



ARCC UPDATE

March 2017

President's Letter

by Alex Csank, Vankleek Hill

Spring has sprung once again! Whatever the weather may be doing today where you live, the icy grip of winter cannot hold on too much longer. Very soon, we will be back into another Alfa driving season. And what a season this one will be! With the arrival of the new Giulia, 4Cs in stock at the dealers and the upcoming deliveries of the new Stelvio SUV, Alfa Romeo has rejoined the ranks of the living in the North American market in a very real way. And let's not forget the upcoming ALFA expo17 combined AROC USA and ARCC convention being held this July in Montréal. It's going to be a terrific Alfa summer!

Although our small vehicular stable has other nice cars which serve us well over the winter months, I have been longing to climb back into my GTV6's comfy Recaro seat and fire up that all-aluminum hemi Busso 2.5 Litre V6! Somehow, there just isn't anything else on four wheels that stirs my soul like my Alfa Romeo ... I know that you understand!

On Friday the 24th of February, Diane and I had a terrific day. I drove Diane's feisty little Abarth into Montréal, where I got a chance to test drive a new Giulia Ti, equipped with the Sport Package and the Q4 All Wheel Drive system. Many thanks to ARCC club member and Alfa Romeo Specialist Germain Cornet, who invited us to visit and provided such a proper introduction to the new Giulia sedan. My impression is that the new Giulia is a very capable, comfortable, quick and great handling mid-sized sedan, suitable for Canadian roads and ready for plenty of fun. I am disappointed that a manual transmission is not available, and that Alfa Romeo has decided to make this car look and feel quite similar to its competitors from BMW, Audi, Mercedes, Jaguar, etc. I know that they are trying to succeed in a highly competitive market, but part of what I have always loved about Alfa is their courage to design and build cars that stand apart from the crowd and are not easily lumped in with the

offerings from higher volume manufacturers. But then, I am **not** a typical car buyer. Friends of mine in the USA have already taken delivery of their Giulias and soon we will see them running around and joining us at our club events. The Giulia has won, and is continuing to win, awards for design and performance world-wide and I am sure it will be a big hit on this side of the pond.



Alex and Diane with new Giulia. Photo by Germain Cornet.

ALFA expo17

Planning for the convention is taking up a lot of my time and energy and that of all the members of our planning committee. George Beston is busy working the numbers so we can keep tabs on our finances, while John Pickering is diligently making sure that our registrations keep rolling in and that our website is tweaked and running smoothly. Marc Faubert is busy making sure that the very popular Pre-Convention *Voyageur* tours will be fun for all participants, while Jean-Michel Reyssset is organizing routes and plans for our Self-Directed Driving Tours. Diane Taylor is helping to make sure that the hotel will be ready for all of our social events, seminars, vendors and guests, while Alain Raymond is busy organizing our Time Trials and Autocross at SANAIR. Germain Cornet is working with the planning team from the Montréal Fiat Club to get every detail ironed out for our Sunday Concorso in 'Little Italy'. On the other side of the border,

AROC USA's Dave Hammond is working with our own Elio Comello to provide us with reasonably priced, but good looking awards to present to the winners of the various competitive events. There are many other folks working in the background to help make sure that ALFA expo17 will be fun for all of our guests. I sure hope that you will join us. If you haven't yet done so, please go to www.alfaclub.ca and register before the early registration pricing ends and some of the events fill to capacity!

With any luck, by this time next month, we'll be back on the roads with our Italian Serpents, enjoying the first of the season's driving events! I encourage you to invite your friends along. You never know when someone new might catch the Alfa virus.

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

Until next month,
Rev high!

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Toronto Auto Show

by George Beston, Cobourg



Alfa booth at Toronto Auto Show. Photo by George Beston.

At long last, Alfa Romeo had a well thought out display at the Toronto Auto show this year. Both the 4C and the Giulia had a number of examples present, and the stand had a backdrop of a video screen with a repeating video collage of Alfas old and new in action. The staff at the booth was well informed and approachable. I happened to find long time club member Bill Moffet at the display,

and a young salesman spent a good amount of time with us talking about the current offerings.

I did get the opportunity to sit in a Giulia Ti. The experience left me wanting for more. I did ask to peek under the hood but was told that couldn't happen at the show. I suppose such activities might compromise the aesthetics of the display, but they should recognize that we gear heads want to have the experience and learn from it.

Come to think of it, technical data is generally not forthcoming from most manufacturers. The tendency is to almost deny the presence of engines in general, and to focus on the electronics used for safety and entertainment purposes. Alfa Romeo has a good story to tell with both of its current offerings, and perhaps an opportunity to distinguish itself from other manufacturers by telling the technical story. The challenge, of course, would be to tell a good story without creating confusion or boredom.

Since the car show, I have come upon a couple of sources of information on the Giulia. One was an Autoline Daily (<http://www.autoline.tv>) segment, and another was on the website Fiat Chrysler Authority (<http://fcaauthority.com>). Details were not abundant from either source, but they do give some meaningful descriptions of aerodynamic and mechanical features.

Charting Alfa Romeo's Course in Canada

by Matt Bubbers, Special to the Globe and Mail, February 27, 2017

Editor's note: It's not our normal practice to re-print newspaper articles. I could have simply provided the link to this article, but I wanted it in the newsletter so that members will be more likely to read it and so that it will be in Club archives for posterity.

We spoke with the Director of Alfa Romeo North America, Pieter Hogeveen, on the delayed relaunch of the brand in Canada, Super Bowl commercials and what it takes to maintain an old Alfa Romeo.



Image from Autoline Daily.

On owning an old Alfa Romeo:

Growing up, I used to drive Alfas. I'm from the Netherlands. My dad was in the auto industry. I sold Lancias in college and I drove a 1985 Alfa Romeo Alfasud. I loved it. It was so unique. I had a twin-spark, which was really cool. Many times, I had to open the hood and show people the engine. The car was quick. I think what's so cool about the old Alfas is the noise. The sound was always so unique. My Alfasud was black with a green stripe, a Quadrifoglio Verde. It was a fixer-upper. I bought it with 110,000 kilometres on it. It was where I learned to turn wrenches. Currently, I own a red Alfetta, a '76 GT. Also a fixer-upper.

On reliability:

I was very proactive working on my Alfasud. Obviously, back then you didn't have blogs, but you had big groups of Alfa people, and we were always kind of working on our cars together. That's the Alfa passion.

To come back to North America is obviously a huge deal. The whole brand is relaunching. Being high quality and reliable is the main thing. That is number one; that's key.

On the decision to "soft launch" Alfa Romeo back into North America with the 4C:

What's important to remember is that vehicle [4C] is for a unique buyer. If you make a huge launch campaign around a vehicle like that, then people are like 'hmmm.' The market isn't there. It's a unique, specialty vehicle. So what we did is come in with a more grassroots approach, start building our dealer network in the background, getting people to start talking about Alfa Romeo again.

On making the Super Bowl ads:

The Super Bowl is when our real campaign turned on. We had three Super Bowl spots. If you really watched, there was kind of a cadence. The first one was really driving curiosity for the brand, touching on all our rich history: We've been around for 105 years; we've won many Grand Prix. The second commercial, *Dear Predictable*, it speaks to the segment. People are kind of tired of buying the same cars over and over again. They rotate between the three [German] brands. We're different. And the third commercial, *Mozzafiato* [to take one's breath in Italian] was about putting some Italian flair in there.

On whether the Giulia launch behind schedule:

Yes. I think we had some holdups that were outside of our control. Our plan was to have cars in market by late last year. We're now talking February.

One of the reasons the vehicle was delayed is that, when you bring in a new vehicle, there are a lot of EPA tests and CARB emissions tests to do. We had to wait for certifications on the vehicles. You can't ship a car without a certification.

There were a lot of new introductions in the segment as well so we made sure we adjusted our product plan. In Canada, and the U.S., [compact luxury] is a leasing segment, so you've got to make sure you've got your content [standard equipment and options] right to get the right residuals to be able to compete in the big leasing segment.

On when will the Giulia arrive in Canadian dealerships:

We're shipping cars to dealerships right now. Cars are landing today [Feb. 16] or yesterday, including Quadrifoglio and the 2.0-litre version. They're on trucks being delivered. In the U.S., we have about 1,000 cars at dealerships now.

On justifying the Giulia Quadrifoglio's high \$87,995 price:

You have a twin-turbo, 505 horsepower engine, with a 0-100 km/hr time of 3.9 seconds. When we positioned this vehicle, we knew there was good demand out there. Demand will always be higher than the supply for this Quadrifoglio.

What is expensive – there are a lot of exotic parts – was the development of the engine. It's a 2.9-litre 90-degree [V-6] that allowed us to put the turbos inside [the V]. We utilized Ferrari engineers and we used their technology. But this engine was developed with Alfa Romeo and it will stay with Alfa Romeo; you're not going to see it anywhere else.



Turbos in the Vee. Image from Autoline Daily.

On where Alfa Romeos will be sold in Canada:

There are seven dealerships currently in Canada. The plan is to have around 10 dealerships by the end of the year. To grow a dealer network is difficult without product. Now we have product in the market. Alfa will always be separate from other FCA [Fiat Chrysler] brands with the exception of Maserati.

Fiat? They can be in the same room as long as there's a good separation between the brands. They're both Italian, and that's what they've got going for them.

On what's next for Alfa Romeo in North America:

The Stelvio [SUV], which we're going to launch late summer.

I'm not going to go into future product, but I think it's important that we have those vehicles that initiated all the passion for the Alfa brand. You've just got to keep an eye on that.

This interview was edited for length and clarity.

Gapless Rings – A Cautionary Tale

by George Beston, Cobourg

Gapless piston rings have a compelling logic to them and demonstrate significant benefits in dynamometer testing, but in my experience, they leave something to be desired.

Of course, there's nothing new under the sun, and the "gapless ring" concept has been around for quite a while. It has been pursued and developed to a high degree by the folks at Total Seal.

Ring gaps are a direct consequence of the nature of piston rings. If they were truly one continuous piece, they wouldn't fit into the ring grooves on pistons, and they wouldn't be able to "spring" outwards to maintain contact with cylinder walls both initially and as wear occurs. As that wear occurs, the end gaps open up, increasing leakage past them.

For a very long time, engine tuners have seen ring gaps as detrimental to performance. They routinely custom grind the ends of the rings they use to minimize these gaps in order to reduce compression loss and maximize power delivery. Of course, there are limits, and if the gaps are too small, the ends can be forced together with enough pressure that both rings and ring grooves

can be damaged resulting in large losses in performance.

As made by Total Seal, the gapless ring is made up of a conventional looking main ring section except that it is machined with a recess to accept a thin second ring in the same groove. These two rings are installed with their gaps offset, which eliminates the presence of an open ring gap.

With no gaps present, a cylinder will hold compression very well, and importantly, will also pull the intake charge in more effectively because there is much less opportunity for air to leak past the rings no matter which direction the piston is moving.

So the hypothetical benefits are many, and should be measurably reflected in superior compression, leak-down and volumetric efficiency. One article posted on [hotrod.com](http://www.hotrod.com) undertakes to evaluate a small block Chevy engine in three configurations including a baseline, hand gapped rings and Total Seal gapless top rings. Sure enough there are improvements along the way, with the gapless rings demonstrating superiority in all measures, and particularly power output.

See: <http://www.hotrod.com/articles/ccrp-0301-dyno-performance-piston-ring-test/>

My own experience with gapless rings began a number of years ago when I was rebuilding a 1750 engine from a parts car for my round tail Spider Jr. My plan was to undertake a thorough rebuild with a few modifications from stock in order to create a strong engine for the street. So, in addition to balancing the crankshaft, matching connecting rods, porting the head and lightening the flywheel, I also used Total Seal rings in the 9.5:1 Motronic pistons. I had a highly regarded shop source and install the rings, and I also had the liners diamond-honed to put a finer finish on them as recommended by Total Seal.

Initially, the results fully met my expectations. Compression numbers were high and uniform, leak-down results were excellent at 1 to 2 per cent, and oil consumption was very low for an Alfa, about a quart in two thousand miles. I never did get dynamometer results, but my Spider was very strong on the highway. With a 4:10 rear end it has been just as happy cruising at 85 mph as at any lower speed.

After a couple of seasons, which translates to about 6,000 miles, oil consumption increased dramatically to one quart every 500 miles. This eased off to some degree over the course of the engine's third season, to about one quart every 900 miles. Over the fourth and fifth seasons, oil

consumption steadily increased until it got to one quart every 300 miles or so. Along the way, I changed intake valve stem seals to see if that would make a difference. It didn't.

After vacillating and wasting time in denial, I finally bit the bullet and organized some compression and leak-down testing. Sure enough, cylinders #3 and #4 showed low compression and high leak-down numbers. During leak-down testing it was evident by the distant roar from the oil filler opening that the air was leaking past the rings and into the crank case.

So, with no other option, I pulled the engine and took it apart. The rings were a disaster. Oddly enough the gapless second rings were in pretty good shape, but the problems were in the one piece top ring. In cylinder #3, the top ring had broken and crumbled a bit, resulting in damage to the piston ring groove, scoring on the piston skirt and a couple of very smooth looking divots in the liner bore surface. The ring set in cylinder #2 seemed intact, but in #1 and #4, the top rings had broken evenly in two pieces and fell out of the piston grooves as soon as they were removed from their respective bores.



Piston #3. Photo by George Beston.

Here's what piston #3 looks like. The top ring fell out in many pieces. Note the damage to the ring groove and the ring fragments left behind. The gapless ring pair in the second groove had been removed prior to taking this photo.



Piston #1. Photo by George Beston.

There was very little apparent damage to piston #1. The top ring was broken in one spot and fell out in two pieces. The gapless ring set in the second groove still looks good.

I can only conclude that the top ring in #3 broke first, and that subsequent operation of the engine caused the ring to break up resulting in the piston and cylinder damage. Also, it seems that the top rings in #1 and #4 were headed down the same destructive path.

There was no evidence inside the engine suggesting extreme conditions such as overheating or detonation in the combustion chambers and piston crowns.

So, what gives? You will notice that I had the gapless rings in the second compression ring position. At the time I built this engine, that was the recommendation I was given. The thinking was that second rings did not do much work under a gapless top ring, and the second ring suffered in its sealing work if it didn't have more pressure on it than a gapless top ring would allow. Now I read that with a gapless second ring arrangement, the top ring can unseat or "flutter" due to high gas pressure between the ring sets. This flutter can presumably lead to fatigue and breakage of the top ring. Excessive wear I noted on the undersides of all the top rings would seem to support this theory.

Now, a number of years later, ring sets are available that put the gapless ring in one position or the other, and the choice is left to the customer to make.

All this tells me that gapless ring design and use is not fully developed for street engines, or at least wasn't at the time I put this one together. Presumably, the technology has evolved somewhat over the last while. I would happily defer to those with more knowledge or experience in this area of engine technology, but for now, in order to have some confidence in the durability of the engine I'm currently rebuilding, I'm going to stick with a conventional ring set.

Upcoming ARCC Events

Regional representatives are requested to send your 2017 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
April 23	10:00am	Springtime First Drive
May 7	9:00am	Montréal City Gimmick Rally
May 21	10:00am	Gatineau Hills Road Adventure with ARCO
June 10	1:00pm	Grand Prix BBQ
June 11	12:00pm	Veteran's Hospital Tribute
June 17		Italian Car Parade in Ottawa
July 13-16		ALFA expo17 Convention
July 16	9:00am	Fiat Breakout
August 13	9:00am	Drive with Scuderia Alfa Romeo
September 9-10		Overnight Road Trip
September 24	10:00am	Radunno Montebello
October 14	9:00am	Autumn Leaves Tour
November 25	2:00pm	Holiday Party

Alfa Romeo Club - Ottawa

Date	Time	Event
May 21	10:00am	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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Alfa Romeo Club of Edmonton

Date	Time	Event
July 13-16		ALFA expo17 Convention

Calgary Alfa Marque Society

Date	Time	Event
July 13-16		ALFA expo17 Convention

Toronto Chapter

Date	Time	Event
1 st Tuesday	Monthly	Cruise Night, La Paloma
April 5	7:00pm	AGM
April 22	10:00am	Auto Detailing Seminar
May 7	9:00am	Go-kart event, Downsview
May 22	9:00am	Victoria Day Pancake Drive
June 4	TBD	Member Appreciation BBQ
June 16-18	TBD	Vintage Festival, Mosport
June 25	10:00am	Rattlesnake Run
July 9	10:00am	Sun Collision Event
July 13-16		ALFA expo17 Convention
August 13	9:00am	Italian Car Day, Woodbridge
August 27	10:00am	Italian Gathering, Forks of the Credit
September 17	10:00am	Drive & Wine Tour, Niagara
September 24		Radunno Montebello
October 15	9:00am	Fall Colours Drive
November 25	6:00pm	Holiday Dinner Party

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