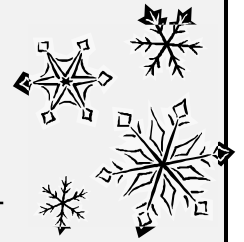


# La Voce

Winter 2004



*newsletter of the delaware valley alfa romeo owners club*

## Autumn Alfa Abundance



**Picnic in Paoli:** Every year our fall picnic is met with a surprise. One year, it was the rain, an unwelcome guest, but one that created a yet-to-be-repeated closeness. Another year, it was a Talbot-Lago Grand Prix car, a swath of French blue among the Italian reds. In still other years, we've been graced by a vintage Maserati Grand Prix car, a classic Aston Martin (relegated to the back pasture for non-Italian machinery) and various rare Pre and Post-War Alfas. This year's surprise came in a lovely yellow package.

When Bernie Varello drove across the field in his father's 2002 Alfa Spider, all conversations stopped. Everyone looked with astonishment at the car Alfa Romeo denied its American customers. Few residing on these shores have seen the current Spider offering in the flesh. Those who attended the picnic got to experience, first hand, what all the excitement has been about. Photos don't do the car justice. Viewed personally, the modern Spider is taught and contemporary. The model, now nearly ten years old, still looks fresh. The trademark Alfa Romeo heart-shaped grill creates a focal point from which character lines emanate rearward. The tiny headamps, since discarded by copycat Acura accent the front of the car with understatement. As one's eyes train rearward, the profile, which photographs awkwardly, evokes motion with its prominent wedge softened

with blunted corners. The linear theme is complemented by its alloy wheels, comprised of a series of large circles. The rear of the car continues the theme of basic shapes and is comprised of a series of rectangles; rectangular tail lamps outlined by a rectangular outline. The simple shapes, softened give one the impression that the car is larger than it is. While a bit wider than the previous generation Spider, the modern version is essentially the same size, overall.

Inside, the car is distinctively Italian, with lots of soft leather complemented by interesting and purposeful hardware. Some lucky ones, like Ruth Wolf, were able to experience the view from behind the wheel, first hand.

While the yellow spider clearly stole the event, it was by no means the only Alfa to garner its share of attention. The field was filled with cars of every hue, style and era. (Continued on Page 4)

**Mark Your Calendars!**  
**February 22 – Winter Lunch**  
**Carmella's Manyunk**

# Bob's Babblings

Bob Brady

**Brrrrrrrr!** While today was a sunny and balmy 40 degrees outside, this winter has been very unfriendly to Alfisti, so far. With the temperatures in the teens, working in my unheated garage has been no fun. Worse, all painting and finish body work activities are on hold until I can get the garage up to 55 degrees. Still worse, the roads are full of salt water, to which my Alfas have become allergic. So, if you're like me, you've been making do driving something more mundane. With that in mind, I'll offer my top ten things to do while waiting for the weather to break:

10. Sort nuts and bolts (very therapeutic.... just ask me)
9. Scan the internet and/or classifieds for parts
8. Make lists of all the stuff you need to do on your Alfa
7. Scan the internet and/or classifieds for another Alfa
6. Buy and read another book on Alfa Romeos
5. Write an article for La Voce
4. Scan the internet and/or classifieds for Alfa related stuff
3. Buy and watch "Victory By Design - Alfa Romeo"
2. Make plans to attend this years AROC Convention
1. **Buy** another Alfa Romeo....you can never have too many!

[WWW.DVAROC.ORG](http://WWW.DVAROC.ORG) If you've visited our website lately, you'll notice that it's not quite as out of date as it has been. That's largely due to the great help from Ed Jones and Mike Berube who generously volunteered to give it a tune up. Thanks!

**Event News** I hope you can make it to this year's winter lunch. We changed venues to break with tradition a bit and to provide a more central location. We had a number of options, and those on the email distribution list voted for Carmella's. (If you're not on the email list and would like to be, send me a note at: [mpbrady@verizon.net](mailto:mpbrady@verizon.net)) It's supposed to offer a great view of the cars, which will be parked below. It's also Italian, and should have good food. Sharing lunch with other like-minded folks is a great way to break out of the winter doldrums. If the weather breaks, it's also a great time to take your car out for an "Italian tune-up." Let's hope the sun shines.

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Classified ads are free to DVAROC members, \$10 for others.

The DVAROC web address is at: [www.dvaroc.org](http://www.dvaroc.org)

Send **La Voce** submissions to:

Bob Brady  
105 Spottswood Lane  
Kennett Square, PA 19348  
(610) 925-1837 (eve)  
(610) 925-1839 (fax)  
(302)366-0500x2814(day)  
[mpbrady@verizon.net](mailto:mpbrady@verizon.net)

On another note, some of you might notice that the CTAROC Time Trials are conspicuously absent from the calendar. It looks

like they will be moved to October, this year. Apparently there has been a change of ownership of Lime Rock and they got caught by some transitional miscues.

Finally, I'd love to hear from you if you have any ideas for events you'd like us to hold. I'm still trying to find a suitable host for a tech session on car restoration. If you can offer a suggestion, please let me know.

**Thanks** This La Voce has benefited from some great input from a number of members. Bill Conway, as always, continues to send me material to publish. Thanks, Bill, please keep it coming. Larry DeYoung sent some beautiful photos of the fall picnic. If you can, take a moment out and visit our website, [www.dvaroc.org](http://www.dvaroc.org). La Voce is published in color there. They are just too good to view only in black and white.

## Classifieds:

**1977 Alfa Romeo Spider**, 90.5K miles, red, good overall condition, water pump needs replacing but otherwise solid and drives well. Auto actually belongs to my son, however, he has been based in Europe for the past three years and recently extended. Consequently, he has asked me to sell the car for him but he would like to see the car go to an Alpha enthusiast. Asking \$2,350. For more info or to see the car please call John Vodantis at (610) 783-0499.

**1971 Alfa Romeo GTV 1750** - Butterscotch Yellow over Black - 76,000 miles. Looks and runs great. Nice older restoration, with a generous amount of new parts. Spica fuel injection was recently rebuilt, car is running at its best. Asking \$8000 Any questions please call me at 215-783-3225. Bermie.

**1962 Giulia Spider** needs total restoration or for parts. \$1000 obo, Jeff Kollar, 610-746-0317

**Giulietta, Giulia Spider, Sprint, SS Parts:** Engines, Veloce bits, trim, body, interior. Call for details. Jeff Kollar, 610-746-0317

**1974 GTV:** disassembled, custom cage & flat floors with bars for seats and undercarriage bracing by S&W in Spring City, PA. **All** parts are boxed and will go with car. 5 new OEM steel wheels widened to 6" with Stahlflex 3011. In storage for 15 yrs. Rebuilt engine (Spica) with maybe 5kmi. Extras available incl: (will not be sold separately until car is sold): pair 45DCOE's w/manifold, Spruell headers (new), Switters close ratio gear box, SAFE fuel cell and Life Line Halogen fire system both SCCA legal) Sparco seat Brembo lightweight calipers (new), Car is at Nick Falcone's, Bala-Cynwyd, PA, 610-664-0944

**1983 GTV-6** 19K miles Silver/Blue, Bill Conway, 973-839-9239

[Bill.Conway@neclease.com](mailto:Bill.Conway@neclease.com)

**1967 Duetto** Euro car, red, has been sitting, but supposedly the engine is fresh. A couple of minor dents and needs floors/paint. Seats are nearly perfect. An easy restoration. \$2000. Contact Bob Brady 610-925-1837, [mpbrady@bellatlantic.net](mailto:mpbrady@bellatlantic.net) for more information.

**NOS Parts** I have hundreds of NOS Alfa parts. Most of them are 105/115 series parts, but I also have some 101, 102 and 106 series parts. For an inventory and some prices, go to:

<http://members.bellatlantic.net/~mpbrady/newpartsinventory.htm>

In addition to the new parts, I have a couple 1750 and 1600 engines as well as some spare 5spd transmissions for sale. Contact Bob Brady 610-925-1837, [mpbrady@bellatlantic.net](mailto:mpbrady@bellatlantic.net) for more information.

**Car Storage:** I have Barn Storage space available for rent. Winter storage for your Spider or that project car you don't have time for. Dry, clean and secure at \$95 a mo. Located south of Bethlehem just across the Bucks County line. Domenick Billera, 610-838-9970

## Events Calendar: \* Indicates DVAROC Event

### \*February 22 - DVAROC Winter Lunch – Carmella's - Manayunk Pa.

Had enough of the rain, ice, snow, cold? Are you looking for something to warm your body and your soul? Join like-minded Alfisti from the Delaware Valley AROC for a cozy winter lunch at Carmella's, on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 2:00 pm. Carmella's Restaurant is located at One Leverington, Venice Island, in Manayunk. Their phone number is: 215-487-1400. Ample parking should be available on the island and we should be able to view our cars as we eat. Please RSVP to Bob Brady by **Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup>**. You can reach Bob at: 610-925-1837 or at [mpbrady@verizon.net](mailto:mpbrady@verizon.net). The menu is as follows:

**First Course Choice of:**

**Carmella's Salad,**

**Romaine Salad with Tomato and Bacon and Gorgonzola Dressing, or**

**Lobster Bisque**

**Entree Choice of:**

**Steamed Mussels in Red Sauce over Linguini Pan Seared Prime,**

**Wild Salmon with Sautéed Spinach,**

**Potato Gnocchi Alla Vodka,**

**Chicken Parmigiana and Spaghetti, or**

**Sautéed Crab Cakes with Red Pepper Basil Cream**

**Dessert:**

**Selection from the Carmella's Dessert Tray**

**Soda, Coffee and Tea service included**

Cost is \$23/person, not including taxes and gratuities... so expect to spend about \$30/person. There will be a cash bar. Also, there will be a children's menu available for about \$11/person, with the usual kids fare available.

**Directions:**

**North and West of Philadelphia:** Take the turnpike to 476 south, to 76 (Schuylkill Expressway, towards Philadelphia) or take 95 towards Philadelphia to 676 (Vine Street Expressway, west) to 76 (Schuylkill Expressway, west). From 76, exit Belmont Avenue/Green Lane. Cross the bridge over the river to Manayunk. Turn left on Main Street. Leverington is on the left.

**South and East of Philadelphia:** Drive towards Philadelphia to 676 (Vine Street Expressway, west) to 76 (Schuylkill Expressway, west). From 76, exit Belmont Avenue/Green Lane. Cross the bridge over the river to Manayunk. Turn left on Main Street. Leverington is on the left.

### February 26-29 – Atlantic City Collector Car Auction – Atlantic City, NJ

Atlantic City Convention Center. For more information, go to: [www.acclassiccars.com](http://www.acclassiccars.com)

### \*April ?? – Tech Session

### April 26-27 – COMSCC Time Trials at Summit Point – Summit Point, WV

COMSCC holds great time trials/drivers' schools. Drive your Alfa as it was meant to be driven. Contact Bob Brady at: 610-925-1837 or [mpbrady@verizon.net](mailto:mpbrady@verizon.net) for more information.

### May 1-2 – VSCCA at VIR – Danville, VA

Vintage races come to the outstanding Virginia International Raceway. Word has it that they will be providing special attention to Giuliettas (in honor of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this year) and will allow lapping by street Giuliettas. Sounds like fun! Contact Bob Brady at: 610-925-1837 or [mpbrady@verizon.net](mailto:mpbrady@verizon.net) for more information.

### \*May ?? – Any Suggestions?

### \*June ?? – Swap Meet with Central PA and Capital Chapters

### \*June ?? – Spring Tour; New Garden Air (and car) Show

### \*July ?? – Summer Picnic and Rally

### \*July 28 – August 1 – AROC National Convention – Manchester, NH

Mark your calendars now. Plan to make the trip, it will be worth it. For more information go to: [www.velocissima.com](http://www.velocissima.com)

### \*August ?? – New Hope Auto Show

### \*October ?? – Fall Picnic

### Other Events???

If you have a particular interest, know of an event that might interest other Alfisti, or just want to get involved, please contact Bob Brady at: 610-925-1837 or [mpbrady@bellatlantic.net](mailto:mpbrady@bellatlantic.net)

## Fall Picnic (con't from Front Page)

The collection of cars provided by our ever-gracious hosts, Henry and Nancy Wessells formed the cornerstone of the display. The highlight, of course, was the exceptional silver 1900CSS. The Giulietta Spider Veloce, Alfetta GTV and Milano Verde, all in red, became the court of the silver queen. While clearly more common than the 1900, they reminded the onlookers of the many features that are shared among Alfas. They also showed the differences in design and construction as Alfa transitioned from an exclusive to an inclusive automobile manufacturer. After Henry's cars, the row of Alfas that extended down and around the front lawn offered no theme, just one beautiful car after another.



Larry DeYoung and Matthew Brady check out the 1900CSS



A row of GTVs as captured by Larry DeYoung's artful eye

First, one encountered a collection of Bertone's best: Bill Shield's green GTV race car, Bob Brady's red GTV sometimes race car, Dan Diefenderfer's red GTV (the car that all GTV owners aspire to), Ed Jones' '69 GTV in, you guessed it, red and Bob Brady's Giulietta Sprint, in fingerprint-resistant, textured red lacquer. A series of monochromatic Spiders were next: Arthur Jones' elegant, gray Giulia, Frank Gil's black Quad, Dan Newton's white "Series IV," followed by another in black, enjoyed by Murray Miller.



The crowd gathers around Dan Diefenderfer's pristine GTV



Bill Conway shows John Madigan his still young Sprint Veloce's engine



Another beautiful shot of the field by Larry DeYoung

A few cars down from the "before" Sprint was Jim Itin's meticulously-restored Giulia Sprint, in handsome blue. Next was another blue beauty, Charlie Crother's Azzuro Lemans Giulia Spider. A stunning red 164 provided the left bookend of Alfas in the front row. (Continued on Next Page)

# Fall Picnic (con't from Previous Page)

Bill Conway, king of the low mileage Alfa had his bronze '79 Sprint Veloce parked next in line. Driving to picnic may have pushed it over the 14,000 mile mark. With the exception of the yellow '02 Spider, the remaining cars in the line demonstrated that Alfas need not be colored brightly to be beautiful. The row of silver, turquoise, blue and black Spiders made one rethink the notion that "Alfas look best in red." Pat Carzo's silver stepnose and Tony Latini's black 164 exuded timeless style and elegance. Finally, the last car in line, a lovely, black Giulia Spider provided the finest photo opportunity. With the turning leaves glistening in its paint and the moss-covered springhouse in the background, the scene was definitely "cover shot" material. While clearly the focal point of the day, the cars weren't the only attraction; rather the friendly smiles of dozens of Alfisti made the event such a treat.



The "shot of the day"



Another shot of the Diefenderfer GTV (I couldn't resist - ed)

Some came to get great technical advice, some came to socialize, a few came to romp in the stream. And after many hours in the warm sun and even warmer hospitality of our hosts, everyone left fulfilled. Nagging questions were answered. Friendships were forged or renewed. And, for the junior Alfisti, soggy clothes were replaced with dry. Somehow, we managed to sneak in our annual meeting and elections. Somehow, yours truly was reelected for another term. While it was with some sadness

that the day had to end, I'm confident that all left with a full tank of memories and a fond anticipation of our next meeting.

On behalf of the entire Delaware Valley Alfa Romeo Owners Club, I'd like to express our greatest appreciation for the hospitality and kindness our hosts, Henry and Nancy Wessells extended to us. We are truly fortunate to have such wonderful enthusiasts among us.

So another fall picnic, with another spectacular surprise passes into memories. I wonder what the surprise will be next year. I hope you'll opt to find out. See you next year.



Bill Shields packs up the GTV after a great day

## On The Road...

# DVAROC Pre-Frost Tour

Bob Brady

With November nipping, opportunities for exercising our favorite cars become rare. Fortunately, the DVAROC, with the expert help from Jason Urban, provided the perfect excuse to convert some hydrocarbons into greenhouse gases.

The DVAROC fall tour started on a lovely, yet crisp Sunday morning, on the shores of Lake Noxamixon State Park. The lake swells and yard of dry-docked boats provided a picturesque backdrop for the lovely vintage vehicles. While, of course, the Alfas were the stars, a couple of Austin Healys, a Porsche 356 Cabriolet and a TVR added some variety to the field. After spending some time in the crisp, autumn air, Jason, our tour organizer, gathered up the crowd and passed out instructions.

The tour meandered us to and through some of Bucks County's best byways. Photo opportunities were in abundance, as we snaked our way through many a covered bridge. (Continued on Next Page)



# Fall Tour (con't from Previous Page)

final leg of the tour, myself included. Regardless, it was another fabulous time, with great weather, a great turnout, and a wonderful bunch of people. There's nothing quite like an autumn drive along the Delaware Valley, except perhaps, that same drive among a cadre of like-minded aficionados.

Thanks, Jason and Holly, for making it such a special afternoon.



The Stolls kept cozy in their GTV, opting to keep the Giulietta Spider at home. The Urbans, DeMennas and Bradys did likewise, snugly secured in their Sprints. Not so, the Jones, Danieleles, Newtons and others; they braved the nippy November air in Spiders. Some even kept the top down to get a last chance sun tan.

Jason's route provided a little bit of everything: challenging, twisty roller-coaster sections, smooth, scenic straights along the river and quick narrow back roads. By the time we made it to our mid-point lunch in Frenchtown, everyone was ready for a break. A few were in need of some anti-freeze. Fortunately, the Ship Inn, our lunch destination, is also a micro-brewery.

Lunch allowed us to thaw out, relax and share stories in a secluded setting away from the cold outside. It was such a pleasant time that it extended well beyond the original schedule. Because of that, and because of the complexities of modern life, many opted not to finish the



On The Track...

# The Tradition of SVRA

## Vintage Racing at Summit Point

Bob Brady

Once upon a time, owners of exotic machinery gathered together on windy roads, closed-off airfields, or sometimes, undulating loops of purpose-built asphalt (aka “race tracks”) to test their skills, equipment and courage. What began as informal get-togethers, quickly evolved into organized events. As time went by, more and more cars began to get involved. Classes became more extensive. Rule books went from being a couple of pages long to voluminous publications. As popularity grew, advertising followed, bringing sponsorship, money and complexity. Today, professional racing is a well-planned, risk-averse production, with spectators compartmentalized away from drivers. Fortunately, there is a movement of sportsmen more interested in friendly, civilized competition than landing promotional perks. This movement is the Vintage Racing movement.

Vintage racing is a worldwide affair and comes in all flavors. In England, unique, priceless automobiles are flogged with the verve. After all, they’re just race cars and can always be rebuilt. In the states, vintage racing is typically less aggressive. How close to the edge drivers pilot their cars depends on the organization. VSCCA, with its emphasis on pre-1957 cars, is very serious about avoiding bent sheet metal. The SCCA Historic series, on the other hand, is arguably the most aggressive series that runs on the east coast. Somewhere in between lies the SVRA.

The moment you arrive at an SVRA event, you know something is different. People at the gate actually greet you. No one tries to herd you on to a designated seat in a grandstand. If you’re part of “the crew” as I was able to claim at Summit Point in September, admission is free. The hosts at the greeting table even handed out stickers, something SCCA would never do without money changing hands.

Driving on to the infield pit area, I met up with Bill Shields, who was enjoying his first SVRA weekend as a competitor. The lot was just like a COMSCC or CTAROC time trial weekend, with a diversity of rigs, cars and a friendly, casual atmosphere. The only real difference was that race cars were all a bit older.

As a spectator, it was just like the Glen in the 70’s, plenty of free access to all points on the track and plenty of great racing.

Alfa Romeos were out in force, with three GTVs (including Bill’s), a GTA jr., a Spider, and believe it or not, a Berlina. Most of the cars were of late 60’s early 70’s vintage.

The cars and drivers put on a great show. While it was clear that some were holding back a little, most were pushing the limits. Most refreshing was that the cars actually resembled cars on the road instead of plastic-bodied tube-framed purpose built racers.

If you’ve never made it to a vintage race, I highly recommend it. Summit Point, Lime Rock, Watkins Glen and VIR are all beautiful tracks that host vintage racing. Maybe once you see a race, you’ll be tempted to come out and play. I hope so!



A sticker from the back window of Hugh Tomkins' GTA jr.



The Tompkins' GTA jr. sitting under the Krause & England tent



A local rhd GTV



A 911 goes off just before turn 5, as the Alfas drive by

**More Photos from SVRA at Summit Point**



*Tompkins' GTA jr at full tilt, rounds turn three, on its way to eating a Triumph Spitfire for lunch*



*Bill Shields' efforts to gobble up a 911 are temporarily thwarted by the yellow flag brought out from the other 911 that went off just moments before*



*The tent of Scuderia Silvesteri and their "arrive and drive" Berlina. They made the trek from Florida and are great examples of the wonderful atmosphere of the event. Their tent had a linen-covered table in front with Italian delicacies offered*  
**Always Looking For Another...**

## The Elusive Stepnose

*Bob Brady*

As December approached, pressure to meet my self-imposed deadline of having the body work "essentially" done on the GTV race car wannabe (aka the "Swiss Cheese Mobile" (SCM)) by year's end, came to a head. My efforts to find a suitable way out of this mess stepped up accordingly.

While the GTV is "essentially" the car I want to race, what I'd really prefer would be an earlier "step-nose" model. Perhaps it's the resemblance to a GTA that's the attraction. Perhaps it's the notion that a solid shell, or better yet, a complete, drivable car could help me avoid months of bodywork and reassembly required for the SCM that's got me looking. Perhaps it's just the "Always Looking For Another" syndrome. After all, I seem to get restless unless I purchase at least one Alfa Romeo or a collection of parts each year. Regardless, I continue to start each day combing the classifieds and internet for another GTV, preferably one that is race ready, and as close to free as possible. Over the past few months of searching, a familiar pattern emerges. It's the **Five Steps of Alfa Acquisition**.

**Stage 1: Discovery** Discovery is when you come across the perfect car, the proverbial deal of the century (never mind that it seems to occur weekly). Even if the treasure appears on ebay, you irrationally congratulate yourself for finding this elusive prize. You wonder why others haven't already capitalized on this valuable opportunity. Never mind that many already **have** passed on it after they've discovered what a frightening prospect it really is.

Sometimes, when knowledge of the car gets to you from a more obscure path, a certain level of paranoia takes hold. After all, you need to keep this baby out of view from the public until its safely in your garage. If you're detecting a theme, you're probably correct. The theme is irrationality.

If you make it past the first stage without first coming to your senses, you quickly move on to the next one, Inquiry.

**Stage 2: Inquiry** Having let the irrational exuberance of the discovery of your future treasure overwhelm your sense of reason, you now get caught up in a frenzy of fact finding. For most mere mortals, fact finding is normally an exercise in reason. Remember, its normal purpose is to bring some sense of objectivity to a decision. Ah, but Alfisti are not mere mortals. We are not stone-faced Skeptics. Rather, we are driven by emotion; we **drive** emotion! So, for us, the purpose of the Inquiry stage is to gather enough information that will rationalize the irrational purchase. If successful, this stage will provide just enough ammunition to convince our spouse or friends that buying this car makes perfect sense. Why, it would be crazy **not** to buy this car.

The Inquiry phase is also filled with plenty of down time, the time between contacting the owner for information and actually receiving it. Fortunately, this down time is perfect for creating elaborate fantasies of ownership. Any known imperfections of the car are magically transformed in our minds until it becomes a flawless gem. Time and money commitments required to make the transformation are minimized; conversely, the pool of time and money one has available gets dilated. (Spouses take note: this manic period is a great time to get your significant other to commit to taking on household projects.) Often, the excited buyer makes extensive, detailed lists of what will need to be done and what parts will have to be purchased. This is normal. It's part of the would-be buyer's attempt at grounding his fantasy in reality. "If I have lists of what needs to be done and what parts to buy," the delusional Alfista reasons, "therefore, the car must be all I hope it to be." (Continued on Next Page)

### **Five Steps of Alfa Acquisition con't**

While those around him can see through this spiral of denial, the pursuer is blind, in a sort of Italian ziti-vision.



Rarely does the acquisition process stop at Stage 2. Stage 3, however is a different story, that's when the information gets delivered and reality collides with fantasy.

**Stage 3: The Let Down.. or Not** As its title suggests, Stage 3 can take on two very different characters. More often than not, it is characterized by a "let down."

Once the information provided by the seller arrives, it usually becomes clear why no one else has capitalized on this "great deal." Sometimes, the owner reveals trivial details such as the car has had some "minor rust" repaired with cookie sheets and pop rivets. Sometimes you receive photos so ghastly that you question the sanity of the seller. "Why hasn't this car cracked in half?" you might ask. This was the case of a '71 GTV I looked into in Massachusetts. In typical fashion, the paint looked very nice and was naturally, red. Fortunately, the seller provided extensive photos of the car from underneath. From that vantage point, there were signs of dangerous-looking repairs to the rockers, floors, front valence... everywhere. Unfortunately, this car looked destined to become a donor for a more worthy survivor.

Sometimes owners of "good" restoration candidates store them in fields with plans to harvest them someday. I looked into some early GTVs down south that were in this state. Talking to the owner, they all seemed to be reasonable race car candidates. My excitement grew. When the photos arrived in the mail, a less rosy picture emerged. After viewing them, I found myself wondering if I'd need a chainsaw to rescue them. It didn't take long to put the photos in a return envelope with a note stating "no thanks." Maybe in a few years they'll return to the earth from which they came, saving prospective buyers from their temptation.

While these cases exemplify how some extra information can yield a "let down," in other cases, the information just fuels the fantasy.

Photos can often make the worst bucket of rust appear like a minor restoration candidate. Minor dents and rust bubbles rarely appear obvious. Also, for some reason, sellers don't typically photograph the "surprises" lurking within... hmmm. While in some cases this is caused by insidious motivations, more often than not, it is truly some naivety on the part of the seller. One car I had planned to buy looked acceptable from the twenty or more photos the seller sent me. He even took photos of all the areas I requested. But, photos are only two-dimensional. Only after driving four hours to pick it up did I realize what a disaster it really was. Within two minutes, literally, I saw that the car was held together with bondo and paint. The front valence had been "repaired" but the new metal had been welded directly over the old rusty section. The inner fender wells, difficult to capture in photos, were non-existent. It was really a parts car with a nice paint job. The owner really wasn't aware of its flaws until I pointed them out. I turned away and drove home empty handed but satisfied I'd made a good decision, even though it came with some interesting spare parts.

Lists of spare parts included in the package are a dangerous distraction. Rarely do you ask yourself the condition of the spares. So when the owner says a twin plug head comes with the purchase, you naturally assume it is in perfect condition instead of asking about the big crack in it. Remember, there's usually a reason why those "spare" parts aren't installed on the car. Even if the spares are in reasonable shape, you might make the mistake of valuing them at prices listed in a ReOriginals catalog. Try selling some parts and you'll find what they're really worth. The same holds true for deals that come with an "extra" car. If the spares or parts car are so valuable, ask the seller to keep the parts and subtract the price from the car. Then, you'll find out the "extensive spares" aren't worth the space they occupy.

Of course, I'm one to talk. Nearly every Alfa I've bought has come as a package deal. Too often, I find myself wondering why I took the time to bring this junk home as I toss it into the can.

Stage 3 is very dangerous. If it doesn't result in a "return to Stage 1" it means you're one step closer to bringing home a bundle of joy.

**Stage 4: Serious Consideration** This stage is merely a prelude to the next one. With everything you've learned about the car, it still looks like a winner. Now it's time to get serious. You compare its value to other benchmarks. You ask others, even at the risk of revealing where your secret treasure lies. You check your bank account again and again. You make more detailed lists of work to be done on the car, parts to be bought and subtract that from the asking price. You create a logical explanation as to why your low-ball offer really is fair. You set your absolute maximum price which you will never, ever exceed. Then, you go for it. You pick up the phone, start typing an email, or worse yet, start bidding. It's time for Stage 5, Making the Deal.

**Stage 5: Making the Deal** Anyone who has ever bought a car from a dealer knows that you must be prepared to walk away if you expect to get the best possible deal. If you were a Consumer Reports operative, you'd approach your purchase that way. Purchases of Alfa Romeos, however, tend to be driven by emotion. At some point, when the bidding goes past your "absolute maximum" or the seller turns away your offer, desperation sets in. All your childhood feelings of being denied that special toy tug at you. Recognize that it's happening, and you'll coolly walk away, smarter and wiser, better prepared for the "next deal of the century." If you don't recognize it for what it is, however, you'll find yourself begging the seller to let you have it at any cost. It's this dynamic that often drives auctions on ebay beyond comprehension.

A couple of months ago, a GTV appeared in the Fiat section. This gave it the "hidden treasure" appeal, despite the fact that its mis-categorization was noted on the alfa-digest. Since the car was in the area, and since it looked like a reasonable candidate for a race car, I went to see it.

Once again, the photos didn't do the car justice. And, once again, after getting within ten feet of the car, I turned and ran. In this case, the entire front windshield surround was rotted away, including the roof. Later, I watched the bidding on ebay go past \$800 for the hulk.

A couple of months earlier, another '74 GTV, albeit in better condition but also with holes around the windshield went for over \$3500. Amazing. A month or so before that, a stepnose "project" race car, in need of floors and a full restoration was purchased within days of listing for over \$5000.

While taking a win at all cost approach to negotiating a purchase will likely land you the car, it will also likely land you a severe case of buyer's remorse. As hard as it might be, sticking to a maximum price you rationally derived will leave you more satisfied, in the end. Also, a willingness to walk away often leads to the seller meeting your offer. When that happens, it's just a matter of finalizing the details and picking up your new toy.

If this were any ordinary used car purchase, picking it up would be a minor matter of meeting the buyer, exchanging funds and titles and going on your merry way. Of course, Alfas are far from ordinary. With few exceptions, all of the Alfas I've purchased involved long distances, trailers, loading and unloading boxes of spares, or all of them. Even buying my Milano, the Alfa I've owned that most closely resembles an ordinary car, involved driving to Connecticut to pick it up. There is a price to pay for demanding extraordinary transportation. Once all of the logistics have been completed, and your car is home, a sense of relief sets in. Relief or emptiness, I'm not sure. Maybe it's the chase that drives us because it doesn't take long after that I find myself perusing the classifieds again.... Always Looking For Another.

In this issue: Fall Picnic, Fall Tour, SVRA at Summit Point,  
Winter Lunch, Events Calendar.... and more



**La Voce**  
c/o Robert Brady  
105 Spottswood Lane  
Kennett Square, PA 19348

*First Class Mail*