

# Alfa Media Notizia



Newsletter of the **FLORIDA ALFA CLUB**  
Tampa Bay Area, Florida

## Monthly Meeting Thur. March 10th **NOTE! Paradise Restaurant - 443 Main St. Safety Harbor, FL**

### **Events on the horizon...**

**March 11-13 Amelia Island!!!** Alfa Romeo is the featured marquee with cars planned from the museum! An expected 45 Pre-War Alfa Romeos are slated to be there for the Sunday Concours. Further, a special Alfa tent on the field has been acquired, and Delmas and Joost are working on a special Friday evening event - a special AROC members, and Alfa exhibitors gathering! Make sure you have contacted Polly to acknowledge attendance for this special event.



**Sarasota Polo Event Report** - Another great day with Alfa's on the mound, the Polo event fantastic. What a way to spend a Sunday!

**New Web Site** - We have obtained our own URL, and the new site is listed below! The new interface will allow officers and administrators to easily update information so we can keep it fairly current, or update information at the last minute if need be. Designed to look similar to AROC site.



*New Meeting Place - Paradise Restaurant - Safety Harbor*

**<http://www.FloridaAlfaClub.com>**

**Postage sponsored by Jeanie & Junior Collins**

### FAC Meeting Minutes, February 10, 2005

In attendance, John Rady, John Picot, Chip Denyko, Polly & Delmas Greene, Heidi & Graham Spencer, Barry Address, Bill Kelly, Nino Montopoli, Gennie & Junior Collins, Delson Correa, Scott Palmer Ciaran Moloney and Scott Suits.

Meeting called to order 7:30 Polly gave the Treasurers report. Also, the AROC sponsorship for Amelia Island will be passed through the FAC. Delmas covered the Amelia Island event coming up in less than a month! AROC is sponsoring a welcoming event Friday evening 6 to 7:30 for exhibitors and AROC members. Saturday noon is the auction, and you should pickup your Sunday tickets for the concourse (\$35 each). Sunday, AI is providing a 10x10 tent for AROC which we need volunteers to man. AROC is sending 150 Alfa Owner magazines to hand out to prospective members. Motion to provide water if AI will allow up to \$75. Motion passed. (John Picot opposed).

Scott Suits of the Mercedes club told the group about a Hope Children's Home they are running a road rally for, \$50 per car for two people with the goal to raise \$10,000 for the home. Rally is June 11<sup>th</sup> (Saturday). Registration can be that morning if you wish to participate. (This is also currently a Dade City drive).

Scott Palmer introduced himself, it was his first club meeting. His 85 Spider was found via Bill at Mastro. Polly had tickets for Polo which is February 20. Ybor city Festival Italian festival will be the same weekend as .....

Nomination for BOD – Chip was nominated for Board of Director and will be forwarding the bio to Jolene.

The Cedar Key Weekend, May 14<sup>th</sup> (Saturday) information will be in this newsletter. This is a great drive and dinner. Lodging is a Fennimore Mills condos.

British car club has invited us to a July 2<sup>nd</sup> Phillippee Park. This is the flip side of our November car show picnic, so join us there!

Several events are on the fore-front, keep an eye on the calendar.

The Paradise restaurant site was a new spot tonight. Motion was made to move our meetings to this site by John Picot, seconded by Polly. Motion passed, this is now our new meeting site!



### CLASSIFIED ADS!

**FOR SALE:** Your Ad could be here!

**FOR SALE: 1993 - 164S** white, 5-speed, leather, sun roof and spoiler, 150,000 miles, (second owner (owned since 28,000 miles), all maintenance records, never been in accident, good condition. **\$5,200** VIN # ZAREA33E2P6270114 Richard Sanderson (941) 923-2663 or (941) 993-2031

**Various cars** available through Delmas Greene. If you have a car for sale call Delmas! (727) 799-1486. '79Spider(rough), '79 spider, (pretty nice), Jr Zagato (nice), 2600 Roadster (restoration needs to be completed).

**FOR SALE:** A long list of vehicles and parts are available from David Wilson - St Pete (727) 526-1378 call for \$

*Run your ad here where Florida Alfisti look! Need parts, want something, or want to sell, put it here!*



**Meeting Thurs Mar10th @ 7:30**  
**- Paradise Restaurant**  
**443 Main St.**  
**Safety Harbor, FL**  
**727-725-0618**



### List of Officers / Board Members

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Newsletter Editor ..... Chip Denyko ..... (813) 886-6165  
Web Page ..... <http://www.FloridaAlfaClub.com>

**Monthly meetings are held the SECOND THURSDAY of each month at Varoius Locations. Check the web page for the most recet update, or call one of us listed above. Meetings begin at 7:30 PM, but you are always invited to meet there early for dinner or just to chat about your latest Alfa adventure!**

## What can we do for you?

Perhaps we don't ask this question enough of our members. There are several of you I've not met, and certainly more people that might be interested in being a part of this club, but not really feeling like it offers much to them.

Well I'm here asking what we can do for you? This is your club, and so it should provide a valuable resource for you as well. We are a many faceted club with a diverse crowd, wide age range and a vast array of cars. This provides a challenge, but luckily we live in Florida and are able to do something almost all year around.

In the past we've held tech sessions to help people out with problems they might be having with their cars. I know I was greatly helped by the club during my first ever timing belt and water pump replacement. It's quite a daunting task for an Alfa novice. But with the guiding help of several member of the club, the effort was not only easy but enjoyable.

If there is a particular problem you might be having, please let us know, we'd be glad to help you out.

But perhaps working on cars is not something you want to get involved in. It can be a bit of a chore, believe me I know. So perhaps driving your car is something you like to do. Is there a particular place that you enjoy visiting? Perhaps the Club could stage a driving event to your special place. Part of owning an Alfa is the enjoyment of driving it. There are many nice drives and places to vist here in Florida. Even if it's just a nice leisurely drive to have a nice dinner and watch the sun set somewhere.

Did I lose some of you on that last one? Driving? Perhaps driving to you means an entirely different thing. Perhaps your idea of driving is racing your RPMs to the limiter and seeing just how many tenths of a second you can shave off of a run. Perhaps you've never really seen what your car can do. We now have a chair in charge of performance driving events and hope to start doing some spirited driving events with other clubs. Primarily I'm taking about Auto crossing or as the SCCA calls it Solo II. For those of you unfamiliar with these types of driving events, they are a very safe way to become a better driver and gain a greater appreciation for your cars. Basically you run timed laps through a course laid out with cones in an open space. This lets you have the thrill of racing without the worries of hitting another car or obstacle.

Driving isn't for everyone. Perhaps you have a pristine car that you enjoy and want to keep that way. The club does several car shows a year ranging from local hotrod shows to invitation only concourse shows. Not sure how to get started? Curious to know the judging criteria? Or perhaps you just want to ask about good places to get seat reupholstered or where to obtain original parts that may be hard to find. The club has years of knowledge it can share and lots of advice. Just ask!

I've listed just a few of the possible and past events the Club has done, but my point is we want to be here for you. There are no wrong suggestions, nor bad questions. We invite you to participate where and how you want to. I personally want to know that everyone in the club feels like they are really getting something out of belonging. I also know that many feel that they don't have the time to participate. Our lives are very busy these days, things all around us are demanding of our time. But here is where I want to differentiate. I'm sure every one could use a bit of help somewhere or sometime. So I'm not asking for your time, though we'd love to have your help if you want to give it, but instead I'm offering you help, fun, information, camaraderie, and hopefully some enjoyment in belonging to the Florida Alfa Club. Please feel free to contact me and let me know how we can help you! - Graham Spencer - FAC President.



# Sarasota Polo Club - Another Hit Year!

A beautiful Sunday found the Florida Alfa Club in the middle of the Sarasota Polo club field. The weather couldn't have been better for a Sunday top-down drive. The cars parked on the mound - attentions turn to the start of the first of a six chukker match. As always, the horses are phenomenal - I enjoy spending sometime getting to know a few of them. Between the 3rd and 4th chukker, while divots are being replaced on the field, the club drove around the field, displaying our cars. John & Linda Rady 84 Maratona; Delmas & Polly Greene, 69 Duetto; Dick and Gennel Downs 90 Spider; Lou Dougherty 58 Giulia Spider; Delson Correa 86 Spider; Dennis & Jennifer's 90 Spider Veloce; Dennis DeMauro 91 Spider Veloce; Graham Spencer 85 GTV-6 and Chip Denyko's 93 Spider Veloce were paraded around the field.

The event brought members from as far south as Naples. We have already scheduled the event for next year, so if you have missed this one, put next February on your calendar now! PS - Thanks Polly for driving my Spider! Chip.



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## Alfa V-6 Tensioner

by Graham Spencer

If you own an 12 valve Alfa V6, then you've faced the tensioner dilemma. If not, well this might be of little interest to you, unless you end up with a V6 in the future. The tensioner (actually it's a DE-tensioner) and the timing belt on the Alfa V6 is one of Alfa's great mistakes. Now I'm not going to say who is at fault, it's in the past, and I'm guessing it's a case of the engineers designing a part one way, yet the accounting department wanting a much cheaper version, and in the end a compromise is made. That's the way I imagine it, but regardless of how it was caused, lets discuss what the problems is, and more importantly, what the best solutions are going forward.



### ***The problem.***

The problem is actually the lack of contact of the timing belt with the (as you face the front of the engine) left camshaft sprocket. This is due to the fact that on this side of the engine resides the distributor and the oil pump drive sprocket. This causes a very limited wrap around the left camshaft as the belt as to continue over to the distributor/oil pump sprocket. The wrap of the left camshaft (using a clock analogy) is from about 10 o'clock to 12 o'clock, or just over an inch or so, compare this to the other camshaft, where the wrap is from about 12 o'clock to 5 o'clock, or around 6 inches. That is a big difference, and the cause of a lot of pain and suffering. Making things even worse, the tensioner is the next item on the left side. Thus if the tensioner fails, slack immediately appears on the left bank, allowing the left camshaft to "let go".

### ***Interference vs. Non-interference***

Why is this a big deal you might ask, so you replace the timing belt and tensioner and your back in business. There in lies the big problem. Alfa's engineering shortcoming wouldn't really be anything more that a pain, IF the Alfa V6 was a non-interference engine, but it's not, it's an interference engine. What is an interference engine, vs. a non interference? An interference engine means just what it says, the valves (intake and exhaust, these are what the cam shaft is controlling) interfere or collide with the pistons. This is a VERY bad thing. If you are lucky, you'll have to replace all the valves, if you're not, you can put a hole in a piston, necessitating an entire engine rebuild. For those of you following along, a non-interference engine means that there is no way for the valves and the pistons to meet. These are also referred to as "free-wheeling" engines.

### ***Timing Belt Tensioner***



So as you see the timing belt and timing belt tensioner on the Alfa V6 are very critical parts. But once again Alfa makes some interesting choices. So I call the path of the belt an engineering failure, but the tensioner itself is also a far from stellar design. Granted the Alfa V6 is a gem, that few other contemporary engines get close to, but why take a simple thing like a belt tensioner and over complicated it to the point of failure? The tensioner is normal spring loaded tensioner with three heavy springs(including a pretensioner), but Alfa to it one step further, one of the bolts attaching the tensioner is hollow and connected to an oil passage, this allow oil to flow into a expansion chamber allowing oil pressure to act upon the tensioner as well. The common thought is this is to make up for the expansion and contraction of the aluminum engine block, thus keeping a constant pressure on the belt at all times. Why does Alfa think that  $\pm$  less than a millimeter make a difference when all other contemporary engines are either fixed (no springs nor accommodation for any varying slack) or a simple spring affair? Who knows. It's a good design, and would be a problem, except for one thing, the seals will eventually leak, and oil on the timing belt is not a good thing, not at all. So with a belt path that's problematic, and a tensioner that problematic, what's to be done?

## ***Enter the Mechanical Tensioner***

Here is where things get interesting, and heated debate comes in. For some reason, Alfa acknowledged there was a problem with the tensioners leaking in NORTH AMERICA, but no where else. I want to point out here as well, that if the tensioner is rebuilt each time the timing belt is changed (30K) there shouldn't be a problem. But for some reason (I'm guessing the US dealers just weren't rebuilding the tensioners) there were scores of failures in the US, and Alfa issued a new "Mechanical" tensioner for use in NA. The mechanical tensioner uses a bi-metallic spring to tension and adjust pressure on the timing belt. The thought being as the tensioner heats up, the spring is affected, thus altering the tension on the belt. It's a fairly simple retrofit, but does require retaping one of the original holes in the engine. As the oil feed is blocked off, yet the spring acts in the same way as the oil pressure you get all the benefits of the oil fed with none of the drawbacks, Right? Right? Wrong!

## ***Mechanical vs. Oil Fed***

As I said this is the source of heated controversy, but I'm going to say it. The mechanical tensioner is far inferior to the oil fed. The spring on the mechanical tensioner is similar (or perhaps is) to an old Westclox alarm clock main spring. Remember this flimsy clock spring is all that stands between you having a nice engine or a very large and oily paperweight. There are also caveats to the mechanical tensioner, like don't park on a hill with the car in gear. Humm, why not? Well the tension supplied by that flimsy spring isn't enough to keep the timing belt tight, allowing the engine to turn backwards and slip it's timing, remember that interference? The main problem is failure. There is a very high rate of failure of this tensioner. It's been said that most failures are attributed to improper installation, but whatever the case there is a high volume of failures, and as I've outlined, this is one part that should NEVER fail.



So the mechanical is no good, and the oil fed leaks oil and is no good what is the solution? Well the solution for myself and most of the people I know who race and thus really abuse these engines is really quite simple, block off the oil feed and otherwise use the oil fed tensioner normally. In this way you get the advantage of the robustness of the oil fed springs, and you don't have to worry about oil leaking out. It's also a very simple process to block the oil feed, requiring no tapping of the engine, etc. The oil that feeds the tensioner is not under high pressure, so the most simple and elegant solution is to thread the hole in the side of the hollow oil bolt and place a simple set screw in place. This also allows you to undo this modification at a later date (if you feel you want that oil leak back). But there are other solutions, a drop of weld, an epoxy like JB Weld, etc.

## ***Wrap-up and going forward***

I really fail to see why all the fuss about these two tensioners. Yes, I'm sure there are plenty of people running the mechanical without a problem. And I am one of them. I currently have a GTV-6 with a mechanical style and a Milano with the altered oil feed. But I plan on replacing the mechanical on the GTV-6 with an oil fed unit next timing belt replacement. As I outlined, this is not the place for a failure prone part no matter what the reason. Why take the risk if it's not needed? The oil fed tensioner is what Alfa Romeo designed. Yes it has a weakness, but that can easily be fixed at the cost of the oil not affecting the tension. Is that really needed? No. I think in this case Alfa realized how critical the tensioner would be and thus over engineered it. The oil feed is not needed.

Where is my proof you say? Well as I mentioned this is the preferred set up by the Alfisti that take their V6s to the limits on a regular basis, and that's good enough for me. But if you feel you need further proof, Alfa Heaven sells a "static" tensioner. This is a unit that has no springs, no nothing. You bolt it on and tighten it up. There is no allowance for either the timing belt stretching, nor anything else. And once again, no failures. It's also important to note that given reasonable care the cause for interference related engine disasters are not from the belt failing, but inevitably from the mechanical tensioner failing. So perhaps I didn't give the Alfa engineers the credit they deserve. Perhaps they did realize the problems that would be caused by a slipping timing belt and did over engineered the tensioner. Whatever the original reasons were we have a choice today. I hope I've helped clarify some of the mystery surrounding these two 'official' parts.

## FAC & Other Events

### Amelia Island Concours

March 11-13<sup>th</sup>, 2005

The Florida Alfa Club has once again reserved a block of rooms at the Holiday Inn (I-95 & Airport Road) for Saturday night (March 12<sup>th</sup>). We also have reserved a room at the Holiday Inn's restaurant (Montego's) for everyone to meet and have dinner. This Holiday Inn is located on the North side of Jacksonville, just off I-95 (around 20 miles from Amelia Island). For reservations, call: 904-741-4404 or 1-800-HOLIDAY. Ask for "Florida Alfa Club" reservations and the rate will be \$72.00 / night. They will honor this rate for those wishing to stay more than one night.

We will meet for dinner at 7:00 PM. On Saturday night. (We are ordering from the menu and have individual checks) Please see, call, or E-mail Delmas and Polly if you plan to have dinner with us, as we need to let the restaurant know the approximate number of people to seat. Phone: 727-799-1486 (home) or 727-439-2019 (cell)

E-mail: [alfagreene@earthlink.net](mailto:alfagreene@earthlink.net)

Please visit our new Florida Alfa Club Website at <http://www.FloridaAlfaClub.com> for updates and changes.

We look forward to seeing all of you. Polly and Delmas Greene & the FLORIDA ALFA CLUB

Please note that the featured marque at this year's Amelia Island event is Alfa Romeo. Approximately 45 unique Alfas from all over the world will be displayed, including some from the Alfa museum in Italy. Most of us plan to attend the Auction on Saturday and, of course, the "Concours d' Elegance" on Sunday. For more information about the Amelia Island event, check their web site. <http://www.ameliaconcours.org>

### CEDAR KEY WEEKEND

WHEN: Saturday-Sunday, May 14-15, 2005 - Experience a weekend away from the stress of city living and stay in a beautiful condominium resort that is in harmony with nature and in tune with the charm of Old Florida. Come join us for a weekend drive in our Alfas, an afternoon discovering Cedar Key, and an evening of dining in one of the unique restaurants of this old Florida town.


WHERE: Old Fenimore Mill Condominium - 1 Bedroom, 1 Bath Apartments \$125.00 nightly - 2 Bedroom, 2 Bath Apartments \$150.00 nightly. These units are well furnished and include everything you might need for a pleasant stay.

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PHONE: 1-800-767-8354.

Be sure to tell the reservation clerk that you are with the Florida Alfa Club.

A few of us will be staying both Friday and Saturday nights. If you wish to do the same, the people of Old Fenimore Mill Condominiums will be happy to accommodate you with more than one nights stay. This promises to be a fun weekend! Hope to see you there!



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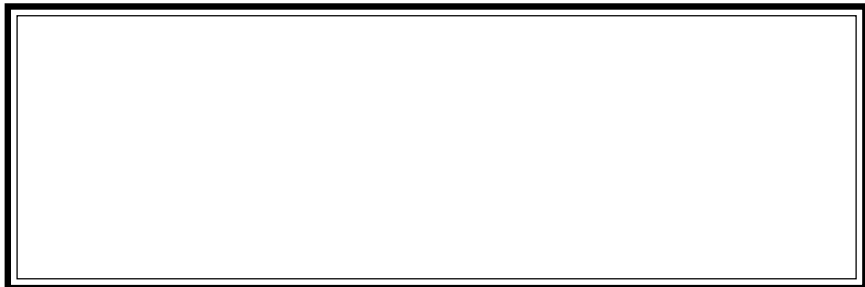
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If you have received this edition of our newsletter and are not currently a member, we have sent you this to peak your interest. The Florida Alfa Club is a group of Alfa Romeo owners or wanna be's that share technical information, skills, experiences, events, fun and commederie of our prized possessions, our Alfas! If you would like to join us, or just visit for a meeting or two please feel free. If you have any questions, you can call anyone listed on page 2 for more information.

*Dinner & Meeting location*  
**Paradise Rest. - Safety Harbor, FL**



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