



The Valve Tapper March-April 2011

Director's Message

I don't have any profound words to start my first Director's Message, but I would like to remind readers that the Free State Region has, for about 37 years, provided Chevrolet enthusiasts with opportunities too numerous to count to preserve Chevrolet history and have fun doing it. I hope all our members will help that mission continue.

At our Officers Installation and Covered Dish Dinner on February 27, I expressed our appreciation to my predecessor, Dave Boyer, and his patient wife, Ginny, and our semi-retiring Secretary/Newsletter Editor, Dottie Miller, who surely holds the VCCA record for not only length of service in that important position, but also doing a wonderful job. With only a typewriter, copier and her talent, she produced a newsletter I always felt compelled to open and read the moment it arrived, no matter how many other demands there were on my time. We thank Jack Anderson for assuming this responsibility.

My first error as Director (get used to them; they're my specialty!) was to momentarily forget to acknowledge the many contributions of our Treasurer, Bill Scott, who does so much more than keep the books. His talent and dedication are *awesome!*

I hope members will take the opportunity to enjoy several upcoming events. The first of these will be our **May 14, 2011** tour to the Radio & TV Museum in Bowie. Gary and Ginetta Schlee are arranging it. I guarantee a visit there will bring back many memories and you'll learn a lot. We'll be sending registration details shortly.

Other upcoming events include the Sugarloaf Region AACA Parts Meet at the Frederick Fairgrounds on **March 25-26**. On **April 1-2**, the VCCA Old Dominion Region will sponsor a tour to nearby Pennsylvania and Delaware, including visits to a remarkable collection of Stanley Steamers and Packards housed at the estate of a former Stanley/Packard dealer, the world famous Longwood Gardens and the Herr potato chip factory. Jack has included information with this issue of *The Valve Tapper*.

Other dates to reserve are the 100th Anniversary of Chevrolet celebration in Flint, MI **July 17-23, 2011**. I'm pleased several of our members are planning to attend. Bob Wilhelm (410-252-3975) and I have raffle tickets that the VCCA is selling to support the Meet; there will be a \$4,000 1st place winner, two \$1000 2nd place winners, and three \$500 winners. If you would like to buy some, please contact either of us. On **August 14, 2011**, along with our friends from the Buick Owners of Maryland, we will sponsor our annual show at Meadowood Park in Lutherville. Meanwhile, the salt is finally disappearing from the roads, so it is time to get the old Chevys revving and out! Best wishes, Franklin Gage

From the Desk of your editor



It's hard to believe that after almost 37 years, someone else is actually composing and preparing *The Valve Tapper* for mailing and, a first, for emailing. From the beginning, Dottie Miller worked tirelessly to create one of the finest club newsletters not only in the VCCA, but in any antique automobile club. Her devotion and unselfish commitment to the Free State Region has been the one common thread throughout the history of our club. Dottie's organizational skills and willingness to assume responsibility for countless club functions, including this publication, have been of immense importance in sustaining the organization since its founding in 1974. She kept us all well informed and provided outstanding support and assistance to the many club Directors with whom she served (including yours truly). In short, the Free State Region owes a huge debt of gratitude to this fine lady for her years of service. Now it's her turn to sit back and enjoy "retirement" as our Secretary and Newsletter Editor. God bless you, Dottie, and thank you for all you've done for the Free State Region, for many of us individually and for me personally.

Now what do I do?! When Dottie announced her intention to step down and turn this job over to someone else, I hesitatingly volunteered knowing that I'd have an exceptionally hard act to follow. So please bear with me as I take the baton from her capable hands, sit down at the keyboard, and attempt to keep this publication going.

We're going to try a few new things. As announced at the end of 2010, we will now publish *The Valve Tapper* every other month. The biggest change is that this newsletter will be emailed to those members who have email accounts. All other members will get *The Valve Tapper* in their mailboxes. However, for any member who has an email account, but would prefer a hard copy, we will mail it. Because I'm writing this from my home computer, I will be able to insert color photographs and other graphics electronically. But there's one thing that will not change: I need articles from you, the members! Please send me stories about your cars and trucks, about any tours you've taken, any shows or cruise-ins you've attended, or about you and your family as it relates to the hobby. I'll try to keep you informed and entertained. In turn, please keep me fed with material for publication!



Dateline: Saturday, January 29, 2011. Your roving reporter sighted a brand new 2012 Chevrolet Volt hybrid electric car in the driveway at Bill Scott's home in Phoenix, Maryland. Member Mike Natale ordered this car last summer right after they were introduced to the public. His Volt is the 56th unit to roll off the assembly line. So if it looks like Mike is glowing a little more than usual, it's not just because he's happy to have a new car!

2011—2012 Free State Region VCCA Officers	
Director: <i>Franklin Gage (703-869-8434; f.gage@hotmail.com)</i>	Assistant Director: <i>Open</i>
Treasurer and Membership Secretary: <i>Bill Scott (410-527-0953; wilomae@comcast.net)</i>	Recording Secretary: <i>Open</i>
Corresponding Secretary/Newsletter Editor: <i>Jack Anderson (410-363-7237; chev565041@comcast.net)</i>	Historian and Executive Board Member: <i>Dottie Miller (410-922-5971)</i>
Executive Board Members:	
<i>Dave Boyer (410-418-8915; dpboyer@verizon.net)</i>	<i>Charlie Lewis (410-663-1793)</i>
<i>Wayne McDaniel (410-525-0625)</i>	<i>Mike Natale (410-583-9171; mrynatale@verizon.net)</i>
<i>Bob Wilhelm (410-252-3975)</i>	
Area #10 Atlantic Central Director: <i>Ken Farley (540-248-0635; kkf163@ntelos.net)</i>	



Coming Attractions/Events

March 6	Ontelaunee Region AACA Swap Meet, Hamburg, PA
March 12	Chesapeake Region AACA Flea Market, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, MD
March 25-26	Sugarloaf Region AACA Parts Meet, Frederick Fairgrounds, Frederick, MD
March 27	South Jersey AACA Swap Meet (Cowtown), Sharptown, NJ
April 1-2	Old Dominion Region VCCA spring tour to Kennett Square, PA (see flyer next page)
April 3	Street Car Museum Spring Car Show, Baltimore, MD
April 7-10	AACA Hornets Nest Region, Charlotte Auto Fair, Charlotte, NC
April 27-May 1	Spring Carlisle, Carlisle Fairgrounds, Carlisle, PA
April 30-May 1	Towson Town Spring Festival Car Show, Towson, MD
May 7	Highlands School Car Show, Bel Air, MD
May 14	Free State Region Spring Tour to Radio & Television Museum, Bowie, MD
June 24-26	GM Nationals, Carlisle Fairgrounds, Carlisle, PA
July 17-23	VCCA 50 th Anniversary Meet, Flint, MI
August 14	Free State Region VCCA and Buick Owners of Maryland, Meadowood Regional Park Show, Lutherville, MD

March-April Anniversaries and Birthdays

Anniversaries

Kathy and Jack Anderson: April 8, 1994

Pete and Patty Medairy: April 14, 1984

Vince and Betty Pullara: April 3, 1958

Birthdays

Bill Baldwin: March 4

Cass Casciero: March 28

Guy Manwiller: April 7

Bob Natale: March 7

Mike Natale: March 7

Bill Scott: March 26

Lucille Screen: April 9

Tommy Thompson: April 9

John Wellham: March 16

New member George Spika's loaded '69 Caprice at the Motor Trend International Auto Show at the Baltimore Convention Center in February 2010. What a find, George!



“Lemon-Aid”: Restoring a `55 Chevrolet Bel Air Sport Coupe (Part 1)

Jack Anderson

It's now been over three years since my `55 Chevrolet Bel Air sport coupe headed north from Owings Mills, Maryland to Hughesville, Pennsylvania for what was to have been a “paint job,” but has slowly morphed into a body-off, comprehensive restoration. How, you may wonder, did that happen?

For those of you who don't know the background, I purchased this car at the Barrett-Jackson Auction in Scottsdale, Arizona in January 2007. As stories go, it's a fairly comical one, given that I've owned 13 `55-`57 Chevrolets over the years and work on the side as a Certified Appraiser. As a Christmas gift in December 2006, my lovely wife Kathy gave me an all-expenses paid trip to the auction, which is like the Super Bowl for our hobby. Although Kathy's gift included a spectator's pass, I converted it into a bidder's pass and went to Scottsdale loaded for bear. I had about six cars that I was interested in that I thought I could afford. But the one I really wanted was a red `66 Mustang GT fastback. (Yes, I know; it's a Ford. But, at the time, I had a red `06 Mustang GT coupe that I ordered new and I wanted an older “bookend” version. Plus, my first new car was a `78 Mustang II fastback with a 302 V8 and I've owned four `60s era Mustangs.) Long story short, I got outbid by an internet bidder on the Mustang and had to pull out on the other five cars when the bidding quickly escalated beyond my limit. So, early on Friday morning of the auction, a `55 Bel Air two-door hardtop came up on the block. Billed as a California car that had undergone a full restoration in the `90s, bidding stalled at what I thought was a ridiculously low price. The car just looked great under the bright lights. Impulsively, I raised my hand and suddenly was the high bidder. Just as suddenly, the auctioneer dropped the hammer and I'd won the car. At that point, adrenaline flooded through my body because I'd just bought a car that I hadn't even inspected!

Rushing out of the main auction tent, I tracked down my “new” Bel Air and quickly realized what I'd bought: an older amateur restoration. Yes, it's a California car with an original 265 V8 and Powerglide transmission, but the paint work was marginal and the restorer added a few odd modifications, such as chrome-plated garnish moldings, small Model Two-Ten/One-Fifty hubcaps instead of Bel Air full wheelcovers, radial blackwall tires, and an obnoxious aftermarket dual exhaust system. So, for my hard-earned money, I got a decent “driver” for near what I would have paid for a properly restored `55 Chevrolet Bel Air sport coupe.

Yep, the guy who thinks he knows a bunch about mid-fifties Chevys, who has judged extensively, and who is a so-called “professional” appraiser did the exact thing you don't do at an auction. How could I have temporarily lost my head? My excuses are pretty lame, but here they are. First, I didn't think I'd ever be able to afford the car given the inflated Barrett-Jackson values, so I never really looked it over. Second, the low bidding caused me to jump in to catch what I thought was a “deal.” Third, I was thinking I'd go home empty-handed if I didn't make a move on a car. If you ever go to an auction, take a friend to keep you from doing something stupid!

When the car was finally delivered to my home in February 2007, I had the chance to really examine it from stem to stern and subsequently made plans to start improving it. One of the weak points was the two-tone yellow and white paint. The amateur restorer used the same paint that is applied to school buses and heavy equipment. In fact, the shade of yellow on my car looked like it belonged on a school bus! While having decent luster, the paint had lots of imperfections. Also, there were signs of body filler in a few key areas even though the car, as you'd expect for something from California, was extremely solid.

Throughout the rest of 2007, I drove the car to shows and cruise-ins, and on the Free State Region's covered bridges tour. I also took it to the Classic Chevy Club International's eastern regional convention in Hagerstown, Maryland where it was entered in a “cruisers” (i.e., non-judged) class. Out of 150 vehicles in this class, the Classic Chevy headquarters team picked ten to receive a Cruisers Pick. My Bel Air was one of those selected. As part of the award, they anoint each vehicle with a nickname. What did they name mine? “Lemon-Aid!”

In December 2007, while strolling through the aisles of the Eastern Nationals Indoor Car Show in the Cow Palace at the state fairgrounds in Timonium, Dave Boyer and I came upon one of the straightest, most beautifully restored `55 Chevrolets I've ever seen. This car, a red, modified `55 Two-Ten two-door sedan, was owned by Bob and Dawn Neuhard of Hughesville, Pennsylvania, which is near Williamsport (about 165 miles from Baltimore). At that point, I'd been looking, without success, for someone locally I could trust to repaint my car and straighten out a few of its “sins.” Immediately recognizing the quality of Bob's work, I asked if he'd be

interested in taking on my car. He asked me to send photographs, after which he'd give me an assessment of what was needed and an approximate cost.

We talked by phone several times before Bob and Dawn drove down to my home in Owings Mills with their enclosed trailer in tow in late January 2008. Bob, an experienced body and paint professional, got a better sense of my Bel Air's needs once he examined it in person, immediately picking out things even I hadn't noticed. So into the trailer the car went for its three-hour ride back to Bob's shop in Hughesville.

For those of you who have restored a vehicle in the past, you know how this turns out. Once Bob started stripping the car, we really began to appreciate how much of an amateur the original restorer really was! For example, the hood is attached to the hood hinges with four bolts, two each on the rear corners. There are boxed sections in these corners that have "captured" nuts (i.e., welded in place at the factory) for the bolts. Bob could not get one of these bolts out because the captured nut weld had broken and the bolt was free-wheeling. What he discovered was that the restorer had stuffed part of a T-shirt into this small, very tight boxed section of the hood and used it with seam sealer to hold the nut in place to run the bolt up into it! (You have to see a photo of the T-shirt hanging out of the tiny access hole in the boxed section to really appreciate the "quality" of the work.)

From there, the calls and email messages with photographs of the car's many issues started flooding in from Bob. It was time for me to make what was the first of many pilgrimages to Hughesville to see, firsthand, what we'd gotten into and what it would take to make it right. Both Bob and I are perfectionists, and we did not want to cut any corners. Along the way, I've learned (and I'm still learning) what a quality restoration requires in both time and money. Also, perhaps the best part of the journey, I've made new friends in Bob, Dawn and their teenage son, Stephen. They are good, honest, hard-working and God-fearing people who have welcomed me into their home and lives. If you've been around this hobby for any length of time, you know that vintage cars and trucks may be the attraction, but it's the people and friendships that make it worthwhile.

So where do we stand with Lemon-Aid's resurrection? Well, let's just say that we're hoping to have the car completed later this year, possibly in time to be shown at Hershey or at least at the indoor show at Timonium in December. Over the coming months, I'll take you through the steps in my car's restoration, including the decision Bob and I made to undertake a full body-off rotisserie restoration about a year into the project. So enjoy and stay tuned. In the meantime, the photograph below is of Kathy and me at the Classic Chevy Club International convention in Hagerstown in July 2007 where our Bel Air was christened "Lemon-Aid." Looks pretty good, doesn't it? Little did we know!



2011 Covered Dish Dinner, Officers' Installation and Auction

Mary Fuhrman

The Free State Region gathered for its annual Covered Dish Dinner, Officers' Installation and Auction at Glyndon United Methodist Church on Sunday, February 27, 2011. Franklin Gage, driving his '66 Bel Air four-door sedan, first picked up Charlie Lewis at his new home and then me at Fairhaven. From there it was off to Kentucky Fried Chicken to buy a bucket of chicken for the dinner and then on to the church.

While we did not have a huge group at this year's event, those who did attend had big appetites and were big spenders! Those attending included Kathy and Jack Anderson, Grace, Bill and Bruce Baldwin, Ginny and Dave Boyer, Franklin, Charlie, Wayne McDaniel, Dottie and Janis Miller, Mike Natale, Ginetta and Gary Schlee, Ginetta's mother Mary, Bill Scott, George Spicka and friend Beverly, Margaret and Francis Werneth, Bob and Bobby Wilhelm, and me.

Jack opened the dinner with a word of prayer before the group headed to the serving table to sample the great selection of good-smelling food. Many went back for second and third helpings. The deserts were excellent and, as in the past, included Bill's famous ice cream with chocolate syrup. Even though Ginny was not feeling completely up to par, she was busy with Kathy getting everything in order.

Following desert, Dave, chairing his last meeting as Director, thanked everyone for coming. Bill Scott presented the Treasurer's report, which became healthier as the afternoon wore on. Then Dave presented Dottie with an Award of Appreciation plaque and a \$100 gift card for her 37 years of service as club Secretary, Newsletter Editor and "chief cook and bottle washer." Everyone knows how much she has done for the Free State Region over the years and greatly appreciates her dedication and commitment.

Dave then turned the gavel over to our new Director, Franklin. Joining him as officers for 2011-2012 are Bill Scott who continues as Treasurer and Membership Chair, and Jack, who will serve as Corresponding Secretary and Newsletter Editor. We are currently looking for an Assistant Director and a Recording Secretary. (George will hopefully slide into this role.) The Executive Board consists of Charlie, Wayne, Mike, Bob and Dottie, who will also continue to serve as Historian. Franklin then made Ginny and Dave's day by presenting them with a personalized, hand-made knitted throw honoring them as the Free State Region's outgoing "first couple."

There was a discussion about who will be attending the VCCA's 50th Anniversary Meet in Flint, Michigan in July. Franklin and Bob are definitely going and will be on a four-cylinder tour the week before. Gary and Wayne are also planning to attend and Jack has a hotel reservation but is debating whether to go since his '55 Bel Air, which is under restoration, will not be ready in time. There was also discussion about the Meadowood Regional Park show, which is scheduled for August 14. Because we only have a limited number of members able to prepare for and run the show, the club officers decided to reach out to the Buick Owners of Maryland (BOOM) club and invite them to be co-sponsors. BOOM accepted, so we will split revenue and expenses with them.

Next, Gary suggested that we conduct a Spring Tour to the Radio and TV Museum in Bowie, Maryland. It sounds like an interesting place and the museum told Gary that they'd love to have us. Gary will prepare a flyer, which will appear in the May-June newsletter. We agreed on Saturday, May 14 for the tour, with everyone meeting at Chatham Mall in Ellicott City at 10AM to caravan to Bowie. Bill Scott also suggested that we consider the Museum of Industry in Baltimore for a future tour, which garnered much interest.

Once all business was taken care of, it was time for Jack and Dave, our auctioneers, to tackle the amazing number of items offered for auction. In fact, there was so much stuff that I thought it would take them well into the Academy Awards show on Sunday night to get it rid of it! But they did a fantastic job and managed to pull \$269 out of the pockets of those in attendance. The big ticket item was Charlie's yellow Free State Region vest, which is festooned with pins from the many shows he attended over the years. Franklin and Wayne got into a bidder's war over this vest, which Jack encouraged, until Franklin finally won out with a \$70 bid. But Wayne didn't go away empty-handed – he stocked up on other items that he can put out on his table at the AACA flea market in several weeks. Francis and Bill Baldwin also managed to take home some loot as well.

Many thanks to Ginny and Dave for taking the calls and organizing this event, to Ginny and Kathy for cleaning up afterwards, and to anyone else I left out (my apologies). A good time was had by all!

Dave Boyer presenting an Award of Appreciation to Dottie Miller for her 37 years of service as Secretary and *Valve Tapper* Editor. Dottie also received a \$100 gift card for her untiring dedication to the club.



Dave and Ginny Boyer displaying the hand-made, knitted throw awarded by the club in recognition of Dave’s two years of service as our Director and Ginny’s support as his “First Lady.”



Old Dominion Region SPRING TOUR 2011

The Old Dominion Region of the Vintage Chevrolet Club of America invites you to join us on our Spring Tour **Fri. & Sat., April 1 & 2, 2011** to the Kennett Square area of Pennsylvania. We welcome everyone; participants do not need to be a member of our club, & you may drive whatever you wish, antique or modern.

On **Fri.** we will meet at the Maryland Welcome Ctr. rest area, (directions on next page) for a quick snack of muffins & juice. After distributing the weekend itinerary, we will proceed to Nottingham, PA to tour the **Herrs Potato Chip Factory**, have lunch at **Perkins** in Avondale, PA, then onto Yorklyn, DE to **Auburn Heights**, to tour the mansion & museum, which houses a collection of Stanley Steamers & Packards.

On **Sat.** we will board a bus to take us on a tour of the **Underground Railroad**. Our last tour of the weekend will be a short distance away at the famous **Longwood Gardens**, which includes 1,050 acres of blooming flowers & trees, spraying fountains, water lily pools & many indoor gardens.

We will be staying the night in Kennett Square, PA, mushroom capital of the world, at the **Marriott Fairfield Inn & Suites**. You must call before March 15 at 610-444-8995 to take advantage of this discount rate of \$99 a night. Register under ODR Car Club. Breakfast is included.

If you have questions please do not hesitate to contact Sally & Jim Batchelder on (H)703-339-2064,(C) 703-989-4036, or sjkbatch@aol.com.

We meet at the MD Welcome Center rest area on Route 95 North, which is about 9 miles north of the Capital Beltway, mile marker 37, at 8 a.m. Meet at the far end of this rest area where there is a covered shelter & picnic tables. Directions & itinerary for our tour will be distributed. After enjoying muffins & juice, we will promptly leave at 8:30 a.m.

ODR SPRING TOUR 2011 REGISTRATION

NAME(s) _____

ADDRESS _____

Telephone (Home) _____ (Cell) _____

Car you will be driving _____

\$10/car Registration (waived for ODR members). . . \$_____

\$12/person Auburn Heights mansion & museum \$_____

\$10/person Underground Railroad bus \$_____ (waived for ODR members)

\$15 (\$14 Seniors over 62) Longwood Gardens. . . . \$_____ (price includes 1-hr guided tour)

TOTAL \$_____

Please register before **March 15**. Make check payable to "ODR VCCA". Send to: **Shirley Farley, 17 Donovans Lane, Staunton, VA 24401**