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THE SAAB CLUB OF NORTH AMERICA

JAN - MAR 2024 : ISSUE **376**



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CONTENTS

- 2 **President's Letter**
SHELLY BAXTER
- 3 **Looking Into the Abyss**
GREG ABBOTT
- 5 **Could You Do It Yourself?**
JIM HICKSTEIN
- 7 **Fluid Everywhere**
BRIAN STAUSS
- 8 **SAAB Events are
My favorite events**
SHELLY BAXTER
- 10 **Saabs Online**
- 11 **9 Questions** [New Board Edition]
JAMIE ANDERSON, SAUNDERS LEE,
JULIE GARDNER, ADAM FRIEDSTEIN
- 14 **Saab Shots**
- 16 **Flatnose Vert Fantasy**
JAKE TILTON
- 18 **Frankenbrakes**
JAKE TILTON
- 21 **Vert Fest Redux**
ED LORENZ
- 22 **Arizona Club Annual Meet**
JACOB PRETZMAN
- 24 **Rocky Top Guru**
ROGER S. HARRIS
- 26 **SOC41**
- 27 **Saab Club Info**
- 28 **Central Penn Fall Drive**
JACOB MOORE
- 29 **Future Events**



PRESIDENT'S LETTER



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Happy New Year and Happy New SAAB Projects!

Hello fellow SAABers!

We are proud to announce next year's convention will be returning to the beautiful Pacific Northwest! Every ten years, the PNW Saab Club hosts a convention in their region. This year, the convention will be held within driving distance to some of the best kept secrets the PNW has to offer. We, as a club, couldn't choose just one area in that region, so we chose to locate the convention close to them all!

If you have ever had the opportunity to attend a convention in the area, then you know what a treat it is to be in that part of the country. If you haven't had a chance to attend one, well here's your opportunity. Please go to saabclub.com for all of the details. Registration is open now!

If you can't make the national convention, don't fret. We have been working hard behind the scenes to keep the Saab Spirit alive from coast to coast. How, you might wonder?

You guys heard my call and we now have several Saab Ambassadors! Look for them at your next meets all over the country, and in your social media communities! These guys on the marketing team have been hard at work making things happen, gathering information about clubs and events across the US, and are now getting ready to share them with the community at large!

If you want to see more Saabs at your next club event, social or meetup please reach out to info@saabclub.com to let us know what's going on.

As always,

Keep on SAABin!

Shelly Baxter
SCNA President



LOOKING INTO THE ABYSS

BY GREG ABBOTT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



9s

3

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The existential angst of Saab ownership is a depression-triggering event for most of us in the community. The tough questions arrive in seasonal cycles (usually attached to a maintenance event): Why am I spending all this time and/or money on a 3rd or 4th car which I rarely drive? Wouldn't life be simpler if I took up a less frustrating past-time, like golf?

My recent Saab angst event was unplanned. My collection of Saab misfit toys includes a 2007 9-7x 5.3 with 245,000 miles, and the transmission went out. In particular, 3rd and 4th gear disappeared entirely, a known failure mode for that transmission. I had lent the car to a friend in need, somewhat foolishly, and at the time the transmission failed it had accumulated some body damage. It also must have been driven into a curb at a fairly high rate of speed at some point, because the front right suspension components were all bent. Oddly enough it still tracked straight - I only noticed because the wheel itself was not centered in the wheel well, it was about a half-inch or so too far to the rear.

So suddenly the irresistible force of my Saab enthusiasm was squarely up against the immovable object of the sunk cost fallacy. My commitment wavered. Do I spend substantially more than the market value of the 9-7x for the repairs? Any "normal" person would have given up on it right then and there.

But there's a reason the sunk cost fallacy is such a common theme in human history — sunk costs are about the sexiest rationalization there

continued

So suddenly the irresistible force of my Saab enthusiasm was squarely up against the immovable object of the sunk cost fallacy.

is for otherwise irrational behavior. "Just one more repair, and I can still benefit from all the time and money I've put in."

I ignored the whole mess for a few weeks, but in the end I had to make a decision.

I wanted to avoid sentimental decisions so I focused on future needs — last year I moved to a remote area of South Dakota and I'm now several hundred miles from a repair shop fluent in Saab. My ragtag fleet often often requires more repair work than I am capable of, and that's a big reason I bought the 9-7x in the first place - as a tow vehicle. I still needed a tow vehicle regardless of what I decided to do about the 9-7x. And it turns out I also need a vehicle with a snow plow attachment, since I discovered my rural South Dakota county won't plow my street.

So I needed a vehicle that can tow, and a vehicle that can take a snow plow, whether that's a repaired 9-7x or another vehicle I bought to replace it.

I had bought the 9-7x from Jim Hickstein, and I had a list of maintenance he performed on it, which was fairly comprehensive as is his habit. (Pro tip - buy your used Saabs from Jim Hickstein, no used Saab has ever been treated better!). I had also done some maintenance myself, ranging from the significant (new steering rack, new tires) to the trivial (LED license plate bulbs - they look great!).

I did my due diligence in looking at alternatives to the 9-7x for tow/plow duty. And as it turned out buying an equivalent replacement would have cost roughly the same or more as repairing the 9-7x. I

was fairly shocked at the prices people were asking for Suburbans, Tahoes, F150s, etc., locally. \$4,000 for something 15-20 years old with 250k or more miles. There were even a few "mechanic's specials - needs new transmission" and they were still listed at \$1,500-2,000.

In the end I decided the known quantity of the 9-7x and its maintenance history was preferable to the unknown maintenance history of a used truck or SUV with equivalent miles. I had the transmission rebuilt and the right front suspension repaired. The 9-7x has done yeoman's service since the repair, towing my '05 convertible 300 miles and towing a U-Haul trailer 250 miles with some random furniture I had to move. The front bumper is held on with duct tape but it drives real nice.

Of course sentiment and emotion matter - and I have to give credit to Saunders Lee, who as many of you know is dedicated to saving as many 9-7xs as he can. We had some good conversations exploring the alternatives. I also have to thank Tom and Patti Donney for their advice and help lining up the transmission rebuild at Fort Dodge Transmission in Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Those of us who fight the daily battle against Saab entropy would be wise to recall the famous Nietzsche quote: "If you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you." We are defined by the battles and obsessions we choose - so choose your battles wisely! 🍷

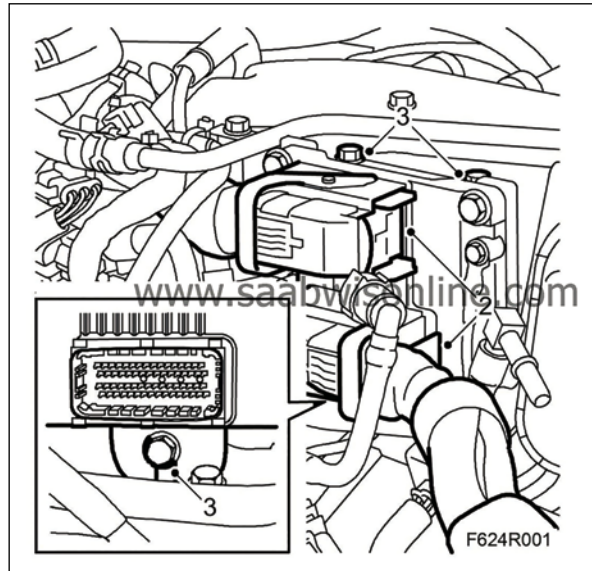
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4

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COULD YOU DO IT YOURSELF?

BY JIM HICKSTEIN



Do you have a good Saab mechanic near you? You're lucky. If not, or if you just want to save money, did you know you could do some jobs yourself? And that the information you need is more readily available now than it was before 2011? (Even parts: Saab Parts never went bankrupt! See findingsaabparts.com about the parts myth.)

For the first 20+ years of my owning Saabs, I didn't even change my own oil. My Saab shop took good care of my car. But with the upheavals in 2009 and then 2011, I wondered how long that would be available, and decided to do some of my own work. I also made the mistake of adding up all the costs. Even in 1987, because I'm that sort of person, I bought the full Saab 900 workshop manual set, to look over their shoulders and be able to speak intelligently about the systems in the car. It mostly gathered dust because I didn't like to get greasy.

Saab replaced the paper manuals, starting with the new-gen 900 in 1994, with a computer program they supplied to dealers called the Saab Workshop Information System or WIS. Mere shlubs like us didn't have access to it. It runs on Windows. After the bankruptcy, anyone could download WIS 3.0, install it on Windows, and have most of the information official Saab service centers had. (Not skills or technical service bulletins, but that's another story.)

WIS has all the step-by-step procedures – how to take things off of your car and put them back on again in the right order, from a headlight assembly up to the entire powertrain. And diagrams, many diagrams,

which are crucial. Some of these procedures have 70+ steps (in To Remove, and that many

again in To Fit), but most are far easier. Quite a few note where you should use new fasteners or gaskets, say, that you wouldn't find out about except the hard way. Torque specs, fluid specs, detailed explanations of how systems work – such as the insanely overcomplicated ignition key and immobilizer in the later 9-3: one diagram about keys alone needs 5 colors! Without this information, you either couldn't begin, or, if you tried, likely couldn't dig out of the hole you made.

To take an example: your alternator dies in your driveway. (It happened to me, once.) You have a 2005 9-3 convertible. You can get a part fairly cheaply on the aftermarket, but your mechanic wants to sell you one at a profit, and of course charge for labor. They say it will be \$1200, plus towing. You have a weekend free, another car to drive to the auto-parts store, basic hand tools, the part that you ordered on Tuesday, and the WIS. (A mentor would speed the process of learning skills. Like a recipe, WIS doesn't show you how to beat an egg: that's a skill.) There are Youtube videos, and you should review them as well, but they are not a replacement for a written procedure. You don't need sheet music to hum along to Beethoven, but if you're going to perform, you do.

So you run WIS 3.0 and look under 9-3, 2005, Electrical, Charging System, Adjustment/Replacement, and find Generator B207. The terms aren't always obvious or US-centric but you read the list and pick the closest match. B207 is the engine in your car, which only came in that year (in the US) with the 2.0-liter inline 4-cylinder gas


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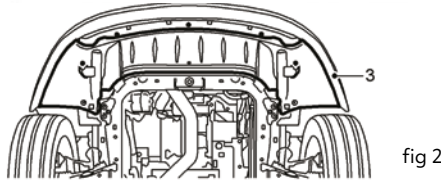
5

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continued

COULD YOU DO IT YOURSELF? CONTINUED

 3. Remove the lower engine cover. fig 1



(“petrol”) engine. You’ll learn these. There are 21 steps in To Remove, but they go pretty fast. Here’s a diagram from Step 3, “remove the lower engine cover”. (fig 1) The 3 in the diagram is the step number, and you can just see the number and location of fasteners, if not their size. You can do it! If you get over the Windows hump.

The world having changed since 2011, installing something on Windows is now considered inconvenient – and early on WIS required Windows 2000 or XP or maybe 32-bit Win7 – to the point where that has moved into the “too hard” column, along with cut-and-paste and memorizing phone numbers. Wouldn’t it be nice if you could use the WIS over the web? I often leaned

on Matt Nicklay, principal at esaabparts.com, about this: “We gotta do WOW: WIS on the Web!” Somebody beat us to it, but it now exists: saabwisonline.com. And thanks to your membership in the Saab Club of North America, the Club has taken this on and will support it on the web, for everyone to use, for as long as we can.

One important difference from the Windows WIS is that it can’t show you the steps and the diagrams side by side. You will have to find and click on this little left-arrow icon in each step that has one, to see the associated diagram. (fig 2) Most people seem to figure this out, but unless you’re familiar with the Windows WIS it’s not very obvious.

There are some broken links, missing model/years, all the NG9-3 DTCs, it struggles with mobiles, and internally it’s a mess. I have my work cut out. But I’d love to hear from you if it has emboldened you to take the next step on your Saab journey.

jim.hickstein@saabclub.com 

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6

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FLUID EVERYWHERE

BY BRIAN STAUSS

I purchased my 9-5 six years ago in Tennessee. As long as I've owned it, the left front wheel and surrounding area gets saturated with oil. The CV boots, half axle seal, engine and transmission gasket areas were all dry. Over time, I noticed that it only slung oil on extended highway drives. Around town, it was bone dry. By monitoring the oil level, I determined it was transmission fluid. Now, by monitoring, I mean with a wire stuck down the fill hole as I was concerned about stripping the check level plug given its difficult to access location. So, a benchmark was marked on the wet wire as "full".

SOC 2022, with the 3500 mile round trip drive, was the breaking point. I went through a lot of Redline MTF and had to replenish my supply at an AutoZone in Sturgis before heading home. And cleaning up the mess on the wheel and surrounding area. I spoke with several Saabers at SOC 2022 and was advised that it was likely the transmission end plate gasket, which happens to be right there in the wheel well area.

SOC 2023 was approaching, so gasket was ordered and received. It was now or never on the check level and drain plugs on the transmission. Both broke loose with little effort. I used one of those 7 quart drain pans that we all have. Plenty big – there's only 1.6 quarts of transmission oil in there.

Well, was I in for a surprise. I filled that 7 quart pan to nearly overflowing! There were at least 5 quarts of oil in the transmission! I then realized that I didn't have a leaking gasket. I was grossly overfilled and blowing the oil out the atmospheric vent. The previous owner must have overfilled it and I assumed what "full" was when my highly accurate piece of wire registered as "wet" on the end.

I buttoned everything up and added the 1.6 quarts per the owners manual. I took the car to the car wash and gave the wheel, wheel well and transmission a good thorough cleaning.

And it hasn't leaked a drop since, including all the way to SOC 2023 in Chicago and back. 🇺🇸



Filled this nearly to the brim!

Why is my OG 9-5 5-speed slinging transmission fluid everywhere?



Wrench needed to remove the full Level plug on side of transmission. Picked these up at a flea market.

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7

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SAAB EVENTS ARE MY FAVORITE EVENTS

BY SHELLY BAXTER



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8

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Saab events are my favorite type of events. Big events or small events, it doesn't really matter as long as there are Saabs and Saab people. This year we hosted a Saab drive in Springfield, MO affectionately named "The Heartland Drive." We figured that we had some good driving roads, that we are centrally located, and that it would be fun to be able to get together in the fall. Saabers drove in from ten different states: Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Colorado, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Georgia, Arkansas and Missouri. Over 50 people came to the drive, ranging in age from swaddling clothes to the traditional retirement age.

We gathered at a nostalgic hotel on Route 66 called the Rail Haven. It had everything that we needed: a comfy bed to sleep in, good breakfast in the morning, and a large pavilion to hang out in at night. If you have ever been to a Saab event, you know that "kicking tires" is a big part of what we do at night. Whether it's in a field, under a tent, or in our case, a pavilion, Saab people like to talk and hang out for a while after the day's events.

Many arrived throughout the day on Friday. Friday night we went to dinner at a local Mexican joint and had the back room all to ourselves. Saturday morning rolled around and we had breakfast at another local



joint, George's, and lined up around the pavilion for a spirited drive through Northwest Arkansas. We had plans for a big day of driving that became more fluid as we were leaving town. As in, I got lost in my own city! I went the wrong direction. And quite a bit of my friends followed me. We ended up scattered all over town, but were able to muster together at Costco, and really begin our drive through the Ozarks.

Our drive divided us into several groups that had us meeting up at the Ferry at Bull Shoals Lake. We loaded the ferry with Saabs, took lots of photos, and met up again at a great BBQ joint called Blacksheep in Yellville,

AR. After a late lunch, we took different routes back into Springfield.

We ended Saturday evening grilling out under the pavilion and catching up with friends telling Saab stories and "kicking tires" until late in the evening.

Sunday, we met at Genuine Saab and took a tour of the shop. We ate a lot of donuts and had quite a bit of coffee before bidding everyone adios! Until the next time! We hope to see you guys the first weekend in October 2024! 🍷

SAABS ONLINE



SAAB WIS Online Workshop Information System

This is an online version similar to an application used by dealers and independent shops to diagnose issues and make repairs. SCNA makes this free resource available to the entire Saab community. We hope this information will help keep your Saab running for many more years. To use this online workshop information system, visit saabWISonline.com

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10



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Our Group 5 National Championship winning 300hp 1995 SAAB 900 was donated to the Saab Heritage Car Museum USA during SOC 2022.

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9 Questions introduces members of our Saab community. In this issue, instead of “OG” (older crowd) and “NG” (younger crowd), we are featuring new SCNA board members “NB”! We hope you enjoy getting to know them.

9 QUESTIONS

BY 9s EDITORIAL TEAM



JAMIE ANDERSON

I work in advertising and my family packs into the 900 at least once a week for adventures. We mostly make it to and from our destinations. When we don't we still call it an adventure.

Are you the first person in your family to own a Saab?

Yes. My parents had a Volvo that burned down. They did not leave my sister in the burning car.

What is the one Saab you would like to own?

99. I need a 99. But with AC. AC that works. I'm older and stuff is hot.

What cars other than Saab do you own?

None

What NEW car would you choose today and why?

None. They are all ugly and have zero personality. The feel like plastic. I'll take the bus, thank you.

Do your friends make Saab jokes?

All the time. None are funny. Or original. I have owned my car long enough to have gone from Gross Point Blank to Sideways to Drive My Car. My car is cool again and the 80s don't suck anymore.

Has anyone ever mistaken your Saab for another brand?

Yes. My favorite is when folks think SAAB is a German brand. I let it slide.

Have you ever slept in your Saab?

Yes. Camped, cross-country drives and naps at the mall. I have never slept with my SAAB.

What is the most embarrassing thing that's happened in your Saab?

It is a longer story but I once had a badly injured pigeon in the car and it got out of a cardboard box I was transporting it in. I was in a hurry as the poor bird was bleeding so I coasted through a yellow light. The blue lights of CPD (Chicago Police Dept) flashed and pulled me over. I did not have my license, registration and was dressed in a white T-shirt covered in blood. I had left the house in a hurry. The officer walked to the door and indicated for me to roll down the window. I pointed to the pigeon on my dash that had a bad head injury. He looked hard. And stared. I told him I was going to the pigeon doctor and was sorry about the yellow but I am in a hurry. After a hard stare he eventually said "This looks complicated. Very complicated." Antique plates (driving off season), refusal to comply with a request, no ID or verification of ownership, no insurance and covered in bird blood and loose story of a pigeon doctor that resides at a residential address (it is true). "I am going to pretend I did not pull you over. Do not make me regret it. If I see you driving back with the pigeon you are going in cuffs immediately." He pulled me over on the way home to check on the bird.

Who is your Saab idol?

Anyone that possesses the power to fix one. Properly. 🍷

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11

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9 QUESTIONS [New Board Edition]

BY 9s EDITORIAL TEAM



9s

12

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Do you think that you have a good Saab Story for the 9 Questions Column?

Submit your information to be considered to nineseditor@saabclub.com for inclusion in a future edition of 9s

SAUNDERS LEE

I've been a Saab lover since I saw my first 99 out at the Air Force Base. I love traveling and seeing new sights and meeting new people. I'm an avid motorcyclist (7 motorcycles). I have a Pet Transport company that keeps me on the go as well! I value my free time and love spending it with others who are positive and seek to enjoy good times!

Are you the first person in your family to own a Saab?

Yes.

What is the one Saab you would like to own?

2012 9⁵ Aero Wagon

What cars other than Saab do you own?

GMC Encoy XL Denali and a Prius V

What NEW car would you choose today and why?

Cadillac Black Wing (manual)

Do your friends make Saab jokes?

They know better!!!!

Has anyone ever mistaken your Saab for another brand?

Nope, although many didn't know what it was!

Have you ever slept in your Saab?

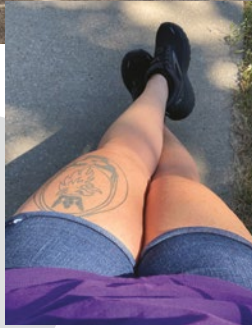
Camped in my C900 and 9⁵ wagon

What is the most embarrassing thing that's happened in your Saab?

Burnt to the ground (my fault, long story)

Who is your Saab idol?

My Saab family really! Those who've worked tirelessly to keep the brand going! 🍷



NJB JULIE GARDNER

Born and raised in Central PA and was always interested in cars. First sold Saab in 1988 and sold my last one in 2012 during a 25 yr career in the auto business. You'll find me buying rather than selling now as the Purchasing Manager for a 40 million dollar logistics company. If I'm not planning Saabs@Carlisle (or SOC) you might find me roller skating or dancing to an old Grateful Dead bootleg.

Are you the first person in your family to own a Saab?

Yes.

What is the one Saab you would like to own?

Viggen

What cars other than Saab do you own?

Matchbox

What NEW car would you choose today and why?

Subaru Crosstrek – cute and practical

Do your friends make Saab jokes?

Sometimes

Has anyone ever mistaken your Saab for another brand?

No.

Have you ever slept in your Saab?

Yes

What is the most embarrassing thing that's happened in your Saab?

My classic convertible top stopped working as rain began and I was fighting with it on side of the road alone until someone stopped to give me a hand in raising it manually

Who is your Saab idol?

Shelly Baxter 



ADAM FRIEDSTEIN

I live in NJ with my son Benny and our dog. I run construction sites when not trying to break old Saabs.

Are you the first person in your family to own a Saab?

I am, yes.

What is the one Saab you would like to own?

Perhaps a 99 Turbo.

What cars other than Saab do you own?

A Nissan Frontier (to tow Saabs)...

What NEW car would you choose today and why?

I don't think I would ever purchase a new car if I could help it.

Do your friends make Saab jokes?

All the time. They are as prevalent as "dad jokes" in my circles...

Has anyone ever mistaken your Saab for another brand?

A Volvo a few times.


Have you ever slept in your Saab?

I've napped in one, but no overnights . . . yet.

What is the most embarrassing thing that's happened in your Saab?

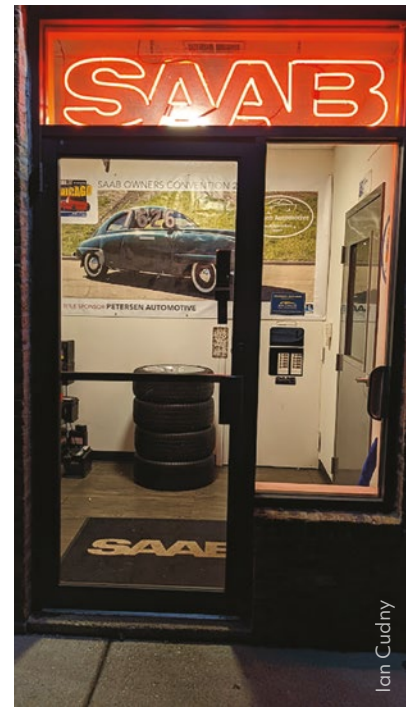
Most of the embarrassment I have felt as a Saab owner involves fumbling through repairs that ended up needing to be done two or three times over. I suppose I felt a little embarrassment driving with my son in our 900 in the dead of summer when the blower motor gave out.

Who is your Saab idol?

So many Saab folks have helped me that it's a hard one to answer. Two well-known names jump out for their welcoming generosity and continued friendship- Al Huseman and Gary Reider. 



Greg Abbott



Ian Cudny

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Julie Gardner



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15

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FLATNOSE VERT FANTASY

BY JAKE TILTON



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16

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One evening in April, I was laying on the couch scrolling Facebook, when I saw a post about a manual '86 flatnose 900 convertible (serial number O2O51O) at an auction lot in Philly. My jaw dropped at what I saw next.

For the uninitiated, 1986 was the first year of the 900 convertible, which is credited with saving Saab in the US after a plummet in both image and sales from its peak in 1984. It is an incredibly important, rare, and cool one-year only car: just 379 were made (205 manual, 174 automatic), and most were silver with a buffalo grey interior. It's even rarer than the 9-4X!



This particular one was cosmetically rough, but had fundamentally excellent bones. I saw an uncracked dash, a totally solid undercarriage, and a mostly straight body – and only 62,500 miles!!! What the hell, I'll put in a bid to save it from the scrapyards. \$800.



My bid didn't meet the reserve. Ah, well, I tried.

Two days later, I got an email from the auction house authorizing a deposit. (?!?!?) It turns out a seller can accept a bid even if it didn't meet the reserve. I now had 48 hours to move a car from the auction lot. And I have a day job. And I'm about 300 miles away. Oops!

I had the car towed (an agonizing saga about which anyone can ask me only after a few beers) to European Motor Services in Point Pleasant, PA, where Jeff Shore hoovered out the old fuel and started work on the car, but the brakes were seized and the fuel pump was completely and utterly kaput and crusty. This car wasn't moving anywhere quickly.

Fast forward to November, where I finally found myself in a position to try and revive this thing with my girlfriend. We were frankly stunned at what we saw (considering the car had been purchased sight-unseen): a total creampudd covered in a thick layer of dust, mouse droppings, iron fallout, and the belongings of the New York City architect who last owned the car and who let the registration lapse in 1998. The car had clearly been stored indoors since then, before eventually heading to the auction as a charity donation.

We made exceptional progress over the next few days vacuuming and detailing, fixing wiring, rehabbing vacuum routing, swapping fuel pumps, sourcing brake



components, etc. I learned a lot about these cars and had to get very crafty very quickly, including making a “frankenbrake” setup from the brake piston/handbrake assembly from an '85 parts car and the yoke from this '86 to make working front brakes which cleared the unobtainium '86-'87 turbo vented front rotor setup (see article on page 18 for details).

As of November 7, I have one trip left to make to the car, but it is exceptionally close to running. It is getting a fuel rail since its original was kinked and burst once fuel started pumping (maybe that's why it was parked?), but it now looks and feels like a different car entirely. The engine cranks over consistently and sounds amazingly healthy, building up oil pressure perfectly. The underside truly has ZERO rust, and there's only minor body damage (a pullable dent, a hood dent, and a minor scrape under rear wheel arch trim). All electronics tested work (down to the mirror motors). The dash is truly uncracked (at which the low resolution auction pictures had hinted), and the seats are remarkably supple. The iron fallout on the trunk and body panels from storage has been totally cleaned up with wheel cleaner. The rubber components are even still soft and pliable: seriously,

no spiderwebbing, not even on CV boots. The roof feels new, barring a minuscule tear or two (its movement is untested at this moment). The paint will require two-stage polish, though, as the clearcoat has that “brushed” effect for which Silver and Rose Quartz Saabs of this era are known. Most of the remaining issues can be easily handled with a few more days of work.

The regrettable ending to this story is that, barring a windfall of cash or storage space, I cannot keep the car. It will be up for sale or for auction soon, where my top priority will be ensuring it goes to the best possible home (and one who will give me right of first refusal should they ever part with it).

It's nice to have done right by 020510. Saab is dead: long live this Saab. 🇸🇪



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FRANKENBRAKES

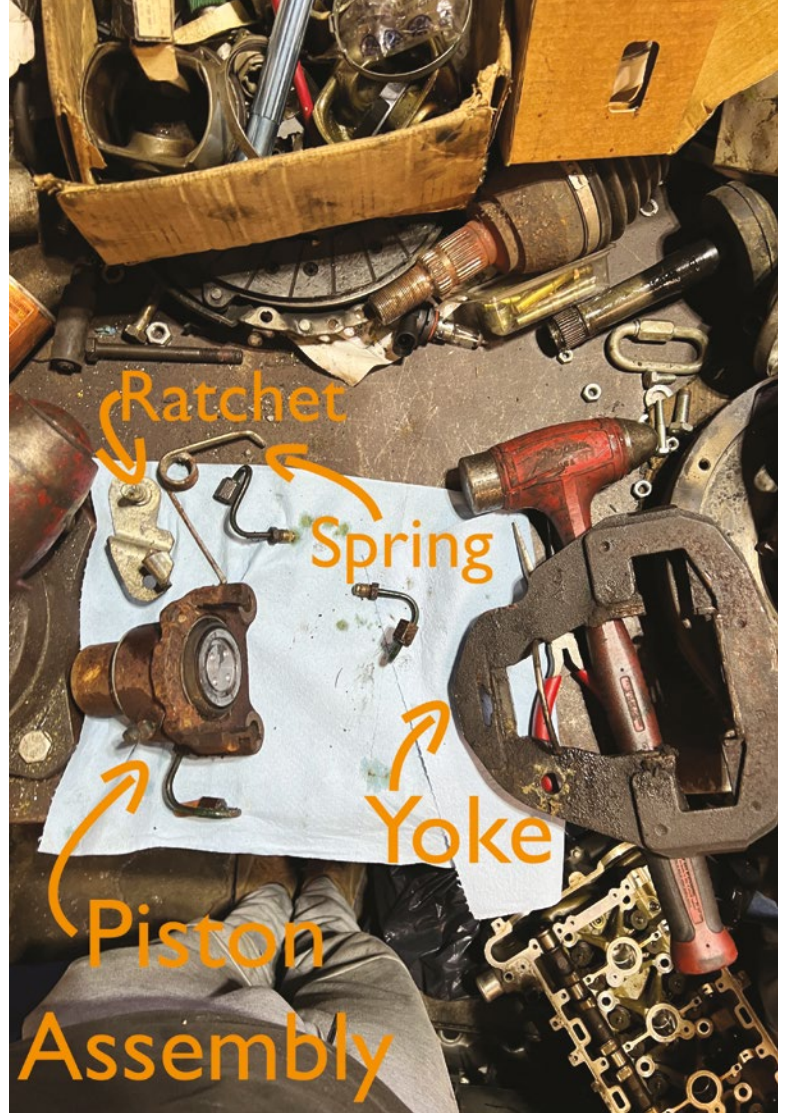
BY JAKE TILTON

Saving a Vented Rotor Setup on a Flatnose Vert



No better feeling than yanking stuck calipers!

***It's easier
than it sounds -
once the parts are
in your hands!***



I was recently (un?)lucky enough to face the task of rehabbing a front handbrake caliper setup, with a twist: the brake calipers were the for the '86-'87 vented rotor setup (they are finicky and rare!). And the car in question (an '86 flatnose convertible) couldn't move without them successfully assembled. But no pressure, though...

Here's the situation: I had an '85 turbo hatch parts car with working brakes and an '86 flatnose convertible with brakes so seized up that a diesel pickup couldn't wrest them free. The '86 had sat for 25 years, long enough for the pads to mechanically and probably chemically bond to the rotors. But the job wasn't as simple as yanking the '85's calipers, freeing the '86's calipers, and transplanting the good '85 calipers onto the '86: that would have been too easy.

Some disassembly and refurbishment was required. While the fundamental assembly and mounting points for these front handbrake cars remained the same over the years, the yoke (a large metal "loop" which holds the pads to the rotor) needed to be swapped to the '85's piston assembly to clear the thicker '86 rotors.

Let's get into this a bit more: The 900's front handbrake caliper assembly consists of the aforementioned yoke and the piston

9s

18

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assembly. This piston assembly carries a main piston hydraulically pushing the inboard pad against the back of the rotor as well as a self-adjusting secondary piston which uses the handbrake cable to twist/ratchet that secondary piston down to exert force on the primary piston via a cool “cam” motion. The yoke holds the two pads in place and the assembly together.

These assemblies, while clever, love nothing more than to freeze up and get stuck. Especially after sitting for a quarter of a century.

Getting these frozen '86 caliper assemblies off was quite the trick: between brake lines which had never been apart, caliper carrier bolts which had never been knocked off, and pads so fused to rotors that they become one unit, uphill battles were around each corner. Chiseling away pad material broke a hammer. A Harbor Freight run for cutting discs was contemplated. Then...

...Enter stage left, the MAPP gas torch and the 4 foot prybar! These tools are your friends. I emerged victorious with two frozen calipers after a long battle, primarily won by pushing the prybar against the outboard pads using the wheel hub area of the rotor for leverage.

Now, to the bench: pulling the yoke is surprisingly easy. Compress and remove the helper spring for the handbrake cable ratchet. Then, simultaneously wiggle back the yoke and the ratchet. The ratchet's guide pin will emerge from the back of the piston assembly.

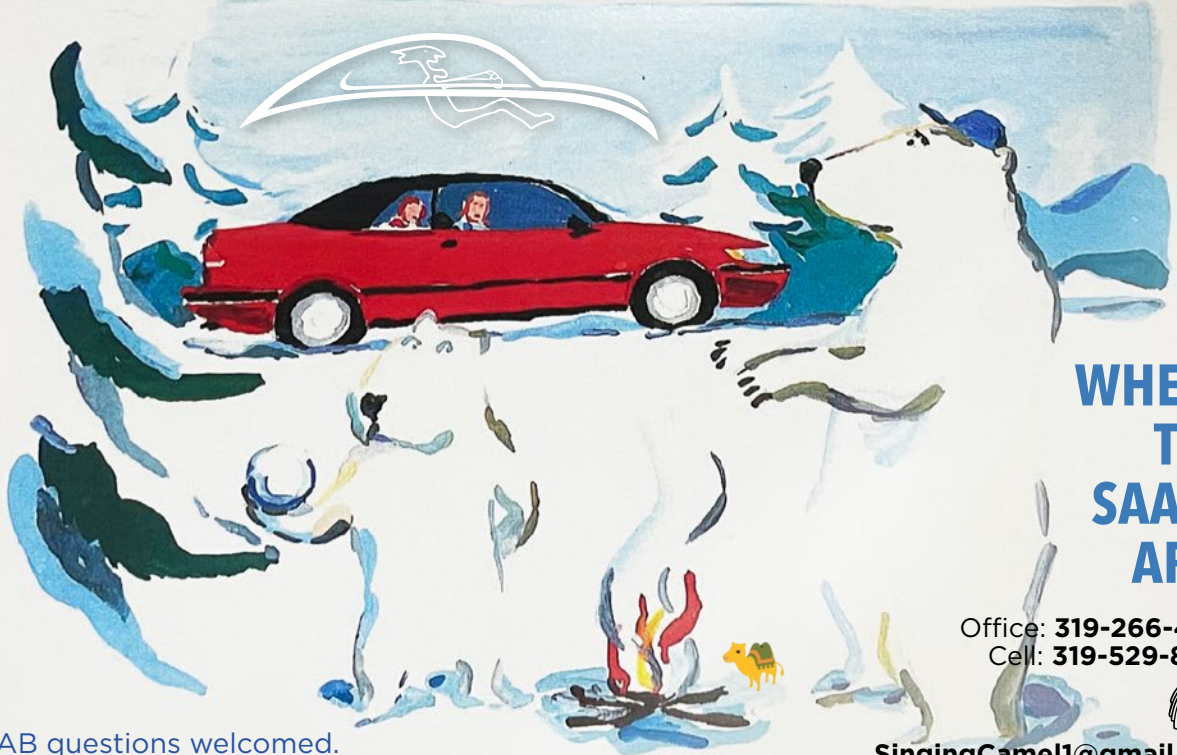
Clean the yoke, check its clearances to the piston assembly (they like to wear, making them clunk), and be sure to lube up those sliding surfaces (and don't let crap into the brake lines: I use foam earplugs to block the lines). Reassemble with the correct yokes on the working piston assemblies. Wind back the caliper pistons with the factory Saab tool, if you have it. Reinstall the caliper assembly, including the retaining plate (bend it around the carrier bolt heads to be sure they don't back out). Reinstall pads, spring clips (2 different types), the U-rail retainer pin, and the cotter pin which holds the retainer pin in place. Use good brake lube everywhere but the friction surfaces (and brake lines, of course). Reinstall the handbrake cable, its circlip, and its rubber boot. Bleed those brakes and pump that brake pedal aggressively to adjust the internal ratcheting mechanism.

There you have it: a “frankenbrake” way to save an '86-'87 front vented rotor assembly. 🍷



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VERT FEST REDUX

BY ED LORENZ



Sunday, July 9 was set as the every-other-year date for the 2023 (Saab) Vert Fest at the Aerodrome, held at the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome, in the Hudson Valley of New York, for the fourth time. With a massive amount of rain scheduled for that afternoon, the Aerodrome canceled the air show a day or two before. And as predicted, under a day of very threatening skies, the sky did open up most spectacularly right on schedule, with severe flooding in the Hudson Valley. Usually the Rhinebeck Aerodrome does air shows of vintage aircraft, on every Saturday (featuring aircraft of the 1930's) and Sunday (featuring aircraft of the pre-1920 era), from mid June thru mid October. Nevertheless, and knowing that the air show was canceled, we had about 15 Saab convertibles show up anyway. And with the weather being “decent” for the first half of the day, a number of vintage aircraft did get into the sky, as well as the 1929 New Standard D-25 ride plane, which many did take advantage of.

After going back and forth, looking for a date that would fit into the Aerodrome's schedule, the chance was taken on Sunday, October 1st, to be our best hope to get an event in before the end of the year, based on events already on the Aerodrome's schedule. Often, October 1st, in New York, can have either beautiful fall weather, or snow. Fortunately, it was a warm and sunny day, of beautiful fall weather, which turned out to be a most perfect day for both flying vintage aircraft, and Saab convertibles.

Attending were at least, by my count, 22 convertibles, with another half dozen Saab with roofs, which parked in the “normal” parking lot. It was a day of intensive Saabing, with background sounds of radial aircraft engines throughout the day, including many who went up for a fifteen minute flight in the New Standard, out over the Hudson River. It was a dash breezy, so most of the really vintage (pre-1920) aircraft stayed on the ground, but it was a great day for an air show anyway.

As great as the afternoon air show was, a better time was had with all the new and old Saab friends. With the air show over at 4pm, we left at 5pm, and many vertsters were still there! Thank you to all the participants who were there, (some for “both” events), the staff of the Rhinebeck Aerodrome, members of the Vert Fest Planning Committee, and wife Cameron, for a day of doing everything that needed be done. Be sure to pencil in the next (Saab) Vert Fest at the Aerodrome for Sunday, July 13, 2025. 🍷



9s

21

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ARIZONA CLUB ANNUAL MEET

BY JACOB PRETZMAN



Jacob Pretzman

9s

22

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The Saab Club of Arizona is a good example of what many of our local Saab communities are and can be

Cooler weather in the desert means it's time for the annual Saab Club of Arizona meet once again! The Club's annual meet was held at IMM Auto Service, the go-to Saab shop in the Phoenix metro area, and featured a diverse group of cars and people, People's Choice awards, a post-meet cruise, and more.

The Saab Club of Arizona is one of the larger groups in the country, with over 1,200 members on Facebook and 60+ cars at the annual meet. The group demographic is spread across young, first-time Saab owners, older owners who remember buying their classic Saabs new off the showroom floor, and everyone in between. Despite the differences, all AZ Saab owners come together to appreciate each other's cars, which often range from pristine, low-mileage, examples, through projects, daily drivers, and complete custom builds. Just about every model was represented, ranging from two-stroke and V4 classics, a myriad of C900s, some 9000s, plenty of 9-3's and 9-5's, and other models. A handful of attendees even came from out of state for the event, traveling from California, Colorado, South Dakota, and Idaho!

This year's meet was the first time our Club offered People's Choice awards. Each car was "registered" upon arrival and assigned a number. All attendees were asked to vote for their personal top 3 cars. The awards went to a dark green 1971 Sonett III (3rd place), a custom yellow 1969 Sonett II rally car (2nd place), and a white 1972 Saab 95 wagon (1st place). All 3 of these cars were owned by the same family and were beautifully preserved!

The Saab Club of Arizona is a good example of what many of our local Saab communities are and can be--an excellent place to show off your car, share technical knowledge, meet new people, and catch up with old friends. Events like these help remind us that in addition to all of us sharing a passion for our



Jacob Pretzman



Jacob Pretzman

awesome Saabs, it's important to remember that the people who own them are oftentimes even better.

If you would like to see additional coverage of the 2023 SCAZ meet or other Saab-related events and content, visit "Auto Autopsy" on YouTube and Instagram. Search "Saab Club of Arizona Meet" on YouTube for videos of the last (and past) events, select cruises, and more. The Club prides itself on keeping the Facebook page local for Arizona residents (and some surrounding states). If you live in Arizona, please consider joining our page and getting invested in our awesome local community!



Jacob Pretzman



Noah Cadenhead

ROCKY TOP GURU

BY ROGER S. HARRIS

Rocky Top Guru is steeped in Saab traditions.

9s

24

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David Dickinson grew up on a Western Massachusetts farm. When farm equipment broke, he made repairs and gained experience with mechanical systems. When his brother moved on from a Chevy dealership mechanic position, David took his place and attended twelve months of GM training. The Chevy shop performed wheel alignments for the Swedish car dealer up the street. The owner of that dealer offered David a job there with the benefit of increased pay. David took the position and worked as a Saab repair technician at Pioneer Valley Sales and Service, PVSS, from 1981 through 2003.

The Saab and Volvo dealership was located in South Deerfield, MA and was started in the early 1960s by Leonard Bedard. Eventually, the dealership was managed by Leonard's son Michael and later sold to another dealer when he retired. When that dealer closed the business at that location, David purchased the complete parts, tool, and equipment inventory as well as a TurboX!

I first had the opportunity to meet David at PVSS back in the late 1990s and found him to be professional and knowledgeable of the Saab car brand. David received all available Saab factory sponsored training, has achieved



Master Technician status and he is ASE Master Level certified. David used to have a side business out of his garage rebuilding C900 manual transmissions as a sub-contractor to PVSS.

Rocky Top Guru was formed as an independent car repair business and it is owned and operated by David and his wife Cheryl Dickinson. At this point, about 90-95% of the business involves the Saab brand with a few Volvo customers. People come from as far away as upstate New York, Connecticut and Long Island to the shop. They maintain a Saab Tech II diagnostic tool.

His first Saab was a mint green 1980 900 Turbo. David's favorite models are the C900 three door Turbo and OG 9-5 wagon. Cheryl's favorite SAAB was her 1993 9000 Aero 5 speed in eucalyptus green which was very quick and comfortable. They currently own a 2006 9-5 wagon, a 2006 9-7X V-8 which doubles as a tow vehicle, and 2011 9-5 Turbo4. They have grown children and grandchildren that also own Saabs. The Dickinsons regularly take their cars on lengthy road trips including


Dickinson calls his parts car collection the "Shady Acres Saab Post-retirement Community" photo by author



two 3,600 mile excursions to South Dakota this year to visit relatives and, of course, the Saab Museum.

Cheryl does the Rocky Top bookkeeping, customer invoices, customer interface, and compliance. His son Issac runs the computer service business and also repairs SIDs, the Saab Information Display modules used in OG 9-3 and 9-5 models. Another son, Ethan parts out un-roadable Saabs and has a good selection of used parts for reuse. His grandson, Gabriel, acts like a Rocky Top ambassador to the Saab community events and regularly attends events and owns six Saabs.

There are more than a dozen parts cars from 900 through 9-3 and 9-5 models in addition to a stock of new and used parts on the premises. They sometimes ship parts out. David has seen a number of high mileage Saabs over the years including an '01 9-5 with 280,000 miles, a C900 with 325,000 miles and an '02 9-5 V6 with 382,000 miles on the odometer. As an example of the long term dedication of the Saab community, he mentioned a customer in his late 80s or early 90s who still drives a stick shift Aero model.

They generally keep one or two good used ECMs in stock and clone them for newer generation 9-3 models. David mentioned good news that the 9-3SS engine sub-frames are now listed as an available part again. Unfortunately, they are back ordered as of this article's date. Other than sub-frame replacements, they generally don't do body work at the shop. Rocky Top does offer the application of Fluid Film or other similar protection to protect the car underbodies from rust. David noted that while the Saab fleet is aging and inevitably corrosion is an issue, other brands such as Subaru have more serious rust problems. 

Rocky Top Guru

29 West Chestnut Road
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9s

25

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Roger S. Harris is a life-long SAAB owner who lives in Western Massachusetts and is writing a series of articles on independent Saab shops for 9s.



Rocky Top Guru Saab repair located in Montague Center, MA
photo by author

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27

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CENTRAL PENN FALL DRIVE

BY JACOB MOORE

Driving to the Central Penn Fall Drive on Sunday, October 29, unfortunately I see grey skies and a gentle drizzle. The day before had been warm weather and sunshine. I suppose I need to test out the convertible top and the windshield wipers on my classic 900 every so often just to make sure they still work. Pulling into the mostly abandoned ice cream shop parking lot I see a few other Saab's ensuring I am in the right place, or at least that I am not alone in being in the wrong place.

As the drizzle of rain lightens up, the handful of us that are there a little early step out of our cars and begin talking. We discuss the route we are planning, grumble about the weather a little, and generally banter on about Saabs as the lot begins to fill up 9-3's 9-5's, classic 900's and even a stray Mercedes which of course is met with some heckling. Not all of us were lucky enough to have a startable Saab that morning. Before long, a hood is open discussing a T5 conversion on the most classic of the 900's in attendance.

As the scheduled departure time approaches, the rain picks up again and we all shuffle back to our cars. We begin our procession out of the parking lot and towards our first destination, Bendigo Airport. The road curves and winds over rolling hills through the wooded area with peak fall colors in the trees above. Despite the rain it really is a beautiful drive as our caravan of Saabs hum along the country back roads. After a short while, we all pull off into the single lane entrance to Bendigo Airport.

As we pull across a short bit of grass and onto the taxiway at the airport, we are met with a beautiful view of the valley full of yellow and red trees on the opposing mountainside. We all line up the cars for our photo op and get out onto the grassy area next to the taxiway. We again quickly resume our earlier conversations, and in the

mix, we later realize that we got plenty of pictures of the cars and the beautiful backdrop, but never really got any pictures of the people. Oh well, there's always next year and the cars are far prettier anyway.

As we head back to the cars, Jon, our president makes a choice to alter the route and take a long way to our lunchtime destination. We're running ahead of schedule, and don't want to get to the restaurant before our reservation time. So back into the Saabs and we head out. For this second leg of the journey, we start with a series of switchbacks up the side of the mountain that was just our lovely backdrop at the airport. We get to push the cars a little harder around those twisting curves and uphill climbs, but not so hard as wet leaves don't offer the best traction. Curving down the road on the other side of the mountain, we pass a police officer hidden away on the side of the road. Luckily none of us were having too much fun at the time, so no flashing lights come on.

The second leg of our journey comes to an end as we all pull into the parking lot at the Stoney Creek Inn. Even this destination offers a view, with the creek and a spillway offering a scenic backdrop to the restaurant. Time for some lunch and more conversation. Among other things we thank Josh for organizing the event and are all already discussing options for next year's drive. The one and only order of business is to unanimously vote Josh as fall drive coordinator in perpetuity while Josh is away at the restroom. Best to not allow for any objections as we have a good thing going.



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28

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(L-R) Ian Cudny, Reden Bingayen, Brian Jameson, and owner Tyler Nay



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