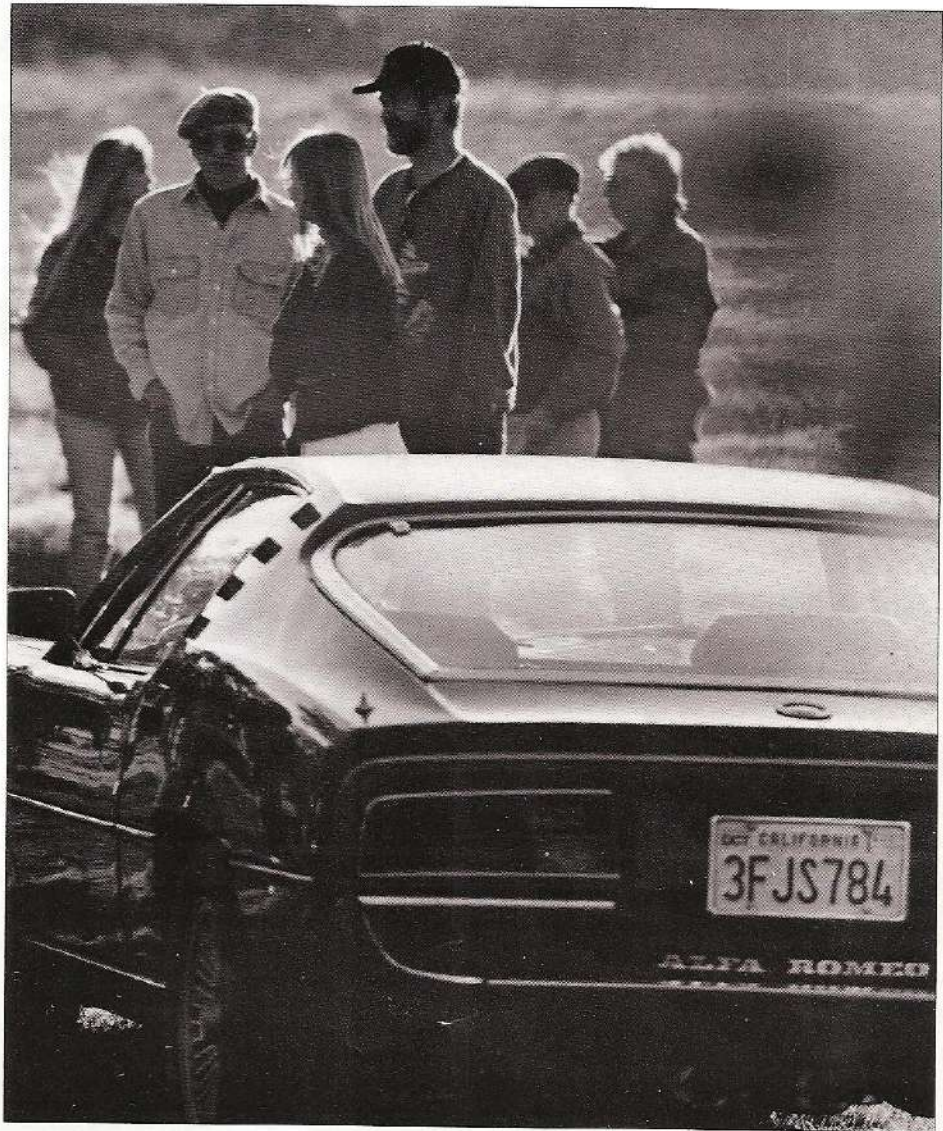


Yfaccionada

Newsletter of the
**Alfa Romeo Owners
of Southern California**

February 1997



*Wine Tour '96: Proof that Montreals
make great wine-tasting cars.*

*Inside: Wine Tour '96, What's coming in AROSC, "Alfanet", Tech
Articles, "One for the Road", Letters to the Editor, and more.*

Meeting Information

General Meetings are held the last Friday of each month except November and December at 8:00pm in the Kaizuki Room at Veterans' Memorial Park in Culver City. In November the meeting will be held on the last Friday if there are two Fridays after Thanksgiving, otherwise it will be on the Friday prior to Thanksgiving. A holiday party is held in December in lieu of the General Meeting that month.

Numerous special meetings and events are also held throughout the year. Check the Calendar information on the outside back cover for an overview of the year and review *Alfacionada* for details of events planned for the near future.

AROSC Mailing Address

Alfa Romeo Owners of Southern California

Post Office Box 3621

Granada Hills, CA 91394

Membership Information

See the inside back cover of *Alfacionada*.

Important Deadline & Info!

Please send classified ads, articles, letters, and photographs to the Editor in time to arrive before the 20th of the month to permit publication in the next month's issue. Please send only prints; no slides are desired unless submitted by professional photographers. **Photos and manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage.**

General Information

Alfacionada is the monthly publication of the *Alfa Romeo Owners of Southern California*, a Chapter of the *Alfa Romeo Owners, Inc.*, a national non-profit organization of *Alfa* enthusiasts. Subscriptions to this newsletter are included as part of the annual AROSC membership fees.

Classified Advertising

Classified (non-commercial ads are available as a free service to members and for a nominal charge of \$10.00 per insertion to non-members. Ad content must be *Alfa*-related.

Commercial Advertising Rates

	Half-year	Full-year
1/8 page	\$60	\$100
1/4 page	\$120	\$200
1/2 page	\$240	\$400
Full page	\$480	\$800

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ONE FOR THE ROAD

More bang for your buck

by Jay Negrin - AROSC President

Question: What simple action offers the *Alfa Romeo* owner the most driving "bang for the buck"?

Answer: Joining the *Alfa Romeo Owners Club of Southern California*.

OK, that was a gimme. But the "real" answer lies in why that stock, clichéd answer is so true. We all know (don't we?) that Alfa Romeo has built some of the best, most affordable sporting automobiles in this half of our century. We all (alright, most of us) appreciate what fine workmanship, engineering and design has gone into virtually every model.

Yes, yes, yes, there are exceptions to every rule, and I am sure there are experts out there who could fill books on that subject. What I am trying to get to here, is how to increase the enjoyment of driving one of those machines that was meant to be driven. And when I say "driven" here, I mean in the Ferrari, Maserati, yeah, even Porsche and Volkswagen sense. Definitely not in the Chrysler, "your father's Oldsmobile", Mercury and (godness!) Mercedes Benz sense. (I feel another treatise coming on.)

What I am talking about is life at the edge. Life at the redline, for hours at a stretch. Buying 'V' or 'Z' rated tires, not because they look neat on those ultra-wide skate-board-looking wheels, but because you want to use them to explore their potential. This is "driving", not grocery-getting. And we have all now agreed that the cars we cherish and drive are capable of being driven like I have just described.

But is the driver capable of driving the car, as it was designed to be driven? I am not putting down those who don't, or can't. I am suggesting that they (you) do more to get in touch with those fabulous pieces of Italian engineering and design.

"How do you expect me to do that?", I hear you asking. Glad you asked. There are several methods offered to anyone in the sound of my voice. AROSC members actually get a discount on some of them. The first item

which comes to mind is driving school.

No, I am not talking about the silly little classroom lecture you were forced to endure to shed the speeding ticket points off your driving record. I am talking about taking you, and your car, to the AROSC driving school, at the Streets of Willow. It is offered in three flavors; Mild, medium and hot.

"Hot" gets you in, if you are good enough to be accepted, with all the certifiable hot shoes. This is a racing school, nothing less, where you learn the fine art of passing off-line, and how do race fender-to-fender without doing damage to yours or hers/his. This is SERIOUS school.

"Medium" lets you find out more of the secrets of "go-fast" without the pressure of "wheel-to-wheel" racing. This is time trial school. Learn what makes going fast possible, and keeping the car on the track, with the shiny side up. If you want to compete in time trials, or improve your track performance in this area, this is the school you want.

HOWEVER, if you (as I was) are a complete novice to the track, and you want to increase you daily, street driving capabilities, think about "Mild".

This session at school is designed to let you feel what your car feels like at its limits. It lets you explore those limits in a variety of ways, all in controlled environments. The key here is not to see how fast you can go, although you can get going pretty fast, believe me. The object is to feel what your car feels like at the edge of its capabilities. As important as that is, school also lets you find out where your limits are.

It is probable that the average driver gets scared of what his/her car is doing well below the physical limits of the car or tires. That goes for absolute coming speed, turn-in from a straight line, braking, and even acceleration. It is possible that even after you take the school, you may never approach the limits of your car or yourself, especially on the street.

Good. Fine. But, if you EVER need what you have learned in school, whether avoiding other drivers who experience lapses in good judgement, driving in adverse weather conditions, or any of number of experiences guaranteed to

What I am talking about

is life at the edge.

Life at the redline,

for hours at a stretch.

increase your heart rate, then school will have paid for itself.

I feel strongly enough about the AROSC driving school that I recommend it to anyone who wants to buy, or has recently purchased, a high performance automobile. That includes Alfa Romeos, of course, but other brands as well.

I also suggest to parents of relatively new drivers (teenagers) that the "kids" take the course to learn good habits early on. It happens to be easier to teach proper technique to someone who is fresh, rather than trying to have someone re-learn years of bad habits. I know this latter part first hand. I haven't broken all of my bad habits yet.

But, I make these recommendations not just because I believe in the Alfa club driving school, which I do. I don't do it just to promote the club, which I do shamelessly. I do it for selfish reasons.

I have seen enough stupid actions while I am driving around, that I want as many drivers as possible, who will be sharing the road with me, armed with as much good information about good driving, as possible. Sharing the road with so many trucks, buses, motorcycles and cars during rush hour may not be fun, but at least we can try to make it safe.

So much for getting in touch with your driving skills. In coming issues, I will be touching on how AROSC can help you get in touch with the mechanical heart and soul of your car.

Want more info on an upcoming event?

For Time Trial & Driving School details, contact Charlie Thieriot or Phyllis Gaylard.

For details on other events and the General Meeting, contact Jay Negrin or one of the other AROSC Directors.

See inside front cover of Alfacionada for phone and FAX numbers.

Greetings Alfisti!

King Koncour Returns

By Dan Ritter

It is my proud privilege to host the AROSC Concours program once again for 1997 and please accept my personal invitation bring your Alfas and enjoy a day of splendid automobiles and the most cordial company anyone can keep.

How about this! The return of *KING KONCOUR!* That's right, starting in May – the 18th to be exact – will be our first concours event which will be in conjunction with the Ferrari Club and VARA. The event will be as last year at the Pomona Fairgrounds. This is a straight ahead competition for points type of event, however it's also a part of a larger show and part of the Vintage Racing festivities that is on going that weekend. Last year AROSC was very well represented with over 16 cars including Guiliettas, Guilias, 1900's, Milanos and – of course – the 1996 overall winner, Al Cortes's beautiful 2600 Zagato coupe.

Starting in May – the 18th to be exact – will be our first concours event

Our second concours will be held at the El Dorado Nature Center on October 5th 1997. This is a marvelous setting for this kind of event, what with picnic facilities available and an interesting flora exhibition that one can walk through and really get intune with nature. Last year's participants strongly agreed that we should return to this sight and it was suggested that an invitation to the Orange County Chapter should be extended.

This year I am soliciting for volunteers to judge. We need at least two impartial knowledgeable people for this season of competition. Let me know if you're interested. I'll be speaking more about the events at our general meetings and I plan to distribute the event applications in March issue of *Alfacionada*. So mark your calendars and start cleaning your cars for what is to be a great season of concours competition.

Please call me if you have any questions regarding the events, if you would like to be a judge, or have suggestions. My phone number is (310) 374-3153.

From The Editor

Some thoughts about *Alfacionada*

by Tom Suter

It is appropriate begin this article with an apology and a promise. The apology is due because this issue of *Alfacionada* falls short of our intentions. Part of the reason for this is that during the middle of the preparation of this issue – my first as Editor – my employer informed me that I was being assigned to a job in Seattle for most of 1997.

With the effective loss of several weeks due to the move, this issue leaves room for improvements. (2 ½ pages of tech material did not make it in, for example). The promise is that we will work on improving future issues to bring them closer to the standards we feel *Alfacionada* should meet.

You may have noticed that this issue of *Alfacionada* looks different than what you have been receiving in the past. As you read this issue we think you will notice some other changes as well. Hopefully you will like what you see.

Why the changes in *Alfacionada*? Simply put, you have new Editors for the AROSC newsletter and, like editors of all publications from time immemorial, we have our own perception of what *Alfacionada* should be. Only time will tell how successful we are at achieving our goals, but we would like to start our tenure off with a few words about what we intend to do, and why.

We consider *Alfacionada* to be the newsletter of the *Alfa Romeo Owners Club of Southern California*. That means first and foremost that we should be telling you about what is going to happen, what is currently happening, and what has happened recently in your club.

After all, the club is *much* more than just this publication and the copy of *Alfa Owner* which you receive with your National membership but, if you never hear in a timely and accurate manner about what's going on, you won't have a chance to enjoy the other benefits of belonging to AROSC.

Our second goal is to provide you with technical and semi-technical articles on a regular basis which will help you keep your *Alfa* in the condition to be enjoyed. No, we don't think that all of you are professional mechanics who do all of your own maintenance, but one thing which I have

noticed over the years of my membership in AROSC is the high percentage of members who do *some* work on their own *Alfas*.

Besides - you may have noticed the use of the phrase "semi-technical". That was to let you know that there will be articles about improving your *Alfa* enjoyment which will be aimed at those who can't tell a screwdriver from a socket wrench. For examples of what this kind of material might be, look for the article in this issue on adjusting your mirrors for improved safety.

Our third goal is to help you locate other means of satisfying your *Alfaholic* urges. You may have already noticed the column in this issue on some neat sites on the Internet for the "wired" *Alfisti* among us.

You may also see articles appearing from time to time about "Alfa roads" which *you* could sample in your free time, or a worthwhile auto museum to visit while travelling, or some really neat activities in other AROSC Chapters which you might want to incorporate into your vacation plans, or . . .

We also have the goal of providing *Alfacionada* with balanced content. We don't say this in the sense of "politically correct", but merely that we will attempt to avoid the trap which others have fallen into of assuming that whatever *we* are turned on by at the moment is automatically "right" for everyone else in the club.

Our membership owns *Alfas* which run the gamut from pre-war classics to the last Spiders and 164 Sedans imported into the United States, and almost everything in between. Some of our members are seriously "wired" and others have no earthly desire to learn where the power switch is on a computer. Some of you will never be happy without grease under your fingernails and others wouldn't be caught dead with a wrench in your hand.

We want each of you to look forward to receiving *Alfacionada* each month because you expect a significant amount of the content will interest *you*. We may not always reach that goal, but we'll always be striving for it.

Just who is it that will be attempting to bring all of this to your mailbox? You may have noticed above that I said

**We want each of you
to look forward to receiving
Alfacionada each month**

"Editors". That is because you are essentially getting two for the price of one. Although the masthead officially says that *Alfacionada* is being done by Tom Suter, a fair share of the load is also being carried by Phyllis Gaylard. We envision working as a team to bring you the best newsletter of which we are capable.

Phyllis and I have a combined tenure with AROSC which exceeds a half century – which means that we've each seen the failures, successes, and mistakes of others attempting to do a club newsletter, and hope to avoid as many of the mistakes as we can. When we fail to deliver a good product to your mailbox, we hope you will let us know about it so that we can continue to learn.

If you have an article, or photographs, or general information which you think might go well in *Alfacionada*, please contact either Phyllis or myself at one of the addresses shown on the masthead. We can't promise to use everything that comes in, since space is limited, but we'll certainly give it serious consideration.

Coordinated Events

a.k.a. – What's Up, Doc?

by Paul Blankenship

Well, Hi. It is the new year and I'm now what is being called the *Event Coordinator* for AROSC for 1997. It just goes to show you that you better attend all of the Club meetings to which you are invited.

Otherwise you will be "nominated, seconded and voted in" to something. I didn't go to the AROSC Planning Meeting held the day after the Christmas Party. Now I seem to be something called "*Events Coordinator*". Jay - is this what is meant by "delegate" ???

As I continue my Competition position of *Director of Safety*, I believe that the thing that qualifies me for this new position was the success of "The Day After Thanksgiving Day Wine Tour", also known as "Let's All Get Together and Drink and Drive". (See Paul's article on the Wine Tour in this issue – Ed.)

NEW STUFF

Some items about upcoming Events. Since you guys and gals enjoyed the Wine Tour so much, my lovely bride, Mary, and I are planning another wine tour in Temecula next Fall.

The *Nethercutt* (formerly *Merle Norman*) San Sylmar Auto Museum's earthquake-proof building is mostly put back together after the '94 shaker. Since Mary used to work there, we will arrange a tour sometime in the Spring or Summer. (Late news: We think we have a reservation for 28 June – Ed.)

Jay says we will "Tour the Wildflowers" this spring. (See Jay's article in this issue – Ed.)

And of course you know that AROSC will have its usual great series of Time Trials, organized by the Time Trial Committee.

Remember, if you have any questions or suggestions drop us a line. If your suggestion sounds interesting, I will have a meeting that you can't make and you will be "nominated, seconded and voted in" to run something.

Ciao, Frequently Sideways.

Paul



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ALFANET

This Issue: Alfa Clubs on the Internet

by Rob Poetsch

The official website of Alfa Romeo Owners of Oregon

<http://www.alfaclub.org/>

Like the banner says, 'Welcome to the Alfaclubhouse!' The boys up north have done it right – a website full of technical information, articles, photos, links and humor – all presented in an easy-to-navigate layout.

The only glitch: Netscape 2.0 users will get a Java script error when launching the homepage. Browse around through classified ads and excerpts from *Alfabits*, the clubs magazine. Don't miss Bill Gillham's TechToons – the illustrations are unbelievable.

These guys are entertaining too. Just visit Uncle Wiggly's AlfaClubhouse TechTips for a good laugh. Some of Wiggly's Pearls of Wisdom: "If the booster vacuum hose on your Giulia GTV slides freely in the micro switch, try bending the sockethead capscrews with a oscillating buffer/polisher." You get the idea. The AROO version of the Alfa logo is worth a good chuckle.

Overall rating: A

Overheard Cams: The website of the Alfa Romeo Association

<http://205.199.225.41/>

Don't let the slow homepage turn you away. This site is filled with articles – both technical and entertaining – on all things Alfa. Includes "How To" articles with illustrations. Classified section features cars in *Alfacionada*.. "The Feature" offers smogging woes, restoration tips and a recap of the Monterey Historics. Very thorough.

Overall rating: A-

The official Alfa Romeo homepage

<http://www.alfaromeo.com/eng/guida.htm>

This site is not intended for you, an American, but an English version is available so you can read all about the

cars you can't buy. Filled with fancy photos, press releases and European auto show information. You'll instantly know It's worth visiting this site for the 24 photos (don't worry, they're fast) of the beautiful Nuvola being unveiled at the Paris Auto Show.

If this doesn't make you want to write a letter begging Fiat to bring Alfa back to the U.S., then check out the photos of the new 145 and 146 – not to mention the new GTV 3.0 V6 24V. It's enough to make you cry.

Overall rating B+

Club Alfa Romeo Sweden

<http://www.datastugan.se/mike/alfa/>

The Swedes are alive and well, and they love *Alfas*. Information may be limited, but this website has some interesting stuff including the Zender Project Five, a curvaceous cabrio two-seater based on a Milano platform. Includes information on the 1996 *Alfas* and photos of member cars.

Overall rating: C-

UK Alfa Romeo Owners Club

<http://www.pncl.co.uk/aroc/>

Find out what our British brethren are doing with their Italian machines. Art loads quickly, homepage is easy to use. Offers access to UK competition information, a UK registry, a club directory and links to other Alfa pages. It's worth a visit, but you may not come back.

Overall rating: C

(Editor's Note: Rob has volunteered to do regular articles on Internet sites of interest to auto enthusiasts, with special emphasis on Alfa-related sites. If you have found a noteworthy location on the Internet, we encourage you to write to us about it so that it can be shared with the rest of the membership. Although only about one AROSC member in six is "wired", we feel that this is a large enough percentage of the membership to warrant some space in the newsletter, just as we provide Time Trial coverage even though relatively few members participate in those events.)

Wine Tour '96

a.k.a. - *The Day After . . .*

By Paul Blankenship

Well, we did have a Wine Tour. We held it on the day after Thanksgiving with the *Central Coast Chapter* in the Santa Inez Valley. The weather was perfect for Fall driving. Vital Statistics: About 45 *Alfisti*, 16 *Alfa Romeos*, including 1 *Montreal* that drove all the way down from San Francisco, Randy Harris' 1980's vintage *Guilietta Taurus*, and 1 Porsch-afile who was a friend of a club member.

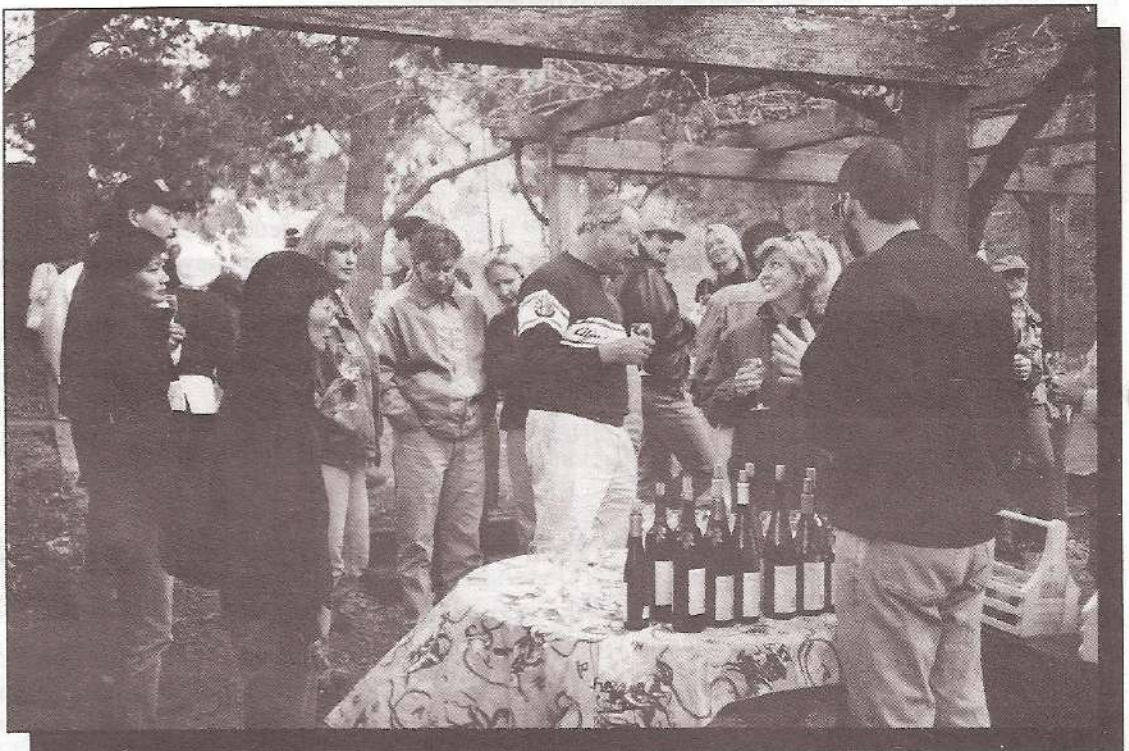
We all showed up to drink and drive and visit at least 6 wineries on Friday, "The Day After. . ." Officially we visited *Firestone*, *Brander*, *Santa Inez*, *Rancho Sisquoc*, *Fess Parker*, and *Bedford Thompson*. Randall, "don't call me Ansel", Higa took a couple of pictures of the Gathered *Alfas*. Sort of reminded me of a grammar school class photo the way he pushed and arranged us.

Those of us who remembered to bring T'giving leftovers ate picnic lunches at *Rancho Sisquoc* where we had a private wine tasting. Prizes were given for the oldest car, oldest person (who would admit it) and car driven the furthest.

From talking to most of you I found that there were several who don't regularly attend meetings but came on the Wine Tour from reading about it in *Alfacionada*. See Gary - at least two people read this newsletter. Glad to see you folks. I'm poor reporter and forgot to write down your names. My apologies.

Our tour at *Firestone Winery* was given by the owner, Brooks Firestone (of the Tire Company Firestones). It wasn't really arranged by me but I will take credit for it, just as I took credit for the perfect weather. Many thanks to Fred Zimmerman, Pres. of *Central Coast AROC*, who got us a look at a 1930's vintage *Alfa* that was being restored at *Bedford Thompson*. Sorry, Stu, I didn't get any serial #.

Many of us stayed overnight at the *Danish Country Inn* in



It takes hard work and dedication to go wine tasting.

Solvang where we had special reserved parking for our "Alpha Romeos". I was "disappointed" that the hotel staff asked us to come back again. "You were much better behaved than the *Pantera Club*." Come on *Alfa Owners*, what kind of reputation are we building???

Wine tasting continued through the weekend for those who had the time. I heard that Phyllis Gaylard was seen in town Saturday morning having a trailer hitch put on her 164 so that she could haul home all of the wine she acquired. It seems that a good time was had by all . . .



The tails of Alfas . . .



*Good Alfas, good food, good wine, and great friends.
What more can you ask?*

Letters to the Editor

To: Editor, *Alfacionada*

I just received, in the newsletter exchange, the November issue of *Alfacionada*. In Stu Schaller's "The History of the Marque" column, Chapter Nine of the series, there appears a preface in which Stu responds to comments I had made about the first installment: "John is absolutely correct in regard to the details he presents. The problem is, that the amount of information John presented was beyond the scope of this series of articles. It is my intention only to present a basic history of Alfa Romeo."

I have been around the block a couple of times with both Stu and Pat Braden, two individuals for whom I have relatively high regard. The material I presented which Stu referred to as 'beyond the scope' is not material which needs to be included in a history of the marque; it is merely material which must be recognized by the historical writer to avoid including untrue 'facts' and incorrect conclusions in his account.

It may take several hundred words for a critic to demonstrate to an author that ten sentences, eight of which are incorrect, need to be reduced to two true sentences, or perhaps less. Once the ten have been circulated, shooting down the eight may need to be a public act, but it had been the author's job to come up with the two instead of the ten.

A "basic history of *Alfa Romeo*" (or of anything else) may be arrived at by accumulating supposed facts, eliminating the untrue first, and then the irrelevant, and illuminating the importance of what is left. It may take a lot of digging and a lot of thinking to come up with the briefest and most basic and least distorted history.

An example - not the only one - of the possible easy abbreviation of a longer questionable piece of history to a shorter but less debatable bit occurs at the end of Stu's November chapter. Stu writes, "Over the years, some 8c2300's (both long and short chassis) have been turned into Monza and Tipo B (P3) replicas."

That statement is (I believe) untrue, thus bad history, but it does not need the addition of mounds of detail which would be unsuitable for a short history; it just needs to be shortened by eliminating the words "*and Tipo B (P3)*".

Proving this to Stu may take mounds of detail: that the engines had their intakes and exhausts on different sides, that the 2300 had detachable heads and the P3 had integral heads, that the P3 had two blowers and two carburetors

instead of one of each, that the P3 had the steering mounted on a boss, cast in the block, which does not exist on the 2300 engine, that the P3 had a unique driveline with two driveshafts, two ring-and-pinion sets, and a transmission-mounted differential, and so forth.

Stu, with no malevolent intent, slipped in a sloppy detail which wrongly suggests that the P3 was a much closer derivative of the 2300 than was really the case. Stu probably knows the differences, and may say that information is beyond the scope of this series of articles.

Does it matter? Only if history matters. This is not a question about details, it is a question of what the author is trying to accomplish for the reader, and how he thinks one goes about it.

Sincerely,

John Hertzman

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Letters to the Editor

Those In Control Assume

The assumption is that everyone who reads the AROSC newsletter knows about a *Disco Volante*, or a *BAT #7*, or for that matter, a *Type 1750 Alfa Duetto Spyder/Spider Veloce Torpedo-back roadster boat-tail convertible 2-door sports car*.

The above may be a little over-kill, but you writer types ought to put yourselves in our sneakers – the average Joe Banana, who just purchased a 2.0L Spider and wants to get involved because we like the Alfa. That's right, we think the car is special.

So we reach for our \$50.00+ and learn that with any luck, and assuming Murphy's Law is avoided, a newsletter will arrive at our door within 3 months. But, I *will* be informed about the outstanding Christmas party well in advance.

NOT

Now that I am a new member and just received *The Alfacionada* – "The What". Naturally you assumed that I speak and read Italian, right? So now I sleep with a foreign language tape under my pillow (I'm trying).

Reading through the newsletter I get the feeling that the National and the SoCal Chapter are not exactly bedfellows. Am I to assume that this is true? I know nothing about *Alfa* politics. But do you people assume that all new members are already aware of the infighting and that they probably won't care? First impressions will last a long time . . .

Reading on, I come to the *Events* page. Italy, France, Germany – now I need a tour guide. Do you people really expect us to participate internationally? If so, why don't you go to them? How about events close to home – in my case Southern California? Sure, you say that you have get-togethers. But they are rescheduled, cancelled, or "To Be Announced", like the Christmas party that was on the day the newsletter came. I live 65 miles from the party but would have gladly driven there if I had even one day's notice.

Reading on, this writer is bad-mouthing the AROC about the members not getting off their culo (it's on the tape). But after reading his article I felt compelled to not say anything at the club picnic about my past involvement with specialty and one-off autos for fear of being tied to the stake and shot like a dog.

The writer assumed that what one person considered creative was actually butchering a classic/collector car. If he really wanted to save this car, why didn't he buy it and

do so? Often the real reason for rebodding or restyling a special model is not given, and many times a so-called collector's car slips past the owners and ends up in a junkyard (recycling center). Chances are slim at best that this car will ever wear a fresh set of plates again.

I have personally saved more than a handful of such collectors over the years and restyled or – in his words – butchered, as many and was paid to do so. But when you consider that two of my saves have made it to Pebble Beach and Monterey over the last six years, I don't feel so bad. My score is: Saves-2, Wreckers-0. What is his score?

However, I do agree with him on his paid membership problem, or issue, or whatever and that brings up the question, "Should I re-up for another year"? If there is a membership problem, the Board should go to the new members for the answers. The new member does not belong to a clique. The new member is not privy to what is happening and is overlooked. If the AROC is to flourish, then the new plants should be watered.

AROSC is what the Board makes it and there is nothing I repeat, absolutely nothing in the newsletter for the new enthusiast. 15 months ago I knew very little about Alpha (pun intended). I now own two and one parts car that I butchered and I loved it (even Pat Braden did not want it free). I guess I just don't belong to the right circle of *Alfa* owners, or at least that's the way I feel. I am an enthusiast and not a purist. The only purist I ever met was a hypocrite.

Happy New Year *Alfa Romeo*, and All The Best,

Ed Russell

Editor's Comment: Many of your comments have been made by other members. About 3 weeks before your letter was written, the SoCal Board of Directors selected a new Editor for Alfacionada. See the Editor's column in this issue for some of our goals for the future.

In regard to the "conflict" between SoCal and the National AROC, the impression you have received is an erroneous one, created by less than a handful of individuals in SoCal repetitively expressing their personal opinions in Alfacionada. Neither the SoCal Board nor the National AROC regard our relationship as an adversarial one.

Similarly, although there are a few people who consider that memorization of large amounts of obscure Alfa information is required to be a "real" enthusiast, most members simply focus on enjoying their Alfas.

Alfas, Vacations, and Fun

Three for the price of One

by Tom Suter

Would you like a way to combine your vacation and a great *Alfa* experience? If so, think about attending the AROC National Convention. Each year the location of the convention moves around the country, so you'll have the opportunity to satisfy some of your *Alfaholic* cravings, while selling your significant other on the idea that all of this is just a part of an enjoyable vacation.

What is an AROC National Convention all about? It's about having *fun* with – and without – your *Alfa*. Although the exact details may vary slightly from year to year depending upon the efforts of the AROC Chapter which is hosting the convention, there are some general activities which you can almost always expect to find. Over the years some of the host Chapters have introduced their own unique events, or variations on the "traditional" events, which have added a special flavor to that year's convention.

Among the fairly standard events you can expect to find at almost all conventions are a Slalom, or autocross, a Rally, a Time Trial on a major track, a Concours, tech sessions on *Alfa* maintenance, seminars on Chapter operations, a banquet, a variety of social activities, and much more. Many host Chapters also throw in unique activities which may often be associated with their part of the country, and these have provided me with some of my fondest convention memories over the years.

Last year, along with a slalom, concours, and other "normal" events, the Phoenix club put on an outdoor Western Cookout at a desert cafe on Friday evening, complete with grilled steaks and line dancing. They followed it up on Saturday with a great "Fun Run" through the wilds of Arizona.

If you have ever been to Sedona, Jerome, and Prescott, you'll have a little idea what a great route they laid out, and the event was planned to permit members to run the course at their own pace, stopping along the way like a typical tourist if desired, or taking some of the roads through the mountains the way your *Alfa* was meant to be driven.

After much of the day on the road, members were rewarded

back at the convention hotel on Saturday night with what I consider the best banquet meal I have ever had, whether at an AROC convention or elsewhere.

Since I am on the subject of food – One of my fondest memories from an AROC convention occurred when the Colorado Chapter hosted the convention in Vail in 1977. One of their activities was an outdoor Pancake Breakfast located at the end of the rally route (non-rallyists received more straight-forward directions to the location).

If you want to eat a great breakfast, have it cooked on portable grills located in a National Forest valley in the mountains of Colorado, early on a gorgeous summer morning. Pancakes, bacon, and coffee have never tasted so good!

When the New England Chapter hosted the convention about 15 years ago they had an outdoor Clambake on Friday evening in addition to the usual Saturday evening banquet indoors. Some years later when New England again hosted the convention, they put on a variety of "extra" activities aimed at families, such as a "Pinewood Derby" contest for kids, complete with trophies.

The Saturday evening banquets are always a lot more than just a meal. In addition to the chance for more socializing with other *Alfa* enthusiasts from around the U.S. and Canada,

and sometimes from overseas, there are a number of awards presented which are separate from the Sunday awards for competitive events at the Convention. Typical trophies go to the member who drove the longest distance to the convention in an *Alfa*, or to the member who drove the highest mileage *Alfa* to the convention, etc. – all presented in an atmosphere that frequently has the attendees filling the dining room with laughter.

A trademark of the banquet over the years has been a host of *Alfa*-related door prizes, and entertaining after-dinner speakers, frequently from the automotive press. Although it's always enjoyable to share a banquet table with existing friends, I have found the opportunity to talk to *Alfisti* from elsewhere in the country, or even from overseas, to be equally satisfying.

If you have an interest in learning more about how AROC

**What is an AROC
National Convention
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is run, the National Board also schedules its annual physical meeting at the time and place of the convention. This is generally held the day before the rest of the convention activities, to permit the Directors and anyone else interested in the Board meeting to participate without missing any of the convention activities.

The Board meeting is open to everyone and comments from the audience on the subjects under discussion are encouraged, so here's a chance to get involved in your club's direction.

So – after all of the talk about Convention activities and what has happened in the past, where and when would you go if you wish to attend an AROC Convention yourself?

This year the National Convention will be hosted by the Buckeye Chapter and held near Columbus, Ohio from the 19th through the 22nd of June. The Time Trial will be held at Mid-Ohio Raceway, which is often considered one of the better "driver's courses" in the United States. The Concours this year should also be well worth attending, as there are a number of pre-war and immediate post-war *Alfas* in the area which might be expected to show up.

And anyone who is in that area of the country and fails to visit the Air Force Museum near Dayton is missing a *real* treat. Definitely worth several hours at a minimum . . .

On a slightly different note, there is an effort underway here in SoCal to bid at this summer's Convention for the right to host the 1998 AROC Convention in this area. If you are interested in helping on this proposal, contact Jay Negrin at the number on page 2 of *Alfacionada*.

The New Mexico Chapter has been working very seriously for some time on preparing their bid for the 1998 event, so we can expect some real competition for the right to host the event, and can certainly use your help.

IN SEARCH OF . . .

a.k.a. – Return of The Wildflowers Tour

by Jay Negrin

If this were a Von Daniken novel, we could look for ruins, and claim that they were from ancient astronauts discovering pre-historic earth civilizations. But alas, we are just AROSC, and we must content ourselves to be look for wildflowers.

Last years tour, for those who could not make it, turned into a (futile) search for wildflowers in the desert areas around the Antelope Valley. It was a futile search because the wildflower gods are somewhat capricious. They had not blessed us with the correct conditions to bestow the hills with all the colors that Mother Nature has on her palette.

If the search for color was somewhat in vain, at least there were nice roads to travel upon while not finding the flowers. The camaraderie and chat at rest stops was welcomed by those on the tour. These are roads which have been there since George C. Macadam invented "blacktop". It takes a veteran rallyist to show some of these canyons to the city-dwellers in our club.

I did it last year, and I intend to do it again this year. If Mother Nature co-operates this year, we may yet find the profusion of color that I have been promising. If not, all I can guarantee is a fun drive, through some different canyons and valleys, to get us to the same desert region of the Antelope Valley, where all this good stuff is supposed to happen.

This year's *WildFlower Tour* will take place on the 6th of April. If the rain gods co-operate as well, we can have a pleasant drive, over some not-frequently traveled roads. The plan is the same as the last tour, to leave the San Fernando Valley (Mission Hills, actually) in the mid-morning, and set up a picnic lunch out among the flowers.

As with the last tour, I am planning frequent stops along the way to allow time to stretch legs, and give the sight-seers in the group a chance to catch up to the "drivers" among us.

As I write this, the course has not been written, but I have a good idea of the route I want to take. If you have any questions, please feel free to call if you want to discuss up-to-the-minute particulars. My home telephone number, as on the *Alfacionada* masthead, is (818) 894-3549.

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Look Before You Leap

Simple mirror adjustment eliminates blind spots

by Marcia Ruff - Courtesy of Alfa Dell'Isola

My closest calls have come while changing lanes. I glance in my mirror and the left lane looks clear. I make my move, only to discover - thankfully before it's too late - a car is in my blind spot. As stupid as I feel, I realize that I'm not alone in this bad habit. The federal government estimates there are 630,000 crashes and 225 fatalities each year resulting from lane changes and merges.

A simple new way to adjust your car's side mirrors may help reduce those numbers. In a paper delivered to the Society of Automotive Engineers, consulting engineer George Platzer, of Rochester, MI, described a side mirror adjustment method that virtually eliminates the blind spot.

Most people sit in the driver's seat and adjust the side mirror so they can see the side of the car. Platzer suggests that you lean your head against the left front window, then adjust the mirror so that you can see the side of your car.

To make sure that you've done it right, return to your normal driving position and watch a car passing in the left lane. It should appear in your side mirror before it leaves your rear mirror. The car will then appear in your peripheral vision before it leaves the side mirror.

To set the right side mirror, lean your head to the centerline of the car, and set the mirrors you can just see the side of your car. Obviously, this is much easier if you have power mirrors! (*Or a helper - Ed.*) The right-side mirror now provides a long, straight view of traffic approaching on the right.

The Platzer system takes some getting used to. The left mirror doesn't show traffic behind you until an overtaking car is in what used to be the blind spot. So you must rely on your rearview mirror for monitoring traffic to the rear. That's actually better, though, because the rear view mirror indicates distance and speed more accurately than the side mirrors. Another bonus is that glare from headlights behind you is no longer reflected in your eyes by your side view mirror.

Staying alert to the traffic around you is a good idea in general. But when you're running late or scrolling through the mental "To Do" list, it's easy to be distracted.

Be a safer driver by being attentive. And try George Platzer's system for improving your view of traffic in other

lanes. Your attentiveness might lower your odds of being a statistic.

Editor's Note: When I first read this article, my reaction tended to be amusement. However, after reflection about the concerns I have always had about blind spots, I decided to give the Platzer system a try. After a period of adjustment to the different "feel", I'm now a convert! It may not be for you (Your Mileage May Vary), but I suggest you take a hard look at it for yourself.

P.S. - After this issue was laid out, my latest copy of Alfa Owner caught up with my new address and I discovered that they had also felt the article was worth publishing. Rather than do a last minute change to the issue, I've chosen to leave it in.

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Our 1997 Calendar

Details Inside Afacionada

January	February	March	April
14 AROSC Board Mtg 25-6 Time Trial - Las Vegas. 31 Annual Meeting - 8pm, Culver City	11 AROSC Board Mtg 28 General Mtg - 8pm, Culver City	8-9 Time Trial - Willow Springs. 11 AROSC Board Mtg 28 General Mtg - 8pm, Culver City	6 Tour "In Search of the WoldFlowers". 8 AROSC Board Mtg. 25 General Mtg - 8pm, Culver City 26-7 Time Trial - Laguna Seca.
May	June	July	August
4 Swap Meet 13 AROSC Board Mtg. 18 Concours at Pomona VARA meet 30 General Mtg - 8pm, Culver City 31-1 Driving School - "Streets of Willow"	10 AROSC Board Mtg. 19-22 AROC National Convention - Columbus, Ohio 27 General Mtg. - 8pm, Culver City 29 Picnic & Tech Session - Culver City	8 AROSC Board Mtg. 25 General Meeting - 8pm, Culver City 26 Nethercutt Auto Museum Tour - 1pm, Sylmar (possible picnic & concours also)	12 AROSC Board Mtg. 29 General Mtg. - 8pm, Culver City
September	October	November	December
9 AROSC Board Mtg. 20-1 Driving School - "Streets of Willow" 26 General Mtg. - 8pm, Culver City 27-8 Wine Tour to Temecula	5 Concours - location TBD 11 AROSC Board Mtg. ?? Time Trial 24 General Mtg. - 8pm, Culver City	14 AROSC Board Mtg. 16 Swap Meet at "Under 3 Liter Meet" at Woodley Park 21 General Mtg, Elections, "White Turkey Auction" - 8pm, Culver City	6-7 Time Trial - Willow Springs 13 Christmas Party ?? AROSC Board Mtg.