



Exhaust Notes

Riverside Foreign Car Club – December 2007

www.riversideforeigncarclub.org

THE EDITOR'S DRIFT BY CLARK TAYLOR

With 2007 drawing to a close, I would like to share some of my own thoughts about our club, and also offer some challenges for the 2008 New Year. First of all, it is important to recognize that our club has shown incredible resilience. Despite this being an introspective year, first with the membership questionnaire and trying to understand that feedback, and then a struggle to define a club purpose, the desire to remain an active club has consistently been strong.

The membership questionnaire clearly pointed out that hanging on to memories of our club's involvement with Riverside International Raceway, and wishing it or something like it would fall into our laps and revitalize our club is a dream on a dead-end path. RIR was a great racetrack, but it is time to realize that it's gone and our reminiscing will not bring in new and energetic members.

As a result, the challenge to our membership was to get out and see what other sports car clubs were doing; go to some of their shows, do some tours, slide around some pylons at a slalom, have some fun and (very importantly) talk with the people and ask some questions about what works and what doesn't. Jim Burke from the local PCA chapter visited one of our early board meetings and, with open arms invited our participation at any of the events listed on their club's calendar, from tech-oriented to multi-day road tours!

What did we learn from this year of idea gathering? What can our club leverage that will re-ignite the kind of enthusiasm we had for RIR and drew in new members? I'm starting to see that glow now. We presently have a terrific opportunity to make something happen with the new "[Riverside International Automotive Museum](#)". True, the museum is not the raceway, but rather it provides a powerful magnet and a gathering point. We have already seen the enthusiasm it has generated, and the museum hasn't even had its grand opening yet! At our last board meeting there on October 16, the ideas started to come together and make sense. There is bound to be some synergism if we do things right. Our club, working together with the museum will attract many new people to the museum as well as to our events, be they receptions, shows, tours, or rallies, and this is the key to our immediate success, and more importantly our long-term health as organizations.

So as we close out 2007 with our annual Christmas meeting and *ever-friendly* gift exchange, I believe we have some exciting and satisfying times ahead. The tough soul-searching and defining of vision parts are behind us, and the satisfaction of working towards our combined success with the Riverside International Automotive Museum awaits this new focus of our club's energy!

So as we head into the holidays and New Year, heel and toe your downshifts smoothly, and clip those apexes!

WILLOW SPRINGS MEMORIES FROM THE SEAT OF A SEVEN

When the clock radio beamed its soft and mellow K-WAVE sounds at 4:30am on Saturday morning, October 13, I couldn't believe what I was hearing outside. At first I questioned, are our sprinklers that loud? Then I got up and stumbled to the bathroom and looked outside. It was pouring! No weather report had prepared me for this. We'd had fine weather all week, and the reports only mentioned something about some clouds. But it was pouring! True, the Seven comes from a country where such weather is rather the norm, but this is California, so come on Mother Nature, how about some cooperation. Why do you always save your best spoils for the most inconvenient times?

About 4:45am, I decided to see what the now suspect 'Weather Underground' had to say about all this. It said scattered showers, dropping less than 1/10 inch through 8:00am, then clearing. The desert report for the Lancaster area showed a sunny weekend. So, on with the hood (top), eat some breakfast and head out for another Willow Springs adventure with the Alfa Romeo Owners of Southern California (AROSC).

The rain stayed with me until about the Hwy. 2 turn from Hwy. 138. At that point, 138 began its drop into the valley below, and all I could see in the still dark sky was clear and stars. Hmmmm, maybe we'll get lucky.

Backing up a bit, I'd like to mention the group driving (ahem!) a bunch of youth-oriented 'import compacts' and rotary 4-passenger-suicide door coupes that I picked up at the Hwy. 138 off-ramp Stop sign. Upon exiting the I-15 freeway, I thought, what's with all this traffic? Who are these people and why are there so many of them? It didn't take me long to figure out they were together from the games they were playing. Above the Seven's decibels and with ear plugs even, I could here their engines rev. They weren't going all that fast, kind of slow really. When we got to any of the passing lanes, they'd spread out into both lanes so there was no way to get away from them. So I just sat back and watched. Crazy stuff. Even the one guy driving a Chevy Suburban was a goof. At least after we got into Palmdale, I was able to get ahead and away. Once on the 14 freeway, it was clear sailing to Rosamond and a gas station to fill the Seven's tank for the day's track work. Well, what do you know, here they all came into the gas station; meeting up with a bunch of others just like them who were already there! I figured they must be going to something at the track, but thought it was unlikely they'd be entering the Alfa club event. But no, they all came into the Willow Springs pits. Maybe these guys were serious racers. But alas, they were lost and looking for the drifting skidpad. We heard them all weekend spinning their wheels, sliding about and smoking their tires! What's this new generation coming to?

The weekend at the track was a lot of fun. This was the first time in years I've had the only Seven though. I'm not sure what's happening to our enthusiastic group, but it would have been fun to see some of the others. Not a problem, though. I pitted next to Ian Harris, a Riverside Porsche 944 owner, and John Pulsifer, owner of a GTV-6 who lives in San Diego. They were both good company, along with some of the other guys I've met at recent events and my regular friends in the Alfa club. There's kind of a core group that I always look forward to seeing; good people all.

On track, it took a couple of sessions to get back in the groove, but by Saturday afternoon, my lap times had stabilized at a couple of seconds quicker than I've ever gone before! Maybe it was the cool temperatures or maybe just sheer talent (oh, yeah). Who knows? Anyway, by the end of the weekend, my lap times were quicker than [the benchmark time a friend had](#) turned in 2002 driving a standard Zetec powered Caterham 7 Superlight on ACB 10 – R-compound tires! The little car was running good! Okay, enough bragging.

But this weekend was about more than lap times, it was about my first sports car "race" in years. It was about stepping in and getting both feet wet and not just lapping for the sheer flogging hell of it. For Saturday's qualifying race, with the pace lap weaving and tire warming behind us, when the starter dropped the green flag we were racing! Honest to God racing! Go for the holes where you can find them or make them, and cover your backside. It's intense stuff. But I'd like to say, I felt confident in the drivers around me. The driving I saw

was all good racing on the edge of adhesion, and all at full throttle. There's a lot of trust, there has to be. We had a couple of minor incidents during the race that were discussed in detail during our driver's meeting Sunday morning, but no harm was done. Sunday's race was even better. For the ten or twelve laps or whatever that we ran around the Willow Springs big track, we had a tight group of three cars and nobody was giving an inch away. After the checker, it was all grins and I've got some bench racing material for years.

Good weekend; and not bad beer (compliments of Antelope Valley Inn) at Saturday night's banquet either. Overall, I learned there's a lot of work ahead for me and for my Seven to be competitive, as most cars racing in the AROSC "Open" class are fairly race prepared. Wheels, tires and limited slip are definitely looming on the foreseeable horizon. Finally, a big thank-you to all of the dedicated AROSC members whose dedication and efforts make these terrific weekends happen. It's why we keep coming back!



Events Calendar - Winter 2007 & 2008

BE SURE TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE FOLLOWING UPCOMING EVENTS!

December 1 & 2 [25 Hours of Thunderhill](#) – Willows, California
December 4, Tuesday RFCC Christmas Party – Faces Restaurant – Gift Exchange!!
December 18, Tuesday Board Meeting – Paula's

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January 8, Tuesday General Meeting – Faces Restaurant
January 13, Sunday [La Jolla Motor Car Classic at the Cove](#) – 11:00am to 3:00pm – Info: 619.233.5008
January 22, Tuesday Board Meeting – Location TBD

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