



Gateway Relay

Vol III, No. 5

St Louis Sports Car Council

January 2014

In Memoriam

Beverly Lamberg

Our condolences to her family, friends and loved ones

Council News & Notes

- Here's hoping all local club members had an enjoyable (and safe!) holiday season. The Christmas/holiday parties are now complete—the MG and Jaguar clubs held their festivities last weekend—and, as indicated at the right, the event schedule is starting to fill up. Expect a return to the six-page format with the *Relay* by April, possibly in March.
- As promised, the updated web page went live at the turn of the year. We hope to add a couple of additional features in the near future but in the meantime, check out the “new, improved!” web page at www.stlsc.org. Our thanks to the StLSCC Tech Department for getting it online.
- Feel free to forward the address to others you may know in the local sports/special interest vehicle community. Many of the events are of “the more the merrier” variety, particularly the drives scheduled by the various clubs.
- In the meantime, pass the word and keep the editor in mind when your club schedules or holds an event. More next month!

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Up & Coming

- 17 Jan 2014—St Louis Chapter NCRS Christmas Party.** Cocktails at 6:30, dinner at 7:30 at Rizzo's, 139 Dunn Rd, Florissant.
- 20 Jan 2014—MG Club of St Louis Tech Session No. 1,** MG Series “A” and “B” engine rebuilding. At British Car Restorations & Services LLC, 2336 N Lindbergh 63114, 7 PM. Info at www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/.
- 23-26 Jan 2014—St Louis Auto Show,** America's Center and Edward Jones Dome, info at www.saintlouisautoshow.com/.
- 8 Feb 2014—Jaguar Association of Greater St Louis Road Trip to Meramec Caverns.** Meet at 9 AM at the St Louis Bread Co, 9920 Kennerly Rd (Tesson Ferry and Kennerly, south of I-270), first car off at 9:30 AM, lunch 11:30-12:30 at a secret location. Arrive at Meramec Caverns at 1 PM, tour 1+20, return drive less than an hour. See www.jcna.com/clubs/main.php?club=sc20&Vref=sc20 for additional information.
- 9 Feb 2014—SLTOA Polar Bear Run.** Traditional all-weather kick-off event for the season. Meet at the Circle K/Shell in Eureka (Mo Hwy 109 south of downtown) for pre-departure coffee and snacks at 11:00 AM, followed by a 50-mile romp and post-drive pot-luck party. Monitor www.sltoa.org for additional details or contact sltoaed@gmail.com for info, open to all LBC and special interest cars.
- 11 Feb 2014—Gateway Healey Association Annual Valentine's Party,** at Trailhead Brewing Co, 921 S Riverside Dr, St Charles. Monitor <http://clubs.hemmings.com/gatewayhealey/?club=gatewayhealey>, RSVP to Marilyn Salini, (314)991-9363.
- 19 Apr 2014 – Cars & Coffee** returns! Starbucks Coffee at 9616 Manchester Rd, Rock Hill Plaza, 8:15-10:15 AM. On Facebook at facebook.com/groups/stlmetrocarsandcoffee.
- 19 Apr 2014—St Louis Chapter NCRS Judging Meet & Picnic.** Mary's Shelter, Love County Park, 2239 mason Lane, Manchester, at 8:30 AM, picnic as 12 noon. For questions, email Judging Chair Kelly Waite at Kelly.waite@att.com.
- 20 Apr 2014 – 52nd Annual Forest Park Concours d'Elegance,** sponsored by the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri. Monitor www.hccmo.com/.
- Apr 2014—Boeing Sports Car Club** autocross season begins, details to follow.

Note: Some club driving events restrict participation to club members only, primarily for national/chapter insurance reasons. If interested in joining in on a drive or other event, we recommend you contact the club's event coordinator in advance for details.

In Print



Mention of articles in the single-marque magazines – and plenty of them exist – usually doesn't appear in this column, but the staff stumbled on one article worthy of mention: conversion of an MG TF into a replica Ferrari Dino 246 GT. Get a copy of the December 2013 issue of *MG Enthusiast* for the rest of the story.



Continued on pg. 3

Roadwork: Volvo Builds A Sports Car

If you've never called up the Bring A Trailer web page, you're missing a daily guilty pleasure. Self-described as a source for "barn finds, rally cars, and needles in the haystack," the page – founded by Randy Nonnenberg and Gentry Underwood in 2007 – provides a rather eclectic assortment of vehicle classified ads on a daily basis, with global coverage. For example, the 31 December "edition" included a 1967 Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GT Veloce (how's that for a mouthful?), 1966 Volvo 122S Coupe, a 1968 Lotus Cortina Mk2 ("...is offered without its twin-cam drive train and with significant rust. It was a show winner in 1980, but what has transpired in the years since is a mystery"), 1967 Intermeccanica Torino, 1967 Porsche 911 street-legal vintage racer, 1968 BMW 1600 Cabriolet, 1952 MG YB Saloon and 1959 Chevrolet Parkwood station wagon, among others.

Occasionally, the offerings are particularly unique. On 23 December, BAT provided a listing for a 1956 Volvo Sport, aka the P1900...that's right, not the well-known and immediately recognizable P1800 (of which there are at least a couple running around Greater St Louis), but the predecessor car which, for whatever reason, had a higher number (must've been a Swedish thing).



Photo via BAT

Here's the description from the web page:

This 1956 Volvo P1900, or as they were also known, Volvo Sport, is one of only 68 or so built between that year and 1957. Said to be in good driving condition and well maintained, these cars were originally commissioned after Volvo's president of the day was impressed by a Corvette he spotted during a trip to the US. Using a fiberglass body and tubular steel chassis, they're rumored to be quite crude and under developed, but that doesn't stop them from being both fascinating and desirable. Find this one here at Mobile.de in Zuidlaren, Netherlands for 75k euros (~\$102,750 today) OBO. Special thanks to reader Oliver K. for the submission!

According to the seller, this particular car spent some time in a Swiss museum; the editors of BAT speculated that with its sale in the Netherlands, this P1900 could very well wind up back in Sweden. The editor's added, "...a unique and rare slice of Volvo history...with so few made in the first place these cars are sure to appreciate further."

In 1953, Volvo co-founder and managing director Assa Gabrielsson developed a strong interest in the Nash-Healey, Kaiser-Darrin and the new Chevrolet Corvette. In fact, he made a specific point during a business trip that year to pay a visit to Chevrolet's Flint, Michigan, plant for a look at the 'Vette. While there someone on the General Motors staff recommended Gabrielson get in touch with Glasspar, a producer of fiberglass boats and auto bodies. So, as part of his tour he headed to southern California, for a meeting with founder and owner Bill Tritt.

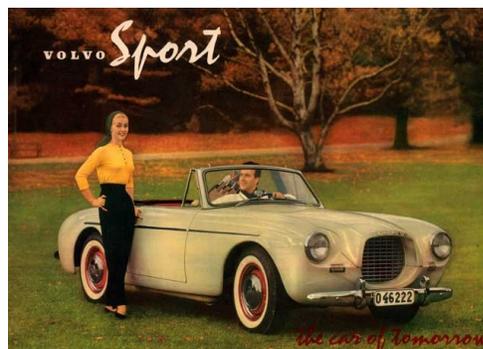
At the time Tritt and his staff were working up the bodies for the Kaiser-Darren's initial production run. After the two men talked, Tritt agreed to fabricate several prototype bodies for installation on a Volvo chassis; his staff did up some initial drawings and shipped them to Sweden, along with a Glasspar body, to give Volvo's engineers an idea of they had to work with.



Raymond Eknor led the project, with Uno Backstrom developing the chassis and engine combination for the proposed sports car. He turned out a reinforced tube frame design which employed the running gear of a PV444. For the engine, Volvo modified a 1414cc B4B, adding twin SU carbs, a new cam and higher compression, in the process creating the 70 horsepower B14 engine. Power went to the rear wheels through the PV444's three-speed transmission which, according to Motor Trend had "...a rather long throw and trucklike, long gooseneck shifter."

When Tritt received the initial chassis he immediately raised concerns about its narrow design and high mounting of the engine. Volvo replied with something to the effect of "build it anyway" and Glasspar set to work, producing four prototypes: a hardtop (designated the X1) followed by three convertibles. The window winders came out of a 1935 Ford, the tail lamps from a 1950 Chevrolet and the Jaguar XK120 provided the brakes and clutch. The car even had some British content, in the form of outside door handles from a 1954 Morris Oxford and inside door handles from the 1954 Humber Super Snipe.

The X1 made its initial public showing at Torslanda Airport on 2 June 1954, followed by a promotional tour around Sweden. In January 1955 the car – now with a modified rear deck, wider doors with roll-down windows and a new dashboard – went on display at the Salon de Belgium in Brussels, alongside other vehicles such as the Triumph TR2, Arnolt-Bristol, Lancia Aurelia B24, Maserati A6G/54, Porsche 550 Spyder and Ferrari 166M. A year later, one of the first production examples of a planned initial run of 300 P1900s made the show in Belgium. Deliveries to customers followed.



Golf clubs, attractive model...(Photo via Better Parts Ltd).

The aircraft in the promo shot below is actually a SAAB product: SAAB 90 Scandia, flown by SAS (Photo via SwedeSpeed)

However, early reports indicated problems with the P1900's frame and the fitting of its fiberglass body components. Between 29 December



1955 and 14 January 1956, Volvo engineering consultant Helmer Petterson and Pelle Nyström drove one of the early cars on a nearly 1400-mile "test drive" to Southern Italy and back. They returned with a rather scathing evaluation of the car: its chassis was weak and flexed too much, which allowed the body to flex, resulting in cracks. The top seriously leaked and the trunk needed drain holes; on the plus side, though, they reported the P1900 could do 90 mph all day without complaint.

The two ventured out on another jaunt in early February, this time as down to North Africa. Again, bad news: Petterson reported problems with brake fade and things shaking loose. He advised the car was certainly fast enough but wasn't ready for production...except it already was in production, with the first examples shipped to buyers in Morocco, Belgium, Brazil, Venezuela and Portugal the previous month.

The first one to the United States was chassis No. 19, which arrived for the New York Auto Exhibit on 9 April 1956. Volvo personnel then drove the car cross-country to Los Angeles for promotional purposes (amazingly enough, the car still exists, in the hands of a private owner in Southern California).



Back in Göteborg, the company's engineers and designers worked on some improvements to the car, including the installation of a 4-speed gearbox in some of the later production P1900s. At one point, Volvo also installed ZF 5-speed transmissions into a couple of cars, but that mod never made it to production. In fact, in 1956 new managing director Gunnar Engellau made the decision to kill of the P1900. He'd taken one of the cars on a drive and subsequently reported it vibrated excessively and was not a quality vehicle, suitable for production and sale by Volvo; the fact the P1900 was expensive to build helped seal the car's fate.



P1900 on display at the Volvo Museum in Göteborg (Photo by Kotasik)

The company made the official announcement on the demise of the P1900 in March 1957. The last car, chassis No. 67 (which was actually the 68th production car) was delivered to a buyer in Los Angeles. In Swe-

den, work shifted to the next attempt at a Volvo sports car, the P1800.

Some 57 years later, above and beyond two on display in the Volvo Museum, several P1900s still exist. Lars Janssen, owner of chassis No. 66 out in California's Bay Area, is regular participant in auto shows in and around his quest for chassis No. 67. The cars also periodically come up for sale, as indicated by the BAT article which started this brief history:

A unique and rare slice of Volvo history, this car is very likely to return to Sweden. Even though most are thought to have survived, with so few made in the first place these cars are sure to appreciate further. We're glad to read this one has been exercised regularly, and hope it continues to be in the future.

New York Times automotive writer Nick Czap, who interviewed Janssen for an article, perhaps summed up the P1900 best:

Compared with the impregnable rolling fortresses on which Volvo built its modern reputation, the Volvo Sport, or P1900, a sleek two-seat convertible with a fiberglass body, seems heretical. But it was actually a timely, if somewhat hastily executed, marketing move.



Lars Janssen (right) and his P1900. Photo: Nick Czap/*The New York Times*

Sources: *Bring A Trailer*, www.bringatrailer.com; Mobile.de; "Drive: 1957 Volvo P1900/Sport," *Motor Trend*, March 2006; Volvo Club UK, www.volvoclub.org.uk; Nick Czap, "Unrequited Longing for the 67th Volvo," *The New York Times*, 19 February 2010; Clifford Atiyeh, "Gothenburg-a-Go-Go: Touring the Volvo Museum in Sweden," *Car & Driver*, 13 April 2012; David R. Hunt, "The Volvosport P1900," *VolvoAdventures.com*; Geoffrey Hacker, "Glasspar (Bill Tritt) Designed Fiberglass Volvo Sport-the Volvo P1900," *ForgottenFiberglass.com*, 31 March 2010; Jan O. Hognark, "Volvo and Their Sports-Cars."

In Print (Continued from page 1)

The January edition of *Thoroughbred & Classic Cars* contains interviews with racing driver Alec Poole concerning his most memorable competition cars ('59 Sprite, '65 MGB, '68 MGC GTS, '69 TR6 and a '68 Wolseley Hornet) and collector/restoration specialist Nick Jones and his favorite cars ('50 MG TD, '59 Sprite, '60 TR3A and '72 TR6, among others). Elsewhere in the issue is a story on the highly involved restoration of a 1964 Morris Mini Cooper 970S.

Over at *Classic & Sports Car* for January, a comparison test of three "V8 Bargains:" the Daimler V8-250, Rolls-Royce Shadow and Rover P5B. Elsewhere in the issue is a write-up on the ex-Ian Walker Austin-Healey 100. An article on several 80's tuner vehicles includes a page on the one-and-only Daimler Double-Six Brandenburger-Lister: 6 liter V12, 474 bhp. Several other 6.0s were built, badged as Jaguars.

January's *Octane* has a cover story on Eagle's new "supercar-beating" repro of the E-Type Low Drag (4.7L six, 346 bhp/360 lb torque, riding on 225/60x15s), which it rates as the ultimate E-Type. Finally, the Brit magazine has an article covering a "search for the blues" road trip by two of the writers on US 61, from New Orleans north to Chicago...in a clapped-out '80 Cadillac V8-6-4. Apparently they had a great time in the Delta, while going through copious amounts of oil and transmission fluid.

Featured Events

Fall Color Tour—St Louis NCRS
2 November 2013



SLTOA Christmas Party
6 December 2013



GHA Christmas Party
7 December 2013



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