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Nines

The Saab Club Magazine




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Front Cover 2004 9³ Aero Convertible.

Photograph by Stephen Goldberger

Cover Wrap: Silk Road Bridge.

Photograph by Edward Feather

Letters

Our Saabs

My wife and I have been long time Nines subscribers. These are Donna's cars (she can't bear to sell them when she tires of one), and they all have many performance upgrades. They are the 2001 Viggen, the 1994 9000 Aero, and the 1987 900 Aero. All fast and agile.

Our 1987 900 Aero has been upgraded to about 230 bhp, is equipped with stainless steel brake lines, Brembo brakes with cross-drilled rotors, K&N "Aircharger" air cleaner, lower and stiffer springs, Koni adjustable dampers, Abbott Racing sports

exhaust and an APC engine management chip upgrade.

Our 1994 9000 Aero is upgraded to 270 bhp with a K&N Aircharger, Koni adjustable dampers, Abbott Racing sports exhaust, Abbott Trionic engine management power upgrade, and Dunlop SP Sport 9000 tires.

Our 2000 9-3 Viggen is upgraded to 280 bhp with a K&N Aircharger, Abbott Racing Viggen Rescue Kit (torque steer control), Abbott Trionic

engine management power upgrade, and Dunlop SP Sport 9000 tires.

*Donna Skupien and Gary Moss
Oak Park, IL*



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Saab 900T at Arches National Park. Photograph by Jim Wilkerson.

Hard work

Horrible, simply horrible. It's amazing what your job, as the editor of NINES, puts you through! I can't believe you (and your wife to boot) had to endure the Aero Academy! Two whole days of being tossed around in a 9-5 Aero. You are a true hero for taking on the tough assignments.

Obviously I'm pulling your leg. What I wouldn't give to be down there with you. I actually wanted to write and tell you how much I enjoyed the "he said/she said" approach to the article itself. It's amazing to see the different perspectives of the same events; it truly made for enjoyable reading.

Keep up the excellent work!

*Michael Laflamme
San Francisco, CA*

Thanks. All compliments are greatly appreciated and sometimes get printed. -Ed.

Saab Economy Run

Earlier this year I read a column in "AutoWeek" written by Steve Thompson. The title caught my eye with something to the effect of, "The Genes For Being Cheap". After reading it I decided the author must drive a Saab. The e-mail I sent with my reaction to Steve's article elicited a quick reply that confirmed my suspicions- he has a 1988 9000 in the family fleet.

My evidence for having a cheap gene comes from a recent trip to visit my daughter in Santa Fe, NM from my home in Minnesota. Driving a 1999 base model 9³ at the posted speed limits, I was pleased to see my mileage across the plains was running in the mid-30 mpg range. Once in the higher elevations

south of Denver the mileage rose to near 40 mpg as I chose interesting roads and drove 55-60 mph.

Some background may be helpful here. Back in the 1950s my uncle raced midget cars, drove the first fuel-injected Corvette I had ever seen and enjoyed TSD rallying in the Chicago area. In the 1960s he helped out a friend at Buick by driving the Mobilgas Economy Run, winning his class over several years in a Skylark and in an Electra 225. Driving for maximum fuel efficiency is something I heard him talk about at length.

On leaving Santa Fe for a return loop through western Colorado I decided to drive for maximum fuel efficiency. Shifting early, I used high throttle

settings at low rpms. Low revs minimize energy used in pumping oil and coolant and high throttle settings direct the turbo boost to pressurize the intake manifold and save energy in filling the cylinders. Being a two-stroke driver I feel comfortable coasting the downhills and I used that technique as well. I also calibrated the odometer using mileage markers so I could accurately report my results.

At the first refueling in Pagosa Springs, I was astonished to calculate 45.2mpg. At Carbondale the calculation yielded 45.7mpg. As I turned east toward Boulder I used I-70 and began driving as fast as 75mph just to keep out of the way of traffic. I won't admit to how fast I coasted down the longer slopes. The refueling in Boulder yielded 49.6mpg!

Returning to the theme of being frugal, I enjoy going far on little fuel. However, I also like the idea of having one car do everything. I am not a fan of pickup trucks even as a second "car". The fact that these unusually high mileage numbers came from a multi-purpose car, not a Honda Insight or a

Toyota Prius pleases me. This same Saab 9³ has hauled a two-person sofa sticking out of the hatch, towed 125,000 pounds of crusher run limestone in 2,000 pound increments when I redid my driveway, and each year moves four cords of oak from the wood lot to town for our cooking and heating stoves. It also tows a 21 foot cruising sailboat and carries our tandem bike sans wheels inside the hatch when the rear seat is folded down.

One car, one license fee, one insurance fee, one parking slot in the garage and one car on which to do maintenance. What is the down side to this versatility? It's not lack of power. A 9³ equipped with the premium fuel version of the same 2 liter engine came in second place to a 5 liter Mustang at Pikes Peak several years ago. Another 9³ was tested "out of the box" for top speed by one of the car magazines. It reached the maximum just a tick over 150 mph.

Is it possible for one car to be frugal and fast, spacious and sporty? I think so.

Addendum #1

On my most recent visit to New Mexico from Minnesota I drove a 2002 9⁵ Linear SportWagon. On the return leg I topped off the fuel tank in Santa Fe and drove for maximum fuel efficiency to Leadville, CO. Pressing the WB button along the way revealed a consistent 10-20 mph headwind. Elevation gain totaled about 3000 ft. Refueling at Leadville and adjusting for a small odometer error yielded just over 40 mpg. Thrifty driving techniques combined with low wind resistance in mountain terrain can result in excellent fuel economy, even when driving uphill into a headwind. Since the trip included freeway driving at sustained speeds of an indicated 80 mph, the overall fuel economy was only 31.7mpg.

Perhaps more important for the person with cheap genes is annual fuel economy. Each year when I begin sorting records for taxes I calculate this number. For 29,317 miles the average was 29.6 mpg. Going back to my first year owning a Saab, a model 99 in 1969, reveals a lot about progress in automotive fuel efficiency. With weight, interior volume, trailer towing capacity,

power, torque and top speed ranging from 50% to 66% of the 9-5 Linear SportWagon, the 99 annual fuel economy was only 26.3 mpg.

Addendum #2

As I complete this article the calendar reads May 27th, 2003. My concern about revealing Steve Thompson's choice of a 1988 9000 Turbo for his personal car has been eliminated. In another article in "AutoWeek" dated May 26th, page 8, Steve Thompson reveals his ownership of the 9000 Turbo. The gist of this most current article is that his 1988 passed the mandated emissions testing as if it had been a 1998. Well cared for, his Saab looks ten years newer than its date of manufacture. In response to the young inspector who said, "Good shape for an '88." to that, Steve said, "Thanks, bought it new and can't bring myself to get rid of it."

*Eric Johnson
Northfield, MN*

Cars Getting Revenge

There I was soaking my left hand in hot water after getting a shot to relieve my trigger finger (honest that's what a finger that sticks in a curled position is called), wishing it wasn't my middle finger, and reading Phil Lacefield's "Ramblings and Demands" in NINES #263. I thus realized that it was the 96 getting revenge when a stuck finger caused a wrench to fly off a nut and crack my ankle. But I treat her right: she has her own storage garage when she isn't in one of garage bays. By comparison, the NG900SET sits in the driveway, and the 99 is relegated to the Indiana University Law School garage when not being worked on. In addition, she is getting new brakes, ball joints, tie rods, a rebuilt tranny, and awaits an Ashcraft tuned V4. I think she is well treated. Maybe it was a "previous owner" who abandoned her to wilderness. That's it: I'm getting the grief the previous owner (P.O.) deserves. That's why I need an exorcist!

Wait a minute the P.O. was one P. Lacefield!

*Paul Galanti
Indianapolis, IN*



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**View from a Saab:
A Woman's Perspective
Saab Movie and TV Plots**

Dharma & Greg - the 90's show with liberal Dharma and conservative Greg married, after a 24 hour courtship, own of course a NG Saab 900 convertible which is famously wrecked in a rollover accident towards the end of the series. (My hubby is definitely Greg!)

A Time To Kill - Yummy hunk Matthew McConaughey plays a southern attorney fighting Ku Klux Klan racism in this film version of the John Grisham classic. Of course he's cruising around in the Classic Red Saab 900 convertible. Need I say more?

Seinfeld - the cult classic in which Jerry owns a black New Gen 900 convertible in New York City...can you imagine the parking garage fees????

As Good as It Gets - Obsessive Compulsive Jack Nicholson pulls his immaculate Saab 900 convertible out of storage to drive Helen Hunt and Greg Kinnear to make amends with gay Greg's parents and offend everyone on the way!

The Sweetest Thing - Three girls (Cameron Diaz, Christina Applegate and Selma Blair) head to a wedding uninvited to stop a good looking groom from matrimony. The road trip is in of course a Saab 9⁵ wagon. (Guys - not a recommended viewing for you if you have an immaculate vehicle. These three will make you cry at their lack of respect for Saabs!)

Sweet Home Alabama - The 2002 Reese Witherspoon romantic hit features trendy NY fashion designer Reese cruising around Alabama in a 9³ convertible to clear up the past from her gorgeous redneck husband.

If you aren't getting my drift, Saabs have been appearing everywhere in movies and television whether you are noticing or not. In the women's world, this is really where they get noticed. Not just in passing, but subconsciously, "Hey, if Reese is driving a Saab - maybe I should get one?" We are creatures of influence, we like to be trendy and we like to fit and blend in. Why do you think fashion trends follow such

shows as *Sex and the City* - where millions of women run out to purchase new Fendi or Manolo Blahnik shoes that Carrie Bradshaw wore on last week's episode? Halle Berry even chose her two gowns in 2002 and 2003 by none other than designer...Elie Saab.

Men prepare. Saabs are really coming into common trend now. I was recently shopping on line for the latest line in Mary Kay cosmetics, and what to my shock did I discover but a contest to win a Saab 9³ convertible for you and your consultant! Of course I entered and I suspect many women nationwide did. Are there any men's magazines or grooming websites you guys can enter to win Saab's? I think not. For that matter, why was it a Saab? This is my point...they are becoming the trend!

Where does that leave you, the lifetime earnest Saab owners who have loved this brand of cars early on before it was trendy; when you were considered just "quirky", very rich or gay. I'm not seeing that definition anymore, especially in the above-named venues! Obviously the fact that there is now a woman president of Saab Cars USA, Inc. is a sign of change, and definitely a good one! From what I read she is a smart, intelligent, sharply dressed woman who obviously knows both chassis and marketing.

Now don't get me wrong, this is not a men vs. women column where I tell you narrow-minded Saaboholics to roll over because the girls are coming into the locker room! It's an observation that the newer Saabs are attracting women clientele. Assume this is the tip of the iceberg. I will tell you, however, that I could guess that the early pre-GMified 900 (the classic as I'm told) will continue to remain your pride and joy. Most women aren't looking for a fixer-upper and in fact if we have one, we usually have a husband/father/mate that keeps their eyes open for any necessary repairs. You may keep the classics as far as I'm concerned - you understand them more than I ever will. I doubt the "bumblebee" will be on the next cover of "People" sitting proudly by a Hollywood owner! No, truth be told we like the pampering at the dealership and the free coffee while some nicely dressed, polite mechanic solves our woes with, "Your car will be ready very shortly, and would you like a Danish with that coffee?" Believe me, I've dealt with the rude, insensitive jerks at "Tire Worlds" or

"Quick Oil Stops". I can live without the condescending tone and laughter behind my back. Heck back in the old days I could, and did, change my OWN oil.

Yes your Saab world is changing and for the better in many ways. Check out the Saab 9-2 coming in 2004. Different market and venue for first time buyers. I'll wait until the 9-7 makes its debut, but I hope it comes with the DVD LCD screen option. Now that's pampering!

Mason James Payne came into the world on August 9, weighing in at 8lbs, 4oz. The delivery went well, but unfortunately he's had a rough time of it since then. At the end of August Mason was admitted to Children's Hospital in Minneapolis due to renal failure and infection stemming from a urinary tract blockage. As of press time the blockage has been relieved and the infection is being treated with antibiotics, but he is still a very sick little boy. We ask our readers to join us in praying for Mason's recovery. -Ed.

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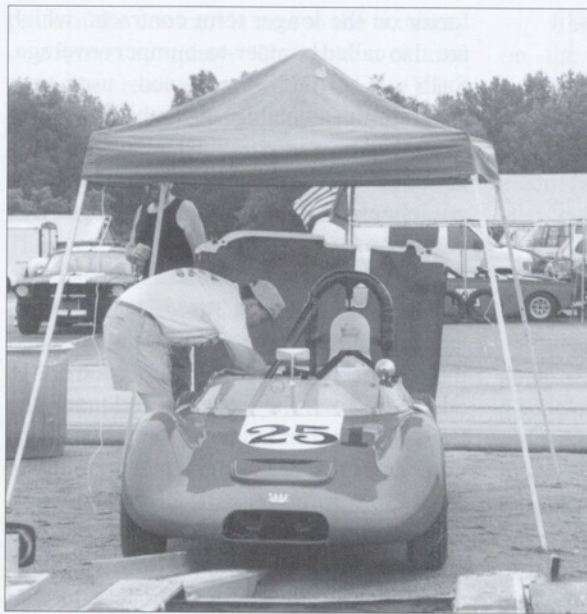
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More Blue Smoke at VIR

On a wet day in June, not unlike most of the days this summer so far, I went down to Virginia International Raceway south of

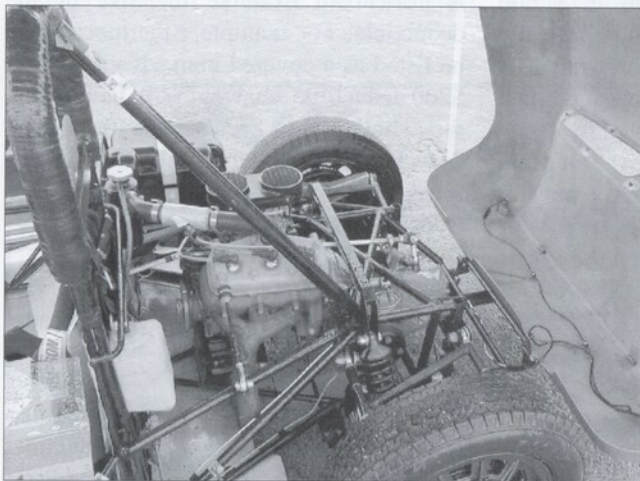
Danville. My mission: to do a little crewing for Chuck Christ and the Elva-bodied Devin chassis SAAB GT-750 powered sports racer. Chuck's father ran this car back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and Chuck restored it from the ground up in the late 1990s. Chuck had called me the previous evening and explained to me the problems he had been having with the car out on course: purportedly lots of power, but the car was very quick to overheat and would spray the engine compartment and the track with water when the cooling



The West of Sweden portable repair gazebo.

Chuck opted out for fear of damaging the car. By 11AM I had my little work gazebo set up, and I proceeded to check the ignition timing. Right off the bat, I spotted the wires on the cap in an unusual fashion for a bullnose engine. Then I pulled the cap and saw what really threw me - Chuck was running about 60 degrees advanced!

Trying not to bend the fragile aluminum chassis of the Sports Racer with my shins as I leaned over the engine bay, I had the distributor in and out a couple times, and by about 1PM had everything pretty much where I wanted. Chuck's practice lap time was coming up fast for the



The "mighty 3" perched behind the driver.

system overpressurized. Naturally the obvious things had been addressed, so it was on to the non-obvious ones.

On a hunch, or at least half of one, I packed away my voltmeter with the temp probe and timing light along with a few other tools which I knew he wouldn't have. We headed down there early Saturday morning. It had rained down there during the overnight and misted in the early hours. Conditions were exceptionally wet, and the morning practice run was not obligatory.

afternoon session, and I wanted to make sure the car would run correctly. Time got tighter, and the car still wouldn't run decently at optimal advance. Both of us crossed our fingers and hoped that it was just a case of plug fouling or something similar as he sputtered up to the grid.

As luck would have it, as Chuck left the grid for the track and turned on the power, the car

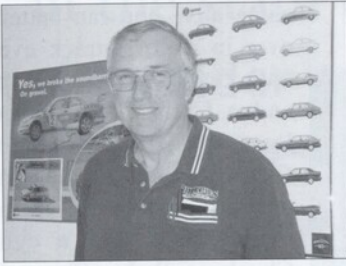
came alive and ran better than ever in its first track event of any kind (with SAAB power and a Christ at the wheel, at least) since 1962! After four or five laps, however, the temperature was getting hot again, and then the car lost a cylinder. Chuck pulled off, and we popped the rear compartment. Between the water on the track and what had just started to blow out of the cooling system, the inside of the distributor, as they are known to, began to act like a holding tank! Wires and points dried off and all was well again.

I had to retrieve someone at the airport the following day, so we left that night for home. Chuck ran the H modified race in the morning but had to retire again due to overheating. I think he's since gotten it tracked down to a cracked cylinder head leaking compression into the cooling system, but overall for a car which has been out of racing and action in general for many years, its first track event was not totally unsuccessful or without merit! As this is not a car which can be run up and down the road at home to perform a simple road test (due to lack of things like lights and registration at the very least), a track event is about the only place that testing can go on.

I'm sure I'll see Chuck, one of the VSRG race cars, and many of you at this year's convention in Hershey, PA. I hope we, as a community, can make it a success for those who have worked hard to put it on for our benefit.



Blue smoke indeed! Chuck Christ at the starting line in his Elva-Saab race car.



Service Contracts

A few years ago, I wouldn't have considered writing about Service Contracts, but they are becoming more and more popular today and seem to be a mystery to most car buyers. When a Saab is purchased new it has a warranty of four years from the date of purchase or 50,000 miles, whichever comes first. Saab does a fine job with its product warranty, so we will move on to the next stage.

If your new Saab is approaching the end of its warranty period, an extended warranty can be purchased to continue service coverage. In most cases they can be purchased from an authorized Saab Dealer, if you want to continue service with that network. The extended warranty you receive from a Saab dealer will likely be a "GM Protection Plan," which would require that the repair be performed at a Saab dealer. If you prefer, you can buy the warranty/service contract from an independent dealer that is good at any licensed auto shop in North America. These extended warranties or service contracts can usually be had for up to four or five years or 100,000 total miles. I'll explain about these in just a bit.

If you are purchasing a used Saab there could be a product warranty or service contract at about any age or mileage. Various dealers have different products available to suit the needs of their customers. Many dealers include a service contract or product warranty in the price of the car. The point of purchase is the best and sometimes the only time to obtain a good contract at a fair price. Contracts on cars with factory warranty remaining when purchased could qualify for bumper-to-bumper warranties up to eight years or 100,000 total miles with \$0 deductible. Coverage with less time and a deductible would be more common. Price is always a

factor on the longer term contracts, which are also called bumper-to-bumper coverage. Saab's Certified Pre-owned used car program is available through authorized Saab dealers and combines extended Saab "Factory" warranty coverage with specific guidelines for vehicle age, mileage, and condition.

Product warranties are the easiest to understand. On a used car product warranty the car owner purchases a product that must be used in the car, such as an additive for the engine oil or the transmission fluid. There are even some companies that are using a radiator additive for these warranties. These products must be put in the car within a few days of receipt, and then the warranty company will cover all internally lubricated parts of the engine and transmission. No seal, gasket, alternator, starter or any other peripheral equipment is covered. Many times wear and tear is excluded as well. For example: the bands may wear out in an automatic transmission. Many of the product warranties wouldn't cover the band unless it broke, which is a rare occurrence. Product warranties basically state if your car's covered parts fail it is because the warranty companies' product failed to protect the stated parts. In a way, these are like a major medical hospitalization plan. They don't pay for anything small but take care of the catastrophes. They usually have no deductible, but they do have fairly low total liability. Limits might be in the \$1500-\$2500 per incident and total claims for the life of the contract of \$3500-\$5000. These products also have very strict guidelines about oil changes and/or other services required to keep the warranty in force. If you were to have a claim they would typically require all the receipts. A usual requirement for oil changes would be for three months or 3,000 miles whichever came first. Missing a receipt? The warranty contract would then be cancelled! These warranties are usually very reasonably priced for higher-mile, older cars, \$400-\$700 is common. Many times this is the only type of warranty available for these cars. Some companies will provide coverage for up to five years or 100,000 more miles regardless of the age or

miles where you are starting.

The next step up would be **Stated Component Service Contracts**. With these contracts it is as simple as this: they only cover the components that are listed. Most of these contracts will have a deductible. These range from \$200 down to a disappearing deductible. A disappearing deductible is \$0 at the dealership that sold the warranty and usually \$100 if the car is serviced at any other shop. These deductibles apply per visit to a repair facility. A deductible means you will pay the first dollar on any repair. If the component is covered, then the contract will cover the remainder of the cost. Limits of liability are stated and are often tied to the value of the car. It is important to note these limits. The cost of a service contract will range from several hundred dollars to as much as \$2500.

Virtually all service contracts and product warranties require an authorization to repair before they will pay for anything. Most companies will not pay for work accomplished without this pre-approval. It is critical to examine the size of the deductible. For example, a thermostat may be listed as a covered item. If you have a \$200 deductible you would still have to pay the whole ticket because the thermostat costs less than \$200 to install. If you had a lower deductible you would then be able to have some claim for the service contract company.

The most complete type of service contract is called **Exclusionary**. Because these contracts cover almost all parts of the car they only list what is NOT covered. The general language in these contracts seems easy to understand but sometimes the parts terminology in the excluded list is difficult to understand. For example, we just had a case where a SID panel was considered by a warranty company to be a navigation device and therefore ineligible for coverage. Once again, the contract could well have a deductible. These contracts are usually referred to as bumper-to-bumper. You have to understand that there really is no such thing as bumper-to-bumper. There are always exclusions. This is the most complete coverage you can buy. Once again this type of coverage is usually available only for newer, lower

mile cars. The older the car and higher the miles, the higher the prices for the contract. On these contracts it is usual to have the liability limits tied to the book value of the car, and the cost of the contracts range usually from several hundred dollars to as much as several thousand depending on the time, deductible and miles purchased. Most service contracts have other features to add to their security. Most contracts offer extras such as: rental cars while yours is being repaired, emergency road service, lockout service, trip interruption reimbursement, or others.

As with any product, these contracts are only as good as the company behind them. Car warranties are backed by regular, fully funded insurance companies (regulated by each state in which they do business) or by a risk retention group (RRG). RRGs operate under different insurance regulations. RRGs only register in one state, abide by their laws for financial stability, and with some permission are able to operate in all states. It is good to know to whom you are giving your service contract money. Usually the purchase

price of the contract is sent to the warranty or contract company. They take a cut and send the rest to an insurance or RRG company that administers the claims. If the contract company or their backers don't stick to business, they can and DO fail. An RRG in Lincoln, NE failed this summer. They were the fifth largest RRG in the country and are now being liquidated by a court in the Grand Cayman Islands. They are believed to be carrying contracts for one million cars in the U.S. Unless there are some assets left after the liquidation proceedings, all these car owners will have nothing left but the paper that the contract was written on. The shakeout in the auto warranty industry is far-reaching. It is good to know with whom you are doing business. If the prices are too cheap to be true they probably are!

Are service contracts necessary? In our culture warranties seem to be extremely popular. A few years ago we had only a few customers who opted for extended service contracts. Today we are seeing more than 90% of our customers purchase service security.

It is very possible that the added strain on the cars from extended periods in congested traffic creates higher service incidents. Think about idling in a traffic jam for an extended period of time; the electrical system is running at its peak in very hot temperatures, the A/C is on, the headlights are on because of the running lights. All these things add to more service costs, and since the odometer is not rolling up miles, it would seem that the cars are not as durable as they once were. The reality, I believe, is that they are much better. The older cars were not subjected to some of the tough driving extremes that we experience today.

We also find that the escalating price of parts has made service contracts much more attractive. The security of a service contract protects drivers from unforeseen large repair bills. Needless to say, all the contract companies have the actuarial tables and know exactly how much it costs to fix the cars. They do make money! Service contracts may not be for everyone but they certainly can provide a certain amount of security for many.

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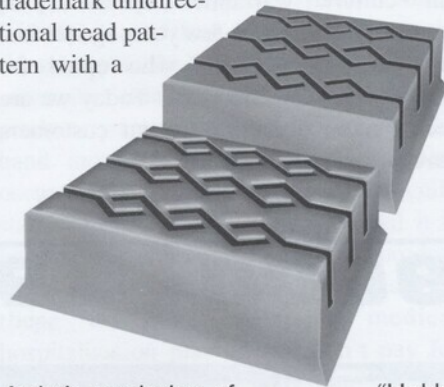
Nokian Tire Company has made something of a specialty producing what they call "All Weather" tires: speed-rated radial tires suitable for year around use which also carry the Severe Service "Snowflake" designation. Their first such product, the NRW "All-Weather Plus" tire was developed from a square-shouldered "mostly snow" tire about 12 years ago into a round shouldered version which combined good winter performance with good dry road behavior. We reported last September (NINES #259) that the NRW combined excellent snow and slush traction with wet and dry road performance that was nearly to the level of their NRH2 summer tires. Beginning last fall the NRW's replacement, the WR began to be available in automobile tire sizes. Supplies were very tight throughout the fall and early winter, but we were fortunate to obtain an evaluation set from Nokian. The tires we evaluated were size 225-50-VR16 XL, which have the same diameter and section width as the 225-45-WR17 XL OE tires on our 9⁵ Aero SportWagon,



guesswork during seasonal tire changeover.

Unique to the WR is "Haka Siping". "Sipes" are the thin cut-like lines molded into the tire's tread, as opposed to the wide grooves which define the tread's "ribs" and "blocks". Haka Siping exploits the tendency for rubber adjacent to the sipes to wear more rapidly than the rest of the tread. By arranging overlapping "S" shaped sipes, the result is a surface that wears to form thousands of tiny "bumps". These bumps increase traction on snow and ice as if they were studs without affecting dry road performance or damaging the roadway.

Finally, the WR continues Nokian's trademark unidirectional tread pattern with a



Artist's rendering of "Haka Sipes" shown as molded (above) and after some wear has occurred (below).

more contemporary looking and streamlined version. Like all automobile and light truck Nokians it features Jointless Nylon Belt over steel belted radial construction for better high speed integrity. The WR carcass is made with rayon cord body plies, the best for high speed and high temperature performance, and carries the Severe Service Emblem for Winter performance.

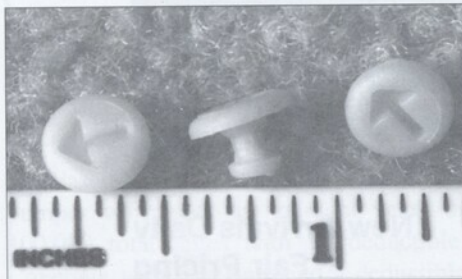
Mother nature came through for this tire evaluation, the 2002/2003 winter season being the most severe that we have seen in Northeast Ohio for many years. The Nokians performed excellently in the snow. Together with our long experience with winter driving, they gave the Saab's anti-lock braking and stability control very little opportunity to demonstrate their ability. Traction is another matter; when pulling away from a stop, a momentarily disabling

traction control, or "ESP", allows enough wheel spin to enable the tires to "dig in and pull" through snow. Otherwise, the traction control has a tendency to cause the car to just sit there, not spinning its wheels.

The real story of these tires isn't so much their excellent snow traction. We expect such performance from Nokian winter tires, and we have always received it. Rather, the dry and wet road performance has been raised to a level beyond what we experienced with the NRW. We found the ride and handling mix to be top rate and all that could be hoped for given the tire's aspect ratio. The ride was a little softer, and the handling nearly as crisp as we experience with the OE Michelin Primacy summer tires. To be blunt, we could hardly tell the difference when we changed over in the spring.

Tire noise, the bugaboo of winter tires, is nearly nonexistent with the WR. We check tested a 9⁵ that was for sale on behalf of an associate. That car had another brand of snow tires mounted, and they howled and rumbled beyond belief. "Flat spotting" is another tire characteristic associated with radial tires with nylon cap plies. This occurs when a car's tires are at operating temperature and the car is then parked. The nylon cap ply takes a "set" as it cools. The next day, the driver feels a characteristic "thump" for the first mile or so. The Michelin Primacy summer tires are relatively unique in using an aramid (Kevlar) fiber cap ply, and they do not "flat spot." During the winter I drove the Nokians, they proved very resistant to flat spotting; it was rarely noticeable.

To emphasize the WR's position as a winter-capable all season tire, Nokian has left the "Hakkapeliitta" name off the sidewall, adorning it instead with the UTQG (Universal Tire Quality Grading) symbols that snow tires are exempt from displaying. The UTQG on automobile size Wrs is 400 (or 420 depending on size) A - A, a credible performing result for any all season tire, let alone one with the dry road and snow performance of the WR. During the winter season our front tires lost about 1/32" of tread, and the rears lost nil. At that rate the set would be good for 14 seasons before being relegated to summer tire duty. Those will be 14 very good winter seasons! (*He should only keep the car that long! Editor's wife.*)

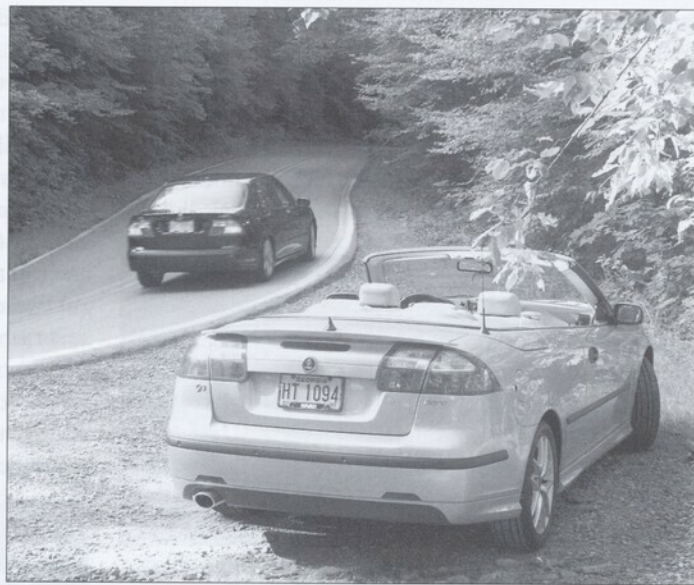


The pale green Info Pin fits into a hole in the sidewall. It turns black at freezing temperatures and turns to show position.

Saab Cars graciously invited us to the East Coast Press Launch for the 2004 9³ Convertible, held "on the road" between Atlanta and Asheville, North Carolina. Family obligations meant that only one could attend, and I really feel badly that Norma couldn't participate. I would have felt worse if she had accepted my offer for her to attend while I stayed home!

The new 9-3 Convertible was developed as a separate but parallel project to the Sports Sedan. Many of Saab's design team, including chief designer, Aamer Mahmud, worked on both projects in tandem. "This process meant that we were able to avoid solutions that could have prejudiced one or other car," said Mahmud. Compared to its predecessor, the new car is 2 inches wider and slightly shorter. Its 3 inch longer wheelbase means shorter front and rear overhangs.

Designers have their own language. Their description in the press release of the convertible styling is: *The well-balanced proportions and more purposeful stance endow the car with a strong, sporty character that echoes its fun to drive appeal. The swept back, frontal styling, with the grille and integrated headlamp/indicator units steeply angled back, is a striking evolution. The rearmost corner of each unit is 18 inches behind the center point of the bumper. This 'arrowhead' shape also matches the traditional wraparound proportions of the windshield. In profile, the clean wedge line is typically Saab and, top down, the shape is no longer interrupted by a tower to mount the front seat-belts. The styling of the rear deck is particularly neat because the pop-up roll bars and retractable rear head restraints are beautifully streamlined by twin fairings, giving a subtle hint of the Convertible's sporty character. The whole body appears more low-slung and closer to the ground. Reduced wheel-arch clearances, with the negatively-cambered wheels located well to the outer edges of the bodywork, contribute further to the more purposeful stance. The rear*



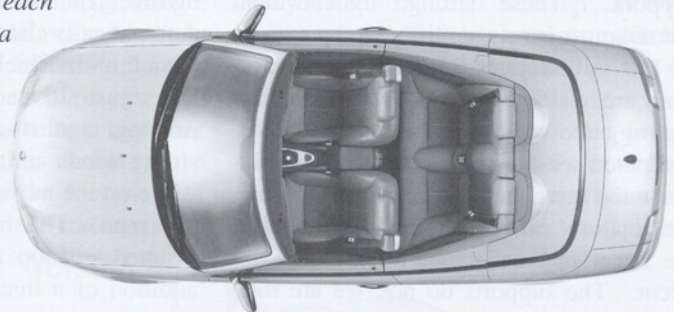
2004 Aero Convertible shown with a 2004 9⁵ Arc sedan.

of the car features large light clusters, unique to the Convertible, which are set high to balance the overall proportions. They wrap around each corner, incorporating a triangular shape and horizontal clear/red lens fields, both Saab signatures.

Whew! In plain English, we wrote (NINES #259, September/October 2002) that the front 3/4ths of 9³ Sport Sedan is gorgeous, but think the rear end treatment is a little plain looking. The new convertible, by comparison, looks great from any angle. With the top down, the headrest fairings, the smooth sweep of the

side sheet metal, and the tub-shaped passenger compartment are very stylish. With the top up, true to the description, the extra bow and padding make for a smooth appearance. The trunk area of the Convertible ends in a flat rear deck, which we like better than the rounded off end treatment of the Sports Sedan. The tail lights extend beyond the sheet metal in a manner reminiscent of the Volvo S80/S60, but stylishly instead of garishly, adding distinction to the tail end. The crease line running the length of the sedan all but fades away on the convertible, but then it is picked up by the tail light's clear section.

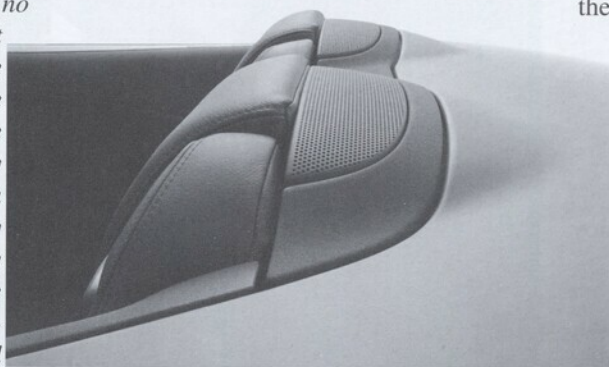
The most striking design feature is the introduction of a distinctive, mono-colored Surround Trim, highlighting the transition zone between the car's



Top view shows Surround Trim. Black line marks where the top rests on the body. Photo courtesy of Saab Automobile AB.

exterior and interior. A U-shaped line extends rearwards from the base of each A-pillar, incorporating slim panels along the top of the doors, the rear side trim and most of the tonneau cover. This line integrates the front and rear passenger areas, protecting and visually uniting the exterior surfaces that "come inside" when the top is up. The Surround Trim has a mat finish. It is black on most colors, but is body-colored on Steel Gray, Glacier Blue, Lime Yellow and Black.

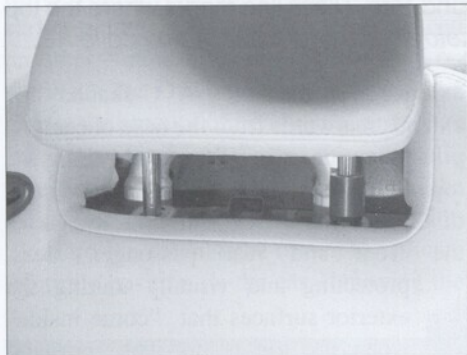
User-friendly features abound. Since the top latch and unlatch is automatic, the remote can be used to lower the top. When the seat back is released the seat motors forward at double speed, able to transverse the distance from "full back" to "full



Stylish fairings molded into the tonneau. The mesh covers conceal the pop up roll bars, not speakers. Photo courtesy of Saab Automobile AB.

forward” in just 7 seconds, easing entry to the back seat. Once the seat back is returned to upright, the power seat returns to its previous position. Access to the back seat is further enhanced by the shoulder belt being attached to the seat back itself, rather than the car body. This all but eliminates the belt “whipping” in the wind as well. The on-board navigation system, which is still not available in North America, is said to display “turning” arrows on the dash top-mounted SID (Saab Information Display), allowing the driver to find his way without taking his attention away from the road. One feature we find fantastic is the cruise control switch which allows 1 mph decreases as well as increases by turning the stalk-end mounted switch up or down.

The Convertible carries with it all the safety and performance advances from the Sport Sedan, except the curtain side “air bag” supplemental restraints for which there is no mounting place. New for Saab is the automatically deployed rear rollover support. These strong, light weight aluminum supports are lifted up by springs in 150 milliseconds and locked in place. They are released by explosive bolts which are triggered when the the onboard “ESP” computer senses imminent rollover. Because the actual deployment is by a spring, the supports can be economically reset in the event that an actual rollover doesn’t occur. The supports do not, we are told,



Pop-up roll bars are visible behind the rear seat headrests.

“punch a hole in the roof” if they deploy when the top is up.

In terms of rear passenger space, at 5’7” I can comfortably sit behind myself, but just barely. If taller folk than I occupy either or both front-back locations, some compromise will be in order. With the rear passenger seats closer together than the

fronts, at least the rear passengers have a good view out the windshield. The windshield itself has a “radar detector alignment line” running down the center which, according to Saab, doubles as a radio antenna. It is supplemented by a short flexible antenna on the trunk lid.



Rear seat passengers get a good view through the windshield.

The top is the heart of a convertible, and with the new 9³, Saab has advanced over the previous model in a number of ways. The operation requires no manual involvement beyond pressing a button, automatically latching to or unlatching from the windshield header rail. The cycle takes just 20 seconds with the engine running, and it can operate reliably in strong winds and, in an emergency, even while on the move at speeds up to 30 kph (20 mph). The materials for the triple-skinned soft-top are improved, with the addition of a thicker fleece middle layer



The convertible top “rain gutter” is essentially a rolled seam.

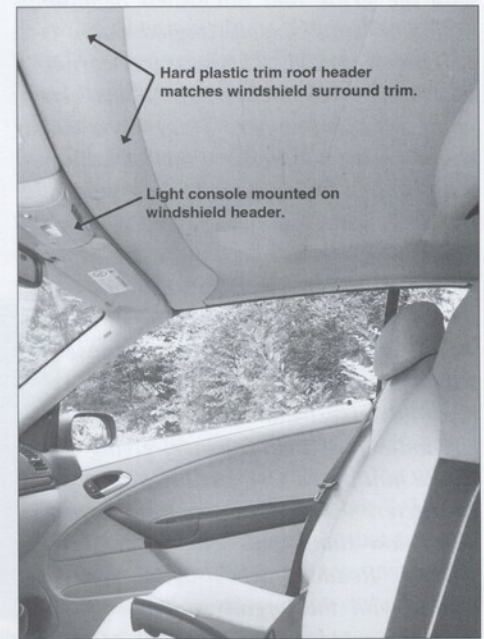
for good heat and noise insulation. The exterior color choice is black or blue. To save weight, the soft-top’s frame, the swivelling braces and the large padded front rail which connects to the windshield header are all made from magnesium, with steel used only for the soft-top’s pivoting side brackets. A small gutter has been sewn into the side of the fabric to prevent any water droplets dripping down onto the seats when a door is opened. The top uses six, instead of five, swivelling braces (or bows) on which the fabric is mounted, giving the soft-top a much tauter and smoother appearance, more like that of a



The “rolled seam” rain gutter is extremely effective in channelling water.

fixed roof on a coupe.

Interior appearance has not been overlooked. The new 9³ Convertible is first on the market to offer a light color, either a beige or a light gray, headliner. The



The interior trim gives the convertible the feel of a closed car when the top is raised.

windshield header bar is padded and finished to match the headliner, with a light console on the top center.

The operation of the tonneau cover is also unique. The tonneau cover has previously been hinged at the rear, but on the new 9³ features it is raised vertically and then moved rearwards, parallel to the top of the trunk. This motion is a quicker and more efficient means of allowing clearance for deployment of the soft-top. Pulling the tonneau down flat instead of hinging and latching it closed is also a more robust operation, and it contributes towards improved reliability and better seating and sealing. One additional benefit is the "last bow" of the top doesn't need to be raised as far to allow for operation of the tonneau. This means a larger rear window can be installed improving visibility with the top up.

The final innovation is a practical feature: raising the roof automatically raises the capacity of the trunk. The CargoSET (Self-Expanding Trunk) feature directly links the soft-top's rearmost hinge mechanism to the flexible "accordion" storage well in the trunk. When the roof is in position, the well is therefore fully retracted releasing useful additional storage space. It is a simple mechanical action that eliminates the

need to manually hitch up the well with straps or rods. When the roof stowed, there is still enough room in the trunk to accommodate two golf bags.

If the top is the heart of a convertible, its structure is its soul in terms of driving properties. A car must have high torsional rigidity if it is to communicate a reassuring, solid feel when a door is closed or the car negotiates a poor road surface. It makes a major contribution to eliminating squeaks and rattles, vibrations and resonances. Chassis engineers also demand a stiff body because the car's handling, obtained through the control of its suspension, wheel and steering movements, can be brought to current standards only if the structure, which supports the suspension, is solid and predictable. Finally, the car's ability to withstand a heavy impact is largely due to the strength of its passenger compartment and the ability of the structure's crumple zones to prevent energy reaching it.

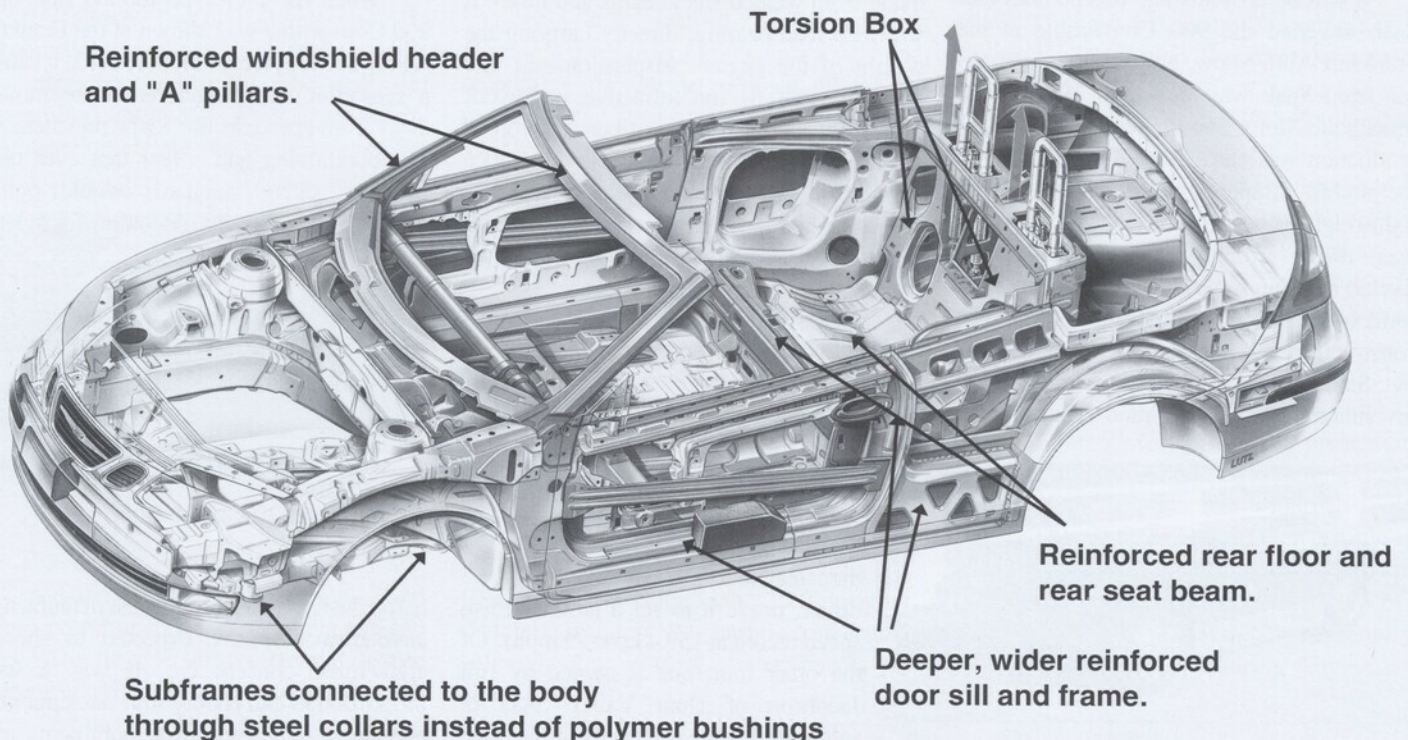
High levels of rigidity are also difficult to achieve with a topless unibody design. Front and rear sections of a car, relatively rigid boxes, are joined by a mid section which, in a sedan or coupe, is also extremely rigid due to its being a large box structure. Change the design to a convertible and three of the four sides of the box are removed. It is the structural

engineers' job to devise a way to restore the missing structure.

Roadsters, especially rear drive roadsters, may feature a "torque tube" design. This is a box structure enclosing the transmission and drive shaft. Together with the floor and door sills, the torque tube can be quite effective, but it also is a problem to apply this approach to a 4 passenger convertible. The torque tube becomes much longer (and therefore less stiff) and the box interferes with the aesthetics and comfort of the rear seat passengers.

To achieve their goals for the Convertible, Saab engineers have installed what is, in effect, a parallel structure within the platform: an additional, completely linked "ring of steel" extending from the front to the rear of the car. The most important element of this new structure is a large closed casing, known as the "torsion box", located between the rear wheel housings, immediately behind the rear seat and ahead of the soft-top stowage compartment. Saab has used a torsion box in all of its convertibles, starting with the original 1986 900 Convertible.

The bottom of the torsion box is welded to another completely new large pressing, a combined rear seat beam and floor which also forms the boot well. This is



Convertible structural details *Drawing courtesy of Saab Automobile AB, captions by author.*

2004 9³ Convertible

another important link in the structure and, like the torsion box, is welded at each side to the first of two rear inner side panels which in turn connect with the lower B-pillar and side sills. The torsion box and seat beam pressing take the place of the upper structure consisting of the "C" pillar, "B" pillar, and roof, rigidly connecting the rear portion of the car forward to the "B" pillar.

Enlarged side sills, unique to the Convertible, are further major components of this "second chassis". They are 32 mm higher and 8 mm wider, with a 25 per cent larger cross-section, than those of the sedan and are made even stronger by the addition of an internal longitudinal plate running the whole length of the box section. The three cross-braces are also good for impact resistance. Forward of the side sills is another crucial area, connecting the sill, the base of the A-pillar, the bottom of the front bulkhead, the sub-frame mountings and the floor. This is heavily reinforced through a structure of four carefully shaped steel pressings.

The upper A-pillars, together the windshield header rail, provide rollover protection as well as structural strength and

are made from longitudinal steel members with cross braces. The header rail is also reinforced, consisting of three layers of steel. The whole combined structure can withstand a loading of 2.2 times the weight of the car, or about 3.5 tons. The final pieces of the chassis reinforcement are braces that engage both the front and rear sub-frames, which, for extra stiffness, are bolted directly to the body with steel collars instead of the polymer bushes used in the 9³ Sport Sedan. At the front, one transverse and two diagonal "X-rods" are bolted into the sub-frame at its mounting points. At the rear, two diagonal "V-rods" are bolted in position, linking the sub-frame on each side to the mounting of the trailing arm in the rear suspension.

About half of its 383 structural body parts are unique to the Convertible and 60 per cent of its body weight is composed of high or ultra high strength steel. The convertible body's torsional rigidity, 11,500 Nm/degree of deflection, is almost three times greater than that of its predecessor and among the best in its class. Although the 9³ Sport Sedan's stiffness is greater still, the new Convertible is about 15% stiffer than

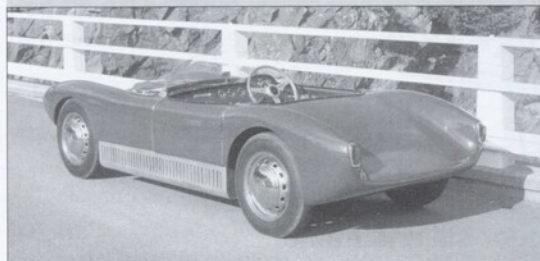
the previous generation 9³ hatchback. As with the Sport Sedan, the Convertible features resilient foam and channel beam bumper assemblies, which can absorb impacts up to 5 mph, and deformable "crash boxes" behind the front bumper to absorb and contain relatively low speed impact forces.

Quality of construction is an area where long time Saab owners may need reassurance because the Convertible is being assembled in a new factory by a new (to Saab) subcontractor. The 2004 Convertible's construction, along with some of its engineering, is the responsibility of Magna Steyr, a division of the Canadian industrial and automotive supplier Magna International, founded by Frank Stronach. Magna Steyr and its corporate predecessors have built Chrysler minivan and Jeep models for European distribution, and more recently have contracted to produce Mercedes and BMW model cars. According to Steyr:

- Approximately 750 workers will be employed building Saab convertibles at the Graz, Austria plant.
- Over 200 engineers and technicians at Magna Steyr Engineering worked for 36

Retrospective

It will be 20 years ago this autumn that Saab unveiled the 900 Convertible at the Frankfurt Auto Show, but the first open-top car from Saab was shown in 1956 at the Stockholm Motor Show. Back then, Saab car production was carried out by a division of the aircraft company, and the chassis of the lightweight, two-seat Saab Sonett I sports car was made from aviation specification, riveted aluminum panels. This 'monocoque' form of design, though common in aircraft construction, was adopted for automotive use by Saab some six years ahead of its revolutionary arrival in Grand Prix racing in



Sonett I

the shape of Colin Chapman's Lotus 25. The aluminum fuselage of the Sonett I was much stiffer and lighter than a conventional chassis made from welded steel beams and tubes. It was also load-bearing, directly carrying the weight of the engine, suspension and fuel tank, as well as the attractive bodywork molded from GRP (glass-fiber, reinforced plastic). Powered by a three cylinder, 750cc two-stroke engine tuned for 57.5 bhp (42 kW), Sonett I weighed just 500 kilos (1100 lb.) and was intended for track racing. Only six were built because a change in international competition regulations put an end to the project. The first Sonett I is now on display at the Saab Car Museum,

which owns two of the six. Just seven years ago it again briefly made headlines in Sweden when Erik Carlsson, the legendary Saab rally driver, drove it to set a new Swedish speed record at 159.4 kph (99 mph). Of the other four, one is owned by Bill Jacobson of Hunt Valley Saab in suburban Baltimore, one is in the Saab Cars USA collection, one is owned by

Gus Jakfors, an employee of Saab Automobile AB, and one, heavily damaged, is being restored by a man in Germany.

When the prototype for the first Saab 900 Convertible was shown at the Frankfurt Motor Show in the autumn of 1983, it caused a sensation. Manufacturers were moving away from open cars due to the prevalence of air conditioning and a fear that ever more stringent safety standards would outlaw them. Saab, with its reputation for winter-



Classic 900 Convertible

hardy designs, was also the last manufacturer anyone would have expected to show a convertible concept car. It was a well-proportioned and roomy four passenger car, and drew many admiring comments as it looked like a unique design rather than a

months in close cooperation with the Saab engineers developing the convertible.

- The project involved a total investment of over 60 million euros. A major percentage of the sum went into the completely new, largely automated body shop, which has a total of 44 advanced robots, and final assembly line which is completely new and consists of 50 different stations.

- The value of the project over the entire duration until 2010 will be around 3 billion euros.

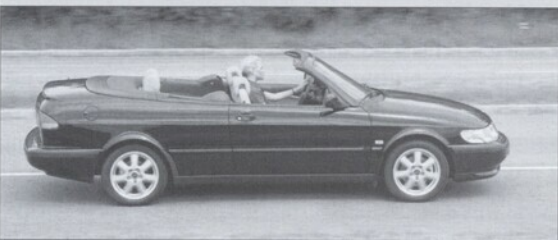
- The planned production rate is over 20,000 vehicles per year.

- Saab convertible production began on July 8. The rated production capacity of 102 vehicles per day is expected to be reached in two-shift operation by the fourth quarter of 2003. During August, the 200,000th Saab Convertible was produced by Steyer.

The Austrian built convertible will have the same processes and standards for corrosion treatment and quality of finish as cars built at the Trollhattan plant. To underscore Saab's confidence in the convertible, the perforation warranty will be extended from the current 6 years/

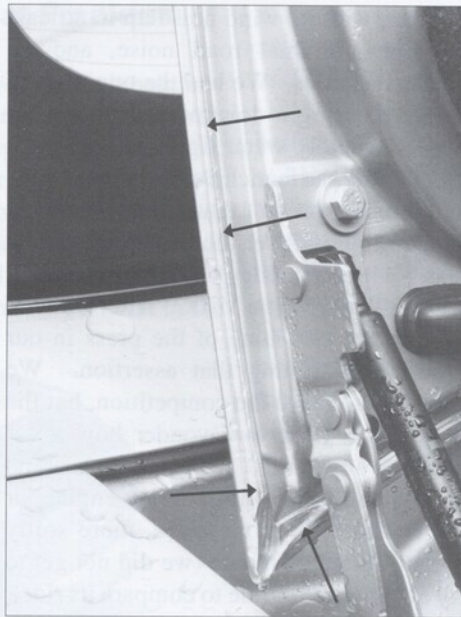
conversion of an existing, steel-roof model. The clean lines were flowing and graceful and the Saab Convertible looked good with its roof up or down.

The all-new "second generation" 900 soft-top was introduced as a 1995 model, a year after the hatchback. The new 900 Convertible, and its later Saab 9³ evolution, benefitted from being part of the new model program from the outset. The designers were



"New Generation" 900/9³ Convertible

now able to achieve a completely flat rear deck and the soft-top was accommodated under a power operated, flush-fitting tonneau cover. The flexible soft-top storage well in the trunk could be hitched up to provide more space, and the manual locking operation to the windshield header rail was also made



Vinyl seam sealer on the lap seam of the trunk door. *Photo by author.*

unlimited mileage to 10 years/unlimited mileage. The finish on our press car was flawless. Door seams have the same vinyl sealing as the Swedish and Finnish built cars, and every part of the car looks and feels the same as a Swedish built 9³ sports

easier. The 'second generation' Convertible was an even greater success than its predecessor, more than doubling previous production and sales volumes. Global sales for 1994-2002 totalled 140,500 units, averaging more than 15,500 units a year and accounting for 24 per cent of all 900/9³ production. This compares with almost 49,000 Saab 900 Convertibles sold between 1987 and 1993, an average of 7,000 units a year and 14 per cent of all Saab 900 production. Across Europe and the United States, the Saab Convertible has achieved an annual share of the premium convertible segment as high as 30 per cent, a remarkable penetration when compared to Saab's usual 6 per cent share of the premium car segment as a whole.

Milestones

1950 - Sixten Sason, Saab's first designer, sketches a Saab 92 based convertible, although the concept never leaves the drawing board.

1956 - Six examples of Saab's first open car, the Saab Sonett, are manufactured.

sedan. We peeked and poked and prodded all over our press car looking for production shortcuts or design compromises. We did not find any.

How does it drive? We are truly saving the best for last, because the driving properties of this car are every bit the equal of the 9³ Sports Sedan. Our press tour included segments which could best be described as "autocross routes running up and down the Appalachians." We drove



Vinyl seam sealer on the lap seam of the driver's door. *Photo by author*

1983 - The prototype for the Saab 900 Convertible, developed from the 2-door Saab Sedan, is unveiled at the Frankfurt Motor Show.

1986 - The first 400 Saab 900 Convertibles are produced for the US market during the spring.

1988 - Production of the 900 Convertible exceeds 5,000 cars per year

1993 - The final first-generation Saab 900 Convertible leaves Uusikaupunki in September. A total of 48,888 were produced.

1994 - The new Saab 900 Convertible is previewed at the Detroit Auto Show. Production starts in Finland.

1997 - Saab 900 Convertible no. 100,000 is produced.

1998 - Saab 9³ Convertible is presented. Special features include hydraulic soft top operation and a larger rear window.

2003 - The all-new Saab 9³ Convertible is launched and test driven by the press in Copenhagen in June. Convertible no. 200,000 rolls off the Magna Steyr assembly line near Graz, Austria, during August.

Story and Photographs courtesy of Saab Automobile AB.

the first part of the route in an '04 9⁵ Arc sedan fitted with 17 inch wheels and Pirelli P-Zero Rosso performance tires. It handled great on the tight turns, as we would expect. Later in the 9³ Aero Convertible, a car which weighs about the same and with the same wheel and tire combination, we were reminded just how good the new car handles. In tight switchbacks and hairpin turns the car tracked around with none of the front tire stress we associate with front wheel drive cars (including the 9⁵).

The engine is smoother at high rpm and generally feels more refined and quieter than the 2.3L engine in the 9⁵. There is adequate power for spirited back-road driving without having to flog the excellent 6 speed manual transmission to squeeze every last rpm out of the power band. For expressway driving across the Allegheny mountains in North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia the power was ample. Some steep downhill grades were more comfortable in 5th gear, or even 4th than riding the brakes down in 6th. Downshifting for uphill grades was only necessary when traffic slowed progress to the extent that the engine speed in 6th gear dropped below 2000 rpm. I have driven 9³s with the 6 speed gearbox a few times since the sedan launch a year ago, and I no longer try to go backward in 6th gear or start away in reverse. The feel of the clutch and shift lever are first rate.

The ride was silky smooth on North Carolina's seldom frosted roadways. When we got home to the more familiar crumbling Northern roadways, the ride was firm but not harsh. There was no body quiver or shake that we could notice even on the worst of roadways. The only flaw in the feel of the car was a strange resonance that the sound system was able to excite when the volume was raised to compensate for high speed open car motoring.

The cabin aerodynamics with the top down are generally pretty good. The only time the wind tugged at my hat was while driving right behind a semi-trailer at expressway speeds. The climate control system automatically switches mode when the top is lowered to adjustable preset heat levels in 20 steps, rather than attempting to control cabin temperature. When the top is up, the cabin is as quiet as

a sedan, with no wind noise up to at least 90 mph, minimal road noise, and no creaks or rattles. We had the opportunity to drive during a downpour, and the top was completely water tight.

During the launch Saab claimed to the assembled press that the new 9³ Convertible will set the benchmark in its class, which includes the BMW 3-series, Audi A4, and Volvo V70C. After a day of driving the car, none of the press in our group was arguing that assertion. We don't get to drive the competition, but the Saab is so good, we wonder how a car could be any better. We could understand a car being faster with a larger engine, or larger and with more space, more softly sprung for a better ride (we did not get to try an Arc convertible to compare its ride), or different in other ways, but we don't see how one could be better. Despite the quantum improvement in the vehicle, the MSRP remains the same for the 2004 9³ as it has been for the past several years: \$39,995 for the Arc (compare to the 9³S) and \$42,500 for the Aero (9³ SE).

Regarding the price, our record for predicting future changes is spotty. In 1999, when the 9⁵ SportWagon was introduced at the same price as a similarly equipped sedan, we said that was a "welcome gift" from Saab and unlikely to last. We were correct, and today there is not only a \$700 difference in the MSRP between the sedan and wagon, but also the incentives are lower on the wagon than on the sedan. In 2002, when the US Dollar's value began to sink relative to European currencies, we predicted a significant price increase for Saab cars because of it. We are still waiting. The 2004 Aero MSRP price has remained constant, and the 2004 Arc's MSRP is significantly decreased over the 2003 Arc.

Undaunted by past mistakes, we predict: If the new 9³ Convertible succeeds as well as Saab expects that it will, and the quality of the car should support such success, then we believe that the \$40,000 Saab convertible will be history. If you are going to purchase a convertible "soon", don't wait!

The technical information on the new convertible was provided courtesy of Saab Cars USA, Inc. Photographs by the author unless otherwise noted.

2004 9⁵ Impressions

Overshadowed by the 9³ Convertible launch are the changes to the 9⁵ line. The changes are mostly cosmetic in the Aero and mostly substantive in the Linear and Arc. Most significantly changed is the Linear Sedan: it has been discontinued in North America. The reason given was that the less powerful 9⁵ Linear Sedan overlapped in price with the 9³ Aero and Arc. Saab has decided that the 9⁵ should be a step up from the smaller car. At the same time, the Linear SportWagon has been "repositioned" with less standard equipment and a lower price to compete against the lower priced Volvo V70, according to Saab. We suspect that is a stopgap measure, pending the arrival of the 9³ Sport-Hatch.

At the 2004 Press Launch, we drove an Arc automatic sedan with the Sport Wheel Package (17" wheels and Pirelli P-Zero Rosso tires) over the first leg of the driving course. With the standard suspension and the Aero's tire package, the sedan rides smoothly and handles well. The biggest change in the Arc's driving character is the additional power. When we tested the 1999 9⁵ 170 hp 5-speed Wagon, we found the power insufficient for passing at highway speed. The car seemed to "run out of breath" in 3rd gear. There were no such issues with the 2004 9⁵ Arc; the car pulled cleanly all the way up to the shift points. Inside, the changes are limited to a darker dash top and a lighter grey leather for the seats.

The Aero's new front bumper looks better in "real life" than in photographs. The lower air opening, which looks like a monolithic black opening in photos has horizontal slats, giving texture to the air inlets. That theme is repeated at the back, where the blacked-out lower valence is slatted. Inside, the new "Sport Tech" carbon fiber dash gives an alternative to those who don't care for the brushed metal look, and the two-tone seats add some style. The mechanical specifications for 2004 in the 9⁵ Aero are unchanged as compared to 2003.

Saab to Hatch New Concept at Frankfurt

On Monday September 8, Saab will have unveiled their new "Sport-Hatch" concept in at the Frankfurt Auto Show. The sporty, five-door, four-seat car appears to be a step between the 9^{3X}, introduced at the 2002 North American International Auto Show and the coming 9³ 5 door variants. When the 9^{3X} was unveiled, Saab representatives declared it to be a good representative of future vehicles. Anthony Lo, at the 2003 NAIAS, said in a NINES interview that the production vehicle would be very similar to the



9^{3X} concept car, but would be a 5 door model and not have the extremely short rear overhang of the concept car. The Sport-Hatch clearly fits that description. We find it interesting to compare the Sport-Hatch to an earlier Saab: the 95.



Saab has not revealed a production schedule for the Sport-Hatch beyond saying that it is "coming." One Saab employee has speculated, however, that he expects the model "sooner rather than later." The reason given is the prominence of small-to-medium wagons, rather than SUVs, in the European markets. With the coming 9² relieving some of the pressure for smaller AWD Saabs, perhaps the front wheel drive Sport-Hatch will be introduced first with the AWD "Crossover" version following.

J.D. Power Survey Results

Results of the J.D. Power and Associates Customer Service Index study, which measures how customers are treated at dealership service departments, have been released. The annual J.D. Power study focuses on experiences with the dealer service department during the first three years of vehicle ownership, which typically represents the majority of vehicle warranty periods. The study is based on the responses of nearly 106,000 new vehicle owners and lessees. Infiniti's first place score of 900 out of a possible 1000 compares with Saab's score of 892, good for 7th

place overall and first place among European brands. Industry average was 851, and the lowest score was Daewoo, with a score of 737.

In a story in Automotive News on line edition, Joe Ivers, a partner and executive director of quality and customer satisfaction at J.D. Power was quoted extensively about the Customer Service survey and the results. According to the story, quality improvements across the industry are driving down the need for warranty repairs at new vehicle dealerships, transforming the nature of the dealer service business. The study finds that the balance of work at dealerships is tilting toward scheduled maintenance as opposed to repairs. The mix of routine maintenance business has increased to 57 percent in 2003 from 47 percent in 1999. With most of the luxury brands offering free routine maintenance over the first three years of ownership, it's not surprising that they also dominate the upper end of the survey.

But free service alone doesn't guarantee high satisfaction. Saturn, a no-frills brand but one which was founded on the premise of excellent service, was second to Infiniti at 896. Audi has long offered free routine maintenance, but Audi also has been a "poster child" for low service satisfaction, seemingly a result from rapid sales growth. "You had a painfully long wait to get an appointment," Ivers said, but efforts to build more service capacity in the dealerships and find more efficient ways to schedule customers gave Audi a 29-point improvement to one point above average in the current study. If routine maintenance is involved, getting the customer in and out quickly seems to be the way to high satisfaction. Fixing it right the first time and things relating to that, such as the quality of the diagnosis and the thoroughness in making sure that everything that was promised gets done, were key when repairs were involved.

The result clearly shows that Saab dealers are successfully satisfying the service and repair needs of new car customers. We question the statistical significance of many of the rankings, with less than a one percent difference in the score being the spread between the top 7 places in the survey and the 8 places from Pontiac (one point below average) to Chevrolet (8 points above average). That said, the brands in the top rank can be justifiably proud of their dealers.

Customer Service Index Ranking

Infiniti 900	GMC 858	Land Rover 812
Saturn 896	Chrysler 857	Volkswagen 795
Acura 895	Honda 854	Kia 786
Lexus 895	Audi 852	Suzuki 781
Lincoln 895	Jeep 851	Isuzu 780
Cadillac 893	INDUSTRY AVERAGE 851	
Saab 892	Pontiac 849	Daewoo 737
Buick 889	Plymouth 846	
Porsche 874	Dodge 845	
BMW 873	Ford 845	
Jaguar 868	Mazda 841	
Mercedes-Benz 868	Subaru 841	
Volvo 868	Toyota 838	Source: JD Power
Mercury 867	Mitsubishi 833	and Associates 2003
Olds 863	Hyundai 832	Customer Service
Chevrolet 858	Nissan 831	Index Study

J.D. Power Dependability Study

Saab performed well in the 2003 J.D. Power and Associates' annual vehicle dependability survey. The study is based on responses from more than 55,000 original owners of 2000 model-year cars and light trucks. The figures represent the number of problems per 100 vehicles. Saab's record of 255 problems per 100 cars placed it behind only Porsche and Jaguar (!) among European brands, and better than the industry average score of 273.

Brand Problems (Per 100 Vehicles)

Lexus: 163	Mercury: 240	Average 273	Jeep: 321
Infiniti: 174	Jaguar: 247	Oldsmobile: 283	Volvo: 330
Buick: 179	Saab: 255	Mazda: 288	Mitsubishi: 339
Porsche: 193	BMW: 262	Pontiac: 293	Hyundai: 342
Acura: 196	Subaru: 266	Chrysler: 295	Isuzu: 368
Toyota: 201	Nissan: 267	Ford: 295	Volkswagen: 391
Cadillac: 209	GMC: 269	Plymouth: 302	Suzuki: 403
Lincoln: 212	Chevrolet: 272	Dodge: 312	Daewoo: 421
Honda: 218	Saturn: 273	Audi: 318	Land Rover: 441
		Mercedes-Benz: 318	Kia: 509

Sales

Saab's sales over the period continue to be strong, with the Saab's USA sales on track for their best year in their history. Through the end of August, Saab sales in the U.S. reached 33,085 vehicles, a 17 percent increase over last year's 28,390 for the first eight months of the year. The prospects for the total year's sales are especially bright considering that in 2002 lack of supply affected the last four months of the year. 50,000 cars for the year would be nice, but December is traditionally a weak month throughout the industry, and convertible sales will probably suffer from supply shortages.

At the 9³ Convertible Press Launch, Saab shared information on the success of the 9³ Sports Sedan so far. The underlying data essentially support the sales growth shown throughout 2003. Saab breaks down buyers into three broadly defined groups: Saab Loyalists, or those whose previous car has been a Saab, Competitive Luxury Conquests, or those whose previous vehicle has been in the entry luxury group (Volvo, BMW "3" series, or Audi), and Aspirers, or those whose previous car has been a lower price vehicle (VW, or Toyota). Luxury Conquests have maintained a constant percentage of sales at 20%. Saab Loyalists have decreased in percentage from 32% of sales to 20% of sales, but the actual number of sales to Saab Loyalists has increased by 13%, according to Saab. Those moving up from lower-priced vehicles to Saab has increased from 48% of sales to 60% of sales. To summarize the breakdown, the Sports Sedan appears to be far more appealing to non-Saab owners than previous models, with their sales increasing by 129%, while being sufficiently appealing to previous owners of Saabs to maintain the total sales level. The top three reasons buyers give for choosing a Saab 9³ Sport Sedan are styling, driving dynamics, and value. As a result, Saab has increased its market share of the "entry luxury group" by 19%, to 6.9% of that market.

The plan is for a similar performance in the Convertible segment. Over the past several years, Saab has held around 25% of the entry luxury convertible segment as the segment has increased from 28,000 to 35,000 vehicles in the US. Saab believes that the markedly improved style, function, and features of the new convertible, combined with their maintaining the previous convertible's price structure, will result in similar sales increases in that segment.

Meanwhile, 9⁵ sales volume is tapering off, perhaps lost in the excitement over the launches of the 9³ Sports Sedan. Saab officials, responding to questions about the weakening 9⁵, gave that as the motivation for the realignment of the 9⁵

line. For the Aero, there is a more aggressive and more distinctive exterior style and the optional "Sport Tech" interior, with carbon fiber dash and shifter knob, two-tone seats, and satin finish door handles. For the Arc, there is improved style, with the previous year's Aero exterior treatment, more power, less weight, better fuel economy, wider choice with a manual transmission as the standard offering, all at a lower price.

Another sales detail (and one which we may add to the table next year) is "Certified Pre-owned" (CPO). Saab's participation in CPO was a little late in coming. It followed many of the other luxury brands into the market and even then was not fully competitive until last year when the CPO warranty was integrated with Saab's new car warranty system. CPO provides buyers with a "premium used car," one supported by a manufacturer's warranty and a documented adherence to the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule. By removing the uncertainty from the purchase, it supports the value for well maintained lease returns and gives cover for "excess wear and tear" charges to lessees who fail to properly maintain their vehicles. Both improve the profitability of the lease programs. Saab's monthly CPO sales exceeded 1000 cars for the first time in August.

	JUL 03	AUG 03	Period
viggen coupe	4	0	4
sedan 93	2	2	4
sedan 93 se	11	3	14
viggen sedan	1	0	1
convertible 93 se	657	593	1250
viggen convertible	0	0	0
Linear Sports Sed	1100	1120	2220
Arc Sport Sed	871	935	1806
Vector Sport Sed	244	232	476
Total 93	2890	2885	5775
sedan 95 Linear	697	602	1299
sedan 95 Arc	178	155	333
sedan 05 Aero	264	206	470
wagon 95 Linear	231	234	465
wagon 95 Arc	67	53	120
wagon 95 Aero	75	74	149
Total 95	1512	1324	2836
IDS	14	6	20
Total (2003)	4402	4209	8611
Last year (2002)	3760	4072	7832
Percent increase	17.07	3.36	9.95
Total year to date	20554	33085	
Previous year	24318	28390	

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ON LINE CLUBS

The Saab Network

http://www.saabnet.com

Turbo!

Send an email request to turbo-request@secret-secret.com. Place the word "subscribe" in the subject line and the body of the post.

VSAAB, The Vintage Saab Mailing List

http://www.vsaab.com

The Saab Club of North America, Inc.

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The Saab Owners' Convention Permanent Web Site

http://www.saabconvention.org

30th Anniversary for Andrews Inc. of Princeton

Every year, one of the highlights for the Minnesota Saab Club is taking time to attend the annual Open House event at Andrews Inc. located in Princeton, MN. This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the Andrews' family-owned enterprise. A special celebration was held on June 14th at the Mille Lacs County Fairgrounds and Racetrack in Princeton following the city's annual Rum River Festival Parade. Over the years the Minnesota Saab Club has become a regular entry in the parade with a smattering of about 20 Saabs, old and new, unusual and ordinary, but all driven by Saab enthusiasts waving Swedish flags. This year as an additional entry, Chuck Andrews drove the company's semi-truck and 8-car transport in the parade. It was loaded with Saabs off the used car lot and was decked out with banners displaying an invitation to the parade-goers to attend the Andrews Open House.

Furthermore, an invitation was sent to metro area Inter Marque members and an assortment of foreign cars was driven in the parade along with the Saabs. Among those were a '78 Citroen 200, a 2000 Birkin/Lotus 7, a 1973 Triumph TR6 and a couple of other Citroens. In addition, Saab enthusiasts Dave & LaDonna Walker from Des Moines, drove their 2003 mini-Cooper in the parade.

The parade ended at the Mille Lacs County Fairgrounds where visitors were greeted by an entourage of Swedish entertainers including Pippi Longstockings, a woodland troll, Ole Olson & the Old Time Orchestra and a Scandinavian hardanger fiddler. The program was emceed by Bob Gasch, another long-time Saab owner. A highlight for the kids was the children's petting farm complete with FREE kittens. As a special treat, a group of Vikings from the Minnesota Science Museum presented a display of artsy things like leather works, chain mail, bead & shell jewelry and also taught the children to play KUBB, an ancient Viking game.

In the Commercial Building, a 24 ft. exhibit was set up to "bring the shop to the fair." Chuck & Don Andrews, co-owners of Andrews Inc., visited with guests and explained the pictures and information that covered "30 Years In Business." As an added attraction, there were other displays and

exhibits from PPG Paints, Dent Wizard and Nokian Tyres. At the other end of the building, guests were tempted to taste Swedish delectables and check out the Scandinavian crafts.

Meanwhile, MN Saab Club members Dean Nelson and Chris Luick organized an Auto Cross that was held on the quarter-mile dirt track. Sixteen different drivers tried their skills on the dirt track that is host to late model racing action each Friday through the summer months. These cars leave the clay track surface very bumpy so it was a challenge to navigate on Saturday.

Meyer Garage and the Minnesota Saab Club sponsored a People's Choice Concours. This year's winner was Phil Duckert from Minneapolis with his 2000 Lightening Blue 9/3 Viggen, followed by Ingemar Ekstrom's '68 blue 'n white Sonett. Approximately 600 persons attended the event throughout the day. How could a summer day in Minnesota be any better? Fantastic weather, delicious food, good company, interesting cars and a great time for celebration!

*Chuck Andrews
Princeton, MN*

The New England SAAB Owners' Gathering

Well over 100 people showed up June 27-29 for the 3rd Annual New England Saab Owners' Gathering, and the weather could not have been better! The Gathering got underway Friday afternoon as cars began rolling into the Sturbridge Host Hotel, the location for the 1990 National Convention. The crowd of Saabs ran the range from Bruce Welch's immaculate 1957 93, all the way up to Don Miller's 2003 9³ Sport Sedan, and truly everything in between. There was at least one of every major type of Saab made since their introduction to the States back in '56, and in most cases there were numerous examples.

Saturday morning we headed over to Old Sturbridge Village, while day trippers rolled in from Boston and beyond. 2-stroke and V4-powered 95s and 96s, 900s, 9000s, 9³s and 9⁵s: they were all there. With over 95 people registering, the attendance was probably in the range of 120-130 people.

One highlight of the morning was the NESAs raffle. Many great, and some very rare items had been generously donated by our friends at SCNA (Garry Grimes and Dan

Orzano) and Central Penn Saab Club (Marc Fails), as well as Bruce Billing, Bill and Joanne Clark, Creighton Demarest, Jeff Proposki, Lennie Veilleux at Dean Hill Motors, Pierre Belperron at Charles River Saab, and more. Lucky raffle winners walked away with great prizes, and the club did well enough to cover our expenses. Thanks go as well to Wendy and Tim Boucher, Kimberly and Mark Gates, Cheryl and Todd Remsburg, Ed Lorenz, John Moss, Bruce Welch, Bill and Joanne Clark, Dirk Feather, Dave Hosmer, and Harry Davis for generously volunteering their time and energy to make Saturday morning such a success.

Concours trophies were awarded for the first three places in each class. Afterwards we were off on a driving tour down to Woodstock, CT and back, by way of many winding and beautiful back roads. Our thanks to Dave Hosmer for taking us on this journey through his "back yard."

Saturday night was our banquet with featured guest Dick Karl of New Canaan, CT, talking about selling Saabs in the old days, as well as a month long camping trip he took with his wife to Alaska in a Saab 99 (yes, the Saab was the camper). Legendary Saab Tech and Teacher John Moss then treated us to a behind the scenes look at how Turbocharging came to elevate Saab to new levels (while occasionally taking it down to a few others). In his inimitable style, John worked many bits of humorous Saab history into his talk, and of course, he brought some very cool items for show-and-tell from his "shop" down in Connecticut. Many Saab die-hards could be found out in the parking lot after dinner and well into the early morning hours.

Sunday morning we made our way down to Dave Hosmer's vintage Saab farm in Woodstock Valley, CT. Dave treated us to an incredible assortment of vintage cars and vintage parts, which he made available for sale despite his apparent tendencies towards collecting things Saab - like Sonetts, which seem to be breeding in his back yard. About 12 of us found ourselves soaking up every last bit of the weekend, down at the local restaurant grabbing some lunch before heading home. It was 3 days of great times, great cars, and great friends, old and new.

Coming Events

October 18th-19th - Swedish Car Day, Museum of Transportation, Brookline, MA. Festivities Start Saturday afternoon with a driving tour through Cape Ann, then a SAAB

USA hosted dinner cruise in Boston Harbor. For more information or to sign up for the dinner cruise, email Phil Jackson at pjackson@crsaab.com or call 617-923-9230. **November 1st** - The 6th Annual Tech Session at Saab Training Center, Wallingford, CT. John Moss will take us through yet another in what has become an annual tradition in do-it-yourself hands-on instruction. Please email Larry West at viggen@mac.com if you are planning to attend.

*Chris Mills
Keene, NH*

Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix

Held annually, the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix (PVGGP), run by the Vintage Sports Car Club of America (VSCCA) in the streets of Pittsburgh's Schenely Park, provides the backdrop for a massive Concours. The Western Pennsylvania Saab Club hosts a nominal Saab showing every year, but as described by their president Andy Bittenbinder, "There's so much going on that anything we might plan would only detract from the event."

Attending for the first time, but only briefly as an evening commitment severely limited my time, I have to agree with Andy's assessment. Even so, the show of Saabs on the field was disappointing, and the grandeur of the event deserves more. The array of



Saabs on display at the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix

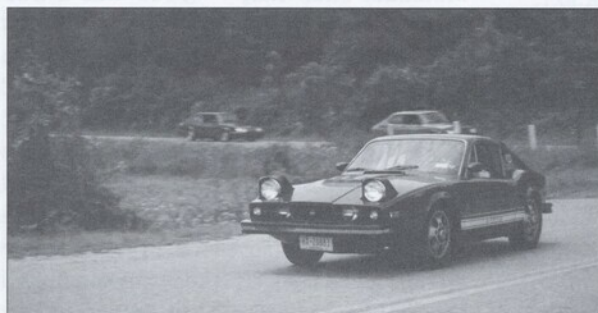
automobiles, from modern to vintage to custom, not to mention the Oscar Myer Weinermobile, is in itself reason to attend. The vintage race, including an appearance this year by a Quantum Formula S (see "Saabs in Competition" in this issue) is an event in its own right, with practice and qualifying sessions on Saturday and the race itself on Sunday. The PVG is held the third weekend of July, and enthusiasts should mark the dates off right now! Let's bring Saab attendance toward what we're seeing in other local events, such as Swedish Car Day in Brookline, MA and the Carlisle Import/Kit Replicar Nationals.

*Stephen Goldberger, Editor
North Canton, OH*

The Green Mountain SAAB Run, VT100

I set out at 5:00 am. An oversized cup of coffee, some breakfast, and an excellent drive across Massachusetts on the Mohawk Trail were a perfect way to start the day. Topping it off, the last 35 minutes of the drive were on southern Vermont's exciting Route 9, winding through the lower Green Mountains, watching out for the cops and tourists in Wilmington, to Bennington, Vermont.

Paul Dolmetsch Motors in Bennington was already abuzz when I pulled in a little after 9:00. Registration for the first *Green Mountain Saab Run - VT100* had begun and Dirk Feather, my brother, was passing out information packages and making sure everyone knew about Paul's shop providing a hearty Vermont breakfast. The final count of Saab speed demons included 29 people, one dog and 17 Saabs.



Sonett III at the Green Mountain Saab Run

My job for the day was official photographer of the event. Shortly before 10:30AM, as the drivers' meeting began, I set out to find Silk Bridge, the first of several covered bridges included in the drive. The course began by twisting out of Bennington, passing the historic Bennington Battle Monument and winding down into a beautiful green river valley on Silk Road.

I heard a crackling over the radio, then the sound of engines in the distance. A train of Saabs sped by, including classic 900 Turbos, SPGs, 900 Convertibles, Viggens, a 99 Turbo, and even a Sonett III. I snapped a quick frame of each car and then got back on the road for the

next shot.

Since I know the back roads in the area, I was able to take a shortcut and get ahead of the group for another pastoral vantage point in Shaftsbury, along scenic Route 7A. Then, after a third round of cat-and-mouse and a third round of action shots, I decided to join in behind the pack. I was jealous that they were getting all the good back roads and I was taking the higher speed straight ones; now it was my turn to get some goosebumps.

Our course took us out of Manchester on Route 11, then Route 30, and finally to one of the most amazing roads I have ever driven: a rural connector between Routes 30 and 100. The road ran up and down over countless hills and valleys, past farms and homesteads, and raised heart rates and adrenaline throughout the pack. The road climbed up a hill, twisted around the top or side, then dropped down a steep grade back into a valley, only to quickly bank off the

bottom, turn sharply to the right or left and then climb up to do it all again. The speed limit was probably 30 or 35 mph, but my guess is we easily doubled that. (I didn't dare take my eyes off the road to check.) While I would not condone this type of driving on a daily basis, the drivers had a great time and stayed safe throughout. We were delivered back to reality and came upon the junction with Route 100.

Since it was August, we had hoped we could expect fair skies and dry roads. We had them for the first part of the day. Unfortunately, as soon as we pulled in to the Hapgood Pond Recreation Area in Peru, the skies opened. We were glad that Dirk had reserved the pavilion overlooking the pond for a dry lunch and awards



Rainy afternoon on the Green Mountain Saab Run

presentation. The Long Distance Award went to Phil Lacefield, Jr., who had traveled over 900 miles (and two days) from Ohio to join the tour. The People's Choice Award went to Mike and Brenda Hedges with their cherry 1978 99 Turbo.



Mike and Brenda Hedges with their 1978 99 Turbo.

And the People's Choice runner-up went to Bruce Turk for his mint 1974 Sonett III.

My camera was calling, so I took off right after lunch and raced ahead of the group for one more speed shot. I stopped in a driveway on a hairpin turn heading into Weston. The hill was steep and the road was wet, but the cars sped by, negotiating the turn with ease. After the hairpin I had to catch up again, but the Saabs seemed to have vanished. The road crested the hill after the turn and then hit a plateau with a long, mostly straight road for a couple miles. I heated up the turbo and rocketed ahead to the next big intersection to catch up with the group, who reappeared back on Route 100. We passed Okemo Mountain Resort and then drove along scenic Echo Lake, which would make a fun summer vacation retreat.

Our next stop, Woodstock, was busy despite the rain with weekend traffic, pedestrians and tour buses. It was a little intimidating, especially when one of the buses almost ran over Bruce Turk in his Sonett III. Deft application of the horn, and quick push on the accelerator and he was out of the way.

We left Woodstock and traveled north into Pomfret, then back south toward Quechee for one final treat: a slalom to beat all slaloms, the push to the end. It began with a right turn along some water. Perfect rows of trees lined both sides and led up a hill into the forest. Then turning south, we began to snake in and out along the hillside. We all revved up and threw our cars into one corner and across into the next. The

twists were so close together that with speed, it required lock-to-lock steering. Through the frenzied steering, I grinned in amazement that a road like this really exists, and the VT100 had found it.

Just after 4:00 we pulled into the parking lot at Quechee Gorge. Dirk jumped out of the lead car and watched each of the drivers pull in. Everyone was smiling; the drive had been a great success. To wrap things up, most of the group gathered for dinner at Firestone's Restaurant in Quechee (delicious, if you're in the area). Two welcome additions to the dinner were Cathleen Pembroke, of the former Green Mountain SAAB Club, and Bruce Welch, who treated us with his mint condition 1957 93.

Can't wait for next year's event!

A Note from the Event Chair, Dirk Feather:

After 10 months of careful planning, I am very proud to say that the *Green Mountain Saab Run - VT100* was a true success. I am thrilled to have been able to lead the event and to work with such a great group of people. Well deserved thanks go to those who helped out with the event. Laura Briggs, a vital part of the planning process, helped see the vision through to the end. All of the event attendees deserve a round of applause for bringing their wonderful cars and great personalities. Special thanks to the event sponsors: The SAAB Network, Hemmings Motor News, Paul Dolmetsch Motors, and Edward Feather Photography. Also, thanks for the support of the New England SAAB Association (NESA), the New York SAAB Owners Club (NYSOC) and the Central Penn SAAB Club (CPSC).

Official event photos are now available at <http://www.featherlink.com/photo>.

Additional Quotes from Participants:

"That was the most fun I have ever had driving a car." *Tom Hannan (NESA BB TSN)*

"It was a great event. I went out and joined NESA as soon as I got to a computer." *Mike Hedges (NESA BB TSN)*

*By Edward Feather and Dirk Feather
Photos by Edward Feather
Framingham, MA*

Saab Proving Grounds

This past spring Saab conducted a promotional tour through its major markets called the "Saab Proving Grounds." The event allowed participants to compare the Saab line with competitors' cars through a series of driving exercises, including wet skidpad, autocross, acceleration and braking exercises. Following are some reports by our readers and an editor:

Here's a review of the Saab Proving Grounds event held today in Wallingford, CT. First off the course: it was all pretty jam packed into a small parking lot. We started off with a 100 yard acceleration test where you MAYBE hit 40 mph before you had to stop (some people got a little faster by starting farther back). This led into a mini cone slalom section which sorted out the good Swedes from the bad (more below). Then there was a skidpad section which I thought was kind of pointless until well, I got bored and spun the BMW with the handbrake. Finally, there was a mini autocross which was the best part. Not very fast, but there were plenty of turns and time for tire squealing.

I will say right here that the organizers were definitely getting their panties in a bunch every time you squealed the tires. Yeah, they don't want you going nuts and killing cones but hey, I can't help it if the tires on the Mercedes SUCK!! I was scolded several times. I took it as a compliment!

Now for a quick car review, in order of worst to best:

- Volvo S60 - Man, what a PIG. I don't know what it is about this car but I'm definitely swearing off the "other Swede" if this is any indication of what Volvos are like. The steering was bloody awful and it just felt like a MUCH larger car than it is. Larry West found that the steering pump ran out of assistance in the slalom.
- Mercedes C240 - It had crappy Continental tires on it and was a little lazy on the acceleration test. Seemed kind of "sedate" to me. This is the car your mother would love.
- 2003 Saab 9³ Convertible - Yeah, it's a Saab and it was the only convertible there. The handling is really kind of hopeless but I think that's what you get when you cut the top off. I'd love to

compare it to some OTHER convertibles (especially the 2004 9³ convertible). Let's just say I don't have "convertible lust."

- Saab 9⁵ Aero - It's definitely got the performance in the straight line acceleration, but it just feels like a BIG car to me. I'm not dissin' it all because it's hard to pick my favorites. I'll have to go pound on it some more to get a good feel for the handling.

- Audi A4 1.8T - This car is no acceleration king. The handling however was pretty damn good I must say. I REALLY liked the steering on this car, more so than the new 9³.

- BMW 3-series - The benchmark. Nothing was wrong with it, and it spins nicely with the handbrake on!

So that leaves...

- Saab 9-3 Vector - VERY responsive steering, sharp handling, and very little turbo lag. Part of the reason why I'm giving this the top rating is because, well, they probably stacked the deck in favor of it. And hey, I've read all the reviews and I'm biased.

All in all, it was fun. I wish the course was bigger and the speeds were higher, but it gave you a basic feel for the cars. I think anyone would do fine buying any of the top four. Once you get into this class of vehicles you really can't pick a bad car.

*Kevin Quigley
Marlboro, MA*

I have to say, my take on the whole experience was a bit different than some others. For what it is, a chance to experience different cars head to head, I found it pretty good. No, this wasn't a 'track day' to thoroughly flog the cars, but something much better than you'd get in a typical test drive. After a 30 minute introduction to the car, we headed to the 'Proving Grounds'. The instructors told us how it was going to go, and gave us a tour of the 'track'.

First up was the acceleration test. Lay on the throttle and see how fast you could make it go. With few exceptions (you know who you are) 40 MPH was about top speed. Plenty of room was left to haul it down and get the brakes warmed up. Next was a short slalom between some extremely short cones. Third position was a test of the ESP, or Electronic Stability Program. In a layout similar to the 'lane change' maneuvers,

you would get the car moving, then swerve left then right, all on a soapy water slicked surface. The hardest part of this was maintaining a steady throttle. Once you could manage that, you could really see how well it worked. The car would be sliding to the left, with the steering pointed right, and the car would correct with brakes and throttle to get you back to the intended line.

Fourth was a test of the traction control. All cars had it, and about all you could say was one would be 'firmer' or more 'dramatic' than another. Fifth was the 'road course'. Kind of a mini-autocross, this lets you slog the cars left & right with varying radius turns. The last station was the 'isolation' part, where you drove the cars over bumps. All cars passed.

My ratings from last to first:

- Volvo S60: This is your Grandfather's Swedish car. If anything could be said about the difference between Saab & Volvo, it must be that Saab makes cars for younger Swedes, and Volvo for more 'Mature' Swedes. (Target market: Mature, distinct tastes). I couldn't believe how the steering feel got tighter the more I went through the slalom. Interior was nice, Ok acceleration.

- Mercedes C240: The only thing keeping this car from the bottom of my list was the Volvo. The steering was a bit vague, helped along by high-profile tires. I could not figure out that manual shifting of the auto. I couldn't find any 'feedback' on the dash to tell me what gear I was in.

- Audi A4 1.8t: Don't get me wrong, the Audi handled just fine. Acceleration was, well, not the best. Even manually shifting it took its sweet time to get moving. I don't know if it's a severe case of turbo lag or the traction control in "M-I-L in backseat" mode, but it wasn't sprightly. As far as handling, since this was one of the targets for Saab, Saab did a good job getting to it.

- The rest of the cars I drove were pretty close in my estimation.

- The Saab 9-3 Arc: Slightly more roll, but very close to the Vector.

- The Saab 9-5 Aero: For being the 'large car' in this test, it acquitted itself very nicely. The addition of ESP to the 9-5 makes it a worthy competitor. I loved the steering wheel, seats, and the positioning of the 'Sentronic' shifters.

- BMW 325i: Very, very competent handling, as you would expect. Saab's marketing has aimed squarely at this car, and hit the mark. Light steering, excellent traction, their 'ESP' was very good as well.

- Saab 9-3 Vector: Yep, I, too rated it highest. I admit to being biased, and in truth, could not spend enough time in each of the other cars to really compare. Certain things you just have to get used to, and I am 'used to' the Saab way of doing things. I found that shifting the 5-speed Sentronic transmission with the manual switches was easy (though I still prefer the switch positioning on the 9-5), and there was a clear display in the instrument cluster that you were in manual mode, and which gear you had selected. Steering and handling was impressive, the ESP and ReAxs (rear steering) worked well to keep the car headed where I pointed it.

- (I declined driving the 9³ Linear and the 9³ convertible)

For a brief introduction to Saab and its competitors, the Proving Grounds is a worthwhile event. If you're of the track racing bent, don't expect hot laps at Lime Rock. Is the deck 'stacked'? Maybe a little. The Vector was definitely the only car there on 17" wheels. If one is expecting to make a buying decision based on this event, I don't think it's going to happen. One needs to spend more time in each of the cars one is considering.

*Larry West
North Plainfield, NJ*

We attended the Saab Proving Grounds at the Meadowlands Sports Complex in New Jersey on June 9, the evening that the New Jersey Devils won the Stanley Cup at the arena on the other side of the complex. Saab had set up a course in one of the parking lots for tests on the Linear, Arc and Vector/Aero 9³s, a 9⁵ and the comparison cars (Audi, BMW, Mercedes and Volvo).

When my husband Steve and I signed up initially, we were put on the waiting list. We were delighted to be able to participate when space opened up. We arrived at the proving grounds, unloaded my electric scooter and went into the tent to register and get a detailed look at the cars on display. Then we joined the group outside to test drive the cars.

The proving grounds staff was great. Rather than standing in line with the scooter for the test drives, they offered to bring the cars to me at the side of the waiting area as they became available, so that everyone could test the cars and the flow was uninterrupted. Some participants wanted to test the "real Aero" - my scooter!

The course consisted of a straight-away acceleration and braking, a rough road section, a tight slalom, a multi-curved road section and "skid-pads" to test both traction and stability control. Initially, I drove the course very conservatively, but practice makes perfect. After I had gone through it a few times, I could really pick up the pace and enjoy it.

I was particularly interested in trying the Saab Sentronic transmission. I had given up driving a manual transmission several years ago, but the lack of a clutch allowed me to return to that mode. We were able to test the paddle shift version at open road speed on the roads in the Meadowlands complex, as well as on the proving grounds course. The sensation is different from a standard manual gearbox, but you can adapt to it easily. If you don't shift up, the transmission won't destroy itself. For example, if you take it to the red line in first, the fuel cutoff safety kicks in. All of the cars were equipped with an automatic/manual capability, and they were similar in size, but there were notable differences in how the cars were appointed. In my book, if I couldn't find a convenient, logical place to stow my cane, the car lost points. Same with seat and mirror adjustments. It was interesting to notice the differences in suspensions and the relative tightness and responsiveness in steering. The "skid-pad" test was very revealing: some of the comparison cars couldn't react through the skid. Overall, it was a fun and informative event and the Saab 9³ got my vote as the best car to drive.

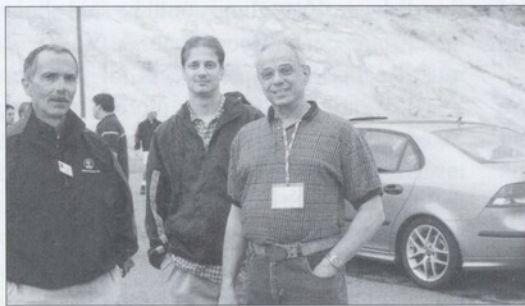
*Martha Carrellas
Berkeley Heights, NJ*

Rocky Mountain Saab Club of Colorado Goes Wild at the Saab Proving Grounds

The 2003 Saab Proving Grounds conducted on June 10, 2003 at the Bandimere Speedway west of Denver was

dominated by three main attractions: the Saab 9⁵ Aero, the Rocky Mountain Saab Club (RMSC) (with 19 members participating), and a jet dragster clocking 247 mph in the 1/4 mile. This was one of 17 similar events held across the USA to let Saab dealership personnel drive the cars during the day and then selected members of the public in the evening. Our club was quite opportunistic in that we registered 19 of our members to attend the event. It happened to be the same evening as our regular RMSC club meeting, therefore we made the Saab Proving Grounds the club event for the month.

The cars available to drive were as advertised in the SCUSA publicity releases with 3 Saabs and 4 competing models from Audi, BMW, MB, and Volvo as identified



(L-R) Chris Calahan of Saab Cars with RMSC members Jason and Paul Bottone.

in the attached graph. Our members did drive these cars in a manner that most of us would not drive our own vehicles, and we pity the eventual buyers of these four cars when they come off the Saab 3-month lease.

The real competition seemed somewhat tilted in favor of Saabs (especially with the 9⁵ Aero) but the BMW 325i did hold its own, according to many of our reviewers. Many interesting cars were running the quarter mile drag strip all the while our Saab event was going on. The background noise was at times deafening.

After 3 hours of driving the cars (SCUSA expanded it to 5-8 PM based on the huge response), we retired to the Morrison Inn for a few Coronas, some Mexican food and the company of several guests including our host Chris Callahan, the Saab Training Manager at Norcross.



RMSC members celebrate the day's "Proving Grounds" experience.

Scoring the cars on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 points for the best performer) using a napkin stained with salsa and beer tells the story....

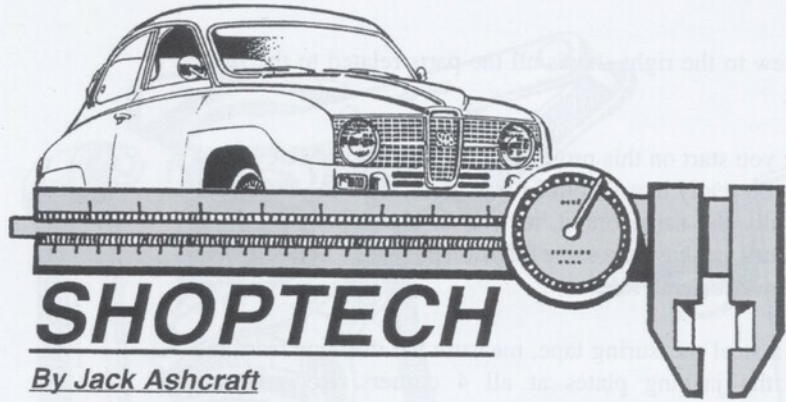
Our club's highly objective scoring was based totally on the driving experience that consisted of an acceleration lane, road course, short slalom, wet skid pad and wet traction pad. The 50 or more participants were all required to take their first drive with a Saab instructor; from then on everyone was on their own.

I'm pleased to report the Aero was scored 5 on almost all score sheets and clearly outclassed the field. But this is predictable as the Aero is really in a different class than the rest of the cars we had available to drive. The new 9³ Sport Sedan Vector and Linear were second and third, respectively, while the Volvo was dead last. The average score for each of the seven models is shown in the graph.

Total points for each car was divided by the number of people scoring that car to get a fair average score because not all participants were able to drive every model.

Two of our members were quite impressed with the entire contingent of cars we were able to drive. Stan Bietscher said "the 7 cars were pretty close in most respects," and Charles Stoyer declared that "the cars were strikingly similar." We want to thank Saab Cars USA for hosting this very enjoyable event. We're glad they liked our bringing the Saab flag, and of course, we have all been down to visit our local dealers to place orders for new Saabs. At least a couple of us have.

*Tom Nelson, RMSC
Evergreen, CO*



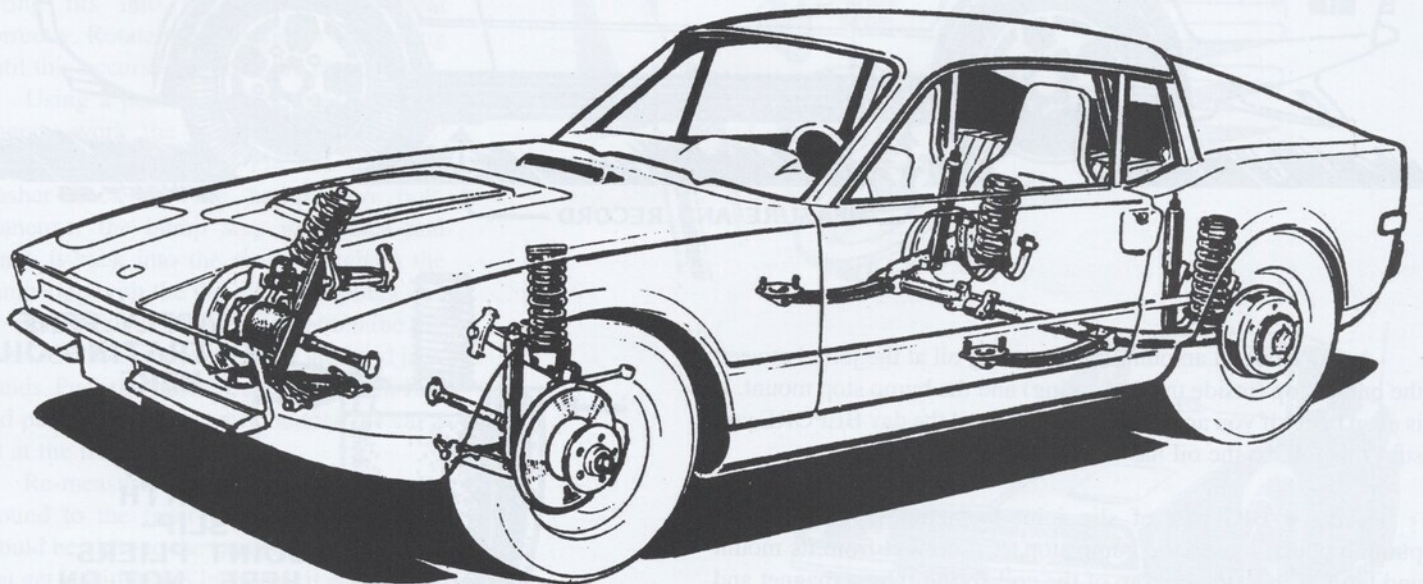
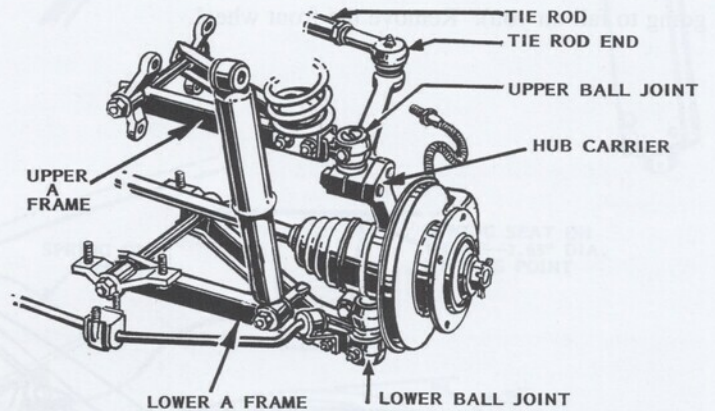
By Jack Ashcraft

COIL SPRING SAG—A CHEAP CURE

One of the best Vintage Saab parts sources I can name is any good hardware store. You know the kind I mean: one where products are still displayed in a BIN, not 3 of a kind (when you need 4) in a blisterpack. In this instance the product is a big fat WASHER. A SERIOUS washer, 0.125" thick and 4.5" in outside diameter. They cost as much as half a dollar and are just the ticket for compensating for the sag of a coil spring on your V4 Saab 95/96/97.

Shown below is the layout of the suspension of a Sonett. The FRONT is exactly the same on the 96. The REAR is the same on the 95, except for the shock absorbers (unless you have installed my tubular rear shock changeover kit).

This is a closer look at the left front suspension on these cars.

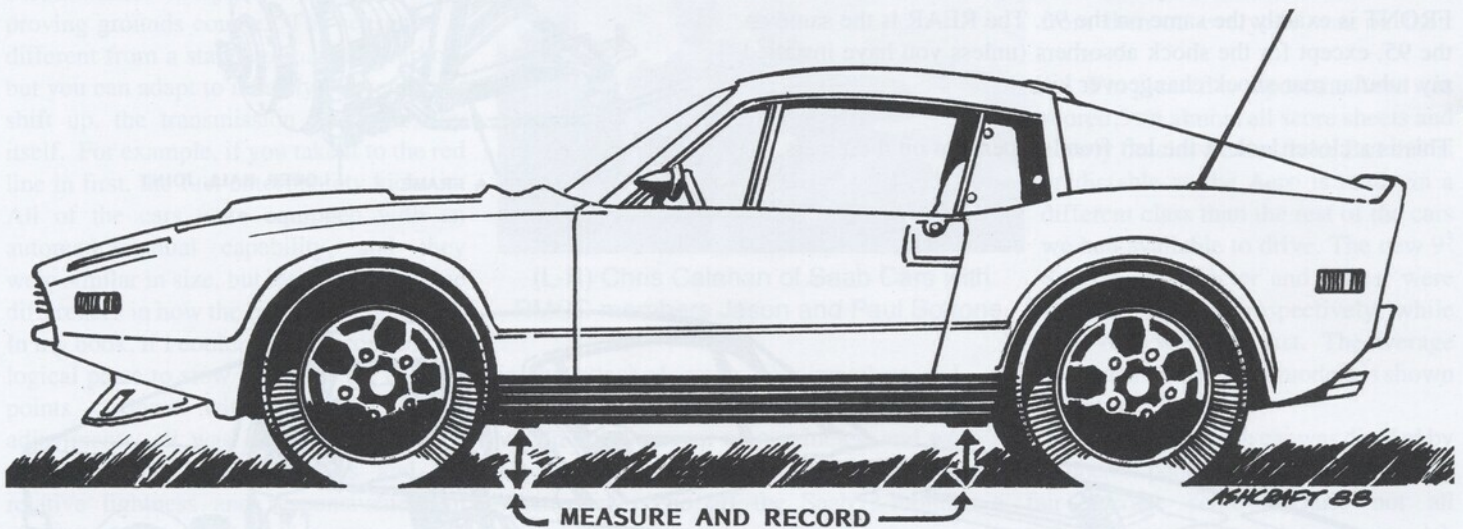
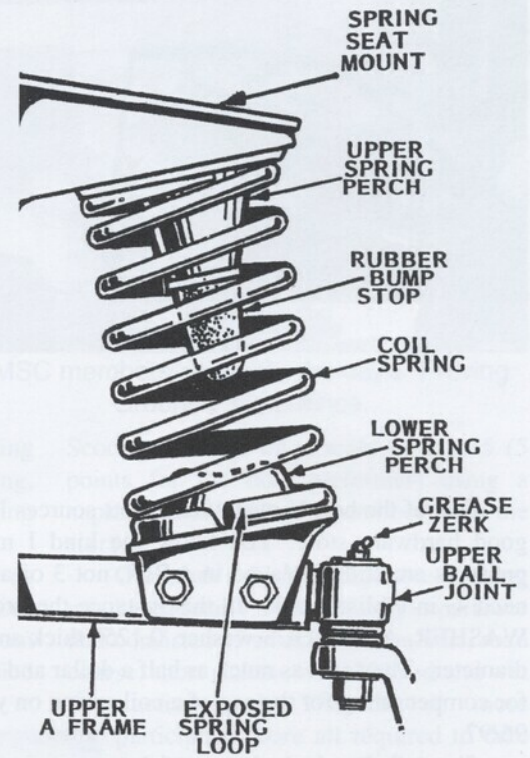


The view to the right shows all the parts related to the front coil spring.

Before you start on this project, determine HOW MUCH coil spring sag you really have. Both front tires must be the same size (and hopefully the same brand, as overall diameters vary from brand to brand) and have the same inflation pressure. The rear tires should follow the same rules.

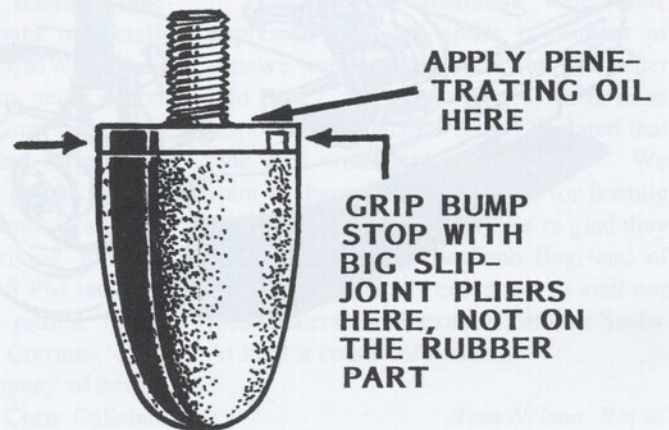
Using a steel measuring tape, measure the distance from the ground to the jacking plates at all 4 corners. Record your measurements. For the sake of this exercise, let's say you have a half inch LESS on the LEFT front than the RIGHT front. Is this the result of spring sag on that corner? Probably.

Jack up the front of the car and put jack stands under the frame at the jacking points. **DON'T JACK ON THE OIL PAN!!!** I leave the floor jack in place, too (good insurance that the sucker isn't going to fall on you). Remove the front wheel.



Apply a liberal amount of penetrating oil at the joint between the bump stop (inside the coil spring) and the bump stop mount. It is even better if you apply the penetrating oil the day BEFORE you start this job, so the oil has time to work.

Using a BIG pair of slip joint (sometimes called "water pump") pliers, loosen the bump stop. Unscrew it from its mount and let it drop to the bottom of the coil spring. Use a magnet and collect the big lock washer.



Using a spring compressor (NOT MacPherson strut compressors), remove the coil spring. A factory Saab compressor is shown, attached to the coil spring. An alternate—and very good—compressor is also shown. See sidebar for more information on the RTI compressor. Leave the coil spring loaded in the spring compressor unless you want to clean and paint the coil spring. If you DO remove it from the compressor, MARK the spring so you can put it back into the compressor exactly where it was. The coil spring has to fit into the LOWER spring seat correctly.

Remove the steel spring seat and the rubber isolator from the coil spring mount. Clean everything up and paint as required.

Open up the inside of the 4.5" washer to 2.75" inside diameter. If you had a half inch of sag, use two washers, which equals a quarter inch of washer. Prime and paint the washers.

Set the washers in place on the upper mount, then the rubber isolator, then the steel spring seat. Have a friend hold the assembly in place as you re-install the coil spring.

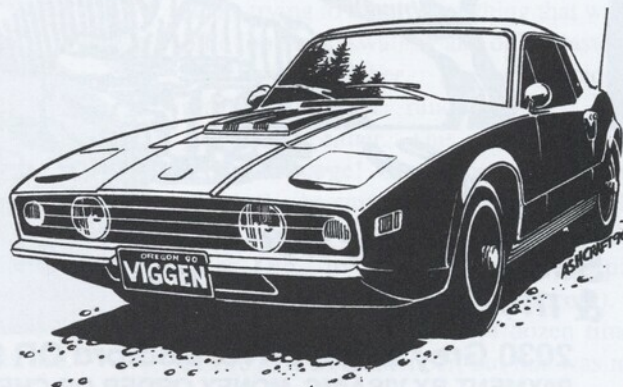
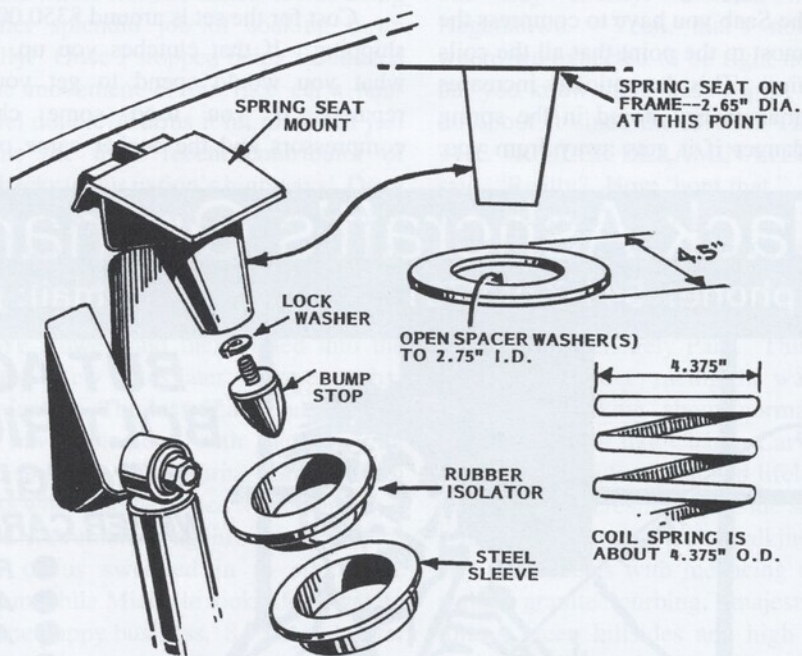
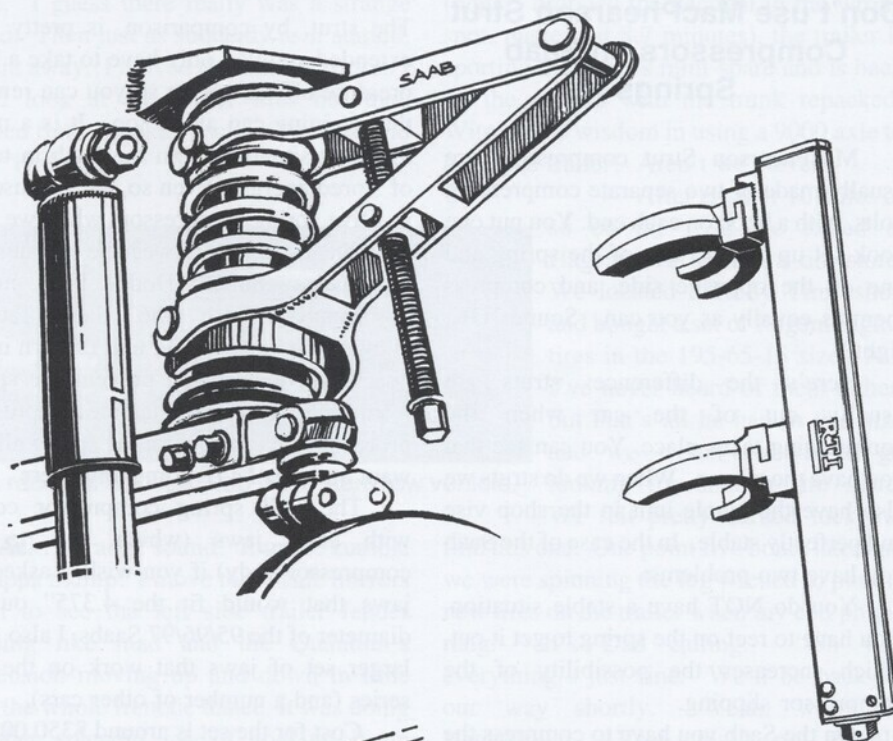
NOTE: Put the rubber bump stop back inside the coil spring BEFORE you reinstall the spring in the car.

As you release pressure on the coil spring, be sure the blunt end of the coil spring fits into the lower spring seat correctly. Rotate the compressor and spring until this occurs. Remove the compressor.

Using a pair of putty knives and slim fingers, work the rubber bump stop UP inside the coil spring. Put the big lock washer back on the bump stop bolt. Maneuver the bump stop into place and screw it back into the mount. Tighten the bump stop with the big slip joint pliers.

Re-install the wheel and tighten the lug bolts. Let the car down off the jack and jack stands. Push the car back and forth a few feet and push on the fenders to bounce the car a bit at the front.

Re-measure the distances from the ground to the front jacking points. You should be close to the same on both sides. If you get it within 1/8 inch, call it good. That is as good as the car was when it was new!



Don't use MacPhearson Strut Compressors on Saab Springs

MacPhearson Strut compressors are usually made of two separate compressing bolts, with a hook on each end. You put one hook set up on one side of the spring and one on the opposite side, and compress them as equally as you can. Sounds OK, right?

Here's the difference: struts are usually out of the car when the compressing takes place. You can see that you have them even. When we do struts we also have the whole unit in the shop vise and perfectly stable. In the case of the Saab you have two problems:

- You do NOT have a stable situation. You have to reef on the spring to get it out, which increases the possibility of the compressor slipping.
- On the Saab you have to compress the spring almost to the point that all the coils are touching. This dramatically increases the potential energy stored in the spring and the danger if it gets away from you.

The strut, by comparison, is pretty well extended and you only have to take a little pressure off the spring so you can remove the retaining cap at the top. It is a much different situation from the Saab in terms of stored energy. Even so, we still use the positive spring compressors when we do a MacPhearson strut, as we have on a number of vehicles—Subaru, Dodge, Ford, etc.

Finally, both the Saab factory compressor and the RTI unit (shown in the article) have tabs that prevent the spring from slipping once you start the compression process. You can reef on the spring all you want and it is NOT going anywhere.

The RTI spring compressor comes with extra jaws (which bolt to the compressor body) if you wish. I asked for jaws that would fit the 4.375" outside diameter of the 95/96/97 Saabs. I also got a larger set of jaws that work on the 900 series (and a number of other cars).

Cost for the set is around \$350.00 plus shipping. If that clutches you up, think what you would spend to get yourself repaired if you used some cheapo compressors and the sucker came out of

there and took a good bit of you with it as it went by. I once saw a coil spring get away from a mechanic. It took off a chunk of fender and went neatly through a shop door. The VERY lucky mechanic only lost some skin off his right hand and shoulder, his glasses and his shirt. I have no doubt that the results could have easily been deadly to him.

Friends, this is not a place to go cheap. Life is too short to take chances to save a buck with some things: cut rate brake jobs are one, and spring compressors are another. I only had to see the hole the spring made in the shop door once. Either get the right tools for the job, or have a professional do the job for you who HAS the right tools.

The RTI part number for this compressor set is SC-10FP.

RTI Technologies, Inc
4075 East Market Street
York, PA 17402
Phone 717-840-0678 FAX 717-755-8304 Ask for a company near you that handles the RTI line of tools.

Jack Ashcraft's Orphan Saab Parts

phone: 541-779-0731

email: jackashcraft@charter.net



BUT ACE SAID IT WOULD BOLT RIGHT ON MY V4!

WRONG! BEFORE INSTALLING YOUR WEBER CARB YOU MUST DO THESE THINGS:

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- ADD LINKAGE
- ADD AIR CLEANER ADAPTOR
- RELOCATE PCV VALVE & HOSE
- MODIFY THE INTERMEDIATE PLATE
- CHANGE EMISSION CONTROL HOSES
- ADD CHOKE CABLE AND MOUNT
- MODIFY HEATER HOSES

-OR-

YOU COULD BUY THE 34 SERIES WEBER CARB FROM US AND IT WILL BE RIGHT FOR YOUR V4 FROM THE START! PLUS YOU GET OUR WEBER CARB MANUAL!

Send for our free catalog & more info on the Weber 34 carb!

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Saabs in Competition

Taking on the VSCCA PVGP in a Saab Quantum Formula S

We loaded up the '94 Aero. It is black with charcoal leather, which is the obvious color scheme for a road trip in the middle of summer. There would be five of us: my good friends Dr. Sam, Mike, Michelle and Alex the puppy. Sam would ride shotgun with us while his mechanic towed his race car out to Pittsburgh. Mike and Michelle, as the newly married couple, would share the backseat with their 3 month old German Shepherd puppy Alex (the fifth passenger). Up top on the roof, I mounted one of Thule's largest ABS plastic stuff carriers and the good doctor's mountain bike (attached to genuine Saab 9000 roof racks, naturally). Behind the car I dragged along what would be my race-mount for the weekend: my father's 1964 Quantum Formula "S," (the "S" stands for SAAB) sitting atop Dad's homebuilt (with a 9000 axle to match the tow vehicle) trailer.

With everything stuffed into place and us belted into our seats (including the precocious puppy Alex), we took off down I-95 at the highest reasonable speed given the traffic on that late morning Friday. When we stopped for lunch at the Four Seasons restaurant off I-70 and checked out the trailer we noticed that the tires were showing some curious wear. It seems that the used tires Dad picked up and mounted on it were a little past their best days and were now complaining that this type of service wasn't befitting the last miles of their rubberized lives. I saw steel cords between those Michelin tread blocks and thought "Geez, that's not cool."

What could we do? We were late getting out of town and had to be in Pittsburgh at 5 for a drivers' meeting. After eating and taking note of a scary insect crawling up the rear window of the Aero we hit the road again (which blew the scary bug right off). Traffic was heavy but moving along nicely. We were making good time when suddenly it sounded like the road was kinda rough, even though it looked smooth enough. I check the center rear view mirror to see Mike's face screwed into the same perplexed shape as

mine. I guess there really was a strange sound. Then just as suddenly as it started, it went away. I moved the side mirrors so I could look at the trailer tires but they seemed fine. I looked back up the road and said "Hmph."



The Quantum race car with its Saab 9000 Aero tow vehicle.

Ack! Strange sound! Rumble zumble thumppa thump! I move those side mirrors again to see the left side trailer fender hopping like mad and the Quantum's suspension moving up and down in time with the whole frenetic dance. It was doing a rather splendid job of soaking it up actually! Once I stopped being fascinated by the movement of the race car's non-parallel double-A arms it hit me that I just became the most recent contributor of gatorbacks to our nation's highways! Dang it... I've been dodging and silently bitching about those things the whole trip, and here I am adding my own tire pieces to the road behind me!

We slowed and then pulled into the rest stop a few miles later. Sure enough... delaminated! The loss of a chunk of tread must have coincided with the rumbling sound suddenly disappearing earlier. Then I guess when another piece worked loose, it started its rumbling again. No problem! Three of us swooped in to attack the problem while Michelle took Alex away to do some puppy business. 8.7 seconds later



End of the line for this tire.

(oops... dropped the decimal in the wrong spot, make that 8.7 minutes), the trailer is sporting the Aero's mini-spare and is back on the ground with the trunk repacked! Witness the wisdom in using a 9000 axle to build the trailer! Aren't we clever?

After another 10 miles or so on the road we exited at Hagerstown to find a tire store. We located a Kelly Tires shop and bought a set of Regent Sigma tires in the 195-65-15 size. No, I've never heard of them either, but that's all he had in that size and we weren't about to go looking for another tire store.

We felt pretty darned lucky to find this one. One point five hours later and we were spinning the lug wrench to put the new tires on the trailer when my cell phone rang. It's Dad calling. "Oh yes, everything's just fine. We'll be back on our way shortly. Yeah, we're in Hagerstown. Yeah, that's not exactly where we expected to be right now either but you know there wasn't a lot we could do about it since the DANG TIRES ON THE TRAILER DELAMINATED!" Dad said, "Really? How 'bout that." So much for that drivers' meeting.

The Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix is run by the Vintage Sports Car Club of America (VSCCA) in the streets of Pittsburgh's Schenely Park. This is THE vintage street race: racing the way it was. We're not talking about normal streets here. This isn't like Champ Car's Detroit race with multi lane, flat and lifeless roads with all the interesting trackside scenery of a highway tunnel. We're talking narrow city park streets with menacing old stone walls, granite curbing, majestic trees, rolling green hillsides and high crowned roads that dive and swerve like some huge snake trying to digest something that was a little too big to swallow and didn't taste all that fantastic either. No catch fencing, gravel traps, or runoff room. No grandstands either. This is free for all to see! No charge! Come one, come all and watch the beautiful cars race through the scenic roads! All proceeds from vendor sales go to charity too: (<http://www.pittsburghvintagegrandprix.com>).

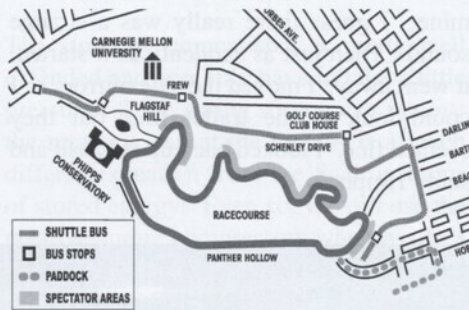
I've been to this race a dozen times before as a crew member, but this was my

Saabs in Competition

first time as one of the oh-so-elite drivers. I felt very lucky, and not a little bit awed. In my very limited vintage race car driver career I've always tried to show a new course a good bit of respect until I get to know it. You can't just run out there and expect to turn a lap record right out of the pits. You have to build up to it. Corner by corner, straight by straight, and braking point by turn-in point by apex and track-out point.

The Quantum was running very well this weekend. For the first time since it was built we were able to run all the way through the revs without the engine breaking up (misfiring) at the high end. To achieve this we installed a new high performance ignition coil and made up some new spark plug wires. The power was really smooth and felt quite strong. Some of our cornering vibration problems were fixed when we tightened the wheel bearings. The brakes were still giving us problems, but I eventually got used to it and forgot about that issue. Zoomy.

All weekend long it ran well. It always started and always finished, at least until the final race. You know, the one that



Map showing the layout of the PVGP.

counts, the big race, the one I really wanted to finish? Well, oh well, that's the way racing goes, *especially* vintage racing!

I qualified in 11th place out of 19 cars with a time of 2:33:290. That works out to an average speed of 54.719 mph over the 2.33-mile course. That's very respectable considering the 18 or 21 turns (depending on how you count) and the daunting nature of the course, not to mention this was my first time here and I was still learning the place!


That qualified me directly behind the VSCCA's favorite novelist, Burt Levy in a borrowed Lotus 7, and directly in front of a

Cooper T52. Both cars have more power than my Quantum, but I have better tires. On the start they both ran away from me up the hill: where power matters most. It's a very tricky start and cars usually get bound up at the first turn and then stretch back out up the hill, like a slinky!

I had some catching-up work to do. Not to worry, I thought I could get back by the Cooper and maybe even Levy in the Lotus. I was more comfy in the car now than I was in the qualifying session, though I've been warned that to be comfy here is not necessarily a good thing. It is much safer to be scared.



The chicane is notorious for being a tight fit. It's put together from a bunch of hay bales and you can not fit more than one car through there at a time. As we crested the hill, the Cooper powered by the Lotus and I had a new piece of polished aluminum tail to chase. I made up a lot of ground on both of them in the *downhill* braking zone and the Quantum jogged left and right through the chicane extremely well... just like an autocross!

Accelerating away as hard as I could in 2nd gear, then 3rd gear, I reached top gear



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just before a right hand kink with a nasty bump taken flat out when I heard a "pop-bang" and saw Burt Levy's arm go up and the Lotus slow and pull to the left. He had a problem! I slowed and pulled to the right and gave him a little wave to thank him for the warning signal. I doubt he saw it, but this is gentleman's racing and we are polite about our passing. Thank you very much.

I lost a lot of time to the Cooper with that broken Lotus issue. I could just see him disappear into the woods as I crossed the Panther Hollow bridge and burst out into the bright summer sunshine right in front of the biggest crowd of spectators I'd seen all weekend! That felt *just like* being shot out of a cannon in a circus! Not that I've ever actually been shot out of a cannon before, but I imagine that's what it is like. I braked for the 3rd gear right hander and got right back on the gas to rev all the way to redline before the Westinghouse Turn.

The Westinghouse Turn is the first of the hairpins (there are 4). I pulled back a lot of ground on the Cooper in the downhill (again) braking zone, though he pulled most of it back on the acceleration run out towards the tricky and slippery lefty that leads onto my favorite turn of the entire course.

The Longclimbingandnearlynever-endingleft turn is great! I rolled into the throttle in third gear until it was all the way at the floor and the engine was absolutely screaming as the car clawed to the inside curb. Again I burst out into sunshine and into the sight of the spectators for another hairpin turn to the right. I did a big



From the right: George Vappa's Quantum which Stefan drove, Jake Jacobson's green 1958 Morgan +4 that George Vappa drove, and Dr. Sam Lee's red 1961 Daimler SP250.

downshift throttle blip with *good* two-stroke-and-expansion-chamber-exhaust sound for the benefit of the spectators (RRRRRIINNGG DING DING DING). I tossed the car to the right and tried to do a power slide out to the opposite curb. SAAB two-stroke POWER, *wheee!*

We went left. We went right. We went left again and right again and then we were there. Where? The Serpentine! Two steeply downhill hairpins, a right and a left tied tightly together combine to make the Serpentine complex. Hand-over-hand steering is called for in some cases. Yikes! Understeer is a major adversary and I found myself skidding around here

and trying to keep my Dunlops away from the stone walls.

I rushed the throttle wide open coming out of the Serpentine and the road continues downhill and curving left when you realize you have to BRAKE and NOW too! The road dives and turns sharp right and I left my braking zone way back there on that last left! "Sketchy" is the word for it. But it is one of the most important turns on the course since it leads onto the straight-ish section where they've located the start finish line.

Let the car slide out towards the outside edge and press hard up the hill. Simple as that. I can see I am closer to the Cooper now and over the next lap I will catch him and stick my nose in on three turns to try and pass. Each time I decide to wait for a better chance. I'm not likely to catch the next car in front of him so it is fun to stick around and play with the Cooper for a while. It's a good show for the spectators anyway and they're a big part of this race. It wouldn't be nearly as sweet without them.



Stefan Vappa in the serpentine during practice following a 1959 Elva Formula Junior.

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Then suddenly the car dies. The engine just goes flat and dies. I pull over to the side of the road and try to restart it. Eventually, after spinning the starter for a long time... it fires up! I rev up and take off again. I don't think I even lost a place, such was the gap to the next car behind me. Half a lap later the car dies. It just does it again like the last time... Aaargh! Again I pull off, restart, rev up and drive off. This time I am passed by a couple cars before I get going. It's the red Elva the Silver Gemini formula juniors. I pull right up behind the Gemini in braking and the corner worker gives the guy a "faster car behind you" flag. The Gemini pulls slightly off line to let me by. I get alongside and am going around him on the outside when the engine coughs, hacks, spits, sputters, wheezes, and dies. Dead. Damn. I hope the spectators couldn't hear what I yelled from inside my helmet. It was rather worse than "damn."

I roll to the offline side of the road right before the entrance to the Serpentine, which just so perfectly happens to be the most populated spectator area of the entire course. Damn damn damn. The starter



Stefan in the Quantum during practice.

won't spin the engine now. I've used up the battery (no alternator of course) and there just isn't the juice to play the game again. This sucks. The corner workers tell me to stay in the car while they figure out what to do with me. They chat on the radio while cars whizz past and I sit there baking in the sun in front of everyone. Eventually the corner worker yells at me "Unbuckle, get out of the car and come over the wall to me, NOW!" The least he could have done was say "please" you know?

So there I am, taking off my helmet and gloves. I'm as disappointed as I've ever been. I feel very sorry for the crowd really. I wanted to put on a show for them. I mean, I've got the loudest car in the whole damn race, I should at least let them hear it RUN! Crud. I should have waved at them but I didn't think of it 'cause I was too disappointed for disappointing them. That's how I saw it anyway. That's how it ended for me.

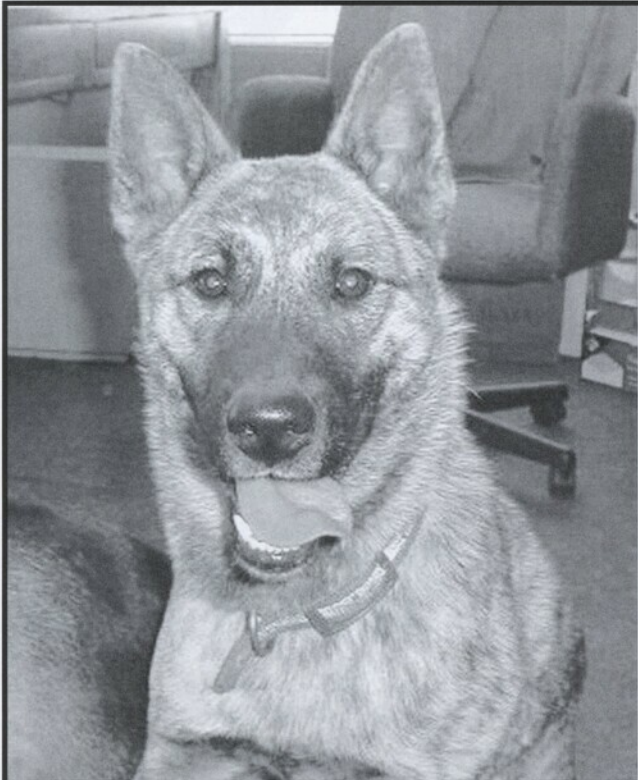
Dr. Sam drove very well in his Daimler SP250 in the over 2 litre group. He had a great time and I was quite proud of his performance. He now needs some real vintage-race tires for that car. He's severely chunking the tread on those street tires. My dad had a fabulous race in the borrowed Morgan +4. He was followed closely by an Alfa Romeo Veloce Spyder for the entire race. Overall it was a very successful weekend, I guess.

The trip home was uneventful and long, as well it should be.

Stefan Vapaa
VSCCA #374

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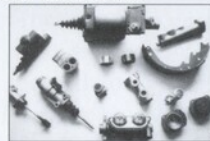
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Found!

I must share my joy. The missing carton of motor books has been found!

I am an avid reader. While I once subscribed to virtually all of the major auto magazines, I found that I usually just perused them. The real reading is in books. Much of that is automotive books, my preference leaning more toward historical and biographical than technical.

When I moved from the little 1BR house on Duluth's East Hillside to the 5BR mini-ranch near Twig (out past the sticks), one particular carton of books went missing. The intent was for that carton to go into my car and be delivered personally since it sheltered the treasured books that I most wanted to retain. However, some well meaning friends grabbed up all of the book cartons and they were out the door and in the bed of a pickup truck before I had finished making coffee for the platoon assembled to assist in the move.

That box of treasured tomes was one of the first things I looked for once the transfer of "Tim's stuff" was completed. I looked in every corner and opened every box (or so I thought), but they seemed to have disappeared. I began to think they had fallen off the pickup and were never to be seen again. That was seven and a half years ago. Every now and then a search was instituted for the errant volumes, hoping they might just have ended up at the bottom of a stack of boxes. Eventually I gave them up as lost and gone forever. I was dreadfully sorry.

But not long ago I was looking for some late-night reading material. I knew there had to be some books that needed reading or re-reading among the many boxes that remained in the basement. I located one that had several



Tim Winker's found books.

forgotten favorites and pulled enough to keep me occupied for several weeks. But it was a shallow box, shallower than it had looked from the outside. There was another unopened carton below it. I moved the upper box aside and found a slightly musty carton that had obviously been hidden from view for years. It was the missing books!

I let out an audible "Hooray!" (though not quite loud enough to disturb


the now sleeping Diane or the cats or Yeti, the Stay Puft canine). They had been found! I grabbed several volumes and headed up to bed for some reading. I was able to delightfully page through a couple before the sandman knocked me out.

When I awoke the next morning I was ecstatic to realize that it was not a dream, the books were patiently waiting, and I spent more time than I should have flipping pages, reading passages, looking at photos.


A few of the titles in that carton:

- "The Story of the RAC Rally" by Phil Drackett.
- "Jyvaskylan Suurajot, 30 Vuotta" (1000 Lakes Rallye, 30 Years given to me by Oalvi Ukkonen on a visit to Finland in 1987).
- "Rally to the Death" by Douglas Rutherford (Young people's fiction, believe it or not).
- "Motoring Abroad" by Frank Presbrey (c. 1908. A guide to motor car travel in France and England nearly 100 years ago).
- "They Call Me Mr. 500" by Andy Granatelli.
- "Fast Guys, Rich Guys and Idiots" by Sam Moses.
- "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash" by Jean Shepherd.
- "Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories" by Jean Shepherd.
- "The Ferrari in the Bedroom" by Jean Shepherd.
- "Running on Empty" by Satch Carlson.

It has been a good summer of sitting on the front deck, sipping fruity rum tings and filling my mind with visions of motorsports events gone by. At least I won't have to waste my evenings trying to follow the latest exploits of The Bachelor, The Bachelorette, The Bachelor Returns, For Love or Money (a.k.a. I'm Just a Golddigging Bachelorette), and Son of the Bachelor.



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It's for good reason we've devoted a tremendous amount of space in this issue to the 9³ Convertible. In its way the Convertible could be as important a car for Saab as the 9³ Sports Sedan has been. The Sports Sedan has been helping Saab build its sales volume, and establish itself as a serious competitor among small Luxury Sport sedans. It is increasing Saab's market share in the "Entry Luxury Group" where it competes. It has been especially successful in the United States at capturing buyers moving up from mass market vehicles, such as Honda, Toyota, and domestic nameplates. Even so, Saab is a small player in this segment, with barely 7% of that market niche (8% excluding trucks) against formidable competition.

With the new convertible, Saab is defending turf on which it has enjoyed a dominant position. According to the figures presented to the press, Saab's market share has been in the range of 25% of a growing Entry Luxury Convertible Segment. Imagine that: Saab being the dominant brand in a market segment (and not just the Entry Luxury Group Hatchbacks segment). In addition to being a profitable business for Saab, the convertible provides visibility out of proportion to Saab's total sales. Traci Payne in her column this issue calls attention to the presence of Saabs supporting major television and movie scripts, and quite often it is a convertible that is called for in the script. The reason is obvious: it's a whole lot easier to film an actor in an open car than a closed car. Those actors will look great in an '04 convertible! Similarly in showrooms and auto shows: when it's not an SUV people are ogling, it's invariably a convertible.

When preparing a NINES article on a new product like the convertible, I go into a lot more detail than you will find in any other publication. You will read elsewhere about the body being stiff, and you may even see the torsional stiffness or the percentage increase over the previous model. You won't see an

annotated structural drawing. You won't see the comparison between the 9³ convertible's stiffness and the 2002 hatchback's. You won't see photos of sealed seams. In most cases, the story won't be written by a long time Saab owner.

I think the new convertible can be a winner. It delivers user convenience, style, refinement, and performance. In many of these respects, its features are best in the class by a significant margin. Most important for Saab's financial performance is that this car is good enough to sell on its merits, not its price. Very often Saabs have been perceived as cars which are not as good as their European counterparts, but less expensive. As Saab buyers, we take advantage of that, reveling in the "good deal" we received when we purchased our new Saab. Unfortunately the days when Saab's profit and loss accounting is made by descendants of Swedish Nobility, as interested in the welfare of Swedish citizens as in turning profits, are long gone. The accounting is now made by General Motors, and without a return on investment Saab will lose its identity if not its nameplate.

The middle ground between Saab's financial health and the financial health of the long-time loyal Saab owner can rest in the Saab Club of North America. The Parts and Service Discount Program is established and growing to the benefit of the Members. To add to that, we have proposed to Saab a Members' Buying Discount program modeled after the successful BMW Car Club of America program. There needs to be a quid-pro-quo for the discounts offered to Club members, and it is simply enthusiasm. Enjoy your Saab, and tell your friends about it. Attend National Conventions and Local Saab Club functions. Read NINES and contribute your experiences.

These Meatballs Ain't Thinking No More

The editorial columns in the American motoring press magazines have been wailing the death knell for Saab ever since the plans for the 9⁷ have been confirmed. Generally they lay the blame at GM's feet. Frankly I left a similar column crumpled up in the wastebasket. The reason mine never saw light of day is that I did two things the other journalists didn't do: I thought rationally and I investigated. You can read

my editorial in Issue #263; I think it shows what is happening and why.

By way of example, Jamie Kitman writing in "Automobile Magazine" under a headline "This Meatball Ain't Swedish No More", bemoans the loss of the hatchback as evidence of GM's malfeasance. Then he shows a photo titled "When Saabs were Saabs" of a 99 sedan, not a hatchback. Jamie stakes a claim as being part of the Saab community because his father owned Saabs. Great credentials. Perhaps I should start writing editorials about what GM is doing to Buick. A 99 sedan was also my first Saab, and the qualities that first attracted me to Saabs are all present in the 9³ Sports Sedan. Those include a rust resistant crash worthy body, decent dry road handling, outstanding snow traction, a winter-hardy heater, and a combination of performance and fuel economy unmatched in a medium sized sedan. The cars' distinctive Scandinavian design was a bonus. Unlike most of the other journalists, I have been a buyer of Saab cars for decades.

Do I think it's great that Saab will be selling a truck-based SUV? No. I also don't think it's a good idea for so many of my fellow citizens to be purchasing these behemoths, but purchase them they do. We can hope that when people come to their senses, if they happen to be driving a 9⁷ at the time, they may look first at a 9⁵ or 9³ to replace it. The litmus test for whether Saab's spirit is still alive rests in the automobiles leaving the Trollhattan factory. So long as they continue to be the cars they have been and have become, I could care less about what else is on the showroom floor.

Autos for Sale

1999 9-3 SE HOT Black - Manual - 65,000 - Price: \$13,000 grey leather VIGGEN springs, wheels, KONI shocks, sport exhaust, ALL service records and original parts (exh, suspension). Patrick Riordan, Arlington VA tag=030819prior (703) 216-4145

1996 9000 CS Burgundy - Auto - 95,000 - \$5,500 very good condition. Properly maintained by SAAB shops, all records. Good tires, new battery, exhaust. misc parts included. Hood edge creased from parking lot crunch. Lee Wahler, Falls Church VA tag=030819wahl (703) 845-9169

1991 900 SPG Turbo Convertible Monte Carlo Yellow - Manual - 62,000 - \$15,900 obo gray leather, new Michelin tires, in dash CD player. ice cold A/C, power windows, locks, and heated seats. Ben Wood, Vienna VA tag=030715bwood (703) 471-4935

Classifieds

NOTE: "tag=123456abcd" is shorthand code for TSN email responses. <http://www.saabnet.com/tsn/class/classmail2.php3?tag=123456abcd>

1990 9000 CD, 99K, Auto, original paint - no damage history, rose quartz/burgundy, drive anywhere, \$3200 OBO. Larry Black, (321)-768-4533

1989 900 SPG Turbo Grey - Manual - 163,000 - \$4,000 Car is in very good condition. Had a recent minor tune up. Runs very well, and still has a kick to it making it fun to drive. Mike Morshed, Amherst NH tag=030910mmors (603) 673-8818

1988 900 Turbo SPG Slate Blue - Manual - 170,000 - \$2,500 Original owner, all records, driven daily, oil changed every 5k Body good SPG molding great, small sunroof leak. Interior worn, Tom Reavis, Raleigh NC tag=030723treav (919) 876-7175

1988 900 4 door, 112K, auto, original paint - no damage history, silver blue, drive anywhere, \$1300 OBO. Larry Black, (321)-768-4533

1988 900S 3-door, 163K, strong motor, bad auto transmission. \$695 OBO. Larry Black, (321)-768-4533

1987 900 Turbo Convertible Edwardian Grey - Manual - 91,500 - \$12,500 245 HP, 300 ft. lb. torque. Very fast. New top, hydraulic rams, window motors, exhaust system short shifter, more. TSN Les Stouder, Brentwood TN tag=030911lstou (615) 485-8774

1984 900 3-door, 5 speed. Mechanically excellent, body good, needs a little work. 200,000 miles. \$1200 OBO. Keneth L. Baer, Corning, NY. Kmbmb81361@aol.com (607) 962-4155

1978 99 EMS Original showroom condition. 64,000 unsalted miles, garaged condition with a/c. Winner 1st place Saab Nationals best of show ('02) Larz Anderson 'Swedish Day'/Front cover of NINES. One of a kind - fun to drive auto. \$13,000. Jeff Becker, S. Natick, MA. Days (781) 449-3530

1974 Sonett III Mellow Yellow - manual - 74,000. \$5750. MSS exh, new clutch at 66,000, breakerless ignition, free wheel disabled. Solid Sonett w/original interior all in very good condition. Runs well. Photo on www.vsaab.com Nelson Woodruff, Mosinee, WI. (715) 693-3470.

1974 Sonnett III Yellow - Manual - 139,000 - \$4,500 2 owners, VGC, many updates and replacements, motor street performance blue printed at 30,000 mi. Appraised at \$6500 CDN. extra parts TSN Marcia Silveira, Rockland Ont CANADA tag=030904msilv (613) 833-2825

1973 Sonett III Black - Manual - 53,800 - \$5900 nice collectors car, Mechanically excellent, tons of recent work done incl exhaust, tires, brakes incl m/c, calipers, lines. Very little rust, Hathaway Elkins, Dedham MA tag=030820helki (617) 970-1421

1971 Sonett III, Orange, 100% original, needs headliner and reupholstering. Garage stored since purchase in 1994. \$1000 OBO. Phil, (410) 719-9619

1970 99, antique plates, no rust, runs well, 2.0L engine from EMS, fuel injection. Could be driven daily. Jim, 724-537-6087. Latrobe, PA.

1970 99 steel bumpers, 2 dr, creme color, 1.85L carb, 4 spd, \$2999. Tom Donney Motors, Ft. Dodge, IA, (800) 626-7222

Parts and Miscellaneous

Gislaved Nord Frost II Tires on Saab Aluminum (not painted) winter rims. Complete set of 4 with less than 5000 miles on both tires and rims. \$325 plus shipping fees. Tires mounted on rims, no blemishes. Jeff Harris, Raleigh NC tag=030910jharr (919) 779-7368

Factory and Aftermarket Service Manuals covering Saabs from 1961 through 1997 EXCEPT for 9000. Call or e-mail me with your needs. Jack Ashcraft, 2030 Grey Eagle Dr, Medford, OR 97501 jackashcraft@charter.net (541) 779-0731.

Manuals: Chilton 1969/75, 1976 Haynes, SAAB 99-1975. "Factory" 900 from 1979 - "Factory" 900 in French. Saab Scania Story. Newsletters - 1976 to 86 Plus most to the modern era. Offers over \$50, plus \$50 shipping. Peter McLoughlin Rigaud, Québec, Canada, J0P 1P0 e-mail:pm3000@istar.ca (450) 451-5165

Pair V4 modified heads, manifold, and 1bbl 34mm carb. Heads ported and polished, SS valves, 42 m intake, 36 mm exhaust. Double valve springs, bronze guides, unleaded valve seats. Including rocker arms and shafts, all LN, \$600. Bob Birbeck, (937) 439-5193.

'67 95 2 stroke, 3 carbs, clutch assy runs good needs generator & bracket, 1 fan blade. Fuel pump NG \$350. Exh for 95 \$75, add rear muffler \$25. Starter \$50. 4 spd 65' 850 GT shifts, freewheel unknown, worn shift rod \$150. Wheels from 850GT w/caps & old tires \$???. plus shipping. Barry Siegel, Grand Junction CO tag=030918bsieg (970) 255-0732

(4) Nokian Hakapellitta NRW snow tires, 195/50-R1588H M+S, 9/32". (1) new Bridgestone Potenza RE92, 185/65-R15. All on steel 6J15 wheels, inc (4) Saab wheel covers, fit 1994 and later 900/9-3. EC. \$280 plus shipping. Larry Nielsen, Lancaster, PA. ln Nielsen99@prodigy.net, (717) 851-0328 days.

1988 900S new parts: A/C compressor w/hose, condenser, radiator, gas tank sender, rotors, pads, fan switch, coolant temp. sensor, radiator cap, K&N air filter, all priced to sell! Larry Black, (321)-768-4533

Wanted

Service Manager/Adviser, Parts Manager, Technician. Auto dealer exclusive with Saab and Volvo. Top salary/benefits for the right person. Demands qualifications that are outstanding. Swedish Motors, 7 N. Decatur Street, Marietta, Pa. 17547 717-426-2202.

Wanted: Wheels and/or Tires set of 17" BBS wheels (2000 or newer), 1 or 2 piece OK. Prefer wheels mounted with winter tires. Don Hess, Quincy IL tag=030917dhess (217) 224-5362

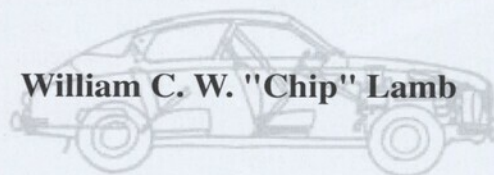
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5 speed manual transmission wanted for a 1991 9000 turbo. I am only interested in low mileage units (below 80k) or those that have recently been rebuilt. I am located in Illinois. Please call me. Thanks. Dan Yassenko, Galesburg IL tag=030711dyase (309) 342-4812

Wanted: One Gislaved Nordfrost II Snow Tire 185/65/15 to complete a set for my 2001 9-3. Andrew King, Ann Arbor MI tag=030807aking (734) 973-1506

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