

A Magazine for New and Classic FIAT and Lancia Enthusiasts Published by FIAT Club America

FIAT CLUB  
AMERICA

# RICAMBI

Spring 2023, Number 93



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# RICAMBI

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## 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 Doug Von Koenig at *president@FIATclubamerica.com*.

Editorial and photos may be submitted electronically via e-mail. All ads must be sufficient quality and format suitable for printing. Please inquire with questions about format. 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.



Visit our website at [FIATClubAmerica.com](http://FIATClubAmerica.com) for the latest in what's happening in YOUR club.

Look us up on Facebook and "Like" our pages.



# From the Prez...

by Doug Von Koenig, FIAT Club America President

REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR FREAKOUT 2023  
HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO 11:59 PM ON MAY 14

Greeting Members!  
Hope everyone is doing well and staying safe.

t-shirt (right), both sure to become collector items:  
Ricambi Articles & Pictures – Thank You!



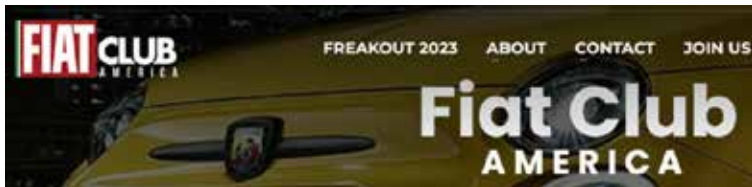
## FreakOut 2023

We're going to Bartlett, NH for FreakOut 2023! If you're looking for the perfect location for some spirited drives up and down the mountains in this area you won't want to miss this FreakOut. Please check out our host chapter's blog at <http://FIATclubnne.com/>.

Event dates are June 7-11, 2023 and registration is now open at [www.FIATclubamerica.com](http://www.FIATclubamerica.com). FreakOut is a member only event and you don't wait too long to sign up, registration closes at 11:59 PM eastern time on May 14, 2023.

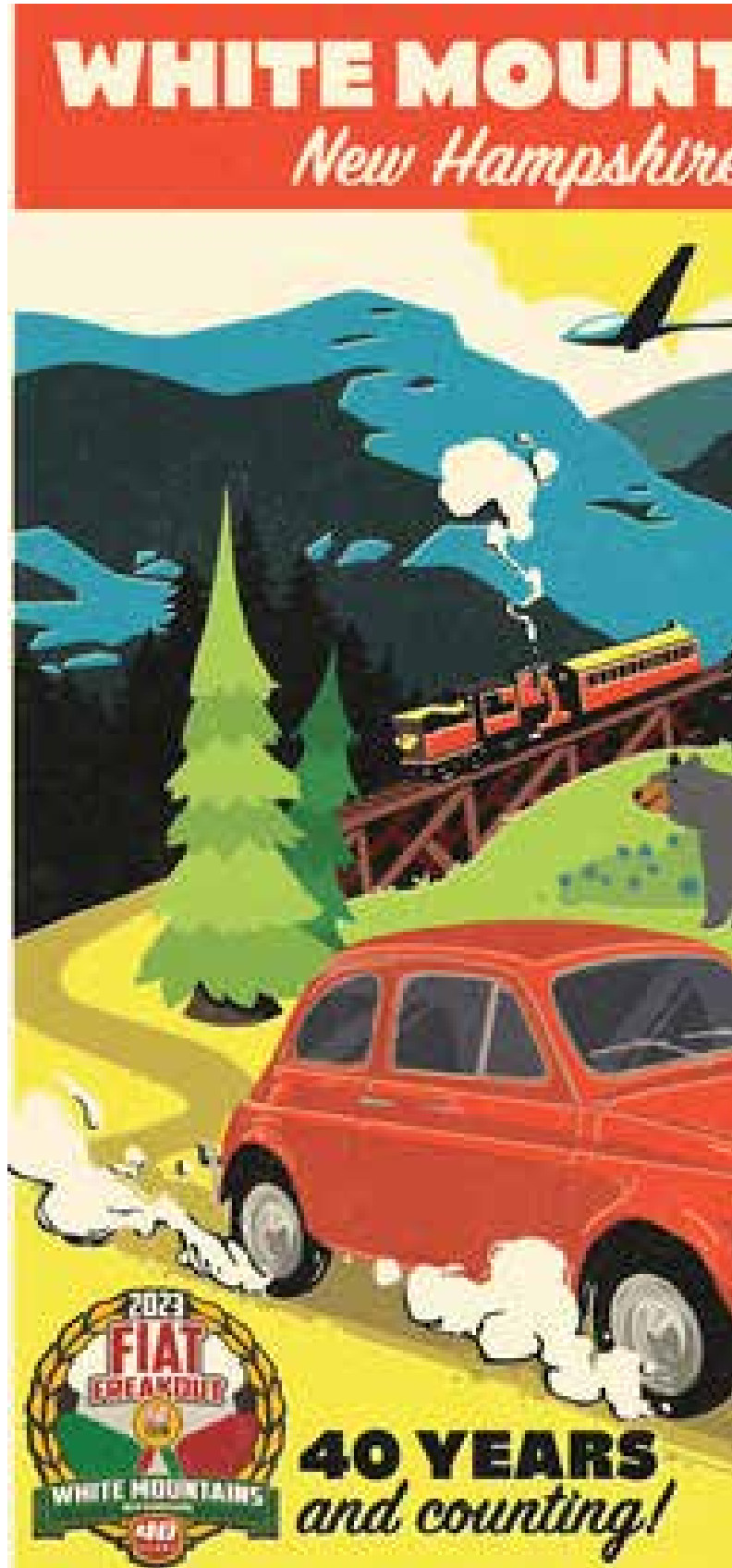
As predicted and forewarned, our host hotel is now full and we're recommending the overflow hotel, the Attitash Village hotel, just 1.3 miles down the road from the Grand Summit hotel. Full details inside the registration form on our website...

Reminder that every registration includes an entry into the



raffle for the COG railway ride and a glider flight experience...

Here's a preview of the event poster (top) and



**You, could be One of Two Lucky Winners to Ride the Rails on the COG Railway!**



We are raffling 2 Pair of Round Trip tickets to:  
**Ride to the Summit of Mount Washington  
The Highest Peak in the Northeast!**  
One raffle ticket, with every Base Ticket Package.

For Schedules, fares and much more visit [theCog.com](http://theCog.com) or call 800-922-8825

**You, could be One of Two Lucky Winners to Soar Over Cannon Mountain in Franconia Notch!**



We are raffling 2 Franconia Soaring Association,  
**Standard Flight Glider Experiences.**  
One raffle ticket, with every Base Ticket Package.

Glider are running Friday-Sunday during the FreakOut. They operate, first come first served.  
Check em out, [www.franconiasoaring.org/glider-rides.php](http://www.franconiasoaring.org/glider-rides.php)  
Let em know you're coming. 603-833-5034



Back  
10" x 14"

**FIAT FREAKOUT 2023**

**40 YEARS** *and counting!*

<b>1983</b> Pocono Int'l Raceway, PA	<b>2003</b> Asheville, NC
<b>1984</b> Pocono Int'l Raceway, PA	<b>2004</b> Asheville, NC
<b>1985</b> Pocono Int'l Raceway, PA	<b>2005</b> Lake of the Ozarks, MO
<b>1986</b> Pocono Int'l Raceway, PA	<b>2006</b> Detroit, MI
<b>1987</b> Pocono Int'l Raceway, PA	<b>2007</b> Detroit, MI
<b>1988</b> Pocono Int'l Raceway, PA	<b>2008</b> Pocono Manor, PA
<b>1989</b> Summit Pt. Raceway, WV	<b>2009</b> Valley Forge, PA
<b>1990</b> Summit Pt. Raceway, WV	<b>2010</b> Asheville, NC
<b>1991</b> Summit Pt. Raceway, WV	<b>2011</b> Nashville, TN
<b>1992</b> Summit Pt. Raceway, WV	<b>2012</b> Wintergreen, VA
<b>1993</b> Hagerstown, MD	<b>2013</b> Long Island, NY
<b>1994</b> Hagerstown, MD	<b>2014</b> Chicago, IL
<b>1995</b> Hagerstown, MD	<b>2015</b> Pittsburgh, PA
<b>1996</b> Poughkeepsie, NY	<b>2016</b> Detroit, MI
<b>1997</b> Poughkeepsie, NY	<b>2017</b> Milwaukee, WI
<b>1998</b> Fontana Village, NC	<b>2018</b> Orlando, FL
<b>1999</b> Fontana Village, NC	<b>2019</b> Greensboro, NC
<b>2000</b> Canaan Valley, WV	<b>2020</b> Knoxville, TN
<b>2001</b> Niagara, NY	<b>2021</b> Lancaster, PA
<b>2002</b> Dunkirk, NY	<b>2022</b> Woodlands, TX
	<b>2023</b> White Mountains, NH

We are in a very good place with Ricambi articles being submitted. Thank you and please keep the Ricambi content coming (articles should be submitted in Word or similar format and high resolution pictures should be sent as attached files, not embedded in the article). Send content to [president@FIATclubamerica.com](mailto:president@FIATclubamerica.com).

If you'd like more copies of the issue your article was published in, we are happy to provide them at no cost to you. Same goes for the calendar, if your picture was published and you want more copies of the calendar, just tell us. Please send an email to [membership@FIATclubamerica.com](mailto:membership@FIATclubamerica.com).



### Club Membership Benefits

As a reminder to all of us the benefits of dues paid Club membership include:

- Physical Ricambi (36 page color magazine) mailed to you four times per year

- Our annual Club calendar mailed to you

- Online access to our Ricambi archives, there are over 150 issues available to read online and/or download spanning the 30+ years our Club has existed

- Members only content access such as the FIAT and Lancia articles from VeloceToday

- Ability to attend any Club sponsored event such as our annual FreakOut (premier event held in different locations throughout the country) or FIAT On The Dragon just to name a few

- Access to our Land's End and Cafe Press logo'd apparel stores

And more...

Compared to other clubs we think we're a pretty good deal at \$45 per year. Our goal is to grow our Club so we can afford to do more fun things with/ for our members. We could literally double the size of our Club overnight if each member reading this brought a new member into our family within the next 30 days...

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.

PS – our mailing address has changed, it is now FIAT Club America, 99 Wall Street #1241, New York, NY 10005

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR FREAKOUT 2023  
HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO 11:59 PM ON MAY 14**



## FIAT FreakOut 2023 runs from June 7 to June 11, 2023

## FFO Registration has been extended... until midnight eastern on May 14, 2023

Welcome to the 40th FIAT FreakOut (FFO23). It's been 40 years since the first FreakOut, and we've been celebrating our passion for all things FIAT, Lancia, Alfa Romeo, and assorted other Italian marques ever since. We'll be at the Grand Summit Hotel at Attitash located in scenic Bartlett, NH.

FIAT FreakOut is the national convention of FIAT Club America and is a five-day event that includes a concours car show, coordinated scenic drives, track day, and lots of socializing. FFO23 is not just about the show car, it is a great opportunity to talk to knowledgeable people and vendor sponsors about your vehicle.

Our host hotel is:

**Grand Summit Hotel at Attitash**  
104 Grand Summit Road, Bartlett, NH 03812  
[www.grandsummitattitash.com](http://www.grandsummitattitash.com)

As predicted and forewarned, our host hotel is now fully booked and there is a long waiting list. The overflow hotel, owned by the same hotel group, is just 1.3 miles down the road:

## Overflow Hotel

February 2, 2023 by [Lisa](#)

The Attitash Grand Summit is sold out!

No Problem!

Just down the road is The Attitash Village Resort (1.3m)

For the rates below, call the resort directly  
833-782-9268

Let them know you are part of the  
FIAT Club America, FreakOut.

**Hotel Room, \$99. + Tax**  
Sleeps 2, Queen Bed

**Studio, \$119. + Tax**  
Sleeps 4, Queen Wall Bed, Queen Sleep Sofa, Kitchen all in One Room

**1 Bedroom, \$199. + Tax**  
Sleeps 4-6, Bedding Varies, with Kitchen and Living room

**2 Bedroom, \$229. + Tax**  
Sleeps 4-6, Bedding Varies, with Kitchen and Living room

Check out the amenities: [attitashmtvillage.com](http://attitashmtvillage.com)

Tuesday, June 6th

### All Aboard! Conway Scenic Railroad

For all of you who plan to arrive early, join us TUESDAY 12:00 PM, aboard the Mountaineer!



**You, could be One of Two Lucky Winners to Ride the Rails on the COG Railway!**



**We are raffling 2 Pair of Round Trip tickets to: Ride to the Summit of Mount Washington! The Highest Peak in the Northeast!**

**One raffle ticket, with every Base Ticket Package.**

For Schedules, fares and much more visit: [thecog.com](http://thecog.com) or call 800-922-8825

We're taking a coach ride on a 1950's-era streamlined passenger train.

The Conway Scenic Railroad's Mountaineer recaptures the tradition & romance of a post-World War II Transcontinental streamlined train. Offering a supremely scenic 4 to 5 ½ hour rail journey through the Mount Washington Valley and over the rugged Crawford Notch, crossing the famous Frankenstein Trestle along the way.

We will board the train at the Attitash Whistle Stop at 12:00 PM just down the road from the Grand Summit Hotel.

A day full of some very scenic self guided drives and dinner tonight is on your own. There will also be two bear felting classes this evening.

Wednesday, June 7th

**Wolfeboro -**

Miles: 109, Drive Time: 2 hr. 52 min., round trip driving time  
At the eastern end of Lake Winnepesaukee, Wolfeboro is the oldest summer resort in America. The town draws hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to visit its galleries, stores and restaurants. Visitors to Wolfeboro can board the M/S Mount Washington for a 2 ½ hour trip around lake Winnepesaukee. Wolfeboro is also home to the New Hampshire Boat Museum, and the Wright Museum of World War II history. Lunch options are available in Wolfeboro and on board the M/S Mount Washington.

**Cathedral Ledge -**

Miles: 39.8, Drive Time: 1 hr. 21 min., round trip driving time  
Cathedral Ledge State Park is a popular rock-climbing destination. BUT we are interested in the mile-long auto road leading to the top. At the top you'll find a viewing area offering expansive views of, Echo Lake in North Conway, the Saco River Valley and the White Mountains. There's also a short hiking trail to explore. Diana's Baths is a leisurely 1.3-mile out-and-back trail. Generally considered an easy route on a relatively flat, wide gravel path. The hike takes an average of 30 minutes to complete.

Diana's Baths are a must-see if you are in the North Conway area and want to experience nature at its finest. Diana's baths lie along Lucy Brook in Bartlett which is fed from Big Attitash Mountain. The baths are a great place to enjoy the tranquility of nature and explore the many rocks, edges, cascading falls, and pools in the brook. The cascading falls measure approximately 75 feet in total height.

**Hurricane Mountain Road -**

Miles: 26.3, Drive Time: 45 min., Hotel to Settlers Green Outlet Village.  
Hurricane Mountain Road is an exhilarating twisting, turning drive up and over Hurricane Mountain heading into Maine. You will want to stay in your lane. From Hurricane Mountain our drive will bring you to North Conway. North Conway offers an abundance of food options and Tax-Free Shopping. Other local options will be available in your welcome bag!

Thursday, June 8th

**Thursday Breakfast Buffet**

Buffet consists of country fresh scrambled eggs, home fried potatoes, applewood smoked bacon, assorted breakfast pastries, assorted fresh fruit, assorted flavored low-fat yogurts, fresh brewed coffee and assorted teas, chilled orange, cranberry and apple juice. Served from 7-8:30 AM



**Track Day**

Miles: 78.2, Drive Time: 1 hr. 58 min., round trip driving time from hotel  
Throughout the FreakOut our rides will guide you through some of the most spectacular views nature has to offer in the Northeast. This ride is no exception but we're stepping it up with a visit to one of the most spectacular man-made views in the Northeast.

continued 



Our drive will bring us to the Club Motorsports campus, home to what is considered one of the best tracks in the country. The track is a 2.5-mile, European style road course with 15 turns and a 250' elevation change with views of Mount Chocorua and the Presidential Range. Spectators are welcome at Club Motorsports at no cost. Food Trucks will be available for lunch for those who plan to stay the day.

### Parade Laps

For those of us who love cars and racing but are not ready to put the pedal to the metal. Club Motorsports has offered free parade laps, photos and a chance to see some of the pros! We're told we won't be disappointed. There is no minimum number of participants needed for this part of the event, it will happen.

### Hot Laps - Track Time

For those of you who love cars and racing and are ready to put your helmets on and heat up the track. Club Motorsports is offering hot laps. Instructors will be on hand to provide instruction and assess skill levels to assign appropriate run groups.

### Cog Railway Ride

Roundtrip Drive Miles: 53.5, Drive Time: 1 hr. 12 min., round trip driving time  
Join us on a ride through Bretton Woods to the Mount Washington Cog Railway!

Completed in 1869 the Cog Railway continues to thrill passengers from all over the world. We plan to thrill you with a trip on one of the powerful biodiesel locomotives for your dramatic ascent to the summit of Mount Washington, the highest peak in the Northeast.

The Cog is the first mountain-climbing cog railway in the world. With an average grade of 25% (some sections approach nearly 38%), it's also the second steepest. The Cog is the only railway in the world whose mainline tracks are built entirely above ground level.



The Cog is located in the heart of the White Mountains on the western face of Mount Washington. Along the way we will traverse through majestic Bretton Woods, passing by the Omni Mount Washington Resort, one of only three Grand hotels remaining in northern NH from the 19th century. Among the many twists and turns along Base Station Road to Marshfield Base Station, it's not uncommon to see wildlife like moose and bear.

More details at [www.thecog.com](http://www.thecog.com) Update 12/17/22 - we have contracted for a full train (70 seats) leaving at 11 AM, we will leave the hotel at 9 AM and return mid afternoon. The group rate we now have is \$59 for adults and \$45 for children. Please purchase tickets below. (Pricing and schedule for the 2023 season have not yet been published but pricing for 2022 was in the \$72-\$86 range for adults.)

### Dixville Notch -

Miles: 174 Drive Time: 4 hr. 1 min. round trip driving time

We call this the Great North Woods drive! No city streets here, just beautiful views, points of interest and interesting history. You'll begin your drive traveling through gorgeous Pinkham Notch, home to the famous Presidential Range of the White Mountains.

Along the way keep a sharp eye out for local wildlife (moose, bear, deer...) and unique sites. Have you ever seen a boom pier, or an Olympic ski jump on the wayside? You may have heard of L.L.B... But have you heard of L.L. Cote?

Wave to the residents of Dixville Notch, at last count there's 4. Although short on residents, the beautiful views afforded are endless. We've added a stop at Dixville Notch State Wayside, The Baby Flume. A pretty flume just steps from your car. There's a peak in the road, you'll know when you get to it. On the way down don't miss Lake Gloriette on the right with the Balsams in the background. The Balsams has been a landmark in Dixville Notch since the end of the Civil War and home to the famous Ballot Room where the first votes in the country are cast.

You'll make a stop at the scenic 80' Beaver Brook Falls Wayside, in Colebrook, where you break for lunch. Lunch is on own, check your FFO23 guide for options.

### FreakOut 2023 Welcome Dinner

Help us get FreakOut 2023 off to a proper start by joining us for an event Italiano themed welcome dinner in the Grand Ballroom of the Grand Summit Hotel.

Social hour, cash bar from 6.00-7.00pm, food service starts at 7.00pm, cash bar remains open during dinner.

Our meal will be a buffet which includes Bourbon Marinated Grilled Steak Tips, Baked Tortellini & Pesto and Grilled Chicken, Mozzarella, Cherry Tomatoes, Cannoli for Dessert.



Friday, June 9th

### Friday Breakfast Buffet

Buffet consists of country fresh scrambled eggs, home fried potatoes, applewood smoked bacon, assorted breakfast pastries, assorted fresh fruit, assorted flavored low-fat yogurts, fresh brewed coffee and assorted teas, chilled orange, cranberry and apple juice. Served from 7-8:30 AM

### Gimmick Rally

Miles: 107, Drive Time: 2 hr. 48 min., round trip driving time

We've created a fun, low-key Q&A Gimmick rally. You will travel a route through the White Mountains with questions to answer and Checkpoints to find.

Geologic wonders and historic sites will provide the stunning backdrop for the 2023 FIAT Gimmick Rally driving route. This family friendly rally will revisit the classic New Hampshire resort experience in a uniquely fun and interactive way that will challenge the skills of young and old alike! Expect lots of laughs along with some fierce competition, or just enjoy this lighthearted journey with friends and family! First car will leave hotel at 9 AM, then one car will be released every minute...

### Franconia Notch Recreation Area -

Miles: 82.5, Drive Time: 1 hr. 55 min., round trip driving time

Franconia Notch is a public recreation area and nature preserve straddling eight miles (13 km) of Interstate 93 as it passes through Franconia Notch, a mountain pass between the Kinsman Range and Franconia Range in the White Mountains. The northern part of the park, including Cannon Mountain and Echo and Profile lakes, is in the town of Franconia, and the southern part, including Lonesome Lake and the Flume, is in Lincoln. It's a beautiful drive but we suggest taking in a few of the attractions along the way as well. Attractions in the state park include the Cannon Aerial Tramway, New England Ski Museum, Old Man of the Mountain historical site, Flume Gorge and visitor center, fishing in Echo Lake and Profile Lake, and miles of hiking, biking and ski trails.

And if all that isn't enough, the trip back to the hotel takes you along the Kancamagus (known as the "Kanc") highway and Bear Notch Road. The Kanc has a number of parking areas with overlooks where you can enjoy the beautiful views. Bear Notch is full of tight twists and turns and ups and downs. You will want to stay in your lane.

### Mount Washington at Sunset

They are closing the Mountain for FIAT FreakOut 2023! We'll have the Mount Washington Auto Road all to ourselves!



Early Friday evening, after dinner, we'll queue up at the base for an after-hours, ALL FIATS drive to the summit for a view of the sunset atop the highest peak in the Northeast. You won't want to miss it! The photo opportunities will be spectacular!

A commemorative photo will be taken of each car and will be available at the Saturday night Awards Banquet.

Saturday, June 10th

### Saturday Breakfast Buffet

Buffet consists of country fresh scrambled eggs, home fried potatoes, applewood smoked bacon, assorted breakfast pastries, assorted fresh fruit, assorted flavored low-fat yogurts, fresh brewed coffee and assorted teas, chilled orange, cranberry and apple juice. Served from 7-8:30 AM



FIAT FreakOut's signature event has always been the Saturday Concorso show, where our cars are definitely dressed for the occasion!

The field will begin loading at 8:00 AM with all cars on the field by 9:30 AM, latest please. Each car will have a predesignated spot/marker to make placing cars a snap. The show and judging will take place between 10 AM and 1 PM,

continued ➡



electronic voting needs to be completed by 1 PM (please see voting details below).

All cars are asked to remain on the field until after 2 PM and we will then return to the hotel.

Our Concorso this year is at the base of Mount Washington with some amazing scenery. The field is 19.6 miles from the hotel and a very fun drive. There will be easy trailer parking at the field.



**SATURDAY AWARDS BANQUET**

Join us Saturday evening for an Awards Banquet with New England fare and FreakOuts Past and Present Theme Hosted in the Grand Ballroom at the Grand Summit Hotel The evening begins with a social hour and cash bar at 6:00. Dinner begins at 7:00. Cash bar will remain open during dinner.

Awards banquet highlights include the famous FreakOut trivia contest to find the “smartest table in the room”.

Presentation of all class show awards, special recognition's, Heritage Class Awards and the coveted Best of Show award. We will also feature a guest speaker. And, let’s not forget the FFO24 Reveal!

Our meal will be a buffet which includes: Stuffed Sole: Crabmeat, Scallop & Lobster Stuffing, Lemon, Beurre Blanc; Grilled Filet Mignon: Black Pepper Jus and Duck Confit.

Sunday, June 11th

**Sunday Breakfast Buffet**

Buffet consists of country fresh scrambled eggs, home fried potatoes, applewood smoked bacon, assorted breakfast pastries, assorted fresh fruit, assorted flavored low-fat yogurts, fresh brewed coffee and assorted teas, chilled orange, cranberry and apple juice. Served from 8-9:30 AM

**Post-Breakfast Raffle**

Starts at 9am. After the big day on Saturday, join us for our famous Sunday Raffle Prize/Silent Auction event. We'll call out the raffle ticket numbers and make special announcements. Vendors may be open just to give you some end of show bargains and special deals.

**See you at FIAT Club America FreakOut 2023!**



**Art Show**

Calling All Artists!

Exhibit Your Art at the FreakOut 2023 Art Show! Provided we have enough interest this will be located in the registration and store area.

Artists are encouraged to creatively express their inner FIAT passion and consider exhibiting their FIAT inspired artwork in the show.

All Fiat Club of America members joining the Northern New England Chapter for Fiat FreakOut 2023 are invited to participate. We are accepting Photography, paintings, drawings, sculpture, fiber art and jewelry that expressly depict FIAT culture, design, engineering and/or heritage.

Members may sell their artwork.

# Why you should organize a FreakOut

FreakOut is our annual premier members only event. It is five days of amazing drives, attending very cool local attractions, making new friends and connecting with old friends all anchored by an amazing car show on Saturday morning, followed by an awards banquet that night. We plan FreakOuts two years in advance...

The ingredients for organizing a successful FreakOut

- Take 5-8 energetic passionate local chapter volunteers who are willing to find a host hotel, map out some nice twisty road drives, decide what local attractions should be included and handle the local coordination details.
- Build out a proposal showcasing the details of your intended FreakOut and submit to the Club Board of Directors at least 18 months before the year you want to host it.
- Once your proposal is accepted, congratulations, you now own that year!
- The division of labor is about 50/50 with Club leadership who will execute the hotel and other related contracts, pay for everything, setup and run the registration site and work with you to tune the details and be onsite to help run the event.

Organizing a FreakOut takes a lot of work but is one of the funnest things you will ever do, it puts your chapter on the map (we're game for anywhere in the continental US and Canada) and how often do you get the chance to design an amazing tshirt and poster logo?



## Ricambi Archives

[www.FIATclubamerica.com/ricambi-archives](http://www.FIATclubamerica.com/ricambi-archives)

**NEW!**

The Club is very pleased to be able to provide over 30 years of our club magazine Ricambi online to our membership. There are over 140 issues and we've got 100 of them online now. It will take us a few months to get every issue scanned and online so please check back often as we are adding new issues each month...You must be logged in as a current member to access the Ricambi Archives HERE. The direct link is <https://www.FIATclubamerica.com/ricambi-archives>





# WE CAN'T THANK OUR 2022 SPONSORS ENOUGH!



They help to make FreakOut the great event that it is.  
Please repay their generosity with your patronage.



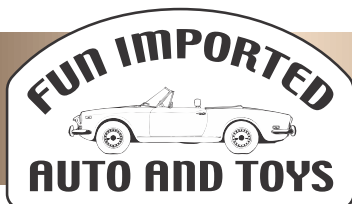
**DIAMOND**



**GOLD**



**SILVER**



**BRONZE**



## Get Out and Drive...

Owning a classic or new FIAT is an experience that takes you back to a time when driving was fun. Guess what, driving is STILL fun.

Now, more than ever, Auto Ricambi is here to keep your classic or new FIAT in top shape so you can spend time doing more of what makes owning a fun car fun.

Our easy to use websites feature the largest inventories of high quality new parts for the FIAT 124s, FIAT 500s and FIAT X1/9s in North America.

**AUTORICAMBI**

## Check out our new easy to use FIAT 500 website!

Auto Ricambi recently launched a new website to better serve the owners of the modern FIAT 500. We are investing time and resources into inventory and product knowledge so we will be here to keep your modern FIAT 500 running great.

## Now selling new parts for FIAT X1/9s!

Check out our growing inventory of new parts for your FIAT X1/9 with our easy to use website.

**AUTORICAMBI.US**  
**FIAT500.US • 682-233-3428**  
**Visit our websites or give us a call.**



Auto Ricambi proudly supports the FIAT on the Dragon events and is a member of FIAT Club America!

photo by Killboy.com - 1981 FIAT X1/9 owned by Brett Melancon



Check out our websites for an extensive line of products for the FIAT models shown above.



# SPECIAL 124 SEDAN

by Bradley Artigue



I find myself in the Woodlands, making a white-knuckled two mile run in an idiosyncratic 1974 FIAT 124 Special TC, intentionally running through the final millisecond of a yellow light. The only pedal position I can find that makes the car work is wide open throttle, any other position and the car floods itself, or runs lean, or just dies. When I do have to stop the procedure is to hold the brake and the accelerator while fiddling with the throttle pull, holding that, then smashing the accelerator to the floor while engaging the clutch. Getting it all done before the plugs foul is a quickly obtained skill. Despite an obvious need for a tune up, with the windows down, the vent windows open, the pedal on the floor, and just around 4,400 RPM the sound of the twin cam finding itself is heavenly. I realize something along the short ride: I'm driving a FIAT with a fixed roof and I'm enjoying every single second of it.

The 1974 124 Special TC is the North American version of the 124 Special T. Equipped with the 132 series 1592cc twin cam engine and a four-speed transmission, it is the last of the FIAT produced 124 sedans. The configuration of the suspension and powertrain are nearly identical to the 124 Spiders I've known my entire life, though packaged so differently one would never know the profound degree of similarity. The view from the driver's seat is certainly different. A gauge cluster of near

enormous proportions houses a speedometer on the left and everything except a tachometer on the right. Large toggle switches in common with the 124 Coupe are just within reach in the center of the dashboard; the ignition switch is mounted Porsche-like on the left side of the column, for those fast starts when one takes their TC to Le Mans. Uncluttered is an understatement – thought the TC was considered the upmarket trim – the sole concessions to comfort are a rear window defroster and a radio console.

Tinkering with a twin cam is something I find endlessly enjoyable. After the wild ride through suburban Houston, I am now staring down the barrels of an obvious and poor Weber carburetor copy. The interested Freak Out attendees stop by to see what's going on. Csaba Vandor peeks over, commenting on just how shiny the aluminum on a Chinese copy can be. Andy Truscott provides a box of jets as we proceed to remove, inspect, and ultimately discard jets made to look like, but that do not exactly work like, Webers do. (Ever seen a carburetor jet with no hole in it? Ever seen an emulsion tube with aluminum shavings in it? I have!) After a bit of cleaning and a bit of tuning the Special starts to idle on its own and even accelerates without much fuss. With a goal of getting the car in reasonable condition to drive to the showgrounds we wrap it up for the evening.

How I ended up with this car is entirely the fault of Andy. In full disclosure I have three cars that came from the Tinkerer's Garage, the Spring, Texas based consortium of people like me, who find solace in quirky Italian automobiles. This one though, unlike two early Spiders I'm restoring that had been saved by their wonderful shop, is fully operational. "Do you need a car to drive at Freak Out?" "Do you want a Special?" "You want this Special." "Here are the keys." "You'll get it tuned up." "Wasn't that fun?" "I told Jennifer it will arrive next week in Atlanta on a truck, enjoy it." Of course the last quote was met in Atlanta by something like "you both did what?"

Secretly though, Jennifer loves it. Everyone does. There was a brief period of doubt, between the car coming off of the hauler from Houston and into my garage and a few weeks

keep in a box, separated from the actual Webers.) The car had a Pertronix system on the ignition, giving me plenty of spark for a Weber 34ADF I've had sitting on the shelf for years. Unlike the Chinese copy, and unlike the stock DHSA, the ADF is a monster of a carburetor. I have a dead stock, new DHSA2 on my shelf as well, but what fun is a pneumatic secondary when you can have a Weber made for a 3800cc engine on your twin cam? I probably don't have enough cam for the carburetor's potential – but one day I'll have to work on the head and rectify that. Tuned now to near perfection the Special is a screamer. Throttle response is excellent and if there is a risk of anything it is over torquing the clutch. I'm not sure my neighbors love the dead stock sound of the FIAT "straight out the back" exhaust, but so far, they've done nothing but smile and wave.



of labor where this exchange was in doubt. Plugs, wires, valve adjustment, hoses, thermostat, some wiring clean-up (grounds, of course), headlights, taillights, interior lights, timing belt, water pump, fuel pump, brake bleeding, shifter refurbishment. I found an original radio mount and speaker and Brett Melancon sent me a FIAT Astrosonic triple-band, 8 track player. Ebay provided a Van Halen II 8-track and, fantastic as it may sound, it all works. I fixed up the "wood" in the interior as well and got all two of the warning lamps working.

Most importantly, I got it running, and running very well. If you've never driven one of the two 1600cc engines – the original 124 series 1608cc and the later 132 series 1592cc – they really are well balanced motors. Where the 1438cc was a high revving machine that needed a little more torque and the later, larger engines had plenty of torque but little top end, the 1600s are really balanced well. The North American engines even had a decent carburetor, a 28/32 Weber DHSA2. In stock form the car had something in the range of 85-90 HP at 5800 RPM.

Unfortunately, this car had a Weber "something else" – a 32/36 Weber DFEV copy that would work great on Monday and not on Tuesday. I never considered keeping it on the car (I did

When I say everyone loves the car, they really do. The convertibles always get smiles from people but for some reason these old sedans really bring out the personality. For people my age, born in the late 60s and early 70s, these were the cars we saw, the first cars we could afford, the ones our parents drove (mine drove Oldsmobiles and Fords...). The simple, straightforward design, inside and out, is somehow beautiful and utilitarian. The interior is roomy – something that seems odd in a car that is shorter than a Honda Civic – and the trunk is enormous, hanging out and over the rear wheels. I can place four sets of golf clubs in the trunk, two more that will easily fit in my Audi wagon. If I have a complaint, it is with the 8 gallon tank (I know they advertised the North American version as having a 10 gallon tank, but I can't find where the other 2 gallons go). Perhaps if I kept the DHSA on it I'd get more of it.

In closing, I'd like to say that I never, ever, not once, considered a FIAT that had a fixed roof or four doors. I drive sports cars! Yet underneath this sedan I found the soul of the 124 Spiders I've always loved, and every time I drive it I find myself laughing. If you have a chance to drive a Special, do it. Stop by and drive mine. They're incredibly rare and astonishingly fun machines.



# FIATS AT CRUISIN' THE COAST

by Loy Seal

Cruisin the Coast bills itself as “America’s Largest Block Party. Held each October on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, there is a full week’s worth of cruising Highway US 90 up and down the 50 mile long stretch of beach. I took my 1978 FIAT 124 Spider and this is our story.

We left our home in Ruston, LA on Saturday and drove four hours to Hattiesburg, MS where we spent the night and visited my wife’s family. Sunday morning we drove the last hour to Biloxi where we attended church where my friend is the pastor. Sunday afternoon there was a car show in downtown Gulfport and then we drove thirty miles down the beach to Gautier for another car show followed by a drive in movie showing of “Grease.”

Monday began with a shopping trip for my wife to the Outlet Mall in Gulfport. Then we headed to Long Beach where the parade would take place. Only the first 600 cars to show up would be in the parade so we arrived early. There were lots of classic cars, specialty cars such as a Scooby Doo Mystery Machine and Herbie the VW, as well as celebrities from the Motortrend Network. The parade lasted about an hour and we ran out of the three gross of Mardi Gras beads we had brought to throw to the large crowd. After the parade was a huge party at the Long Beach Harbor with a great band and a lot of food.

Tuesday was our day for registration and after the registration at the beautiful Cruise Central, we headed to Moss Point, about 35 miles down the beach along Highway 90. Moss Point was my mother’s hometown so that was a special time for me to see the downtown where







I had spent so much time as a child. After eating more shrimp, we headed back to Biloxi for another Cruise In at Margaritaville featuring more celebrities from Motortrend TV as well as more live music.

Wednesday began the big push toward the weekend with the Biloxi Block Party. Thousands of cars clogged downtown and finally, we found another FIAT, a 1979 Spider 2000 with an automatic transmission. After listening to more live music, we went back to our rented apartment to rest, because the cruising began in earnest on Thursday. Each entrant was given a card to be stamped at six locations stretching 50 miles along the Highway 90 coast. We decided to go to two stamping stations per day so we could spend time at each of the locations. Pascagoula was held in the park along the Gulf, which my family would have picnics when I was a child. Ocean Springs has a beautiful and historic downtown area. D'Iberville, Edgewater Mall, and Pass Christian were all great venues with lots of classic cars and band after band playing live music. Our favorite spot was Bay St. Louis with its row of historic houses and waterfront restaurants, not to mention all the classic cars.

When we returned to Cruise Central in Gulfport, we found one more FIAT, albeit a strange one. There was a FIAT Anglia set up as a drag racer. We did see two more 124 Spiders and an X1/9 cruising down Highway 90. but they were going in the opposite direction and we could not get pictures of them.

All in all, it was a fun week. Although geared primarily for American muscle cars, there were plenty of Italian sports cars around including Ferraris and Lamborghinis even though they they were too new to be officially entered in the event. Full information can be found at <https://cruisinthe coast.com/>

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## 1937-1955 FIAT TOPOLINO – **TOPOLINO IS ITALIAN FOR MICKEY MOUSE**

by Joel Patience

It was a time that while a large part of society was in the Great Depression, leaders (or leader wannabes) were planning ahead.

On a grand scale of trying to keep up with the “Jones”’s; the “Schmitz’s”, the “Rossi’s”, the “Sato’s”, etc. they all looked at the success of Henry Ford.

For the Italians, the goal was the same; create a car that everyone could afford and put everyone back to work.

Benito Mussolini, asked what it would take for a small, cheap car to be produced by and for Italians. Italian Car Production up until then was very low.

1928	55,000
1935	44,000
1950	129,000
1960	645,000
1961	759,000

### As it was with other countries.

For example, in 1932, the year before Nissan Motor started operations, the total car supply in Japan was 16,000 units, of which only 5.5 % (880 units) was domestic.

And so the folks at FIAT set about seeing what they could put together with existing parts and technology. Think AMC pacer.

With not many success prototypes and under great political scrutiny, they asked Engineer Giulio Cappa. Giulio had created an all wheel drive Bugatti -le Patron for the 1926 Grand Prix and was also busy working on a motorcycle for Bugatti.

But Giulio had a inspired student - Oreste Lardone, who had already created a prototype of a small car.

FIAT gave him a small team of designers and engineers to set about creating a 4-seat vehicle with a 500 cmc air-cooled twin-cylinder engine with a front-wheel-drive system.

It seemed a good idea at the time.

Only, after a few bombs - as in one prototype caught fire on the test track - FIAT fired Lardone and abandoned front wheel drive concepts.

### Again, FIAT looked for help.

Dante Giacosa, who was to become FIAT’s Chief of design until 1970 took over the project. He figured the collaborative designs were so close to their goal that a new prototype was produced in only a record few months.

The new car had a radiator above and to the rear of the engine to save the water pump.

The 4-cylinder engine with side valves was fitted that ultimately, had only 13.5 horsepower. Its top speed was about 53 mph (85 km/h), and it could get about 39.2 mpg (100 km per 6 liters).

On June 15, 1936, the FIAT 500 was put on sale. While the Topolino was a modest car in terms of technology and performance. The price was only about twenty times of the average salary of a skilled worker.

The Topolino sold for about 8,900 Lire and depending on which Lire one used, about 7,000 euro today.

For that, on the base model there was no bumper, no radio, no hand crank windows. Glass slides were in tracts along the door frames. It only had a speedometer and oil pressure gauges. The gas tank is located in the compartment in front of the windshield and over your legs. That bit of design used gravity and eliminated the need for a fuel pump. To save metal there was no folding hood mechanism, only hinges so the hood could tilt forward. The original car had only one hand driven windshield wiper, with two as an option.

The doors were hollowed out to create more space and the door latches were external.

However, the engine was placed ahead of the front suspension creating a spacious interior.

The first FIAT 500 was one of the smallest cars in the world at the time. All three models were produced until 1955, all with only minor mechanical and design changes. They featured the

Italian “alta moda” grill; a streamliner design that made you feel like you were going fast.

## **FIAT Topolino 1937 -1955. Over 520,000 FIAT 500 Topolino were sold.**

The car and name was so popular that FIAT announced plans to revive the historic Topolino name in a Citroen Ami. It would have the same fenders, circular headlights, spare tire embedded under the trunk hood and the unmistakable grill.

As far as Mickey Mouse was concerned, Topolino was a popular comic character in Italy from its start in 1932. Disney figured the use of the Topolino name on a car with national pride would only enhance Mickey’s popularity.

I travel to Italy with my wife for inspiration to paint in watercolors and write stories about Italy. We also take emersion language classes. It is, as they say ...“a hobby gone wild”.

The Topolino in this painting is from Monterosso al Mare. It was just asking for the classic ad setting. So, I painted it on a beach and researched swimwear of the time.

(Hello@) JoelPatience-watercolors.com



# ITALIAN VINTAGE RACING - BUILDING & RACING CLASSIC ITALIAN CARS

by Dr Shelley (with huge input from Denie Hiestand)

OMG! She is sexy! She is gorgeous! She is Italian! And she was built just for me!

Most people get into racing in their younger years but this is the story of somebody who started building and racing cars at 70 years of age!!! And of me, a female, who had zero interest in cars or racing, but got totally hooked!

## BUT WHY ITALIAN?

The old adage is very true... we like to race cars that we grew up with. My partner, Denie, bought his first Italian car, a 1972 FIAT 125 special, when he was a young man in New Zealand. FIATs were very popular among the farming community as the family car. Strong, roomy and reliable. That started his life-long love affair with FIAT cars and in fact, in his farming days, he only had Italian cars and big FIAT 4-wheel drive tractors for his contracting business. "As a young man when you are driving an Italian car, there is something about them," he reminisces, "... they have a feeling, a passion and are naturally good handling." Far superior than anything from Japan or Britain at the time – the main options back in the day, in New Zealand. Denie has had them all in his day, FIATs, Lancias, Alfa Romeos but his original 125 special is still his ultimate favorite of all time. But life happens and Denie's move to America took him away from his cars and boyhood passion for 30 years. Upon his retirement he started saving his pension with the idea of getting an old car and playing with vintage road racing.

Finally settling into Las Vegas in 2010, he built himself a home garage/workshop and in 2019 attended the VARA (Vintage Auto Racing Association) high performance driving school to get his racing license, acquired a semi race-prepared 1959 Austin Healey bug-eye sprite and started racing. He got 6 class podiums out of his first 6 races of his life (2 firsts then the club put him up a class – can't have a newbie cleaning up – then he got 2 seconds and 2 thirds) and won Rookie of the Year with VARA at 70 years of age. But the bug-eye didn't really blow his skirt up.

Denie missed the Italian passion of his youth. He spotted an ad online for some Lancia Scorpion parts in Las Vegas. Fascinated he phoned up and found Eddie Tauson, a Lancia aficionado, who lives in Las Vegas. Upon visiting Eddie,



Denie was amazed to find a yard full of Italian cars, engines and parts. It was like he had found Italian car heaven! Looking at one of Eddie's Lancias, Denie passed the comment, "I'd love to race one of these!" To which Eddie responded, "I've got a race car. It's been sitting in 'sand storage' for 30 years." Yup, it was in a back lot in the desert and it took 2 people, 2 hours, to dig it out of its near death grave experience. However, it duly arrived at Denie's newly built one-bay workshop at his house, and there a new phase of our lives started. How to take an old dying race car and rebuild it into a class winner, without any prior experience – racing or building old cars!

We were fortunate enough to meet Mike Morine, at Cars 'n Coffee one morning in Vegas, with his FIAT Spider which evolved into a friendship where two old fellas spend most of their time in the workshop tinkering and building old race cars. One of the things they learned very quickly was





that FIATs and their parts were very plentiful and relatively cheap in the US, as the US was the biggest market for FIAT 124 spiders, with that amazing twin cam engine. Denie and Mike spent a year stripping and rebuilding the Lancia into a full on, modern spec, racing machine. He sold his Austin Healey bug-eye and took the Lancia from original US Lancia Scorpio specs, to European Monte-Carlo specs. First time out on a test day, 3 laps in, blew the engine up. The old fella did something wrong! Within 3 weeks he had another engine prepared and off we went to our first race meeting which proved to be an entire season of DNF's (Did Not Finishes)

for the Lancia. Denie did not like the handling of the car as this was the first mid-engine car he had driven. He had little, frustrating, ongoing problems such as crank case pressures, gasket failures, oil seal failures, suffice to say the first year the Lancia hardly finished a race. However, it was a huge learning curve, and with continuous modification to the suspension set up, and rebuilding a second engine and meeting Mark Allison and getting him on board as technical advisor, things started to come right and they got some reliability, finally, ending up winning class champion in the 2nd year of running the Lancia.

However, wanting more power, he put Mark Allison in charge of building a full race FIAT Lancia, twin cam, 2 liter motor with everything they had learned. Finally, he has an engine that produces more horse power than the famous Guy Croft achieved, with incredible reliability. Taking Denie to class champion in the Lancia in 2022.

Going back a bit to the start of Covid lock-down at the beginning of 2020, Denie picked up a 1967 124 spider, sort-of race car, on Bring a Trailer. Got it home and stripped it down to a bare shell. Over the 2 years of covid, Denie & Mike, spent every day in the workshop, rebuilding the 124 into an amazing little race car, for me!

It's a special feeling to know every bolt, nut, washer, wiring, gauge, control, switch, etc were all put into the FIAT 124 with me in mind. It was built specifically for me. In its first racing season it became a DP class champion, which is a very competitive class in our Vintage Auto Racing Association (VARA) club. The handling of the 124 spider and Denie's tweaking of the suspension set up, is amazing. The 1800 engine that Denie & Mike built in the home workshop, with everything they had learned from the Lancia experience, is just a high revving, reliable, brilliant little engine. And I have gone from the days of Denie lapping me in my original race car (a 1960 bug-eye sprite) to now I can keep him in my sights the entire race.

It took me a good year to truly feel the Italian passion of the FIAT 124 and to get used to my new Italian lover, her ways, the feeling of racing her on track. Quite different to my first English Austin Healey bug-eye sprite race car that I had raced for 3 years and become very comfortable with. The bug-eye was solid and reliable. It handled the corners well but lacked the extra grunt needed to really keep up with the lads on the straights. The FIAT with its slightly larger 1800 engine and finessed suspension now keeps me at the middle to front of the pack and makes for some very competitive racing. She is definitely Italian. Sexy and passionate. I have never driven an Italian car before, unlike Denie, so it did take some time to get used to her sassy handling, but now at the end of my first racing season with her, I am looking forward to really getting to know her this year.

continued 🐾



It's been quite the journey. Two race cars built by first timers in their 70's, and raced by a 70+ year old and me, neither of us who have ever raced before or had anything to do with race cars, to take two cars to win their respective class championships.

This whole experience of building and racing Italian vintage race cars has been made so much easier by having some amazing resources in the US. Namely on the west coast, Mark Allison, of Allison Automotive in Upland, California. On the East Coast, Mid-West Baillis & Mid-West 124 and in the south/Texas, Auto Ricambi which is the main FIAT/Lancia parts supplier, and of course we must also mention Daniel Snow in Southern California who is a long time FIAT racer and garage owner. The combined resources of these companies is a true gem in the Italian vintage car community and makes building and racing vintage Italian race cars the most affordable option of any make. Parts are never a problem and very reasonably priced. We have been blessed to get to know and partner with some amazing machine shops, custom piston manufacturers, and cam shaft grinders under the watchful eye of Mark Allison. One of the keys to the power and reliability we are now getting out of these FIAT/Lancia twin cam engines is the fact that under Mark Allison's guidance we have the machine shop, piston manufacturer, cam shaft grinder, and piston ring manufacturer all talking



to each other. And of course, with the modern development of 3D scanning, and CNC machining, we can custom make pistons to match the combustion chambers. Something that Guy Croft did not have back in his day.

It is a little-known fact that in its various iterations, the FIAT twin cam engine, has won more world championships in various forms of motor racing, than any other engine in motor racing history. The bottom end of these engines is still used today in FIAT cars around the world, basically unchanged in design philosophy since its first introduction in the 1960's. This engine has gone from 90 HP engine back in the 60's,



to the turbo racing machines in the mid 80's, producing over 500 HP using pretty much the stock bottom end. It is also the most produced engine in a road going car, in world motoring history. The FIAT engine technology is even being used in our new RAM truck! And as a by-word, FIAT group produces more diesel engines than any other manufacturer in the world.

Sadly, FIAT cars have not got a good reputation in the US because American mechanics did not have a great understanding of belt driven, twin overhead cam engines, because American manufacturers produced nothing like that. A lot of the cars came out to America fully assembled from Europe as deck cargo, and therefore had serious rust issues. Whereas in New Zealand the cars were shipped in the holds of the boats and all the ones Denie had in New Zealand never had a rust problem. FIAT were the first car manufacturer in the world to fully dip the entire body shell of the car to rust proof them. In the rest of the world, FIATs have the opposite reputation to that in America, that of great handling, great performance and great reliability. And in fact, in South America, Brazil and Argentina, they outsell every other make of vehicle.

Another by-line... in the VARA Hill Climb Series for 2022, Italian cars had a clean sweep of the Under 2 liter Championships. Denie in his Lancia won the 'Under 2 liter Race Car' Class, and Mark Allison in his turbo 500 Abarth took the 'Under 2 liter Road Car' Championship.

I am blessed as a female race car driver to have Denie & Mike work on my race car and keep it race ready for me. I absolutely LOVE vintage racing and would be out on track every weekend if I could! I love inspiring other women and young females to become race car drivers too.

The next project for Denie & Mike is to rebuild a 1975 FIAT 124 Coupe into the ultimate race car, incorporating all the knowledge and experience gained by building the Lancia and my 124 spider. Keeps the old fellas busy that's for sure! Never a dull moment at Team Kiwi's garage in Las Vegas!

At the track, Team Kiwi's pit gets a lot of attention. Two hot Italian cars. We get a lot of compliments from very experienced race car drivers and builders about how the two cars look and handle on the track. Testament to the passion Denie & Mike both have for Italian cars. Plus the fact that I have a sexy female pit crew helps too!!!

## OUT-TAKES

It amazes me that two old guys in their 70's who have never read a book on race car building or suspension set up, have got two race cars that now handle so brilliantly. However, I was quite surprised one day walking into the workshop to see that Denie had a coiled spring from the rear suspension of my 124 spider, wedged between two boxes, with a short plank on the top of it. He was standing on the short plank, bouncing the spring up and down. "What are you doing?" I asked. He replied, "Feeling which spring to use." Yup, that's Denie! A brilliant engineer but with the added advantage of being able to "feel" things. He has the ability to "plug in" to molecules and feel what will work and what won't. I remember the first time we took the 124 for a test and Denie was not happy at all at how the car handled. He loaded it back onto the trailer, back to the workshop, pulled the back suspension apart, changed a few things, took it back to the track – the difference in handling was chalk and cheese. Just unbelievable! This car sticks in the corners even better than my bug-eye sprite and is so neutral to drive. Turn the steering wheel and she responds. Not many people have that type of "feel" and know what to do to a race car.

Team Kiwi has had an awesome 2022 season. Winning 3 Championships, the Hill Climb, and two class championships. Not bad for two old guys and a chick who have never raced or built race cars before in their lives! Our life now revolves around vintage racing... our entire year schedule is based around our race weekends! One of the most pleasurable parts of vintage racing are the friendships we have made and the people we have met. It's just one big village/family.

## YOU CAN FOLLOW OUR PROGRESS ON WWW

TeamKiwiClassicRacing.com or on our facebook page [www.facebook.com/teamkiwiclassicracing](https://www.facebook.com/teamkiwiclassicracing) and videos on [www.YouTube.com/TeamKiwiClassicRacing](https://www.YouTube.com/TeamKiwiClassicRacing)

# “CHIST’E’ PAZZO”!

by John Dolgetta



I look forward to each new edition of Ricambi for the wonderful photos of my beloved Italian cars, but also for the inspirational stories of those beautifully affected by their experiences owning one of these works of art.

**I would like to add one of my own to the catalogue Ricambi has accumulated over the years.**

In 1967, my Italian immigrant parents decided to move our family back to their small town in the province of Salerno. In the three years we lived an American born reverse immigrants in the town of Sarno, my brother and I learned about the lives we might have had if our parents had never made the trip to New York, and then we fell in love with all things Italian.

At the very top of that list were the cars. Our home was in the center of town. The FIAT 500's, the occasional 600,

the three-wheel Ape, the Innocenti, the rare Alfa Romeo and Lancia's in an Italy that was still recovering from the ills of World War II, buzzed by entering our bloodstreams as we imagined ourselves behind the wheel of any one of them. My cousin Vincenzo's 850 SS Moretti Sportiva, was a special treat each time he pulled into our driveway as if he was making an F1 pit stop. My mother would always point out in her best Neapolitan "chist'e' pazzo" (he's crazy). We were all crazy with passions that were impossible to describe accurately if one didn't live them in their native environment.

Our parents unwittingly granted us the chance to inhale that life... we did... completely, and we took it back with us to America. We returned to New York in 1970 with Italian clothes, shoes, hairstyles, and a heavy nostalgia that has taken us back for summer vacations till this day.

During the summer of 1972, Mom and Pop took us to a FIAT dealership on Long Island. They made a deal for a new 124 Coupé positioned in the center of the showroom like a



proud work of art at the Uffizi in Florence. My brother and I opened and shut the doors a dozen times, taking turns at changing the gears, touching every switch, wondering what the radio would sound like, running our hands over the smooth surface of the last of the wood steering wheels, and reading to each other the Italian descriptions on each gauge. I had just gotten my license, so our new FIAT became my first car. When I drove it into the school parking lot at Fordham Prep in the Bronx for the first time, all eyes were on my red beauty. For certain there were the ubiquitous BMW's, Mercedes, and Jaguars of the suburbanites, but mine was one they had never seen. Questions abounded about its origins. FIAT was a brand known by only a handful of my classmates... by the end of senior year, it had become the cool car many would have pursued if not for the manual transmission.

By 1974, the paint had started to fade, so I saved enough money from my job at the pizzeria a block from my building to pay for a new paint job. The color silver/gray was just becoming popular. Two weeks later I picked up what appeared to me to be the most beautiful machine ever built to transport people. I added white FIAT stripes just above the ricker panels. That summer of 1974, the look was so fresh and completely unmatched on the streets of the Pelham Parkway section of the Bronx.

No more than a few days later, I got off from work a few hours early to shower and prep for my date with my girlfriend who would see the newer version of the Coupe for the first time. The rear of our building looked out onto the elevated train tracks of the Allerton Avenue stop. As I showered, anticipating a startled look from my date, and the joy of pulling up to her house like a knight in shining silver armor,

when the sickening screech of rubber on asphalt and the inevitable crashing sound of metal on metal invaded my bathroom through the open window.

I thought to myself: how sad someone just messed up their car wrapping it around one of the steel columns; hope no one got hurt. I was too suds up to peek, so I continued to wash up. Moments later, my mother knocked gently on the bathroom door to ask if I would soon be done. She followed the question with an ominous notice that she would wait there.

When I came face to face with anxious mother, she simply said I shouldn't be angry with my brother. I reminded her that we weren't kids any longer, and that sibling rivalries and demonstrations of anger were something of the past. With that good answer, she said to follow her from our second-floor apartment to the front of the building. There was a small crowd gathered. My father, my uncle Pellegrino and several younger cousins. They were fixated on the passenger side of my Coupe completely totaled.

Baffled, I couldn't have imagined that my brother, only sixteen months younger, had decided to take the car for a spin. He couldn't resist, and little did I know that he would start his fantasy rally car career practicing weaving in and around the steel column obstacle course of the elevated trains.

A few tears escaped my watery eyes, but the sight of a grieving sibling kept any anger in check. We shared the same passion for driving Italian cars, but my brother Joe, rightfully understood that passion needed to be driven. That day I could only wish to have been in the passenger seat. With his overly cautious older brother by his side, we may have had many more drive our passions as well.



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## PART 2 – RESTORING A FIAT DINO 2400

by Chip Williams and Karen Knapp



We purchased our 1970 FIAT Dino 2400 Spider in April of 2022 with the intent of showing it at a variety of major concours. Doing so, however, requires a full, ground-up restoration to the highest standards. We chose the award-winning White Post Restorations in northern Virginia for the work, and we're reporting on the car's progress in Ricambi through a series of articles.

The first step was to get our car into the queue. At any given time, White Post has about 12 cars undergoing full restoration, but also has another 6 or 7 in partial restoration. They also have as many as 24 other cars on site awaiting work (White Post now quotes a one-year wait for a full restoration). So, our car had to wait its turn. After we signed the work contract, a deposit was made to hold its spot in line, but unlike most of the cars White Post restores, our car was an intact driving car, so we were able to keep it at home and enjoy it for the first few months. We finally sent the car to them in August.

In mid-November, the car was moved into the bay that will be its home for the duration of its restoration. White Post's first order of business was to thoroughly photograph the car, inventory its loose and extra parts, and research period documents to assure the historical accuracy of their work.

As disassembly began, the hood, trunk lid, cowl, gas filler cover, and doors came off. Everything was carefully inspected and any necessary repairs were sent to the body shop. For example, once the door cards and windows were removed, it was discovered that a previous owner had exchanged the power window regulators for incorrect ones from a much later FIAT 124. Unfortunately, in order to do this, the owner took a Sawzall and opened up several large holes for access. Since this was hidden by the door card, the owner probably thought no one

would notice, but we did. Hidden or not, in order to be correct, the White Post body shop cleaned up the holes, and then welded new pieces in place to return the inner door panels to their original configuration. The outer surfaces of the doors were in excellent condition, but under the paint was an overabundance of completely unnecessary Bondo. All of this was removed, and after the necessary repairs were completed, the bare metal parts were then sprayed with primer and set aside.

The beautiful Ferrari 2.4-liter Dino motor was removed and placed on an engine stand. During disassembly, it was found that the alternator and fuel pump were not correct, so proper replacements were sourced. Interestingly, the previous owner had left the distributor in a rotated, fully retarded position! Although the engine underwent a \$40,000 rebuild in 2013 (we have the receipts), it will be completely taken apart to assure the work was done correctly. Then, in reassembling the engine, special attention will be paid to sealing all oil leaks, since a leaking engine will never pass inspection at a concours. Still awaiting disassembly are the gearbox and final drive.

The interior was next to be removed, including the seats and carpets, and all of the small and large chromed trim pieces were gathered for repair and replating. Removing the wiring loom, it was noted that while the Italians historically used robust wires, their crimped-on blade connectors were coming apart and bare wire was exposed in many places. There was also evidence that a previous owner had installed a car alarm and an upgraded radio. But these had long since been removed and they left behind a tangle of dead-end wires. A new wiring harness will eventually be fitted, complete with a new fuse box—there were still fifty-year-old original fuses inside—in an effort to reduce the risks of arcing and fire. To accommodate the car alarm,

the previous owner had also replaced parts of the wooden dash with non-matching wood, so White Post's carpenters will make a completely new dash. The top of the dashboard was in good condition, but its black vinyl cover was faded and brittle, so it, too, will be sent out for recovering.

The suspension components were initially left on the car so it could be rolled around the shop if needed, but with progressive disassembly, the suspension was removed and sandblasted for inspection. Those parts are currently awaiting paint and new bushings. Interestingly, previous owners had replaced some of the bolts in the suspension with modern, non-FIAT ones: the original bolt heads should have FIAT and the bolt's grade cast on them. The proper ones will have to be sourced and substituted in to assure the car's accuracy.

With the body completely disassembled, the car was then placed on a rotisserie so the body shop could begin its work. Sitting alone on the frame, without wheels, doors, or windshield, the flowing Pinninfarina lines really stand out—what a beautiful car!

Computers were used to generate the data necessary to replicate the original paint color, as the removal of all old paint will begin soon. Our car was originally painted with factory-optional metallic blue paint.

Close inspection of the body on the rotisserie was very encouraging, as it was deemed to be a very solid car. A hole about the size of a fifty-cent piece was found in the bottom of the battery box, probably from either electrolytic corrosion or errant battery acid, but this will be easy to repair. A second bit of corrosion, probably from rust, was found at the lower, trailing edge of the inner surface of the passenger door. The area was cleaned, ragged edges were removed, and sheet metal inserts were fashioned. After grinding the welds smooth, the finished, bare metal door was painted with a primer. Remarkably, no rust was found anywhere else on the body.

There was also evidence that the car had sustained some very minor body damage to the left front corner many years ago. Unfortunately, whoever repaired it did a very poor job, simply using spot welds instead of continuous, ground down welds. Once the paint is completely removed from the body, a full assessment of this area can be done and any necessary repairs will be done properly by White Post's body shop.

The receipts from 2013 show the seats were re-covered and a new convertible top was installed. None of these parts fit well, however, so a full interior upholstery and new top are anticipated.

While White Post has only been working on the car for a few weeks, their progress has been impressive. Still, there are some potential pitfalls awaiting us under the body's paint and inside the engine. We'll hopefully have a fuller understanding of what work will be required within the next few weeks, and any new work will be document in Part 3.

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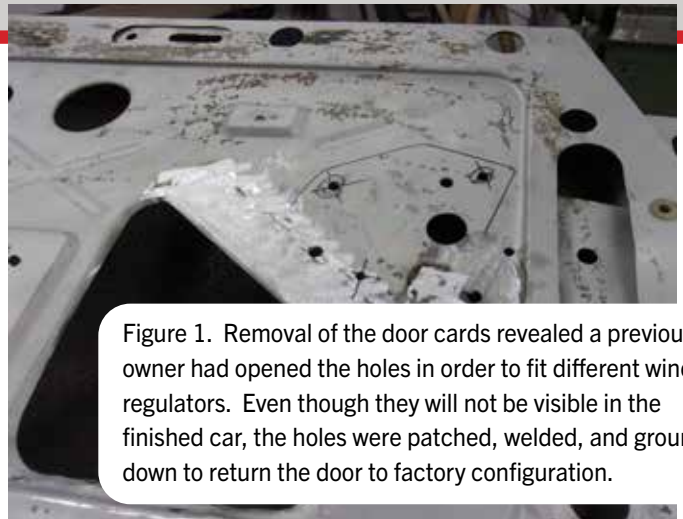


Figure 1. Removal of the door cards revealed a previous owner had opened the holes in order to fit different window regulators. Even though they will not be visible in the finished car, the holes were patched, welded, and ground down to return the door to factory configuration.

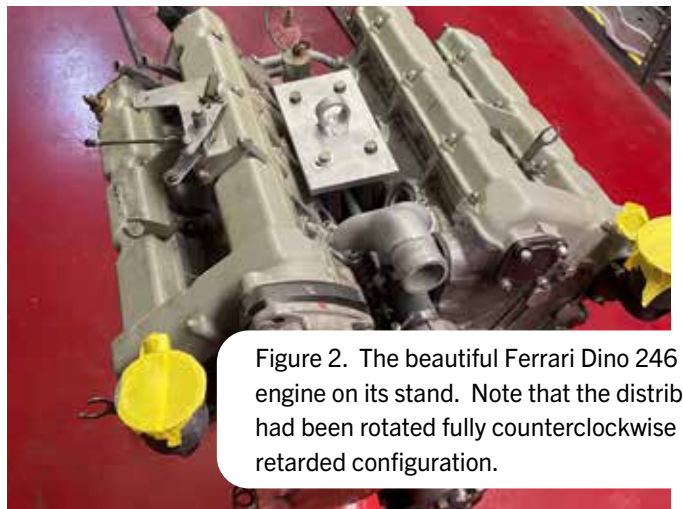


Figure 2. The beautiful Ferrari Dino 246 engine on its stand. Note that the distributor had been rotated fully counterclockwise in a retarded configuration.

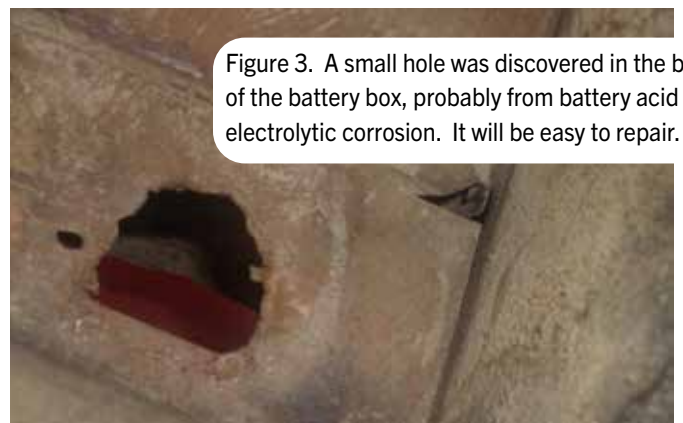


Figure 3. A small hole was discovered in the bottom of the battery box, probably from battery acid or electrolytic corrosion. It will be easy to repair.



Figure 4. The original fuse box (left side of picture) still contains fifty-year-old fuses.

by Mike Sizemore

# Memorable FIAT 850 Spiders

Even though I had read about FIATs in car magazines in the late 1960's I hadn't had an opportunity to experience one first hand until my last summer in college. During that summer I worked as a migrant farm worker taking a Greyhound bus from my home near St. Louis up to far northern Wisconsin to pick cucumbers. I had worked there for a couple weeks before another kid from the St. Louis area arrived. He had driven up in his almost new FIAT 850 Spider. Being



near the same age, coming from the St. Louis area, and both being sports car enthusiasts we got along well. Since he had wheels we could occasionally drive into one of the nearby small towns to catch a burger or ice cream after a backbreaking day of picking. Having previously owned a Triumph TR3 and an MGB I was intrigued by the FIAT. The FIAT seemed so much more technologically advanced with its smoother, higher-revving motor, lighter steering, more compliant independent suspension, and more comfortable seating, not to mention better-sculpted styling compared to the British cars.

When the cucumber crop came to an end the guy allowed me to ride back south with him. After attending a rock music festival in Minneapolis on the shores of the Mississippi we followed the scenic river road back to St. Louis during which I got to drive the 850 for a large part of the route. The car was amazing to drive and handled so lightly that I was immediately smitten by the FIAT. It was totally reliable for the whole trip, and gas mileage was excellent which was a consideration on our budgets even though gas only cost about twenty-nine cents a gallon back then.

A couple years after college by the time I was married and had our first child we had been driving a hand-me-down Oldsmobile 98 land yacht when I became aware of a nearly new FIAT 850 Spider for sale in a Positano Yellow (butterscotch) color for an affordable \$1200. We added that as a second car which allowed my wife and daughter to have wheels while I was off to work. The car was so much fun and so reliable that we usually opted to drive it for fun outings, even camping trips in the Missouri Ozarks to also enjoy



those curvy roads. Yes, the front trunk and rear luggage shelf could accommodate all our camping gear and occasionally a third passenger in those pre-airbag days. I performed all the maintenance on the car since it was mechanically simple and accessible. I may still own that car except that my wife was involved in a crash when an old guy in a pickup truck abruptly turned left in front of her from the right lane. The car was totalled, but my wife was uninjured. My insurance company allowed me to harvest the engine and transaxle since I was definitely planning to search for another 850. My wife beat me to finding a replacement, a 1974 FIAT X1/9, which became her daily driver. But our subsequent string of X1/9s over the years may be another story.

Over the years I've probably owned thirty FIAT 850 Spiders, several of which were cars that I bought just to scrap out for parts after FIAT withdrew from the U.S. market. I had always preferred the early model 1967 and 1968 model years which had faired-into the body glass headlight covers which were more pure to the original style. I was able to convert a friend of mine into FIAT appreciation by passing along to him an early model covered headlight 850 that he was able to nurse along as a fun driver for several years beyond the body becoming structurally unsafe. After that, he and I jointly restored a structurally and cosmetically sound early model (Giallo) into which we implanted a later model 903 cc motor and Abarth ventilated rear panel. This completed car was later also transferred to my friend who maintained it for several years.

He and I drove that car on a memorable trip up to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. On a stopover in Chicagoland on the way up to visit a friend, the friend said he would like it if we would stop over in Racine, Wisconsin where his sailboat was being kept tied off to a buoy in the harbor there. He welcomed us to stay aboard the boat as lodging on our way up or back. On our way back from the UP we decided to take him up on his offer since we had been carrying his inflatable dinghy the whole trip which took up the entire space of the parcel shelf of the car. We got to Racine, inflated the dinghy, and

rowed out to the boat to spend the night. The evening and sunset were beautiful. But in the middle of the night I was awakened by a storm rocking the sailboat. The hatchway looking out to the back of the boat was open, and I could see my friend, when lightning bolts illuminated him, barfing over the back rail of the boat. He came into the cabin and insisted that we gather our gear and get aboard the dinghy to get to shore. I argued that the four-foot tall waves would swamp the dinghy in a minute, but he was unrelenting. So we gathered our gear and barely made it into the dinghy where we were immediately blown toward the shore. We were soaked and washed up on the large rocks of the shore. We loaded up our completely



but not having even asked about or searched my luggage. This was pre-911; couldn't get by with that now. I bought a bare body shell of an early model 850 Spider from Greg Schmidt back in those days which some gracious relative from out there delivered to me in the midwest a few years later. I still have that body shell which has been a long-term project of mine; over the years I haven't accomplished much on it other than having media blasted it, painted it, installed enough suspension to make it a roller, and having fabricated a roll cage copied after a vintage 850 race car I had back in the day.

Greg Schmidt sold out his business and inventory twenty years or so ago and was absent from the community for a long time. However, I re-connected with him a couple of years ago and have been in communication with him since he now lives in the midwest. I sold him a FIAT 850 Spider project that I had been working



drenched belongings and drove around Racine to look for a laundromat to dry our clothing and luggage. It was about 3:00 a.m., so that we were fortunate that no one came into the laundromat to find us standing around in our tightee whitees while every dryer in the place was busy drying our clothes and gear.

During the 1990s there were only a few suppliers of FIAT parts in the country, since FIAT as a manufacturer did not sell vehicles or parts in the U.S. This was pre-internet, so all correspondence and sales were conducted via snail mail correspondence and paper currency. I was fortunate that my in-laws had retired to San Diego. Whenever we visited the in-laws I took the opportunity to visit the FIAT Mecca of renown FIAT specialist, Greg Schmidt, who operated a repair shop as well as a voluminous inventory of factory new as well as used FIAT and Abarth parts. Greg had written books about FIATs and Abarths and was a wealth of knowledge about their upkeep and modification. His books, "FIAT and Abarth Tricks", "Abarth", and his "FIAT Parts" still serve as excellent guides for owners of rear-engine FIATs. Every time I returned from San Diego I brought back repair and upgrade parts for my car. One time going through airport security on the flight home my wife's bags were searched due to some small jewelry items of her mother's that she was bringing back. My bag was not searched even though it contained an Abarth geared belt pulley kit, ignition system items, and a couple of Koni shock absorbers. My wife didn't rat me out, but on the flight home she kept complaining about the security guys haven shaken her down

on for a few years confident that Greg would get it operational. He recently communicated to me that he has now gotten that car to an operational driving status.

In the late 1990s or early 2000s I saw an ad in Sports Car Market Letter for an early model FIAT 850 Spider which had been converted to FIAT 124 twin-cam power. The car was located in the Chicago suburbs. When we were on a trip to Chicagoland to visit family I convinced my wife to swing by and look at this car since it was kinda on our way. I did not expect to be able to buy the car but was interested in seeing how the motor transplant had been done. Over the years I had researched how to do this mechanical conversion and had hoped to perform one some day. Back in the '70s a handful of FIAT aftermarket parts manufacturers had made conversion kits containing some of the essential parts such as the motor-to-transaxle adaptor, engine support crossmember, cooling system plumbing to a front radiator, and such. Those parts have become extremely rare since then.

When we approached the seller's suburban house where a Rolls and an Italian exotic car were parked out front I became even more certain that the FIAT would be well out of our price range, but I was still interested in inspecting it. The gracious elderly seller invited us into his garage, which from the street appeared to be a usual two or three car garage. However, it spread out in the back to one open garage space housing 25 - 30 cars, all of them high-end collectible cars, mostly vintage sports cars, most of them Italian.

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Figure 5. Top: A small amount of rust damage was found on the trailing edge of the passenger door. Bottom: Repairs were made by welding in patches and grinding it smooth.



Figure 6. Left: Many of the suspension bolts had been replaced with modern versions. Right: Original-style bolts will be sourced and inserted for historical accuracy.



Figure 7. The suspension components (bottom shelf) were removed, sand-blasted, and inspected.



Figure 8. The stripped Dino 2400 body sits on its rotisserie. The author (right) and Billy Thompson, fourth-generation co-owner and Vice President of White Post Restorations (left), discuss the car's future.



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**Memorable 850 Spiders**

We were entranced and wandered among the Ferraris, Lamborghinis, Lancias, and Maseratis before locating the lowly FIAT in the midst of them. The 850 Spider was gorgeous - - early model covered headlight model with flawless red paint work. On further inspection and discussion with the seller all the conversion appeared to have been done in accordance with the now unobtainable pieces - - PBS adaptor, Abarth engine support member, Abarth coolant header tank, rebuilt 1800 cc FIAT twin cam motor, VW transaxle to handle the extra torque, custom exhaust, more than I could have ever achieved by my mechanical skills even if I had been able to source the necessary parts. The conversion had been done by Michael Besic, a noted Alfa race car shop. We talked to the gentleman seller at length, and he was very knowledgeable about the details of the conversion. When we got around to talking price of the car he mentioned that he was selling it for less than the cost of the car's paint job. This piqued my interest. Before I could make an offer he suggested a price almost half the asking price I had seen in the Sports Car Market classified ad. I hesitated for a bit because my wife was at my side, and I already owned more FIATs than we could house, but she elbowed me in the ribs in encouragement because even she recognized what a value it was. I immediately accepted his offer and agreed to pick up the car the following weekend. The seller was obviously ready to fill the FIAT's space with something more upscale.

I've owned and prized that 850 continuously to the present. I trailered it out to the 1999 FIAT FreakOut at Fontana but only got one pass over and back on the Tail of the Dragon before the fuel



pump quit. Fortunately, I had had the foresight to bring my Ducati Monster in the U-Haul box van that was serving as my tow vehicle. I also showed Rosso at the 2019 FreakOut where it suffered an electrical problem and was outmatched by several extremely cute FIAT 500s and 600s.

My FIAT 850 collection is now limited to three early model 850 Spiders - the 850 with the twin cam, the rolling chassis that I bought from Greg Schmidt all those years ago, and an in-progress project car sourced out of North Dakota which I've had painted a Porsche tangerine (arancia) color. Within the last year I've managed to talk Merkel Weiss, the president of the California-based Rear Engine FIAT Club, into selling me, after 15 years or longer of haggling, his Moretti Sportiva which is Moretti coachwork based on the FIAT 850 chassis and running gear with an Abarth 1050 motor.

I've been fortunate to have owned several cars over the years, but the FIAT 850 Spiders continue to be my favorites.



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Auto Ricambi recently launched a new website to better serve the owners of the modern FIAT 500. We are investing time and resources into inventory and product knowledge so we will be here to keep your modern FIAT 500 running great.

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Check out our growing inventory of new parts for your FIAT X1/9 with our easy to use website.

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*photo by Killboy.com - 1981 Fiat Spider 2000 owned by Don and Debi Yates*



Check out our websites for an extensive line of products for the FIAT models shown above.