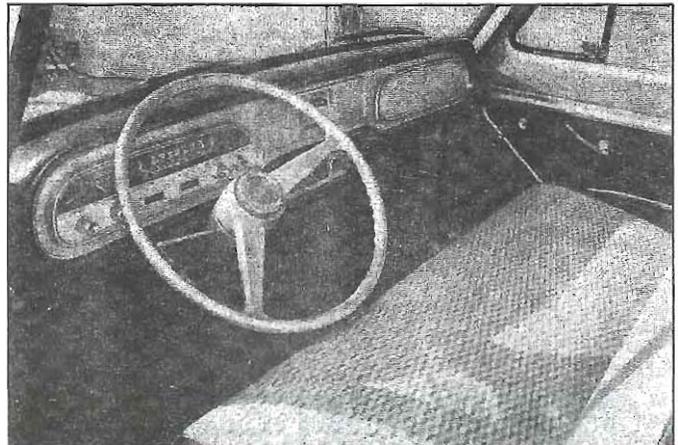
travel.

Dimensionally, the physical exterior of the Rampside provided a good bit of hauling and loading space. There are no hidden underneath storage areas (as had the VW transporter of the 1950s), but you could store 80 cubic feet of items in the bed with a total payload weight of 1,895 lbs. The Rampside is 70 inches wide and has a wheelbase of 95 inches, with an overall length of 179.7 inches. The top height of the three passenger cab is 69 inches. The tailgate is 44.8 in. wide, and the loading side ramp is convenient at 47.5 in. The light 2,715-lb. curbside weight of the Rampside is much less of trucks of today with similar abilities.

The Rampside model, along with all other Corvairs, featured one of the earliest American four-wheel-independent suspension systems that achieved enough success to make it an engineering feat other manufacturers would one day copy.

The crew compartment of the Rampside is functional and can seat three in relative comfort. Heater and defroster were available as options (our rig is so equipped), as well as a radio. There is space behind the front bench seat for some modest storage, proving the "king cab" concept is not such a new idea.

The Rampside, in the heyday of the Corvair, attempted to serve notice to Europe that U.S. manufacturers were willing and able to compete with rear-engined, air-cooled rigs coming out of Europe. The Europeans, as we know, eventually won the war. The sheer uniqueness of the Corvair concept was a tribute, though, to '50s and '60s auto technology. We may never see it again, but it was nice while it lasted.



A thoughtful instrument panel put the gauges in a horizontal cluster before the driver. (David Gooley photo)

This reprint was provided by Ed Thompson of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and is from the Feb. 13, 2003 issue of OLD CARS WEEKLY. Ed was kind enough to send me his issue for inclusion and I must admit, it is a very good magazine. Ed further has informed me that there is an excellent article in the April, 2003 issue of Collectible Automobile, featuring Norbert Laubach's 1963 Rampside in a 4-page spread! Look for this issue, or possibly it could be special ordered through that magazine. THANKS ED!

(Continued from page 3)

Corvair enthusiast's work shop.

Bob continued as Technical Editor for many years until he stated that he thought that he had contributed about as much as he could. But he always remained available to answer questions about Corvairs. I asked him many.

We have a Corvair in our stable that will always remind me of Bob. He had taken me for a long drive in his well known "shorty" Corvair which was an early model that he had shortened to a one seat model which he called "Shorty". It drove and handled well, which it should have since Bob at that time was at some supervisory level in the Chevrolet suspension design department. "When Bob found that I was restoring a 1962 Monza station wagon and I had made mention of the poor brakes on early models he smiled and told me about the modifications he had made on "Shorty". Those features I incorporated in my "62" wagon and they are: Late model suspension system with the brake cylinders bored out to the next normal sized cup {poor memory} and five lug hubs. The rear suspension was modified using the brake system from a Corvair pickup truck. The early model axles were modified for five lug wheels. There were other minor changes but I can not remember them all and was recently planning to call Bob to have him help me remember what I had done on our wagon. But, I never got to make that call. That wagon will always remind me of Bob.

Those of you who knew him better than I did may have a different perception of him but I will always remember him as a very religious person, highly intelligent, a skilled engineer, very truthful, always gentlemanly and considerate of others.. I hope that you will remember him as we do.

## Tom Silvey

Ed. Note: I remember truly reveling in Bob's articles back in the early eighties. Those with complete sets of Corvan-Antics might want to dust them off and re-read some of those articles. They are truly gems. In future issues, I will rerun a few of the better articles for our newer members.



(Continued from page 5)

on their 20-foot kitchen. Wow, these guys take their cooks with them.

After lunch it was back to the set and after 10 more takes we ended that scene. I was glad because the temperatures were warm that day and we were told to keep our jackets on and windows closed.

At this point most of the other cars and drivers went home. Then the director asked the remaining people if we wanted to stay and help move some of the movie owned cars to another street in Harrisburg. I said sure because I wanted to see this part too. We were then dropped off in their parking lot. One of the guys got a big Dodge Monaco and I got a Buick Skylark. None were PA inspected. The turn signals on my car worked by two toggle switches on the dash. The cars looked OK from the outside for filming purposes. It was starting to get dark outside as we followed each other to a street blocked off in Harrisburg for the nighttime scene. This part of the movie again had Winona riding in a taxi along this street at night. Nighttime filming in a moving car requires the placement of many lights inside the moving car. This part was really funny because as the taxi moved up the street, the street lamps would go out because their electric eyes thought it was daytime. At this point the director decided to make this a daytime scene so within 20 minutes they moved in large truck mounted generators, cabling, and portable telescopic lamps. It was really neat to see this small army of technicians go to work turning night into day. All this went in place and was undetected to the eye for filming. After all that the filming went well and by now it was almost 11:00 pm. The Harrisburg shoot was over. I was thanked by the director and got a check in the mail for a 12-hour day in the movies. It was an experience I only would want to do once in a lifetime. The extreme detail that goes into making a movie is extreme.

PS: I waited until the movie went into tape and rented the movie. After all that trouble I found that all the scenes my Van "Neptune" was in were cut out. What a letdown, but that's just "A day in the movies".

## Jesse Wright



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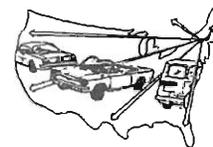
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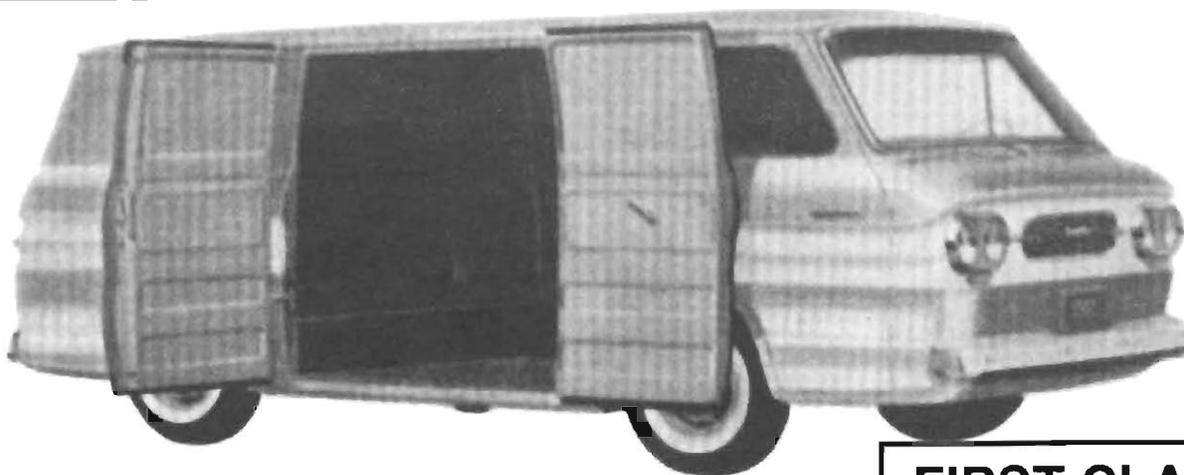
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