



ARCC UPDATE

February 2017



"Alfetta on Test" – a watercolour "sketch" by John Lewington.

President's Letter

by Alex Csank, Vankleek Hill

As usual, I attended the Montreal Auto Show in January. This year, I attended the show with Marc Faubert, the president of the Alfa Romeo Club of Ottawa (ARCO). Although the show was filled with the offerings of all the major manufacturers, it is hard for me to get excited about the bulk of ordinary vehicles, particularly as they now look so much alike. It's almost as if there is a formula used by the designers, produced by crunching all the computer data from the bean counters, marketing departments and comparisons with offerings of competitors. That is to say ... it is very boring when the only difference between the products seems to be the nameplate

and choice of head and taillights. With the exception of a few unusual cars and trucks ... and the few *concept cars*, there was little to get my heart rate up.

Until we arrived at the Alfa Romeo display and were instantly transformed into drooling schoolboys as we laid our eyes for the very first time on the new Giulia in the flesh! Although neither example of the Quadrifoglio 505HP version (one in red and one in white) was accessible, there was a nice blue example of the Giulia TI equipped with AWD and a black interior which we were able to sit in and explore. The seating position, seats and controls made it almost impossible for either Marc or me to extract ourselves ... as we were so enchanted and well, everything felt SO right!



Photo by Alex Csank.

Of course, there were also some nice examples of the 4C in both Coupe and Spider forms and a couple of very pretty and nicely dressed, but also well informed and personable young ladies who were happy to show us around the display area and provide us with the usual brochures and other information. It was unfortunate that the new Stelvio SUV wasn't in attendance except on the big flat screen TV. But the few examples available are busy making the circuit in the larger market in the USA.

ALFA expo17

On the convention front, there is still a lot left to do as we ramp up towards the summer. We are beginning to receive quite a few registrations both online and by mail ... with already almost 50 family registrations bought and paid for! Thanks to the hard work of our convention committee, our scheduled events and other details are all coming together nicely.

Please remember that we still have plenty of important jobs left to do. You do not have to live in the Montreal area to help. Please consider helping us out by volunteering to help at the convention.

Please keep sending me your feedback, and also your photos, articles and ideas for the newsletter. George Beston is always looking for your input for upcoming editions.

LED light Upgrade

by Marc Faubert, Gatineau

Our 1980 Spider is in very average shape as we use it on a daily basis during the summer. If you really have to go to work, might as well drive there in a vintage Alfa Romeo.

As we all know, the secret to keeping our cars reliable is constant and meticulous maintenance.

Although I am not too worried about originality, I do tend to stick to OEM parts as much as possible. However, I do make the occasional exception in the name of reliability and/or safety.

My latest upgrade to the Spider was upgrading to LED lighting for taillights, turn signals, side markers and dash lights. I was constantly afraid of being rear ended because of my dim brake lights.

A bit of research led me to the Superbright LEDs website. They sell LEDs for all sorts of application: household, industrial and of course, automotive. The bulbs they sell are plug & play and use the same fitment as our regular bulbs. You can search their inventory based on car manufacturers. Sadly, Alfa Romeo is not listed. The closest I found was Fiat. I selected a 1980 Fiat 124 Spider. This only got me part of the way. Some of the bulbs suggested did not match what I had on the car, namely brake lights and front signal lights. The website listed type 1156 but the ones installed on my car were 1157. As the lights worked fine, I went with 1157.

Round headlights are also available but I find that they do not look very good on a vintage car. Or in the words of George Beston "A bit like putting a mini-skirt on your grandmother".

Another thing to consider is the beam angle and which colour to choose. I chose a 360° beam angle for all bulbs as that is most similar to regular bulbs being replaced. You also need to select the colour based on the colour of the lenses. For taillights you need red. Front markers and signal lights, amber. Installing a white LED behind a red lens will result in a pink glow instead of bright red.



Photos by Marc Faubert.

Now, although the price of LEDs has gone down significantly over the last few years, this is still not a cheap endeavour. Total cost for the bulbs amounted to C\$134.80 including shipping. I did not include licence plate lights and dash lights

were limited to the speedometer and tachometer. Fitting new lights to the smaller gauges is pretty much a dash-out job and will have to wait until next winter. I also neglected to order sufficient bulbs for the speedometer and tachometer as I was under the impression that it was only one bulb per dial. You need two per dial.

Again, fitment is no harder than replacing regular bulbs. One of the advantages of LEDs besides stronger light output is low power draw. This does cause a bit of a problem for flashers. Because of the low power draw, the relay thinks the lights are burned out and will not flash. I have tried using other relays made specifically for LEDs but remained unsuccessful. I contacted Superbright LED's technical support who confirmed that load resistors will need to be used for my application. One load resistor is required per LED so 4 in all at \$5.00 each.

At the time of writing this article, I had not yet received the load resistors but I am quite pleased with the results so far. My brake lights are now extremely bright and I can now see how fast I'm driving at night. Not that I really care about that!

Martellina's Insurance Story

by Elio Comello, Camlachie

For most of us *Alfisti*, the most attractive insurance coverage is often found through an affinity group (university, profession, union, etc.). It becomes most attractive in the "Package" form, with multi-vehicle, home and contents, retiree, etc., discounts. *Martellina* had great coverage, easily suspended and reinstated with one phone call, so insurance costs for the driving season were very affordable. I had enjoyed great rates for our two vehicles, but the "replacement value" of our home brought relentless yearly increases. Fed up after many annual discussions, reduced coverage and increased deductibles, I decided to get a quote from an alternate affinity insurer. Wow! Their rates were very much better, so I decided to change in advance of the renewal date, but DID NOT cancel the existing policy yet. The new underwriters, seeing that *Martellina* was 29, required an independent 3rd party inspection and a form signed by a licensed mechanic in order to get collision and comprehensive coverage. Not an easy task; the form and its legalese caused shops to pass. Not to worry; a garage specializing in German cars rose to the challenge. As expected, they certified *Martellina* mechanically as a first class vehicle, with the exception of a small windshield stone chip and one small "ding", barely visible at each door. The submitted form and my protestation could not convince the

underwriter to give more than Liability and Property Damage coverage. It was obvious they **did not** want to cover a twenty-nine year old car. So I switched only my home insurance but kept and renewed the car policy that had covered *Martellina* for twelve years.

Insuring *Martellina* with full coverage was without issues, but I was certain enough that an appraisal was required if you did not want arguments of value in the event of serious damage or loss. I had heard enough horror stories about write-offs at Black Book value. So in 2004 I called my insurer and asked who/how to get an approved appraisal. It turned out that any licensed car dealer could do this. A local dealer, which had a history of doing appraisals, provided one for a fee. It included internet and newspaper comparisons, photos and a thorough description of condition. I submitted the original to my insurer's file, no issue.

On the day *Martellina* was crushed, I thought; thank the Lord I have an appraisal on file!



Martellina, before and after the altercation.

Monday morning, with *Martellina* in the Novi compound, I called my insurance company and relayed the facts filing my claim. Not to worry; they would get on it right away. Was I hurt? No. Did I need a rental car? No. Mentioning that I wanted to get some forgotten personal items, remove the Ontario plates and take some photos, the insurer advised that if I could get a copy of

Novi Traffic's accident report it would for sure speed things up. Shortly they would arrange for an adjuster to assess the car in Novi. I was able to get the Traffic report and I faxed it to the claims department. Weeks passed without any progress and I started to regret not getting the rental car.

Finally, good news! "You lucky dog, your car can be repaired!" Where do you want it repaired? They sent the appraiser's estimate and a collage of pictures. Only trouble was that the repair estimate presupposed a complete used front end of a different colour from California, allowing hourly rates that neither the shop in Novi, nor one in Toronto would honour. To name just a few gaps; there was no allowance to remove the motor to facilitate the repair of the front bumper structures. I reported to Claims that neither the Novi nor the Toronto shop would accept the repair estimate and had no assurance of the California donor parts. Both shops quoted estimates that were double and that the repairs could take 3 months or more. In addition, I pointed out that with the grafted California front end my "repaired" car's value would be far, far less than in its original condition before the accident and since structural parts associated with the bumper shock to frame assembly repair required special attention in order to pass the new Ontario safety certification. Welding procedures, materials used in this repair need to be documented for safety certification. Thankfully my Claims contact accepted these arguments and championed my case up the bureaucratic ladder.

Finally, I got a call asking me what I thought the car was worth. I made reference to my appraisal on file and suggested the Haggerty insurance website which gives current prices based on condition for Canada and the USA would be good benchmarks to support my valuation. The Haggerty insurance website evaluation as well as a couple of listings in Auto Trader I referred to Claims seemed to get me in the range of a correct valuation. It turns out that my appraisal being eight years old was best ignored. Appraisals are valid for two years and set the absolute payout value (including sales tax) that the policy will pay out in a loss. Had they been difficult and stuck to the appraisal on file I would have most definitely been worse off. Claims gave me a verbal write off figure. I said "OK, but with additional 13% sales tax". They said no and convinced me a lot of work on my behalf had gone into the figure offered. So I said "OK", but I get to take off the new chassis stiffener and swap the polished wheels and new tires ... they agreed ("but keep it quiet").

There were three *Alfisti* interested in buying *Martellina*, but this was not an option. To purchase it through the contract auction firm that they used to recover value in the sale of write-offs was the only option. David Small and I planned to recover some value before *Martellina* went to auction, but this plan was quashed by the fact that the compound would not allow us to do any "work" because of insurance liability restrictions. So *Martellina* went to auction dressed, with all her "gifts" and I got the settlement cheque. It took 49 days, from accident to conclusion and that with a lot of effort and time on my part. I shudder to think the time it would have taken if my "100% not at fault" was not clear, if there was no witness or if there were injuries.

The Other Stuff

- I wanted to cancel the insurance on *Martellina*; after all, she was not going to be on the road for a while. They would not. In the end, when the insurance was cancelled I was able to get refunded two months' coverage cost. I was surprised that upon becoming a one-car family, they charged a significant "occasional" driver fee, for being added to my wife's vehicle, as well as clawing back the multi vehicle discount.
- It is important to have an appraisal on file that is valid, but bear in mind it becomes the policy's absolute payout limit for loss.
- Not all insurance companies will settle allowing you to buy out the wreck.
- Stuck in Novi, I relied on friends for a ride home to Canada. In fact, the policy would have covered cab fare or a rental car home (but you need receipts).
- By not opting for a rental car, I gained nothing. Mileage and tolls to retrieve plates and personal items, get the Novi traffic report and appearing at traffic court were on my dime. You need receipts, not an expense account.
- In the end, when the Red Ranger took over *Martellina's* stall, I got quotes and went with the house insurer. It cost me \$110 to cancel the insurance for Luciana's SRX.
- From what I have learned from *Alfisti*, it appears that specialty car insurance may be worth investigating. It appears you simply set your value and how you are going to use the car and that sets the premium. Perhaps someone will write an article on his or her experience.

- The onsite appraiser sent was far short of experience and knowledge of Alfas, witness the fact he thought *Martellina* of “Average” Condition. His expertise as tested by well known collision shops proved lacking.
- A pleasant, unexpected surprise was a “Mini Tort” settlement offer from the other party’s insurance company. They sent me a letter acknowledging their client’s fault and offered reimbursement of the deductible of my policy up to \$1000. Too bad I had \$200 deductible collision. Submitting a scan of my policy and the repair estimate got me a \$200US cheque. BONUS!

Ciao Alfisti! This closes the chapter on the *Martellina* file, gone but not forgotten! Let us hope that Alfa will make cars that give us the emotional and personal connection and intimacy we enjoyed with the pre '94 cars. That was when you drove the car and could fix it and not rely on the computer program you select but can't fix.

Editor’s Note: *Elio has contributed to the Club in many ways over the years and my friendship with him is a rewarding part of my Alfa club experience. I am particularly grateful for his Update articles on the many projects he conducted on Martellina, his very nice S3 Spider. I hope he finds a new, or at least new-to-him Alfa Romeo flame as an outlet for his enthusiast’s passion for the marque. G.B.*

Alfetta Chronicles

by George Beston, Cobourg

It never ceases to amaze me that despite owning my Alfetta for almost forty years, there are still things to learn about it.

Since day one, the alternator light has glowed dimly (only to be noticed in night driving) and that glow always increased in intensity with additional loads on the electrical system such as wipers or the rear window defroster turned on.

Over the years, I've followed up on a number of published suggestions regarding this issue such as turning the fuses in their fuse block holders and replacing the bulb itself, with all of them resulting in no change in the situation.

This past summer, and after an extended period off the road, I noticed that the light was visibly glowing in daylight, with the usual intensity increase under added load. I was on the 401 headed home at the time so there was little I could do about it. Well, an independent issue arose as I got closer to home – the Alfetta needed fuel. So, I pulled into the Port Hope service centre

and filled up. Life got really interesting when I tried to start it again. It wouldn't crank. Well (duh) it wasn't cranking because the battery was flat! Fortunately, I was able to bump start the engine and the battery had enough life left in it to keep the ignition and fuel pump running for the few remaining kilometres to home.

So, what's the problem? With the battery charged, the Alfetta would run just fine, but the battery voltage just kept dropping as it ran.

In the belief that my problem had a lot to do with alternator performance, I began the procedure of removing the alternator. In order to disconnect the leads, I removed the alternator's rear cover to get at the primary red wire, the one that normally would connect to the positive battery terminal connector.

What I saw was surprising and frightening. The red wire had pulled out of the ring connector and its bare end was exposed under the cover. It certainly explains why the battery wasn't getting charged, but I'm just lucky that the exposed end of the wire (which is directly connected to the battery) didn't get around to shorting out on something, melting insulation and maybe even starting an electrical fire.

So, the cure was to crimp and solder a new ring connector on the end of the red wire and put everything back together. Now the system shows appropriate voltage with the engine running and the battery stays charged.

Best of all, the alternator light in the instrument panel stays dark now under all operating conditions. I can only conclude that the root cause for the glowing alternator light for all those years was a marginal connection between the ring connector and hot wire of the alternator. Yes, the two items were crimped together, but not so well that they couldn't pull apart somehow.

So, if anyone reading this article has a glowing alternator light that persists despite efforts to resolve it, that ring connector is one more place to look. I'm sure a touch of solder in the crimped fitting would have made the difference in my case.

Giulia Pricing

As found on alfaromeo.ca

Giulia Quadrifoglio Verde	\$94,995
Giulia Ti	\$50,995
Giulia	\$48,995

Time to belly up!

Upcoming ARCC Events

Regional representatives are requested to send your 2016 events calendars to the secretary or the editor for inclusion in the next issue.

Club Alfa Romeo de Montréal

Date	Time	Event
1 st Saturday	Monthly	Alfas & Espresso, LaSalle Alfa
January 21		Pizza Lunch and Convention Meeting
February 11		Valentine's Day Dinner
March 12		Tech Session
April 23		Springtime First Drive
May 7		Montréal City Gimmick Rally
May 21		Gatineau Hills Road Adventure with ARCO
June 10		Grand Prix BBQ
June 17		Italian Car Parade in Ottawa
July 13-16		ALFA expo17 Convention
July 16		Fiat Breakout
August 27		Drive with Scuderia Alfa Romeo
September 9-10		Overnight Road Trip
September 24		Radunno Montebello
October 14		Autumn Leaves Tour
November 25		Holiday Party

Alfa Romeo Club of Edmonton

Date	Time	Event
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Calgary Alfa Marque Society

Date	Time	Event
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Toronto Chapter

Date	Time	Event
January		Executive meeting
July 13-16		ALFA expo17 Convention
September 24		Radunno Montebello

Alfa Romeo Club - Ottawa

Date	Time	Event
May 21		Gatineau Hills Road Adventure with CARM
June 17		Italian Car Parade in Ottawa
July 13-16		ALFA expo17 Convention
September 24		Radunno Montebello

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