Tipping Point?
Series II Cab Passes $1m

Legal Files: Loan Your Car, Get Sued

$8m Microcar Sale Scores One for the Little Guys

Robert Cumberford: The Misguided Aston Lagonda
W e’ve seen more gators than ducks or beavers recently, as we’ve spent 20 of the past 30 days in Florida, with our home state of Oregon becoming more of an imagined entity than a place.

We had barely unpacked our bags from our February trip to Rétromobile when it was time for another early-morning taxi to PDX. Our ultimate destination was the Boca Raton Concours d’Elegance, but we thought we’d sneak in a side trip to a resort in the Bahamas for a non-car-related vacation. (Such a thing exists for the Martin family? I can already see you shaking your box-end wrenches in disbelief.)

Atlantis, as the resort was called, was an exercise in fantasy — especially if you are 5-year-old Bradley Martin and get to feed manta rays and swim with dolphins. One of the mega-yachts docked at the resort was named “Never Again III.” I’m sure every SCMer has cars they would christen the same.

From Atlantis it was on to the Boca Raton Resort and Club, where the concours, along with a first-time and very successful Bonhams’ auction (Carl Bomstead’s review is on p. 106) and a gala fund-raising dinner, were held. The weekend’s events were a benefit for the Boys and Girls Club of Broward County, and more than $1m was raised. If you’ve ever been involved with fundraising, you’ll know what a monumental achievement that was, and hats off to concours founder and driving force Rick Case for emphasizing the charitable side of the event — while continuing to improve the concours.

I was emcee of a panel on car collecting, and my participating luminaries were Wayne Carini, Tom DuPont, Dave Kinney, Bill Rothermel and Paul Sable. The room was packed, with over 200 inquisitive collectors involved in the give and take as we discussed today’s trends. At the end, each panel member gave his pick for the car they thought would appreciate the most in the next five years. My choice, “Any Alfa that I currently own,” didn’t get the respect I expected.

I served as Grand Marshal of the concours and awarded my trophy to a 1927 Voisin C7 owned by Olivier Cerf. Best of Show was a much-deserving 1947 Talbot T26 brought by Jim Patterson (there will be a report in the next issue). The concours was extremely well organized, and I was especially impressed that Case called a “post-mortem” dinner meeting Sunday evening, where he facilitated a round-table discussion about what had improved from the previous year (fewer cars, higher quality, better field arrangement) and asked for thoughts about how next year could be even better.

Case owns the largest Honda dealership in the world, along with 15 other franchises, and he brings the same determination to create relationships and a good customer and sponsor experience to the concours field that he has for his automobile customers.

The Boca concours is a first-rate event, and it has a perfect location on the calendar for collector-car snowbirds, as it occurs between Cavalier I and Amelia Island.

It was back to Portland for four days, just long enough to drop off and pick up the dry cleaning and see how the newly hatched angelfish (Pterophyllum scalare) in Bradley’s 29-gallon tank were doing. Too soon, I was in another taxi at 4:30 a.m. on the way to PDX.

Connoisseurship gathering

This time, I was en route to the 7th Symposium of Connoisseurship and the Collectible Car, held at the Revs Institute in Naples, FL, in conjunction with the Revs Program at Stanford. Founder Miles Collier brings together about 100 thoughtful collectors — some as faculty and some as attendees — for free-wheeling discussions about issues of contemporary interest, ranging from how to use reversible paint for restorations, to collecting Japanese cars, to exploring how we might interest Millennials (born 1982–2000) in collecting cars.

I was honored to return for the fifth time as a faculty member. I chaired two panels and led two gallery walks with good friend and SCM’s columnist-at-large Simon Kidston.

In one gallery walk, where we discussed current market values, participants included Bruce and John McCaw, noted European dealer Adrian Hamilton, museum founder Fred Simeone, and collector Bruce Meyer, among others. They were fully engaged as we discussed what makes a car a true blue-chip, top-tier collectible (Alfa 8C 2900b yes, BMW 328 no, for instance) and how the market goes about sorting out valuations on rare cars. There’s no question that I learned as much from the attendees as they may have learned from me. Kidston’s thoughts appear in his column this month on p. 38.

The Gatorland trek

After five days of thoughtful tire-kicking, ACC contributor Michael Pierce and I drove from Naples to Amelia Island. As always, the Amelia weekend was a total immersion experience. The class I judged was “What Were They Thinking,” and the judging team included Automobile President and Editor-in-Chief Jean Jennings (head class judge) and famed long-distance racer Hurley Haywood. Best in Class was a brilliantly restored 1959 F.M.R. Messerschmitt TG500 owned by J.C. and Judy O’Steen, and the Camile Janatzy award for the car having the most audacious exterior went to the ugliest car I have ever seen, a 1957 Spohn convertible brought by Ralph Marano and Wayne Carini. Of course, there will be full details in the next issue.

As much as I enjoy kicking tires and talking with SCMMers, it’s good to be home. Another batch of angelfish eggs has hatched, Bradley is about to have a pint-sized, gas-powered Corvette coming into his life courtesy of Pierce, and I look forward to bike rides around the neighborhood and barbecuing fresh-caught Pacific salmon on the back deck. We’ve got three weeks to enjoy the nascent Oregon spring before heading out to the La Jolla Concours d’Elegance and then Keels & Wheels in Lakeland, TX. ’Tis the season.