



ARCC UPDATE

June 2008

Alfa News

by George Beston, Cobourg

Fiat continues to pursue the thought of North American production, and has been holding talks with Chrysler over the past month. Following is a brief article by Dave Battagello writing for the Windsor Star that gives a perspective on the efforts of the Ontario government to attract Fiat to produce cars there.

McGuinty Courts Fiat

from the Windsor Star, Friday, June 06, 2008

With bad news of auto plant closures spreading across the province, Queen's Park retains a glimmer of hope that Ontario is in the running to land an Alfa Romeo factory.

Minister of Economic Development and Trade Sandra Pupatello called a May 21 meeting in Turin, Italy, between Premier Dalton McGuinty and executives from Fiat, Alfa Romeo's parent company, a positive step.

"They had a very good meeting," she said. "The premier had the opportunity to make his case in terms of any opportunity for Fiat in Ontario."

The Italian automaker is investigating whether to build a plant in North America to help boost sales of its mass market products under the Fiat, Alfa Romeo and Lancia brands -- currently not being sold in Canada or U.S.

There is a Windsor connection within Fiat. Its CEO, Sergio Marchionne, was raised in Toronto and received his university education there and in Windsor.

But Pupatello stressed the emphasis is on attracting the carmaker to Ontario and not specifically Windsor.

"They need to look favourably on Ontario and that was the premier's job," she said. "They had a very good meeting."

Marchionne has indicated with the weak U.S. dollar the time is right to consider producing cars for sale in North America.

Political officials from Kentucky and Georgia have also met with executives from the carmaker, but McGuinty went a step further by flying to Italy to meet with Marchionne.

Fiat has not set any deadline for a decision.

Toronto Chapter Restoration Shop Tour

by George Beston, Cobourg

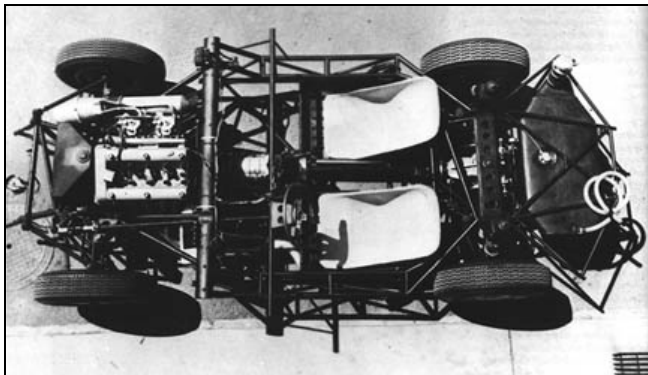
On May 24, approximately twenty of us gathered at the rendezvous point in Port Hope. After a beautiful drive north on County Road 10 through the rolling hills of Northumberland County towards the Ganaraska Forest, we were welcomed by Jim Sebert of Sebert Motors. Jim operates a restoration shop that works on interesting older cars. Current project cars in the shop included an MGTC, an MGA twin cam coupe, a Jaguar XK 120 chassis, an AC Aceca coupe and his daughter's love, a Super Beate tribute to none other than the Toronto Maple Leafs!

Of course, to us those vehicles were little more than a fitting backdrop to the reason we were there, which was a TZ1 in the final stages of restoration. Actually, the finished TZ body and frame were on stands, and it was relatively early in the process of having the mechanical components installed. The body looked wonderful in its dark red metallic paint, and it wasn't hard to imagine how good it will look when it's all together again. Apparently the plan is to have the entire vehicle together and ready to go later this year.

Jim requested that we refrain from taking pictures, because he feels that the owner should have the privilege of announcing the completed car to the world at his discretion. We agreed, and have only memories to share.

My strongest impression of the TZ is how light it is in comparison to more familiar Alfas. The tube

frame looks very delicate, and it is notable that there is nothing like a roll bar or roll cage built into it. Also, the transmission housing and driveshaft tunnel that we see built into the floor of unit-bodied Alfas just isn't there. The fuel tank is very unusual in that there are two tunnels running through it. These are actually used to secure the tank within the frame. Steel tubes run through these tunnels and are in turn bolted to the frame. The tunnels in the tank contact rubber collars around each end of the tubes. This feature is truly unique!



TZ 1 Chassis from Minerbi

This particular car had unfamiliar fender flares above the rear wheels which I couldn't recall seeing in any TZ pictures. I looked in the *Alfa Romeo – Zagato SZ e TZ* book by Minerbi, and sure enough, in the chapter entitled "Technology of the TZ-1 and 2", some factory racing team notes mention as one required modification "Rear indentation on the wing for the 5.50x15 Dunlop tyres."

The TZ's engine was on a stand which helped us get a good look at it. Given its cam lift and timing, and the particular spot in the engine's rotation, we could easily look through the ports on cylinder #2!

After enjoying Jim's hospitality, scones and coffee, and poring over the TZ and other projects in the shop for almost three hours, we retired to lunch at a local Swiss Chalet.

Toronto June Cruise Night

by George Beston, Cobourg

June is always one of the best cruise nights! For most of the afternoon, it looked like our June cruise night could be a repeat of the weather problem we had in May, and sure enough it rained really hard around supertime. The good news is that the weather cleared at about 6:00 pm, and the turnout ended up almost as good as ever. There were about 15 Alfas, and at least that many cars of other marques as well. Given my interest in Alfettas, I was pleased that someone brought out an example I hadn't seen before. It was an exceptionally good 1977 (I think!) example of one in silver.

We had lots of good conversation looking at interesting cars, and catching up with everyone's progress on their winter projects.



photo by Gord Zimmerman

Thirty Years with an Alfetta

by George Beston, Cobourg

Editor's note: What started out as an article that was intended to be relatively small has grown beyond the bounds of one issue. A second and possibly a third segment will follow in subsequent issues.

I've recently passed the milestone of owning my Alfetta for 30 years. It's a good time to pause and reflect on what must be one of the most underrated Alfas ever made. I won't try to convince anyone that it's a perfect car, but I do contend that it is a good design that deserves a warm spot in the heart of Alfa enthusiasts but this has been mostly denied to it so far.

My interest in owning an Alfetta had a lot to do with my prior Alfa which was a 105.48 1750 Berlina. It served my wife and I (and our first-born when we became three) well for eight years, and whetted my appetite for another Alfa. By the late 1970's, the Berlina was long in the tooth and more than a little rusty. A depressing trend in new car pricing had occurred during those years. The list price of my Berlina in 1970 was about \$3,700. The 2000 Berlina got up to around \$5,000 before it was discontinued. The price of an Alfetta when it came out in 1976 was around \$7,000 and the 1978 Sports Sedan brought with it an asking price of over \$11,000. The seventies were inflationary times, but the rate of price increases was far higher than inflation. When I saw the price of the Sports Sedan at the Toronto car show in early 1978, I gave up the notion of buying another new Alfa.

One fateful day in the spring of 1978 I was picking up my Berlina after a routine service at Esposito Motors when I got a sales pitch from Vince, extolling the virtues of an Alfetta he had for sale. It was a demonstrator with about 10,000 miles on it. This wasn't the first time Vince or one of his staff

had attempted to sell me an Alfetta, but somehow this car, its price and the new car price situation coalesced and made the deal an appealing proposition. This Alfetta came with a nicely trimmed body, then popular Cocoa Fibre floor mats, a Blaupunkt radio, 185x70 tires on Alfetta GT steel rims, and an Ansa rear muffler with twin pipes. I was not thrilled with the colour (Piper Yellow) but it wasn't a strong deterrent.

After some soul searching and a heart to heart talk with my better half, the deal was done. I picked up the Alfetta on a memorable Saturday in April 1978, with my first son (he was three!) in tow. We took the train to Toronto, the TTC subway and trolley bus combination out to Weston Rd, and then drove the Alfetta home to Cobourg. He remembers the experience to this day!

About three weeks after this event, our second son arrived. In the following months, we enjoyed the Alfetta, but found that it was somewhat small for the family. The interior seemed a little tighter than the Berlina, and trunk space was much less due to the gas tank location at the front of the trunk above the rear axle. The cure was to buy a very large car for the family, and keep the Alfetta as dad's personal four-passenger express. After about one year of this arrangement, I lucked into an old winter beater for very little cost. The winter beater and its subsequent replacements (it took about ten years to build up to a new car replacement for the beaters!) have given me the opportunity to use the Alfetta as a summer car and preserve it for all these years.

Over the last thirty years, miles have accumulated to about 120,000 at present. It has seen service for many mundane purposes including regular daily driving, commuting, and a vehicle for my sons to drive when the need presented itself. Our Alfetta has lots of fine memories associated with it. It has taken us to many Alfa club conventions in places like Ste. Agathe, Toronto, Ottawa, Danvers, Mass., Springfield, Connecticut, Detroit (twice!), Baltimore, and Manchester, New Hampshire. These trips have involved a range of situations including getaways for my bride and me, family trips with the kids, bonding with one or other of my sons and traveling with other Alfa enthusiasts. For the longest time it was my only Alfa and got pressed into service for driver's schools, track day events and even slaloms, but we were both younger then!

Since the restoration of my round-tail Spider, the Alfetta has been a refreshing counter-point in my pursuit of the hobby. It makes up for being less sporty and engaging by being far more refined and serene than the Spider. Other than a few external cues such as vent windows and separate bumpers,

(never mind a woeful lack of power accessories by today's standards), it could pass for a contemporary vehicle because of its ride quality and capable handling.

I frequently tell people I meet who don't have a car hobby (and aren't automotive enthusiasts at all) that I like to play with cars, and that Alfas make an excellent playground. "Playing" with my Alfetta has certainly been a big part of my recreational life. In looking back on my ownership of this car, I realize that my satisfaction with it has a lot to do with the large number of projects I have carried out over the years. Many of these have been responses to the well known laments that enthusiasts have about Alfettas. Common complaints are lack of power, heavy and clunky looking bumpers, balky gear shifting, miscellaneous issues with drive train, brakes and running gear, and that just starts the list. It's somewhat disappointing that North American Alfettas suffered as products of those early days of legislative influence over automotive design. This led directly to less power, more weight, less trunk room and a higher ride height than the car had as originally designed.

Frankly, I wouldn't have persevered with mine except for two facts. First, none of the issues are insurmountable, and second, Alfettas are pretty decent cars to start with. They are relatively small and light, well balanced for neutral handling, and have sophisticated driveline and suspension features not shared with prior mass-produced Alfa Romeo vehicles.

Also of interest to me is that the Alfetta Berlina is the first example of what turned out to be the last unique vehicle platform that was solely developed by Alfa Romeo as an independent company. The Berlina introduced the new chassis and running gear but kept some of the familiar aesthetics of the earlier 105 series Bertone GTV's and Berlinas.

My comments relate to my own activities on my 116.33 48-state 1976 Alfetta Berlina, but I'm sure much of what I've done applies easily to other Berlina versions and the GT's of the era. For starters, many people insist that my car is a 1975 Alfetta because it has the original narrow grille. I hate to get into these discussions because they can be time wasters, but my reasons for insisting that it's a 1976 model year car are that it was manufactured in July, 1975, and came with an owner's manual picturing the identical car (front grille and all) and calling it a 1976.

Rather than giving a chronological list of projects, I will discuss engine tuning, driveline, suspension, bodywork and interior projects in future segments.

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.



Fritz Durenberger poster

Alfa Romeo Club of Canada

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ARCC Update

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