

California Mille Miglia 2017 post event report by David Martin Alfa Romeo 1900C Sprint *01583
(all photos by Holly Martin of Metal and Speed)

As we pulled out of the Fairmont Hotel on April 23 and headed toward the Golden Gate Bridge



This was only the 5th day I had driven the car since I have owned it. 4 of the days were in the 2016 Mille Miglia a few weeks ago and the 5th in the Sant Monica Mountains getting ready for this event.

After the Italian adventure the car needed a few things to be taken care of (see picture below).

Peter Marshall observing: " Dave sunbathing with almost headless mechanic "!

The Alfa 1900 brakes as large as they are, were terrible in Italy. Now the car is much safer and easier to drive, because of a major improvement with the addition of a brake servo. I shouldn't mention this in public however the fellows at JD classics said they've hidden it so that no judge could find it. I haven't found it yet!!!!!!

Now the Solex carburetors are smooth and strong- no bogs or hiccups. The trans shifts cleanly and gear noises are way down.



The California Mille was a fabulous event entirely different than the Italian version. The back roads of northern California, particularly after such a wet winter were "knock out gorgeous." There was a general lack of traffic and each day we had the opportunity to run with groups of 5 or 6 classic cars always at a very good clip.



In a way, this is the essence of the rally. Unlike Italy we stopped at lunch and dinner every day. By the end of the 4th day my navigator- niece Stephanie and I had met most if not all the participants. In Italy we ate power bars for 4 days with little time for meals. We were too busy trying to win which was great fun and close to hopeless. Although we missed the intensity of the various timing events in Italy, following the route book was enough of a challenge.

The 2 gracious hosts of the event Howard and David Swig, were busy trying to deal with changing course conditions as many of the back roads had wash-outs. The third day route was changed entirely and right off the bat on the first day at the top of Mount Tamalpais a last minute wash-out had all participants scrambling to find a "drive around".

Each day's route could be described as traveling along the phenomenal north coast of California punctuated by trips inland through the incredible back mountain roads, usually to the wine country and then back out to the coast. It was generally drizzly and sometimes raining on the first three days clearing on the 4th day. Visibility in the fog on top of the mountain range was at times challenging but then you swoop down into a dense redwood forest that would somehow disperse the fog.



My car is equipped with 5:50 -16 Dunlop Racing tires which look correct on the car and handle in a predictable way on all these various surfaces. Those who know this car are familiar with how it leans into the corners but manages to hang on all the way through. One of the great runs was out of Healdsburg where Robert Davis, in his beautiful 2 liter Siata V8 and I tried to leave each other going up a two lane steep long road out of Healdsburg.



I tend to use up a lot of road going at a good clip whereas with the little Siata it was zip zip zip he was always there right behind. In conversations after, with Bob and others as well, it seems a little easier to follow than to be the rabbit.

If I had to name the fastest driven car of the event it would be Stefano Natoli's Fiat 1100 4 door I don't know how he did it. A string of us watched him pass us then a new Chevy Camaro running at a good pace. This was the greatest pass of the event, of course around a corner, with the guy in the brand new Chevy trying everything not to let this little old Italian car pass him. We never saw the Fiat again till dinner.

There were 3 other Alfa 1900 's in the event. The Milner double bubble Zagato, Matthews 1900CSS and the Alexander CSS. All easily made the journey without incident.

This is an event that I will do again. The only issue for us, we picked up a bad noise in the driver's side rear after traveling on some really rough roads. I have yet to find what that is .

Our next event -We will show the car at the Quail as part of the Pebble Beach show this August. Hope to see you all there.

Thanks

David Martin