



ARCC UPDATE

July/August 2008

Alfa News

by George Beston, Cobourg

This was a quiet month on the news front until the recent reports of a partnership between Fiat and BMW regarding North American distribution. If it's for real, this will fill the most glaring hole in Fiat's plan to market Alfas in North America in 2010. BMW has been very successful at marketing its products in both Canada and the United States. We'll see if they're up to a new challenge. We haven't heard yet how this partnership is supposed to work, and it will be interesting to see how they might deal with product overlap situations. Other related reports are trickling in, such as talk of technical collaboration on Mini and Alfa Romeo products.

As far as I can tell, there is no new news regarding the possibility of North American production. Mr. Marchione has been quoted saying that all options are still open. I suppose this is another way of saying no decision has been made. It makes me wonder if BMW has production capacity available in its American plants.

The MiTo is now finding its way into journalist hands in Europe. Reports on the 1.4 t-jet versions have been complimentary so far. The MiTo apparently has many desirable characteristics that are not evident in its corporate sibling, the Fiat Grande Punto. One discouraging fact about the MiTo for us is that Fiat has let it slip that this is the last Alfa that will be designed without conforming to North American standards.

Convenzione d'Oro Chicago 2008

by Tony Adams, Toronto

We had planned to drive our 1969 1750 Spider to the AROC convention in Oak Brook, Illinois, north west of Chicago but, as I was uncomfortable about a couple of items on the Alfa, we chose to enjoy the air conditioned comfort of our PT Cruiser. To avoid at

least one trip through the heavy traffic areas around Chicago and the bottom of Lake Michigan, we took the Lake Express high-speed ferry from Muskegon to Milwaukee. The ferry was clean and comfortable, carrying around 58 vehicles and about 250 passengers. Once out on the lake, the ferry reaches a top speed of 40 mph, resulting in a 2½ hour ride to Milwaukee. The ride was smooth with only a slight roll for the first couple of miles. All-in-all an enjoyable trip (albeit expensive – \$280 for vehicle and 2 passengers). While there had been some construction on the roads from Toronto to Muskegon, there were no extended delays.



The Lake Express. Tony Adams photo.

The trip from Milwaukee to Oak Brook however was quite different with 70 miles of major construction, rough roads and heavy traffic. I doubt that the Spider, currently without a sump guard fitted, would have made the trip intact. We arrived safely at the hotel mid-afternoon on Wednesday, checked in (very nice room), checked in at registration and attended the Welcome Reception.

On Thursday morning we checked out the vendors. A new vendor at this year's convention was Alfaholics from England. They were displaying various competition parts that they have developed for 105 Series Alfas through their racing experience (lots of interesting goodies!).

Later on Thursday morning we headed to the racetrack for the Time Trials. The location was the Autobahn Country Club where members can play with their "big boys' toys". The Club has two tracks (which can be linked), garages, clubhouse, café etc.



The Alfa group used the North track while Autobahn club members were using the South track. The area is fairly flat but there is some elevation change, resulting in an interesting looking track. Spectator viewing was primarily from the paddock area where the start-finish straight and corners 1 & 2 could be seen. Speeds at the start finish line were quite high and there were a couple of "offs" at corners 1 & 2 but nothing serious. In the paddock area, we met up with Ken Lee, Elio Comello and a friend who had driven down that morning from Sarnia. The Time Trials wrapped up at 4:00 pm with some demonstration laps by "Bonnie", of Bonneville Salt Flats fame and a Formula 3 Alfa open wheeled race car.

Following the Time Trials the GTA Reunion commenced. There was a long delay from the close of Time Trials to the Reunion race, apparently due to issues with the proposed handicapping of the cars. Eventually the organizers announced that the cars would not be handicapped. About 18 cars lined up on the grid, considerably fewer than had been hoped for.



Race Action. Tony Adams photo.

However the race among the first 4 cars was exciting, with a Class E Production round-tail Spider holding the lead over a later model Kamm-tail spider (let's hear it for the round-tail!!). However an off at corner 2 by the round-tail let the second car through. While the round-tail did recover some time, it could not challenge the Kamm-tail. The 3rd car was an Alfaetta GT which slowly reeled in the Kamm-tail Spider and after a few laps attempted an inside line pass into corner 2, however, he could not hold his line and the Kamm-tail continued in the lead. After few laps to regain ground, the GT passed the Spider on the back part of the track. The 4th place finisher was a GTA.



The round-tail that almost could. Tony Adams photo.

On Friday morning, under overcast skies, the Autocross was held on a very large parking lot, clear of any light posts, barriers etc. The course was long and fairly fast with times around a minute (best time was about 53 seconds). An electronic display board that could be read easily from the spectator area showed the time as each car finished its run. Towards lunch time, as the skies darkened, the organizers announced that lightning, hail and high winds were imminent and a few minutes later it poured. Unfortunately, there were some cars that had not completed all their runs before the rain commenced. Tech sessions on a number of topics were held in the afternoon. I went to the session on the development of "Bonnie" and the speed records she has achieved at Bonneville – highly entertaining!

In the evening we joined the Convention crowd on a Skyline Cruise of the Chicago water front and canal. There were great views of the older buildings, bridges and gardens along the waterfront. An open bar and a buffet of pizza, salads, etc. were provided. After the cruise we were bussed to the Hancock centre for a ride to the viewing platform at the top, followed by cheesecake for dessert – a great evening.

On Saturday morning, the Concours was held at Cantigny Park.



GTV's 4Ever. Tony Adams photo.

Again it "rained on the parade" at mid-morning, thankfully a short thunderstorm but with heavy rain. There were 104 entries (according to my count) including 10 round-tailed Spiders (not to mention 3 others in the parking lot, and not entered). My favourite was a Duetto fitted out with a GTA twin-plug head, suspension, wheels, door handles. It was finished with new seats, carpet, roll bar and competition harness and a beautiful black paint (the best color for round-tails in my opinion – but I may be biased!).



"Black Beauty". Tony Adams photo.

There were no pre-war cars entered but there were many lovely looking cars from the late 50's including this dazzling 1959 Sprint Veloce Zagato.



Sprint Veloce Zagato. Tony Adams photo.

The banquet was held Saturday night - an excellent dinner, followed by 4 speakers! The first was B.S. Levy (Vintage Motor sport magazine). He delivered a highly entertaining presentation on his boyhood interest in cars and some of his current racing experiences. The second speaker was English author John Tippler. He has campaigned a number of Alfas over the years and has written a number of books on Alfas. He was followed by Dr. Martinez who talked about his experiences with Alfas. Last to speak was Gary Kaberle who, at seventeen, owned the BAT 9 Alfa Romeo. He also spoke about his experience with Bertone and the development of the new BAT 11 car which hopefully will be displayed at Meadowbrook this year. While a lengthy evening, it was an entertaining group of speakers with lots of Alfa interest!

The Sunday awards brunch started at 10:30. The awards were presented and the locations of the 2009 and the 2010 conventions were announced: Portland in 2009 and Washington, DC in 2010. We can drive to Washington – but is any one interested in shipping Alfas to Spokane and driving over the mountains to Portland!

Although the 2008 convention was smaller, it was well-organized, fun event – thanks to the Chicago Chapter!!

VARAC Vintage Festival

by George Beston, Cobourg

Another case of threatening weather seemed to restrict our attendance this year. In fact, the weather turned out to be perfect despite threatening to rain early in the morning. As usual, the organizers set aside a specific area for Alfas because of our reputation for attending as a Club. We only ended up with 6 cars parked in the area, which we shared with some vintage XK Jaguars. On the other hand, there were more Alfas racing than we usually see. There were four Alfas from Ontario

and one or two others from the US. Overall, the number of racing entries and spectators seemed much higher than normal, perhaps due to the event's theme of a Can-Am Reunion. The car show that we participated in was also well attended and a wide variety of (mostly British) rare and interesting vintage sports cars were on display.



Doug Paraschuck, his well turned out Spider race car and a few of the usual worthies! Geoff Lee's Giulia spider is on the left. Dave Munro Photo.



Here's a rare sight, Christopher Creighton's GTV which he uses both on the road and as a vintage racer. Dave Munro Photo.

Sadly, in the third race of the Sunday morning an extremely unfortunate single car incident resulted in the death of a competitor. Initially, the racing schedule was suspended due to an Ontario Provincial Police investigation of the incident. After a few hours, the entire day's schedule was cancelled out of respect for the man and his team, and due to the ongoing investigation.

The driver involved was Dino Crescentini of Michigan. At the time of the incident, he was driving a Wolf Dallara Can-Am car along the back straight. Apparently the initial problem was an aerodynamic device that broke, perhaps a front wing. This resulted in a loss of control and several

rollovers, some before and some after hitting a concrete wall.

This is a grim reminder that racing in all its forms can be an extremely dangerous proposition. I'm sure that we all share a profound sadness over this incident.

Toronto July Cruise Night

by George Beston, Cobourg

After some weather issues with the May and June cruise nights, it was terrific to see the turnout at the July cruise night. Blessed as we were with fine warm weather and clear skies, interesting cars of many makes and descriptions showed up in force. There were at least 25 Alfas there and probably about 75 cars in total. The range of non-Alfas extended from a couple of mint Fiat 500s to a Lamborghini Murcielago, with a brace of C6 Corvettes thrown in for good measure. A beautifully done Fiat X1-9 was showing off a transplanted turbocharged Prelude engine.

Notable Alfas there included a first outing for Ernie Francia's newly restored round tail spider. Also present was a unique 1974 Spider with round tail bodywork at the back and a customized front valence that resembles some of Pininfarina's Ferrari efforts.



George Beston photo.

Amongst the newer Alfas present were a spotless red Milano Quadrifoglio and an Alfetta GT in nice shape.

The lot was busy the entire evening and many people seemed to be stopping by to visit rather than participate, including two nuns!

Toronto Sunday Drive

by Dave Munro, Toronto

This particular drive was deliberately planned to be a little longer than usual, with the route going from Mississauga up to Creemore and back. This turned out to be a good workout for five Alfas and a Lotus. The weather was perfect for a top-down day.



Rene Svastal's GT Junior In front of Creemore Spring's corporate HQ. Brian Crockatt photo.

Here's the view from the driver's seat of Brian's round-tail spider. What a way to spend a Sunday!



Brian Crockatt photo.

If you are in the Toronto area and have a route and destination you'd like us to use as part of a Sunday drive, please e-mail Dave Munro at alfadave@gmail.com.

The Dreaded E-Test

by Gord Zimmerman, Bobcaygeon

In May, it was time again for the biannual Ontario E test on my 91 Alfa Spider. I made an appointment with my local inspection station. I was optimistic because the Spider, with 80,000 miles on it was running just great. I cleaned the plugs and air filter and put in clean 91-octane fuel. Off to the test I went with fingers crossed – and damn, it failed. The cost was \$35.00.

After a few calls to my local mechanics I changed fuel & air filters and spark plugs and ran a half tank of gas treated with Lucas injector cleaner through the engine. Next, I filled the tank with 94-octane fuel, ran it down to a half tank and then put 1/4 litre of methyl hydrate in the tank. I ran it hard again, and the engine was running well as always. Before the re-test, I warmed up the engine with a 20-minute blast up the highway in 4th gear. Off to the test, and it failed again at a cost \$17.00 for the re-test.

Now I had to do some checking!

The results of hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide were just over the acceptable limits at the re-test. This made me think that the engine was running a bit rich, that is, more fuel was being squirted into the engine than required.

First, I did some checking on the catalytic converter. There was no sulphur smell in the exhaust, it wasn't glowing red and it didn't have any rattling sound that would indicate a problem with the catalyst medium. Given that the results of the HC & CO were close to the limits and the NOx results well within limits, I decided that the cat was probably OK, and I didn't go further with inlet and outlet temperatures and back pressure measurements.

I didn't think the O2 sensor was bad as it was replaced for the last e-test only two years ago.

My local mechanics suggested I do an engine vac procedure. I was a bit suspicious as it is a \$100.00 1/2hr process that supposedly cleans the injectors in the car with detergent and other stuff. I called my Alfa mechanic and he basically said it was a waste of money. I looked up this 'engine vac' on the Internet. The reaction was a bit dubious at best. Whether or not the process works, it has a bad name because of some unscrupulous operators.

When I brought this to the attention of my local guys, they said in some what of a defensive mode that it wouldn't solve my problem but a \$20.00 can of "Red Stallion" upper engine cleaner would clean all the carbon, varnish and deposits built up in the head. I had to do something so we put a can of this stuff through the engine. It is injected directly into a vacuum line (the little one from the fuel tank carbon canister). With the engine at a little over idle, I squirted it in. A great cloud of black smoke came out of the exhaust. (My neighbour thought the car was on fire!) Along with the black smoke lots of black carbon particles came out of the exhaust while I ran all 325g through the engine. It was still smoking a bit so the garage mechanic said to take it for a spirited run for about 10-15 min. That was the best part. The engine seemed to run better and accelerate faster than ever.

I had done some research on the O2 sensor and how to test it. The sensor should alternate between 0 volts and .9 volts depending upon RPM so I checked the voltage at idle & above. We put a meter on it and found it was cycling between zero and .4 volts, about 0.5 volts less than it should be.

So, I put on a new O2 sensor, paying \$189.00 for an Alfa (Bosch) OE sensor. I think this is a bit steep for the correct connectors but it's an original Alfa part. I made an appointment with the tester with high

hopes it would pass. The results didn't change. It failed again – for the third time!

The licensed garage mechanic shook his head and suggested (for the second or third time) I do an "Engine Vac". I asked if there was any guarantee that it would pass, he just chuckled a little and said he would not promise anything. I passed and decided to take the car down to Pino in Woodbridge.

I was at Pino's about 8:30 am. He looked at all the results, by now the stack of papers was getting pretty high. Pino did a couple of things to the engine. Then we took it over to an E test facility and ran the test again. Pino drove and said the car was running great so I had high hopes. There was some improvement. The Hydrocarbons dropped to 51 ppm, which is a pass, but the CO failed at .51%. Back at the shop we changed out the O2 sensor and catalytic converter from a car that had passed the test. Found the 2 exhaust gaskets at the cat were broken causing an exhaust leak so we replaced them. We also cleaned the new spark plugs again, checked for air leaks and tightened up all the clamps and hoses. I also checked the fuel tank carbon canister.

Back to the e-tester. By now I had become friends with Mike as he ran the test yet again. No go as the CO% failed at .46% just .09% from passing! Mike said that there was no way to pass the test, so slowly I took the car back to Pino who didn't have any more time to work on the car as it was about 3 in the afternoon. I had to leave him the car for a few days until he could get at it. My buddy Don in his 88 Alfa had come down with me so I had a ride back to Bobcaygeon.

A week later Pino called and said he had got it to pass (hooray!), and that he had spent quite a bit of time on the car. First he checked the valve clearance and found them to be all OK but that the exhaust cam was slightly out of time as the timing chain was a bit loose. He fixed that then checked compression on each cylinder. They were all within spec and less than 5lbs different so the engine was tight. He took out the injectors and sent them out to be tested. Number two injector was spraying more to one side, and the other three had a great cone-shaped spray pattern. The #2 injector was cleaned and new seals were installed all around. Pino also cleaned and tested the throttle body (sometimes they get sticky), and cleaned idle air valve and oil separator.

As you can imagine, this has been a time consuming and expensive exercise. Here are the gruesome details:

Item	Cost
Test 1	\$35.00
Test 2	\$17.00

Test 3	\$17.00
Test 4	\$35.00
Test 5	\$35.00
Test 6	\$35.00
Spark plugs	\$30.00
Air filter	\$40.00
Fuel filter	\$10.00
O ₂ sensor	\$190.00
Red Stallion	\$20.00
Exhaust gaskets	\$14.00
Injector seals	\$28.00
Injector flushing	\$100.00
Shop labor	\$500.00
Taxes	\$161.00
TOTA	\$1,267.00

Reflections:

The old O2 sensor may have been OK as it had only about 30,000 miles on it. I'm hoping that gas mileage will be about 10% better with the new O2 sensor. The catalytic converter was good but the gaskets needed to be replaced. The air filter was about due as well as the fuel filter and sparkplugs which I generally replace every 2 years. The valve clearance had not been checked in about 5 years. Setting the exhaust valve timing was probably the real problem. It didn't hurt to clean the injectors, as there was a problem with #2 that sprayed off to the side. Cleaning the throttle body, oil separator and idle air valve is generally good maintenance.

It's still a great car to drive and fun to own. My Spider is good to go for another 2 years and hopefully I won't have the same problems again. Next time I'll try my local garage for the first test. If it doesn't pass I'll take it to Pino right away.

For interested parties here are the e-test results:

Condition	40 km/hr			Curb idle	
	HC ppm	CO %	NOx ppm	HC ppm	CO %
Limit	66	0.37	757	200	1.00
5/16/06	45	0.29	90	19	0.05
5/20/08	74	0.53	197	87	0.21
5/27/08	70	0.59	168	55	0.21
6/02/08	73	0.54	152	23	0.01
6/05/08	58	0.46	137	50	0.28
6/05/08	51	0.51	132	48	0.22
6/12/08	63	0.37	69	45	0.20

Editor's Note

Ontario's Drive Clean program applies to vehicles manufactured from 1988 to the present. Many of us do not have to face the test because our vehicles were manufactured before that time. It's actually a fairly complex program aimed at keeping vehicles in disrepair off the road. It surprised me to discover

that the standards applied depend on the year of manufacture of the vehicle. The requirements for your vehicle may vary.

Humble Pie 101

by **George Beston, Cobourg**

I hope that by sharing a problem I've had, I can spare somebody else the humility that goes with finding a solution only after trying too many other things while not thinking carefully enough about the symptoms of the problem.

Last year, on the last day of the Lago Huron Mille Miglia, the Lake Huron tour that preceded the Detroit convention, I experienced an unexpected "no-start" situation with my Spider after a twenty minute rest in the early afternoon. The car had been starting normally, the battery was only a year old, and there had been no sign of a battery charging issue. It just didn't crank when the starter was engaged. There was no solenoid clicking, and the lights worked normally. Another puzzle was that when we tried to boost the battery, it made no difference! A team effort got the Spider going by push starting it, which actually was tricky because of the lightened flywheel on the 1750 engine. At the time, I found that a lead on the generator was a bit loose, and concluded that the battery was simply too flat to crank the engine. This was all but confirmed when the car started well after another break, and kept starting every time after that.

Until, that is, my first outing this year. After a drive to Port Perry and back, I turned the Spider off because I needed the other key on the ring to unlock the glove compartment. After being turned off for about one minute, it wouldn't crank, so I coasted it into the garage, and started scratching my head. This time, the problem occurred after dark, and I know the Hella H4 conversion headlights were doing their usual fine job of turning night into day, and there was no warning light illuminated that would indicate a discharging battery. Hmmm.

A quick check revealed there were no loose leads to blame, so I decided the starter motor must be at fault, possibly due to worn brushes or a bad commutator.

So, I went through the process. Disconnect the battery, remove the carburetors (In this case those SPICA cars are easier to work on), remove the starter and deliver it to Port Hope Auto Electric, currently my favourite rebuilding shop for this sort of thing. After a few days I went back to pay the ransom and Dan (the proprietor) raised an eyebrow and said "Why did you bring this in to me? The brushes are maybe 20% worn, the commutator is good, and it tested fine. I'd suggest you check your

ground cable. That'll be fifteen bucks for the inspection."

Sigh! The ground cable was snugly in place, so I took it off and started looking at it. It seems that **SOMEBODY**, in his zeal to have a fine looking new engine in the car a few years ago, had painted the ground strap, including the contact areas. I brushed off the paint with my Dremel tool, and made sure there were good "star" washers helping to make contact at both ends of the cable. Sure enough, with that done, the starter works better than it has before.

In hindsight, I recognize that the starter had not been cranking with much enthusiasm since the 1300 to 1750 upgrade. I had written this off to the fact that the starter was cranking an engine with larger displacement, but that was just a wishful rationalization. I also remember that the first attempt to start the 1750 engine was interrupted by a trip to the store to buy a new battery because of a lethargic cranking effort. Of course, I jumped to the conclusion that the old battery was marginal due to its age, and due to it being out of service for about a year.

It still puzzles me that a connection such as this can be good enough to work most of the time but not all of the time. If someone has an explanation other than "Electricity is the work of the Devil" I'm eager to hear it.

So, my conclusions are that paint on ground cable contact areas is to be avoided, and any troubleshooting on electrical issues should start with thoughts about the possibility of a bad ground connection.

EFI Maintenance

An Update

Elio Comello reports that since the thorough injector cleaning, his Spider is now achieving 37 miles per imperial gallon, whereas before his maintenance efforts, 32 mpg was the norm. He also has reason to suspect that the already modest oil consumption in his Spider has decreased a bit.

Preventative

Upcoming ARCC Events

Alfa Romeo Club of Edmonton

Date	Time	Event
May 30	6 pm	Go Karting
June 7	12 noon	Spring Road Trip
June 13	6 pm	Eurasia Show & Drive
TBD	TBD	Solstice Rally
TBD	TBD	BC Run

Ottawa Chapter

Date	Time	Event
May 25	10 am	Drive to Oxford Mills
June 8	12 noon	Canadian Grand Prix viewing - Tifosi Lounge
June 18-22		AROC Convention
July 15	TBA	Movie Night
July 19	10:30am	Drive / Cottage BBQ
August 7	7:00 pm	Pub Night
August 24	TBA	Zig-Zag Tour
Sept 24	TBD	Drive to Wakefield
October 25	7:30 pm	Pot Luck Dinner

Toronto Chapter

Date	Time	Event
April 19	TBD	Tech Session
May 1	7:00 pm	Cruise Night
May 4	TBD	Sunday Drive
May 24	9:30 am	TZ Restoration tour
June 5	7:00 pm	Cruise Night
June 8	TBD	Sunday Drive
June 18-22		AROC Convention
June 22	TBD	Vintage Festival
July 3	7:00 pm	Cruise Night
July 6	TBD	Sunday Drive
July 18-20	TBD	Shell Historic Races, Mont Tremblant
July 19	1:00 pm	BBQ, Ottawa
August 7	7:00 pm	Cruise Night
August 10	TBD	Simcoe Tour
August 17	TBD	Picnic, BBQ
September 4	7:00 pm	Cruise Night
September 7	TBD	Sunday Drive
September 21	TBD	Wine Tour
September 28	TBD	Club Rally
October 2	TBD	Cruise Night
October 5	TBD	Fall Tour
November 6	7:00 pm	Pub Night
December 6	TBD	Holiday Dinner
February 28	10:00 am	Directors' Meeting

Watch for e-mail notices regarding the specifics of each event.



A beautiful TZ at Convezione D'Oro. Tony Adams photo.

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