

ALFANATIC

Remembering George Meikrantz

George was a key player and driving force in the history of AROC-Wisconsin—active in every aspect of the club until his MS advanced to the point of limiting his activities. He passed away Friday, October 23, 2015. George did not wish to have a funeral or even have an obituary placed in the newspaper. Hopefully he will forgive us for publishing these remembrances from those who knew him.



Very sorry to hear of George's passing. He certainly did give of himself for this organization. Some years ago, when I was doing the newsletter, George sent me the attached photo to save for this time. It's a picture from the Hill Climb when he was in better health. He wanted people to remember him this way. - Janice Ziglin



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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

In memory of GEORGE MEIKRANTZ

As a freshman in college I decided that someday I would own an Alfa Romeo. I regularly enjoyed reading Road & Track in the college library and I was quite taken with the enthusiastic reviews of these affordable exotics. It took more than a couple of decades to make it happen however as college, getting married, buying a home, and starting a family took precedence. When I was in a position to make it happen, I reached out to George Meikrantz when my search identified him as the area contact for the Alfa Romeo Owners Club. Armed with the knowledge gained from my telephone conversations with George, I continued my quest.

On Memorial Day weekend of 1990 I saw an ad in the Milwaukee Journal for a 1971 GTV 1750. The car was located near Cascade, WI. I checked it out and decided that this was the car for me. I made an offer and put down a deposit with the final sale subject to review by George. On a weeknight after work, I picked up George in Cedarburg and we headed up to check out my find. Following careful scrutiny, a com-

pression check, and a spirited test drive, he gave it his blessing. I remember the day as if it were yesterday. I got to drive the Alfa home, smiling all the way, while he followed in my '82 Plymouth Champ.



George at '96 Fall Color Tour

George took the time to make sure I got to know the important maintenance issues relating to my new pride and joy. I fondly remember the many tech sessions George held in his garage. There was always a

2016 Local, Regional, and International Events Calendar

Anything missing? Send dates for events we've missed and we'll include them in the next calendar. email: rabhalter@att.net

January 11-24	North American International Auto Show, Cobo Center, Detroit, MI
January 23-31	Phoenix Area Collector Car Auctions
February 3-7	Salon Retromobile, Paris Expo, Paris France
February 13-21	Chicago Auto Show, McCormick Place, Chicago
February 20-28	Milwaukee Auto Show, Wisconsin Center, Milwaukee
March 3-13	Geneva International Motor Show, Geneva, Switzerland
March 11-13	Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, Amelia Island, Florida
May 7, 2016 (T)	AROC-WI New Glarus Hillclimb New Glarus, WI
May 13, 2016	Spring Vintage Weekend, Road America
June 3-5, 2016	Concours d'Elegance of Chicago , Northerly Island, Chicago, IL
June 15-19	SVRA Brickyard Vintage Racing International, Indianapolis, IN
June 16-19	Weather Tech Chicago Region June Sprints, Road America
June 16-19	AROC National Convention , Nashville, TN
June 18-19	The 24 Hours of LeMans
June 23-26	Verizon Indy Car Series/ Pirelli World Challenge, Road America
July 14-17	Weather Tech International Challenge with Brian Redman presented by Hawk, Road America
August 4-7	Continental Tire Road Race Showcase. Road America
August 7 (T)	AROC-WI Italian Car and Motorcycle Show
August 21	Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance
August 25-27	NASCAR Xfinity Series, Road America
August 27-28	The Milwaukee Masterpiece and Saturday Club Day, Veterans Park, Milw.
September 16-18	VSCDA Elkhart Lake Vintage Festival, Road America

good gathering with hot coffee, donuts, good conversation, and the opportunity to learn. I brought my transmission to one of the session. George helped me rebuild it with new synchros and bearings. I thought it remarkable that we heated up parts in his gas kitchen stove ease a press fit reassembly. Years later he had an engine in his kitchen that he was helping someone rebuild.



George at Colin Comer's shop, Summer '98

George was an avid bicycle enthusiast and enjoyed many a long ride in the country. As time went on, George's medical condition limited his mobility—initially a little and later on a lot. He welcomed visitors and always had a wide variety of beer to offer his guests. Sometimes a few bottles of beer were sent along home. Each visit resulted in something to take home, read and return, or pass along to someone else when finished. As his ability to communicate verbally became more difficult, he used his computer to express himself. Through it all he was a good listener and remained a respected friend.

George served the club in so many ways; president, event coordinator, newsletter editor, librarian, tool lending, tech sessions, etc. He was most generous in his regular donation of books for the club's annual banquet. His generosity with his time and his enthusiasm for all things Alfa was contagious.

Thanks, George, for the many memories. You will always be fondly remembered as a true ALFANATIC!

Gary Schommer 🍀



At Wisconsin Auto Museum: (l-r) Gary Schommer, Angelo Ramirez, Mike Tozzi, George Meikrantz, Jim Zyla



Tour at Ray Summerfield's shop: (l-r) Ray Summerfield, George Meikrantz, Gary Wirth

George Meikrantz

By Colin Comer

In 1988 I was a 16-year-old learning the intricacies of Alfa ownership through trial and error. Mostly error. I was given an old WAROC newsletter and told I could contact George Meikrantz to borrow the Club's SPICA tools and valve shim set if needed. So I called George, a total stranger, and he asked if I could be at his house in thirty minutes. He said it in such a way I was pretty sure that it wasn't a question. Upon arriving George handed me the tools but quickly sensed I had no freaking clue how (or why) to use them. Moments later I was a passenger in my GTV with madman George blasting through Cedarburg assessing how it ran. He then used the SPICA tools to set up the throttle stops, fuel cutoff, and main mixture solenoid. Once that was done he put paint on all of these things, grabbed me by the temples, looked me dead in the eyes and said, "Do not touch these again. Are you listening? DO NOT TOUCH THESE AGAIN." I left with the shim set, a micrometer, and George's valve adjustment worksheet with instructions to not screw up this task and to return with the car afterwards so he could verify I didn't.

This was George in a nutshell. A stubborn, opinionated teacher willing to help a complete stranger. And with that first lesson George quickly became my Alfa mentor. I appreciated the fact he never sugar-coated anything and I think he appreciated that I (usually) did things the way he thought I should. He also seemed to take some pity on my high school student finances. For a long time even the reasonable dues for WAROC were a stretch for me and George was kind enough to tolerate that. He'd mail newsletters stamped "Complementary," usually with a handwritten note that said "Colin: Can you afford a membership YET? -Geo." And in spite of long lapses between paid membership, George would always encourage my participation in the Club. The tech sessions in George's garage, back in the heady days of triple-digit WAROC membership numbers and all of us driving old Alfas, will be forever etched in my mind. They not only involved the "tech" I needed to learn but also introduced me to people who would become life-long friends, just like George.

When I started my business in 1993 George was not only one of my best customers but also my best advocate. He was demanding, and quite particular, but it was all done from his heart. He always demanded perfection, and in the process forced me to be better. His famous line when working on any of his cars was

"Colin, pretend I am driving this car to Alaska tomorrow. I better make it." George would send me customers and then tell me how to fix their cars and how much to charge them—his way of helping two friends at once. He pushed me to host WAROC events at my shop, including migrating a few tech sessions from his garage to mine. And lest you think the temple-grabbing was a one-time thing let me assure you: It was not. That was George's way of making a point, and it worked.

Don't get me wrong, it is not as if George and I didn't butt heads once in a while. The stubborn and opinionated part came through often, such as when I'd submit an ad for the *Alfanatic* and George would "adjust" my pricing before print if he felt it was warranted. When the MS was starting to take George's mobility he fought it. Hard. When I'd try to help he'd get pissed off and I'd be equally pissed he wouldn't let me. But we always worked through all of this stuff. George would often visit me at work just to have an excuse to go for a ride. When walking eventually became too much of a challenge he would simply pull his van into my shop and we'd just sit in it and talk. He'd ask how I thought his voice was and if I could understand him. He was a man who was so fiercely proud he didn't want to have anybody look at him as if he needed help. And when it was time to go there were no words wasted—typically he'd start the van and say, "I'm leaving" moments before slamming it into reverse.

It was hard to watch my friend who was so mentally sharp have his body fail him, but clearly it was hardest for George. As the years went by our visits became fewer and then solely electronic, but our friendship evolved from teacher and student to one of equals, which made me quite proud. The best part was that George was always George. He would take pride in my successes yet was always there with solid advice if things were going the other way. He was a historian, an engineer, a walking service manual, and a life coach all in one. I'll be forever grateful for the invitation to stop by in 1988, and as much as I'll deeply miss my friend George I'm happy he finally has the peace he has sought for so long.

Godspeed, George. And yes, I was listening. Thank you. 🍀



Colin Comer wrote:

Attached is my remembrance of George (see previous page) and a photo from a WAROC event I hosted at my shop in 1995.

George is front row right of center. Unfortunately his is now the 4th friend in this photo to have passed away. What a difference 20 years makes.

Hi, certainly sorry to hear about George passing away. Have known him for over 40 years. What I remember is he had a large Alfa poster that covered the entire back of his van. It was very impressive. He also gave an Alfa engine to the Kessel museum in Hartford.

Regards, Roy Ferrari

George was the driving force for AROC-Wisconsin for many years, and successfully passed the torch to the next generation. For a young Alfa enthusiast, the go-to destination was Cedarburg's Hamilton Road. George and neighbor Randy anchored the most amazing geographical mile of Alfa Romeos in the country, capped by David Uihlein's pre-war cars just south on that same road and Al Pinkowsky's parents garage in the middle. He was a die-hard Alfisti, and I am relieved that he has found peace.

Bill Hall

Sad in so many ways... so many underlying stories of this complex individual...

Jim Huff

A YouTube posting by George's daughter, Becky Stacey:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UptYQM0FBtk>

I'd like to relate some anecdotes about George. I met George in 1978. George, Gary Wirth, Jim Huff, and I were instrumental in starting the AROCW in Milwaukee. We had our first "event" as just a get together at Estabrook Park. I believe we had about 12 Alfas there. George had a beautiful 2600 Spider.

Over the years we were involved in a lot of Alfa stuff and even cross country ski raced together. George was older than me but tenacious as hell!

He demonstrated this tenacity to me several times over the last few years. One day I visited and George was on the floor. This was not unusual as that's how George got around his house. I asked him if I could help him up into his kitchen chair. "NO!" was about all he could say. I sat and watched him struggle to get in the chair. It took about 15 minutes. At first I was anxious because I wanted to help him. Then I realized he was trying to show me just what he was made of. I sat back and enjoyed George's performance.

He knew exactly where to put each hand and how to balance himself. At one time he used his chin on the table to support himself while he moved his left hand. When he was finally in the chair, he gave me a great big smile! I was in awe of his strength and determination.

That's how George went about everything. He immersed himself in everything he was interested in. His library was constantly changing and challenging! He could converse on almost any topic. He was opinionated but also very interested in other's points of view.

George was an exceptional man who enlightened us all. He will be missed.

Russ Whitford
S/V Tumultuous Uproar
Chesapeake Bay

George Meikrantz, My Friend!

By Brad Trick

It was 1995 when I had attended my very first Alfa Romeo Owners meeting. It was a get together at a garage with Alfas. I remember George walking across the parking lot with the aid of some crutches. He asked me who I was and welcomed me. It seemed that from that very first meeting he took the time to help me in any way he could with the goal to keep me in Alfas and encourage me to be active with the club.

George helped me identify the Alfa Romeo engine that I bought for \$40 at a rummage sale. I will never forget how shocked he was that I sold that engine that was from a 1957 Normale for \$650.

I mentioned to him once how I saw an engine with a glass top that was made into a table at Hinsdale Ferrari and that I would like to do that with an Alfa engine. That led to George, without my knowledge, posting an advertisement in the *Alfanatic* stating I wanted an engine to make a table. Of course a fellow Alfa owner saw the advertisement and after two weekends I got the engine pulled out and that engine resides in my man cave today along with pictures, books, and other meaningful Alfa Romeo items that George generously gave me over the years.

I tried to give him gifts and he sort of yelled at me and expressed to me that I could do something else. One thing George and I had in common outside of our love for Italian automobiles was a love for Dachshund dogs. He had a couple in the past and due to his health problems he could not have one. So on a couple of occasions I came over with my two wiener dogs. Seeing these dogs made George smile. If you ever owned one you would understand why these dogs are so special. When my wife and I were participating as foster parents for Dachshund rescue it was George who found a home for one of the sweetest dogs named Weiner.

George assigned me many projects to help with the newsletter. I wrote a story on a repair that I had done on replacing a stepper motor on an Alfa 164. He insisted that I read books that he owned and write book reports to share out with the club. I remember at the time thinking, why am I doing this? But today I'm so glad I did.

Last night as I put my Alfa Romeo Spider in storage I kept thinking of George. As I was changing the oil, laying the plastic down for the car to be parked on, I

kept thinking how George would have an article on properly storing your Alfa for winter in the newsletter about now.

George more than anyone else gave me the confidence to own and do things with Alfa Romeos that most people would never even consider. He inspired me to drive a new to me 10-year-old Alfa Romeo from California back to Wisconsin. George was more to me than somebody who seemed to know a great deal about Alfa Romeos but also a wonderful trusted friend. I feel so fortunate and blessed to have known George Meikrantz!

The article below is reprinted from the July 2013 Alfanatic

AROC--WISCONSIN—ORIGINS

Memories from the early history of our chapter

George Meikrantz, 1st president
29 Alfas, 6 Biturbos, 2 Fiat 128

In One Sentence

George moved to Grafton in 1970 from Michigan with a clean '68 Montecatini green Duetto; joined AROC; read about AROC of Western Wisc. in mid '76; ran into president Scott Romanski at Tosa Imports at 69th and North, learning 3/81 that the Madison group was folding; and drove to a Madison meeting at glitzy Sue Gustin's to get elected president and bring the focus to Milwaukee.

Networking

The first Alfa guy I met was Gary Wirth at Fourintune two blocks from our apartment. His '66 Spider had just been painted. He talked up fellow engineer Russ Whitford (a new maroon Alfetta and several Giuliettas in parts on the driveway) so I hung out lots on the east side and met other Alfa people, especially at Tosa Imports. I think I met Carol and Paul Neumann at the old Tosa location on 73rd and North. In those years—pre International, etc.—there were lots of stops at the dealers; there was the convenient for me Millrace Motors in Thiensville (Jags, Volvo). Resource Tom Zat was in Edwardsville, Ill., and Jim Kauffman was in Green Bay. Gary had a needy Giulietta coupe so we and Russ drove to G.B. and saw tons. Other resources were O'Reilly's on Brady St., a killer machine shop, and MP Enterprise on North Ave. We reached out to the Chicago people—Knauz was the big time dealer; later in the '70s, Russ and I

drove to two tech sessions in Geneva, Ill., at Rex Chalmer's Alfa/Saab shop. We met Jim Huff shivering in a silver GTV—October, Road America. The four of us formed the initial core—Russ, newsletter; Jim, treasurer; Gary, events.

Events

My earliest memory was four Alfas in the '70s (1972?) on my horseshoe driveway. Neighbor Dave Uihlein saw us but didn't stop that day. Very soon, we met by the river in Estabrook Park adding Carol and Paul Neumann. Bill Paul owned the "race car garage" on Weill and Concordia, so many hung out there, and, of course, we frequented the new Tosa Imports on 68th and North.

Steadily, lots of Alfa people were forming a network and friendships, with lots of tech events. Tech sessions were always well attended, with Gary, Russ, Jim, and yours truly having lots of dirty nails with "projects," dentist Jim Herman excepted. In Cedarburg, we had a so-so dyno session at Kreuger's but lots of conversation; the attempt was worth it. The Fourintune techs/visits (10?) were always first class due to Tom Kovak's knowledge and high standards. Tom Schmock drove his newish cool red Milano to his first event. We were preaching gearbox lube, so Tom got a free change and magnetic plug inspection!

My number one tech event/visit memory was Rick Bunkfeldt—Ferrari and Alfa 8C 2300 engine re-builder. Extraordinary! Dave Uihlein's wife's Bugatti was getting some exotic voltage regulator work done.

Our first big real, official, event was a rally on the Holy Hill roads, ending at a quiet bar on Lake Keesus. The Chicago people rented Road America in the fall—a solid Wisconsin turnout. Our first banquet in December at the Milwaukee Yacht Club became our long-term very popular venue. (Russ's boat was named Veloce.) We started our AROC-Wisc. Italian car show at Mount Mary College—same scenic location as the CCCA.

At Kalt's we showed the awesome Shell racing movies. We visited Ray Summerfield's three great times and Rex Chalmers ten impeccable times. We attended the showing of new Alfetta, GTV6, and Milano models at Reina's shops. We staged a brunch at Hubbard Park Lodge and summer dining at Weissgerber's Seven Seas as well as picnics at the Masonic Home in Dousman. The club made many stops at Brooks Stevens' Museum in Mequon

due to the easy access, the red Alfa 8C 2900B Mille Miglia, and the savvy car people. We were shocked when we learned of the plane crash that took Jim Hewett as he was returning from the '81 Alfa national convention in Detroit. Jim, owner of a cool red Alfetta sedan, was a brain who worked for Brooks. Our lowest ever event turnout—my idea of S.C. Johnson's Golden Rondelle Theater in Racine—three showed.

Driving

The New Glarus Hillclimb started in 1988. This was a Tom Caulfield creation—tons of ideas, organizational skills, exceptional contacts, and a true gentleman. In '91 Brian Brunkhorst brought his 8C 2300 Monza, worth \$3 to \$5 million. Dave Uihlein brought his a few years later. Note John Julian's Bentley in the photo. Interesting classic! (*See front page for photo, ed.*)

We had drives to visit Tom Zat/Alfa Heaven in Aniwa and staged AROC-Wisconsin gymkhanas (Lindy Jacobs brought a Chevy V8-powered orange Falcon!).

Jim Huff organized rallies. Bruce Gillman organized several drives west of Madison. Tom Schmock's events ended at the Blue Moon. George Stauffer organized three jaw-dropping rides. Colin ran three mega-interesting rides to quality places. (Ask him about "tweaking" my Spica adjustments when he was 17.) We enjoyed brats and Italian beer at the R/A Historic Races and the Chicago Fall Challenge, especially the touring sessions. There were other miscellaneous rallies and the 1995 drive to Jim Kaufman's shop in Green Bay in my two pristine injected Biturbo Spyderys.

Show 'N Tell

We visited Dave Uihlein's three or four times with *huge* attendance! There was always a "collection" at Jim Kaufman's. We visited Alfa Heaven, George Stauffer's, and Smokey's warehouse; saw Tom Caulfield's Ferraris & Duetto and the Janesville body shop. Al's GT Motors was an eye-catching extravaganza. Madison Alfa dealer test drives were a treat, and, of course, ICAMS at Reina—impeccable food, venue, and overall attention to detail. A visit to Ferrari restorer Motion Products in Neenah was like visiting nirvana.

"George's Garage" evolved into a club event. Gary Wirth picked up on the considerable Alfa stuff going on in my garage, and we thus had lots of tech events, both impromptu and scheduled. We held a

kind of open house/Sunday coffee. Al Pinkowsky worked out of it the summer of '90. My place was a hangout spot for years. We even attracted passers-by. Club-wise we could do anything. It appealed to my educator brain, and, due to my being in control, we had a high involvement of others which was my goal.

Next Chapter

I got sick and stopped driving about 2000. Crazy-busy Gary Schommer and fellow educator Janice Ziglin took over leadership and the newsletter for many years doing an exemplary job. 🍀

Palmen Motors Event in Kenosha—Photos by Gary Schommer



Gary and I attended the Tour d'Italia Event held by Palmen Alfa/Fiat

In Kenosha. Unfortunately we were there at different times and missed seeing each other. Too bad. Fortunately, Gary had his camera and captured a photo or two of Pope Francis's favorite U.S. transportation, a black Fiat 500L. I remember watching coverage of the Pope's visit on television and thinking that the P.R. people at Fiat had to be doing a happy dance about all the free publicity. Talk about product placement! In one segment I saw, the commentators mentioned Fiat 500 at least as many times as they mentioned Pope Francis. Great stuff! Our friends at Palmen have promised to keep us in the loop concerning upcoming Alfa events. We look forward to getting up close and personal with the new Giulia sometime in the not too distant future. 🍀

Classifieds Extra

FOR SALE:

1986 Spider Veloce, red with black leather interior
Always garaged since I have owned it from 2003.
19,000 miles since engine overhaul, cam shafts, guides, valves, head resurface, more. Complete maintenance records. Pressure sensors by Volpe and more in 2010. Tune up, new vacuum hoses, break booster, plugs and more in 2014 spent \$1,176.00. New battery in 2015. Window sticker and manuals Priced at \$19,084.00 in '86
Issues:
Drivers side mirror needs paint
Passenger side window off track, easy fix, power motor works fine
Rear window has split covered by clear tape

Asking \$5,500.00
Dale Dodd 636-493-1838
located in St. Charles, Missouri



Photo from 5/2011

Fall Color Tour Photos from Gary Schommer



Assembly in the Holy Hill parking lot



Dave Curro with Roy Ferrari and a Ferrari



Bill Sigfriedt studies the route



Wendy Tefelske, Cana Comer, son Briggs, and something distinctly non-Italian



The group at Delafield Brewhouse





Gary saw this on Hwy 167 enroute to the Color Tour.



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Classifieds

Alfanatic will post brief non-commercial classifieds for members and friends at no charge. Email the [editors](#) to make a submission.

For Sale

1987 Alfa Romeo Spider Quadrifoglio

Luxury trim package. Silver on gray leather including



factory hard top, custom wooden MOMO steering wheel & gear shift, new tires, nose bra, bikini cover & full cover. Garaged, no winters, rust free original. Fun ride. Pulls strongly & idles smoothly. 37,240 miles \$15,000 O.B.O. Rockford, IL
dek_cmk@yahoo.com

1985 Corvette

Red/Red, 4+3, removable hard top. 51k miles and stored inside since new. All original. Body and interior in great shape. This car is move-in ready and is a nice ride. Blue Book value \$12,000.

Contact: Jim, 262-642-5068 or jzyla@wi.rr.com

Engine - Make offer

1987 2.5l from a rusted out Milano. Approximately 90k. Make Offer.

Steve Wirtz, West Bend, WI
262.306.8238 Home swirtz@charter.net

Parts - Make offer

Several Milano parts—Engine parts, oil pans, valve covers, heads, small interior parts, hood, and sunroof. Don't have a Milano so I don't need the parts.

1974 Spider Hood, Cowl, Doors, Transmission and

interior parts. New Left rear quarter panel and lower nose pan.

Steve Wirtz, West Bend, WI
262.306.8238 Home swirtz@charter.net

Spider Parts

Member Paul Ristow is closing out his stash of parts from '75-'79 Spiders, including bumpers, trim, aftermarket and NOS replacement parts. Following is a partial list:

- * Clutch Hose, Crank and Trans. Seals
- * Throttle cable and throttle rod ends
- * Distributor shield
- * Fuel pump
- * Trim parts for heater control
- * Trunk release lever with key
- * Aftermarket chromed pedals with logos
- * Hood rubbers



Contact Paul at
414.807.3675 or
pristow44@yahoo.com

1965 Giulia Sprint

For parts -- body is very bad, 1600 engine is apart, transmission & differential are available, other parts as well.

1967 Fiat Dino 206 -- car is in running condition.

Books (Alfa, Ferrari, etc)

Contact: Graziano Rossetto @ 414-351-2155

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SUBMISSIONS

Do you have a story you'd like to share? Have a restoration in progress or finished? Taken a memorable road trip or have a funny car story? Pictures, lessons learned, maintenance tips? Whatever. The *Alfanatic* is always looking for material to publish. Email your submissions to the editor at rabhalter@att.net and share with your fellow Alfisti.

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