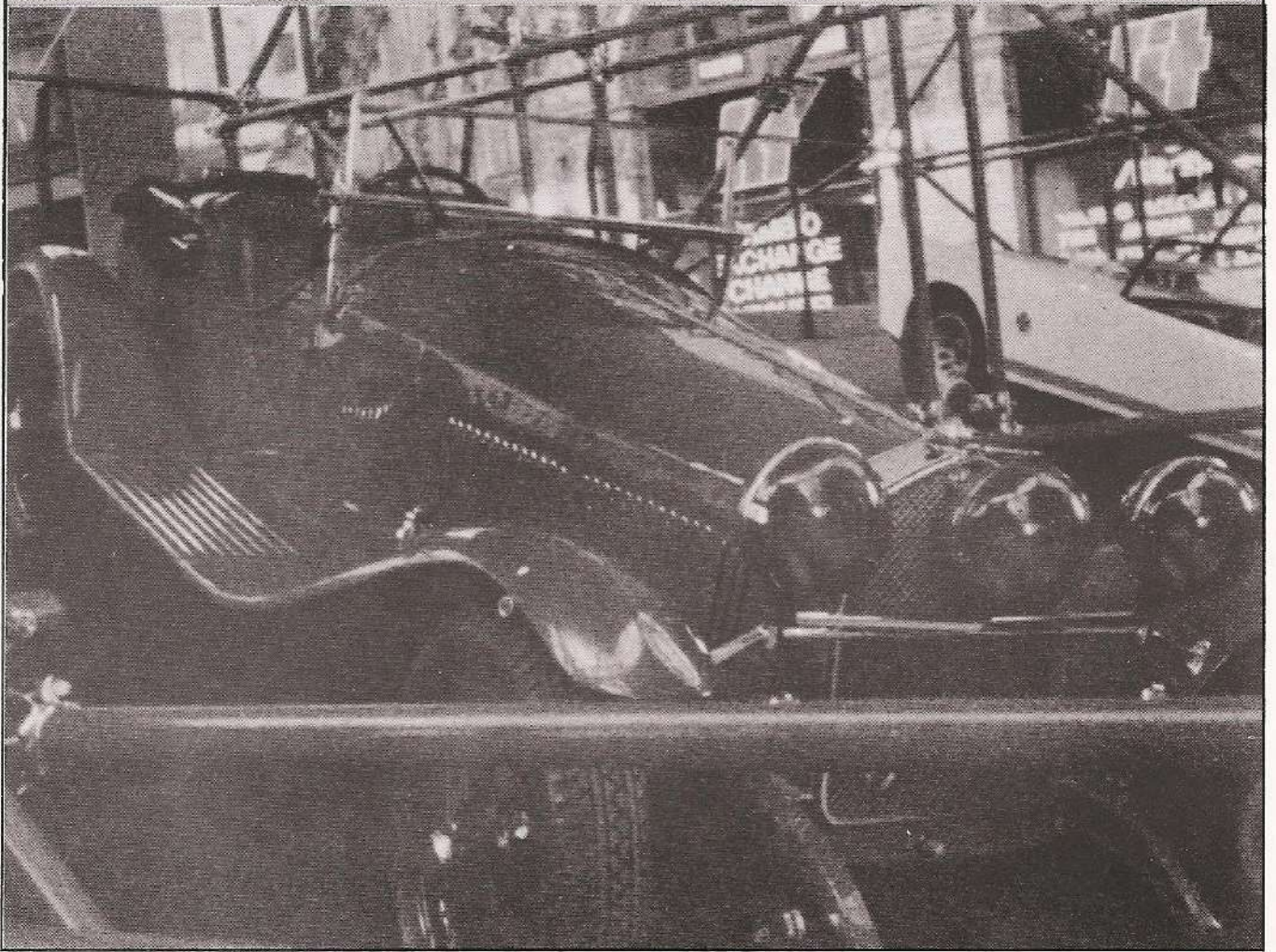


AlFacionada!



ALFA ROMEO OWNERS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



ALFACIONADA!

ALFA ROMEO OWNERS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

ALFACIONADA is the monthly publication of ALFA ROMEO OWNERS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, a regional chapter of ALFA ROMEO OWNERS CLUB, INC. Subscriptions to this newsletter are included as part of the \$47.00 membership fee paid to AROC, Inc. Meetings are held monthly on the LAST FRIDAY of the month at 8 p.m. at Alondra Park Clubhouse, located at 3850 Manhattan Beach Blvd., Lawndale, Calif., unless otherwise noted in the newsletter. Please send articles, letters, ads and photographs to the newsletter editor by the first of the month for publication in that month's edition. Classified ads are available as a free service to members and at a nominal \$10.00 charge to non-members advertising Alfa related items. This newsletter and its authors and editors assume no liability for the accuracy or legality of any technical information appearing herein.

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GENERAL MEETING

IMPORTANT NOTICE

If you want to learn how to tame those pesky Weber carbs of yours, or if you're thinking of converting, you'll not want to miss the March General Meeting at Alondra Park on the 30th. Our guest speaker will be John Concialdi from Redline Co., distributors of Weber carburetors. Be there! It'll be a GAS!!!



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PAROLA DI PRESIDENTE

Dan Ritter

It's been great to receive responses from the membership. Sometimes I fear no one is reading this column and all this writing is in vain. However I rejoice in the overwhelming response from many of you regarding the piece in the December issue concerning Alfas in film. I will compile all the additions and hopefully we'll publish an updated list in the late fall. One letter from Phelps Hobart, the president of the Delta Sierra Chapter talked about a famous car which many of you are already familiar with but for those who aren't it is one of the most beautiful cars that has appeared in the movies. A 6C 2500 SS with a Pinninfarina convertible body, this beautiful machine carried Rosano Brasi, Eva Gardener to romance and heartbreak with Humphery Bogart to round out the love triangle. Actually this was Tyrone Power's car. He purchased it in Italy and drove it for sometime after the filming of *The Barefoot Contessa*. The original color was black and Phelps shares my annoyance that they never washed the car for the entire duration of the film. The 2500 found its way to Nort Newman who was an active AROSC member until he passed on in 1984. Nort had restored the 2500 SS, repainted it red and campaigned it in local concours along with his other 6C 2500 convertible (Touring I think) which was painted a light blue. The light blue car is featured in Joe Benson's Buyers Guide. The last time I saw the 6C 2500SS was at the Burbank Car Show where Nort's widow was offering the car for sale. I think the price of the car at that time must have been around 17K to 20K. I understand that Phelps saw the same car at the Monterey Historics in 1985 and had considered purchasing it for 25K. However he bought 2 fixer 2500's for 10 instead. Phelps indicated the same Tyrone Power 2500SS sold for 137K in Cannes in 1988!

POINTS OF INTEREST

What a terrific general meeting we had on Feb. 23rd. With Mike Sperry as the guest speaker the throng of Alfisti were treated to an advanced lesson in cylinder head preparation. Mike has been working with a new fuel injection system designed specifically for modern engines such as the Alfa 2.5 and 3.0. The system allows for a more flexible mixture control which is critical when changing cams and or port and polishing is performed. What an honor it is to be associated with Mike Sperry. His generosity is greatly appreciated (he has donated a set of big valves each time he has presented at our meetings). Thank you Mike
I also want to thank Jan Cline and Vicki Dillman. Here are two enthusiasts who drive from far distances (Vicki lives in San Diego) not only to attend the meetings but to bring refreshments as well! Both ladies baked their own cookies and it is axiomatic that the attending members were in accord as to the flavor. I say two thumbs up for Jan & Vicki.

The next general meeting will be Fri. March 30th at Alondra Park and our guest speaker will be John Concialdi, a representative from Redline corp who are the distributors for Weber carburetors. This would be of special interest to the owners of older cars and to those who are interested in conversions.

ALFACIONADA

On April 27 Paul Dexler has graciously agreed to present slides and talk about the Alfa Romeo Museum in Arese. Until then-

A Rivederla

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS & JUST NEWS

Stu Schaller

It's amazing how different people view the value of an old Alfa all over the world. Here are some results from auctions held in England, France and Italy in December 1989. 1950 6C2500 Pinninfarina Cabriolet, excellent cond., England, \$148,500; 1960 Giulietta Sprint Veloce, new restoration, Italy, \$16,900; 1962 Giulia Sprint Normale, Good, France, \$12,500; 1963 Giulia Spider Normale, very good, France, \$28,600; 1964 Giulia Sprint GT, Excellent, Italy, \$13,250; 1964 Giulia Sprint Speciale, vintage racer, Italy, \$16,900; 1965 2600 Spider, very good, France, \$37,600; 1965 GTA, vintage racer, Italy, \$104,400; 1971 GTV, Excellent, England, \$7,200; 1971 Montreal, excellent, Italy, \$25,700. These prices all seem reasonable except for the Giulia Spider, which is about double the going U.S. price. In ads for February 1990 in English magazines prices seem very high, for example: 1974 Spider, very good, \$19,800; 2600 Spider, excellent, \$64,200!!; 1972 GTV, very good, \$16,400; 1967 Sprint GT, very good, 14,800; 1958 Giulietta Spider Normale, very good, \$26,300; 1965 Giulia Spider Normale, very good, \$32,900!!; 1969 Duetto 1750, very good, \$21,400. It appears that English dealers are asking about double what the same car commands here.

Alfa has decided to run a second Indy car in selected races driven by Unser. I recently went to a Porsche literature and models swap meet and found, of all things, a factory press kit on the 1989 car complete with photos, slides and even a book containing Alfa's Indy history. No, Alfa never officially ran at Indy, but privateers ran P3s, 8C, and 308 type GP cars with modifications in the late 1930's and throughout the 1940's; unfortunately without any real success.

Recent Alfa articles have included one on the 2 million dollar plus 8C Gran Prix car and 1970's Spiders in *Road & Track*, a Giulietta article in *Classic and Sportscar*, and some stuff on the 164 and ES30 Zagato in French, German and Italian magazines. I have not as yet seen any of the new Alfa books I mentioned last month, and at current book prices I have decided to see them first, rather than just buy them through the mail. I understand the Dutch Alfa club magazine is thinking about issuing an English language version. The Dutch magazine is superb, because many people in the club write articles for it; the Dutch obviously feel that participation is the key.....somewhat different than most people here.

For those of you into miniatures, 2 French companies STARTER and PROVANCE MOULAGE have recently done a number of Alfas: GTA's, Giuliettas, Zagato SZ's, TZ's, TZ2's, and Type 33's. As these are difficult to find in the U.S., I suggest you write to Rod Ward at Sun Auto, P.O. Box MT1, Leeds, England. These limited series resin kits sell for about \$40 each.....tell Rod I sent you.

continued page 4

Still have not gotten an answer about a speaker from Patrick Racing for our April meeting, but I'll let you know as soon as I know. I am also trying to get Rick Cole to speak to us on Alfa values and appreciation; Craig Morningstar, the Alfa PR man; and even Phil Hill for a meeting this year.

Well guys, after spending the last 2 1/2 years fixing up my 2600 Spider, it's gone. I seriously looked at what still needed to be done and what it would cost. I was offered what I considered to be a good price, so I let it go. I am looking for a very nice 105 series GT, a 1600 GTV, 1750 or 2 liter. I want a car that needs very little and I'm willing to spend about \$8,000. If you have anything, please let me know.

The first Formula One race was somewhat of a surprise; not in the fact that Senna won, but in the fact that Cosworth powered cars were able to keep up. Jean Alesi, a new hot-shoe finished second in a Tyrrell.

My good friend Peter Zobian, just traded his 1900CSS Touring, the first one built, S/N 1594, in need of total restoration, for a Chia bodied car in perfect condition, with only 24,000 original kilometers on it. I will try to get Peter to bring this car to a meeting as soon as it arrives in the U.S.

"Til next time

Stu

continued from page 7

CRITIC'S CORNER

Larry Meyer

The emphasis then shifts to Ricart's aero work, and there are photos of the amazing 2500 bhp, 50 liter, turbocharged, 28 cylinder radial Tipo 1101. We are then "treated" to a look at the grim days of 1943-45, which begins with a heavy Allied bombing run that prompted Ricart to move his staff to the safety of the beautiful nearby lake district. After Mussolini's ouster, Ricart had to contend with German soldiers trying to kidnap Alfa engineers to bolster their bombed-out factories at home. A massive US bombing run leveled the Portello factory, and leaving few survivors. Ricart left for Spain in early 1945; mere weeks later, partisans moved on the factory and murdered Gobbato. The car Ricart had planned for a post war Italy, the Gazzela, proved too costly to build, and was stillborn.

Back home in Barcelona, Ricart joined E.N.A.S.A., the nationalized truck builder, where he finally created the GT of his dreams, the superb Pegaso, a car which badly outclassed the early roadgoing Ferraris. The name (Pegasus) seems like sweet revenge directed at Enzo--the flying horse clearly surpasses the cavallino rampante or prancing horse.

At Alfa, it is obvious Ricart's legacy was not his designs but Orazio Satta and the staff he assembled and trained, who were getting ready to build the company we know.

There's no trick to making an Alfa fast and reliable.

You just have to know what you're doing.

We have over 15 years experience repairing, maintaining, modifying, racing and caring for Alfa Romeo motorcars.

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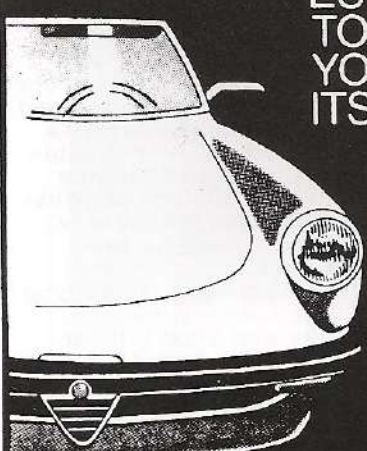


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




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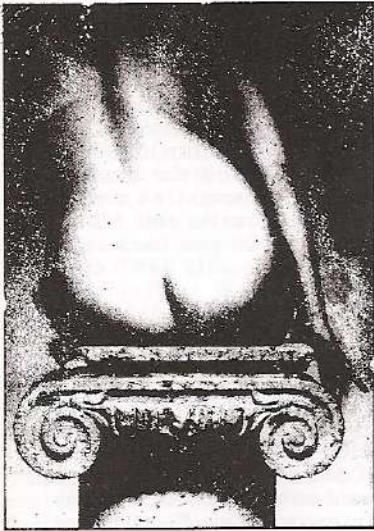
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EDITOR'S DESK

I'll be the first to admit that I have an irrational love of automobiles. In spite of all the evidence that cars are one of the biggest baddies in the pollution battle there are some cars that can turn me into a babbling drooler on sight (or sound). I love to be around cars, go to shows, races, what-have-you. For me, and probably for most of us so afflicted, it's a personal thing, a fantasy world, and therefore sort of selfish. So when an opportunity presents itself to do the *car thing* and at the same time be of some use to others I think we sort of owe it to ourselves to do it. I met a man at a Ferrari club event by the name of Michael Allen and Mike is offering a unique opportunity to do some good while enjoying what promises to be a wonderful event for people like us.

Dear Auto Enthusiast,

It is with great personal pleasure and a sense of hope that I announce to you, my fellow aficionados of Italian motor cars, a rare opportunity to let our passion for these exciting machines serve a truly noble purpose.

FIVE ACRES, a private, non-sectarian agency founded in 1888, provides care and treatment for abused and neglected children in the Los Angeles area on a 24 hour, 365 day basis. A non-profit organization, **FIVE ACRES** relies on the generosity of its benefactors to continue its valuable and important work.

FIVE ACRES' major fund raiser is an annual benefit auction which, because of its location and theme, is always a truly unique event. The theme for the 1990 auction is the Italian **MILLE MIGLIA**, a race which holds particular significance for Alfa Romeo enthusiasts. The auction will take place Saturday afternoon, June 3, 1990 at the Coleman W. Morton villa in Pasadena, California. This luxurious private residence and its beautifully landscaped grounds are often used by the motion picture and television industries for on-site filming.

I feel very strongly that the success of this event depends to a great degree on providing an atmosphere which is at once festive and at the same time true to the racing tradition of the **MILLE MIGLIA**. Therefore, I extend to you, on behalf of

FIVE ACRES, an invitation to participate in this worthwhile cause in a most novel and exciting way.

We are inviting owners to exhibit their automobiles on the mansion grounds the afternoon of the dinner-auction. Automobiles will be selected to represent three categories:

1. Automobiles which participated in the **MILLE MIGLIA**.
2. European manufactured automobiles of **MILLE MIGLIA** vintage.
3. Italian manufactured automobiles of recent manufacture.

All owners who offer their automobiles for exhibit, whether selected or not, will receive a complimentary invitation to attend the event and enjoy the Italian food, music and atmosphere.

Please take a moment to consider the importance of this effort to the many children who will rely on **FIVE ACRES** as their only hope to live a normal, productive life. Please contact me at (213) 203-8372 or, outside California (800) 621-5969.

Sincerely,

Michael Allen

CRITIC'S CORNER

Larry Meyer

I hope you enjoyed Pat Braden's personal history of Alfa experiences as much as I did. It is hard to imagine now, when it seems everyone is attracted to classic cars, that in the late '50's and early '60's enthusiasts were nearly as rare as those few surviving pre-war cars themselves. Back then, the first serious marque histories were just being compiled, and the focus was on keeping cars roadworthy rather than the latest Sotheby or Rick Cole results, and tips on the best way to secure them for transport in large, moving van-like enclosed trailers.

I myself was about 15 years too young to get involved in any of Pat's adventures, but did have the benefit of two close friends who really brought the era alive for me. Both bought very cheaply, drove the cars for transportation, were never the same afterwards - and sold too soon. Purchase prices? How about a near concours DB2-4 Aston Martin for \$2500, a 1933 4 1/2 litre Invicta for \$1000, or a 1931 8 litre Bentley for \$1500? We'll have to see if Dan Ritter is as much a sparkplug as my friend, who had the energy to repeat for 20 years as Pres. of the New England chapter of AMOC! By the way, the other friend still has the Bentley, which is all there but after a quarter century continues to hibernate until it finally gets the full restoration treatment.

Anyway, I've heard many great stories over the years (some of them true!), got to ride in two of the cars and drive the Invicta, which makes me feel right at home with Pat's enthusiasm as collector-user. What he is too modest to say is that in his generation, it was often the most knowledgeable and respected enthusiasts who gravitated to the

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pre-war through 1900 series cars, and they had a lot to do with the amazingly high regard the marque enjoys among collectors. As Pat himself noted in the OWNER, Alfa even now is held in awe by the automotive press, and a surprising amount of print is devoted to the many important cars in Alfa's past. If you love Alfas, you're in good company.

Which brings me to Dan Ritter's plan for a club library coupled with book critiques. I'm sure many of you are anxious about Alfa's future -- will new models still attract the loyalty of AROSC members, and how can you justify buying Alfa when it is the Germans or Japanese, and not the Italians, who appear to be building the next generation of our present cars. At the other extreme, the level of speculation in collector cars is approaching the famous Dutch Tulip mania, and has basically eliminated the real enthusiasts and connoisseurs from ownership of nearly all really significant cars.

In short, there are many reasons for Alfisti to feel blue, which is why Pat Braden's upbeat message is a welcome antidote. Plenty of affordable machinery remains, whether the goal is fast street driving, time trials, or a small collection, and that is not likely to change soon.

I'll be using this space in upcoming newsletters to introduce you to some of the many worthwhile books and articles on Alfa, which can add to your enjoyment of the club and the marque.

As a final note, I'd like to paraphrase that famous quip about Alfa's attributed to Henry Ford, "Every time I finish a Pat Braden column, I raise my hat."

Book Review

Automobile Quarterly, Volume 24, No. 2 (2nd Quarter, 1986)
"Alfa Romeo: The Merosi and Jano Years", by Griffith Borgeson
Pp. 122-153, 224.

What we know of Alfa's history comes from the hard work of a mere handful of writers. Luigi Fusi spent a lifetime with the factory, starting as a 17 year old assistant to Vittorio Jano; he wrote two fine volumes on the marque, and single handedly assembled the Museo Storico. British super-enthusiasts Roy Slater and Peter Hull assembled the first real history of Alfa in 1964 (Hull has also served as Secretary of the VSSC in England). Angelo Tito Anselmi has done major work on the Giulietta and the great carrozzeria, and Simon Moore is the world authority on the 8C 2900.

Also on this short list is AQ European editor Griffith Borgeson, a long time admirer of Alfa who also has the unique distinction of actually interviewing the reclusive Jano before his death. To me, the glory days of Road & Track were in the '50's and '60's, and Borgeson was there, along with Henry Manney and Dean Batchelor.

For those of you unfamiliar with AQ, it is a handsome hardcover book published 4 times annually in magazine format, thankfully sans advertising. Sooner or later it seems every subject which makes your heart race will have its day, often in definitive form. However, AQ tries to be eclectic, so unforgettable features may be followed by "Fords of the '50's", and driving impressions are found only occasionally.

Nonetheless, there is much to recommend it: the articles are succinctly written, offering an appealing alternative to those intimidated by encyclopedic volumes such as Fusi and Hull & Slater. Staff photographer Roy Query produces exquisite results with his 4x5 view camera (Nikons are relegated primarily to action shots), the cutaway drawings are the Best, and the historic B&W photos and engineering schematics are quite wonderful. Car books are expensive and AQ is no exception, at \$60 per year or \$20 per back issue, but on the other hand running an Alfa isn't cheap either.

In this 1986 issue, we learn about the man who was there at the start--Giuseppe Merosi--who was hired as chief engineer in late 1909, a few months before A.L.F.A. was formed. Although all his road cars had pushrod engines, it was Merosi, and not Jano, who developed Alfa's first twin cam, for an abortive 1914 GP car. Conservatively engineered but solid, long lived, and possessed of superb handling, Merosi's cars gave Alfa a fine reputation on which the brilliant Jano could build. Borgeson presents the human side of Merosi, and I particularly like the photo of the young Giuseppe perched on one of those turn of the century racing bicycles with the impossibly high front wheel, chest covered with competition medals, one hand free to wave his cap.

After bicycles came motorcycles and aviation -- one of his first Alfa engines powered a successful 1910 biplane. Borgeson mischievously quotes Peter Hull on Merosi's pushrods, saying they "were surprisingly heavy, and a spare one would be perfectly suitable for keeping beside the bed for attacking burglars." Years after he was deposed, Merosi returned to Alfa broke and desperate for work, incredibly serving during WWII as a 70 year old draftsman.

The ending of this story brings us to a momentous event, the hiring of Vittorio Jano, who was recruited when Merosi failed to deliver a successful GP car for the 1923 season (Merosi actually hung on for another 3 years after Jano's arrival, and surprisingly, his cars also sold better). I won't spoil it by recounting all the interesting details, but Borgeson presents a persuasive case that the P2 was a real breakthrough for its time. Jano came from Fiat, the dominant force in GP racing since the turn of the century. Jano had worked on every competition effort since WW I, and Alfa gave him the opportunity to release all his bottled up creativity. The P2 was a remarkable achievement--Alfa was a very obscure company then, Fiat had introduced its latest world beater, and the P2 so humiliated Fiat and the competition from its first outing that the company shortly felt compelled to withdraw from racing. Interestingly, neither Jano nor Merosi had a formal engineering education. Both went to technical institutes but were largely self taught regards things automotive.

Borgeson takes us through the genealogy of Merosi and Jano designs, skillfully illustrated with superb contemporary B&W photos and marvelous renderings which appear to be straight from the Portello works drafting tables. He argues that the Tipo B (or P3) is a masterpiece by every standard, of this or any century. The article is accompanied by a magnificent color portfolio of greats from the Museo Storico, which will make you wish you had a spare \$100 million or so to buy them all. On the cover is a fine painting of two 8C 2900's storming through the mountains in the 1938 Mille Miglia.

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Which brings us to a most dreaded topic for Alfisti, a.k.a. The Greatest Management Blunder of All Time: the firing of Vittorio Jano and Enzo Ferrari from Alfa. I'll want to get into this more later, not to mention the departure of other major talents. But for the moment, just imagine if Ferrari had continued to run the competition effort, with Jano as chief engineer until retirement. Every Bone knows Enzo's story, but Jano himself achieved about as much after WW II as he did while at Alfa. First was the narrow angle V-6 powering the landmark 1950's Lancia Aurelia, the machine which defined the Post War GT car. Then came the Lancia D.24's, which won the 1954 Mille Miglia and Targa Florio, and the D.50 Formula 1 cars. These were promising but underfunded, and when sold to Ferrari, won the 1956 championship for Fangio. At Ferrari, Jano designed a nifty family of V-6's you may have heard of, known as Dinos, which won the F1 championship in 1958 for Mike Hawthorne with engine in front, and in 1961 for Phil Hill with engine in back. After Jano's death in 1965, a streetable version went into the 206 and 246 Ferrari Dinos and their FIAT counterparts. The story continues into the '70's, when the Dino-powered Lancia Stratos destroyed all competition and won the World Rally Championship 3 years straight over 1974-76.

Not so different from Jano's glory years at Alfa.

Book Review

Automobile Quarterly, Volume 25, No. 3 (3rd Quarter, 1987)

"Wifredo Ricart: Alfa's Innovator in the Shadow of War", by Griffith Borgeson, Pp. 274-289.

This month, a short but significant Borgeson article, which not only features Alfa's forgotten man but also provides some explanation of how Enzo Ferrari and Vittorio Jano came to be fired from Alfa. I haven't seen any categorical statements confirming this view, but there can be little doubt that the blame goes to Il Duce himself. Only in the past several years have we begun to understand this period, so deep have been the wounds associated with Fascism, Mussolini and Hitler. I myself had very mixed emotions viewing a photo in which the Alfa racing team is showing off a victorious P2 to Mussolini's sons.

Basically, Il Duce nationalized a sagging Alfa Romeo in 1933, which had been badly hurt like so many others in the Depression. As Borgeson explains, car production and racing had nearly stopped by 1935, as the Portello factory converted to aero engines and military vehicles. While Vittorio Jano was perhaps one of the two or three greatest designers of racing engines in his day, his expertise did not extend to air cooled radial powerplants, and with Ugo Gobbato replacing Nicola Romeo as head of the company, Jano was busted from chief engineer to cars and trucks, which is to say, considering the wartime preparations, almost nothing. At the same time, losing Grand Prix to Hitler's Mercedes and Auto Union teams was an unpardonable blow to Il Duce's masculinity, so something also had to be done about Scuderia Ferrari, Alfa's racing intermediary. Never mind that the Italians couldn't compete with the huge racing budgets of the Germans. In the resulting political infighting, Gobbato sacked Romeo's favorites Ferrari and Jano, installing his own man, the Spaniard Wifredo Ricart, as chief engineer.

Today, hardly anyone remembers this figure, so much so that his name is often misspelled, coming out "Wilfredo", or "Ricard", and his time at Alfa is usually dismissed as one of total failure. The reality isn't that simple, as Borgeson explains. Unlike the self-taught Geometra (Surveyor) Merosi and Jano, Ricart had the best formal engineering education, was fluent in five languages, also a talented artist and musician, who also found the time to race airplanes. From a prominent upper class family, he had the bad luck of being pro-Franco in Barcelona, where the anti-fascist partisans were strongest. Gobbato knew and respected Ricart, and offered him refuge in Italy in 1936, effectively saving his life. He rose rapidly, and undoubtedly gave Gobbato the confidence that he could afford to live without either Ferrari or Jano.

Ricart surrounded himself with brilliant staffers, first and foremost a young aeronautical engineer named Orazio Satta. Jano's protege Gioacchino Colombo remained through the war and after, developing the Alfetta while Ricart pursued his own racing efforts and military aero engines. Satta, of course, was the man responsible for the cars we have first hand experience with: the 1900, Giulietta, Giulia, and Alfetta series. Colombo lost out in a power struggle with Satta, but his post-Alfa career is quite impressive. How about the "short block" V-12 designed for Ferrari, which powered nearly all their great road cars from the 166 of 1946 through the 275 GTB of 1967 (including the dual purpose 250 SWB and GTO). He proceeded to lose another power struggle at Ferrari, surfacing at Maserati where he did the 250F Formula 1 car. Fangio won his first World Championship in Colombo's Alfetta, and his fourth and last in Colombo's 250F. The in-line 6 from the 250F was detuned, and powered most of the Maserati GT cars until the late '60's. He also was involved in the abortive attempt to resurrect Bugatti.

As for Ricart's designs themselves, all were failures, a dismal statistic having to do with a brilliant man working in a company dominated by Machiavellian politics, where racing programs were abruptly terminated by War, and military aero engine designs were within two years obsoleted by Italy's losing the War. It seems that Ricart was too smart for Gobbato to successfully manage or control, with the result that Wifredo's design teams spent their time speeding down cul de sacs.

The Tipo 162 (1938) had an engine as beautiful to look at as Jano's best, and was surpassed in specific output only by the Mercedes 165. A real tour de force, the unit was a 4 cam 3 liter V-16 which pioneered 2-stage supercharging, achieving a very nice 490 bhp at 7800 rpm. Ricart's mid-engined Tipo 512 was equipped with an impressive boxer 12, and has the distinction of attaining the highest specific output of the pre war era, at 335 bhp (at 8600 rpm) out of a mere 1490 cc. That stands at 225 bhp/liter vs. Mercedes' best of 186.

Neither car could handle, and Borgeson states that Colombo's rival Alfetta faction knew how to correct Ricart's chassis design flaws, but held back in retribution for the demise of Jano and Ferrari. Indeed, Borgeson notes that Enzo, in his autobiography, saved some of his most vicious epithets for Ricart, out of wounded pride for the rough treatment he received at Alfa toward the end. Nothing in Borgeson's portrait of Ricart justifies Ferrari's attack--Gobbato and Mussolini surely were the heavies here, at least in terms of asking the impossible from Nicola Romeo's old favorites.

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MEN WHO LOVE ALFAS TOO MUCH

I talked to Dave's mother the other day. She sounded hysterical: "Have gotten rid of your Alfa yet?"

"Uh, no, I haven't," I said, "But I've tried. Really." After my Alfa convertible broke down near Bakersfield last Thanksgiving - costing me \$1,300, plus millions in psychological damage - my wife said either the Alfa goes or she goes. But so far, I've been unable to unload the damn thing.

Dave's mother nearly broke down over the phone. "He thinks people who have Alfas are wonderful people," she said accusingly. "Our family almost split apart over him getting that Alfa. We didn't want him to get it in the first place - his father hates it. Instead of going to college, he's working two jobs to pay off that Alfa. It's not what we dreamed of for our son..."

I'd never met Dave's mother, but I know Dave. He's a 22 year old bag boy. We met two years ago when he brought my groceries out to the Alfa. His eyes sparkled. He asked me how I liked it. "It's great when it works," I said with a grim smile. "I'm gonna get one soon," he said.

He was halfway back to the store when I said, "Uh, Dave - I need a push. It won't start." So Dave pushed me and the Alfa through the parking lot until I was able to jump-start the infernal machine.

You'd think Dave would have taken this as a sign, but no. Undaunted, he bought a metallic charcoal 1984 Alfa Spider convertible for \$8,900 and got a night job.

"It's an obsession," said the poor woman. "It's his whole life. Every penny he makes goes into that car. He doesn't have money for food, clothes, rent. Have you seen his shoes lately? I think it's a cute car," she admitted, "But he hates it when I say that. He doesn't think it's cute, he thinks it's beautiful. And it doesn't help him meet girls, either."

I understood completely. In the 10 long years I've driven an Alfa convertible, I've never picked up a woman with it. (I did get lucky a couple of times when the Alfa was in the shop.)

"His problem began three years ago when he saw one on 'Miami Vice,'" Dave's mom blithered. "Since then he goes out and gets a tape of any movie that has an Alfa in it. The other night we were watching 'See No Evil' and he says, 'Here it comes! Here it comes!' I had no idea what he was talking about, until he points out the 'gorgeous' red Alfa. I'd like it better if it was a gorgeous redhead. When he sits down at the dinner table, we wonder what part of the Alfa he's going to talk about."

Dave's dad got on the horn. "Every time I'm around the darn thing there's something wrong with it. Right now, the synchronizer in reverse gear is going out." His mom recalled the Alfa's very first road trip, to Santa Cruz. Dave bought some Miami Vice-style clothes, and a friend borrowed some video equipment so they could record the car's maiden voyage. "There's this one scene where he's supposed to step on the gas and roar down the

street, but the car just goes 'pfft, pfft, pfft.' On the way back, a spark plug went out, and the windshield wipers weren't working, so the car was covered with mud. He just came limping home. It was humiliating."

I asked her if she'd ever been in the Alfa. "Yes, but I'm constantly worried - what are we going to do if it breaks down? Do I have my triple A card with me? I won't go on long trips."

How about Sunrise mall? "Not that far," she said. "We went to Nordstrom. Wherever we go, he parks way out in the parking lot so nobody dings his door. I have to hike all the way in."

Dave's mom did have one fond memory of the Alfa. "He took me out on the Fourth of July. We sat there with the top down and watched the fireworks. But I'd rather he was there with a cute 22 year-old blonde. Do you know any 22 year-old blondes?" I didn't, but I promised to have a talk with Dave. He confirmed his obsession was sparked by Miami Vice. "It was episode 66, 'Viking Bikers From Hell,'" Dave said. "It's night, and the bad guy's sister drives up in a black '88 Spider Veloce with the top down. I have the video. If you'd like to see it."

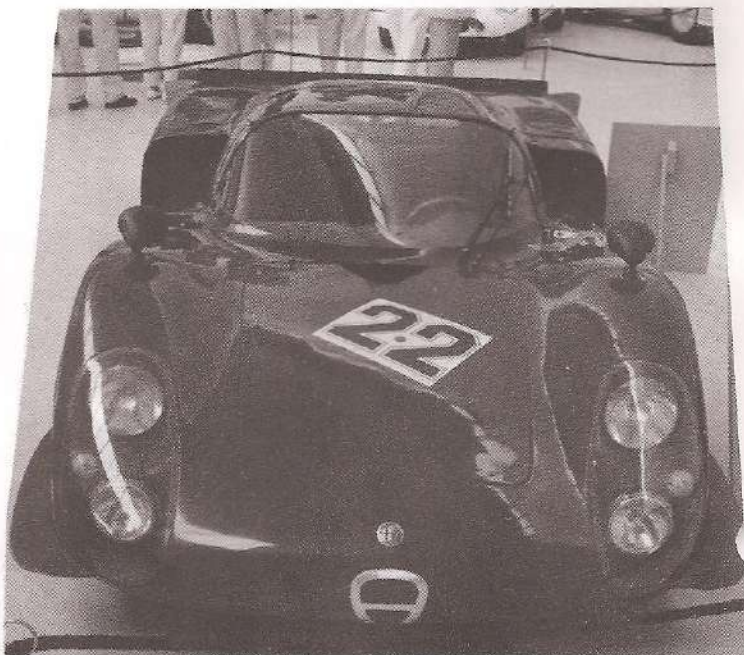
I asked Dave if his Alfamania was becoming a problem. "I don't think so," he said. "Well, yeah, maybe until I get it paid off."

That's like pushing a snowball up a hill, Dave. What with all the repairs, you'll never get it paid off. I could see there was no reasoning with him. I called Dave's mother back and said, "GROAN."

"Groan?"

"Grieving Relatives of Alfa Nuts. You can get my wife to join."

(From a newspaper article of unknown origin submitted by Dirk Stoehr. Apologies to the author.)ed.





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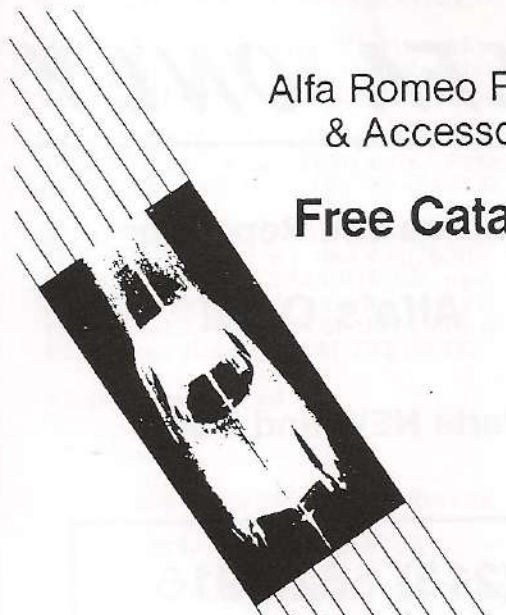
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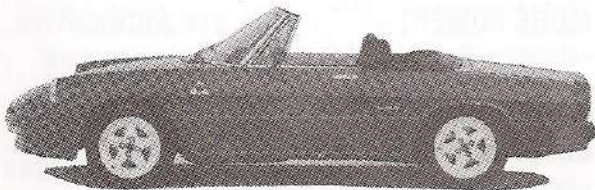
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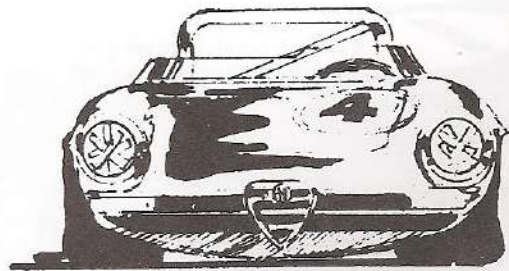
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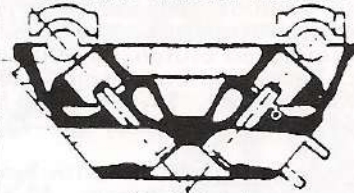
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