

Old Spiders in Oregon, a 46 Year Celebration

By Doug Klein and Bill Gillham

OLD SPIDER TOUR HISTORY

In the United States, following WWII, there was great interest in European sports cars and sports car racing. Most European specialty cars were sold through independent import shops as dealership networks were absent. The first Giuliettas to arrive in Portland, OR were two spiders that were probably veloce models. These cars arrived in late 1957 or early 1958 and were quickly prepared and entered the local racing scene. For most regional sports car fans, their first look at these Alfas was at the track where the Giuliettas not only looked beautiful but also thoroughly dominated the races.

One of the trackside spectators was a young man named Bob McGill. He left the races convinced that Alfa ownership would be in his future. The vast majority of Giuliettas imported into the US, most through Max Hoffman, were spiders, and they were very hard to obtain.

As Bob recounted in the mid-1980s, "I bought my first Alfa on April 15, 1958, a Giulietta 750 Series Spider, and I still have it. It's been a road car for almost 30 years with over 150,000 miles. I've had other more modern Alfas," (including a Giulia SS) "but I could never bear parting with this spider."



Old Blue Forever! Bob and Margaret McGill

Most of us probably can't remember the date of an automobile purchase, but for Bob, every April 15th was a day to celebrate the "birthday" of his light blue Giulietta Spider. By 1978, Bob had decided a public celebration for Old Blue was in order – and the best way to celebrate an Alfa is behind

the wheel on a high-speed tour through the beautiful and lonely back roads of Eastern Oregon. By this time a Giulietta Spider was an old car, so Bob organized the event as the first "Old Blue's Birthday Tour". All Alfas were encouraged to attend, but the Giuliettas and early Giulia Spiders would be in the lead. "Old Blue's Birthday Tour" number one, featured five 750 and 101 Spiders and a number of other Alfas. "Old Blue" performed perfectly. "A wonderful time was had by all."

In 1982 McGill asked Bill Gillham to draw up an "Old Spiderman" logo for his tour. McGill had the logo printed in red on white t-shirts. It didn't matter your age: if you drove an old Spider on the 1982 Tour you were an "Old Spiderman" and McGill gave you one of the shirts. Today having one of the original red "Old Spiderman" shirts is quite rare, as there were only 12 made. Several later editions of the shirt exist, but they were all printed in black.

Late in his life and facing increasing health challenges, Bob eventually transferred ownership of "Old Blue" into Bill Gillham's care. Bob has since passed on, but "Old Blue", now in Bill Eastman's collection, still shows up almost every Spring to celebrate her birthday with other Old Spiders. The "Old Spider Tour" remains an annual opening day celebration for Oregon Alfa Owners and continues to be one of the most well-attended events in our region. Bob is affectionately remembered as the first "Old Spiderman".

Old Spider Tour #45:

Rain delay - No way! 9:30 AM - Santiam River Rest Area - South of Salem on I-5. The sky is dark as 17 intrepid Alfa Drivers (plus one in Porsche) and their navigators gather in the thickening mist at the beginning of the 45th Annual AROO Old Spider Tour. We were joined



at the beginning of the tour by a special guest, Willo Roe from Dublin Ireland. Willo, a fellow Giulietta owner, came by to see the Old Spiders and to see us off. Brad Baum and his wife Sherry drove their topless '57 Spider up from Brookings. Greg Miller joined us from North of Seattle.



It's Oregon it Rains! The stars of the day were the eight Old Spiders who led the tour, plus Larry Mark's Sprint Speciale which became an honorary Spider for the day. Except for 1.5 miles of I-5 to escape the Rest Area, the whole tour was 137 miles of some of the finest 2-lane blacktop in

Western Oregon. The tour ended at about 2:30 PM in Ona Beach State Park, on the Oregon Coast just south of Newport. There were no serious mechanical complications and only a little complaining about the weather.

Trivia:

1. Bradley Martin completed his first Alfa tour driving his father Keith in their series 4 Spider. Keith is very pleased with his progress as a driver.
2. Bill and Marian Gillham's '60 Spider Veloce and Doug Klein's '60 Spider Veloce are 1 serial number apart. Sisters in Arms as it were. Bill restored both Spiders 30 + years ago.



Doug Kleins 60 Spider Veloce

3. Several people on the tour were participants in "Old Blue's Birthday Tour" #1 in 1978. Erik Roe, however, was 12 years old at the time, and not driving. Tour leaders Bill and Marian Gillham drove their first Alfa, a '63 Spider in 1978.
4. John Draneas (Sports Car Market - Legal Files author) - Joined us in his '58 Spider, it was his first AROO Tour, and we believe he had enough fun to join us again.
5. Jon and Betty Anderson came along in their '67 Duetto which they have owned and

driven on AROO events for as long as anyone can remember. Jon says: "I don't know why people are fussing about driving their cars in the rain! They don't melt!" (Well, Jon actually they do, it just takes a while. I make my living un-melting them)!

6. Larry Marks has owned his SS since he was 19, a pretty car that he drives a lot!
7. Keith Martin provided a nice static window cling to all participants to prove they were there.

Let's Do it Again! - Old Spider Tour #46 - Giulietta #70 - May 18, 2024

2024 is the 46th anniversary of Oregon's "Old Spider Tour," it is also the 70th Anniversary of the Giulietta. We invite all 750 and 101 Alfa Owners to join us on May 18th for a one-day Driving Celebration Tour to the Oregon Coast. (All other Alfas of any age will be welcome to tour along to join the celebration).

Marian and I participated in the first tour 45 years ago in our '63 Spider. We will mark the 46th-anniversary tour by leading it in our '60 Spider Veloce. With luck, we will be joined by a record number of Old Spiders and 750 and 101 Giuliettas on our drive. There are enough 750 and 101 cars in Oregon, Washington, and California to make it happen, if we can get them all to show up!

AROO's Old Spider Tour #46 will start at 9:30 AM, May 18, 2024, in the West Parking lot of the Santiam River Rest Area off of I-5 South of Salem, Oregon. It will finish Late in the afternoon on the Central Oregon Coast.

Bill and Marian Gillham - Tour Leaders

Doug Klein - AROO History



Tour Leader Bill Gillham directing drivers about to depart



At left: John Draneas's '58 Spider

Center: George Krauss' '60 Spider Veloce

Bottom: Larry Marks' 1960 Sprint Speciale (owned for 55 years!)

