

Demise of the 5 Door 900

To a lament about the deletion of the 5 door 900 configuration from the U.S. market back in the early 1980s, Bob explained:

It was a tough call, but basically involved reducing the model count to a manageable number, given the number of Saab dealers spread across a territory as large as the U.S., and the difficulty of getting the right car to the right place at the right time. I often heard comments like: "The car I'm looking for is [their personal preference]. I can't seem to find one anywhere, and I've contacted [pick a number] dealers. How come Saab can't get me the car I want?"

In North America, the inventory costs and the expense of getting "the right car to the right place at the right time to satisfy an individual buyer's preferences" increase exponentially as the number of models/ exterior colors/interior colors/ transmissions, etc. increase. If you take a

given number of models, multiply that by the number of colors and interiors, multiply that by whatever other major variants there are to choose from give you an idea of what I'm talking about.

Let's say, picking numbers out of the air since the details really aren't important at this point in time:

- 5 models;
- 8 colors on average (since it did vary a bit by model);
- 2 interiors (probably more most model years, but this is a fair average);
- 2 transmissions, manual and automatic;
- 2 engines, turbo and naturally aspirated;

That gives you $5 \times 8 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 320$ distinct configurations to choose from. Consider the poor chap who went to a Saab dealer in mid-America, 1500 or so miles from the nearest port. If Saab is delivering, say, 25-30,000 cars per year through around 250 dealers nationwide,

that's an average of 100 to 120 cars/year/dealer ... or an average of 8 to 10 cars/month/dealer.

Let's say the average dealer tries to keep two month's supply of cars in stock at all times. That's an average of 16 to 20 cars (and a pretty stiff interest expense that must be carried). If there are several hundred combinations to choose from, what are your chances of finding exactly the car you want at exactly the Saab dealership you choose to visit at exactly the time you go there? Not very good. And the more choices there were, the more difficult it was for the dealers to "close the deals" (and we're talking about crass commercial interests here, after all!).

This is a basic principle that's usually not clearly understood unless someone sits down and works out the numbers.

This is a serious issue here with regard to distances involved. Here in North America, cars must cross an ocean, then in most cases be trans-

ported hundreds to thousands of miles overland to the individual dealers.

This is not the case in the Swedish home market, nor in nearby markets. The UK, for example, receives cars in very frequent shipments on what amount to car ferries. The inventory turns quickly; "special orders" can be quickly fulfilled. Therefore, it makes sense to offer a much wider model range in nearby markets than it does on this continent.

I hope this explains the thinking behind dropping the 5-door. As I said, it was a tough call. Among other things, the Lovely Anne gave me holy hell for dropping her favorite model from the lineup, but it came down to the lesser of evils given the goal of restricting the choices in the interests of sales and distribution efficiencies.



FROM THE BACKSIDE

Isn't this age of electronic-this and computerized-that amazing? For the past several issues newsletter contributions have arrived by fax, on computer disk, and by overnight delivery. It won't be long before you can submit your articles via computer modem. I constantly marvel at the power of this box on my desk (though lately I've also been known to curse it when it blinks out for no apparent reason).

Since the personal confuser is such a part of most lives these days, a SAAB Club electronic bulletin board has been proposed by several members. Turns out there is one of sorts, a special interest group for Saab on the UUCP mail network (UNIX to UNIX CoPy). Paul Matz of New York sent a printout of E-mail that was exchanged over this network. Paul writes:

"Someone at Dartmouth College decided to start an electronic mail Saab distribution. If I want to send a message to all members, I send E-mail to 'Saab@dartmouth.edu' who then forwards it to all members. Those who want to respond can send E-mail directly to me, or post the response back to the entire Saab group."

There are about 50 subscribers on the network from all over the country and even some from overseas. Much like NINES, it

consists primarily of questions and answers on how to fix things, but without the benefit (?) of an editor.

Anyone who uses UNIX and has access to USENET can join. Send E-mail to "Saab@dartmouth.edu" for details. If you are not a current UNIX user, but do have a PC, software is available to make your computer compatible with the UNIX protocol. For further info, contact:

UNET Communications Service
P.O. Box 2685
Fairfax, VA 22031-0685
703/876-5050.

Another medium that has been sharing the Saab message is magazines. *Import Service*, a trade publication for automotive technicians, has carried a couple of step-by-step repair articles on SAABs recently. In the February 1989 issue they demonstrated a SAAB 99/900 clutch replacement. Part one on rebuilding a SAAB manual transmission appeared in the May 1989 issue. (Are mechanics seeing a lot of these, or what?)

A new magazine also arrived this month, *Classic Auto Restorer* - "The How-To Guide For Vintage Car Enthusiasts." One of several hands-on type articles deals with the ever popular "sagging headliner". Though the author's victim is an old Chevy, the instructions could also apply to replacing the headliner in a SAAB.

In the same issue (June '89) there is a directory of car clubs for virtually every marque including Berkeley, Cartecar, Jewett and Kissell. We are listed, as is the New England Sonett Club. There is also a directory of car museums. Did you know there is a Front Wheel Drive Auto Museum in Brighton, Colorado? (For an appointment and directions, call 303/659-6536.)

Despite its' regional monicker, a look at the membership list for the New England Sonett Club indicates it is more of a national organization. Only a third of their members reside in New England.

This month, all members of that club received a printout of Sonett and V4 parts provided by Saab-Scania. Since everything is listed by part numbers, you would need a parts book for it to be effective, but it does give Saab's suggested list prices and the balance on hand in the warehouse.

Their quarterly newsletter always has several tips for the Sonett owner, many of which can apply to owners of V4 and 2-stroke sedans as well. They have attempted manufacture of some obsolete parts, but the membership does not always buy sufficient quantities to keep tooling costs low. Those who have older cars and would like an additional source for parts should consider joining the New England Sonett Club. The address is:

P.O. Box 4362
Manchester, NH 03108

Overseas membership has expanded greatly over the past couple of years. We now have members in Sweden, Finland, Great Britain, France, West Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Israel, Japan, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand and Australia. Most overseas clubs are now sharing their newsletters with us, and we are sending NINES in return.

Less than a handful responded to our request toward updating the mechanics list. Please share with your fellow SAAB owners if there is an independent shop / mechanic / parts store in your area that specializes in SAABs. Body shops and performance shops are also in demand.

Tim Winker, Editor



Photos by D. E. Baer, Baer Images

Saab Returns to Rallying

Saab Cars USA, Inc. has returned to the roots of the company's competition history by sponsoring a Saab 900 SE Turbo in the SCCA/Michelin PRO Rally Series. Saab has provided the car to last year's Group 2 Pro Rally Champions, Sam Bryan and Rob Walden, both from Washington state. Their championship winning car was an earlier model normally-aspirated 900 3-door (see NINES #224).

The rally-edition 900 features Saab's 2.3 liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine, tuned to put out 300 horsepower, and coupled to a six-speed XTRAC manual transmission. The 900 competes in the new Group 5 category, for two-wheel drive cars.

The Bryan/Walden Team Saab is sure to be noticed as they rocket through the woods in the Monte Carlo Yellow 900 with Saab's unique Find Your Own Road graphics.

"The Saab has performed exceptionally well during practice runs on logging roads around Olympia, Washington," Bryan said. "We're confident in ourselves and our car. We're excited about getting back to a turbocharged engine, which gives the Saab outstanding mid-range torque characteristics - perfect for the kind of driving we do during rally racing."

Due to short amount of time

between delivery and the start of the season, Team Saab missed the first rally of the '96 season at Wild West in Washington in April, then ran into teething problems during the Rim of the World in California early in May. Ultimately they rolled the car on a late stage, putting them out of the event. At the Susquehannock Trail in Pennsylvania the first weekend of June, the Bryan/Walden Saab was leading the class by more than a minute before a crank spark sensor failed on stage five, forcing a DNF (Did Not Finish).

The car that took Bryan and Walden to the Group 2 title in 1995 has been purchased by Douglas Schrenk, a technician at Walden's Scandia Autosport independent Saab repair shop in Seattle. Also painted in Monte Carlo Yellow, the Classic 900 3-door DNF'ed the first two rallies of the season, the first due to a blown engine, while a co-driver with motion sickness caused the retirement at Rim. Despite not finishing, Schrenk did lead Group 2 (normally-aspirated 2-wheel drive) at both rallies and was competitive overall with supposedly faster all-wheel drive rally cars.

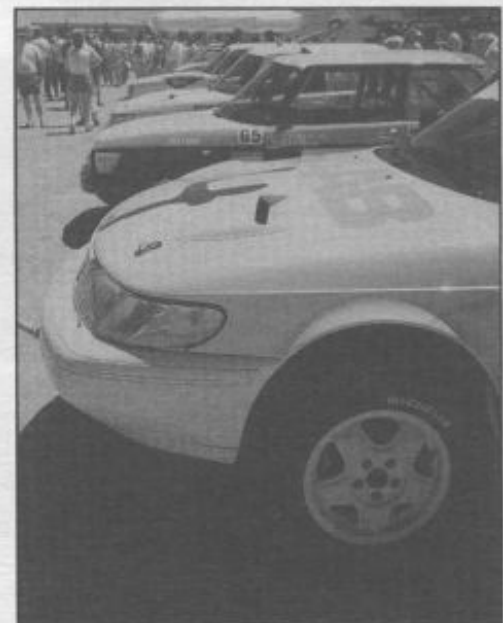
Also contesting Group 2 in Saabs this year are last year's runners up for the Group 2 title, Gerry Sweet

and Stuart Spark in a 99, and Jeremy Chambers and Neil Roeth in a 900. Chambers/Roeth placed 4th in the category at Susquehannock Trail, while Sweet and Spark DNF'ed due to a transmission failure.

George Plsek is running a 99 Turbo in Group 5 and led the class for a time at Rim of the World, but dropped back due to a variety of problems late in the event, including a broken axle. He was able to make repairs at a service break and went on to finish 2nd in class at Rim.

Saab's first rally victory came in 1950, just weeks after the first 92 rolled off the production line. Several of the first Saab 93s to arrive in the U.S. in 1956 were entered in the Great American Mountain Rally, where they placed first, third and fourth overall, and won the team award.

In 1980 and 1981, Jon Davis and Harry Ward won SCCA Production Class PRO Rally Driver, Co-driver and Manufacturer's Championships aboard a stock Saab 99. Due to the efforts of several other Saab drivers, Saab also was awarded the PRO Rally Production Class Manufacturers Championship in 1982.



Three Saabs lined up at Rim of the World: Bryan/Walden 900 Turbo, Plsek/Ratsam 99 Turbo, Schrenk/Tennis 900

Ah, yes. Minilite wheels. Brings a story to mind . . .

After I signed on with Saab-Scania of America back in 1979 (soon to be known as Saab Cars USA, Inc.) I eventually got around to looking into the company's Parts And Accessories business. Being a bit of a car enthusiast, I naturally noticed that we listed gen-u-wine Minilite wheels. Matter of fact, I also had noticed there were Minilites on some of the company cars parked in front of the Orange, CT. headquarters.

Since I wasn't especially fond of the stock wheels coming on the cars from the factory, and felt Minilites would fit right in with my still nascent drive to emphasize PERFORMANCE as a major part of moving Saab upscale on the U. S. market, I asked a few questions of our P&A people.

Like how many Minilites were we selling per year?

- What, only 400 or so?? How come?

- Well, sir, our landed cost is more than \$100 per wheel, and the lug nuts cost extra. And we might as well tell you now, sir, most of the 400 we sell to ourselves, to go on company cars.

Understand that, using a normal price buildup, landed cost to wholesale to retail, would translate to a retail price of well over \$200. Back in 1979!

And that, dear friends, is how my deal with Carroll Shelby began.

At the time Carroll had a wheel casting business out here in the Los Angeles basin. I made an appointment with my friend Shelby, flew to LA with a Minilite in my suitcase, and told him I wanted a price for wheels that were enough different in radii, etc. that I couldn't be sued, that would be "hell for strong," would be hub-concentric, clear-coated, and of the highest quality.

I needed them cheap if we would have any chance to sell them in volume. And, oh yes, they had better be perfect, because I was going way beyond my area of responsibility, sticking my neck way out, and would have to put a few sample wheels through rigid testing before I dared put them on the market.

We dickered for a while, then agreed on a price. A few weeks later, some sample wheels arrived at my office. I took two of them with me on one of my regular trips to Trollhättan, and asked my pal, design chief

Björn Envall to take me to the room where the company tested road wheels.

Enval took me to a room filled with component test rigs, and introduced me to the person in charge. I briefly told the man what I was up to, and gave him the two Shelby wheels, telling him I wanted them put through the full OEM test, and I wanted it done confidentially.

I also handed him two fifths of fine American bourbon. He gave me a broad smile, clearly indicating he understood what I was up to, and that I was sticking my nose way beyond what I was authorized to do, and said he would send me the test results when available.

The reports arrived a few weeks later. The wheels passed with flying colors, of course.

During a board meeting some weeks later, I put one of the wheels on the board room table and mentioned we were introducing Shelby wheels as part of our acces-

over the subsequent years.

My wife and I happened to meet Carroll at a dinner recently, at the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles. He and I hadn't seen each other or spoken in quite a few years. Now in his early 80s, Carroll appears to be holding up quite well.

The business world can be a lot of fun, provided you don't take yourself too seriously.

Ever wonder how the color of your Saab is selected? We know that the Lime Green for the new 9-3 Convertible comes from Saab designer Maria Turnberg, the head of color and trim at Saab. The color was inspired by the Brazilian drink — the caipirinha.

But what about the special grey SPG's? Bob Sinclair reports:

During my watch at Saab, in the 1980s, I visited friends in Italy a number of times, each time in loaners provided by my



Lewis Eig's Sonett II shows off the Shelby wheels

sories line.

My boss, Sten Wennlo, the President of the Saab Car Division, exploded. "Mr. Sinclair! I FORBID IT! This is a safety part, I forbid it!"

I passed the factory test sheets to him. "Gee, Sten, they passed all the tests at Trollhättan. I assumed it would be okay."

My boss and good friend knew he'd been had. There was much merriment around the table.

U. S. Saab dealers sold many thousands of Shelby Silvervane and Goldvane wheels

good friend and Saab importer, the late Odoardo Pagani. For a number of years Odoardo and I served on Björn Envall's "Color Committee," which met several times each year to discuss and help make decisions on colors and interiors, and such-like.

Odoardo Pagani campaigned long and hard for dark gray to be added to the Saab color range, to augment the black, which was very popular in his market. As I remember it, by far the majority of Saabs sold in Italy in the early to mid 1980s were black

Turbo hatchbacks, something like 80% or so of the total! Odoardo wanted to broaden the color offerings a bit, but not too much.

Eventually, in response to his pleas, a dark gray was added, called “Odoardo Gray.” For the U.S. and Canadian markets, we called it Edwardian Gray.

Robert “Bob” Sinclair joined Saab in 1958. His first job was as a field rep calling on Saab dealers. He rose to be Saab’s national sales manager, then switched to Volvo in 1962 as advertising manager. He moved to California as president of Volvo’s Western U. S. subsidiary in 1967, then rejoined Saab in 1979 as president/CEO, later chairman/CEO. Bob Sinclair is known as the “father of the Saab Convertible.” He retired in 1992, but as a longtime car (and motorcycle) enthusiast, he remains active in the industry as a consultant, and as board member of a number of automotive-related companies.

Letters Cont'd.

on a Saab contains that word.

Quirkiness is relative. After driving a Saab with the ignition "properly" on the floor (tongue in cheek), you get in a 9000 and are reaching for the ignition on the floor, but they went and put it in the "wrong" (again, tongue in cheek) location!

I think that when some of the car scribes get ready to do a Saab road test, they consult their little book about what to write about Saabs, which results in them always using the words "quirky" and "rubbery." Immaterial to a Saab owner that happily lives with and loves his or her Saab!

Roger Pfeiffer
Cedar Rapids, IA

More Oil Comments

I note that you trashed the part of my last letter that did not support your sales. I see that some members are reacting.

There are still no minimum standards in your table and no note that "This test method is not a substitute for engine testing of an engine oil".

Mr. Andrews spoke of "gelation" of Toyota engines without mentioning the gelation testing done on oil. His oxidation test is not a measure of gelation. I am not going to spend money getting the complete SAE/ASTM testing procedures, but many things make up a class SL oil. They are safe for use in the hundreds of millions of engines when manufactures maintenance instructions are followed. Stop scaring people for profit.

I also noted the crash pictures of his accident prone family. Go to any junkyard and every bent car will have a story to tell. The pictures reminded me of the old man at the last convention who got up and said "Saabism is a religion" and proceeded to have a veneration of a couple of teenagers whose indulgent parents bought them a high powered car that was beyond their skill and experience level. They lost control and murdered an oncoming driver, losing their own lives in the process. This caused much grief.

Teenagers have been doing this for decades. I lost some friends that way and it will not stop. Where are those car pictures? I suggest you research the German government's tests. They bought three each of several autos. Put one in Climate controlled storage, used one in daily service, and

left one outside. After 20 years they crashed all three cars. All 3 cars did not offer the same protection after so long.

I note that my issue arrives about two weeks after some others. The ads are very dated then. I have no interest in the Saab "religion". Do not send me any more. It's time to leave the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's behind.

David Calabrese
Las Vegas, NV

Chuck Andrews responds:

Thanks for taking the time to respond to my efforts in this publication. The title of my column is Professional Perspective. What I write is from my point of view as an automotive professional and not for profit as charged.

A much larger profit could be had from not talking about problems and potential problems and just fixing the results. Engine oil sludging is a huge problem in the whole auto industry. How you test oil or which one you use is not an issue to me and manufacturers recommendations are not always in the best interest of all consumers. If you were to visit our shop and interview consumers with failures both mechanical and safety related you might have a different opinion. As long as we are a Saab Club publication I hope all the writers will write about issues relating to all ages of Saab products. As you will see in my current column there is sufficient interest in model 99's that we still service a number of them. We are an eclectic club. That is part of what makes Saabs and their owners such an interesting group.

Scary Saab Story

Tonight, I was testing out my car after reassembling my shift assembly. I was driving around town and went on a back road nearby. This road has a huge cemetery on it with not a single light. It is surrounded by trees and it was pitch dark. I was traveling uphill and all of the sudden I heard a POP, really loud as if something fell out of my engine.

I then thought, s**t, I really messed my tranny or drivetrain up. My car then died so I thought, OK? Alternator maybe? Understand that this cemetery is VERY old, one of the oldest in New Hampshire and I broke down right next the church, the VERY first Catholic church in the state as a matter of fact. Some of the headstones date back to 1770's.

Also, just to get a feel for how scary it is out there, I am 6'1" and weigh 225 pounds. I'm a very broad person with a football player's stature. I was afraid, and locked the doors, and turned on my fogs and blinkers. I hate it out there, too creepy and dark. Plus, the church is haunted. And it was midnight.

Well, I called my mom to have her pick me up. She then came and got me. I drove back home with her, got a flashlight, and went back out to the cemetery.

I got back to the site and with the flashlight. I opened the hood and turned the flashlight on. I then inspected belts and the alternator, which all seemed to be fine. I glanced to the left as I was about to walk over to the tranny and saw it. The intercooler pipe had blown off of the throttle body!

I took out the screwdriver, popped the pipe back on, tightened the screws, and drove off. My mom couldn't believe how fast I fixed it. She thought my car was toast. I explained to her it was really just a gigan-



Zach's car posed at the graveyard.

Every so often, the opportunity to assist fellow Saab brethren (or future brethren-in-law, as it were) with their crazy vehicular acquisitions arises. Zach had been down in West Virginia since Thursday, installing a transmission in his newly acquired 1988 SPG.

Incidentally, a host of other issues had cropped up and his buddy that he was working with was very, very sick. The phone rang around midnight on Sunday, and as I lay there in bed with Alicia we both knew who it was. We didn't think much of it, but when her mom came upstairs and said "Zach wants to talk to you", I knew it wasn't good. He explained the situation and I knew where it was leading, and before I knew it I was off to West Virginia in the morning.

The 9-5 was readily equipped for the task and I set out around 7:10am. I didn't stop for a good 100 miles or so, in fact, my first cup of coffee was in Enfield, CT. After battling urban sprawl madness on CT-15 in Berlin as I didn't get on as far south as I should have, I finally reached the Wilbur Cross. I was making semi-decent time, so I figured I'd swing by and see if John Moss was still cleaning out the training center. When I arrived at the Wallingford facility, I didn't see a Saab parked out front but the door to the center was unlocked and so I went in. The double ended 900, which he and Roland St. Sauveur, Jr. built is the only vehicle in the front of the building. The 900 engine on a stand was still there as well as some random posters and whatnot. No sign of John. I walked out back, and saw a late 1970s 99 2-door notchback with CT plates along with random engines, transmissions, equipment and that 96. No sign of John. I figured he ran out for a bit, so I left a note on the hood of the double headed 900 and returned to my journey to the

land of sheep.

The Wilbur Cross gave way to the Merritt Parkway, and by this point my squirrely fuel gauge was telling me that the car was nearly out of gas. I pulled over and paid \$2.34/gal. for mid grade. Now with a solid 19 gallons of gas (love having a very early production car), I was set for the rest of the journey to West Virginia. The Merritt dumped out onto I-287, and I went over the Tappan Zee Bridge. I-287 was the spot where my 1997 900SE Turbo

was the most scenic interstate that I had traversed thus far. I saw Seideling Hill, where eons of layers of rock can be seen in one sweeping vista. As the road continued deeper into Appalachia, signs of religious fanaticism sprouted from the surroundings including "Noah's Ark, being rebuilt here!" It's good to know that some crazies in Maryland will be ready when the next 40-year flood comes up. The last few miles of I-68 were in West Virginia, and believe it or not, I was excited to see the intersection of I-79. I was al-



Terry, the kindly sheep herder.

overheated and destroyed a thermostat on the way to the Saab Owners' Convention 2002, so I was sure to flip off the exit where it happened. A quick lunch in the Township of Bernards filled the other empty void and I continued westward on I-78.

Now we all know how uneventful those rural Pennsylvania interstates are, so I won't bore you with those details. So I went I-78 to I-81 to I-70W. I-70 begat I-68, which in my opinion

most to my destination: Salem, WV. I took I-79 down to US-50 in Clarksburg and 10 miles west to Salem.

Zach was waiting in the parking lot of the gas station next to the shop where his car had been sitting for the past three years. He and his friend Chris had done a great deal of work to the car, so it was looking and sounding pretty sweet. They put the transmission from one of Zach's parts cars into it, totally resealed the engine, put

on a new crank pulley and before re-installing the powertrain, detailed the engine compartment. I had a look around the place, it was pretty sketch... lots of Chevy trucks and toothless folk. We all hopped in the 9-5 and headed over to Clarksburg to indulge in the beefy delights of Outback Steakhouse, gas up the car and visit Wal-Mart. We got back to the shop around 10 and it was time to get to work.

Now all that was left was for me to check it over and make sure they didn't miss anything. After all, Chris caught whatever Alicia had last week when he was up here helping Zach pull the transmission from the aforementioned parts car and when one is that out of it, who knows what he could have missed. The brakes were spongy, so we gave the system a bleed. The engine would stumble when Zach hit the brakes, but it was written off as LH 2.2 issues. I took a listen to the brake booster and it was hissing pretty bad. Thankfully, there was a spare servo in the collection so we installed that and it seemed to improve things. Terry Sr., the sheep herder, came to visit a few times and imparted his Appalachian wisdom upon us.

By 1:30am, Tuesday, the car was detailed, had working brakes and was ready for the 700+ mile trip back to Claremont, New Hampshire. We called it a night and retired to our luxurious

accommodations. Oh wait, did I say luxurious? I lied. One Ninety, it sounds like some fancy restaurant in Boston but in actuality it was a run down \$17,000 house that the absentee owner of the shop purchased for Chris and friends to shack up at. I had neglected to bring anything to sleep on, as I was told there would be "something." An egg-crate foam dealy and some strange government-issue blanket did the trick, albeit poorly.

The alarm emitted its shrill, piercing tone at 6:30 and I attempted to shower. Somehow, even with the lack of water pressure, I cleaned up and we were packed up and on the road by 7:15. A stop at Bob Evans was obligatory as Zach had never been. Two eggs, sunny side up with sausage and two biscuits did it for me. We left Clarksburg at eight-something and headed north to I-68. We stopped in Maryland for a pit stop and to call Keith to see if he could look up the radio code for Zach's car. He wasn't at work yet, so Zach ended up not having tunes for the whole ride.

We know the drill, I-68 to I-70 to I-81 to I-78. We stopped at the PA border to gas up and get some lunch-type food. A guy in a Volvo station wagon sporting Panasport minilite knockoffs rolled in and we had a quick chat with him. He was a former Sonett owner and knew enough to identify Zach's car as an SPG. We took I-78 back to I-287 and found that the bridge was closed because of an accident. In a last ditch maneuver, I cut off the highway and redirected our two-Saab caravan onto the Palisades Parkway up to US-6. We took US-6 up to Carmel and hopped onto I-84.

The ride on I-84 back to I-91 was quick and we were back in Claremont at 9:20pm. It was definitely good to be home, in a place where I can look out the window and only see one Chevy truck. I kissed Alicia, and then felt compelled to kiss the floor because I had never really appreciated just how good we've got it up here in New Hampshire.



The car in its old location . . .



. . . and its new digs. All photographs by Zach Wallace.

GLSC GM Historical Center Tour

On June 24, the Great Lakes Saab Club was invited to tour the super-secret not-open-to-the public GM Historical Collection, located "somewhere" in Sterling Heights, Michigan. This same facility was shown on the Speed Channel's "My Classic Car" a year or so ago, when host Dennis Gage was shown the "collection".

Rather than bore you with all the months of prep work that went into this, I'll attempt to give Saab enthusiasts and car nuts in general a sense of the significance and breadth of this outstanding collection of automotive history.

The first facility we toured was the actual "historical collection,"

which was a rather large warehouse-looking building in an industrial park.

Once inside, however, we were greeted by Jan-Willem Vester, Tom



The group poses outside. All photographs provided by Jim Laman.

More Club News on page 25.

Beaman and John Libbos from Saab, who gave us some background on the facility and how it operates. The first car we saw in the lobby (likely not coincidentally) was a rare Saab 92, the one many of us have seen in previous years at the SOC's. Then the real fun began as we walked into a large, darkened "hall" that held an estimated 125 significant GM cars from the past 100 or so years. Production cars included a '76 Eldorado convertible, some muscle cars and older Caddie convertibles, various Corvettes, several "antique" models from the various maker. It was overwhelming. Amazingly, all of this was just assembled in the past 3 or 4 years, as each of the separate brands had their own "collections" that were stored and (sometimes) maintained, but there was apparently little consistency. Now, however, the cars are getting some outstanding treatment that you have to see to appreciate.

There were several engines on display, loads of neon dealership signs and static displays, and a breathtaking collection of concept and show cars that I wish I had more pictures of, even though I shot constantly for 45 minutes. Ever seen the Firebird I and II? Or a Corvair Monza GT (recently featured in a popular British car magazine), or a subtly modified Firebird with a Ferrari V12? Or so many Corvair variations you can hardly keep them all straight? We also saw a Cadillac LeMans race car, several real and cloned NASCAR cars, some one-off Corvettes and some Hummer-like SUV prototypes. And that is without trying to peek at the stuff under covers!

Oh yes—the Saabs. Many of you will recall Eric Johnson's 1960 96 RAC-winning rally car, and that was proudly displayed in the center of the facility, with a Sonett I near it. The Saab portion of the collection initially started with the cars that SCUSA



owned in Atlanta, which many of us have seen at the SOC's over the years. These were mainly of the two-digit variety, from the aforementioned 92, a GT750, a Quantum I, the Sonett I and II and the Talledega



9000 and 900. In addition, GM has added to the collection with an ultra-rare red 1986 900 Turbo convertible, a red 91 SPG, a tan 1970 99 (ex-Tom Donney) and there are rumors of a 99 Turbo in the wings somewhere too.

The second half of the tour was a visit to the CAS (Custom Automotive Services) facility, the company that does all of the storage, detailing, shipping, and more recently, restoration work on GM's collection. And did I mention there are over 800 cars in this "collection?" We drove a couple of miles and met the owner (whose name escapes me at the moment) and some of his staff. CAS, started about 20 years ago to work just for GM, originally got into just working with the auto carriers so that cars slated to go to shows and events were ready to go and on the right truck. For a growing collection of 800-some one-off and rare cars, that is a lot right there. More recently,

however, they have ventured into restoration as GM adds to its fleet. So after viewing even more rare and interesting vehicles, we toured the restoration facility, where Tom Donney's old 99 was now looking like it was mid-assembly line in Trollhättan rather than 36 years old. The rule for restoration at CAS is



that it has to be "perfect," and CAS told us of one instance where they had not only to remake some non-existent bleed nipples for a vintage Pontiac, but also hire an engraver to put on the tiny Pontiac logo, which hardly any one would ever be able to see! As I said, the Saabs are under good care! There is also a Sonett III in the works, being built from the remains of two cars, and at least one of these (the 99) was said to be headed, complete, to the 2006 SOC. Of course, many of us wanted our own project Saabs to be "next in line," as the level of detail there is just astounding. You will certainly see their handiwork at future conventions, and perhaps we can even invite them to speak!

Our sincere thanks to all of those who took their time to host us that day, including Jan-Willem Vester, John Libbos and Tom Beaman of SCUSA and various GM people, including Gary Stottler who helped in the initial planning. We thoroughly enjoyed seeing the collection and hope we can visit again sometime in the future.

- Reported by Jim Laman

More Club News on page 27.

Saab owners' convention at Lake George

Saab owners and enthusiasts gathered to celebrate their passion for their cars and the Saab brand at the 24th annual North American Saab Owners Convention. One owner even traveled from the land down under—Australia, that is.

This year's event was held August 24-27, 2006 in Lake George, New York at the Roaring Brook Resort and Conference Center. This all-inclusive family resort is situated in the beautiful scenery of the famous Adirondack region.

More than 200 vehicles were on display and joined the weekend activities such as the Concours d'Saab, the People's Choice Contest and technical seminars. Saab Automobile USA also brought an array of vehicles, ranging from the award-winning Aero X concept car introduced at the Geneva Motor Show to a collectible

9-3 Aero Convertible '20 Year Anniversary Edition', as well as a number of vehicles from the Saab USA Heritage Collection. Among them were a freshly restored 1970 Saab 99, a 1973 Sonnett and a 1991 900 Turbo SPG—all considered milestones in Saab's nearly 60-year history as an auto manufacturer.

“Saab owners are unique in terms of their affection for their vehicles and the brand,” said Jay Spenchian, Saab Automobile USA General Manager. “This annual convention provides a unique opportunity for passionate Saab supporters to come together, sharing experiences and stories centered around their cars.” Spenchian was also the keynote speaker at the Saturday night banquet, updating participants on the ‘State of Saab 2006.’



USA issued a press release regarding 60th Anniversary models of the 9-3 and 9-5. In NINES #230 for June 1996 there is mention of a Limited Edition 9000 CS.

“The unique lustrous metallic black paint and silver 8-spoke wheels give the Limited Edition Java Black 9000 CS the look of luxury, but with the popular 2.3 liter Light Pressure Turbo engine, it is also an economical choice. The Java Black color features a gold mica metallic flake in black paint for an elegant accent. Saab will sell only 300 copies of this special 9000S—one per dealer—all with power front seats with Sand Beige leather upholstery, a power glass sunroof and black rear spoiler. The Car is priced at \$34,295 with 5-speed manual; add \$1,045 for automatic.” I hope many of the readers are still enjoying their 9000s, special editions or not.