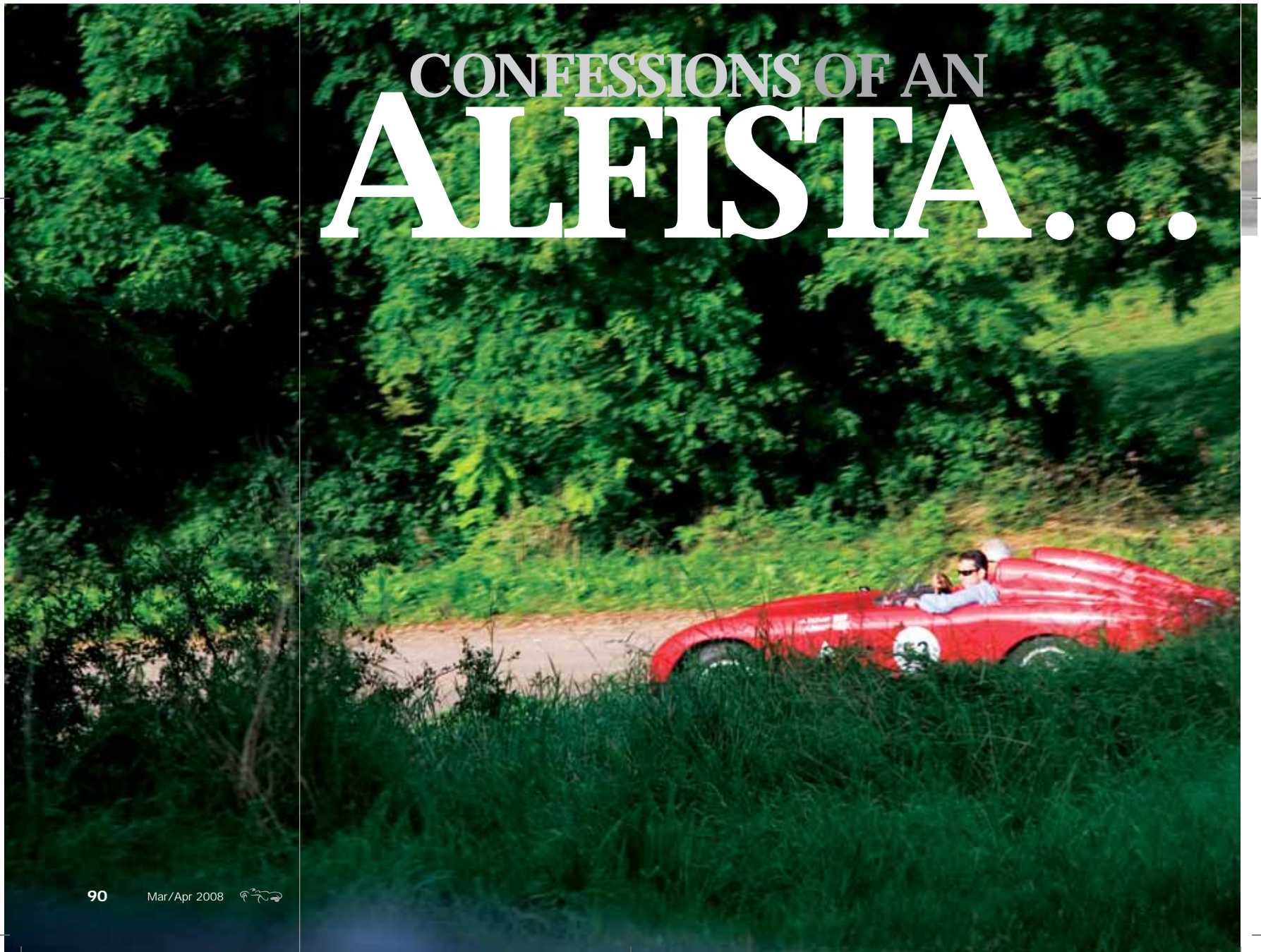


Right: Automobilito Storico pilot Signore Renato Perucchini and journalist co-driver Peter Steinfurth take the Alfa Romeo Museo's terrific 1932 8C Le Mans over the start ramp in the Basel Messe (convention center) in Basel, Switzerland, at the commencement of the 2007 Raid Suisse-Paris. Below: Dr. Axel Marx and the author take the glorious 1953 6C 3000 CM through a series of bends east of Thenissey, France, on Stage Three of the Raid.



# CONFESSIONS OF AN ALFISTA...





## Driving the 2007 Raid-Suisse-Paris with Alfa

### Romeo's Automobilità Storico

BY JAN TEGLER. PHOTOS BY ERIC TEGLER AND THE AUTHOR



PHILIPPE MAURY

My hearing's shot but I'm smiling.

After the first of three days in the ferocious 1953 Alfa Romeo 6C 3000 CM, which was driven to a win in the 1953 Supercortemaggiore Gran Prix by Juan Manuel Fangio, my ears

are ringing. The 6C 3000 could wake the dead. Unfiltered blasts from the spider's 3.5-liter inline-six are funneled straight from exhaust manifold to collector and out a large side pipe. There's no escaping the noise from either position in this blood-red *bi-posti*. Blipping the throttle produces a startling bark, but it's addictive—and attention getting.

And I admit it. I want to be seen in this magnificent, unruly racer. I want the glamour conferred on anyone fortunate enough to take a seat in something so red, so Italian, so extroverted. It's cramped, hot and harsh in almost every way, but my name is on the side and I'm feeling it.

Fangio...me...this car!

I don't even pretend to be worthy of the "celebrity-by-association" that came with this, but stick with me for a minute. Imagine. It's a lovely late-summer afternoon and you're tucked snugly inside a competition car from the firm that is the patriarch of Italian racing. Crowds of people point and stare as you pass in company with other Alfas. The sound and power of the machine get inside you and you begin to become more than an enthusiast. You begin to be an *Alfista*.

The fact that it's late August and that this awesome Alfa is surrounded by almost 200 vintage automobiles might lead you to conclude I'm smack in the middle of the Monterey weekend, but no, I'm more than 5,000 miles east of that wonderful madness. This is the Raid-Suisse-Paris, a vintage rally that, because of its unique character and its proximity

on the calendar, makes an appealing alternative to Pebble, Concorso, the Historics and all of the staggering activity that takes place on the West Coast.

The 2007 edition of the Raid-Suisse-Paris marked the 17th running (August 23-26) of this well-established event. Scarcely known on this side of the Atlantic, the Raid attracts every August an impressive variety of classic automobiles from across Europe and beyond. As its name suggests, all roads lead to Paris. The contest begins in Basel, Switzerland, and follows a route that is changed each year to keep the challenge of this TSD (time, speed, distance) rally fresh.

Small slices of Switzerland, and occasionally Germany, are incorporated but the overwhelming majority of the Raid takes place inside France. The result is a run over some of the most interesting and engaging roads you'll ever drive. Passing through five regions this year (Alsace, Franche-Comte, Burgundy, Centre/Loire Valley, Ile-de-France), the event took participants through gorgeous countryside, picturesque villages redolent with history and cities (Dijon and Orleans) not often visited by casual tourists. The amazingly extensive, sinuous and traffic-free network of French secondary roads keeps the Raid far from major highways, maximizing sporting and visual pleasure.

Periods of orderly motoring allow one to absorb the varied delights, but these are interspersed with foot-down sprints where competition, conditions and adrenalin come together. This is where Alfas shine and where you understand best why the marque is revered by so many. This is where the 6C 3000 CM really comes into its own.

The Milanese maker produced only six examples: two spiders and four coupes. Developed in 1952 using components (engine primarily) from the 1948 6C 3000 prototype and its competition counterpart, the 1950 6C 3000 C50, the 3000 CM was built to compete in the World Sportscar Championship. Three coupes were entered in the 1953 Mille Miglia. Fangio and co-driver Giulio Sala drove #602 to second place overall, finishing 11 minutes behind the winning



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Left: The author also did a stage in the Automobilità Storico's 1954 1900 Sport Spider, a supercar prototype that Alfa never put into production. Just two were built, a spider and a coupe. The coupe's light weight and 138 hp give it impressive performance. Here, Alfa Romeo Switzerland's Maurizio Melzi bravely takes duties as co-driver while the author blasts along on Stage Five between Asquins and Chateaufort-Sur-Loire. Above: A look at the cockpit of Fangio's 6C 3000 CM. Just touching the big wooden wheel "El Maestro" once held is a privilege.