



ARCC UPDATE

December 2009

Museo Storico Alfa Romeo – Addio?

by Elio Comello, Camlachie, Ontario

Prologue

In 2004, after buying “Martellina”, my fine ‘87 Quad Spider in Fayetteville NC, I drove her to her new home in Camlachie. Having been “widowed” 13 years earlier from her predecessor, a beloved ‘71 Kamm Tail, I endeavoured to establish solid Italian ALFA roots. I was born in Italy, and now I’m a retired electrical engineer and pretty fluent in Italian. With Fiat’s acquisition of Alfa Romeo, I thought it wise to establish an Italian connection to ensure longer term European support beyond the resources we are fortunate to have in NA.

Through family connections in northern Italy, I was able to connect with Ing. Giovanni Groppi, found shopping for “Alfa stuff” at Imola. His Alfa credentials: a master’s thesis on the subject of stress analysis of the twin cam head; ownership of a ‘69 Alfa 1600 Junior Zagato and a ‘91 S4 Euro Spider; he has a partnership in a firm that translates technical literature & drawings (Alfa manuals included); and, he’s an executive of the C.P.A.E (Club Piacentino Automobili d’Epoca www.cpae.it) and the Vernasca Silver Flag event.

For the last 5 years Giovanni and I have corresponded, become friends, but never met.

Last visitors to Arese?

It is always a significant event to become a “senior citizen”, but mine was something special. My son was overcoming some personal issues and getting on with his life. While doing some father/son stuff, he reported he was going on a business trip to Germany and Italy. Mike is 32, an electrical engineer, and his work involves providing training in Kaizen and production monitoring software. The purpose of his trip was to provide 2 days of on-site support and training at American owned robotic manufacturing facilities in Germany and Italy (who are making frame and suspension sub assemblies

for Fiat and Alfa as it turns out). I immediately blurted out “I’ll come with you Mike!”

After sorting out some details, it made sense. I could assist in translation. He would have company. His company and the Italian customers welcomed the free guest interpreter, so I had an official presence. I was happy to do it without pay; car, hotels and tolls were no more expensive for two.

Okay, so we were on our way, making travel arrangements. I advised Ing. Giovanni of my itinerary and tested if we could meet up. As it turns out Giovanni lives close to Piacenza, which was on the business travel route and dates were good. I looked into a visit to the Museo Storico Alfa Romeo in Arese, but discovered that it was not open on weekends. Bummer!

I met Mike in Rome on September 30. We picked up a rental car (Ford Mondeo TD) and headed south to Caserta for 2 business days. On Friday evening, we drove north past Rome and stopped in Umbria for the night. On Saturday morning, we went to Piacenza to meet Giovanni.

Checking my emails with Mike’s computer, I had received an email from Giovanni ... “Good news! I have been able to arrange a private visit to the Alfa Romeo Museo Storico in Arese 10 a.m. Sunday Morning. I’ll meet you at hotel 4 p.m. Saturday, for a tour of Piacenza, then you can see my cars followed by supper at my home.” In Italy, if you know someone or have connections, anything is possible ... how else was Ing. Giovanni able to arrange for a special private opening of the Museo on a Sunday?

What bounty on turning 65! It can be said that Muslims must visit Mecca, Jews the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, Catholics the Vatican and Alfisti, the Museo in Arese. I was about to achieve Alfista salvation.

We met Giovanni, visited his “stable” and I lusted over his Junior Zagato. We did the road course/hill climb route of the Vernasca Silver Flag (an invitational road race for historic competition cars organized by C.P.A.E. We traveled the back roads,

through manicured hills and valleys (many with medieval castles) of the lush Piacentine countryside in fall splendour. Oh, how I wish to go back and do this drive in an Alfa! That night at dinner, Mike and I met Giovanni's architect wife Elena and their three children. We exchanged gifts, followed by a wonderful dinner complemented by three fine local wines. An evening to remember!



Next morning, Giovanni met us at the hotel and we made the one-hour drive to Arese and the Museo Storico. We arrived on time and the guard had already opened the main gate. We met Lorenzo, our tour guide who spoke English. We were told that plans to relocate the Museo were impacted by the economic situation and were on hold. Across the Museo's square were the old administrative offices, and the design and engineering center, closed for some time.



On entering the Museo I was awestruck. I felt like a child with free rein in a candy shop. My son Mike, the designated photographer documented the cars and the emotions of his father in some 200 images. I was truly overwhelmed at the engineering and mechanical excellence evident in the Classic and the Competition cars. I was surprised to learn that many cars were totally made by Alfa, without any

outside suppliers whatsoever. My absolute favourite was the 8C 2900B Le Mans, deemed arguably the fastest, most expensive, rarest and unluckiest car in the world. Followed closely by the original unrestored 1925 RL SS bought by Alfa and returned to the Museo from Pakistan. To be honest the TZ and TZ2 also struggled with my soul for top pick.



I was surprised that the "newest" Spider on display was a 1966 Duetto. The youngest production car on display was the 1974 GT Junior. The 1967 GT Am and GTA Junior took my breath away. Engines on display reeked of sophistication, innovation and pure artistry. I was surprised that the history of the twin cam hemi engine design most of us still operate dated back to before 1920, with mass production from 1954. No "newer" Alfas, not even the 8C Competizione were to be seen.

Lorenzo told us that full 70% of the cars on display were always kept operational and "good to go". In fact most of the display cars regularly take part in displays, concours and invitational track events all over the world.



We did not want to overstay our welcome, so as afternoon approached suffering from intense Alfa euphoria overload and an Italian's automotive

pride, we made way to say our good byes. Lorenzo handed each of us a copy of the Museo's colour guidebook and then looking at me he said "Perhaps you would like a few extra copies for your friends?"

I thanked Lorenzo for his time and took down his email address. He generously offered to work on some follow up questions pertaining to North American Bosch Spiders for me. It was impossible to repay those involved in our "private" visit. I could only try and to this end, I sent letters of appreciation to the director of the Museo and Lorenzo, small tokens.

After Arese, Mike and I traveled to a plant outside of Torino for a two-day onsite call, and then on to a prospective client company in Parma, that was the end of the business part of our trip. We continued east to Friuli in the province of Udine where I was born. Here we spent 4 days visiting family, friends, enjoying the fine weather, the food, and the wine.

I noted that a large majority of the cars on the road were late model, many turbo diesel (our Mondeo got better than 1200km per tankful!). The only pickup trucks we saw were Tatas (from India). Is the \$2,500 Nano next?

Starting in Rome September 30, my trip of a lifetime ended October 11 when we left from the Venice airport for Toronto. The only thing I wish I had brought was my Spider and the only thing I would have changed, was to have been able to rent a MiTo for the 2500km trip.

Epilogue

There is a lot of uncertainty in respect to the Museo. It was announced that the Museo, closed for some time, was to reopen on Sept 8 2009. During our October 3 visit, we were led to believe that the Museo was closed pending a relocation which is now stalled due to the economy. Currently the Museo website is closed and the Alfa Romeo UK website reports: "We inform our customers that the history museum will remain closed until Dec 2009 for works." I was not able to clarify the situation in respect to plans for the Museo through my contacts in Italy. I hope it is not ADDIO to the Museo and I trust we were not among its last visitors. I hope the Museo lives on and that the uncertainty will be cleared up. For now if you plan a visit I would recommend that you make arrangements in advance, lest you be disappointed.

As we all know 2010 is Alfa's centennial. Giovanni indicated that there are no known celebration plans. In fact the C.P.A.E who are planning the 2010 Silver Flag event in June have no indication of Alfa's plans at this time. Though the MiTo is enjoying great success, Alfa sales are down

disturbingly and Fiat/Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne has been quoted as telling Alfa that it cannot reinvent itself every 4 years. Indeed we Alfisti live in interesting times.

All photos by Mike Comello.

Editor's note

100th Anniversary Events

Elio's article raises the issue of what might be going on in Europe to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Alfa in 2010. Dave Hammond of the Detroit AROC chapter pointed us to the AROC New York web site that contains more recent information from the Alfa Romeo club in the Netherlands. Check out "Alfa Romeo Centennial Milan 2010" on your favourite search engine and you will find it.

In brief, there will be 100 hours of celebrations organized by Registro Italiano Alfa Romeo between June 23 and June 26, including events in Milano, at the Monza race track, the Museo and the Balocco proving grounds.

It seems the Dutch club has put together two trip packages, one for nine days from June 19 to June 27, and another for five days from June 23 to June 29. The idea is to start in the Netherlands and drive across the continent to Milan to enjoy the festivities.

ARCC Classified

For Sale

1987 Milano for parts. This was the first Milano in Canada. It was parked in my mother's driveway in the fall of 2003 and hasn't moved since. Now Mom says it has to go – and before Christmas! I'd be happy to sell the whole thing as is and where is but if you want something in particular we can discuss who is going to pull the parts. Please leave a message at (416) 499-7129 or send an email to jwpalfa@gmail.com.



Upcoming ARCC Events

Alfa Romeo Club of Edmonton

Date	Time	Event
June 10	TBD	Wetaskawin
June 27	TBD	Porsche meet
July 14-19	TBD	AROC Convention
August 10	TBD	Rock'n August
August 29	TBD	Concours
September 21	TBD	Fall Colours Run
November	TBD	Italian Dinner
Dec. 13	TBD	Tree Hunt

Ottawa Chapter

Date	Time	Event
June 8	7 pm	Pub Night – Pub Italia
June 20	9:30 am	Italian Week parade
June 25	7 pm	Tech Session
July 1	10 am	Italian Car Show
July 14-19	TBD	AROC Convention
July TBD	TBD	Summer BBQ event
Aug.10	7 pm	Pub Night – The Swan
Aug.15 or 16	TBD	Beau's Brewery
September 13	TBD	Drive to Calabogie
September 19-20	TBD	Drive to Algonquin
October 17	TBD	Italian Car Christening Party
November 7	7:30 pm	28 th Annual Pot Luck

Toronto Chapter

Date	Time	Event
May 10	TBD	Sunday Drive
May 30	10:30 am	Restoration Shop Tour Legendary Motor Cars
June 4	7 pm	Cruise Night La Paloma
June 21	TBD	Vintage Festival/Drive
July 2	7 pm	Cruise Night La Paloma
July 5	TBD	Sunday Drive
July 14-19	TBD	AROC Convention
July 19	TBD	Summer Wine Tour
August 6	7 pm	Cruise Night La Paloma
August 9	TBD	Sunday Drive
August 16	TBD	Picnic, BBQ
September 3	7 pm	Cruise Night La Paloma
September 27	8:30 am	Europa Rally
October 1	TBD	Cruise Night La Paloma
November 4	TBD	Director's Meeting & Pub Night
December 13	6:00 pm	Holiday Dinner That's Italian Ristorante
Feb 27, 2010	9:30 am	Directors' Meeting

Calgary Alfa Marque Society

Date	Time	Event
May 2	TBD	Drive to Nanton RCAF Museum Tour
May TBD	TBD	Garage Tour
June 6	TBD	3 Hills car show
June 27	TBD	Drive to Gleichen Blackfoot Museum Tour
July 11	TBD	Stampede Breakfast & Alfa Car Show TBC
July 14-19	TBD	AROC Convention
July 18	TBD	European Car Show, Stanley Park
July 25	TBD	Drive to Canmore via Hwy 1A
August 1	8:30am	Local meet & coffee
August 22	TBD	Drive to Chain Lakes & Picnic
September 10	7 pm	Parking lot meeting
September 26	TBD	High River Car Show

Alfa Romeo Club of Canada

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ARCC Update

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