

VAIR STREET JOURNAL

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CORVAIR CLUB

MAY/JUN 2009

John Fitch, the man behind the Fitch Sprint

See page 2



Never Forget 09-11-01

Next Meeting

Tuesday, July 28, 2009

Kings Restaurant—Wexford • Route 910 • Off I-79 at Exit 73

Dinner at 6:30 p.m. • Meeting at 7:30 p.m.

John Fitch, the man behind the Fitch Sprint

A COUPLE OF WEEKS ago I was rummaging through some folders in my file cabinet and happened on the catalog that's shown on the front page of this issue of the *Vair Street Journal*.



An April 7, 1965 postmark is on the back cover of this catalog. It came to me a number of years ago from a friend whose twin brother requested it, no doubt, out of curiosity, because of an ad he saw in an automotive publication.

A headline on the inside front cover of the catalog reads, "**The most sophisticated car on the road**", followed by copy that continues, "**If you are among the growing number of experienced enthusiasts who reject the ridiculously overpowered brutes being represented these days as refined automobiles, you will be delighted with qualities of the most sophisticated domestic car on the road, the Corvaire SPRINT**". Sounds like it was exceptional Corvaire. I'd be convinced.

I started thinking about John Fitch, the man. What do I know about him?" Simple answer, "nothing!" So, I googled him. This is what I found:

John Cooper Fitch was born

August 4th 1917 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

John Fitch was an ace during WWII. He piloted a P-51 Mustang and was the first American to shoot down a Nazi jet fighter in 1944.

He was the first American to successfully race automobiles in Europe during the post war era. In the 1950s, he piloted a Mercedes 300SL to come in first in his class at the Mille Miglia road race in Italy. He was beaten to the line by Sterling Moss and Juan Fangio who were driving 300SLRs.

Driving a 300SL he won the Pan American Road Race in 1952. He was a regular driver for both Team Cunningham and Team Mercedes.

He did some consulting work with General Motors, trying to get the Corvette into full racing mode, and worked with them in the early stages of the design for the Corvaire.

Fitch modifications to the 1965 model Corvaire enhanced the stock 140 horsepower Corsa into a more spirited car. Changes in the engine compartment included individual air cleaners for the 4 carburetors,

an upgraded crankcase breather and 3 degrees of additional ignition advance. Advertised horsepower for the Sprint was 155.

He emulated his famous ancestor, John Fitch (1743-1798), inventor of the steam ship, by inventing many safety devices for the race track and highway.

Le Mans Disaster

The Le Mans disaster occurred in 1955 when a racing car involved in an accident broke apart, sending parts flying into the crowd of racing fans. The car's magnesium body exploded in flames, killing the driver (Pierre Levegh) and burning spectators to death. 80 spectators died that day. In terms of human toll, it is the most catastrophic accident in motorsports history.

Fitch has devoted a great deal of effort to the task of increasing the safety of motorsports and driving in general, resulting in his company, Impact Attenuation Inc. His innovations are characterized not only by their effectiveness, but also by their real-world practicality, as affordable and easily installed and maintained solutions.

Safety Innovations

Inspired by sand-filled fuel cans which he used to protect his tent from strafing during the war, he devised the Fitch Barrier system, now ubiquitous on American highways, for installation around fixed objects on racetracks and highways to absorb impact. Typically, Fitch insisted on testing the system himself.

Other impact absorbing systems designed by Fitch are the Fitch Compression Barrier, suited for oval tracks and other such high speed situations with little runoff area. It is

Fitch continues on page 3

May 26, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Officers Present:

- Jim Steigerwaldt, *President*
- Bill Young, *Treasurer*
- Pat Greenwald, *Secretary*

Board Members Present:

- Tim Desmond
- John Gundlach
- Jim Heatherington
- Bob Hieber
- Steve Puskas

The meeting was called to order by President Jim Steigerwaldt.

The minutes of the March meeting were approved as printed in the newsletter.

The treasurer's report showed a balance of \$2590.55.

The 2009 schedule of events was reviewed with some details added.

Don Baker discussed the Time Trials at Beaver Run on May 30th.

Jan Fabyonic (relaying some infor-

mation from Al Friend) and Jim Heatherington discussed the June 7th Founders Tour practice run. The five hour day trip leaves the Four Points Sheraton in Greensburg at 8:30 a.m. The trip through the Butler area includes stops at Wendell August Forge, Grove City Shops, and McConnell's Mills.

Bill Young announced that the trip to Geneva on the Lake, originally scheduled for June 13th has been pushed back to the 3rd week of August.

Jim Heatherington discussed the June 14th trip to the Mountain Playhouse in Jennerstown. The meeting place is the McDonald's on Rte. 30 at Norwin Town Center at 10:00. The cost of the play has increased to \$25. As in past years, we will lunch at the Green Gables before the play.

The topic of the club's participation in the July 4th Canonsburg parade revealed that without compensation there was no interest.

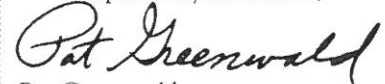
Tim Desmond passed out fliers with details about the Blueberry Cruise on August 1st. Meet at the Krispy Kreme in Cranberry on Rte. 19 at 8:30 for a 9:00 departure. Bring a cooler for the berries, and a hat and sunscreen for the berry picker. Call Tim at 412-761-3926 or 412 952-9753 if you plan to attend.

John Gundlach could locate no information about the day of the car show during the Saxonburg Festival. The dates of the festival are September 12th and 13th. We will have the club picnic at Steve Puskas' new home on the day of the car show.

Bob Hieber said that the Fall Foliage/Covered Bridge Tour is still on for October - later.

Following adjournment, Bob Hieber conducted a short tech session on tools.

Respectively submitted,



Pat Greenwald

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comprised of a set of strong, resilient hollow cylinders, three feet in diameter placed between the guardrail and the wall, gently absorbing the vehicle's energy without bouncing it back onto the track. The Fitch Displaceable Guardrail where more room is available: a guardrail is mounted on skids so that it can slide backwards on impact, gradually capturing the car.

Fitch also engineered the Fitch Driver Capsule, an easy to install seat incorporating a seat back which pivots integral with the seat belt in order to reduce the inertial force experienced by the driver. He later extended the principle with the Fitch Full Driver Capsule, by anchoring the helmet to the seat back to prevent basilar skull fracture and hyper extension of the neck.

In 1998, Fitch received the Kenneth Stonex Award from the Transportation Research Board of the National Academy of Sciences for his lifelong contributions to road-traffic safety. "In all, John Fitch's achievements in road safety throughout the world have spanned four and one-half decades. His lifetime contributions have covered the full spectrum of highway safety - the roadside, the vehicle and the driver. All have resulted in significant reductions in injuries and fatalities on the motor ways of the world," said Transportation Research Board committee chairman John F. Carney III on presenting the award.

Fitch has also developed the Evans Waterless Engine Cooling System, a propylene glycol based cooling system which does not require pressurization; the DeConti

Brake, a liquid-cooled secondary braking system for light trucks, buses and similar vehicles; the Fitch Fuel Catalyst, which reduces the proportion of light chain (C1 - C4) molecules in gasoline, and inhibits oxidation and microorganism growth in both gasoline and diesel fuel; self-leveling automotive suspension systems, for which he has received several patents; the Salisbury Thermo-Syphon Fireplace which uses waste heat to provide convective heating, and the Fitch Cervical Spine Traction Therapy, which allows freedom of movement in bed while continuing to provide tension that relieves disk pressure.

Some of you reading this may already know about John Fitch and his many contributions to safety. Perhaps now, a few more of us know more than just his name.

The Trip to Jennerstown

Many thanks to Suzanne Heatherington for providing the copy in this article and thanks also to Pat Greenwald for the photos

On Sunday June 14, Jim Heatherington led a group to Jennerstown for lunch at the Green Gables Restaurant and a matinee performance of the play "I'll Never Be Hungry Again," a send-up of the novel *Gone with the Wind*. This was a joint event with members of the Western PA Corvair Club and the Western Region Model A Club. The turnout was great!

The day began at McDonald's in Norwin Town Center. Six Corvairs and

six Model A's started out over the countryside of Westmoreland County in a beautiful drive through Herminie, Waltz Mills, Ruffs Dale, and Somerset before climbing the mountain to Jennerstown.

Following lunch, many strolled around the beautiful grounds before taking their seats for the play. This musical parody of *GWTW* begins when a college student falls asleep while cramming for a final. In a hilarious dream-turned-nightmare, he awakes in a reality far

scariet than the exam, as he is inside the story itself with characters like 'Starlett' O'Hara and 'Ghastley' Wilkes.

The trip, the lunch and the play made for a grand day out.

Awaiting the play:

- 1 Vince & Louise Duva, Jim Heatherington and Don Cekus
- 2 Jim Heatherington, and Pat Greenwald
- 3 Louise Duva and Mary Ellen Cekus
- 4 Bob & Polly Tedesco, Bob & Donna Hieber, Stephen Puskas and Vince Duva



COMING UP

BLUEBERRY CRUISE

Saturday, August 1, 2009**Meet at Krispy Kreme Cranberry Rte. 19 at 8:30 a.m.
Leave at 9:00 a.m. Sharp**

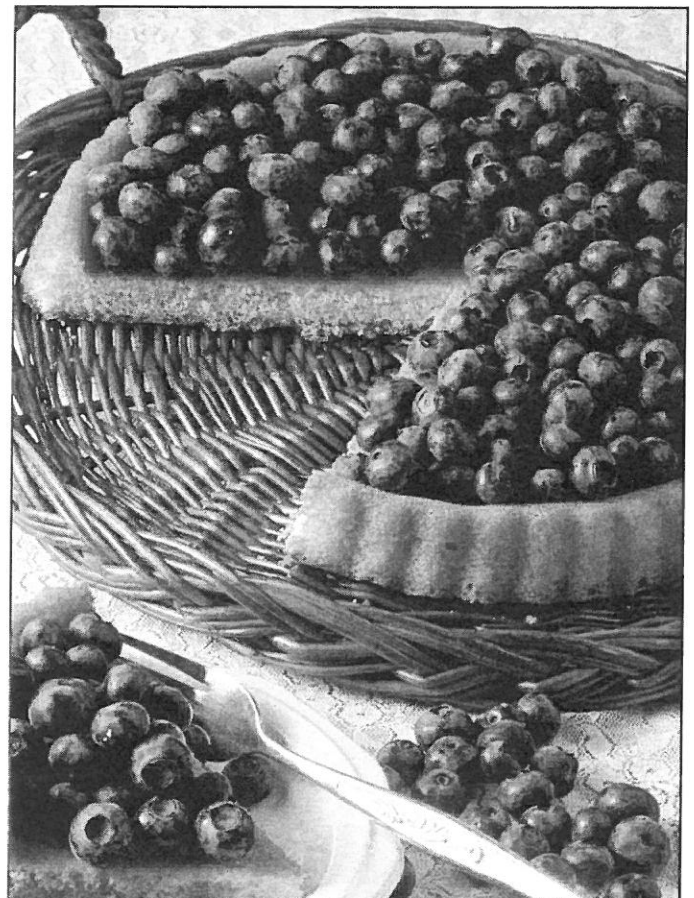
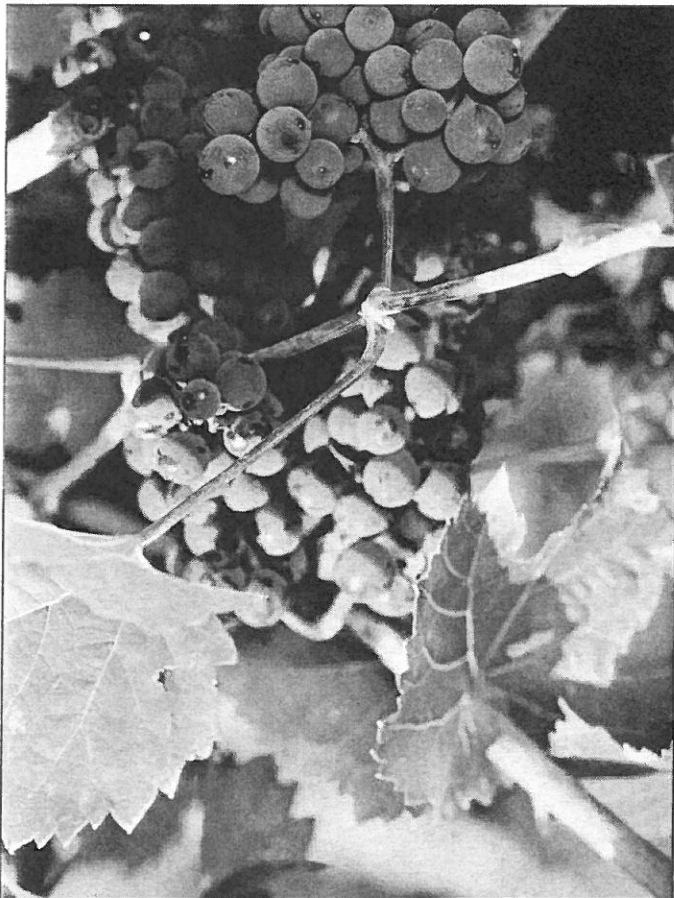
We'll be traveling Rte. 19 north from our departure point all the way to Cambridge Springs, then onto Rte. 99 to Edinboro. From Edinboro we travel four miles to Hulings' Blueberry Farm

Lunch is undecided at the moment, but we'll be sure to pick something nice. Plan to bring a cooler to keep your blueber-

ries cool on the way home. Don't forget to wear a good sun hat and sunscreen.

If you would like to come along, please call us at 412-761-3926 or my cell phone 412-952-9753. Blueberries are wonderful!

Jim & Michele Desmond



COMING UP

Each summer I receive a flyer from Idlewild Park, like the one shown here.

Here's the deal folks: drive your Corvair to the park from July 20th thru the 24th and have FREE admission to everything for you and a guest.

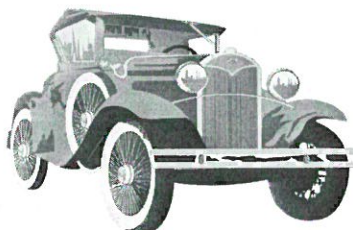
You only pay for food. Your Corvair is on display all day, you can parade it at 7:00 p.m. and get a nice dash plaque.

Come on, spend a great day at a wonderful park!

Spread the Word and Join the FUN--



58th Old Fashioned Days
Monday, July 20 - Friday, July 24, 2009



WPXI
TV-11

- Antique/Classic Car Show
- Vehicle Parade 7:00 PM

You're invited to roll out your antique or classic vehicle and join us for a day of FUN during our 58th Old Fashioned Days Celebration!

The highlight of the five-day event is our daily car show and parade. Antique and classic vehicles will be on display in Parking Area "C". Directions to the display area will be clearly marked and will be staffed with Idlewild attendants. *A special note to our street rod participants:* It is necessary to cross (6) three inch speed bumps before entering the display area. We will end each day with an evening parade through the park. The parade will start promptly at 7:00 PM and is *limited to the first 125 vehicles* per day. Each parade entrant will receive a commemorative plaque in appreciation for attendance.

For admittance, vehicles must be in quality condition, at least 15 years old and/or registered as an antique or classic. Vehicles not meeting these standards will not be permitted to participate. We ask that you enter Idlewild's main entrance (gates open at 10:30 AM) and proceed to Gate No. 2 to register your vehicle. Free admission will be limited to two per vehicle and includes park rides and attractions. Additional family members will receive \$6.00 off our \$28.99 admission with a donation of a canned food item. Donations benefit the Salvation Army Food Bank.

We'll see you soon!

As a reminder... Don't Miss Idlewild's 3rd Annual
HallowBoo! Cruise & Rod Run
September 26 & 27
"It's the most Un-BOO-lievable FUN
You'll ever have in your car!"



Questions? Contact Idlewild Group Sales: 724-238-6784 (Kathy, Jodi or Patti)
visit Idlewild at idlewild.com

	NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	E-MAIL
1	Adamson , Richard & Doris	251 Lilac Drive, Monroeville, PA 15146	412-372-3452	
2	Artzberger , Bill	305 Golf Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15229	412-364-6842	BILLA305@comcast.net
3	Bachman , Jack & Joyce	402 Elfinwild Lane, Glenshaw, PA 15116	412-486-2478	quebapa@aol.com
4	Baker , Don & Joanne	12461 Larimer Avenue, North Huntingdon, PA 15642	724-863-3770	dcbakerscca@yahoo.com
5	Biddington , William & Carol	1722 Lexington Avenue, Uniontown, PA 15401	724-455-1826	wbiddington@atlanticbb.net
6	Brier , Dick & Carol	493 Sleepy Hollow Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228	412-563-4591	
7	Brill , Jean	4500 Oakhurst Blvd., Harrisburg, PA 17110	717-526-4523	
8	Buccigrossi , Emerick	1502 Fernledge Drive, Allison Park, PA 15101	412-486-7691	ebuccigrossi@comcast.net
9	Bucklew , David & Linda	414 W. Newcastle Street, Zelienople, PA 16063	724-452-5735	dbucklew1@verizon.net
10	Cekus , Don & Mary Ellen	197 Browns Hill Road, Valencia, PA 16059	724-903-0990 C:412-952-3190	corsa1@zoominternet.net
11	Cekus , Dwayne & Joy	108 Prosser Drive, Monongahela, PA 15063	724-258-7778 C:412-296-0294	cekus@verizon.net
12	Cekus , Ken & Toots	28 Center Avenue, Monongahela, PA 15063	724-258-8514	onecorvair@yahoo.com
13	Clapper , Ed & Wendy	315 Western Avenue, Beaver PA 15009-1448	724-375-1461	
14	Costantino , John & Clare	305 3rd Street, Freeport, PA 16229-1141	724-295-2675	
15	Dandois , Dick & Marie	11844 Route 286 Hwy W., Homer City, PA 15748-7803	724-726-5606	dindy6@verizon.net
16	Desmond , Tim & Michelle	107 Hivue Lane, Pittsburgh, PA 15237	412-761-3926	TDES123@netzero.com
17	Duva , Vincent & Louise	195 Browns Hill Road, Valencia, PA 16059	724-898-1604	
18	Fabyonic , Dave & Janice	387 Sierra Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15239	724-327-7361	davidfab@usa.net
19	Fabyonic , David, Jr. & Melisa	313 Oak Wood Circle, McDonald, PA 15057	412-2574554	
20	Friend , Al & Carole	6000 Great Oaks Drive, Export, PA 15632	C: 724-433-0839	a.c.friend@comcast.net
21	Goehring , Earl & Diane	140 Whitestown Road, Harmony, PA 16037	724-452-8823	
22	Greenwald , Pat	415 Crestview Drive, Plum, PA 15239	412-795-5719	pggreen233@netzero.net
23	Gundlach , John, Gayle & Laura	228 McKay Road, Saxonburg, PA 16056	724-352-4205	
24	Hackl , George & Marlene	420 , Hulton Road, New Kensington, PA 15068	724-224-0482	
25	Hamlin , Charlotte	2207 Arbor Glen Court, Sun City Center, FL 33573	813-633-6684	hamlinchar@aol.com
26	Heatherington , Jim & Suzanne	128 Sharp Road, White Oak, PA 15131	412-672-0914	suzanne@heatherington.com
27	Hieber , Bob & Donna	1679 Brodhead Road, RR3, Moon Twp, PA 15108	724-457-9712	bob@thehiebers.com
28	Jones , Judy	3205 Bell Air Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15227	412-882-2109	wandjones@yahoo.com
29	Kreisel , Curt & Elana	1141 Sunrise Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15243	412-561-1845	curl.kreisel@wolterskluwer.com
30	Lucas , Charles & Sarah	236 W. Marigold Street, Munhall, PA 15120-2233	412-462-6735	chaslucas@gmail.com
31	Madden , Jim & Heidi	3045 Mt. Troy Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15212	412-321-1654	triximadden@comcast.net
32	Matenkosky , Walter & Susan	702 Spring Street, Latrobe, PA 15650	724-537-8922	wmatenkosky@hotmail.com
33	McDonald , Paul & Joyce	258 Evans City Road, Butler, PA 16001-2711	724-287-5671	jam40258@zoominternet.net
34	Mims , Donna Mae	503 Hunters Path Road, Unit 21, Bridgeville, PA 15017	412-221-3257	
35	Morgan , Robert & Margaret	344 Ridge Road, New Brighton, PA 15066	724-846-6040	
36	Puskas , Stephen	130 Alana Drive, Saxonburg, PA 16056 (Temporary)	724-352-4294	Pusk8@aol.com
37	Rising , Connie	155 Ben Franklin Road N., Indiana, PA 15701	724-465-4146	
38	Schifano , Charlie & Connie	223 Blackridge Drive, Greensburg, PA 15601	724-832-7498	
39	Shearer , Ralph & Joanne	30 Clover Drive, Latrobe, PA 15650	724-539-8645	
40	Steigerwaldt James & Diane	506 Quail Drive, Cranberry Twp, PA 16066-4074	724-776-0935	Jimstg@zbzoom.net
41	Sweet , John & Charlotte	1264 Walnut Street, Stoneboro, PA 16153	724-376-4335	jasvair@certainty.net
42	Tedesco , Bob & Polly	4741 Curry Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15236	412-881-8577 C: 614-496-4000	bptedesco@aol.com
43	Tyger , John, & Barb	8399 Rte 954 Hwy. N., Creekside, PA 15732	724-397-2043	jtyger@directv.net
44	Walter , Lester	100 Thompson Lane South, North Huntingdon, PA 15642	724-863-8437	timerles@aol.com
45	Watkins , Kerry & Linda	209-1/2 S. Third Street, Youngwood, PA 15697	724-925-1962	
46	Wilson , Gregory	508 Bigham Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15211	412-481-6864	
47	Yobst , Robert & Rosalie	518 Brookdale Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15215	412-963-9943	
48	Young , Bill & Dana	126 Pennsylvania Avenue, Bridgeville, PA 15017	412-220-3896 C: 412-260-8359	william.h.young@verizon.net

If you would like to correct or update your listing, please forward the correct information to:

Charles J. Lucas • 236 W. Marigold Street • Munhall, PA 15120-2233 • or phone: 412-462-6735 • or e-mail: chaslucas@gmail.com

COMING UP

Dwayne Cekus sent me an e-mail reminder about the:

Victory Hill Car Show

Saturday, August 29, 2009
from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
at the Victory Hill Social Center
25 Jones Lane
Monongahela, PA



158
Western Pennsylvania
Corvair Club
236 W. Marigold Street
Munhall, PA 15120



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
CORVAIR CLUB