Check out the NEW www.flu.org
Visit the web for the latest in what’s happening in YOUR club.

We need your submissions!
RICAMBI needs submissions from YOU! Anything from a simple photo and description of your car to a nice article telling about your car or interesting tech knowledge. Send photos and articles to bmelancon@fmbadvertising.com or call 865-604-3271 for instructions on how to submit your article. FLU thanks you!

Editorial submissions can be sent in for consideration to:
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All submitted material will be considered and is subject to editing to fit the format of RICAMBI. Material will not be returned unless arranged before submission. Questions regarding submissions should be directed to Brett Melancon by emailing at bmelancon@fmbadvertising.com or calling 865-604-3271.

Editorial and photos may be submitted electronically via disk/CD or e-mail. All ads must be sufficient quality and format suitable for printing. I can accept material created in most software, contact Brett for details. Please do not send low resolution graphics from web sites unless you check and discuss it beforehand.

Please send all checks for classifieds to Scott Hill, Club Treasurer, 3258 Scioto Farms Drive, Hilliard, OH 43026

Helpful Sources
Bayless Fiat Lancia World
1111 Via Bayless, Marietta, GA 30066-2770
fax 770-928-1342 sales@baylessfiat.com

Bruce’s Parts Bin
6 B Enterprise Court, Sewell, NJ 08080
856-582-7770 bruce@fiatparts.com

C. Obert & Co., formerly Fiat Plus
2131-D Delaware Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95060
831-423-0218 www.fiatplus.com (Check out NEW website!)

Fun Imported Auto and Toys
143 Tunnel Road, Vernon, CT 06066
860-871-1990 info@vickauto.com

International Auto Parts
P.O. Box 9036, Charlottesville, VA 22906
800-953-0813 http://www.international-auto.com/

Midwest X1/9
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614-784-8870 www.midwestx19.com

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800-466-3428 info@vickauto.com
FLU is spreading, if you would like to start a FLU chapter in your area, please contact John Montgomery for information on how to become an official FLU chapter. You may also sign up to be a regional contact. This is the first step to becoming a chapter. Join the fun!

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John Montgomery– (864) 304-1337
bertoneman@aol.com

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Kevin Barnett– (Western NC & SC)
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WYNSO (Western New York, So. Ontario) (chapter)
Darryl Stacey– (716) 822-3812
printstopwny@aol.com

FIAT FREEZE OUT 2009!!
Make plans now! Saturday January 24, 2009. 6pm We will host the winter party at the Park Ridge Hotel on North Gulph Road in Valley Forge, PA. This will be the site for FFO 2009. Come with or without your Italian steed and join other car owners in the dead of winter. We’ve done this party occasionally in the past and it has always been a great excuse to get together with old and new friends. You can get a preview of next summer’s big show as we will do a presentation on the plans so far for Freak Out 2009. This will also be an opportunity to volunteer for any of many the needed jobs for FFO. The cost is $25 per person for dinner and there will be a cash bar. We need to have an accurate count for dinner.

Please contact Thad Kirk through delvalleyflu@gmail.com to get on the list. The Park Ridge Hotel is also holding some rooms at a discount rate if any out of town people would want to stay for the night. Contact the hotel direct and tell them you are with the Fiat group. (610) 337-1800

For more info go to our local website: http://fludelaware.italiancarclub.com/

www.flu.org
Dear Members,

Some people check the calendar, others observe the color change in the leaves, but FLU people know that the end of the driving season is here when Tim Beeble puts his beloved 1974 Fiat 124 Spider in winter storage up in Connecticut. I got the word from him just a few weeks ago. Yep, it’s back in the barn. Sure, we get a little more time down here in South Carolina, but the frost is definitely on the pumpkin.

The trees are bare, the Holidays are here and the first snows have blanketed much of the Northeast. Mike Bouse has reported that the salt trucks are clomoring down western Michigan roads.

Still, the sizzle of this summer is remains in our hearts as we look back on a tremendous 2008. Wow, what a 25th Anniversary year! We returned to the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania where it all began back in 1983 to draw a full 25 year circle around the grand adventure that is Fiat motoring. We have more new photos from Freak Out posted on the web so please go to www.flu.org to have a look.

This year’s Freak Out broke all records for attending members, cars, event sponsorship and sales of FLU clothing & merchandise. The weather was just as fantastic, just like the quality and variety of cars. Jim McGill from Ireland brought his new 2008 Fiat 500 for all to see and many got a first time experience from behind the wheel. For me and many others, seeing the car in person was truly witnessing the dawn of a new day for Fiat in this part of the world.

I guess it can be said that FLU is an Orphan car club. Yet, like every orphan, we look toward a day when we’ll be once again part of the national automotive family. Certainly our continued devotion to the Fiat and Lancia marque positively impacts Fiat’s view for a new market here and dare I say their eventual return to North American shores. Impossible you say? Well, after seeing and driving the “star” of this year’s FFO, it reminds me of another import that took America by storm many years ago.

Some of us old folks remember 45 years ago when the “Fab 4” arrived from Ireland to make its musical debut here in America. The Beatles appeared to a record 73 million viewers on the Ed Sullivan TV Show on February 9th, 1964. Ironically, newspaper reviews on the following Monday morning said the band “couldn’t carry a tune” and that they were nothing more than a passing fad. However, the public’s response was far different! The band played 5 songs on Ed’s “Big Shoe”, Beetlemania was born and music was forever changed. The band was very reluctant to come to America at first since they had no number one hit song here and were completely unknown just three months before appearing on American TV. So how did this unknown band pull in 73 million viewers? The Beatles rise to stardom in America can be traced back to the action of one person; 15 year old Marsha Albert from Silver Spring, Maryland. So who was Marsha Albert? Marsha watching TV and happened to see Walter Cronkite do a CBS news story about obscure British bands on December 10th, 1963. She got a glimpse of the Beatles from the story and strongly urged the DJ at her local radio station play a British hit song called “I want to Hold your Hand”. The Washington, DC radio station played it in America for the first time on December 17th. The calls to the radio station poured in and the single went on the station’s regular play list. Within 3 weeks it was not only a number one hit in America but had sold over a million copies in the states. The rest is history. So why am I bringing this up?

Because Jim Magill did the same thing this summer that Marsha Albert did for the Fab 4. But this time Jim was introducing the new “Fab 5”, the Fiat 500! The Fiat 500 made its first journey from here from Ireland and traveled 5 regions of the country over this summer. The reception for this little car at FFO was absolutely incredible everywhere it went. Jim and a team of lucky FLU member caretakers took the 500 all across the fruited plains of the entire country, getting 50 MPG all the while! Enthusiastic crowds gathered everywhere the car was parked. Men lusted, women swooned, children pointed and even little dogs wagged their tails in excitement. We don’t realize it yet… but Fiat’s destiny in North America will be changed forever by this car. Just give it a little time, for the seeds have been sown my friends! We are going to see Fiat automotive fruit here in the next few years, because it’s just too tasty to hold back.

So, what happened to our tiny hero of a car? The story only gets better. The little white Fiat 500 has been adopted by Jeff Lane at the Lane Motor Museum (www.lanemotormuseum.org) in Nashville, TN. So much for being an orphan! Jim had to go back to Ireland, but we’re officially adopting him too!

Meanwhile, I am happy to report that club membership is up to nearly 600 current members and the amount of regional and chapter activities is at an all time high. The Chicago fire of Fiat fun and excitement still rages big time over at Chi-FLU, and they have a new 2009 calendar! Buy one today and support the Chi-FLU guys! http://italiancar.meetup.com/46/

Lots of other good things are going on within the club and at FLU HQ. We just had an FLU Board election. This year Lee Putman and Denise Burchette joined the BOD while Bobb Rayner and Jon Logan were re-elected. Since the FLU Bylaws revision vote (152 for vs. 7 opposed), Vice President Jon Logan and Secretary Tim Beeble gave up their BOD seats to remain officers under the new regulations. Therefore, two more vacancies on the Board were appointed by BOD vote. Chris Fumagalli and David Corder will serve on the Board until the next election in 2009 where they can choose to run for a regular 3 year term.

BOD member Mike Bouse will be taking over from Jon Logan as FLU's
The FIAT Freak
by Bobb Rayner

Ciao Amici!

It’s cold! Maybe not where you are, but for most of us in North America, winter is setting in, so let’s spend a few moments contemplating the warm and fuzzy feelings of the Club FLU family.

THE NEWS

It should come as no surprise that Fiat is feeling the effects of the global financial quagmire just like every other automobile company. For the first nine months of 2008, Fiat sales have fallen 3.3%. One of the effects of the world economic crisis is the delayed return of Alfa Romeo to the N. American market. Fiat chief Sergio Marchionne has gone on record in saying that it would be “simply crazy” to invest in a return to the USA in such a depressed market. Plans are still in place to return in 2011, one year later than originally scheduled. That said, it should be noted that some of the spectacular limited-production Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione cars have, indeed, been delivered to well-heeled customers through a prominent New England exotic car dealership. I’ve seen photographs of the delivery of these incredible cars, so I can state for a fact that Alfa Romeo has already returned, though in very, very limited numbers.

Of course, this postponement will affect the possible USA sales of the terrific Fiat 500, which is supposed to be promoted and sold in future Alfa dealerships under its own brand. Rumors abound that it will only come to America in the hot Abarth version. One very likely scenario will be the manufacturing of Alfa Romeos and Abarth 500s in the USA, possibly utilizing Chrysler plants or even Fiat’s Case New Holland farm tractor factories in Pennsylvania. We can only hope!

Meanwhile, Alfa has unveiled a small call aimed at the segment ruled by the successful BMW-built Mini and the Fiat 500. The Alfa “MiTo” is based on the Fiat Grande Punto, featuring a 1.4-liter 4-cylinder turbocharged engine cranking out 155 HP with a predicted top speed of 133 MPH. The engine is reported to lack camshafts! Power is transmitted by a DSG (Direct Shift Gearbox), getting to the ground through 16- or 18-inch wheels. There are many hints of 8C styling in this little buzz bomb, with all of the panache you’d expect from the marque.

Elsewhere in the world, Fiat has launched its popular “Linea” in India in December of 2008, to be followed by the Fiat Grande Punto a bit later. The growing Chinese market is set to see around fifty-thousand Alfa Romeo models per year beginning in 2010, down significantly from the original projection of nearly three-hundred thousand. The production of small and medium Fiats in Russia, including the Grande Punto and Bravo, has doubled in the first nine months of 2008, as that market continues to grow.

Here’s a blast from the past: The much-maligned Yugo, which was basically a Fiat 127 manufactured under license in the former country of Yugoslavia, ceased production on November 21st of this year. Production began in 1980, and the total output approached 800-thousand units, of which approximately 142-thousand were exported to the USA. Fiat plans to revamp the factory in Zastava, Serbia, with an eye on restarting future production of Fiat cars in 2010.

On the international car show scene, Fiat has been showing the “Fiat Concept Car II,” a.k.a. “Bugster,” driven solely by electric power. The dune buggy-like concept is reported to be capable of a top speed of 110 kilometers-per-hour, with a 120KM range following an 8-hour full charge of its lithium-ion batteries. The all-electric powertrain will be tested in a Fiat Palio Weekend car in Brazil, with possibleseries production slated in the future if the trials are successful.

Overall, Fiat is surviving during this crazy financial mess, and actually prospering in some areas of the world.

THE VIEWS

With Fiat FreakOut’s 25th anniversary now in our memories, FLU members look toward the future for growth and prosperity in 2009. While I’ve said it many times before, it’s worth repeating that Fiat and Lancia enthusiasts need this club now more than ever. I’ve recently noticed a huge decline in the availability of parts and supplies for our cars. Not that it has been all that great in the past few years, but the decline in parts and accessories supply seems to have dwindled at a more rapid rate in the past year. We need to stick together to provide parts and assistance to our fellow members. Don’t crush that worn out old car! There are likely plenty of parts on it that, while junk to you, may be extremely valuable to other enthusiasts. Contact the many FLU sponsors found on the club website and on the pages of this magazine, and see if they’d be interested in obtaining your car for parting out. As the saying goes, “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.”

Plans for FreakOut 2009 are well underway. The next venue will be at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia. The MG club held a very successful national gathering there in the spring of 2008, with over 350 cars in attendance, so we know the accommodations will be more than sufficient to cater to the needs of FreakOut 2009, scheduled for mid-August 2009. The hotel has been reserved at a very, very reasonable rate by a host of attractions that will delight any vacationing family. Committee
It may seem strange to tell you the tale of the Fiat 500 adventure from the end rather than from the beginning but the Irish have always been a bit ‘back to front’ so why change now. We brought our brand new Fiat 500 over from the UK in June for the 25th anniversary of Freakout where it went down a storm with all the Flu’sters that came to the Pocono’s for the landmark event. As soon as it was over Alan and I jumped into the new baby Fiat and headed west but that’s another story!

We left the 500 in LA with Rudy Mortero a good friend of Brett Melancon who assured me that we would get our bambino back in one piece and no sooner had we left the States but the 500 was at shows and getting spotted on the ‘net’, sometimes even being mistaken as a Fiat factory presence back in the US by such notaries as The New York Times and Hemmings thinking that FIAT are testing the publics reaction to their new range!

So the car went from show to show across the United States until it and Rudy ended up in Tennessee at Brett’s house just as gas hit five bucks a gallon so Brett wheeled his beloved Mazda SpeedSix into the garage and started hitting 45mpg with the 500 on the daily commute to work as he waited on me coming back to collect the car for it’s return to the UK but the best laid plans never work out as you expect and suddenly Brett gets in contact asking if I’d be interested in a buyer for the 500 meaning that the first New Cinquecento in the US would not only get to stay but also be on display for the public to see for years… Now that sounded a lot more interesting that shipping it back to the UK and putting the poor wee thing on to the commute to work this winter!

by Jim Magill
So Fall comes and I get a flight to Atlanta were I find some bit of Southern Hospitality as soon as I get off the airliner. At immigration the officer took one look at me with my small bag, teddy bear and UK number plate that I’d brought for Brett’s car and he must of thought ‘We have a live one here, get the men in the white coats....’!

After being grilled about my intentions in the United States with a small bear and a British number plate the officer thought that I must be mostly harmless and let me though but with the word of warning that the plate would never fit a Fiat as it must be about twice the width of anything Italian that was ever exported to this continent. Leaving aside his technical advice on this matter I headed for the metro to meet up with John Montgomery and Brett on the other side of town.

John and Brett where running a little late in Atlanta traffic leaving me all on my lonesome at the last station on the Metro. Cursing the pair of them under my breath as only a true Irishman can I set myself down to my fate of being murdered in on of Atlanta’s more ‘interesting’ suburbs as the sun started to set on this little drama but soon, but not soon enough the familiar site of two small round lights came over the hill and behind the wheel where the grinning faces of the latest converts to Fiat’s new baby. No sooner had they pulled over did the apologies start about why they were late but no amount of tales about traffic and distance would shake my belief that the guys where just having too much fun on the freeways and probably forgot all about me (Well, that’s what I would of done, sorry guys!)

Next morning was an early start for all but as I was still on UK time it seemed like I had a good long lie in before the day kicked off getting ready for the annual Atlanta Italian Car day. Getting behind the wheel of the 500 for the first time in nearly 3 months I realized just how much I missed the little thing. I had ordered the car in November of 2007 for delivery in March this year (yup, waiting lists were that long and even now a year after my order 12 or 14 week delivery schedules are not unheard of such is the 500’s popularity) and in 6 months it had done 20,000 miles crossing the United States twice without ever having to visit a repair shop, not even for an oil change! When we first got the car the little 1.2, 68BHP engine seemed so tight but now it had really come alive and felt so much faster and even sounded better. I’d heard it so many times from Fiat owners that you really don’t get all the performance from your Fiat FIRE (Fully Integrated Robotised Engine if your that way inclined to ask what such things mean) until you had a good 10K on the clock and my example was no different.

John, Brett and myself all arrived at Kurt’s restaurant really early were the day was happening for to set up and John soon had us all hard at work making coffee, hanging banners and putting out the registration desk. Denise Burchette arrived and both of us manned registration at the entrance to the park. This just totally amazed me how many of the exhibitors had heard of the ‘SpiderLady’ and the ‘craic’ (as the Irish say for banter) was great with the owners of the cars as they came pulled through our checkpoint. Some of them even said ‘Hay, you that guy with the 500 that came from Ireland, I followed your adventures!’ which to be honest I’d have to say really made my day!

Thou I wasn’t the only export from Northern Ireland for the next car to pull up looking for the spectator parking was a Delorean! These have an extra special place in my heart as not only is the factory that made them only 12 miles from my house back home but my dad actually worked on the production line building them! I got talking to this particular automotive expat’s owner, Chris who was amazed that in and Italian car show not only is the factory that made them only 12 miles from my house back home but my dad actually worked on the production line building them! I got talking to this particular automotive expat’s owner, Chris who was amazed that in an Italian car show not only was he talking to a guy from Northern Ireland but the son of the builder of his car! Touchingly he removed the glove...
box lid off his car and asked me to sign it on behalf of my dad. I’d have to say that I’ve have some amazing experiences with FLU organized events but this one particular one really did bring a lump to my throat.

The rest of the day I just kept hanging away about the 500 to all that would listen to me. Five star crash ratings, the European car of the year award for 2008, the fact the factory can’t build enough and that FIAT are opening two new factories to keep up with worldwide demand, the 64mpg that I got out of it from Sacramento to San Francisco, the emissions that are nearly as clean as a prius, the 12 week waiting lists in Europe... Everyone was very polite and listened intently but I’m sure by the end of the day people were avoiding me in case I started talking about the 500 to them!

The awards were given out, the raffle was done and soon the day was over and arrangements made for the following days drive into the mountains. Brett kept a sly smile on his face, telling stories of the route that we’d be taking after back to Tennessee over ‘The Dragon’. These roads apparently are now folk law for the driving gods that manage to keep their cars on the blacktop for the 11 miles with over three hundred bends. I felt a certain uneasiness in my stomach that only a dodgy Mexican meal could re create when I first heard of this idea as it was starting to sound like my trip to the Nurburgring in the panda that left me well out of pocket when I left the road to commune in a very expensive way with the roadside barriers but Brett plied me with enough alcohol for me agreed to take the 500 on the automotive equivalent of ‘Bush Gardens’.

Another early start and we all meet up at Kurt’s after an early breakfast of biscuits (and what looked like road kill but I didn’t want to be rude to my hosts as it was actually very tasty. Like we were in the south after all so ‘when in Rome and all that!’) we pulled into the parking lot and were the first to arrive but soon the other cars that were going on the run with us arrived and I can see that the 500 is going to be fairly outclassed by it’s fellow Italian brethren. We have a 2008 Lamborghini, a Porsche 930, a Pontiac Solstice. I take a quick glace over at the 500 and I could swear that it looked a little nervous but like all the small FIAT’s that I’ve owned it seems to have a tough guts and a brave heart so we soon set off with me at the controls and Brett being co pilot.

Soon we get into the mountains and Brett and I swap as he is more familiar with these roads than I am and we soon find that the 500 isn’t as outclassed as we think. In the convoy the Lamborghini leads, then the Porsche, followed by John in his X1/9 (who knows these roads like the back of his hand) and then our little FIAT tails behind. Brett is well used to Italian engines and keeps the motor spinning near it’s limiter, swapping second to third like a conductor hot on the tail of the 3 lead cars. I look out the rear window and the Solstice is a distant memory behind as our little three door economy hatch keeps up with some very powerful sports machinery.

At the next stop the Pontiac driver comes over and says ‘You guys can really hammer that little buggy, what size of engine is in it?’ to which I tell him its a 1.2 with just over sixty horse power. I get the feeling that the next day he was probably back at the Pontiac dealer asking for a refund.

Strange but not quite as strange as the family who walk across the parking lot to come look at the 500 and after a few minutes of admiring it’s looks they then realize that its parked beside an ultra rare Lamborghini Gallardo spider and turn in shock as if it has just arrived even thou it’s been parked 3 feet away the whole time. Its the biggest complemt I think that you could ever tell the designers of the 500 that to the average person in the USA a 500 get more attention than an three hundred thousand dollar super car...

Brett and I say our goodbye’s to our travelling companions and are back on the road home leaving me a little nervous as Brett has hyped the route so much that I feel that I should of prepared a will and possibly considered the last rights before leaving Atlanta.

Tales from the 98 Fontana Freak out
of Spiders being pulled from the foliage and X1/9 owners heading home after the first bend don’t in spire confidence but Brett has been over these hills numerous times in his X1/9 without incident so I think to myself ‘What is the worst that can happen?’

The roads get tighter and tighter and soon we’re at the biker stop of ‘Deals Gap’ where they filmed the end to the movie ‘Two lane black top’. I’m just hoping that our story will have a happier ending than the owners of the cars & bikes that filled the ‘wreck art’ tree did. Just a few feet from the door of the diner is a tree covered with automotive parts pulled from the ‘Dragon’. I notice one fender from a 2003 Mini Cooper signed by it’s owner ‘Big Daddy’ who came off, hit the wall and rolled a 360. He signed off with the words ‘No Pain, No Foul’. Secretly I pray that the only 500 in the US doesn’t leave any of its important parts on this tree by the end of the day...

No sooner than when we weave our way thou the parked bikes that seems to surround the 500 like some sort of invading army of ants we’re on the ‘Dragon’ and the 500 is giving it it’s all like it knows the significance of being the first of it’s breed to take on Route 129 knowing that it got to show ‘Big Daddys’ mini how to do it. The needle is bouncing off the limiter and Brett is pushing the handling like a factory test driver. 319 bends in 11 miles and the 500 is enjoying everyone of them as I film the whole roller coaster for posterity while I get flung from side to side in the front seat giggling with delight at how well the bambino copes on this amazing road. The 11-miles fly and Brett keeps hot-dogging the 500 from corner to corner where even he’s impressed how well it copes. In no time at all it’s near the end of the run and I can’t quite believe that we made it! How Fiat can make so little do so much, all for the same price as a Chevy Aveo is beyond me. This little 500 has had to endure a lot with it huge mileage and extremes of heat and altitude on it’s transcontinental trip but what it’s just did on these Tennessee road takes my respect for the car to a new level. One up on the 500 and we don’t repeat ‘Big Daddys’ mistake, the 500 lives too tell the tail of the Dragon.

Next morning, after we’ve let our wheels and brakes cool over night, we take the 500 to Nashville for it’s meeting with Jeff Lane who is our mystery buyer and intends to put the car into the Lane Motor Museum and make it the star of the 5th anniversary celebrations that they’ll be having the follow-
Now, since the autocross was scrapped, having an autocross award dinner might have seemed to make little sense, but there was actually a larger turnout than expected! It was another great Italian dinner with more colorful conversations with great folks that I’m so glad I had the chance to meet. When it came time to present the awards, Mike decided that a sense of humor was in order, and he simply passed the box around for participants to grab one (without looking) and I was honored to receive a first place award, and in a 131 no less! I’ll take it, as it’s very likely the ONLY first place autocross award I’ll ever receive!

Back to the parking lot for additional conversations about the weekend, travel plans for the following day, and future event to attend. Alvon and I were both planning to leave fairly early in the morning, and so we said our good-byes to those that we wouldn’t see in the morning, and turned in for the night. As I became sleepy I thought of the experience of the past few days at the Freak Out event, and I couldn’t help but note the strong similarities between this event and the Oregon event. Each is focused behind the rear window we head back to Knoxville, taking my mind off the loss of my new Italian friend who I’ve left to an interesting new life a long way from home.

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**Editor’s Note:**

Dave’s travel story will appear in the next few issues of RICAMBI. This is a fantastic story, thanks to Dave Voss for taking the time to share it with everyone in FLU.

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The Fiat 500 Trek ends

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**Iron Butt 2007**

This is the third part of Dave’s incredible journey. Refer to RICAMBI #38 and 39 for the more of this story.

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on the PEOPLE that comprise the club, with the common thread of Italian car ownership and enthusiasm at the core, but not necessarily the focus. Where the Oregon event has camping, the Freak Out has a hotel, and where the Oregon event has a campfire, the Freak Out has a banquet dinner. Both events host an autocross, a group photo, presentation of awards, tales of club beginnings and history, and countless hours of quality conversion opportunities with great people. In spite of the differences on the surface, I can't help but feel that these two events are actually quite similar as each is held in the same spirit, that being to bring members of their respective clubs closer together. I'm thankful I finally made the effort to go to the Freak Out this year after contemplating it for many years, and I look forward to returning again next year.

I was on the road the following morning by the time the sun rose, off toward the next stage of my road trip, continuing east to pick up a friend at Dullas airport in Washington D.C.

Chapter 5 - D.C. Diversion

I left Pontiac Michigan following the Freak Out event on Monday morning around 5:30am, heading for Washington D.C. to pick up my good friend Chris Millikan, who was flying out to look at a car (Acura Type R) that he was thinking about purchasing. Chris bought one new back in 1997 when the model was introduced, but his was stolen a few years later, and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and he always wanted a replacement. He contacted an owner in Maryland and

"Yeah, just look out your window!" He was calling from the Burchette's truck, riding with them to his next destination, right next to me on the highway, as I had just returned to the turnpike after filling the tank, and apparently merged right next to them. Kinda funny really, because I hadn't really even noticed their large trailer (and it's big!) much less that it was them next to me. It was good to see them one last time before they turned south and I continued east.

The drive through Pennsylvania and Maryland was especially nice, everything is so green and lush even in the middle of summer (very unlike most areas in the western states and California!) and I arrived at Dullas Airport around 3:00pm to wait for Chris' flight. Of course it was over an hour late, but the air conditioning inside the terminal following the hot 10 hour drive made the wait worth while, and by 6:00pm we were on our way back to Maryland to meet up with the seller of the Acura Type R. The car was amazing, ten years old but with only 3900 miles (that's right, 39 hundred, not thousand) and when I opened the door I was overwhelmed with a strong 'new car smell' aroma. Not a scratch or a blemish anywhere, and for all intents and purposes, this was a ten year old NEW car. It didn't take Chris long to decide that he would purchase it, and so we spent a while dealing with the paperwork for the sale, and found a local hotel to stay for the night.

In the morning, the deal was completed at the seller's bank and arrangements were made to have the purchased car transported back to California. I had initially suggested to Chris that he drive the car back, but once I saw how incredibly clean it was, I agreed that having it transported was the right decision. Beside, this way I would have someone to talk to during all of those miles of driving between the D.C. area and California. But we weren't ready to head home just yet, as our next destination was Shaun and Nanci's new home outside of Reading Pennsylvania.

Chapter 6 - Pennsylvania

Chris and I left Damascus Maryland just a little before noon, and headed for Shaun and Nanci's home in Douglasville Pennsylvania. We decided to travel on rural roads so that we could enjoy the rolling hills past fields, farms, and through the Amish communities found in that part of the country. It was great to find so many intersecting roads, as it was quite easy to make a direct route between our departure and destination, very unlike California where a single missed turn in rural areas can take you 50 miles or more out of the way in the wrong direction! Every so often, traffic would slow for a horse-drawn wagon traveling down the road, but even with these minor delays, I think we made it in the same time that we would have on the interstate, and I know we enjoyed the scenery much more. Again, I found myself impressed with how green the hills were, with forests, fields, and agriculture everywhere you looked.

We arrived at Shaun and Nanci's home a few hours later and received a very warm welcome and were given a tour of the grounds and the house that they are in the process of remodeling. Since I live in a typical California neighborhood with lots that are too small for the houses that were built on them, I was envious of the size of their yards, not to mention the adjoining acres. The house is very big, the remodel work that they are doing is turning out really nice, and when they are finished it will look and feel years newer. I enjoyed seeing...
some of the interior work under construction, with some new and some old floor plan, as I used to work as a carpenter, and therefore appreciate just how much work remodeling can be! Shaun and Nanci are doing a great job with it.

When Nanci arrived home after her first day back to work, they decided that we should go to dinner at the well known Shady Maple restaurant. That sounded great to us, and so we began the half-hour or so drive. While we traveled, I heard about Shaun and Nanci’s final episode of difficulties with the Zagato, as it had more of the same fuel related troubles as before while we were traveling east toward the Freak Out event. Apparently, it quit running again, similar to before, however this time it happened on the turnpike. So, the clock was now ticking, as the turnpike’s tow trucks will make sure you get towed if you sit for too long, as they tend to frown on roadside repairs. Shaun, of course, did not waste any time troubleshooting, but this time burping the fuel pipe for any signs of vapor lock did not fix the problem. As he told the story, he recalled that throughout all of the fuel related troubles, repairs, bypasses, and vapor lock burping, the original pump had not yet been swapped for the generic new pump that he had carried as a spare since he purchased it back in Idaho. With nothing else to try (or lose!) he installed the new pump on the side of the turnpike, at night, in the dark, using bungee cords by securing it under the car in an alternate location to shorten the repair time. Well, the new pump made the engine run again, and thankfully before the turnpike dispatched tow truck arrived to enforce their flavor roadside assistance.

So to recap the fuel related troubles with the Zagato, it seems that the fuel pump had actually been the trouble all along, in spite of the debris found in the fuel system which led us astray. Apparently, the fuel pump was failing very slowly in that it moved plenty of fuel when cold (or while attempting some troubleshooting through a disconnected fuel line!) but not when it was hot, in particular when the outside temperature or elevation became high. In thinking about this, it explains the nature of the breakdowns, where after a while the engine would run again, as much because it cooled down a bit as for any other reason. The vapor locking that occurred was also due to the failing fuel pump as once it became hot it could no longer maintain enough pressure to overcome the pressure regulator to circulate fuel back to the tank, and so the fuel just sat in that hot fuel rail until it boiled. I’ve never experienced an electric fuel injection system fuel pump fail in this manner, but next time I see this set of symptoms, I might just start by replacing the fuel pump first!

Ok, we arrived at the Shady Maple for dinner, and I was a little curious as we pulled up to an incredibly large building, more like a convention center than a restaurant. We went inside through a very large entry/lobby area, and onto the restaurant, which was only part of this large facility. At this point I began to realize that this was a smorgasbord buffet type of restaurant, evidenced by the 100-yard long (well, maybe that’s an exaggeration, but not by much!) line of entrees, salads, side dishes, breads, deserts, drinks, everything you could imagine wanting to eat for dinner. In addition, there were several grills in operation with fresh fish and other meats ready to serve. Well, taking just a small portion of only half the foods that caught my eye resulted in having had way too much to eat, but every bite was delightful.

But wait, there’s more... The restaurant was roughly the size of an airplane hanger, and downstairs there was a gift shop of equal area, with items so tight and packed with merchandise that it could easily take hours just to know what items were sold there! I found a few gifts for family back home, and left with my head spinning from all that there was to see. Upstairs there was a bakery selling loafs of their specialty breads and other items, many of which we sampled during dinner. The Shady Maple experience is an unusual combination of high quality and large scale, seemingly contradictory in most instances, but not at this place. I’m told that folks travel from all around to go there, and it’s easy to see why with all that they have to offer. After we finished up with dinner, we headed for downtown Reading to see Shaun Folkert’s collection of cars, parts, books, etc. that is better known as the Garagemahal. Chapter 7 - Garagemahal

We arrived in downtown Reading Pennsylvania at night, and after a short drive on city streets we pulled into a driveway in front of a rather large building with a tall roll up door. The building is roughly (maybe exactly?) the size of a city block, an old warehouse from back in the day. Nanci dropped us off and headed back for home while Shaun began to show us around. The lights in the main building slowly brighten as they warm up, and so Shaun began the tour in the living quarters that used to be his home.

I was surprised to see that the apartments built inside this old building were as large as they were, plenty of room for an entire family, although probably more comfortable as a large office given the layout. It would certainly make a great area for entertaining, which we understand happens from time to time. Inside the apartment are shelves with books and...
other literature about Italian cars, upstairs is a large area set up to organize parts, and adjacent to the door leading to the main storage area is a large board for visitors to sign. Shaun invited us to leave comment, but I decided to wait until the end of the tour, as I figured that my impressions had only just begun to formulate.

By now the lights had become bright, and so we returned to the main building to view Shaun's collection of cars. Wow... there are a lot of cars here, so many that each is practically touching the next on all sides such that you need to plan a route through the building if you want to stand next to a specific car! As I made my way through the building, trying to look at everything, I realized that many of these cars were not the typical models that one might expect to see at a gathering of enthusiasts, but rather the more obscure and rare models that many of us only read about or see a picture of from time to time. Shaun stated proudly that each and every car in the Garagemahal has a story behind it, and so we asked about the history a few of the more unusual cars in his collection, and he quickly recalled information about previous owners, the acquisitions, and the future plans for each. The stories were great to listen to and so we asked about some of the other more common models, and we realized that those stories were equally colorful as Shaun had retained an incredible amount of detail regarding each car. Shaun said it would be great to sit down for about an hour in each car and write about its history, to which we agreed would be time well spent, if for no other reason than to capture the depth of knowledge that he has for each of the cars in his vast collection.

We probably spent several hours climbing (sometimes literally!) over all of the cars, listening to all of the stories, and discussing the restoration efforts to be performed, and by this time I could visualize the completion of many of the cars and their participation in future events and shows. It is definitely a magnificent collection of cars, with potential beyond what I had imagined. But the incredible number of cars was just the beginning of what there was to see in the Garagemahal. Along the walls were groupings of parts, engines, wheels, interiors, etc. such that quite a few bare chassis could be brought into the building and be reassembled into complete cars! Everywhere I looked, there was too much to see, and after many hours inside I felt a bit overwhelmed by all of it. I've always had running and project cars around, as well as piles of parts for spares or future projects, but the scale of Shaun's collection really puts my efforts to date into perspective! As I later wrote on the visitor board, I see Shaun's visions and share his passions, and I wish him the best of luck on all of the individual projects that await their turn within the Garagemahal.

By the end of our tour it was getting really late (or would that be early?) and so it was time to travel back to Shaun & Nanci's home for another night's stay in Pennsylvania before beginning our westward travel back to California.

Chapter 8 - Farther East

We awoke late on Wednesday morning and decided that a nice breakfast in town might be a great way to spend our final hours with Shaun before beginning our return trip back to California. Shaun knew just the place to go, a favorite dinner that he and Nanci had been to many times. We missed seeing 'Flo' but still had a great meal, as I was encouraged to try scrapple, a traditional Pennsylvania Dutch breakfast food. After trying a bite, I realized that I had eaten this before, years ago when I was a kid, but I never knew that it was called scrapple. In fact, there were quite a few dishes that I grew up with that I never realized were Pennsylvania Dutch in origin, but I suppose it all makes sense since I'm about a quarter Pennsylvania Dutch and many family meals and recipes were passed down from my grandparents. I found it rather neat to discover these childhood meal connections while spending time in Pennsylvania.

Following our late breakfast, we headed back to Shaun's place for a final good-bye and a sincere thank you for having us and showing us around for a couple of days. After just returning home from being on the road for two weeks, and in the middle of remodeling their house, and getting ready for their first child, Shaun and Nanci were as gracious and accommodating as anyone I've stayed with, and it was a pleasure to spend time with them at their home. Thank You!

We left around 2:00pm and after taking a look at our travel atlas, we decided that it would be a shame to be this far east and so close to the Atlantic Ocean and not see it, so we looked for a appropriate destination somewhere along the New Jersey coast. I thought it might be neat to see an Atlantic lighthouse, so we decided on Sandy Hook, apparently one of the oldest lighthouses in America. The drive through eastern Pennsylvania and across New Jersey was slow going, but we made it to see the lighthouse just before the tourist information center closed at 5:00pm. It's interesting to imagine what life must have been like hundreds of years ago when this lighthouse and the supporting grounds were all that existed on the Sandy Hook peninsula, as it must have taken days and days just to get there! I've always liked lighthouses and the history behind them, and so traveling the extra distance to see this one was well worth the effort.

After spending a while on the lighthouse grounds, we stopped at the adjacent beach to take off our shoes and put
our feet in the Atlantic Ocean. This was a great spot, as the beach stretched a long way in both directions with crashing waves and large shells all over the sand, many types and sizes not found on the Pacific coast due to the rocky shores that break up larger shell before they can be found by beach combers. Knowing how much our family likes to collect shells at the beach, I felt like I had hit the jackpot, and found a few choice ones to bring back home. This beach was also great in that it offered a view of Coney Island, Staten Island, the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, and the New York City skyline in the distance. Although it was a bit hazy, we thought we could see the Empire State Building amongst the taller buildings, and that was pretty neat. I've never been to New York City, but now at least I've seen it!

Well, we couldn't travel any farther east, and the sun was quickly setting, so we marked the time and set out west for home. Chris and I discussed how good an Italian dinner would be, and after less than an hour's drive, we found a really great restaurant with fabulous service and terrific food. After dinner we were both stuffed and ready for a long nap, but we decided to drive along the way back to California, driving through the night to make good time heading west. We arrived there around noon on Thursday and we were impressed by the enormous scale of it. We spent some time at the park that surrounds it, checked out the visitor center underground at the base of the Arch, and took quite a few pictures. Interestingly, one of the best pictures I took was from the highway as we entered St. Louis, as I was not able to capture the entire Arch in any other pictures taken from the memorial!

Our next destination was Mount Rushmore, my second time on this road trip, but Chris' first time there. We figured that we could drive straight through from St. Louis to Rapid City, South Dakota and arrive late that night to stay in a hotel. This plan worked well, and my Fiat 131 just ran and ran for hours at a time picking up highway miles and setting them back down. We were both getting a bit tired about half way through this stage of our journey, and although we were trading off driving and sleeping with each stop to fill the gas tank, some stretches of road were a bit tough to get through. Windows down, windows up…stereo on, stereo off…drive faster, drive slower…anything to add variety to break up the boring miles of night time interstate driving. At times, we would trade seats just to give ourselves an excuse to get out of the car and stand up for a few minutes, ever mindful of not pushing ourselves too much, for safety's sake.

Finding an available hotel room from the road as we traveled was challenging, and as we became closer to South Dakota the reason became evident. Bike Week in Sturgis was just a few days away, and the roads were filled with motorcycles heading for the Black Hills region in parallel with our planned route. Chris finally found one in Rapid City, and although we would arrive rather late, we looked forward to getting a good night's rest and a chance to clean up a bit.

While in Rapid City South Dakota on Friday morning, Chris and I stopped for breakfast at the same restaurant where Shaun, Nanci, and I ate just the week before. Ironically, the same waitress took our order, and she commented that she remembered me. "Weren't you traveling back east?" she asked, to which I replied "Yes, but now we're traveling west." She remembered that we drove old Italian cars, and razzed us about being 'adventurous' at which I stated that her charming wit is what brought me back! It was obvious to all of us that we were joking in good nature, and finally I said that I wanted the same breakfast as last week, just to test here memory. She got it right!

Ok, on to Mount Rushmore, this time (for me) in the daylight. No ceremony to see this time, just the monument and the beautifully built grounds surrounding the area. It was impressive in a different way during the daytime compared to the night viewing, and we stayed about an hour or so taking lots of pictures, including a profile of George Washington from the access road which I couldn't see at night when we passed through on our eastward trip. We left the Black Hills area and traveled along secondary highways through the desolate high country of Wyoming en route to Interstate 80 and on through Salt Lake City and into Nevada. By this time it was Friday evening, and we decided once again to drive through the night to make good time across Utah, Nevada, and back into Oregon for the final stages of this
long road trip. Back when we left New Jersey, we realized that we would have the opportunity to drive a Fiat from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean as part of this road trip, and so the coast was our next destination.

Chapter 10 - Pacific Coast
The road between Winnemucca Nevada and Lakeview Oregon was rather interesting, and could have been described as deserted if referring to the vehicle traffic in the middle of the night, but in fact we were anything but alone. I cannot recall ever seeing so much wildlife in a single stretch of road! We saw deer, coyotes, cattle, rabbits, and other smaller mammals or rodents everywhere, and nearly every mile or so we could see another set of eyes shining in the near distance, waiting to make a break across the road in front of us. We nearly hit a few creatures along the way, but thankfully they were only close calls.

We arrived at Goose Lake around sunrise and passed back into California to see the familiar brown hills so common during the summer months out west. We took it easy along Highway 995 and 299 all the way into Redding where we stopped for coffee and a break from being in the car. We sat in the sun, happy to be so close to home, but equally happy that our journey was not quite over yet, as we were back in our own backyard, so to speak, and we were very familiar with the roads that led from the central valley to the coast up and over the mountains through the Trinity National Forest.

We left Redding on Highway 299 past Whiskeytown Reservoir until we had left the recreation area and most of the traffic behind, and then I stepped up the pace all the way to Highway 3 where we turned south and enjoyed an uninterrupted run through countless twists and turns all the way to Highway 36. This presented the first extended opportunity to explore the limits of my newly built 131 on an open road, and it was great! The added weight of an extra passenger and a trunk full of parts, tools, and baggage settled the car and helped the handling in many turns, especially high speed sweepers. From there, we continued west on Highway 36 to Fortuna and then south along Highway 101 through the redwoods and onto Garberville for a lunch stop.

Now, I forget the name of the restaurant, but that’s probably because I was just too distracted by all of the antique signs, advertisements, older license plates, sports caps, pennants, etc. that were displayed all over the walls, doors, ceiling, counters, and tables inside. I’ve never seen so many, and it was only after lunch that I realized how quiet I’d been during the meal, as my head kept turning to discover more and more in each place that I looked. After leaving Garberville, we headed south and down the grade on Highway 1 to finally arrive at the coast where we looked out at the Pacific Ocean. It was so nice to see the water, the waves, and the rocky shores and cliffs near Fort Bragg and Mendocino, an area where I’ve spent so much time over the years.

Although we didn’t stop anywhere along the coast, we did spend a few minutes calculating the time we spent traveling west from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, which totaled 64 hours by the clock, though only 48 of those hours were spent on the road. Although we were moving most of the time, it didn’t feel as rushed or hectic as that little amount of time sounds, as most of the miles traveled were on the interstate or equally fast secondary roads. We were almost home now, just a few hours left between Mendocino and Napa on Highway 128 through Boonville, past Mount St. Helena, and down into the Napa Valley past acres of vineyards with the sweet smell of grapes that tells me I’m almost home at last.

Chapter 11 - Finally Home
Chris and I rolled into Napa late Saturday afternoon, and it sure was nice to finally be home again. As much as I really enjoyed this extended road trip and all of the fantastic people, places, and experiences along the way, I enjoyed the greeting that I received from my family (as they ran out to the car before it was even parked!) even more. I missed them a lot, and I think my kids grew as much as the grass during the weeks that I was away from home. There was a list of household issues that needed tending to, but none of that would happen until later, as all I wanted to do was enjoy being home, play games and read books with my kids, have a nice dinner with my wife, and sleep in my own bed.

Apart from finding the souvenirs that I’d bought, I didn’t begin to clean out my car or unpack anything until late the next day. As I emptied out the trunk I found items that I’d purchased along the way and then forgotten about, like the new sweatshirt that I bought in Oregon that I would have worn while I was in New Jersey if I’d remembered that I had it! Oh well, that’s how it goes...

In reflection, this was undoubtedly one of the best road trips that I’ve ever taken, totaling 8300 miles through 23 states in 17 days while driving a Fiat. I’ve taken similar trips in the past, but not on this scale or for this amount of time, and now that I’ve finally participated in the Mirañori-Oregon-Event to Fiat- Lancia-Unlimited-Freak-Out-Event Iron-Butt, I’ll definitely plan to do it again, maybe next year in my Fiat 128 Wagon if I can get it put together in time. With an entire year to plan it’s completion, I should be able to have it finished, but if the month of June rolls around and there is still quite a bit of work left to complete, I might just have to shop for another Fiat again. I wonder if that excuse would work two years in a row.

Thanks for listening! ~Dave Voss

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HOW IT ALL STARTED

My history with small cars goes back into the early 1940s. The first recollection I have is of a “kid-scale” little blue car with an opening top and red wheels and upholstery. It was crude compared to my parents’ 1937 Buick, but, gaaaahhhhhhlee!, was it ever NEAT!

It was a ’41 Crosley and was the summer runabout my grandfather’s ex-boss kept at his place on Lake St. George in Liberty, Maine. He had a nice “cottage” at the end of the single-track gravel lane which went down past the Liberty Inn at which my family vacationed each summer, so I got to hear and see the little car on a regular basis since it’s twocylinder chuff-chuff-chuff was easily identifiable. I’d usually run to try to get a glimpse of it as it went past and disappeared, being chased by its little trail of dust.

If we’d walk down the road with the grease-topped weeds between the tire tracks to the Kemp’s for a visit, I’d be granted permission to go to the garage while the “big people” did their “big people” talk. You know, to a kid, b-o-r-i-n-g. The Kemps also had a gorgeous ’41 Packard convertible with a custom body by Darin. It was yellow with a black top and black rolled-leather interior and had swoopy cut-down doors much like MGs did in the TC, TD, and TF models. It was handsome, beautifully appointed, and smelled delicious.

But the real attraction was the Packard’s little blue stablemate. I never touched either car but rather peered over door jambs at the seats, instruments, pedals, shifter and brake handles, and switches. I’d get on my bony knees to look at the undersides. I also tried squinting through the Crosley’s small vertical front slots for a peek at the engine, though without much success in the fairly dark garage.

On occasions, I would be invited for a ride in this little machine to go to Banks’ IGA store or to check the mail at Liberty’s unique octagonal post office. These rides were such joy! The Kemps weren’t really into double-clutching and the little Dana gearbox wasn’t synchronized. The reckless abandon with which they made gear changes manifested itself with much graunching of gears to accompany the throbbing and drumming of the little Waukesha air-cooled flat-twin.

This was really fun with the top down, the sun in your face, and the wind in your hair and mechanical noises galore. Everyone seemed so happy when they were riding in or driving the Crosley.

I finished my freshman year at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and started my sophomore year only to drop out before Thanksgiving of 1953. I got a job in “downtown” New York, having the opportunity to indulge myself in riding both trains and the last of those great old steam-powered ferries that plied the waters of the Hudson River. I bought a ’46 Olds Club Coupe — not exactly a Crosley-style “mini” — and that was followed in 1955 by a ’50 DeSoto 4-door with a hood that reached into the future.

But the “minicar” yearning was about to manifest itself again and in a very unusual way, one I could never have anticipated and with a brand of cars I had never even heard of, even though FIAT had been founded in Turin in 1899 and had even built cars — large, expensive cars — at an assembly plant in Poughkeepsie, New York, between 1910 and 1912 as seen in
meetings have already been held, consisting of many more volunteers than were seen at several of the FFOs in the recent past. Lack of help was a major headache in organizing FFO 2008, so we’re anticipating one of the best-run, most exciting FreakOuts ever. Watch the pages of this magazine and the club website, as FreakOut information and registration will be posted early in 2009. Many of the bugs that plagued FFO2009 have been addressed, so make your plans and reservations early!

As always, I send my best regards to my FLU family, wishing you all a happy holiday season and a future filled with love and fun. I’ve treasured the relationships I’ve developed with so many FLU members, and look forward to turning wrenches, sharing drive time, and just being surrounded by you…the best car fans in the world!

Love you, love your show! Ciao!

Prez Says continued from page 3

new Membership Director. Jon has done a tremendous job for the club and will continue on as Vice President. Mike Bouse has already brought a great deal of experience and wonderful enthusiasm to FLU so we won’t miss a beat during the transition. If you have any questions just E mail Mike at “Membership@flu.org”.

We also have a new advertising committee at FLU. The group includes Kevin Barnett, Mike Bouse, Denise Burchette and Marc Matzer. Their mission: To further advance the promotion of FLU, to more effectively utilize the media outlets of FLU, and to advance the connectivity between the FLU membership and those vendors who desire an effective dialogue with FLU.

FFO09 is going to be a great show! We may even pass the record numbers from this year’s Anniversary show so don’t miss it! The date of August 14-16th and venue at Valley Forge, PA (near Philadelphia) has already been set. There is information about the area linked at flu.org. So get your Chi-FLU Calendar and save the date!

The holidays are a great time to reflect on the past year and look forward to the next. I hope that 2008 was a terrific year for you; full of good health, personal enrichment and prosperity. On a personal note, I finally moved into a new house in Greenville, South Carolina, just 15 minutes from the now expanding BMW auto plant & about an hour from our 2003-04 FFO venue in Asheville. Finally there’s a good parking place in the basement for the X 1/9, a future (yet unknown) project car and all the car parts, literature and Italian car stuff collected (and stuff I refuse to throw away) over the last 30 years. The basement area (also known as the man cave) will display old Fiat, Lancia & Alfa showroom marketing literature, all FFO pana photos, my car models, plaques and various memorabilia. E mail me if you’re down in SC so you can stop by and check out the progress.

Happy Holidays!
John Montgomery, FLU President

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Open letter to FLU members

One of the things I realized at the 2008 Freak Out is everyone knows C.Obert & Co. as knowing the old Fiats. Yes, my first car was a Fiat 600, and my father had owned Fiat 500s & Bianchinas for years before I bought my own car. And his everyday driver, which I still own & drive, was a 1968 124 Sedan. But you also need to realize that my company, named Fiat Plus at the time, became an authorized Fiat/Lancia parts & service center soon after Fiat stopped selling cars in North America in 1982. We continued as an authorized facility until the North American Fiat distributor franchise was sold to Linea Rossa. My shop repaired all of the Fiat models Fiat & Lancia had imported up thru their closing as an authorized center. We were the largest volume parts dealer in North America, and after the service department of Fiat America was shut down, Bill Clark directed all the service calls he got to us.

C.Obert & Co. is also the only authorized parts distributor in North America that can buy directly from Fiat in Torino. So even today, mama still knows who Chris is.

We also became the authorized Yugo parts & service center after Yugo stopped selling cars in California, and before that we did all of the warranty repairs for the local Yugo dealership. All with the blessing of the National Yugo importer.

This barely touches on the amount of old dealer inventories we have purchased, model specific repair specialists that we have taken over, or companies in Europe that we represent as their North American specialists.

So the next time someone tells you C.Obert only knows the older cars sold here before 1968, you can tell them that is untrue. I know the later cars also. And with all of the self imported cars since, we are learning those also.

The other thing I realized at the event is folks also told me something about how I was just a vendor. This is also untrue. I am as much of an enthusiast as you are. My hobby just went wild after I graduated from college, and you got a normal job. My hobby, knowledge, & love of Fiats & Lancias just grew so much that it became my way of paying my bills, and providing employment for other enthusiasts on my staff. I have devoted most of my life to preserving our wonderful cars, and to keeping the parts and knowledge to service your car available so you can enjoy yours also.

Whatever the needs of your collecting & preserving your Fiat family automobile(s) might be, no matter when it was produced, remember C. Obert & Co. is here for you. And we will continue to be here.

Sincerely,

Chris Obert
thunderstorm. The heat had been in the 90s with high humidity. Some of us became trapped walking back from the race track to the Fiat Corral, which was about a half-mile or so away. Soaking wet, we hid in our cars until the storm was over. Then the races resumed and we walked back towards the grandstand to watch them. To get from the infield to the grandstand, you had to walk through a tunnel beneath the track. We entered, and discovered rain water about a foot or more deep in the tunnel. If common sense had prevailed we would have retreated, especially when discovering halfway through the tunnel an electrical wire dangling into the water. Once again, a redneck to the rescue, who suggested that if we ran real fast we could perhaps beat any dangerous charge. To this day I have pondered if this kind of mentality was a requisite for owning a Fiat or Lancia. Whatever, stupid is as stupid does. We waded through the water and lived for another day. That night, we capped off a perfect day with our “banquet” — pizza and beer at a place which I recall as the Ugly Mug tavern in White Haven. There were many positively warm memories of subsequent freakouts in the Pokiness. When the actor, Paul Newsman, for instant, led the field and won races in those heavy Thunder cars. And when race car driver Bob Boig, our friend and owner of the fastest X1-9 on earth, plowed into the wall before our very eyes. It was a very serious accident, requiring Boig to be airlifted to a hospital. We speeded his recovery with a basket of flowers. Elli and I and son John, whom everyone knows as “Third” are particularly sorry we cannot attend this reunion. We will be there in spirit. Also, Dave and Nan Myers, who live up the road from us in Vermont, send their regrets. For the record, we have six grandchildren now. Four of them are Third’s kids. Our ’82 Spider is still with us, though now rusting away in the bottom of our barn. Third’s famous chocolate-coated X1-9 is doing likewise. Some day they will be returned to the glory they deserve. In the meantime, keep the faith and have a wonderful time.
Flipping through the channels with the remote control the other day, I ran across a cable T.V. show called HOW’S IT MADE. I thought I would let you all in on a short pictorial view of the Michigan SHORTER SHIFTER in a similar to cable T.V. article.

The Fiat Spider and Coupe have a nice shiny chromed piece of stamped steel attached to the shifter arm of their manual transmissions. That chromed shifter cover is approximately 7 inches long, with some older models being even longer. Over the years, many Fiat owners have grown tired of this long shaft, and have fashioned shorter versions for their own personal use. With the help and encouragement of several friends and business associates, I designed and manufacture a simple replacement that requires only simple tools to install; and with installation time taking under 15 minutes. In case the car owner ever wants to revert back to stock parts, this process can be reversed in about the same amount of time and effort. Let’s look at the manufacturing process of this unit.

First we start with a 12 foot length of stainless steel, 3/4 inch in diameter. I’ll leave it up to you to find your source for that minor item. Cut the raw stock to sections small enough to be accommodated by your tracing lathe; which is a lathe built for creating repetitive production parts. For our application that means cutting the big bar down into three equal pieces four foot long. Then the fun begins. We experimented with about three different designs before we hit on one particular design that made the most sense for production purposes, and still afforded the end user the shortest shifter possible, with no cutting, drilling, or welding needed by the installer. The neck is cut for the threads, and then tapered back for a smooth transition on the lathe.

Once the four foot length of bar has been whittled down to about eleven shifter blanks we will feed the next section of raw stock into the lathe and repeat the process. A full 12 foot bar will produce about 33 shifters. Here is a peek at what the model looks like in the duplicating station. There is a stylus that follows the model in tandem with the actual cutting tool on the lathe. When the lathe is in motion, it looks exactly like those T.V. shows depicting how a baseball bat is made…except we gotta perform several more steps.

Once each of the blanks passes through the duplicating step, we then move on to drilling the holes in the base of the unit. Two different size drill bits are used for two different diameter holes, based on the design requirements of the transmission shifter arm. This work is also done, individually on the lathe. One part at a time is loaded into the lathe chuck, and holes are drilled to specific depths. A large quantity of a water based lubricating fluid is used to flush away the chips, and at the same time cool the drill bit. Drill too fast and you will clog the drill bit with chips, as well as dull the bit. Dull the drill bit and you must stop production to re-sharpen the bit. Push too hard and you can snap the tip off the bit. Drill too slow and other expenses begin to build. Time is money, even at the bosses’ machine shop! The second hole is drilled identically to the first, to a different depth.
Fortunately, this tedious but important set up need only be done once, and the 30 some parts will be all pushed through this workstation one after the other in about an hour’s time. First the hole is cut in the exact location with a center drill, and then finished bored with the correct size drill bit.

When all 60 some holes have been drilled in precisely the correct location, the next step is to use a 5mm x .8 tap to create threads for the set screws that will anchor our part to the customer’s shifter lever. Get the tap directly perpendicular to the part, or you’ll bugger up some threads. Not very high tech, but high tech is not always needed, right?

Only two steps to go. We’re almost done building a batch of Michigan SHORTER SHIFTERS. We go back over to the lathe department and grab a die handle and a 10mm x 1.25 die. Loading the units one at a time in a lathe chuck, we cut the very important threads that the customer will use to screw his favorite shift knob on. A generous quantity of special cutting oil is used to lubricate and cool the part and the die; a slow speed is chosen to turn the part and cut the threads. A lot of heat is generated by cutting these threads. Cut too fast, and you could damage the cutting die or snap the end of the shaft off the part.

After all of the threads are cut for shift knobs; turn the part around in the chuck, adjust the speed of the lathe to about 1850 revolutions per minute, and with a series of finer and finer strips of emery cloth, polish the shaft so it sparkles. This step is not necessary for the function of the completed unit, but the customer sure enjoys a nice shiny stainless steel part.

Each finished shifter is test fit on an actual transmission lever to insure the customer will have no problems installing the shifter on his/her Fiat.

Now that the shifter is nearly complete, all that remains is to add the mounting hardware. Of course, we are using metric set screws with metric threads. Pack the shifter with a printed installation instruction sheet, and stuff it in a box to ship out to an anxious customer.

Here’s a picture of the finished unit installed in a 1980 Fiat Spider. Doesn’t it look fantastic? Why don’t you order one for your car today? Just contact me at mhouse@chartermi.net and I will get you started on installing your very own Michigan SHORTER SHIFTER.
Then Tim North posted this picture of his X 1/9:

I immediately peppered him with questions of where/when/how! His shot looked so absolutely perfect, that skyline matching our logo so well…I knew we’d found our spot! He told me he took this picture at The Adler Planetarium, on the sidewalk at about 7am on a Sunday, when no security or Planetarium employees were around!

Knowing that our club attendance had been better this summer when people had at least a month to plan for an event, I chose a Sunday that was about six weeks away, on a weekend that looked fairly open.

At first, we had little RSVP activity, and what seemed like too little momentum. On our club’s website, (www.chicagolandFLU.com), I chatted up the opportunity, and kept my fingers crossed. I talked our club photographer, David Wittingham, into showing up even though his Spider still wasn’t roadworthy, and he even scouted the location at 7am on a weekend prior! I had Tim North calling the Planetarium to see if there was a “more legal” way of doing this. The official response was that there included a $1,500.00 “facility rental” fee, but that the sidewalk was city property, and driving on it would still be illegal.

So, I planned the event for 7am, and kept my fingers crossed. A few other events and one family crisis later, and I’d not checked RSVP’s for a few weeks. Then we had a flurry of activity with new members, and a “New to FLU BBQ”, and a logtime friend of the club, Giovanni D’Avola at LONG LAST joined our ranks!

Giovanni runs AutoSprint in downtown Chicago, a longtime Ferrari, Maseratti, Alfa Romeo, Lancia, and Fiat shop. They do amazing work, and have one of the best selections of NOS parts anywhere to be found! Giovanni was one of the very first people besides Mike Bouse who encouraged me to start this club, and many of our first members came off his mailing list.

Once Giovanni decided to join Chi-FLU, and participate in the club picture, we suddenly had some momentum! Two days before the event, I was emailing the entire club, soliciting specific members, and setting a VERY high goal of TWENTY cars! This was almost hubris in-and-of itself, as our previous club attendance record was ‘only’ twelve cars! That record was set just a few weeks prior at our second annual BBQ hosted at Jeremy Burton’s house – which was our club’s one year anniversary event!

The day of the picture I was up at 5am, and I was outside warming up the car and wiping dew off it by 5:30am. At 6am I met Bill Discher and his X 1/9 at Dunken Donuts where I picked up a “Box o Joe”, and we set off for the city. I was more nervous than I’d been in a long time, unsure of the weather, our
turnout, and the likelihood of getting caught.

Looping around the next exit southbound on Lake Shore drive, we picked up two other Fiats, and as we came around Soldier Field, we found another. These cars were all new to me! As we came through the museum complex, I saw the colorful line of Fiats already waiting on us, and suddenly I realized we were going to have a GREAT turnout! Giovanni brought his red 600 with suicide doors, AND an ’84 Pinninfarina Spider! When Scott Hay showed up in his amazing Scorpion, he joked that without his “token Lancia” the rest of us were just “F.U.”!

As we waited for the last few stragglers to show up, my nervousness increased. We were attracting quite a bit of attention at this point, parked all along the causeway to the Planetarium. I’d also walked the area we wanted to use for the picture, and it was quickly becoming clear that we might not have enough room! We had NINETEEN cars!

Not wanting to wait any longer before drawing the attention of the local constabulary, we waited for a Museum Campus Parking Enforcement vehicle to clear the area, before I called, “GO!” David had given out numbers to each car so that we’d not repeat colors, and hopefully get the smaller cars centered. Drivers at the end of the lineup guided the first few cars into place as we tried to line everything up nicely. Then, from around the back of the museum, a sleepy-eyed security guard’s car drove up. My heart sank, and I felt like kicking something, as I signaled behind my back for cars to continue moving into place. Smiling as brightly as I could, I leaned down to his open passenger side window and gave him a cheerful “Good Morning, Officer!” Scowling, he gestured towards all the cars, and asked, “What the hell are you people DOING?” “Oh”, I said, “Just doing a quick club picture”, still smiling brightly, like there was no worry in the world, as another two cars got into position. “You can’t do that, it’s illegal to drive on the sidewalk!” he nearly shouted at me. Prudently, I decided to not mention his own car on the same sidewalk. “Oh, golly, I’m sorry!” I said brightly. “No problem at all, Officer, we can be outta here in five minutes”. I smiled, and watched for his reaction as he sipped his coffee. “Make it THREE” he growled, and pulled away. “Come on people, MOVE!” I shouted as I turned towards the 2/3rds that were already staged. I was absolutely convinced that the security guard was already calling Chicago’s finest. “LET’s TAKE THIS PICTURE!”

Hurrying at the end, we had the foresight to move Giovanni’s ’84 Spider from the right side where it’d be blocked by the statue. Sadly, we got flustered setting up the left end of the lineup. Two white cars ended up side by side, and the X’s didn’t exactly get centered. Nor did the normally beautiful Chicago sky help out, it stayed overcast, quite windy, and many people were getting chilled. But before we knew it, the pictures had been snapped, and we quickly had everyone back onto the main causeway. Cautiously, with an eye towards the entrance road, we took solo shots of cars with that perfect Chicago skyline as our backdrop.

Finally, my heart rate was returning to normal as we all pulled past Soldier Field, turning right at The Field Museum to head Northbound on Lakeshore. We did it!

Check out all our pictures in the “Photos” section of our website at www.chicagolandFLU.com or you can see them at my personal picture site: www.flickr.com/photos/leeputmanjr/sets/72157607824660182/
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We had our fall tour this weekend in Tahlequah, Ok. It is very like Missouri/Arkansas with parkway-styled roads, rivers, lakes and forests. The fall colors are predominantly brown but the twisties were tight and slow or high-speed sweeps with no traffic. It was a good weekend and we did warm up the tires. I organized just the tour and the participants did the rest. 12 folks and 7 cars showed up and the Italians at the evening restaurant got a big kick seeing them all in their parking lot. With only a rough idea of a route (what else is new for me), I went looking for the towns of Chewey and Chance that more likely were extended family ranches from what we saw. But there on the highest ground on a windswept plain surrounded by chicken farms and cattle ranches was Cowboy Corner, a small gas bar/restaurant/store. Most of the gas pumps were knocked over and locals arrived in trucks to call the cashier to turn one or the other on for fuel. The clean tables enticed us to stay for a hearty lunch of local beef and chicken. Somehow I found our way back the starting point in spite of very few road signs. Even the GPS units were confused and useless.

On the return to the motel, we passed a sad X1/9 that was for sale. The owner got a big kick when we stopped in a bunch of Fiats to look it over.

It was a good weekend in a great area and the cars were faultless but for some exhaust rattles/buzzes that need some attention. The Zagato had a weak horn so we oiled the compressor and all was well when the cool Italian horn once again was in full song. My drive to/from was a treat in itself with half the distance through the hill country.

Maybe next year we can seek out a lodge with cabins for more atmosphere than the motel. I know we did not find the best roads.
As a personal indulgence, I have hatched a plan to explore more of the state of Oklahoma in my Fiat Spider with other members of the Roamin’ Chariots. So we scanned over the maps and found a state park named Roman Nose that obviously needed our attention. Ron put out the word to see who would join us in a lunch and tour of the park and the call was answered by Jim Wagner and Allen Lofland both of Wichita. They promised to meet me there on September 21. They did, too. Lynette co-drove with Allen in their very nice brown Spider and traveled convoy-style with Jim in his plum colored version. They took off-interstate roads, as did Ron from Norman. The weather was perfect.

Ron’s route followed Hwy 37 west to Hwy 281 north to Watonga, which is the nearest town to the park. He passed through a nice variety landscapes on the 2 hour run. Flat land prairie gave way to rolling ranches with plenty of bison to see among the cattle. Then the roadside flora got taller and more forested as the highway dipped in and out of the draws and over hills to the bluffs that prompted lawmakers to designate the park. It is named for an Indian who chose the area to spend his days away from town life.

Jim and Allen met up early that morning outside of Mulvane, Ks. They had decided to take a more scenic route to Roman Nose to meet up with Ron rather than the high speed dash down the toll road. So they spun down old Hwy 81 into Oklahoma and then followed OK51 to OK8. The roads were good and nearly empty of all traffic making the drive pleasant and enjoyable with the convertibles. The roadside signs about rattlesnake roundups seemed to keep Allen on his guard and on the paths. They arrived at the park early, thanks to some spirited driving and toured the lodge while they waited on Ron.

We had a fine buffet lunch at the lodge and then drove the park to see the sights. It is not a big park but has two small lakes and plenty of campsites. Trails are laid out for walks, bicycles and horses. These swing around and over the gypsum bluffs.

We walked a bit and pointed out the best views while we drove around the park minding the low speed limits and being acknowledged by groups of children who did not miss the novelty of three unusual sports cars.

The cars did not look out of place but must have seemed a page taken from another era. They all performed well but not without some drama. The Spiders are all over 30 years old and that is several lifetimes for any automobile. Ron’s trip home was pleasant and more often than not the trucks waved greetings to me in the open roadster. He began to wonder what they had in the shed for Sunday drives – an early Corvette or T-bird. He did not push the speed limit but enjoyed the clear air in warm but not hot sunshine. While Ron cruised through the small town of Newcastle, suddenly all power was lost. Momentum carried the car into a nearby parking lot with thoughts of doing a roadside repair. It rolled to a stop with the car at a perfect idle but with no gas pedal. A retaining clip had slipped up and the carburetor linkage had disconnected. The clip thankfully not lost. This was likely from recently filling the steering box with oil that is close by the linkage. It was back to normal before the song on the radio ended and the last few miles through the suburbs to home were without incident.

At the park we planned our next outing to see the fall foliage in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Thus we will be exploring more of this state.
Meet Tony and Sarina Kaluzny and their 1979 X 1/9. This trio hails from Toronto, Ontario. They are pictured here attending the 2006 FIAT FREAK OUT. The X was purchased brand new at a nearby dealership, and currently has 81,000 KM on the odometer, 50,000 miles. If that sounds like Tony babies his car, don’t believe it. According to Tony, this car is a performer, a Go Kart that is street legal. ’79 was the first year for the 1500cc engine, which has been extensively modified over the years right from the dealer's show room floor. A performance carburetor and camshaft were installed before Tony took delivery. Since then, Tony has added 10.5:1 pistons, lightened and polished connecting rods installed, and the head has been ported; and headers installed. He is currently running dual radiators, a 40/80 camshaft, and a Weber 36 DCNF, with 9:1 compression. The rims on this car are a 1979 ONLY for X 1/9’s. The paint job is original, except for a small repair job due to a door ding incident.

Tony is toying with a Megasquirt conversion and a new stainless steel manifold with multiport injection. He kept part of the ‘80 parts car and uses that for test fitting his engine modifications so he can preserve that 1979 paint job.

This is not the first, or the only X 1/9 that Tony and Sarina have owned. The first X was a used 1974 that Tony liked very much, even though it was underpowered. Tony fondly remembers that the ’74 X was beat only by Volvo when it came to exceeding 1974 crash and roll over requirements, thanks to its stiff uni-body. According to Tony, “an X is always predictable, there is a melding of machine and man, you always know where this car is going to point when you push it, no surprises here”. Since then, Tony has purchased a ’78 x and an ’80 X for parts. Sarina gets to drive a stock 1987 X 1/9, which Tony spent two years restoring. The ’79 is a little bit too temperamental for Sarina’s tastes.

Tony enjoys being a member of FLU, and believes that the internet has been very helpful to all of us old car enthusiasts. He enjoys the www.flu.org forum, but insists that there just is no replacing hearing an engine run or face-to-face discussions while watching a part of history rumble or scream by. Tony’s advice is to get out there with your prized possession, display and use your car.

Tony would like to share this advice with his fellow club members: “Drive an X, own an X, then realize that one really isn’t enough. The purists want to keep the car just as it left the factory and are afraid to drive them. Then there are the modifiers that realize that this car has so much potential that to keep it stock is a waste of a great sports car. Try it, you will like it, then you will be hooked”.

Meet Bruno. Bruno is owned by a very new member of FLU, Henry Steinberg. Henry lives with his family and this 1983 Pininfarina Spider in Costa Rica. Henry found his Spider on the web in Milwaukee and split the $1,000 shipping expense with the seller in December 2007. Henry believes he is the third owner of this very nice example of Italian Iron. The car currently has 27,000 miles on the odometer, and is currently Henry's daily driver. Henry is not new to Fiats, having owned a 124 “back in the day”. Even though he’s been a lifelong enthusiast of Fiats, college expenses took charge of the finances; and that car had to be sacrificed for more pressing needs.

This car sports a K&N air filter, performance spark plugs and wires, and a performance exhaust. Henry has also added shorter performance springs in the rear. He is currently changing out
the original pistons and the clutch. Henry does not have a favorite one item about this car, he likes EVERYTHING about it; especially the styling. Although the wife and boys appreciate having this car around, it is definitely Henry’s. Bruno just sounded right, so that is Henry’s reason for the name. Henry is also very happy to report that although his sons are of driving age, they tend to drive some of his older hand-me-downs, rather than the Spider.

Costa Rica basically has a 12 month driving season; although some months are more comfortable than others for driving his Spider. As you can see, the car is equipped with air conditioning, something that Henry finds very useful in Costa Rica’s 8 month rainy season. Seems that it gets quite humid, and the functioning air conditioning comes in quite handy. Henry says that Costa Rica has two seasons, wet and dry. You’d better like lots of rain if you are thinking of visiting Costa Rica. As I write this (02/04/08) it is 22 Celsius or 72 Fahrenheit. Quite a difference for a Michigan resident, where it is 22 F right now. And, according to his calculation, Henry owns nearly 15% of all the Fiat Spiders in the country. His favorite, to own someday, is an Alfa Romeo Giulietta Spider, but that will have to wait for a while. For now, he loves his Pinin, but wouldn’t mind a second one of these as well.

Henry doesn’t believe he will make FIAT FREAK OUT 2008 due to the driving distance, but would love to have someone conversing with him via email at bushikai@racs.co.cr After all; he joined FLU for the friendship and advice.

May I please introduce to you the brand new 1970 Fiat 124 Spider of Peter Hanson, of Berwyn PA. Peter and this car just came together early last fall, acquiring the vehicle at an auction in California. The car was delivered with several layers of shop dust (inside and out), most of the electrical system disconnected, and a stench of varnished gasoline. But, thankfully no rust, good chrome, a decent paint job, and a working engine (sometimes). A good scrubbing and dousing a wiper motor fire was all that was needed to bring the Spider back to life. When Peter found this car, he had originally been looking for something suitable for his daughter to drive back and forth to work; well, she’s still riding the bus, and the Spider is in Pete’s garage!

Although the odometer has 85,000 miles on it, the engine and drivetrain were rebuilt within the past 200 miles. Peter has not had enough time yet to get to know the car, so it remains un-named, but only for a time. Other than the rebuild, the car is basically stock, with the 1438 cc engine, and a standard interior. Immediate needs for the engine include adjustments or modifications to the ignition system and some adjustments to the clutch. Long range, Peter is dreaming of dual Webers, and 4-2-1 exhaust and maybe exhaust headers. An old body shop guy, Peter is also promising an improved exterior before FIAT FREAK OUT 2008; participants take note that Peter is throwing out the challenge.

Fiats have been in Peter’s blood since his senior year in college (Villanova Class of ’78). His early graduation present from mom & aunt was a 124 Spider; while studying in Siena Italy! The European Delivery Program afforded Peter a one in a million chance to drive a Fiat Spider in Italy during the time when NO Spiders were available to residents. That summer, Peter toured every twisty turn he could find throughout Western Europe. No wonder Peter “needs” a Spider in his life today.

Peter has had 10-15 different cars over the past 30 some years. Honda Civic, TVR 2500M, and a Honda CRV just to name a few. Quite a diverse collection you might say. Peter met his wife Nancy in his 1979 X 1/9 twenty five years ago. It was rough on him to part with that machine a dozen years ago after a wreck. Ever since, his itch to tweak, adjust, upgrade and modify the family buggy was just not the same. Yeah, he added new wheels to this one, modified
the air intake of that one, or changed the suspension of the other thing. But he wasn’t satisfied driving just anything. The twelve year drought between Fiats ended with this Spider dropping off the delivery trailer and Pete’s mind drifted back to some very, very fond memories.

Peter has joined FLU to find other people with a similar passion. As Peter says “You can’t run down to the local dealer anymore, and some of the great garages that worked on Fiats, Lancias and MG’s are long gone.” Peter is looking for folks to share Fiat problems and concerns with; people to share issues and resources among. Also, he notes that it is great to hear the stories of other owners who’ve “Been there, yup, had that happen too!” Welcome aboard, Peter!

For approximately 8 years now, Paul Beevor has been dealing with his mid-life crisis in a fairly normal way; however, he’s really going to extremes with it. Can you imagine: first a 1952 Willys Military Jeep, then a 1973 Lotus Europa Special which was sold for a replica 1927 Bugatti Racer and a 1965 Huron Formula Vee; which are still in his stable. Paul has also recently owned a 1983 Capri RS, and a 1975 MG Midget that he set up for autocross. The family shares daily drivers in a Saturn and a Hyundai, and a Ford.

But, Paul’s current joy is with his 1989 Lancia Thema 8.32. This car was imported from Italy, originally purchased by a 79 year old Italian gentleman, and ran by him until he was well into his nineties. Paul has only owned the car for a few months, but it is quickly becoming his favorite; a definite keeper. This car came to Toronto when an exotic car importer spotted it in Germany, where a French broker was advertising the collection of a 91 year old Italian gentleman who had recently passed away. Sitting among Ferrari and Lamborghini machines in the Toronto showroom, this little thing just spoke to Paul; besides the fact that it was the one of the few on that floor he could afford.

Paul says the car has a top speed of 140mph, and can do 0-60 in 6.8 seconds. The Ferrari 32 valve V8 alloy block and head engine has a displacement of 2927cc. and a 10.5:1 compression; rated at 215 hp at 6750 rpm, with 210 # of torque at 4500 rpm. The manual transmission is a five speed, and features a power activated rear spoiler. The car has rack and pinion steering, and MacPherson struts with coil springs and front and rear anti-sway bars. Paul runs 6x15 alloy wheels with 205/55 VR15 tires. With only 2087# on those four corners, you can bet this 80.7” car can shoot down the road. Paul has changed the factory silencer with a much louder Magnaflow system, which Paul enjoys. The change in exhaust provides a little more pony power to the ground.

Paul employs a young aircraft/Ferrari engine mechanic who manufactures his own specialty tooling for tune-up and maintenance jobs on this car. The young man is nimble enough to perform some pretty cumbersome tasks while the engine is in the car; most mechanics needing to pull the engine for these jobs.

The interior is no slouch system either. Leather wrapped dash and door panels, wood dash and door caps, Alcantara seats and a beautifully stitched head liner. Wool carpeting invites comfort, as do the power seats. Of course, the center console sports a radio blanking plate; no need for a radio when there is that beautiful engine to listen to.

One of Paul’s favorite gripes about the car is that he frequently gets pulled over by the police; no, he’s not driving too fast. The cops are just curious car guys with the power to invite Paul for a chat. Everyone hears the Thema coming down the road, but look right past the sedan for a non-existent Ferrari. The Thema is a definite sleeper; stately sedan look, but with power to outperform nearly everything in the area.

Depending on the option list, this car sold new in the range of $69-80,000. It currently has 107,000 kilometers on the clock. Paul is the second custodian of this car, which came to North America with an owner’s manual and service records, all written in Italian. Paul is really happy to point out the 2001 Italian parking sticker on the windshield.

Paul enjoys the companionship and discussions at www.flu.org. If he could change our forum, he would do so by encouraging more folks to participate in the discussions. He is looking forward to meeting fellow club members in Ludington this fall when we get together for FUN (Fiats Up North).
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