



# ARCC UPDATE

August 2010

## *Alfa Romeo Centinario*

by George Beston, Cobourg  
photos by Brian Crockatt

This was a coordinated event organized jointly by the Toronto ARCC chapter and the Detroit AROC chapter, and was held on both sides of the Canada/USA border near Sarnia, Ontario and Port Huron, Michigan.

This is the second time in recent years a club event has taken us to the Sarnia area, thanks to our host and primary organizer, Elio Comello.

Unfortunately for me it's also the second time that I haven't been able to make it in one of my Alfas. I'm not quite ready to call it a jinx yet, but it's getting pretty close to that.

So, early Saturday morning, two round-tail Spiders belonging to the Adams and Crockatt families, and a wannabe round-tail of ours headed out westbound on the 401.



*Two round tails and a wannabe!*

We picked up Ken Lee in "Ruby", his plum coloured GTV at Trafalgar road, and later we also met up with Gord and Sue with their S4 Spider at the service centre just west of Woodstock.

As we headed further west, we fell upon a couple of fellows in a black Mitsubishi coupe, who passed and re-passed our group taking pictures galore. I was tempted to stop and ask them to join the club! As

we made our planned turn off the 402 to enjoy some country roads the rest of the way, they gave us a cheerful and friendly wave. I suppose as our Alfas get older and scarcer, it really is unusual to see even a small number of them travelling together.

The rest of our Saturday morning trip was a pleasant country drive that ended at the Comello residence in Camlachie, just east of Sarnia along Lakeshore Road.

Pat O'Reilly, was at Elio's to greet us and take pictures as we drove up. Elio was busy at that moment studying the local weather radar on the internet because of some predictions of rain in the afternoon.



*Arriving at Comello's.*

After parking our Alfas and a bit of a stretch, we enjoyed a delightful light lunch organized by Luciana Comello. Our agenda called for a visit to Automobile Metal Shaping in the afternoon, a trip downstream along the St. Clair River, a ferry ride from Marine City Michigan to Sombra, Ontario, and then a full course dinner at a Sarnia restaurant.

So, after lunch we headed into Sarnia and the Blue Water Bridge. Traffic on the bridge was pokey at best, and a thunderstorm broke out as we were crossing. The good folks of the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol opened the NEXUS lanes to all traffic

which helped get us through the border crossing in a reasonable length of time.

We re-grouped after the crossing and drove a few miles to the location of AMS near the Port Huron airport. We met up with a number of participants from the Detroit chapter at AMS and we were all welcomed by AMS owner Mike Kleeves and his wife.

AMS is a coachbuilding shop that does restorations for enthusiasts and prototype fabrication for manufacturers. Mike gave us an overview of various metal shaping techniques and their uses. In doing so, he discussed at length a couple of projects underway in the shop; a Gurney Eagle open wheeled race car, and a Porsche 550A. The 550A is the model manufactured immediately after the 550, the mid-engined sports racer which has gained far too much notoriety over the years for being the car driven by James Dean at the time of his fatal accident.

This 550A is a unique restoration opportunity because the owner wished it to be built up exactly as these cars were made in the first place, right down to the flame welding (on aluminum sheet!) done to join body pieces together, and hammer marks in some of the formed sheet metal pieces. According to Mike, a year's research was done before any fabrication began. In answering one of my questions, he agreed that the car has been reverse-engineered in that a number of surviving examples of the 550A had been carefully examined and measured, and this car was restored based on the findings of that effort.



*Mike Kleeves demonstrating flame welding.*

The results speak for themselves. The current plan is that this car will be shown at Pebble Beach this year as a work in progress, assembled but unpainted.



*Assembly beginning on the 550A.*

This is a Porsche that I can relate to. Straight-forward in design, light-weight, sophisticated and elegant, it reminds me of a lot of Alfa creations.

To satisfy our need to see something related to Alfas being done, Mike demonstrated the hammering of some aluminum sheet with the goal of forming a hood skin for a GTA, something that gets done in this shop once in a while.

An early low-nose Sprint Speciale body shell was on display painted in primer and getting close to final paint and assembly.



*Sprint Speciale under restoration.*

AMS graciously provided our group with drinks and cookies, and raffled off a bottle of some excellent California wine as a door prize. As a token of our appreciation, we gave Mike a plaque expressing our thanks for his efforts.



*Elio and Dave Hammond present the plaque.*

The drive down river on the Michigan side towards Marine City demonstrated where the term “Blue Water” comes from as the river is indeed a beautiful shade of blue as it rushes by.

The ferry carrying cars back and forth across the river between Marine City and Sombra is rather old and small, carrying only nine cars at a time. Service however is quite quick with the crossing taking less than ten minutes. The cost of the crossing is only a few dollars more than the bridge toll, and overall, it seems like a good way to go as long as the waiting lines don't get too long. Our fellow passengers included two women from Québec who were on their way back home after driving their motorcycles as far as Utah. And yes, they had some good stories to tell!



*Boarding the Sombra Ferry.*

After the crossing we re-grouped at a gas bar in Corunna and headed for our dinner at the Bread Man Café. This was a private five course dinner arranged by Elio. By dinner, our group had expanded to about twenty five people, including Phil and Carmen Gicante who drove up from London in Phil's ES-30 for the occasion.

After dinner we re-grouped chez Comello for a bonfire and even more socializing on into the evening.

After a good night's sleep we got together at John's restaurant on London Line. This place is famous for its enormous breakfast plates and its exclusive use of “Canadian Bacon”. Service was prompt and friendly, and the food did not disappoint. This would be a great place to cope with teen-aged appetites if you ever have the need!

After breakfast we did a driving tour of Sarnia ending up at Pat O'Reilly's home for a photo opportunity.



*Alfas in Pat's driveway.*



*Plaque presentation.*

To wrap up the weekend, we had an al fresco barbecue at Elio's house and some beautiful slate plaques were distributed to the Toronto Chapter and AROC National presidents to mark the occasion.

Thanks to Elio and Luciana Comello and Pat O'Reilly for their many contributions to this event.

All told, this was a marvellous weekend for those of us who participated. There was some discussion about repeating some or all of this event next year. If it happens, I'm in, and I'm determined to finally get there in one of my Alfas.

## Upcoming ARCC Events

### Toronto Chapter

Date	Time	Event
April 24	10 am	Tech Session Pinarello Motori
May 6	7 pm	Cruise Night La Paloma
May 16	10 am	Canadian Automotive Museum / Sunday drive
June 3	7 pm	Cruise Night La Paloma
June 19-20	TBD	Vintage Festival/Drive
June 23-27		AROC Alfa Century
July 8	7 pm	Cruise Night La Paloma
July 11	TBD	Sunday Drive
July 17-18	TBD	Toronto / Detroit Rendezvous - Camlachie
August 5	7 pm	Cruise Night La Paloma
August 8	TBD	Sunday Drive
August 22	TBD	Wine Tour or BBQ
Sept. 2	7 pm	Cruise Night La Paloma
Sept. 10-12	TBD	Alfas at the Glen
Sept. 26	TBD	Europa Rally
Oct. 3	TBD	Fall Tour
Oct. 7	TBD	Cruise Night La Paloma
Nov. 2	TBD	Director's Meeting & Pub Night - Cam's Place
Nov. 27	TBD	Holiday Dinner That's Italian

N.B. – Unofficial cruise nights happen every Thursday at La Paloma during the season.

### Ottawa Chapter

Date	Time	Event
May 8	3:30 pm	Where are all the Italian Cars?
May 30	TBD	Oxford Mills Car Show
June 18	6 pm	Weekend Fest Registration – Frank's
June 19	10 am 1 pm 2 pm 3 pm 6 pm pm	Italian Day parade registration – Frank's Lunch Parade Italian Car Show Banquet

### Alfa Romeo Club of Edmonton

Date	Time	Event
April	TBD	Tech Session - Lionel's
May	TBD	Spring road trip
June	TBD	Rally / Road Trip
July	TBD	European Car Meet Calgary
August 3-7	TBD	Rock-N-August
September	TBD	Fall Road Trip
October	TBD	Annual Italian Dinner
December	TBD	Christmas tree hunt

### Calgary Alfa Marque Society

Date	Time	Event
May 6	7 pm	Cruise Night
June 3	7 pm	Cruise Night
July 8	7 pm	Cruise Night
July 17	10 am	European Classic Car Show
August 5	7 pm	Cruise Night
September 2	7 pm	Cruise Night
October 7	6 pm	Cruise Night

### Events of General Interest

- AROC National Convention. Frederick, Maryland, June 23-27.
- Alfa Romeo Centennario. Milano, June, 26-27
- Ferrari Shell Historic Challenge. Mont Tremblant, July 9-11
- Pittsburgh Vintage GP. July 24-25
- Vintage Grand Prix. Watkins Glen, Sept. 9-11

## Alfa Romeo Club of Canada

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