

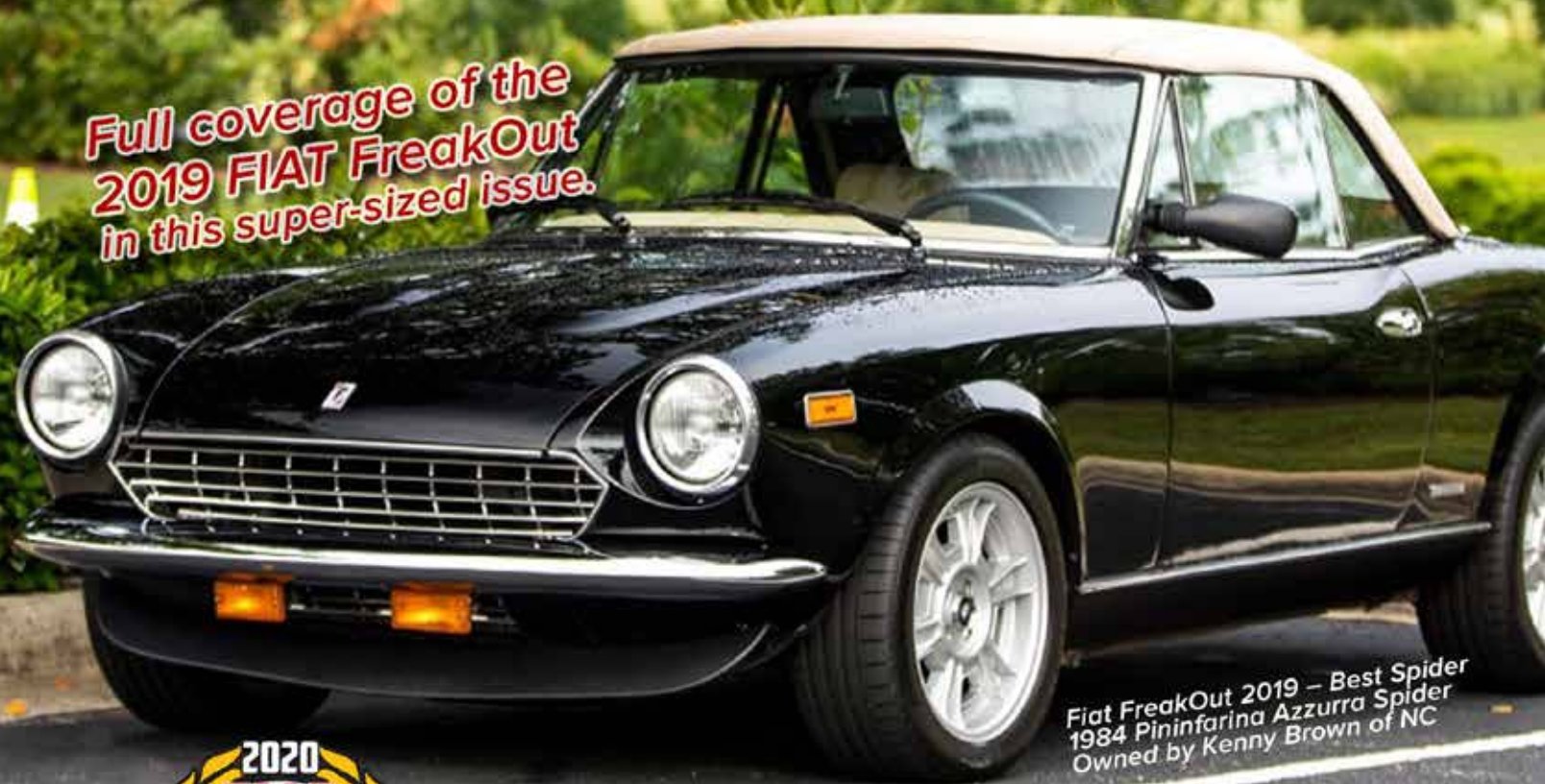
Super-Sized FIAT FreakOut Issue

RIGCAMBI

A Magazine for New and Classic FIAT and Lancia Enthusiasts, Published by FIAT Club America
Fall 2019, Number 79



**Full coverage of the
2019 FIAT FreakOut
in this super-sized issue.**



**Fiat FreakOut 2019 – Best Spider
1984 Pininfarina Azzurra Spider
Owned by Kenny Brown of NC**



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Two Open Positions



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 the email below

Editorial submissions can be sent in for consideration to:

president@FIATclubamerica.com

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 via contact information above or calling 865-604-3271.

Editorial and photos may be submitted electronically via disc or e-mail. All ads must be sufficient quality and format suitable for printing. Please check with questions about format. Please do not send low resolution graphics from web sites unless you check and discuss it beforehand and have permission to do so from the source.



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From the Prez...

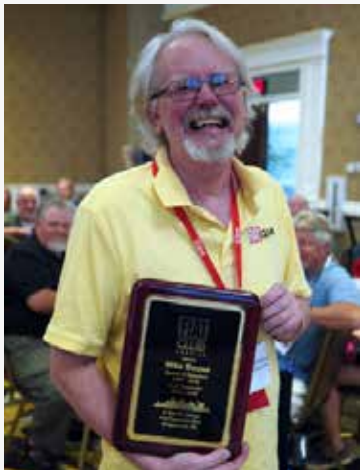
by Doug Von Koenig, FIAT Club America President

Another amazing FreakOut! Wow!

For those of you able to attend this year's FreakOut in Greensboro I think you'd agree that words like wow, fantastic, over the top, amazing and similar would just be a start to describing how excellent this event was. Thank you to the army of people, led by Denise Burchette and John Montgomery, who helped make this FreakOut the awesome event that it was. I get to do some very fun things on behalf of our Club and one of those is being able to recognize those whose efforts go above and beyond to increase the value of our organization to you, our membership and shareholders. It was my privilege and honor to make the following awards this year:

- **The Lifetime Achievement award –**

The Club presented Mike Bouse with a special lifetime achievement award to recognize his contributions to the club since 2007 when he first became a member of the Board of Directors. Mike has also served as the Membership Director and he became our Club Treasurer in 2014. As Treasurer, he instituted financial controls, budgeting, documentation of expenses and cost-benefit/ROI analysis enabling us to run our Club like a real business. Mike has always led by example and taught us so many things. The Club engaged an auditor to examine its 2018 financial records given that we were transitioning Treasurers. It should be no surprise that the auditor found that our finances were being handled 100% professionally and correctly by Mike Bouse. Thank you Mike for all of your efforts.



- **The Damon Kane award –** Each year, FIAT Club America presents an award in memory of Damon Kane and his promotion of fellowship among club members. This year, the Damon Kane Award was presented to John Montgomery for his 20+ years of being the friendly face of the Club, reaching-out to new members thought out the year and to first-timers at FIAT FreakOut.

- **The Con Brio award –** FIAT Club America presented Denise Burchette with the Con Brio Award for her efforts in coordinating FIAT FreakOut 2019 in Greensboro, her leadership of the Carolina Chapter, and her past service on the Club Board of Directors. Denise is a great driver who regularly wins in autocross and then puts her car on the concorso to win awards there.
- **The Helle Nice award –** This year's recipient of the Helle Nice Award that recognizes women who advance automotive sport/industry went posthumously to Susan Bayless. John Montgomery presented the award on behalf of FIAT Club America. Accepting on behalf of Susan was her husband and business partner, Art Bayless. Together, Art and Susan Bayless, operated Bayless Racing in Georgia, selling parts to FIAT owners everywhere.
- **The Darryl Stacey award –** The Club created this award to honor one of our 30 year club members who sadly passed away in 2018. One of Darryl's many achievements was that he was responsible in moving Ricambi from photocopy to print. It was an honor to award Bobb Rayner this award to recognize his contributions to Ricambi magazine since its inception. Bobb, love you, love your show!
- **Concorso Award Winners –** as you know the highlight of any FreakOut is the Saturday Concorso show where we get to see some of the coolest Italian cars on the planet, this year we had over 130 of them. Bobb Rayner personally awards each 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winner with their trophy during our awards banquet, this year there were 20 car classes. Congratulations to all the winners!

Our FreakOut experience is significantly enhanced by the generosity of the businesses that step up and financially sponsor the event. The best way to repay their generosity is to buy from them and I'm asking us all to think of them first any time we make a purchase for the goods and services that they provide. Thank you to our FreakOut19 sponsors from a very grateful Club.

Registration for FreakOut On The Dragon 2020 will be open by January 1st, 2020. Overview details are on the Club website now. Will you be joining us?

No doubt, you our members, have fantastic ideas about how to improve the Club and I am eager to hear them. As far as I'm concerned the suggestion box is always open. You have an idea to improve some aspect of the Club, I am all ears all the time. Please let me know how to improve your Club experience.

Best, Doug.

Ciao Amici!

Riscaldiamo I motori!

Once again, it's an honor to have the opportunity to share my musings with you once again, especially when the luster of the most recent FIAT FreakOut is still glowing in my mind and heart. Our annual convention was less than two months prior to the moment I'm writing this article, but the emotional experience lingers within me as if it happened yesterday. Saluti importanti go to Denise Burchette, John Montgomery, and the many others who took the reins to host this massive event in its 36th year. By all accounts shared with me, everyone was super-satisfied with the venue and events. I can't recall the exact number of cars that were on the concorso field this year, but it was nearly one-hundred-thirty, if not more. FIAT FreakOut has come a LONG way from the first dozen cars in year one, with a nice uptick in the number of Lancias, race-prepared cars, and other related marques joining the display. You'll be reading more about FFO 2019 in this and future issues of this magazine, so if you weren't there, you'll see what you missed and be inspired to attend FreakOut 2020 next year.

On a personal note, our club's now ex-treasurer Mike Bouse, battled some challenging health problems to be with us at FreakOut 2019. Mike has always been a particularly jovial and amusing fellow (need I mention the infamous "cocoanut brassiere?"), and in his heart and mind, he still is. Unfortunately, Mike is currently plagued with some respiratory afflictions that have slowed him a bit, and it was admirable to see him make the effort to attend FFO this year, due in no small part to the constant assistance club president Doug Von Koenig rendered to Mike at every moment. Kudos to Doug for his kindness! Due to his health concerns, Mike Bouse felt the need to resign from his position as club treasurer, a job for which I and many others have been extremely grateful. I join many other club members in reminding Mike that he is loved and in our thoughts as he battles his maladies.

At this year's FreakOut, we were blessed to have Art Bayless among us. Those of you who are relative "newbies" to FIATs may not be familiar with Art, but he meant a great deal to FIAT and Lancia fans in decades long past, particularly in the 1960s to 1980s. Art and his wife Susan operated "Bayless Racing," a business devoted to FIAT and Lancia parts and supplies for both racing and street use. Back in those days, if you wanted to boost the performance of your FIAT or Lancia, Bayless Racing was the source for parts, accessories, and above all, know-how, due to the Bayless's vast experience in racing FIATs in the USA. I still have many of the Bayless Racing catalogs from the 1970s in my literature collection, and wish that the same performance parts were still available now. In case you're wondering, yes.... Matt and Marnie Brannon's "Midwest Bayless" company name stems from the fact that they purchased Art's business when he retired. Art's late wife Susan was the recipient of this year's Helle Niece award at FreakOut, and Art and his son were there



THE FIAT FREAK

Bobb Rayner
Delaware Valley

to accept the award in Susan's honor. It was wonderful to have the newer generation of FIAT fans meet this legend of FIAT lore.

Just prior to FreakOut 2019, a number of club board members came up with an idea to hold (for lack of a better term) a "job fair" at FFO during which we intended to share information about club needs and solicit volunteers who could address those needs. I had realized that the club has often missed the opportunity to "strike while the iron is hot" by not asking for member help when the level of enthusiasm is so high during FFO. Admittedly, the idea came too late for an appropriate organization of this gathering, but some club members did, indeed, sit with members of the board of directors to discuss some ideas and their implementation. For many years, I've begged members to contribute editorial material to RICAMBI magazine and the club website, and I continue to do so. Members are reminded that this is a 100% volunteer organization, so your ideas, and a willingness to help execute them, are encouraged.

In FIAT-related news, talks of a possible merger between FIAT Chrysler Automobiles and Renault were in progress for the first half of 2019, but collapsed in June. Rumor has it that the two companies are now negotiating again, and the resulting merger would form the 3rd-largest auto company in the world. Vehicle sales in Europe have been way down, and like any other industry, automakers look toward boosting profitability by taking advantage of economy of scale: the bigger the buying power, the cheaper the cost of needed resources. Economy of scale was a major motivation for former FIAT CEO Sergio Marchionne when he pursued, and eventually consummated, a merger between FIAT and Chrysler. In addition to slumping sales, financial burdens car manufacturers face as they attempt to develop electric and alternative-fuel vehicles are further reducing profits.

Thankfully, FIAT has already made significant investment in electric vehicle propulsion, evidence of which I saw manifested with the FIAT 500e at the NY International Auto show in the spring of 2013. Ironically, it's said that FIAT loses money on every 500e they sell, a scenario repeated for many other car companies when it pertains to electric cars. I recall Sergio Marchionne publicly asking that people not buy a 500e, based on what it cost FIAT-Chrysler to manufacture and service it! Why make the 500e? Because a total of ten states in the USA

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My FIAT Journey and a Tale of Three FreakOuts

by Dave May

My FIAT Journey started in 1981 and led me to three Class Winner awards at the Concorso events at the three FIAT FreakOuts I've attended.

In 1981, I was a newly minted National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence (NIASE – now called ASE) General Automotive Technician (now called Master Automotive Technician) at Camplese FIAT in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. After my initial interview, my qualifying test was to diagnose a 1981 FIAT Spider that would start briefly before sputtering and stalling. I quickly diagnosed that the air intake hose going from the air flow meter to the intake was loose and would slightly detach after starting, pulling in too much air and stalling. I worked on countless FIATs, as well as many other foreign cars, and I always looked good doing it!

I also discovered two things at Camplese FIAT; that the owner's daughter had a 1979 FIAT Spider, and that FIATs were fun to race. I initially raced her FIAT Spider in 1982 at local SCCA races, and then switched to a beat-to-death 1974 FIAT X 1/9 I purchased from a customer for \$20.



I achieved the coveted status of Association of FIAT Service Technician, which would help me throughout my life.

I also received a 1971 FIAT 850 Racer in payment for work from the estate of an elderly gentleman who passed. Then, in 1985, I made a change in my life's direction and enlisted in the U.S. Army, leaving my FIATs behind at Camplese FIAT to be sold.

Fast forward 24 years to 2009 and I was recuperating from an injury and looking through the "Free" section of the Philadelphia Craigslist. I found an ad for a "FIAT"; no other description. It turns out the FIAT was a 1980 FIAT X 1/9 with 40,000 miles that hadn't driven in 23 years. Well, I picked that dead X 1/9 up, disassembled it completely, rebuilt and upgraded the body, engine, and interior completely, and then found out about this event called the 2010 FIAT FreakOut. I drove that X 1/9 all the way down to Asheville, North Carolina, in the blazing summer heat, and had a great time at the FIAT FreakOut, meeting many friends (including the "FIAT Twins").



Shockingly, I won the Concours First place award for my class.

But this X 1/9 was no trailer queen, as my love of racing FIATs returned and I raced it in many local SCCA races.

Fast forward another three years and I just returned



from my third combat deployment to Afghanistan. What better way to celebrate a safe return than to drive up to Long Island, New York for FIAT FreakOut 2013. With only a couple weeks to reacquaint myself with my family, pull the X 1/9 out of storage and prepare it, I was shocked when I again won the Concorso event (although I suspect my win might have had something to do with my recent return from Afghanistan).

After FIAT Freakout 2013, because of my increased military duties, I found I wasn't driving my X 1/9 more than once a year. Facing another combat deployment, I reluctantly sold the X 1/9.

Another surprise waiting for me when I returned was being contacted by the long-closed Camplese FIAT owner's son, who wanted to know what I wanted to do with my 850 Racer. Apparently, he couldn't bring himself to sell it and had held onto it for decades, it's Coral Red paint fading into a nice shade of pink!

I brought the 850 Racer back home, but, when I learned I would be going on another combat deployment, I gave the 850 Racer to my cousin.

After recently returning from my final combat deployment, I was medically retired from the Army for injuries sustained during my 34 year career. However, I wasn't done with FIATs yet! I still had the FIAT 500 Premier Edizione #55 of 500 and what better way to celebrate my retirement from the Army than by attending the FIAT FreakOut 2019 in Greensboro, North Carolina (conveniently located 1 1/2 hours from where I retired to in Raleigh, North Carolina). And yes, shockingly I again won my class in the Concorso event (although I suspect I received the sympathy vote).

So, that's my FIAT Journey and the Tale of Three FIAT FreakOuts. I know I've missed a few FIAT FreakOuts while I was deployed with the Army, but I've always enjoyed when I could attend a FIAT Freakout.



However, FIATs were not out of my system, having purchased FIAT 500 Premier Edizione #55 of 500 during FIAT FreakOut 2009. My wife had a surprise for me when I returned from Afghanistan; a special license plate because of a decade worth of work by my local Pennsylvania Representative.





2019 FREAKOUT AWARD WINNERS



Owner Name	City	State	MAKE	Model	Year	Class Name	Class Award	Owner's Choice
Adam and Rheana Watts	Charlottesville	VA	FIAT	500	1967	Fiat Rear Engine	1st	Best 500
Edward Bernhard	Erwin	TN	FIAT	500	1966		2nd	
Jerry Cucchiara	Toronto	ON	FIAT	126	1974		3rd	
ROBERT ZECCA	Dover	NJ	FIAT	500 ABARTH	2012	Fiat 500 Abarth	2nd	
Jason Hall	BRISTOW	VA	FIAT	500 ABARTH	2012		3rd	
Matthew Ross	TRENTON	NJ	FIAT	500C ABARTH	2015	Fiat 500C Abarth	1st	
Hilary Falkenberg	Gloucester Point	VA	FIAT	500C ABARTH	2013		2nd	
Rick Mancini	Girard	OH	FIAT	500C ABARTH	2017		3rd	
David May	Raleigh	NC	FIAT	500 Prima Edizione	2012	Fiat 500 Modern	1st	
Arman Labrada	MOUNT BETHEL	PA	FIAT	500 Prima Edizione	2012		2nd tie	
Cathy Coale	Emory	VA	FIAT	500 Gucci	2012		2nd tie	
Ira H. Schoen	Alexandria	VA	FIAT	500	2012		3rd	
Javier Rico	Sunrise	FL	FIAT	500 sport	2012	Fiat 500 Sport, Turbo & 500C	1st tie	
Bill Bremner	Sarasota	FL	FIAT	500c	2017		1st tie	
Daniel Woods	Fayetteville	GA	FIAT	500 Sport Turbo	2013		2nd tie	
Cindy Crenshaw	Greenville	SC	FIAT	500 Sport Turbo	2016		2nd tie	
Andy Hight	Alexandria	VA	FIAT	500c	2018		3rd	
David Reiners	Waukesa	WI	FIAT	500X	2016	Fiat 500 XL	1st	
Dale & Terri Crandall	Greenville	OH	FIAT	500L	2014		2nd	
Megan Croker	LAKELAND	FL	FIAT	500L	2014		3rd	
Brett Melancon	Knoxville	TN	FIAT	124 Spider Abarth	2017	Fiat 124 Abarth Nuova	1st	
Tony Leisner	Tarpon Springs	FL	FIAT	124 Spider ABARTH	2017		2nd	
Dan Hennig	Reedsburg	WI	FIAT	124 Spider ABARTH	2017		3rd tie	
Mark Pinkston	nashua	NH	FIAT	124 Spider Abarth	2017		3rd tie	
Alvon Elrod	Ventura	CA	FIAT	124 Spider Prima Edizione	2017	Fiat 124 Spider Nuova	1st	
Mark Ascherl	Morrisville	NC	FIAT	124 Spider	2017		2nd	
Mark and Pamela Collins	Corning	NY	FIAT	124 Spider	2017		3rd	



Simone Bonino	Troy	MI	PININFARINA	Spider Azzurra	1983		1st tie	
Kenny Brown	Winston Salem	NC	PININFARINA	Spider Azzurra	1984	Pininfarina	1st tie	Best Spider
Susie Truscott	Spring	TX	PININFARINA	Spider Azzurra	1985		2nd	
Mark Rowan	Shelton	CT	PININFARINA	Spider Azzurra	1984		3rd	
Craig Nelson	Blairsville	GA	FIAT	Spider 2000	1982	Late Fiat Spider 2000	1st	
David Page	Greensboro	NC	FIAT	Spider 2000	1982		2nd	
Kim Brown	Winston Salem	NC	FIAT	Spider 2000	1982		3rd	
DONALD MARTONI	Port St Lucie	FL	FIAT	SPIDER 2000	1980	Early Fiat Spider 2000	1st	
Keith Kresconko	Buffalo	NY	FIAT	Spider 2000	1980		2nd	
Marty Posila	Johnstown	NY	FIAT	SPIDER 2000	1979		3rd tie	
Rick McCurdy	Newburgh	NY	FIAT	Spider 2000	1979		3rd tie	
Gene Saalweachter	Yadkinville	NC	FIAT	124 Spider	1977	Fiat 124 Spider - Tube Bumper	1st	
Joseph DeGasperis	Somers	NY	FIAT	124 Spider Race Car	1977		2nd	
Angelo Figurella	Royal Palm Beach	FL	FIAT	124 spider	1978		3rd	
Jody Farr	Worthington	PA	FIAT	124 Spider	1974	Fiat 124 Spider - Bumped Hooc	1st	
Jim Herzog	NORWICH	NY	FIAT	124 Spider	1973		2nd	
Ron Battaglia	Amherst	NY	FIAT	124 Spider	1971	Fiat 124 Spider - Flat Hood	1st	
Frank Battaglia	Fishersville	VA	FIAT	124 Spider	1969		2nd	
Charles Banks	DULLES	VA	FIAT	124 Spider	1971		3rd	
Walter Forlini	Burke	VA	BERTONE	X1/9	1987	Bertone X1/9	1st	
Blake Melancon	Knoxville	TN	BERTONE	X1/9	1985		2nd	
Brian Benson	Carlisle	PA	BERTONE	X1/9	1986		3rd	
Robert Martin	Radcliff	KY	BERTONE	X1/9	1987			Best X1/9
Everett & Janet Bailey	New Lebanon	OH	FIAT	X1/9	1980	Fiat X1/9 1500	1st	
Bob Grash	Sandwich	IL	FIAT	X1/9	1982		2nd	
Shanon Gutierrez	Anamosa	IA	FIAT	X1/9	1980		3rd	
Matthew Brannon	Columbus	OH	FIAT	X1/9	1977	Fiat X1/9 1300	1st	
STEVEN BECKER	EAST MEADOW	NY	FIAT	X1/9	1978		2nd	
Mike Hynes	Goodfield	IL	FIAT	X1/9	1978		3rd	
Pietro Arena	Troy	MI	Ghia	GT 1500	1963	Other Fiat	1st	Best of Show
Kim Strickland	Walkertown	NC	FIAT	131 Mirifiori Sedan	1976		2nd	
JOSEPH DAGOSTINO	STAMFORD	CT	FIAT	128 SEDAN	1978		3rd	
John Montgomery	Taylors	SC	LANCIA	Scorpion	1976	Lancia	1st	
Richard Lancia	Cary	NC	LANCIA	Beta Zagato	1981		2nd	
Daniel Goldman	Long Beach	NY	LANCIA	Flavia Coupe	1966		3rd	Car I Want to Drive Home
Jason Hall	BRISTOW	VA	ALFA ROMEO	Giulia TI AWD	2017	Alfa Romeo	1st	



2019 FREAKOUT AWARD WINNERS



FIAT FreakOut 2019 – BEST OF SHOW

Pietro Arena of Michigan won Best of Show in Greensboro at FIAT FreakOut with his 1963 Ghia GT1500.



FIAT FreakOut 2019 – Best Spider

There were 47 spiders at FIAT FreakOut ranging over 50 model years from 1969 to 2018. This 1984 Pinfarina Azzurra Spider owned by Kenny Brown of North Carolina was voted Best Spider by fellow spider owners in the FreakOut Concorso. Congratulations Kenny!



FIAT FreakOut 2019 – “The Car I Want To Drive Home.”

The members of FIAT Club America displaying their cars at the FIAT FreakOut Concorso concorso voted this 1966 Lancia Flavia Coupe, owned by Daniel Goldman of Long Island NY, as Yes, Dan and Annette drove their Lancia to Greensboro, NC and back again to Long Island!



FIAT FreakOut 2019 – Best 500

There were 56 FIAT 500's ranging in model years 1959-2018. Adam and Rheana Watts of Virginia won Best FIAT 500 for their 1967 model as voted by the FIAT 500 owners at FreakOut. Congratulations to the whole Watts family!



FIAT FreakOut 2019- Best X1/9

There were sixteen X1/9's at FIAT FreakOut ranging in model years 1974-1988. This 1987 Bertone X1/9 owned by Bob Martin of Kentucky was voted the Best X1/9 by fellow X1/9 owners at the Concorso. Congratulations Bob!



Let Passion
Drive You!





THE FIAT CLUB AMERICA “2019 FREAKOUT:” POSSIBLY THE BEST EVER!

by Philippe H. Defechereux – All photos property of FIAT Club America except otherwise indicated

part 1

From July 10th to 14th of this year, on the vast and resplendent grounds of the Grandover Resort in Greensboro, North Carolina, the 36th consecutive “FIAT FreakOut” (“FFO” for initiates) successfully took place. Why such a long-lasting and popular tradition? For some peculiar reason, FIAT cars (and some of their close relatives) inspire a beguiling and enduring fervor in their American owners and even their families. The FFO, organized by the FIAT Club America, is the annual national celebration of that passion, mixed with a large boost of well-planned fun.



The Grandover Resort in Greensboro, NC

Long in the planning, the much-expected 2019 event gathered over 350 FIAT Club America members who had driven a total of 138 cars of many types and vintages from over a dozen US states as far away as Arkansas. A consort of attractive Lancias and Alfa Romeos were part of the mix, adding their own unique flavors to achieve a real trifecta. The mostly bright sun and blue sky overhead caused hot temperatures, but happily also made all the multi-colored and proudly prepped Italian automobiles shine at their very best.

In the months preceding the event, under the innovative leadership of Club President Doug Von Koenig, a dedicated brigade of FIAT Club America volunteers from

across the country had worked extremely hard to put together a highly attractive program for each of the five days. Thus for the first time, each day offered up to three different sets of related activities, so members had a rich choice of quite varied venues depending on their moods and preferences. The diversity of entertainment alternatives was truly both amazing and perfectly selected.



WEDNESDAY

On the first day, for instance, Wednesday, the more car-racing-oriented members could register themselves in “Group 1” and, driving their own car in a joyful caravan over a near 200-mile round trip, partake in a carefully organized visit to two famous Stock Car museums; while the more culture and nature-oriented members could join “Group 2” and drive on in a 150-mile scenic drive that reached into historic Randolph County near Raleigh, about a 90-minute drive westward.

“Group 1” was thus composed of those Italian car enthusiasts among FFO attendees open-minded enough to take time to visit, inspect and take measure of the machines of that uniquely American racing tradition: oval racing powered by huge V-8 engines!

With departure from the hotel set for 8:30 am, the first “temple” to that tradition due for a tour was the Petty Museum situated in Level Cross, just south of Greensboro. Dedicated to Richard Petty, a living legend and one of the most famous pioneer of the sport, this museum



THE FIAT CLUB AMERICA "2019 FREAKOUT:" POSSIBLY THE BEST EVER! *part 1*

consists of a lovingly organized memorial to a long family tradition of success. Many versions of the iconic red and blue "Car No. 43" were on display to admire, along with the design tools and safety features that had helped perpetuate Petty's success and fame for so long. Later, in a goodhearted gesture, the famous champion with the big cowboy hat even dropped by the hotel resort in the early evening to chat with members. Very classy.



Richard Petty mixing with members and the Resort on Wednesday evening

By late morning, the Italian car caravan started its engines once more and got back on a scenic road for its next stop the Richard Childress Racing (RCR) Museum, situated just south of Winston-Salem. This is a giant place! To quote the RCR website: "Arrayed in the 47,000-square foot shop was home to Earnhardt's No. 3 team for many years, visitors have the opportunity to step back in time to see race cars and other artifacts that have contributed to some of the most iconic moments in NASCAR history." The much-regretted Dale Earnhardt joined the team for good in 1984. Together, they accumulated countless famous wins, all accomplished while driving Chevrolets, Earnhardt's 1998 Daytona 500 victory, after nine failed attempts, being the most special. After great champion's tragic death early in 2001 during the last lap of yet another Daytona 500, Team Childress continued its impressive series of successful racing and still does today.

Well, though no FIATs ever competed in NASCAR, nearly all of the "Group 1" participants seemed mightily impressed by this grand display of uniquely American racing power.

Now what were the "Group 2" people enjoying at the same time much further west? Shortly after entering rural Randolph County, they experienced the pleasure to cross the first man-made milepost of their tour; the picturesque

Pisgah Covered Bridge – a historic state and federal landmark. A few miles further, they reached the little town of Seagrove (population: 228), which houses the North Carolina Pottery Center, actually a museum, and not situated there by coincidence. Indeed, the area within a 20-mile radius of Seagrove is home to an active group of artisanal potters, the largest concentration of such professionals in the country. Their precious tradition in fact dating back to the 18th century. Nearly extinguished by 1900, it was successfully revived in the 1920s and continues to thrive in our new century.



The Art of Preservation: covered bridges and coveted automobiles

And finally the renowned Southern Supreme Fruitcake Factory in Bear Creek, NC. This is another continually successful American business that was started in a garage (in 1989), though its products bear no relationship to those indispensable gadget multitudes requiring electric power or digital brains! Those folks simply make delicious nutty fruitcakes! And, to paraphrase their website: "... despite the stigma attached to the word fruitcake, ours proved so tasty people kept coming back for more." So the business kept growing and today has its base in a lovely large store standing in the middle of a big green lawn near Raleigh, while the younger members of the founding family are successfully nurturing an expanding on-line business.

By 3:30pm, it was back on the road towards the Grandover Resort, the mind full of pleasant memories to share with everyone else over dinner.

THURSDAY

The second day, Thursday, offered a similar choice between quenching one's passion for driving exciting cars versus simply enjoying relaxing tourism.

The more driving-inclined "Group 1" members chose



to partake in a very exciting Autocross Day planned at the Winston-Salem Classic Fairgrounds, only some 30 miles west of the hotel. The place actually started as a dirt oval track in the early 1950s and staged such races until 1963, when it was converted and enlarged into a real "Fair Grounds" for the local citizenry when the season is right (usually Fall). True to its origins, however, the Fairgrounds still seat an asphalted road circuit offering challenging gymkhana sessions to those so inclined. The FFO organizers had decided to add this fast-disappearing type of competition early on, but decided in the end that the most appropriate place for its members to have fun testing their driving slalom skills in their own cars just had to be the Fairgrounds lot itself, looking like a vast and flat parking lot where pylons could be installed to form a course to the requirement of the FIAT Club.

After the caravan of eager participants had arrived and settled, "Autocross Day" started with tech inspection at 10am, followed by time trials one hour later. For the real competition, each driver would have four runs snaking around a specially designed pylon course where 40 seconds would be considered a "just-OK" total time. To spice things up, however, two runs would be one way through the improbable course, and two the reverse way. Keeping your mind straight in all this twisting and turning was going to be important. But what a fun challenge! The eventual prizes would be handed for two categories: Vintage Class and Modern Class. However, the cars could take their runs in mixed sequence.

After a quick pizza lunch was consumed, the real gymkhana took place from 1 to 4pm. The competition was



Vince Gallo and his "number 9" classic FIAT Spider.



Hailey King pushes her Abarth 500 to the limit.

fierce; countless pylons were harmlessly hit (then reset by members waiting their turn), seconds were lost and gained throughout the afternoon; and a few egos were probably bruised. But it was exciting at all time and the camaraderie always wonderful. The final classification was as follows:

VINTAGE CLASS:


#1	Brayden Connelly	(1985 X19)	34.31
#2	Craig Nelson	(1982 124 Spider)	38.15
#3	Rick McCurdy	(1979 124 Spider)	38.16

MODERN CLASS:

#1	Daniel Hennig	(2017 124 Spider)	33.28
#2	Brandon Fisher	(2015 500 Abarth)	33.53
#3	Hailey King	(2012 500 Abarth)	35.11

After that, it was return to the Resort for rest, refreshment and getting ready for the full group formal dinner on the Terrace.

In great contrast to Group 1, the Thursday program for "Group 2" was far the opposite from "speeding ahead," rather it was a leisurely travel back to olden times: an extended visit to exceedingly charming "Old Salem" (founded in 1776) in downtown Winston-Salem. This historic heart of the modern city consists of perfectly restored or carefully reconstructed 18th century houses; more than two thirds of the buildings are original.

Better yet, during daytime hours, they are inhabited by skilled artisans in period attire (gunsmiths, bakers, carpenters...) practicing their trade and always pleased to interact with visitors. Perfect diversion for the more culturally-oriented. To complete this pleasurable time-travel experience, lunch took place in "The Tavern in 



THE FIAT CLUB AMERICA "2019 FREAKOUT:" **POSSIBLY THE BEST EVER!** *part 1*

Old Salem," a pre-civil war eatery serving farm-to-plate fare brought to your table by servers also dressed in impeccable 18th century costumery.

That evening back at the Grandover Resort, at the outdoor dinner party on the terrace, most faces from both groups flashed happy smiles among animated conversations. It was obvious that the "new formula" 2019 FreakOut was off to a splendid start.

FRIDAY

Friday, the third day, was going to be the first fully car-driving oriented journey of the FFO, with a single relaxing exception for those who wished to enjoy a long night's sleep to catch their breath and leave the hotel well after lunch time. They would be "Group C."

Among the early risers, "Group A" would take part in a Long Distance Time Rally, leading to a mysteriously tantalizing location whose exact nature and even GPS address were kept tightly secret. "Group B" would have a different, much speed-oriented driving contest: they would compete in a Go-Kart Challenge at the GoPro Motorplex in Mooresville, NC, about 30 miles north of Charlotte.

The "Group A" rally participants had to get up the earliest, with the driver briefing starting at 8 am, and eventually cars leaving at 30-second intervals, final destination still unknown. There was no leading car; only a set of typed directions to follow, each segment with a prescribed average speed. Every single second of time ahead or behind the programmed schedule at the end would count as a penalty. Since all participants had received exactly the same set of instructions, each driver was best keeping the 30-second interval constant as long as the itinerary of the car ahead was followed correctly. Great test of patience and attention topological details required!

Even before their car was waved off, there is little doubt all participants were speculating about what "feature" was so magic and enticing in North Carolina that they would discover at the end of their Rally. By doing some calculations from the instructions sheets, a good navigator could calculate they would travel just under 100 miles in a northwestward direction. Not enough of a clue. Then finally, not long before one hour had passed after their departure, signs began to make their ultimate goal obvious: The Andy Griffith Museum in Mount Airy, NC, birthplace of the famous singer, actor comedian and TV producer had to be it!



But first the scoring of what was officially called the "Travel Back in Time Rally", tough this was a much to a more recent time period than the Old Salem visit.

The Time Rally top three finishers were:

1. Jack & Caroline McGahey
2014 FIAT 500 Abarth - 1 second fast, scored 2
2. Mark Pinkston
2017 FIAT 124 Abarth - 17 seconds slow, scored 17
3. Ryan & Megan Crocker
2014 FIAT 500 L - 38 seconds slow, scored 38

The arched red-brick Andy Griffith Museum artfully displays actual wardrobe, props, and other artifacts from The Andy Griffith Show and Matlock, plus memorabilia from his most famous movies. The FIAT Club Members, young and old, had plenty of time for admiring all those historic entertainment items, eliciting countless fun memories. Reforming their Italian car caravan after an informal lunch, they then drove back to the Grandover Resort to join the final event organized for the late risers of "Group C" if they wished (see below).

Now for the "speed time forward" program of "Group B." Having been granted a little more sleep time, they departed the resort at 9:30 but would arrive at the GoPro Motorplex in just about one hour by way of I-85 South. The complex is a quite a beautiful track and sophisticated operation inspired by the famous Kartdromo in Parma, Italy. The very twisty circuit is tightly carved within a rectangular space of red earth and features 11 corners, most of them taut, over a distance of 0.7 miles. The go-karts are powered by a 13 HP engine that can move the single-seater up to 55 mph. So, the setting was great for the bold and talented to show their racing skills



The podium. A triumph of women's power

To give all participants an equal chance, once everybody was on track and helmeted, they were handed their go-kart and allowed a trial run of a few laps. This was soon followed by a heat race, similar to what the F1 people call "qualifying." Then it was full-bore racing. It was intense but good-natured. And the podium was remarkable: three women had dominated the competition; here are their names in order:

1. Amber Lynn Burchette
2. Denise Burchette
3. Haley King



Members at the Red Oak Brewery enjoying a pint (or two)

A lunch celebration was at nearby Lancaster's BBQ, then the group left with the option of returning straight to the Grandover Resort, or join "Group C" and their destination described below.

Now indeed for the exception tailored for the late risers who wished to enjoy a lazy morning and lunch at the Grandover Resort perhaps by the large pool. Leaving at a comfortable 3 pm through the scenic back roads of the Greensboro countryside, they would visit the Red Oak Brewery and enjoy a full tour. Founded in 1991,

this brewery has grown to be the largest craft lager-only brewery in the country, producing 23,000 barrels per year, even though it is distributed only in North Carolina. Red Oak only brews unfiltered, unpasteurized Bavarian-style lagers of seven different types.

A Lager Haus & Biergarten lies by the brewery, and nobody we know would tell us how many mugs were consumed before the group returned to the hotel before 9pm for the special outdoors final feature of the day.

And that, dear members, would be something incredibly special, something almost spiritual, something only the planners of this whole 2019 event could have imagined, then made to happen.

The author would like to especially acknowledge specific members who went out of their way one more time post-Freakout to help him with many photographs and to verify many facts regarding events where he could not be present: Tim Beeble, Denise Burchette, John Montgomery, Jody Farr, Thad Kirk and Mike Louviere. The general guidance and support of Doug Von Koenig was also precious.

Philippe Defechereux is a published author and marketing consultant. Born in French-speaking Belgium only 10 miles from the famous Spa race track, he arrived in New York in 1970 after completing his Bachelor's degree at Liège University. Envisioning a career in marketing, he first earned a Master's Degree of Business Management at Columbia University, graduating in 1972. After a two-year stint at Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati, he was lured by Madison Avenue's Ogilvy & Mather, one of New York City's top three advertising agencies. He earned his stripes there all the way to Senior Vice president, working on half-a-dozen national accounts, including Peugeot Motors of America. Doyle Dane Bernbach, now part of Omnicom, hired him to become president of their Detroit office in charge of the Volkswagen and Audi accounts. There, he helped nurture and implement the successful and still fondly remembered "Fahrvergnügen" VW campaign. After spending a year in Germany with Volkswagen AG in Wolfsburg, he returned to New York to manage the US Mercedes-Benz account. He started his own consulting business in 1998 and also turned to writing books devoted to cars, three of which have been successfully published so far. He currently lives in northern New Jersey.

Part II to be continued in the next issue



THURSDAY EVENING AFTER THE WELCOME RECEPTION AT BREAKOUT

by Dale Crandall

I decided to walk about the parking lot in my white slacks and palm tree print shirt as Mike B. would have been doing in the past years. Yes, hanging around in the parking lot in the evening. Mike with his cigar and a drink chatting about just about anything FIAT.

The scare of rain was the prediction. Then over in the far corner of the lot were two men working on a X/19. I walk over and find (AKA) Anamosa Mike and his friend Shawn installing rear rotors, pads and calipers looking very frustrated. Now here we are two of the evenings recently awarded members for assisting members in need of help beginning to share what is wrong. Brakes are locked up. Well what is causing it??? Check the reservoir for fluid, AOK. All of a sudden it starts to rain big time. I run to "Yellow Bird" to bring it to the site with additional tools and a tarp. I hold the tarp over our two mechanics when three fellow FIAT brothers appear and the four of us create a four man set of tent poles with the tarp over the two working on the car. Rain is now pouring down and what to do next. The left rear seems to be non- functioning so take it back apart. Pump the brakes and no movement in left rear caliper. Disconnect the steel line from the hose and pump the brake. Ya, sure!

Finally with fear it might break it comes loose all in tacked due to lots of spray brake cleaner. The fluid flows freely from the tube. So we have a bad hose or what? Well we might be able to get a hose tomorrow. No, lets try opening the hose if it is not collapsed. What to use, find a wire to probe the ID. Check tool boxes. The guy in the white pants finds the one we need. With two holding the hose at each end start pushing the wire 4 or 5 times from both ends it is decided to hook the hose to the steel line get an empty water bottle placing the hose end in it and stomp on the brakes. Out comes this black blockage along with some crud. After several pumps of the brakes clear fluid flows. The rain continues on assemble the left rear and bleed. Now with rain still coming down at a rapid rate move to the right side and see if it bleeds and it does. Rain stops both rear wheels are installed. Tools and jack stands picked up and Road test with success. Everything stowed away and it is now 3 AM. With coal black hands and still white clean pants to take showers, sleep and be ready to take photos and spot park cars starting at approx. 8 AM. Even though we had the tarp all 6 did get somewhat wet.



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by Emilio Crincoli



OUR FIRST FREAKOUT

July 10-14 marked memorable days as we attended our first FIAT Freakout in Greensboro, North Carolina. My husband and I flew in and rented a car; we asked the rental place if they had FIATs and the answer was "this is the south, we don't have FIATs." (We thought he must be joking, FIATs are everywhere and are part of Chrysler!) we then drove to and arrived at a great resort hotel in which the ceilings were high, the decorations a perfection, meticulous surroundings and a friendly atmosphere filled with kind staff and of course FIAT family.

Our first day was getting to know the people and walking into the parking lot where every FIAT junkie would be in awe, there were old cars, new cars and custom cars; (there's a great deal of passion in that parking lot, each car has a story, an adventure and a little spark of attention that draws you to look closer). There must have been over a hundred cars, FIATs, Alfa Romeos, Lancias, and even a Ghia, we had to stop and look at each of them. We went up and down the aisles and at each car stop, people were so friendly, ready to tell their stories and history behind their cars; it was like a kid's matchbox collection with an assortment that tailored the car to each owner. My husband was like a kid in a candy store looking at these cars. He always says that FIAT stands for Fun Intelligent Automobile Technology.

Each morning we gathered at breakfast and the room was filled with the friends we had met in the parking lot (that was the hot spot) or from our New Jersey chapter, when we entered we were invited to sit by our friends, (have to say these are the warmest people we have ever met) at the table conversations always started with the car obsessions, or the ones that were fixed or worked on); there was never a dull moment. The most

exciting part was what activity we would be involved for that day, it was decided prior to our arrival, which made it organized and perfectly planned. The agenda for each day had many choices from racing to touring such as walking in old Winston-Salem, where you could learn a bit of history as you cross a bridge that had a beautiful stars above it, with a deep history of the Moravian culture. On the street there were many FIATs parked, this is where we met 'Rosie' a cool Mediterranean blue color car that awed our eyes with its color; the funny part was it had a large bear in the passenger side that was a representation of his wife (sunglasses and all) that's what FIAT people are; people with big hearts! That day was so much fun we went with Lou and Bonnie to town and enjoyed their company, we first met them at breakfast in NJ where we meet every first Sunday of the month (that's where we found out about the Freakout and were asked to come down and check it out).

We are really happy we decided to be FIAT Club members and to attend the Freakout this year, we hope to make this an annual ritual. We had an amazing time and met the most friendly people; I guess we love our FIATs, we own four, one for each of our family 2 500L's, a 500 Turbo and a 500X! They are fun and different not the traditional type of car, when anyone sits in a FIAT they can't believe how much room it has and how well the design is planned. I can't say enough about FIAT, and the FIAT Club our friends Robert and Aminah that got us excited about the Freakout. We are happy we are part of the FIAT Club family now. Thanks to all that made our moments memories that will last forever.

First Timers at FreakOut



by Mike and Ann McCain - Chattanooga, TN

This was our first time to FreakOut. We had been to FIAT on The Dragon last year (2018) and had a good time in spite of the weather. So we thought this year we would bite the bullet and go. As it got closer to time to go I found myself getting more excited about going. I am not a Social media follower however I am a member of the FIAT500USAForum.com and reading what some of the other members had to say was adding to the excitement. Upon arriving at Grandover in Greensboro we were both taken aback by the size of the Resort, how accommodating the staff was and how they would ask questions about the cars and the events. To a car person this is like pouring gas on the fire; it just added to the excitement. There were events for both the gear heads and the socializers. We elected to take the backroad excursions which allowed us to see the country side, some of the local points of interest and interact with others at the event along the way. By the end of the first day we had found our selves teaming up with two other couples and enjoying their company for the rest of the week as well.



Here is our group stopping and walking down to the old covered bridge. Our "Fearless Leaders" did a great job of keeping all the cars together and insuring everyone knew what was going on through out the day.



The next day while a group went to the historic Winston Salem District we elected to break away and go visit some of the surrounding area ourselves. We visited a local park where we took a nice walk, looked at an old Quaker's home and grounds, stopped at a local coffee shop, and toured the inside of the old theater in downtown Greensboro. As we walked the streets we saw an old Woolworth's Store sign. The store was long gone but the sign had been well preserved.



The old Woolworth sign and us riding bikes at the resort with the other couples that we had meet.



Our Abarth Cabrio at the show.

A FIAT 500x pulling a FIAT 500 from Tennessee.



Finally the big day arrived. Cars from all corners of the country were in the parking lot, even some from Canada. One couple had even driven their Lancia down from the NY City area without AC.

The awards banquet was great. As they called the winners up they showed their car on the big screen so we knew exactly which cars they were talking about which made it great. We elected to leave before the silent auction on Sunday because we wanted to take the back roads home. What a pleasant way to end a great week. We are already making plans for next year's event. I will try to remember to register my car in the right class. Also looking forward to continuing our relationship with the people we meet and meeting new people as well.

FIAT FREAKOUT 2019 WAS THE BEST EVER!

by Tim Beeble



Well, FIAT FreakOut is in the books. I applaud John Montgomery and Denise Burchette for delivering the fantastic Grandover Resort hotel (except for the spotty internet service) and a super agenda of high speed racing, autocross, NASCAR Tour, Go Karting, a Time-Speed-Distance Rally, a NASCAR Race, and daily drives to a brewery, pottery centers, a fruitcake factory and other historic sites, We attracted 132 Italian cars to our Concorso which was 50:50 vintage vs new FIATs.

Our concorso was 35% bigger than FFO 2018 in Orlando, and it was the biggest since FFO 2015 in Pittsburgh, which John Montgomery also coordinated. Jerry Cucchiara and John Montgomery came up with a brilliant layout and marker system for the concorso. Jerry's team of volunteers loaded the field by 9:30 AM. Of course, we could

load the field faster, if we only could get our members to enter the field together in classes!

We had about 240 people registered for FreakOut including many sisters of Denise Burchette. Candy Ogletree Benson and Karen Pugh Gallo with the help of Brian Benson, Vince Gallo and Bree Benson ran the best-ever Club Store while at the same time they coordinated registration (that, was too much to ask, but they did it anyway).

Thad Kirk made Electronic Concorso Voting happen for the first time at a FreakOut, and it will continue into the future in an even better form. The Concorso Panoramic photo shot was by Mike Louviere completed around 12:20 pm. In the past, we used a team of about a dozen ballot counters to determine concorso winners from a mountain of paper ballots. With





electronic voting, it took Thad Kirk and Tim Beeble about 90 minutes to identify winners. At the same time, Michael Louviere and Shanon Gutierrez were matching the concorso car photos with the winners. Once we were done, Doug Von Koenig put together the Saturday Banquet PowerPoint in about 90 minutes, finishing at about 3:50 pm. That was 20 minutes after the start of the Social Hour. Clearly, we need 4+ hours to identify winners & their photos and create the PowerPoint.

Doug Von Koenig was a great master of ceremony for the nightly dinners. Doug, along with Mike Bouse, were the trouble shooters for registration for three days. Bobb Rayner did his ever-so entertaining presentation of Concorso awards.

I believe that the Special Awards to Bobb Rayner, John Montgomery, and Mike Bouse were effectively kept secret until

the awards were presented. Our rock star this year was Art Bayless, who had been the go-to supplier of FIAT parts in the 70's.

This was my 21st FreakOut that I have attended since 1997. In my opinion, this was the BEST FreakOut EVER. It wasn't the biggest in terms of number of members nor number of cars, but it was the best for the quality of the hotel and the wide array of daily FreakOut activities. We just need more volunteer help. We need another Patty Horning who used to coordinate FreakOut volunteers, name tag production and registration packet stuffing. Who wants to step up for 2020? I thank everyone who had a hand in making FreakOut the best ever. Now, I have to get my fabulous FFO 2019 Poster framed for my garage wall!



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IT WASN'T MY FIRST FREAKOUT...

*by Matt Conway, Ithaca, New York
Buffalo-WNY Chapter Member*

2019 was coming. 50, 40, 30. I'd be turning 50. My 1979 Spider 2000 would be 40. And it'd be 30 years since purchasing it. How could I miss the Greensboro Freakout? That's simply too many anniversaries to ignore! Plus, I'd visited the "Research Triangle" region of North Carolina a number of times for work, and always loved it there.

It wasn't my first Freakout. The first was 2013, in Long Island. But the car didn't make it that time. I was still buttoning up the transmission swap that began in 2010, with help from my father, Walter, and my brother, Vance—the original gearhead of the family.

Three years to install a transmission? Yes, well, considering that I was in Ithaca marrying Lynne; we were selling our separate homes and moving into something of a "fixer-upper" together; and the car was (usually) 150 miles away at my parents' house in suburban Buffalo, three years is not too bad, is it?

Actually, the gearbox itself was in place by 2013, but the starter motor was not cooperating. So I attended the Long Island meet with my Ford Probe. And with my mom, Eileen. Why not? She wanted to see the ocean—near Atlantic City where she did restaurant work as a teenager in the 1950s—and I wanted to see what the Freakout was all about. My new

bride stayed home with our dear, ailing Pomeranian, Frannie, who—sadly—died later that summer.

In Hauppauge, Mom and I learned it wasn't uncommon for owners to attend, while their cars convalesced at home. We made it to the beach, took part in a driving tour, and joked about the empty spot on the show field, where "the Blue Car" (as it's known in our family) probably belonged.

At some point during the activities, we met Darryl Stacey—then the leader of the Western New York chapter of the FCA. (Or was it still FIAT Lancia Unlimited at that time?) Darryl happily advised us that a gear reduction unit from Auto Ricambi was the solution to my starter woes. He was right about the starter, but—even though the car would soon be running again—it spent little time on the road over the next few years. It needed frame work at the time I bought in 1989, but I was 20 years old then, and not too worried about it. Sheet metal, rivets, and Rust-Oleum would do for the next two or three decades.

By 2014, with the transmission and starter finally sorted—and my interest in the club newly kindled—perhaps it was time to deal with those rotted rockers. After wasting a year waiting to get into a "fancy" shop—oh, and a bit of a detour with cancer (diagnosed early and now behind me, thankfully)—someone on a forum recommended a welder in Ohio. Good enough for me! Maybe I was addled from chemotherapy ("chemo brain" they call it) or just plain not thinking straight, but—if the guy is any good—why not drive the 500 miles back and forth? It'll be a good test drive for that "new" transmission I bought four years ago!

The transmission held up fine, and I probably got my money's worth from the welding shop. On the drive back, the car definitely felt more firm—less "rattletrap"—than ever. And the doors were all out of whack, so they must have done something under there besides spray undercoat all over the place!



But it ran terribly all the way home—stalling out every time my foot came off the gas—and getting worse with every mile. I knew I wouldn't make it back to Ithaca, but maybe I could get to my folks' place outside Buffalo. I made it that far, and borrowed my dad's Ford Ranger for the rest of the trip to Ithaca.

The Blue Car stayed put for a while, and I'm still driving the Ranger. That was never the plan, but my father died unexpectedly, not long after lending me the truck.

My dad was never really a "car guy," but a chemistry professor—a Renaissance man, really—who enjoyed the FIAT as much as anyone, helping to keep it alive with humor and skill. A bushing he machined for the distributor ca. 1991 is still spinning around in there. And he left his mark on the rebuilt engine head that we installed in '99 or so, which required some tricky drilling and tapping to accept those peculiar "flutes" that run between the head and the air cleaner. (By contrast, the supplier's advice was to "stuff a sock in there." They were talking about the engine head, weren't they?)

Now, with my dad gone, and the mantle of adulthood weighing slightly heavier, the car languished.

The announcement of the Greensboro meet was just the thing to rouse me. A new fuel pump went in the fall of 2018, and solved the stalling problem. A new radiator and transmission pan brought rare victory in the war against leaks.

Would it pass New York inspection with those ossified windshield wipers, dim headlights, and lazy flashers? Yes! But better swap in a high-output alternator and wiper relay kit from Auto Ricambi before hitting the road in July. "Upgrade" doesn't begin to describe the difference!

Of course that shredded old top would never survive the trip. So an economical but good looking, American-made Haartz vinyl top was soon on the way via eBay.

A friend once told me, "If you can install a convertible top, you can do anything!" Well, I did need my dutiful wife, Lynne, to help wrestle it shut for the first time, but—with a little help—I guess I can do anything!

Wait! What about those worn out, twisted seats? Greensboro is easily a 12-hour drive in a "normal" car, and those seat bottoms are nearly as old as my own! New cushions from Vick; a pair of used (but straight) seatbacks from eBay; an odd bit of trim from Fun Imported Auto and Toys; and a little bit of stitching by Welco Awnings and Upholstery of Ithaca, and those Frankenseats will last another 40 years for sure!

Time to make those reservations. But who to join me? Lynne teases me over my ongoing relationship with "the first Mrs. Conway," and the car does look pretty parked in the driveway; but a week on the road with her husband and his loudmouthed, unpredictable, needy first wife? And no AC? That's pushing things!

Why not call on Mom again? While I often looked to my father to "Fix It Again, Dad," my love for cars surely stems from my mother and her side of the family. My fondness for convertibles, in particular, definitely comes from her. She still talks about her red and white '56 Ford—the one she and my father drove to Florida on their honeymoon. And of course her copper '67 Dodge Dart GT convertible. I came home from the maternity ward in that car. My brother, Vance, kept it mechanically sound into the '80s, but the Buffalo winters eventually eroded it away. Still, if someone in my family says, "We should've kept that car," you can bet they're reminiscing about that Dart.

Mom would join me, and this time, we'd make it to the show field. One stop for Subway sandwiches at mile 305, somewhere in Pennsylvania, about halfway to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. So far so good. No trouble to speak of. Except the heat. The heat! From outside and in. At 40, 50, 60 miles



an hour, it made sense to keep the top up, but—before long—astonishing temperatures radiated from the console. Yet the engine kept cool, and the temperature gauge seemed reliable, since the electric fan kicked in faithfully at around 210 degrees. I blamed the transmission (which was still sort of “new”). Mom blamed the exhaust positioned under her seat. But who really knew?

So many things could go wrong. My imagination reeled! I recalled the FIAT story that my sister, Celine, likes to tell: Remember that time we were diving on the 400? In the single lane between the Jersey barriers? And I said, ‘Gee! This would be a terrible place to break down!’ And right then and there . . . !

Maybe the secret is to never say such a thing aloud, because the car kept on steady this time, and we kept on rolling to Harpers Ferry. St. Christopher, the Patron Saint of Travelers, delivered us, wilted and weary, but safe and sound: 562 miles to the Angler’s Inn bed and breakfast. Clean, cool, quiet, and genuinely charming with a roomy enclosed porch within our second level suite. At breakfast, we met a couple who had noticed the car. Their son, it turned out, was a tuner who raced a Miata. The father worked for Case New Holland Industrial, a step-child of—you guessed it—FIAT! They weren’t headed to the Freakout, though. Maybe a category for farm tractors is in order?

Harpers Ferry looked to be a great place to explore, but it was back on the road if we were going to make it to Thursday night’s welcome dinner at the Grandover Resort.

An inadvertent, but pleasant, detour on the Blue Ridge Parkway in Shenandoah National Park slowed our pace with twist and turns, spectacular views, and cooling shade. Once back on the main road, the rewired wipers proved themselves, as we drove in and out of downpours for the remaining hours to North Carolina.

After covering 899 miles over two days (well, three days including the solo leg from Ithaca to Buffalo), no AC, the roar of machinery—sonorous, but unrelenting—the wind, rain, and sun, the Grandover seemed a mirage. And the welcome dinner a blur of fried chicken and cellphone pics of fellow attendee’s cars.

We knocked around on our own on Friday, satisfying our curiosity with an independent fieldtrip to Southern Supreme Fruitcake in Bear Creek. (We’d arrived too late to join the fun on Wednesday’s group drive.) And late that afternoon: a side trip to Carboro, near Chapel Hill, for dinner.

Then Saturday’s concorso. The main event! The heat was oppressive, but what a grand display of cars on the field: Spiders, old and new; 500s; Abarths; at least one 850; lots of X1/9s; 131s—you never see those; Lancia Beta and Zagato; a 126; that 1500 Ghia coupe!

By now Bobb Rayner knew our names well, and we’d connected with some members of the Buffalo-WNY Chapter, including Julie and Owen Stacey (now president of the chapter after the passing of his brother Darryl). We became acquainted with Rose and Jerry Cucchiara of Toronto, and accepted some very welcome advice regarding the heat we experienced on the trip down. And Mom was enjoying the attention of the hotel chief of security, Alton, who shuttled us back and forth to the show field on his golf cart.

On the field, it looked to me like only four cars in my group (1979–80 carbureted Spiders) had made it. Maybe we’d win a plaque? Not this time, but we were thrilled to join members of the Central Pennsylvania chapter at the awards dinner, and share in all the good will.

On Sunday, we broke up the long ride home with a stop at Dr. Ho’s Humble Pie pizza shop in Garden, Virginia, and a visit with cousins in Springfield. This time, we overnighted in Leesburg—a picturesque town, for sure, but email one of us before booking a room there. “Quaint” is one of those words with shades of meaning . . .

There was more heat. More hot, hot, heat. But the interior finally cooled down along Route 219, alongside Lake Eire, near home.

Right about then, my Mom said she felt like someone was in the backseat with us. My dad? My other brother, Neal, who passed in 1995? Could be . . . Could be . . .

In my experience, FIAT ownership is a family affair. And one of these times—maybe not too long from now—this family’s going to win a plaque at the Freakout!

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THE ULTIMATE 500L ROAD TEST

by Simone Bonino - FIAT Club America, Detroit Chapter



Introduced in 2012 as a 2013 model year, the FIAT 500L entered the US market in 2014 with the notorious (and hilarious) “The Italians are coming” TV commercial. Since then, while over 500,000 cars have been produced by FCA in the Serbian city of Kragujevac, only a few tens of thousands have been bought by North American customers. The car is way more popular in Europe, where the small MPV segment - a class FIAT invented in the 60s with the 600 Multipla and kept flourishing over the years with many successful models, including the controversial Multipla made in the 90s - is still relevant and appreciated by many as the ideal family car.

The 500L received a significant update in 2018, with slightly revised exterior styling, as well as many interior improvements, so when we had the opportunity to rent a 500L for our summer trip across Europe we immediately took it, eager to perform an extended test drive that brought us across 7 countries. For full disclosure, our journey didn't begin on a 500L. The first rental we got was a smaller Qubo - the ultra-compact minivan FIAT developed a few years ago in collaboration with PSA, also sold as commercial vehicle under the name of FIAT Fiorino - but unfortunately after a couple of days driving it, some street thieves decided they really liked its radio with nav system, which prompted them to break the passenger window and get it while it was parked overnight on the street below our apartment.

So, after a morning spent making phone calls, we finally got to ride in our (almost) brand new 500L Cross (known as Trekking in North America), dressed in black on black. In total we drove over 2800 miles in it, but I'll focus on the 2500 km (over 1500 miles) driven across Eastern Europe over the course of 5 days. So, let's dive into our semi-serious review!

INTERIORS

Like many small MPVs, the 500L shows its best once you sit inside the cabin. There is plenty of room for 5 adults, with comfortable - yet not very sporty - seats and a perceived quality which has greatly improved with the 2018 facelift: the soft surfaces of the dashboard are well assembled, and you soon forget you're in a relatively inexpensive vehicle. We almost didn't feel at home in such comfort and silence, so we decided to place a diecast model of a 500L right in the middle of the dashboard to supply the necessary squealing and rattling noise you would expect from a FIAT. Our attention soon moved to the modern infotainment system that dominates the dashboard, the latest iteration of Uconnect shared with other vehicles in the FCA family. This particular version offers navigation system, DAB radio (replaced by SiriusXM for the cars sold in the US), Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration, and many more gadgets wrapped in a large touch screen and a



smaller LCD in the instrument panels. All the information we needed were just one touch away, and the system proved to be very responsive and well organized. Cargo space was also a pleasant surprise: our test consisted in helping our niece moving out of her college dorm in Warsaw, Poland, also finding extra room for a load of Polish beer for her father.

PERFORMANCE

Our 500L was fitted with a not particularly peppy 1.3L turbo diesel engine, producing only 95 HP. Despite the lack of power (the engine currently available for the US market is the much more powerful 1.4L MultiAir Turbo with 160 HP) it proved to be a good tourer, paired with the manual 5 speed transmission (no longer available in the US). Honestly, why would you need more power when every city, town or village in Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia is equipped with speed cameras? Just slow down and enjoy the ride, the ample greenhouse will make you feel like you're right on top of a hop-on-hop-off bus tour.

On the plus side, if speed is not what you're looking for, you'll be rewarded with a great fuel economy: we averaged over 43 mpg, which is less than 40 gallons of diesel, plus around a gallon of AdBlue (available in Europe at most service stations) for the entire trip. Getting such achievement was particularly remarkable since we didn't spare our little chariot, driving it into the chaotic traffic of cities like Budapest or Vienna, on curvy country roads across Slovakia and Czech Republic, and, of course, grinding a good chunk of miles on toll roads. Most of the countries we visited have now adopted the booth-less system of the highway vignettes, very convenient (you get them at the service station and they last for a couple of weeks), although they clutter your windshield with colorful stickers.

SAFETY

While the 500L doesn't offer - at least as standard equipment - some of the most recent safety devices, such as lane assist or adaptive cruise control, it does make you feel safe. You sit pretty high with great visibility around you, helped by a backup camera when needed. You may argue that being a tall and relatively short vehicle doesn't help with body roll, but in an automotive world filled with SUVs and crossovers, that's a forgivable sin. While crossing Czech Republic, we were hit by a severe thunderstorm, that started with hail and progressed into heavy rain and strong winds, so strong that trees started falling on the highway. While I have to admit the situation was a bit scary - we were on a hilly four-lane highway filled with big trucks - we never felt unsafe: all we had to do was to slow down and keep a good grip on the steering wheel. Okay, my daughter texted her friends "goodbye world", but that's all pre-teen drama! In reality, our 500L - and its driver - handled it so well that my niece kept sleeping in the back, only to wake up a few miles later asking "did I miss anything? Why did you all turn pale?"

Once back in Italy, we drove our 500L around a few more hundreds of miles, ending our trip where everything started: in front of the FIAT Headquarters in Turin. There, while my wife was taking one of the pictures featured in this article, somebody drove by in a soulless Renault SUV, yelling at us (ah, Italians...) something that in English would translate into "It's just a f***ing FIAT!" Yes, it is indeed, and we love it!

OUR TEST BY THE NUMBERS:

1584 miles over 5 days

33 hrs and 16 min at the wheel

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43.6 mpg average fuel economy



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small car... BIG DREAMS!

by Rosario Di Bella



When I first fell in love with FIAT 500s, I was thirteen years old and living in a small town called Ciminna in Sicily, Italy. Something about them always interested me and they would always catch my eye whenever I'd see them. Even in Italy where FIAT 500s are more common than in the states, I became hooked on how unique and different they are. Two years later, at fifteen years old, I started working part-time in a local restaurant and I was able to save some money. With that money, I bought my first FIAT 500. Since then, an interest turned into a passion and I've worked over the years to restore my car from a rust bucket to a gem. I remember working Saturdays and Sundays at the restaurant and then Monday after



school, spending all the money I made at a local auto parts store. I would walk through the small town carrying bumpers, fenders, and whatever else I could find and would drop the parts off in my garage and continue the restoration little by little.

Years went by and the restoration on my FIAT 500 was still a work in progress. In Italy, siesta time is built into the work day so things definitely take longer to get done. I continued working on my car as often as I could, but it still wasn't complete. In 2009, I made the big decision to move from the small town of Ciminna to New York in hopes to find better opportunities. When I made the move, my FIAT 500 stayed back in Sicily which was upsetting because I had devoted so much time and was eager to finish the project.

Over the years, I would ask my mechanic in Italy to help continue the restoration because it was still on my mind all the time. I was in a better spot financially after getting a job here in the states, so I was able to continue to put work into my car even from across the Atlantic. In 2016, my car was finally completed with a full restoration. I was more than happy and excited. The timing was just right because I got married in my hometown of Ciminna that same year. My wife and I used my fully restored FIAT to drive away from the church. It was such a proud moment because I felt like all of my hard work, time and dedication truly paid off. When I left Sicily that year, I had the same uneasy feeling because I couldn't help but feel like I was leaving my car behind.

In 2018, I came to the conclusion that I wanted my car to come to the states so that I could enjoy what I worked so hard to achieve. I organized a container which had my FIAT as well as another one that I purchased while in Italy. I figured there might be other people in America who would be as interested and intrigued by these cars as I am. Turns out I was right because that one sold fairly quickly and since then, I've shipped and imported several containers full of FIAT 500s, different engines, transmissions, and parts. These cars seem to attract a lot of attention and are always crowd pleasers. When I'm not working my day job, I'm working in my garage on these cars. Whether I'm tweaking things in my own car or prepping a car for a customer, I always have tools in my hand and FIATs on my mind. I really believe that I turned a hobby into a passion, and I feel very grateful to have my car in the states and be able to attend car shows while drawing attention to these awesome little cars. They are undoubtedly unique and not seen in America very often. If you're reading this and you're interested in getting more information on original, vintage FIAT 500s, please contact me. I'm looking forward to being able to go to car shows and promote and advertise these fun cars. I really enjoy what I do and am so happy that I could turn my passion into a profession.

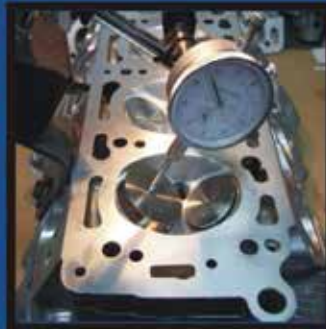


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either currently or soon will mandate that car companies selling vehicles within their borders offer a zero-emissions vehicle. Good news: the afore-mentioned economy of scale is bringing electric vehicle manufacturing costs steadily downward. Several months ago, FIAT Chrysler Automobiles announced plans to invest well over \$700-million to develop a new generation of the 500e, with production scheduled to commence in FIAT's famous Mirafiori factory in the middle of 2020. I've had the opportunity to drive a FIAT 500e, and one thing to which I'll attest is the remarkable acceleration, which is simply a result of the laws of physics: unlike internal combustion engines, electric motors have 100% of their torque available at zero RPM! Who doesn't love that? I've personally referred to torque as "the big T." I'll take torque over horsepower every time, because that's what makes for rapid acceleration!

Most of we FIAT Freaks are all-too-well accustomed to hearing disparaging things about our beloved marque, especially in the automotive press. That said, I was more than a bit surprised to see a very favorable review of the

current FIAT 500x recently published in the Los Angeles Times newspaper. The author cited the new 1.3-liter turbocharged engine as being a "game-changer" for the vehicle. My wife Jennifer owns a 500x and drives it daily, and we both are enamored with the vehicle... something I never would have dreamed of saying about any vehicle resembling an SUV! Our long trip to and from Pennsylvania to Florida and back for FIAT FreakOut 2018 was a fantastic experience in our 500x.

So...there you go. Another bit of views and news from "The FIAT Freak," this being the God-only-knows rendition of this column for well over thirty-five years. Throughout that time, my enthusiasm for FIATs and all Italian cars has never waned, and has in fact, continued to grow, greatly enhanced by people like YOU who "get it" and share my enthusiasm. I ask that you continue to support this club and each other, because ultimately, it's our shared ownership experience and interpersonal relationships that bring so much enjoyment to us all. *Grazie per aver letto, e grazie per essere parte della mia vita! Ciao!*

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CALL FOR NOMINATIONS to Club Officer and Board Seats

FIAT Club America is preparing to hold elections of its Officers and Board of Directors. In addition to a vote for President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary, there are 8 seats on the Board of Directors that are up for election. As a result of our By-Laws revisions that were approved by the membership in 2018, candidates for President and Secretary will run for a 2-year term. Those running for Vice President and Treasurer will run for a one-year term. The Board of Directors serve staggered terms of 3-years. However, certain Board of Directors vacant seats, or vacant seats that had been filled by appointment in the past year, are subject to election for a shorter term. There are four 3-year term seats that are up for election, plus there are also two 2-year seats and two 1-year seats that are up for election. The top 4 highest vote getters running for the Board will be awarded the 3-year seats. The next two highest vote getters will be awarded two-year terms. The 7th and 8th highest vote getters will take the seats with one-year terms.

The Officers and Board of Directors manage the club, its finances, the Ricambi magazine, the club website, the annual FreakOut national convention, and its network of chapters. Since the return to North America of the FIAT 500 and now the new FIAT 124 Spider, the Officers

and Directors have an established relationship with FIAT Chrysler Corporation. Our membership now exceeds 1,500. With our growing membership, FIAT Club America needs motivated members who are willing to volunteer their time, talent and energy by serving as an Officer or on the Board of Directors. Note that Board members are expected to devote a minimum of 8 hours per month to take responsibility for specific national club "jobs." Please consider this before seeking a nomination.

Club members who wish to run as a candidate for an officer position or for a seat on the Board of Directors may nominate themselves or another member, provided that the nominated member is willing to serve. Please submit your nomination to Tim Beeble, Club Secretary, at tbeeble@aol.com by October 30, 2019.

The following current members of the Board of Directors are not up for re-election and will continue on the Board:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS	Term	Term Ending Year
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FIAT alla familia – 15 Years on the New England FIAT Drive Weekend



Charles O'Donnell, the father of Danny O'Donnell and his sister, Diane Curtis, was a car guy and this influenced the lives of his kids. While Danny and Diane were growing up, their father always took them on Sunday rides in the country with no particular place to go. Charles was a Terminal Manager at a trucking company. When Danny was 8 years old, he would sometimes go to work with his Dad and help maintain the fleet of trucks. When Danny and Diane were teenagers, their Dad bought a 1981 FIAT Spider 2000 which made a huge impact on their lives.

Danny worked at a parts store and repaired FIATs beginning 1977. The influence of his Dad led Danny to open his business, Fun Imported Auto and Toys in Vernon CT in 1987. Danny supplies new & used FIAT parts and repair services to FIAT owners throughout the country. In 1980, Diane married Tom Curtis, and they moved to Maine. Charles O'Donnell died in 1993. While the 250 miles separating Danny and Diane didn't get in the way of them getting together throughout the years, a FIAT connection would soon bond them. In 2004, Diane and Tom Curtis bought a 1975

FIAT 124 Spider from one of Danny's customers. Danny got it ready for the road, which completed the connection of Danny, Diane, their late father and their shared love of FIATs.

In 2005 Danny and Diane decided to plan a three-day FIAT Drive Weekend to bring together fellow FIAT owners from the Northern New England Chapter, covering Maine, NH and VT, and those in the Northeast Coast Chapter, covering CT, MA, RI and Metro NY. In August 2005, the first FIAT Drive Weekend was held on Maine coast in the vicinity of Diane and Tom Curtis's home. This provided a great escape from the heat for those living in southern New England. Danny led a caravan of FIATs from his shop in CT to the host hotel for the FIAT Weekend.

The first FIAT Drive Weekend was 2 nights and 3 days of driving along the Maine coast. Diane and Tom hosted a BBQ at their house. The weekend included a boat tour of the harbor as well as drives to Maine Coast lighthouses. FYI, Maine has more miles of coastline than California.

The FIAT Drive Weekend was a success, and everyone wanted it to become an annual event that would move its



base location every year to different places in New England. From year-to-year, other Club members stepped up to help Danny and Diane to plan the annual drives, including from Connecticut: Dave & Rose Laborde, Bill & Carol Foster, Mark & Sue Rowan and Bob and Diane Durgan; from Maine: Jim & Kathy Custeau and Kevin & Holly Rich; and from Vermont: Tim & Sharon Turner and Dan Lewis. In addition some of the faithful followers since the early years included Gardner & Marja LePoer and Rusty Harris.

The Drive typically attracts 15-30 cars and 30-50 people, some coming from Canada to the north, New Jersey from the South and New York to the west. Most of the participants reside in New England.

Diane handles registration and logistics. Danny, Dave Laborde and Jim Custeau lead the caravan groups of cars and run the morning Drivers' Meeting to review road safety. The groups of cars are limited to 15 but preferably have less than 10 cars.

A lead car and tail car keep each group together and remain in communication via walkie talkies. If the entire group cannot proceed through a traffic light or a left turn, the tail car radios the lead car, and the lead car pulls to the side of the road in a safe location until the group is reunited. If a car breaks down (yes, it happens) then, the entire group pulls to the side while our mechanical experts: Danny O'Donnell, Mitch Zelman and Dave Laborde and others, get the FIAT running again. Sometimes we may have to leave a

car behind, but we never leave any members behind. They shift into empty passenger seats in other participants' FIATs. Danny usually trailers his spider to the home base hotel, so that it will be available to transport any disabled FIAT back home or to his shop in Connecticut.

The locations of the New England FIAT Drive Weekend over the past 15 years have been in Maine, NH, VT, MA, CT and have included day drives into eastern NY & Rhode Island. The longest and most popular FIAT Drive Weekend was held in Bar Harbor Maine which involved 4-nights and five days of driving FIATs and eating lobster.

Charles O'Donnell left this earth 26 years ago, but thanks to his children, Danny O'Donnell and Diane Curtis, his spirit has been with us for the past 15 years on every New England FIAT Drive Weekend.



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Is this Sesame Street?

One of these cars doesn't look like the other.

by Tim Beeble



It is always a challenging contest to guess the model year of each FIAT spider you see by examining the hood, bumpers taillights, side markers and engine size badge. From 1966 to 1972, FIAT 124 Spiders had a flat hood and chrome bumpers. In 1973 FIAT installed a bumped hood to accommodate a 1600cc engine. In 1974, FIAT introduced the 1800cc engine which could be accommodated under the same bumped hood. Unique to 1974 is a collision impact absorber system that the chrome bumpers are attached to. 1974 was the last year of the lightweight chrome bumpers, before the transition to the 5-mph double tube bumpers that are on the later spiders. In 1979 FIAT introduced the Spider 2000, with the 2000cc engine, the hood was modified to sport wider bumps.

To further complicate things, owners often modify their spiders by swapping parts. For example, installing a later or earlier hood to replace a damaged hood, or installing the classic chrome bumpers on a post-1975 spider.

At the 2019 New England FIAT Drive Weekend in Maine, two 1974 Spiders, owned by Tim Beeble and Rob Glen, parked side-by-side and a debate ensued about which spider had an original hood and grill badge. The two spiders were identical in every way except that Tim's has a FIAT badge in his grill and none on his bumped hood. Rob's spider has a FIAT badge on his hood and

none in the grill. Tim thought that Rob's must have a replaced hood from a later model year, and that his grill was replaced with one without a badge. Gardner LePoer initially thought that Tim's car was a 1973 model which also had a bumped hood without a badge, and instead, had a badge in the grill. Tim reminded Gardner that he has the 1800 engine which was not available in the 1973 model. Danny O'Donnell thought that Rob's hood and grill were correct, and that Tim's hood and grill had been replaced. However, Tim bought his spider in 1978 when it was 4 years old. The hood and grill were never changed. How could this be?

The date of manufacture is the key. Tim's 1974 FIAT 124 Spider was manufactured in October 1973. Rob's 1974 FIAT 124 Spider was manufactured in June 1974. In addition, Lee Putman reported that his 1974 FIAT 124 Spider was built in February 1974 and his front badge is on the hood. FIAT was notorious for making changes to their cars in the middle of their model year. Perhaps you have heard of the 1985½ Pininfarina Azzura. We can now narrow down that the transition from the front badge on the grill to the hood occurred between November 1973 and January 1974. Do you have a 1974 FIAT 124 Spider that was built during this November-January window? Let me know the location of your front badge and when your Spider was built.



New Chapter formed in Minnesota

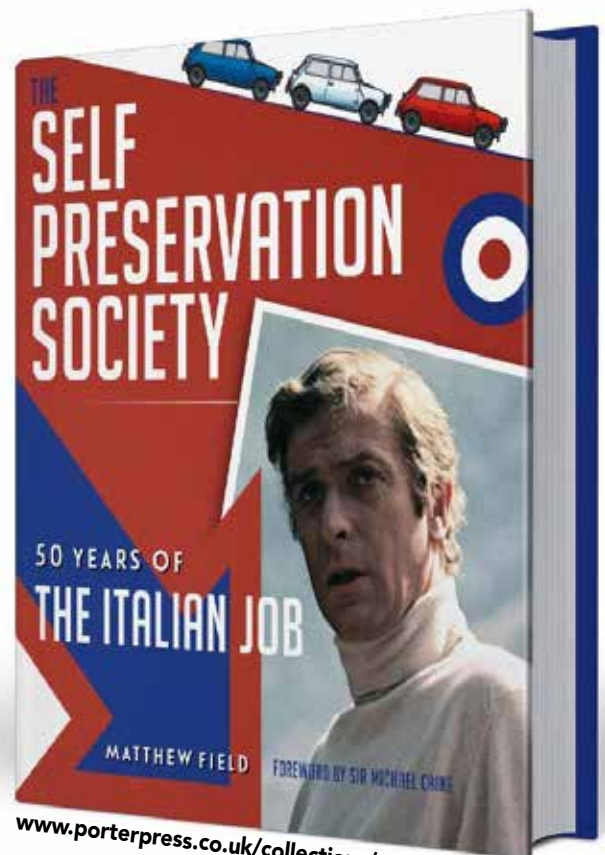


Nick DeJoy and club members in Minnesota proposed establishing a new chapter of FIAT Club America. In August, the Club's Board of Directors approved the Minnesota Chapter. Currently, there are seven members of FIAT Club America who live in Minnesota. The Chapter held a meeting and elected Nick DeJoy as the President and Cindy Walter as Secretary/Treasurer. Those in attendance at the meeting to launch the Minnesota Chapter included Paul & Vicki Bierlein, Cindy & Larry Walter, Joe & Laurie Eichelberger, Nick & Shirley DeJoy and Ed Solstad. In addition, attending but not voting at the meeting was prospective member, Tim Herzog. We look forward to seeing membership growth in 2020 resulting from Minnesota Chapter activities.

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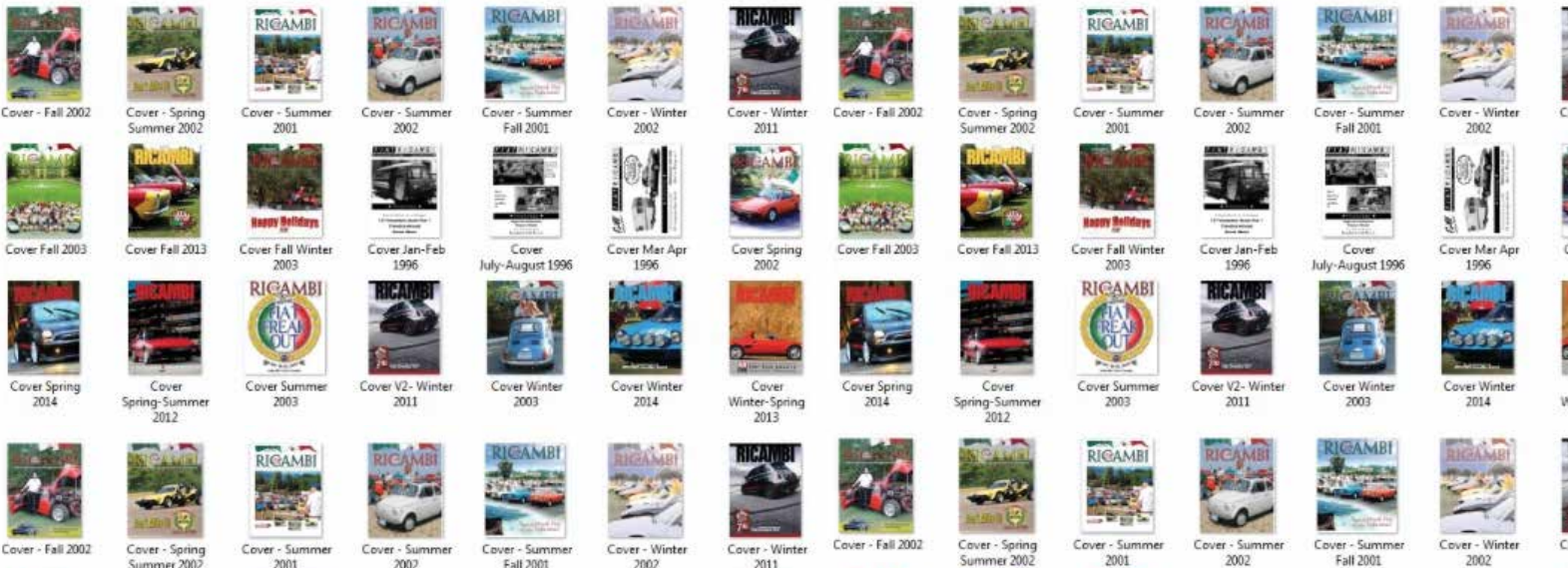


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