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Joy Ride: 1966 Chevy Corvair Monza convertible

Defending a beauty's honor.

By CYNTHIA RUPE
SqueezeOC.com

Joy Ride is a monthly feature that's all about the love we have for cars. Every month, we profile a different local and his or her treasured ride – be it a sleek new sports car or a restored classic – the vehicle lovingly, passionately maintained for joy rides, not commutes.



ROD MURRAY, 46, Rancho Santa Margarita

His ride: 1966 Chevy Corvair Monza convertible

Year purchased: 2000

Behind the wheel: The car was an early 40th birthday present, which Murray bought from a UCLA grad student who was heading back to the East Coast.

One of Murray's primary reasons for buying the car was price: he only spent \$2,500 on it.



Corvairs are one of the world's least expensive collector's cars, he says.

And they're great project vehicles because they're easy to work on, and the parts are easy to find.

Murray heard all the misconceptions about Corvairs – that they are a "death trap," that the engine falls out, that they roll easily. The rear-engine car was made in the '60s to compete

against the VW Beetle, but was met with scathing consumer reviews.

This seems like a compelling enough reason to avoid these cars. But Murray disagrees with the critics. He loves his car.

"It's got its rattles. It's got its air leaks. It's a toy ... but it's so fun to drive," he says.

He's not alone in his passion. Murray is a member of the Orange County Vintage CORSA Club, a group of 35-40 local Corvair owners. The club has been around since 1974, and many members have had their cars since they purchased them in the '60s.

The owners get together for weekly meetings, annual meet events, and to help work on each others' cars (see accompanying box for more club info).

"Without question, the best thing about the car is the people I've met," Murray, says.

Under the hood: The convertible was in pretty good shape when he bought it, Murray said. But he replaced the engine and automatic transmission with a four-speed, and got new tires, rims and a paint job.

"I'm not a full-blown mechanic by any means – I'm a desk jockey," says Murray, who works as the director of entertainment and multimedia operations for the Anaheim Ducks.

But Corvairs are so easy to work on, you quickly lose your fear of plunging in, he says. "I'm not sure if I have more fun working on the car, or driving it."



First car: A 1973 Gremlin.

Also in the garage: A 2003 Mazda 6, and a 1996 Chevy Monte Carlo.

Favorite cruise: "I like Santiago Canyon, down Live Oak Canyon Road to Orange. Since I work in Anaheim, it's a nice alternative to the freeway. There's a good donut shop, KD Donuts, on Rancho Santa Margarita Lake.

"And anytime you can get down by the beach, it's never a bad day."

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