



ARCC UPDATE

January 2012

The End of an Era – Frank's Garage, Ottawa

by Dave Semel, Dave Willis, Marc Grenier

After 38 years of serving the automotive needs of the Italian car community in Ottawa, Frank's Auto Centre at 95 Norman Street has closed. The garage has long been the home of the annual Italian Car Parade that celebrated its 32nd anniversary in 2011, the base for the Italian Car Club of Ottawa and many wonderful Friday lunches. The garage, the office building next door and the parking area adjacent to the office building will be turned into low-rise condos sometime in 2012.



The festive scene at Frank's Garage, Italian day 2006. Photo by George Beston.

The closing of Frank's leaves the Italian car community in Ottawa with the challenge of finding another facility willing to take on the work carried out so knowledgeably by Delio, Giovanni and staff for so many years. In addition, their large stock of parts has been dispersed meaning that future repair work will be dependent on car owners locating their own parts prior to work being completed.

Delio has assured the Italian car community of Ottawa that the successful car parade will continue on Preston Street although the registration locus will change for 2012. In 2011, there were 150 cars and motorcycles registered for the parade and the number of participants has been growing for many years with cars coming from Montreal, Toronto and New York State as well as the local area.

When asked for his best memories, Delio spoke about all of the friends they've made and dealt with over the years. Delio's plans include working on his daughter's new home but he admits that the day may come when he'll do some automotive work in his 'spare time'. Giovanni has been away from the garage, off and on, for a few years while his wife was working at the Canadian Consulate in Rome. While in Italy, he has been working on a family home and one might anticipate that he may move there some time in the future for at least part of every year.

Franco who works at the garage is not The Frank. "Frank's" was the name of the garage when Delio and Giovanni bought it. During their tenure, they owned a Lada dealership on Preston Street for a number of years and Frank's was the service centre. In fact, the closed garage still sports a Lada sign. Why Lada in Ottawa's Little Italy? Fiat set up the Lada factory in Russia, and the first cars were based on the Fiat 124: that's why.

The former Lada showroom now sells ceramic tiles, and you can't buy a Lada in Ottawa. From the beginning though, Frank's serviced all Italian cars and the garage was always worth looking into for exotica. Managers and parts men came and went, but the core quartet of craftsmen remained.

Dave Willis has fond memories of what he calls 'My Favourite Year' – 1998 or '9 – when Giovanni and Delio allowed him into a corner of the garage to rebuild his engine and gearbox, mentored by Giovanni. His engine stand was on casters so could be rolled out of the way when the lift was needed for a paying customer. In addition to the education, there were the lunches delivered by the Abruzzo community centre. Dave is also grateful to the quartet for getting The Alfatross on the road before they retired this year.

Our thanks for many years of trusted service and friendship go to Delio D'Angelo and Giovanni Centofanti as well as to their employees, Franco and Ugo.

Giulietta Rendering

by George Beston, Cobourg

Hard on the heels of the 2uettotanta spider in 2010 and the 4C in 2011 it seems that Alfa is about to spring the new Giulia on us shortly. The story goes that the CEO sent the design team back to the drawing board at a fairly late stage of development. Now, these renderings have surfaced. If it's accurate, it reflects distinctive styling that would be a big boost if we ever see the Giulia on our shores. Bring it on!



Renderings by A. Masera.

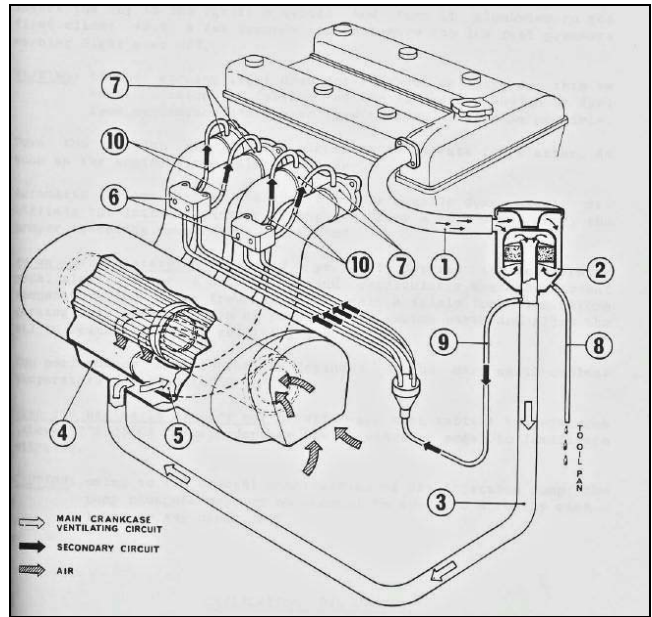
Imagine the Alfa Romeo line up we might have on a dealer's floor in a couple of years: The 4C coupe, the 2uettotanta spider, the Giulietta and the Giulia.

Of course, all the usual caveats apply. Fiat/Chrysler must succeed with a number of other introductions like the Dodge Dart before they'll have the luxury of bringing our favourite brand back to this continent.

Restoring the Alfa Romeo Oil Vapour Separator (OVS)

by Elio Comello, Camlachie

Alfa literature says little about the OVS, however it is a key component for engine health and emissions reduction. It is a common fixture in most all Alfas.



Oil Vapour Separator as used in early Spica cars.

The OVS is an ingenious cyclone separator and oil demister that keeps the engine under a slight negative pressure (see Alfa figure). Recovered oil is returned to the sump, vapours and moisture go to the air cleaner in the older Spider or direct to the throttle valve inlet of Bosch Spiders. If it does not work properly, in the extreme, it can lead to engine oil leaks, increased oil consumption, plug fouling, increased tailpipe oily soot and even impact the catalytic converter. In the Bosch Spider it can affect the fuel/air ratio because what is passed to the throttle inlet is unmeasured air.



I opened my OVS. Photo by Elio Comello.

The OVS should be cleaned out with solvent regularly. When this is done, invariably we find it is full of sludge, gunk and even chunks of non-ferrous alloy. The crud is material that is sucked out of the engine: oil vapours, moisture and blow-by all drawn out from cam cover space. The metal flakes are rust or brass from a disintegrating demister. It is not

unusual to find the carbon steel outer body to be corroded to the extent that it holes through.

The body of my OVS had become thin from corrosion, and the internal brass alloy demister had disintegrated. Obviously it did not work, everything went to the intake, and it recovered no oil. I found no sources anywhere for an OE replacement. An eBay purchase was in not much better condition. I saw details of a number of DIY versions and even an after market copy for \$150US plus shipping and duty. I looked for alternatives and "oil catcher" solutions, but most had no beneficial scavenging action or were expensive. I was stuck.

Serendipity came when I attended the AROC Detroit Chapter Benson's Barn open house and BBQ this summer. The featured guest was David Boenke, a master body metal restorer. It was rumoured that he had studied the OVS and had made an improved version. I had heard that it was possible to open up the OVS and rebuild it if the outer carbon steel body was not too thin. To this end I sent a couple of OVS's for Dave to dissect and/or repair.

Dave was able to roll open the top. He removed what was left of the brass alloy oil demister, replaced it with a continuous wound spiral coil of thin corrugated stainless steel duplicating the original demister function and dimensions. He repaired a thin spot in the body by brazing. The repaired OVS was reassembled and the top metal rolled back into place to seal. The entire repair was done for a very affordable price and it was for all intents "Original".

I am very happy with the performance. Dave has indicated that he is willing to do this repair to the OVS's of other Alfisti, as long as the body is in good condition. If you want further info on how to contact Dave or assistance with Canada/US handling I'd be pleased to help. Perhaps we can do a group repair while our cars are in winter hibernation. Dave is in Michigan; I am in Ontario on the border near Sarnia. ecomello@xcelco.on.ca

So, what's to do in the off-season?

by George Beston, Cobourg

It's that time of year again when there is precious little to report on when it comes to club activities.

I, for one, have many plans to make further progress on my Spider and its EFI / engine management conversion, but other than having it poised over my recently acquired (used) scissor lift, I haven't touched it since putting it away in mid-November. A few parts are here, more are on the

way, and I hope to get some useful technical articles out of my activities this winter.

Otherwise, if you want to do anything that relates to interesting cars in general or Alfas in particular, some travel is required.

Here is my dream list of events I would choose to attend this winter given no time constraints and a useful travel budget.

My first destination would be the Phoenix Arizona area. Everyone knows about Barrett-Jackson because of the never-ending Speed Channel coverage of their Scottsdale auction in January. I have only been there once. Back in 2001 I was drawn to this auction by the presence of a featured 8C Tipo C, which in fact was very beautiful. Unfortunately the auction of that vehicle never happened due to some concerns over its provenance. I came home with a beautiful poster showing that car, which was all I was going to get in any event. At this time I would not attend a Barrett-Jackson auction with much in the way of expectations for finding interesting Alfas to peruse. Having said that, I still think it's well worth attending to take in the atmosphere and check out the offerings of the numerous vendors present. I was particularly impressed with the art and sculpture that was available the year I was there. The "Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Event" dates this year are January 15-22. Their web site is well worth viewing to get more information.

Other auctions of interest in the Phoenix area are the RM auction on January 19 & 20 and the Gooding auction on January 20 & 21. These events are much more focused on the auctions themselves. They don't have the numbers of vehicles to auction that Barrett-Jackson does, but what they do have is more focused on high quality British and European cars.



Ex-Fangio Tipo 159 at Rétromobile 2011.

Let's see. After enjoying the sun in Arizona for a week or so, a trip overseas might be just the thing. The annual Rétromobile Antique Car Exposition

and Auction occurs in Porte de Versailles, Paris France this year from February 1st to 5th. All reports say it's full of a broad range of interesting vehicles, and the Alfa Classic Club de France is listed as an exhibitor. The auction itself takes place on February 3.

Of course, any automobile enthusiast travelling to France should get over to Mulhouse near the Swiss border to spend at least a day viewing the former Schlumpf collection which has been nationalized for some time now.

To complete this trip overseas, a visit to the U.K. is in order. The Historics auction at the Booklands Museum (Feb. 17&18) would be the icing on the cake. Reportedly, one of the auction items this year is an Alfa Romeo model collection, including at least a couple of the elaborate 1/8 scale Pocher Alfa models still in unopened boxes. Kiss your spare time good-bye for a while if you get your hands on one of those!

If things are dull and wet in the U.K. due to North Sea weather, get back to this side of the pond in time for the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance March 9-11 event and Auctions from both Gooding (March 9) and RM (March 10). The setting for these events is said to be second to none.

Finally, on the way back to Canada, visit the Simeone Museum near the Philadelphia airport. It's within a day's drive of home and has a rich variety of rare and beautiful Alfas. I was there in 2010 during the pre-convention tour and could have spent a lot more than the available time taking it all in.

Apparently, a lot more is going to happen at the track before next season. It will be really interesting to watch as things unfold. Another reason to look forward to next season!



A beautiful 8C 2300 at Rétromobile 2010. Photo by Peter Marshall.



Alfa Canadese

Toronto, June 17-24, 2012

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