

# Corvairs of New Mexico Standing Award

## The Ike Meissner Award

As approved the Corvairs of New Mexico Board of Directors, October 20, 2004, and  
As re-established by the Corvairs of New Mexico Board of Directors, July 16, 2014.

The following is courtesy of Past President Sylvan Zuercher:

*In Memoriam John A. Meissner*

*Sylvan Zuercher*

*“Blessed are those with the Corvair hobby, for they shall be allowed to get dirty.”*

*Ike wrote those word in an article for our club newsletter entitled “Hints – Kinks – Sense and Nonsense.”*

*Ike was as unique to our club as is the Corvair.*

*He was enthusiastic in his approach to club activities, club members, Corvair owners and to finding answers to Corvair car problems. He encouraged many to keep, preserve and maintain his favorite car. This he did with advice, trading or giving of parts and by sharing his knowledge.*

*He attended meetings and club activities under distance and weather conditions and later his own physical condition that would have kept most of the other members at home. Ike arrived on many a meeting night after a session with dialysis when the meeting was nearly over, to share what he could and I am sure for the fellowship of the members. I feel that his overall outlook on life was the reason for such enthusiasm.*

*Ike was the author of many articles about the Corvair, and several were published by CORSA. His sense of humor showed in these articles, such as his account of Clyde and the 500. This was the story of his daily drive from Santa Fe to Los Alamos and the competition he was getting from a driver going the same route.*

*Ike’s determination was evident several years ago during a Corvair fun run near Montrose, Colorado. It seems he misread or missed some directions and became somewhat lost. Eventually he was found, but upon learning he was close to the finish line, he declined to be led there, saying that he would find the way.*

*Ike’s approach to Corvairs seems to have been: If it can be fixed or some part can be made to work better, I’ll find the way to do it.*

*While visiting Ike at the hospital two weeks ago, he told me that he just had to find a way to get better. Maybe Ike found his way.*

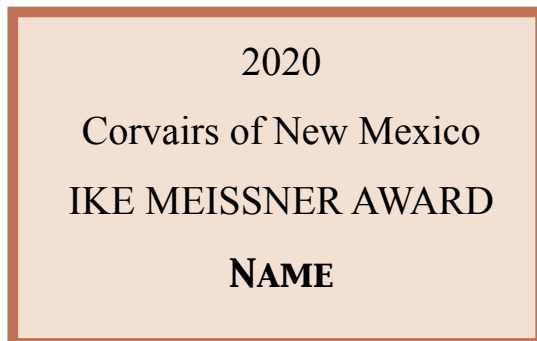
*Blessed are we of the Corvair hobby who were privileged to know you and to fellowship with you.*

### The IKE MEISSNER AWARD - Established 1987

01. 1987 Dec 2	Bill Hector	... 2002 (Change from December to March)
02. 1988 Dec 7	Jerry Goffe	16. 2003 Mar 9 Anne Mae Gold
03. 1989 Dec 6	LeRoy Rogers	17. 2004 Mar 27 Larry Blair
04. 1990 Dec 5	Jim Pittman	18. 2005 Mar 26 Robert Gold
05. 1991 Dec 4	Sylvan Zuercher	19. 2006 Mar 18 Tarmo Sutt
06. 1992 Dec 2	Bill Reider	20. 2007 Mar 10 Dave Huntoon
07. 1993 Dec 1	Steve Gongora	21. 2008 Mar 15 Heula Pittman
08. 1994 Dec 7	Michael Stickler	22. 2009 Mar 7 Ray Trujillo
09. 1995 Dec 9	Charles Vertrees	23. 2010 Mar 21 Ruth Boydston
10. 1996 Dec 7	Debbie Pleau	24. 2011 Mar 6 Brenda Stickler
11. 1997 Dec 6	Mark Domzalski	25. 2015 Mar 21 Larry Yoffee
12. 1998 Dec 6	Wendell Walker	26. 2016 Mar 12 Vickie Hall
13. 1999 Dec 5	Dennis Pleau	27. 2017 Mar 11 Pat Hall
14. 2000 Dec 3	Rita Gongora	28. 2018 Mar 10 John Wiker
15. 2001 Dec 2	Oliver Scheflow	29. 2019 Mar 16 Terry Price

The Ike Meissner Award is presented annually to a Corvairs of New Mexico (CNM) member, in good standing who best exemplifies a spirit of camaraderie and fellowship, in the Corvair realm, with other CNM members and other Corvair enthusiasts.

To commemorate the occasion, the recipient shall be awarded a plaque suitable for prominent display. The award shall read:



The selection committee for the awards shall be comprised of three CNM members appointed by the CNM President, within two months of the last presentation, who will work with and report to the CNM Vice-President. It is recommended that at least two of the three members be immediate past award recipients. It is preferable for the last three immediate recipients to serve on the selection committee.

The CNM Vice-President shall achieve approval of the award by concurrence with a quorum of the officers of CNM. (i.e., Three of the four CNM officers must concur to approve the award.)

Guidelines for consideration for the Ike Meissner Award, in order of priority, shall be:

1. Attend meetings and plan, coordinate or organize CNM activities or events
2. Share Corvair knowledge, contribute technical information and tips to the CNM newsletter or other CORSA publications.
3. Encourage owners to preserve, maintain and share in the lore of the Corvair.
4. Serve in CNM as a committee person, chair, director and/or officer.
5. Attend an official CORSA event and/or serve with CORSA in an officially recognized capacity.
6. Recruit at least one new member.

The presentation of the Ike Meissner Award shall be made at the annual CNM Anniversary Banquet or at a time and place designated by the CNM President. The presentation shall be made by the CNM Vice President or an alternate designated by the CNM President.

The content of the oral award presentation shall be scripted in advance and have achieved concurrence of the Ike Meissner Award Committee and the CNM Vice President or an alternate designated by the CNM President.

The oral award presentation and engraved plaque shall be prepared no later than one week prior to the annual CNM Anniversary Banquet or the otherwise designated time and place.

# Ike Meissner Award Nomination

The Ike Meissner Award is presented annually to a Corvairs of New Mexico (CNM) member, in good standing who best exemplifies a spirit of camaraderie and fellowship, in the Corvair realm, with other CNM members and other Corvair enthusiasts.

*This form is confidential. To avoid disappointment, do not divulge to or otherwise advise the nominee of this action.*

This form shall be submitted to the CNM Vice President or an alternate appointed and designated by the CNM President.

**This form will be distributed in the January issue of the Enchanted Corvairs Newsletter and at the January Membership Meeting.**

**The DEADLINE for submission of this completed nomination form shall be NO LATER THAN adjournment of the February Membership Meeting or as otherwise designated by the CNM President.** Any exceptions to this deadline shall be made by agreement between the CNM Vice President or the appointed alternate and the CNM President.

**To the Ike Meissner Award Committee:**

It is a pleasure to submit the following Corvairs of New Mexico member to be considered for the Ike Meissner Award.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Has been a CNM member since: \_\_\_\_\_ Has been a CORSA member since: \_\_\_\_\_

Has served as a CNM official, chair or leader: Y  N  Approximate years: \_\_\_\_\_

Has promoted the Corvair and Corvair hobby: Y  N  Has helped other people: Y  N

Briefly describe the merits of this member and nomination: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of this nomination: \_\_\_\_\_ Author of this nomination: \_\_\_\_\_

## CLYDE AND THE 500 Ike Meissner

There's this race driver, Clyde. His real name probably isn't Clyde, but I call him Clyde. All race drivers like him should be called Clyde. He may be a businessman, an artist, or a time-clock repairman, but behind the wheel of his Detroit chariot he is Clyde. The sneer, the squinted eyes, the heavy foot, the gnashing teeth, the hollow laugh you can see and feel -- but never hear -- when he wins, would put the Red Baron himself to shame. And he does win. Regularly. Every morning like clockwork. And he is used to winning; or was -- up until the time of the 500.

You see, Clyde does his racing on the highway. And every driver going his way is his competition, whether they know it or not. But precious many of them are aware of it, and this is where Clyde shines. Because only Clyde can be the first and best.

I used to drive a Chevy. A '66 Bel-Air coupe with the big 250 inch engine and Powerglide transmission. And I raced Clyde. Neither of us broke any laws. That was part of the game. To take an idiot chance or break a law was an automatic disqualification from the morning race. And there were always plenty of contenders around who could signal their crushing decision by a mere toot of the horn -- no possibility of being unobserved in a transgression. Clyde never made any mistakes. The competition and referees alike always gave him a clean, unblemished slate. He didn't have to cheat. He had POWER.

Clyde had over 400 cubes in his Pontiac LeMans. It was new, or nearly new. A big, powerful expanse of metal and glass from which he could see and easily be seen sneering and gloating as he passed the proletarian VW's and Ramblers. But one day each week I dared to race Clyde. I lost as regularly as he won, but I derived some satisfaction from the fact that my obviously inferior machine could occasionally give him a close second.

That was because Clyde was an unsophisticated race driver. He was basically honest, but he could only understand power. A little pressure on the correct pedal and his competition would fade. I had honed my Chevy driving technique to a fine edge. And after driving the same stretch of highway for 8 years, I knew every bump in it.

The race began every Tuesday morning in Santa Fe at 7:40. Clyde would wait for me at the parking lot next to the last traffic light on the way out of town. As I passed, he would pull out. Our finish line was the Los Alamos county boundary sign 36 miles west. We both worked in Los Alamos and were due there at 8:00. We always left a little late, which eliminated many of the leisurely drivers and sort of raised our stakes. The road was four-lane divided for the first eighteen miles, two-lane for the next six miles and three-lane undivided (two lanes uphill) for the last twelve miles. It started out at 7,000 feet in Santa Fe and gradually dropped to 5,300 feet at the point where the two-lane ended and it crossed the Rio Grande on a narrow bridge. From there it climbed to the finish line at 7,300 feet, although most of the twisting climb was in the last five miles.

That's where driving technique and knowledge of the road really paid off for me. The whole race was kind of like a pin-ball machine with all the balls going at once and me in control of only one. That last five mile section was posted at 50 and 60 MPH, but the highway engineer who did the posting never saw that stretch of road, much less drove it. I think his decision was made by looking at a map and then figuring how many cows would likely wander across it. Anyway, most drivers would do all of 45 with nobody else in sight. The center uphill passing lane was almost never used.

The first part of the race was usually unexciting. Clyde and I were both bound by the 75 MPH speed limit and except for minor jockeying with slightly slower

vehicles, we didn't force each other's position on the four-lane. We just kept each other in sight. The narrow two-lane part was through rolling country and was posted 65 MPH. Clyde plainly had the advantage here and would easily put distance between us with his passing power. When we crossed the Rio Grande the fun began, because all his power wouldn't do a thing toward keeping him on a road that was so winding and climbing. I would just floor it and pay attention to steering, braking and the other traffic. The hill pretty well took care of my speed problems. Usually I was very close when Clyde crossed the county line. He always won -- but then, that was before the 500.

I have owned a Greenbrier since 1961 when they were first made. I wanted a station-wagon vehicle at the time, and the roomiest one I could find was the VW bus. Woefully underpowered. The Greenbrier was more of what I wanted, so I bought it and it has served me well for over 250,000 miles. So when I drove past that lemon lot and saw the Corvair coupe sitting there I said to myself, "Why not? Maybe I'll like it as much as the Greenbrier."

It was a '65 3-speed coupe. Nothing special except maybe the 110 engine. The faded blue paint was showing brown undercoat in a few places and the right door was an off-color green, which told the story of a junkyard replacement. The body was sound; no rust, no dings. The odometer had 73,000 miles showing, but was broken. The salesman said \$225, and then glanced at my Chevy and added that the Corvair would get me 25 MPG. OK; so I drove it, and loved it, and offered him \$200 for it. And he took it. It was my 1965 Corvair 500 coupe, and at that moment, although he didn't know it, Clyde had had it!

It was a Tuesday night that I had bought my 500. That gave me a full week of fun getting used to it before my next encounter with

## CLYDE AND THE 500 Ike Meissner

Clyde. At the time I thought seriously of leaving the Bel-Air barge with the car shark and then thought about what the wife would say (it was her car) and kept it. However, it wasn't long before she was begging me to sell it and get her a Corvair, which I did. But that's another story.

As I said, I had a full week before the next contest to do all those things a fellow does with a new car. I changed the oil. I changed the filters. I lubed the chassis and transaxle. I fixed the speedometer. I ordered a '65 shop manual from Helm. And although its appearance didn't change much, I even ran it through the carwash. But most of all, I drove it. After you've been driving a boat for years, you really appreciate a car that you "put on" instead of "get into." And I appreciated it -- three tankfuls worth.

Next Tuesday morning I had a problem. Clyde didn't recognize me. I drove around the block, pulled in beside him, honked, waved at him and then pointed toward the highway. He made me extremely mad by getting out and laughing. Then with a deep bow he motioned me toward the road. I was really going to enjoy winning this one!

Clyde didn't waste any time getting as far ahead of me as he possibly could. By the time I crossed the Rio Grande bridge and started uphill, I could only catch an occasional glimpse of him on curves. No matter. I had almost caught up with him many times before like this, and I was sure I could do it this time.

I did better. By the time we reached the turnoff to Espanola I was chomping at his heels. That was the first time I'd ever taken that stretch of road at the 60 MPH limit. But up ahead was a slow truck which was forcing every car into the center lane to pass. Then away up the line I saw my break in the making. We

were on a curve and I could see that someone had overestimated the speed of the truck, and approaching it too fast from the rear, had jammed on his brakes. The ripple would pass on down the line, and Clyde, unless he was a better driver than I thought, would hit his brakes too. I waited. My prediction was good. Clyde panicked when the car in front of him slowed. He hit his brakes. I didn't. I simply spun the 500's wheel to the left and passed him. I had been checking to my left rear and knew it was clear. Clyde lumbered out and followed me. I could tell he was fuming. I got to the truck and the fellow to my right, seeing that I was already in passing form, held back and let me go on past the truck. Clyde was right on my tail.

As I went on past, I gave a little too much room to the truck and Clyde ducked in and passed me on the right. He was using his power to the hilt. But it was the last time he could use it. The road ahead was clear and I could see what I had been waiting for -- the steeply climbing "S"-curves leading up to the first level of Los Alamos mesas.

Although the speed limit was officially 50, the yellow curve sign said "slow" and suggested a much milder 25 for the curves. By using both lanes and throttling back, Clyde rounded the first curve at 35, tires wailing. I stayed in the outside lane and handily cleared the curve at a legal 50. By the time we reached the second curve, Clyde couldn't swing out to use both lanes; I was right beside him. I passed him on the curve and could see the look of astonishment on his face -- being passed by a half-pint car in the outside lane and whose tires didn't even complain!

From then on it was uphill curves and I got further and further ahead. I was so gleeful when the county-line whistled past and Clyde was 1/4-mile behind, that I almost drove into the canyon.

The following week it was the same story, and the week after that. The following weeks, Clyde didn't show up at our Santa Fe meeting place. I wondered a lot about that during the following months. I engaged a few other Clyde-types on the highway and won -- but the thrill was gone.

I spent the time improving my 500. I put on HD shocks, radial tires, dual exhausts and carb venting modifications so I could take those curves even faster. I spent a week cussing a '66 4-speed transaxle into the 500 even though it was 1-1/2 inches longer and took a torch to make it fit. All these things worked beautifully, but each time the thrill would fade and I was soon looking for something else.

Then one Sunday morning I saw an ad in the paper about a '66 Corsa for sale. The ad said it was sound and free of rust and the first offer over \$400 could take it. I grabbed my checkbook and left, muttering something to the wife about testing a sticky lifter.

I drove to the listed address, but I could see I wasn't the first comer. Did I have enough in the checking account to up the bid and get it anyway? There were two people standing by the Corsa, obviously talking about it. The prospective buyer's car was parked in front of it. I looked again. The car was a nearly new Pontiac LeMans -- the buyer was Clyde!

I have a funny feeling that I'll see him again next Tuesday morning, and that I'll be in trouble. I think I'll change his name. From now on, he'll be "The Black Knight." I, of course, will be the "White" one.

### FOOTNOTE:

Not all of the above story is true. Just most of it. And out of consideration for Clyde I must say that he is really a fine fellow. I got him to join CORSA.

-Ike

## I CAN FIX ANYTHING (ALMOST!) Ike Meissner

Because I've got quite a few Corvairs of my own (fifteen) I have, over the years, developed a local reputation of knowing how to fix them and keep them running. Therefore I was not surprised when one day I received a call from a fellow Corvair owner some forty miles away asking me to fix his Corsa. What was unusual was his story, which I will relate to you.

He had bought his Corsa used several years before with an unknown number of miles on it. The speedometer cable had been broken "for a long time" according to the previous owner. But the car had given him dependable service and seldom failed him until now. It seems that he had lent his car to a friend to drive to Santa Fe to get groceries. His friend was indeed a friendly fellow and because the majority of New Mexico is wide open spaces and rides are few and far between, he picked up a hitchhiking Indian as he drove through the neighboring reservation. No harm in that -- except that it was many minutes and several miles later before it became plain that the Indian really wanted to go the other direction!

Not wanting to immediately retrace his path and feeling somewhat obligated to the Indian, he made it understood that he would take the Indian where he wanted to go as soon as his shopping was done. The Indian settled back into the seat with a disgruntled expression and was obviously not happy with the idea.

On getting back toward the reservation, the Indian directed the car down a

dirt side road and told the driver to stop in front of one particularly large and colorful hogan. He told the driver that this was the house of the tribal medicine man and that he should wait there for a few minutes. Presently he emerged from the hogan with the medicine man who waved a feathered staff at the car and chanted something in the local dialect. The hitchhiker then told the driver that because of his ineptness the medicine man had been told to put a hex on the car. To make a long story short -- the Corsa never made it back to the highway! And now I was being asked to fix it.

I've lived in New Mexico 22 years and I'm a lot less skeptical about such things as Indian magic than I used to be. So, more out of curiosity than anything else, I accepted the job.

I first went to look at the car. It had been a white 1965 Corsa. I say "had been" because at one time it must actually have been white. Too many years of being outdoors in the New Mexico sun and wind had taken a fierce toll of the finish. It was pitted and almost sandblasted off in front. The glass on the driver's side was permanently frosted. Some stuffing was leaking out of the back of the rear seat and the dash looked like a misplaced asphalt plant. Oil and dirt everywhere. Solid grunge.

While towing it on the way home I stopped at an auto store and bought two cans of gunk and then washed the top layer off at a do-it-yourself carwash. By the time I got

down to where I could see the ignition wiring the dirt had plugged up the drains in the stall. I tipped the attendant an extra quarter and towed on home.

The interior of the engine was equally unbelievable. It had been torn down once before and improperly reassembled. Broken piston rings, backwards pushrods, etc. The spark plug wiring had cracked insulation. The plugs themselves were in terrible shape -- with electrodes worn down to mere nubbins. The rubbing block on the points was worn away and the secondary carburetor bowls were full of some stuff that resembled old coffee grounds. The fuel filters looked as if they'd been used to strain plum pudding. After going through that engine I'm convinced that the medicine man's magic didn't have to be very strong -- it only had to be strong enough to cancel out the prayer that had kept it running.

But a lot of elbow grease and about \$100.00 worth of parts later, it ran just fine. I drove it back to the owner who immediately embarked on a trip to Florida with it. I'm glad he had such confidence in my work -- I would have been a little jittery about the idea.

A month or so later he called me up to let me know that the car was still running great and that he was having it painted and reupholstered.

As an aside, he asked me how I was able to get rid of the medicine man's hex. I told him I used one of my very special tools for that -- a hex wrench.