

# Nines

The Saab Club of North America Magazine



APRIL - JUNE 2019 #356

# Bil

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### Editor's Notes:

The front page photograph by Linnea Krajewski is a perfect lead-in to the Saab Owners' Convention 2019 in Colorado. See the second half of Linnea's journey to Colorado and beyond on page 22.

The Saab Owners' Convention 2019 is set for Loveland, CO. This is the third time in 30 years that the Rocky Mountain Saab Club has hosted the event (1999, 2009 and this year) so you already know it's going to be an incredible gathering. This year's focus is on Viggins, so look for all your favorite fast Saabs in one place! See information on the SOC on page 5.

As of this writing, Winter hasn't loosened its grip, so get out there and play with your Saabs even if it's cold! Personally, I'm also looking forward to top down, wind in your face weather as well. Won't be long now!

# Letters

## Thanks, Murray!

Great job on last issue! Great copy, interesting stories.

Murray Solomon  
Columbus, GA

## We Do our Best

I just got my renewal notice with this past issue, #355. That started a discussion with my wife about how long we had been receiving the Saab Club's Newsletter. I said about 9-10 months after we had purchased her 1974 blue Sonett (new from the now doubly defunct Pontiac/Saab dealer - this car made her a legend among Haddonfield High School kids and police officers) and before I got my orange 1973 Volvo 1800ES (which did not have the same effect for me.) She said I was wrong.

I went to our archives and found the enclosed letter from Dick Grossman dated 8/11/75. His letter shows how far the club's newsletter has grown by #355, and that the Saab owners/fanatic's dedication and overall good-natured camaraderie has remained the same! Enclosed is my 2-year renewal check. Keep up the good work and owner's morale and I will attempt to keep her 1992 900 convertible (a direct replacement for that Sonett) and my 1992 900 convertible in good running order with that same ongoing collaborative effort.

Thanks to you and all the Officers/Board members and members for all your efforts!

Dwight Benecke  
Cherry Hill, NJ

## Keep them Going!

I am the original owner of a Saab 9-5 sedan built in April 2007. I hope to keep it on the road another decade. Perhaps my grandchildren can drive it.

Steve Brasington, MD  
Sarasota, FL



*This one, for example.*

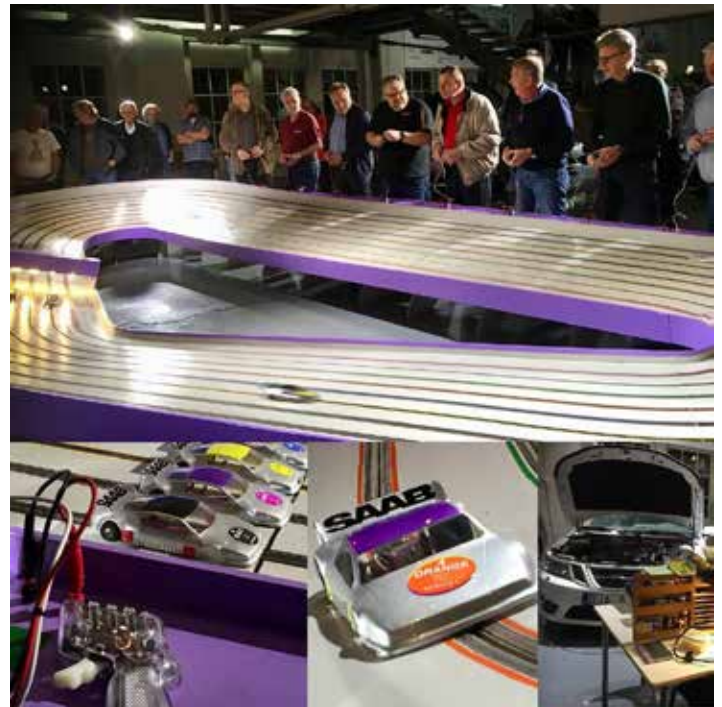
## Racer! Racer!

Many thanks for a fantastic convention in Delaware. I enjoyed it to 100%! The way you keep the Saab-spirit alive is simply remarkable. And keeps me inspired in snowy Trollhättan right now.

See the enclosed images of our new "Talladega" Speedway at the Saab Car Museum in Trollhättan!!!!.....DS.

Best Regards

Peter Bäckström  
Intendent / Curator  
Saab Car Museum, Sweden



*I was not aware until this last Saab Owners' Convention in Solomons, MD that Peter is quite the slot-car enthusiast! Ed.*



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# SOC 2019

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The Saab Club of North America and the Rocky Mountain Saab Club are pleased to announce the Saab Owners' Convention 2019, July 25-28, 2019 at the Embassy Suites in Loveland, Colorado. At the foot of the Rocky Mountains, home of great roads for driving and sights for seeing!

Hosted at a different site every year, this 4-day convention brings together owners, enthusiasts, servicers, and all things Saab. The weekend is packed full of social events, educational panels, contests/competitions, meals, swap meets, auctions, and other fascinating events.

Hotel reservations, convention registration, and offsite-event registration are separate. Please follow these steps:

Book your hotel room now. Luxury two-room suites with private bedroom and separate living room are just \$159/night + tax for SOC attendees. You can follow the link at [saabclub.com](http://saabclub.com)

A block of rooms has been reserved for July 24, 2019 - July 28, 2019. The special room rate will be available until June 25th or until the group block is sold-out, whichever comes first.

See you at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Loveland Hotel Conference Center & Spa in July! We hope you enjoy your stay and your group's event!

Check [saabclub.com](http://saabclub.com) when registration opens for the Convention proper.

The Rocky Mountain Saab Club of Colorado wants to make sure you enjoy your stay in Colorado. If it's possible for you and your family to come early or stay late to SOC 2019, we have some suggestions. Did you know that Colorado has seven national parks and eight national monuments scattered throughout the state? There are also hundreds of other attractions for all ages and interests. Our state's visitor site has great information. Here are a few ideas to get you excited about your visit:

The Four Corners region includes Mesa Verde National Park, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Hovenweep National Monument, the Durango and Silverton Railroad, and the unforgettable Gateway Auto Museum.

The Grand Junction area with the Colorado National Monument, Grand Mesa, and great mountain biking.

Dinosaur National Monument near the town of Dinosaur in the northwest corner of the state.



Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park – the 'Grand Canyon of Colorado' near Montrose.

The jagged San Juan Mountains and the towns of Telluride and Durango.

The Paonia, Palisade, Delta, and Olathe agricultural areas that specialize in fruits and wine; peaches will be ready!

The ski towns of Crested Butte, Aspen, Vail, and Breckenridge offer great summertime activities like mountain biking, river rafting, hiking, and zip-lining. And world-class lodging, dining and shopping.

Glenwood Springs, a family-friendly town with great hiking, a huge hot springs pool, an unusual mountaintop amusement park combined with cave tours, and biking along the Colorado River.

The road up Mt. Evans is the highest paved road in North America. At the top of the mountain, the Meyer-Womble Observatory has installed Saab sunroofs to facilitate cooling of its dome and telescope.

Great Sand Dunes National Park, with North America's highest sand dunes, is a breathtaking experience.

Rocky Mountain National Park, one of the most popular national parks in the US, offers hiking both below and above timberline, mountain climbing, camping, and wildlife viewing. Estes Park is the park's gateway town. The Stanley Hotel is located here, as is the Stanley Steamcar Museum.

Fort Collins is home to the Odell, Anheuser Busch/Budweiser and New Belgium Breweries, all of which offer tours and samples.

Mile Hi Automotive, Saab specialists since 1969, is open for tours. And there's so much more! Plan your SOC 2019 adventure now!



# From the Archives

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**By Bruce Harbison**

*This article is from NINES #252 published for July/August 2001 by Editor Stephen Goldberger, and written by Larry West.*

Welcome to Classic Corner, a regular column which will cover the care, feeding and driving of the Saab 99, 90 and Classic 900. These Saabs have seen very little coverage in NINES recently (2001), yet they are among the most numerous Saabs still on the road. This column will try to rectify that.

Some may be asking why the 99 is grouped with the Classic 900, and what is a Saab 90? Well, the answer is pretty simple. The 900 started life as a stretched 99 chassis. In fact, many of the parts and upgrades for the 900 will fit the 99. Front suspension, rear suspension, seats, etc. are all interchangeable to some degree between the 99 & 900. Over the years, each was upgraded and updated as needed. The Saab 90 was an entry level car with the front of a 99 and the rear of a 900 2-door sedan. Following is a brief history of the Classic Saabs, the 99, Classic 900 and 90. This is not meant to be an exhaustive history, but rather a quick guide to the changes over the years.

## **Saab 99: A New Era**

The 99 was Saab's first "large car." A "compact" by EPA standards, it was a departure for Saab, who had, until this point, only produced small, lightweight cars. Everything would be different about this car, unlike the 95 and 96, which were obvious descendants of the 93 platform. Introduced in 1969 as a 2-door, the Saab 99 contained many features which were new to Saab:

- Disc brakes on all 4 wheels, with a handbrake acting on the front wheels.
- A completely new engine: the Triumph-built OHC inline 4-cylinder.
- A Saab-exclusively designed transmission, and an optional automatic transmission.

Initially in 1.7 liters, later expanded to 1.85 liters, this Triumph-built motor was in place of the Ford V4 that was powering the 95 & 96s of the time, but Saab had problems with the engine right away. It was low on power, and had reliability problems, so Saab decided to take the bull by the horns and redesign and manufacture the engine to their specifications. Saab significantly beefed up the head, strengthened the block, and straightened the head bolts in their new design. Thus was born the 1985 cc "B" motor in 1972, which would soldier on, little changed mechanically, until 1980.

The transmission case bolted to the bottom of the engine block formed the oil sump for the motor, but

the motor and transmission never shared lubricants. The basic design, with many internal modifications, was kept throughout the production of the 99, 90, and Classic 900. Curiously, Saab kept the freewheel feature that had been in Saab gearboxes since the two-stroke days, which is not needed by 4-stroke motors, until the Swedish 'B' engine was introduced.

For the first two years, the 99 had an instrument cluster very reminiscent of the 96. In 1971, Saab changed that to the modern, distinctly Scandinavian instrument cluster we know today, which carried through to 1987. The 99 was produced in the widest selection of body styles save the Classic 900. There were 2 and 4 door sedans, and 3 and 5 door hatchbacks. The hatchback 99 model was introduced in 1974, and continued through 1978. Carburetors gave way to fuel injection, and many of Saab's safety features were born on the 99.

The most important innovation for the future of Saab as an automaker was the introduction of the Saab 99 turbo in 1976. Offered for public sale as a 1978 model, it was the most powerful Saab to date, with 135 horsepower. Turbocharging would become a vital part of Saab's philosophy as an automaker, and established Saab as the maker of high performance, luxury-class vehicles.

## **99 to 900**

By the mid-70s, Saab recognized that the 99 was starting to look a little long in the tooth, and the engine and accessory demands of some markets (the USA in particular) were now making maintenance on the engine increasingly difficult. The car couldn't live on one alternator belt. At the time, Saab was not ready to invest in a completely new car, and they also believed that the chassis they had designed still had a lot of life left in it. Saab decided on a redesign of the 99 chassis to accommodate the new demands of their markets. Thus the 900 was born. Legend has it that Saab was initially going with the next number in sequence, which would have been 100. However, Audi already had a 100 model, and one thing that kept the lineage in the naming of the cars was the number nine. So, 100 changed to 900, and all was well in Trollhättan.

The first 900s were only available as hatchbacks. In fact, the new 900 was essentially the same car as the 99 from the "A" pillars back. When the 900 started selling as a 1979 model, the 99 became available only as a sedan with 2 or 4 doors. Compared to the 99, the 900 had a longer wheelbase, more integrated front lights, and plenty of room in the engine compartment. Saab completely redesigned the instrument panel as well, with a more modern and vastly cheaper to

## From the Archives Cont'd

manufacture version. The wiring system was upgraded to be able to handle the large number of accessories that were anticipated. Air conditioning was designed in from the start. Even when purchased as a dealer option, the installation was completely integrated into the car's ventilation and heating system.

1981 saw the addition of a sedan body style to the 900 range. Also, Saab redesigned their 2.0 liter motor into a lighter, more reliable one. Gone was the usually reliable, but expensive to repair in-the-block water pump, and the shaft that drove it as well. The distributor was moved to the end of the camshaft, and the oil pump was now driven by the crankshaft. This motor also would end up powering the 99 & 90. The most significant developments made to the 900 over the years were APC turbo boost control (1982), the 16 valve DOHC turbocharged motor (1984), and the Convertible (1986).

APC stands for Automatic Performance Control. This system reduces boost levels when the system detects a knocking in the cylinders. As a result, higher compression ratios can be used, improving fuel economy and allowing quicker engine response.

The 16-valve motor started in 1984 (1985 in the US). The added breathing increased the turbo's performance to 160 HP, and ultimately 175 hp in SPG models. A non-turbo version was also introduced.

Former Saab USA president Robert Sinclair provided the impetus for Saab to build the Convertible. One of the best-selling Saabs, there were people who ordered one in 1986, but did not get one until 1989!

The Saab 900 helped take Saab to new heights in production numbers. However, by the late 80s, the bubble had burst, and it was time for a new car. While the design and construction were still excellent, Saab could no longer compete in the marketplace. The 900 was designed in an age where speed of assembly wasn't so important. If you needed more capacity, you built a new plant (Malmö 1990) and hired more people. By the late '80s, it was apparent that continuing to build the Classic 900 would push Saab further and further into debt. A solution was needed, and the New Generation 900 was created.

### Saab 90

When the 900 came along, it wasn't long before the 99 was relegated to the position of the "entry level car." There were no trim options, only the manual transmission, and carburetors to boot. In fact, as soon as the 900 was introduced, all but the base 2-door 99 models disappeared from the USA, even though 99

turbos were made as late as 1981 in Europe.

When Saab introduced their next large car, the 9000, in 1985, it was obvious which model was the "old maid" here. The tail end, especially, of the 99 was definitely '60s. Saab still needed an entry-level car, so the decision was made to modify the 99 using parts from the 900 2-door sedan. If (Seth—The "If" looks as if it's in a different font. Perhaps you can unscrew this. MB) the 900 is a 99 from the "A" pillar back, the 90 is a 99 from the "C" pillar forward. The trunk of the 90 is the same as a 900 sedan trunk, with the spare under the floor. The Saab 90 was sold only in Europe and the UK, and only as a two-door sedan.

Model Years in production:

99: 1969-1984

900: 1979-1993 (1994 for the Convertible)

90: 1985-1987

So many years later there are still quite a few Classic 900s on the road and some 99s as well. Several of our local Rocky Mountain Saab Club members still drive these cars regularly and I know others still do across the country and in the UK and Europe. A fair proportion are treasured and have been restored or kept in excellent condition which is a testament to Saab's original and innovative design, making them desirable to a great many Saab enthusiasts.



Let's start with my favorite Saab, the 99. I was a young boy during the 1970s, and every year I'd go to London for the Motor Show and to see what was new. And I'd go to the Saab stand to have a sit in a EMS or a GL.

The sad fact as we all know Saab is no longer. But if you see a 99 drive past remember the good old days. You never know Saab might rise again up out of the ashes of time.

Andrew Dunne, Saab Owners' Club UK



# Transmissions from God

By Tom Roush

No—not the kind of transmissions you’re thinking about. These transmissions are four-speed on the column.

Back when I was going to school at Fort Steilacoom Community College (now called Pierce College), I had some car trouble one day. It was payday (I’d gotten my work-study check of \$124.96. Why do I remember this stuff and forget where I left my cell phone?). I got home, planning on cashing the check, when my dad called me over and read this ad in the paper:

Saab 96. Runs.

\$100.

And a phone number.

Dad had a 1966 Saab 96 Sport and loved it until it turned into a Flintstone mobile (the floor rusted out, and you could see the road underneath).

Even back then (1982 or so) \$100 for a Saab 96 was a touch on the cheap side. Saabs were a lot like Lay’s potato chips—you couldn’t have just one. You needed a second car for parts, so you could keep the first one running.

I called the guy.

“Hey, I’m calling about the Saab you have in the paper.”

“Oh, yeah. Strong engine. Strong engine.”

Um, Okay...

“Can you tell me a little bit about it?”

“Well, the engine’s got a lot of power.”

Right; got that.

There was something about how he was describing this power that piqued my interest enough to realize a couple of things.

He was telling me things he didn’t realize he was telling me.

I was going to have him tell me the rest without him realizing that he was doing it.

“Which engine’s it got in it?”

“The V4. Strong engine. Strong engine.”

I was beginning to see a pattern here.

I asked about the body. I mean, if it’s full of dents, that doesn’t change how it drives, but it sure tells you how it was driven. Also, bodywork is expensive, and it told me a lot about how well they’d taken care of the car—or not.

And I asked about the glass, in large part because I wanted to know if they’d rolled the car. Because of the way he was answering the questions, this seemed like a distinct possibility. I happen to know that, if you roll a Saab 96, you’ll likely scrape one side, maybe scrape the roof, but if you hit the

roof, there’s well north of a 90 percent chance that you’ll end up with a diagonal crack in the windshield.

“Oh, the glass is good, no cracks.”

Then he emphasized that strong engine again.

Eventually, I determined that the body of the car appeared to be good, but the right door might have some issues.

Just as I was mentally noting the significance of that statement, he said, “Oh, by the way, first, second, and reverse are gone.”

“Gone?”

“Gone.”

“Strong engine, though. Strooong engine.”

A 1968 Saab with what was very clearly a strong engine, a horked out transmission, some issues with the right door, and good glass.

“Oh, and there’s this banging noise.”

“Banging noise?”

“Yeah, there’s a banging noise when you drive it.”

And he’s still driving it? Heck, it’s only got two gears left, and “banging” to me is the sound of sheet metal. It’s in the higher frequency of sounds.

It is a cheap sound.

A “thinking noise” is not sheet metal. It’s the sound of something internal, like bearings, or worse yet, gears. It’s in the lower frequency of sounds. You do not want to hear thinking.

It is an expensive sound.

“Banging?” I press him a little bit on that, and eventually it becomes clear that I need to go see this car. I mean, the engine’s worth more than a hundred bucks.

So, I do a little more asking, kind of a last confirmation of the condition of the body, and he finally pops out with something he’d clearly forgotten.

“Oh, and there’s a hole in the driver’s door.”

Right. I can see how easy this would be to forget.

Given where I grew up (near Fort Lewis or other military installations that my dad was stationed at), I figured the hole would be about 3/8 of an inch in diameter, at the center of a little dent. Standard, military-issue bullet hole, simple to create, simple to fix.

But just to be sure, I asked, “How big is it?”

So, while I’m confidently expecting to hear, “Oh, about three-eighths of an inch.” I actually heard, “Oh, about the size of a man’s hand.”

What on Earth?



## Transmissions from God Cont'd

---

Turns out his buddy had been commuting down to the industrial area called the tide flats in Tacoma and accidentally ran a forklift tine through the driver's door.

I got the owner's address and, as Dad and I drove out there to find it, we noticed that it was not a neighborhood of manicured lawns and well-tended gardens. It was more a neighborhood of dead grass, faded plastic toys, and rusting cars.

We found the Saab sitting in the back of a house that was clearly being rented by a bunch of guys who were associated with some kind of motorcycle club. The names Harley and Davidson were nailed, sewn, welded, or stapled to just about every object available. These guys were, well, how do you say this?

My son once said that, while some of his friends had made nasty comments about rednecks, he had absolutely nothing against them because they were so ingenious and so ridiculously practical. You've probably seen the picture of the redneck whose air conditioning broke in his car, but he happened to have a generator and a house-sized window air conditioner handy. So, he bolted the generator to the trunk lid of his car and mounted the air conditioner in the right rear window. When it was hot, he fired up the generator, fired up the air conditioner, and grew icicles in the car. Not "cool," but definitely cool.

These guys were the same way. If they could make it work, it worked. You'll see this in a minute.

Dad and I drove out there and, sure enough, the car turned out to be a V-4, not a three-cylinder like my other Saab.

Whoa, cool!

In fact, not only was it a V-4, but it was a "De Luxe," meaning it had a tachometer.

After a bit of investigating, I noticed all the body work on the car was good, just like he said on the phone. Except for the passenger's door, which was scraped up pretty badly.

I noticed that all the glass in the car was good, just like he said on the phone, except for the windshield, which had only one crack in it.

A nice, big, diagonal one that went from top right to bottom left.

Hmmm.

The stories the car was telling me were just a touch different than the stories the owner had told me.

But I watched and looked, and after he started it up, I listened.

Oh. My. Gosh.

It sounded wonderful!

The three-cylinder, two-stroke engine in the other Saab sounded like a swarm of seriously irritated hornets. Powerful? No. If you heard it, you might look for a tree being cut down with a chainsaw.

But this thing: It idled beautifully, had a low rumble, almost a dual exhaust kind of a thing—a little "blap blap" from one synchronized with a "blublup" from the other. Oh, it was cool. You just didn't hear that out of a Saab of that vintage. It sounded almost like a couple of gentle Harleys. (Come to think of it, the Harleys had what they called a two-cylinder V-twin engine. The Saab had a V-4, which was effectively two V-twins end-to-end.) But what on earth had they done to this thing? In fact, how the heck could this thing sound so wonderful? I knew what kind of exhaust it had: two headers joined in the front by something Saab had called a "resonating chamber" and a pipe that went from that back under the passenger's side of the car, exiting just under the right rear tail light ...

Except it wasn't there.

Hmmm.

Time to change the questions a bit—see, these were a bunch of Harley bikers, and after a little chatting, the stories the owner told me started to match the stories the car was telling me.

When I told him the stories the car was telling me, what started off as a "Nope, never been rolled" turned into a reluctant "Well, once. A bit."

And then, since we were now swapping stories instead of him trying to potentially cover stuff up, he opened up and told me one story about driving as fast as they could up a dry riverbed. They hit a soft spot, rolled the car, got a bunch of gravel in the engine compartment, broke the motor mounts, and cracked the windshield. In doing so, they also blasted the crap out of that original exhaust system. In fact, there was nothing remaining of it. But fixing it would have been expensive, and one of the things about redneck ingenuity was that if you could make it work, you would make it work. So, they took a cutting torch to what was left of the exhaust to balance it out, then attached a piece of flex tube to the left and right exhaust manifolds, one on either side of the engine. The flex tube then went under the car, just like the normal ones did, but instead of connecting to a resonating chamber, they went back about two feet.

And stopped.

There were a couple of little baffles screwed on the end, and that was it.

It was the shortest, smallest, simplest "dual high-performance exhaust" I'd ever seen.

I asked if I could take it for a test drive. He agreed, so I got in, fired it up (oooh, that sounded nice), hit the clutch, put it in first, let up on the clutch, and ... nothing.

Engine didn't slow down.

Gears didn't grind.

Car didn't move.

Nothing.

**Transmissions continues on page 10.**

## Transmissions from God Cont'd

---

I tried second.

Nothing.

Reverse.

Nothing.

Holy cow. I was actually running out of Nothing to shift into. What the heck had they done to this transmission?

I shifted it into third, got it moving very slowly, and there was a low frequency "thunk, thunk, thunk" that happened with a little jerk about once per tire revolution.

Hmmm

A thunking sound. Not what you want to hear, but I managed to accelerate slowly and found that, if you accelerated gently enough to actually get some speed, the thunking sound did, indeed, become a banging sound.

The sound of a transmission beating itself to death.

So, I did the only thing I could possibly do under the circumstances.

I bought the car.

I started it out slowly in third gear, made it to fourth, and drove it the 17 miles home, with Dad following me. Every now and then, you could smell gear oil. This was, to use a technical term, "bad." Gear oil is supposed to stay inside the transmission (with the gears, hence the name).

I took the engine out, took the transmission out, and realized the ring gear (part of the ring and pinion set of gears in a gearbox) was missing more teeth than a hockey player. I found six of them in the bottom of the transmission housing. Of the ones that were left, forty-six were damaged, all with various cracks or chunks out of them. Bottom line, that gearbox was in dire need of dental work, which simply wasn't happening.

It was toast.

But that engine. Oh man. Strong engine. Strong engine.

In fact, on top of everything else, the starter actually broke off the engine block when the previous owners rolled the car. The starter is bolted on to the engine through a hunk of cast steel about an inch and a half thick. That must have been one spectacular rollover. And with redneck ingenuity, the previous owners had obviously gotten the car home and welded the hunk of engine block with the starter on it back on.

Very. Strong. Engine.

By the time I took it all apart, someone gave me another car, ironically, a 1968 Saab 96 Deluxe, with the words, "Here, you can have it if you'll take it away."

That car, however, had one minor issue.

No engine. In fact, no transmission.

In fact, nothing under the hood at all.

So, now I had two Saabs sitting in my parents' back yard, one with nothing under the hood at all, and one with a strong engine, but no way to use the power.

Speaking of power, it was clear that it was time to call on a higher power, so I did the only thing I could at the time.

I prayed.

It wasn't the kind of prayer that was filled with "Oh Lord, it is I, Tom, thy humble servant, beseeching thee for a four-speed synchromesh transmission that yea, verily, and forsooth, worketh in my Saab."

No.

Not the way I prayed.

Ever have kids whine at you? Kids who really, really wanted something? The kind of whining that pestered you to the point where you just wanted the noise to go away? Where no matter what it was, you would give it to them just to shut them up?

That was me: "God, can I have a transmission? Can I? Can I? Can I? Pleeze can I have a transmission?"

"Oh, one more thing: Amen."

I have to tell you, I have never, ever heard so much nothing coming back from a prayer of any kind. I mean, even the "God bless Mom and Dad and (insert requisite list of friends, relatives, pets both living and dead, and so on)" seemed to get more of a response than this, even if it was just an echo.

I mean, there's quiet, there's silence, and then there's that stunned silence you get when you've heard something so totally unexpected that you just can't think of anything to say.

That's what I think God was doing right then, sitting up there with a stunned look on His face going, "Are you for real?"

And then, oh Lordy, He had a sense of humor. Now the thing was, I was pretty much out of options. I'd priced VW transmissions at the time, just to get a sense of what a transmission cost, and they were running in the \$375 range.

I didn't have \$375.

I also didn't have a transmission.

I had several piles of Saab-shaped Swedish steel in the back yard, and my parents were pondering things like "How did we get into this mess?" "How do we get out of this mess?" and "Where do we put this mess?"

So, I was praying, literally doing that, "God, can I have a transmission, can I can I pleeeze?" thing, in large part because I didn't know what else to do.

I'd looked for transmissions, and they were rarer than Sasquatches in Singapore.

No Saab transmissions anywhere.

Also, no answer.

I kept at this for six months.

## Transmissions from God Cont'd

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No answer.

I mean, I heard nothing. Not even a cricket.

And then one day, one of Dad's Saab buddies, a fellow by the name of Clark Duncan, came out, totally unannounced, dumped a few boxes of Saab parts on the front porch, and said, "Hey, wanna go Saab hunting?"

"Huh?"

"I heard there were some out near Wilkeson and Carbonado. Wanna go?"

Wilkeson and Carbonado are two towns close to Mt. Rainier that were, well, not quite in the middle of nowhere, but you could see it from there.

"Um, sure."

So, we went.

There were no Saabs out there at all, so we headed farther out, and, well, you've heard of the boondocks? Depending on what part of the country you're from, past the boondocks is what's known as the pucker brush, and past that is the toolies. We were on the border of the toolies and whatever's past that. No one knows for sure. They've never come back to tell us.

And out there, (with apologies to Douglas Adams), there's a wrecking yard. A Wrecking Yard at the End of the Universe.

It was called "Double I Wrecking."

I mean, this was like any standard junkyard, and it came with the standard stuff.

Big fence. Check.

Gravel. Check.

Lots of old metal crap. Czech. (Just seeing if you're paying attention.)

Oil on the ground to the point where it's either congealed or in rainbows in the puddles. Check and check. Oh, and mud. Have to have mud.

And cars.

Check, check.

What are we missing?

Animals! The kind that keep people out of a junkyard.

Now, if you were to think of a guard animal for a wrecking yard, what type would your mind conjure up?

You might come up with something mean-looking, like a pit bull or a Rottweiler, heck, any junkyard dog would work. You could even go one better and get Leroy Brown (look it up). This junkyard was protected by geese.

Not a pit bull. Not a Doberman. Not a Rottweiler.

Geese.

When Clark and I got out of the car, we didn't see a pack of dogs, we didn't hear an ominous growl, heck, we didn't even see Leroy. No—we were attacked by geese.

They don't growl, they hiss. They've got long necks that you could grab, but there were so many of them! Which one would you grab? It was like trying to fight off an enormous plate of angry spaghetti.

While we were standing there flailing our arms at those necks, looking just exactly like the sissies we were, someone came out of the made-to-order shack and called them off.

Surprisingly, the geese obeyed. They waddled back through the gate into the junkyard.

Waddled.

(And it was a threatening waddle, too.)

We followed the geese in, daintily stepping around the little landmines they'd left behind, and found real humans to talk to.

By this time, in my search for a Saab transmission, I'd learned that you didn't just walk in and ask for them, because often, the folks working there had no clue what they actually had in their junkyards. If you went in and said, "Hey, you got a transmission for a 1968 Saab 96 with a V-4 engine in it?" they'd just say no.

So, over time, I learned how to ask for things, and how not to ask, and in the Wrecking Yard at the End of the Universe, I heard myself say,

"Hey, you got any old Saabs around here?"

If he said no, we'd thread our way back through the geese and their landmines and leave.

If he said anything else, we were in.

"Whatchaneed?"

Ding!

We were in.

"Well, I'm looking for a transmission for a '68 96."

"Hmmm. The one I've got doesn't have a transmission in it, just has the engine."

(That's not possible. Just to get the transmission out, you either take the engine out or you cut the car in half. I wasn't going to be so rude as to tell him he didn't know what he was doing in his own junkyard, so the transmission had to be there.)

"You mind if I go out and take a look?"

"Sure, help yourself," and he gestured in a direction that used up roughly a quarter of a standard compass.

I averaged it out and headed in that direction. It turned out that the car was a station wagon (a Saab 95) that someone had turned into a pickup truck with a welding torch, so everything behind the driver's door was pretty messed up (read: gone). Everything in front of the driver's door was identical to the sedan that I was getting a transmission for.

**Transmissions continues on page 12.**

## Transmissions from God Cont'd

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I popped the hood and sure enough, everything under the hood was still there, and I mean everything.

Behind the engine, there was a transmission.

I was thrilled, I was elated, I was...

Confused.

I had no idea what to do.

So, I asked, "How much do you want for it? Engine and transmission?"

"Engine and transmission?"

"Yup."

"Can't take it out today."

"Don't care. I'll take it out."

This confused him.

"Can't guarantee the engine'll run."

"Don't care, I'll fix it."

This confused him more.

Then he said something that I, only years later, realized was something Alex Trebek from the TV show "Jeopardy" would be familiar with, because it was phrased as a question.

"Sixty dollars?"

"Done deal. I'll be back tomorrow."

Clark drove, and I rode home in a daze and, sure enough, went out there the next day, yanked the engine and transmission out, paid the man \$60, and brought it home in Dad's Toyota pickup truck.

I took the two apart, bolted the strong engine to that transmission, put them in the car that I'd been given for free if I'd take it away, hooked the rest of the stuff up, and started it.

I drove that car for 17 years.

Until one day, as I was leaving work, the transmission made a pop, and then a low-frequency "thunk, thunk, thunk" that happened with a little jerk about once per tire revolution.

I'd heard this before. Many years before, and I knew what it meant.

It was not good.

I thought I might be able to make it home, but work was, interestingly, 17 miles from home, through some pretty awful traffic and some steep hills.

I gently accelerated. The thunking noise turned into a banging noise, and that transmission, after 17 years of work, gently let me know that it didn't have anything left to give.

Interestingly enough, I was now in the very same position that I'd been in many years earlier, with lots of power from that

"strong engine" and no way to get it to the ground.

I had it towed home, called around, and learned that it would cost \$1,700 to rebuild the transmission.

A friend heard of my plight and said, "Hey, I know of another one that's for sale up north. I think it's the same year. Same color even."

I went up to look at the car. It was, indeed, the same year and color. The previous owner bought it when she was in college and, when she left home, she left the car in her dad's barn. He retired and needed something to do, so he had the engine rebuilt. And he had the transmission rebuilt, and then, one day, after he'd gotten so much fixed and done, he called her over from where she lived, 12 miles away, to give her the old car back. With a father's pride, he handed her the keys to what had been his project for the last few years.

But she'd grown past it, so she drove it from Snohomish to Everett and put a for sale sign on it.

For \$1,900, I got a car that had 12 miles on a fully rebuilt engine and a recently rebuilt transmission. (I drove that car for more than 12 years.) When I got it home, I looked at the VIN number, and something looked very familiar.

All but the last digit on the VIN number were identical the car whose transmission had just died.

I popped the hood of the original one: xxxxx0.

And went back to look at the new one: xxxxx6.

In the end, two cars that must have been made on or about the same day, by the same people, had been acquired about 20 years apart and were sitting next to each other in my driveway.

And it got me thinking... I haven't been pestering God like this in all my prayers, nor have they all been answered like this (maybe there's a lesson there), but this one was kind of special. The funny thing is, the Bible says to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and that's exactly what I'd been doing. Maybe that right there is the lesson in all of this—to pray without ceasing.

The transmissions that come raining down from God may be in the form of messages and wisdom from Him, rather than heavy, rare steel gears held together inside aluminum castings (though, come to think of it, those can be pretty useful, too).

"Transmissions from God" is one of many stories from the book *Stupid Things Papa Did When He Was Younger*, which is available on Amazon. It includes many more stories like this and, although they aren't all about Saabs, they're all delightful.

Author Tom Roush died last year and left behind Saab bodies and quite a few parts. Being Saab-illiterate, his family cannot describe them in a way that would help you know whether they might meet your needs. But if you are willing to come to Roy, Washington to identify and help sell what remains, his family would be incredibly grateful. For more information, please call 360.202.7403.



# Saab Clubs News



The Central Penn Saab Club has hosted the SAABS@Carlisle event at the Carlisle Import & Performance Nationals since 1998. We are one of the largest Saab gatherings in the United States, averaging 200-250 cars for more than a decade. We consistently take home Carlisle Events top awards for Club Participation and Coolest Club Hangout, and donate more toys and money to Toys For Tots than anyone else.

In fact, for the past few years we've put more Saabs on the showfield than total cars for the second through fifth place clubs combined. We've become so synonymous with Carlisle's Import event that at least one in ten cars on the showfield is a Saab, and it's been that way for nearly 20 years through all permutations of the Import show from Fieros and kit cars to sport compacts.

For more information check out the Central Penn Saab Club's page at <http://www.centralpennsaabclub.com>

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## In Memoriam

Hello all, this is Jason S, VP of the New Mexico Saab Club. It is with a heavy heart that I announce the passing of our long time president and co-founder Lisa Bondurant. There is no funeral info at the moment, but I was hoping that we could get together and raise a toast to the craziest but most dedicated and passionate of all of us.

One of her favorite restaurants was El Pinto, and I'd like to find a time where we all could bring some Saabs get together.

The Saab Club of Canada had a winter drive on January 27th. It was a grey, wintery day with lots of snow. I had arranged a photo stop, but I'm not the most skilled photographer and it was a grey day with snow and some fog, which really made for some dull pictures. Maybe they work in black and white.

I've attached some pics. I can send higher-res images of any of those if you think they're usable for Nines.

The interesting thing is that for this drive, we had a 9-2X, a 9-3X, a 9-5X (or whatever they called those AWD NG9-5s) and a 9-7X. I think that completes the "all wheel drive Saab" bingo card.

- Ed Treijs



*Photograph provided by the author.*



# Dan Martin's Auto Depot

*This is the tenth in a series of articles about those who care about the Swedish brand enough to focus on the repair, service and sales of Saab cars even as others have moved on. The point is to let those who continue to enjoy the individuality and great value of the cars to know where these unique shops are and what they offer.*

Without those firms that continue to focus on the preparation and sales of lower-mileage used Saab automobiles, the marque would not be what it continues to be today to many car enthusiasts. An example would be one who appreciates the Saab 2002 9-3 features and individuality to the point of flying from Texas to Yonkers, NY, (just north of New York City) to purchase and drive back in a 53,000-mile example of that sixteen-year-old car. That is dedication. There continues to be that long term commitment to Saab on the part of tens of thousands of United States customers.

Dan Martin's Auto Depot, Ltd. is the firm that sold that 9-3. The owner, Peter Toth, has shown tenacity, and dedication and regularly collaborates with other firms in getting the job done. At the time of a visit to Yonkers in early January 2019, he had about fifteen used Saabs on the lot for sale. These ranged from a 2002 9-3SE with a five-speed manual transmission with only 105,000 miles on the car for \$4,200 to a 2011 9-3X XWD wagon with 77,000 miles for \$14,000. The offerings included a nice light blue 2008 9-3 Aero with only 45,000 miles for \$11,500. Additional Saabs which were set aside for preparation for future sale included two old generation 9-3SE models and a few old-generation 9-5s. In 2018, he sold about sixty used Saabs, making his business one of the top three



**The above picture shows a part of line up of the Dan Martin's Auto Depot cars for sale. All photographs by the author.**

retailers for the brand in the New York/New England region. It is not unusual for the sold cars to be shipped to buyers outside of the northeast region. Dan Martin Auto Depot seems to be helping time stand still in terms of the cars it has for sale.



**Dennis Dassatti (left) of Magnum Motors and Peter Toth (right) of Dan Martin's Auto Depot.**

Peter Toth bought the Dan Martin business back in 1995. Dennis Dassatti has run Magnum Motors since 1981. The two businesses share the building and adjacent lot located at 16 Graner Place in Yonkers. Peter and Dennis collaborate with Dennis's staff regularly performing preparation (on cars for sale), service and repairs (on customers' cars) on Saabs for Peter. Driving up to the building you will see the Magnum Motors sign outside. Peter and Dennis are semi-partners in keeping their joint venture going. Magnum services other brands and Dan Martin's does sell other brands including electric-powered Fiat 500 subcompact cars. Magnum has two employees in addition to Dennis.

Peter Toth immigrated to the United States from Hungary in 1990. Growing up abroad in his youth he was always into cars during the 1980s. He graduated from Pace University in New York. His first job was as a waiter in a diner while he was in college. He worked for Morgan Stanley Dean Witter & Co. in Manhattan for fifteen years starting in 1997. On September 11, 2001 he went to work at 2 World Trade Center and the South Tower and was having breakfast on the 63rd floor when the plane hit the North Tower. He indicated that no one told them to evacuate at first but they all went down to the 44th floor via elevator to gather there. Then they walked down the dozens of flights of stairs to the main lobby. At that point the second plane hit the building. Police prevented them from going outside to keep from being hit by debris from the adjacent building. Peter said he saw

## Dan Martin's Auto Depot Cont'd

hundreds of pairs of shoes in the concourse outside. They were directed to go into the subway which was full of smoke to be able to come outside to Church Street which was the surrounding street which was farther away from the Towers. Upon coming to the exit of the subway, he discovered that the cell phones were not working. Standing there for a moment, a Yellow Cab stops right next to Peter and others and they got right in and went up to Midtown before the one of the Towers collapsed. Peter feels lucky that he went where he did that day!

Toth feels that Orio and other companies will provide parts availability for many years to come for the 9-3 series. He also maintains a supply of certain used parts on site. He has a local firm cut out and replace rusted 9-5 doglegs with new steel.

Toth has some first-time buyers for the Saabs he sells. He said that the Saab buyers are well educated, understand cars well and can be very selective in their purchases. The average buyer is 30-50 years old for the earlier cars while the buyers of 2008 to 2011



**A view inside the Magnum Motors/Dan Martin's Auto Depot service area.**

Toth's first Saab was an early 1990s red 900 convertible. His interest in cars prompted him to sell cars. He went to the Manheim Auto Auctions to purchase vehicles in the wholesale market. He eventually left his Morgan Stanley desk job to run Dan Martin Auto on a full time basis. Back in the 1995 through 2005 Saab had its own lane at Manheim. There were regularly 100 to 150 Saabs to pick from but there were bidding wars to get those cars. The cars were typically two to four years old with many just off lease. In addition to Saabs he used to specialize in European station wagons including VW, Mercedes-Benz and BMW. Toth indicated that the other brands did not hold up in quality as the Saabs do. He says the Saab is like a "driver's car".

models tend to be in their 50s. He did say that the cars are getting harder to find as time goes on. He focuses on the sale of 1999 to 2011 9-3 (and first generation 9-5) model Saabs. In another part of his business, he exports mostly other brands of cars to Europe for specialty markets.

Peter Toth can be reached at 914-233-3252. He can also be reached at [peter@danmartinsauto.com](mailto:peter@danmartinsauto.com).

*Roger S. Harris, the author of this series, is a life-long exclusively Saab car owner who lives in Western Massachusetts.*



# The Doctor is In

By Kelly R. Conaty, MD, MBA



## Leather Seat Rip Repair

In the last issue of NINES I discussed simple leather care and repairs, and my thoughts on why the leather seats in our cars suffer so much abuse. I also discussed my opinion on the use (and overuse) of conditioners and moisturizers which actually do very little to preserve the leather and ironically may actually hasten leather wear. I have received lots of feedback on the article and have fielded many questions from readers. I hope that my introductory article has inspired readers to experiment with their worn and tired seats. It is my philosophy that with any DIY leather repair, the goal is not necessarily perfection, but rather to make the defect less noticeable to the casual observer. After all, you will know where the defect is, but others won't. If the eye is not immediately drawn to the area of defect then you will have accomplished your goal. What have you got to lose?

In this article I will begin my series of more complex repairs by showing the reader how to repair small to medium holes, rips, or tears in leather. In subsequent articles I will discuss filling cracks in leather seats, whole seat refurbishment, re-dyeing seats, and repairing seams and stitching that has come apart. I will also do an article on steering wheel repair and re-dye in a later issue.

Seats may end up with rips, tears, and holes for various reasons, from the unintentional hole poked in the leather from something left in a back pocket



**Cracks left unchecked will develop into holes. All photographs by the author.**

(oops) to the more common situation where the surface of the leather cracks, accumulates dirt particles in those cracks, and wears through. The surface protective layer wears through from the constant abrasion of constantly sliding in and out of the car and leaves the leather vulnerable. We tend to ignore the wear until finally, it is too late, and there is a hole along a crack line. When I purchased my '95 9000 Aero, the side bolster of the driver's seat had such a wear hole.

The hole was relatively small, and I knew that I had to repair it or it would rapidly get worse and eventually the seat bolster would be in tatters. A hole the size of the one in my seat is really easy to repair and will last a long time if done correctly. As in any other cosmetic repair, surface preparation is the key. Essential for repairing holes in leather are a good All Purpose Cleaner (APC), isopropyl alcohol (IPA), 300 grit sandpaper, a good sharp scissors, leather repair filler, and leather dye. An artist's palette knife is a handy tool for this and other leather repairs. A piece of backing material used to reinforce the hole from the rear is necessary as well, and this can be any scrap piece of vinyl. Leather filler can be sourced from any number of suppliers as well as the leather dye. I use filler from Leather World Technologies. Leather dye can be in liquid form or balm, or can be a good spray on dye such as Colorbond LVP or SEM Classic Coat.

The first step in any leather repair is a thorough cleaning of the area with APC and a light sanding, and then wiping down with IPA. It is also a good idea to trim any loose or frayed edges with a sharp scissors. In the photo you can see the pale yellow foam backing which is present in all leather seats. A backing patch will need to be inserted and glued to



**Rip in leather shows backing foam.**



## The Doctor is In Cont'd

the underside of the torn leather between the leather and the foam backing. Any scrap piece of material which is strong can be used as backing for the area of the tear. For this repair I used a scrap piece of vinyl cut larger than the tear that I am repairing. The next step will be to tuck the backing patch under the defect but over the foam backing. Leather filler or vinyl adhesive is used to glue the backing patch to the back of the defect using a palette knife or any thin tool to "butter" the glue to cover the rear of the defect and to glue the backing patch in place.

This glue/filler on the backing patch is allowed to dry over several hours. A heat gun or hair dryer can be used to speed the process. Once dry, the filler is used to fill in the defect left by the tear. The edges should be fully adhered to the backing patch before the filler is used. Several coats of the filler may be needed, allowing it to dry in between coats to fill in the area.



**Rip in leather coated with SEM Classic Coat and Acrylic top coat.**



Once the desired effect has been achieved, the area is sanded and wiped with IPA in preparation for coating with the color dye. After the filler has dried, it is sanded smooth and wiped with IPA. In this case, the panel will be coated with SEM Classic Coat and coated with an acrylic finish coat to complete the repair. The repair will be as strong as leather and will last for a long time.

I am more than happy to answer questions or to offer advice at [kconatymd@gmail.com](mailto:kconatymd@gmail.com). I can also be found on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/kconatymd](http://www.facebook.com/kconatymd)

*Kelly is a pediatric anesthesiologist, new to the Saab game, having purchased his first Saab four years ago. He now owns six Saabs. His first name is actually Kelly, incorrectly reported in the last issue of NINES. The editor is sorry for his mistake.*

# On the Column



By **Bob Miller**

## **SAABness**

I will make a disclaimer right from the start: I am an old Saab guy. Of course, there are no new Saabs, and I am an old guy regardless, but I mean that I like the earlier Saabs best. The newest Saab that I have driven is a NG 900, and I have ridden in much newer models. Mom has had a '74 99LEA (new) and a used '79 900 5-door, and I have a '66 95 2-stroke and a '68 Sonett V-4. Mom never learned how to drive stick, so both "modern" Saabs were autos, and that may have prejudiced me against them. I did love how quiet and roomy they were, compared to the earlier Saabs, but they did not seem to enjoy driving in the snow the way my 95 did; not as agile or controllable.

The Sonett, however, had problems in the slippery stuff, in that its shorter wheelbase let the tail come around quite suddenly, and I wasn't always able to catch it the way I could in the 95. My sister had a '69 96 V-4, later to be mine. It was quieter than my 2-stroke, much torquier (is that a word?), and much better at highway cruising. It had a sort of cruise control, in that, if you placed your shoe under the gas pedal and then rested your foot on the pedal, it would do 70 MPH all day, up and down hills. Of course, on the steeper down-hills, you had to lift and let it free-wheel, but it really liked 70 and got at least 30 MPG doing it. However, it also had slower, heavier steering that detracted from driving fun.



**Photographs of the vintage Saabs, like this 95, are originally from Saab and not necessarily the cars in question.**

I met Steve Butler back in the early 1980s when he lived in the Phoenix area, and I just read his articles in Vintage Views. His 95 2-stroke doesn't seem to want to do more than 60 MPH. Mine was noisy as hell at any highway speed, but that didn't keep me from driving it across the country and on several round trips between Tucson and Los Angeles at 60 MPH and then, when the national limit was lifted, 70. I just wore earplugs. It would, according to the speedo, do 90 MPH on a flat stretch when it was young, but it took a very long time getting there. I did enjoy the handling of all the Saabs, including the 99 and 900; lots of body roll but great roadholding nonetheless. The 95 handled bad roads better and the later ones seemed to corner faster on smooth tarmac.



**Sonett II.**

The Sonett was quite tossable on dry pavement and I loved to "yump" it over rises in the road. Only the 900 had power steering, and it was not needed on the smaller cars. I talked several of my friends into buying Saabs back in the '70s. One found a 96 V-4 with a 2-stroke transaxle; it had great acceleration but was quite busy at highway speeds; there is a reason why the V-4 cars had taller final drive gearing.

What all these cars had in common was what I call Saabness. They did not all smell the same or have the same engine characteristics, or even look much alike, but they all had that Saab flavor. They were stone reliable, in a time when most European imports were not so much. They rode well for such small cars. They laughed at snow and slippery roads (see Sonett exception above), handled quite well despite not cornering very flatly, had good-to-excellent brakes, had comfortable, supportive seats, and could be driven for hours without causing pain.

They had unbelievably effective heaters and defrosters (well, maybe not so unbelievable when you consider that they were made to deal with Swedish winters) and they had full-size (15") spare tires that did

## On the Column Cont'd

not intrude (much) into their rather compact interiors. They all seemed to be bigger on the inside than on the outside and got very good gas mileage. They combined practicality with sportiness and engaged the driver in a way that most modern cars do not.



**Earlier and later model 96s.**

I am not knocking the excellent reliability of new cars, and they certainly have more bells and whistles than do old Saabs, but to me, they lack personality. Their TV ads are mostly about what electronic gizmos they offer, not what makes the car unique. I truly believe that you could be blindfolded, put into virtually any new car, remove the blindfold, drive it, and not know what brand it was from Jeep to Cadillac to Fiat. Certainly that was not the case back in the day, when each brand had its own personality. Fiats were fun and sporty and noisy and rusty and unreliable. Jeeps were single-purpose vehicles which compromised ride and fuel economy and road handling for off-road capability. Cadillacs were huge and had a cushy, quiet ride, and handled like boats. They got crappy fuel economy, but those who could afford them did not care. It came with the territory, and you always knew what you were driving.

I loved to get into my 95 on a snowy day, blast out of the driveway and over the 3-foot berm left by the snowplow, and go for a drive on the snow with no trepidation. Getting stuck? Not an option. Understeering on a turn? Just a tug on the handbrake while at full throttle, and the back end came right around, totally controllably. (This did not work on the 99, on which the hand brake worked on the front brakes, for crying out loud; don't ask me how I discovered this). The 99 was the family limo; even with its primitive Borg-Warner 3-speed automatic that would not shift out of first gear until it warmed up. It was the car of choice for trips to New York (about 3 hours), its 2-liter electronic fuel-injection engine starting right up on the coldest days and happily humming

along at what seemed like high revs all the way (even when 2nd and 3rd gears became available). It had excellent drivability at a time when most cars had primitive emission controls that caused hesitation and stalling when cold. It also had air conditioning that probably worked well in Sweden, but did allow US drivers to keep the windows closed at freeway speeds in the summer while only sweating a little.



I forgot to mention safe. Safety was expected in a Saab, back in a time when safety did not sell cars. My '66 wagon had 3, count 'em, 3 roll-over bars, dual diagonal hydraulic brake circuits, a front crush-zone, padded safety visors, a pop-out windshield, and 3-point harnesses at a time when many cars had no seat belts. Oh, and front-wheel-drive, a rarity in those days. I think that the spiritual descendent of Saab may be Subaru, pushing safety, reliability, and longevity over style and gadgets. Subaru now has owner loyalty akin to what Saab had, and Subaru drivers tend to form emotional attachments to their cars, just as Saab drivers have always done (except maybe in the '80s when Saab 900s became a fashion accessory).

The combination of emissions regulations, safety regulations, required durability of drivetrain, and fuel economy requirements has succeeded in homogenizing cars. American drivers voted with their wallets, so most manufacturers are cranking out SUVs. Individuality is not at a premium any more. Thank goodness for the durability of Saabs, so they we can still drive them and appreciate their unique Saabness.

*Bob Miller learned to drive in his father's 1966 Saab 2-stroke wagon, and he has been driving it ever since; he loves sharing his enthusiasm for Saabs.*



# Professional Perspective



**By Chuck Andrews**

## *What's in the Name?*

Saab is the name I refer to most when dealing with cars these days. As I dream about maybe upgrading to a new EV, I have hopes that I may be patient enough to wait for a NEVS. I think I would get along well in a 9-3 EV. Will NEVS ever start production and will they import them to North America? My Nissan Leaf EV has spoiled me. I like EVs but don't intend to abandon my 9-5 anytime soon.

I have tried to keep up with NEVS and the company ownership since it was acquired from Spyker in the bankruptcy. Some time ago (see *NINES* Issue #348 July/August 2017) I wrote about all the changes in ownership, partnerships and agreements of cooperation. I thought that NEVS had gotten to the place that they just needed to produce cars for all the sales that they had announced since 2014 when the last of the ICE 9-3s were built. It seems that the story just keeps getting better.

This is not new news but a review of the last few months. The information I have used to write this article was gleaned from NEVS press releases, Saabplanet.com, and Automotive News China knowing that NEVS was the ultimate source. It is difficult to quote sources when writing an article like this because many times the quotes have errors from one source to the next. I've tried to use these primary sources plus others to get what I think is the most accurate report on what is and what was happening.

It had been announced two years earlier (I reported in *NINES* Issue #346 March/April 2017) that NEVS had received approval for their manufacturing license from the Chinese government to build EVs at 200,000 units per year in the Tianjin factory. The factory was to be finished in 2017. On November 8, 2018, NEVS said it just now had the final or tenth license issued by the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology to build EVs in the new Tianjin plant. A new subsidiary, NEV, (National New Energy Vehicle Co. Ltd) is the actual license holder. I might mention here that in the Chinese Auto Industry NEV means New Energy Vehicle. No confusion so far!! Just keep the NEVS and NEV straight. Also announced was the fact that NEVS was supposed to have started

production in June of 2018 but it would now be the end of 2018. As I write this, it is the middle of February 2019 and there have been reports of production beginning but I have not seen any reports, production numbers or actual pictures of cars produced. However, things are still happening.

The above information then triggered the opening of pre-orders for the NEVS 9-3 EV in China. The specifications listed as follows: weight 3747 lbs., 130 KW electric motor, 45 KWH battery, 0-60 mph in 5.5 seconds, and a projected range of 220.5 miles. Price is \$24,553. If you know much about EVs you will know that this is an optimistic description. It could maybe be sales hype or poor translation from Chinese/Swedish. It will be very interesting to see what the road tests prove to be. Be prepared for some adjustments in the specs!



***Kai John Jiang Chairman of Board of Directors at NEVS AB being interviewed by the press. Notice the 9-3 car bodies in the background. Could this be how Tianjin receives the cars from Trollhättan? All photographs provided by the author.***

A lot has happened since November 2018. On January 18, 2019 Evergrande Health Industry Group, a subsidiary of China Evergrande Group, (a real estate developer), purchased 51% stake in NEVS. The purchase price was \$930M. Evergrande had just won a court case concerning investments in Faraday Future, another EV start up, and seems to have just moved part of the settlement to NEVS. It seems to me like Evergrande is now the majority owner of NEVS.

On January 29th NEVS announced that it had invested 150M euros in Koenigsegg AB. Ironic that just a few years ago (2009) we thought that Koenigsegg was going to own Saab instead of eventually NEVS. This investment will give NEVS a 20% stake in Koenigsegg's parent company. There

## Professional Perspective Cont'd

are lots more details that are hard to describe and maybe some translation issues. Another report said that NEVS is a 65% owner of a new joint venture to develop new products with Koenigsegg. (Either case could be true). Both parties seem very happy at the moment. Tacked onto this press release, NEVS through it's majority owner Evergrande has stated it has distribution channels now with one of China's largest auto retailers (un-named). Also, within this press release was the information that Evergrande has acquired 58.7% of auto battery maker Shanghai CENAT New Energy Ltd. for \$156M.

believe that so far the capacity of the Tianjin factory is 50k cars per year but initially it was supposed to be 200k. If it is 50k, it will take three years to fill just one order of pre-sold cars. Since a number of the Chinese auto giants have been eyeing the US auto market, there may be a number of new Chinese EV brands in our country. NEVS? 9-3? Or maybe NEVS has been working on a replacement for the 9-3 EV. It has been almost five years since the last 9-3 rolled off the line in Trollhattan. See additional information on page 30.



**Can you dream about what this man's company and NEVS could build together? The Koenigsegg name says it all in the exotic car world. Can these two companies mutually benefit?**

It appears that Evergrande now has the majority of ownership in NEVS who has a license to build EVs, majority ownership in a battery manufacturer for the cars and a Chinese dealership group to market them. What is left? Be prepared! It is not over till it is over.

NEVS had announced before some of these ownership changes that it is building the car bodies in Trollhattan and shipping them to Tianjin to be finished. As soon as the Chinese market is working, the cars are to be sold in Europe and then worldwide. I

It is hard to believe that a bankrupt purchased company could last five years without a product to market. I hope whoever the owners are now that make up NEVS will finally build a real EV that we can be proud of. Will it be called a Saab, NEVS, Koenigsegg, or will it morph into an Evergrande? So, what's in the name?

*For 42 years Chuck owned and operated a sales, service, auto body and parts facility specializing in Saabs.*



# Through a Windscreen Darkly



By Linnea Krajewski

## Colorado Dreamin' 2

*This is the second part of Linnea's odyssey, where she has come and gone through Colorado, and is now in Texas. See Part 1 in NINES # 355. Ed.*

After what seemed to be an eternity, I began to see signs for Austin. We finally pulled into the hotel parking lot after being on the road for 15 hours. The place was jumping at 11:30 in the evening, but all I wanted to do was sleep. My room, if it could be called that, smelled bad, the toilet had to be hand flushed and I found that we were not the only inhabitants of the room as I saw a cockroach scurry into the innards of the clock radio that I was trying to bring back to life. If I hadn't been tired enough to sleep in middle of I35, I would have packed everyone up and found a better place to stay.

But, no matter. The next day, I spent with Seth and Diana. I met Jackie, the half Beagle half Plotthound and admired Seth's Halloween display in the front yard. We went to the new Austin Public Library, five floors with a rooftop garden/picnic area. We had a beautiful view of downtown Austin from the roof; the river running through the city was full to overflowing. Two weeks of rain had made it dangerous to anyone trying to canoe or paddle board, and the city had banned any activity near or on the river until further notice.

The library itself was amazing...there were tablets and computers for rent, and books...thousands of books...to be read. I could have spent all day in the stacks, browsing the titles and sitting down for a good read.

I sampled some Texas barbeque; Seth and Diana were there to help translate the offerings. My pulled beef sandwich was delicious and the sauce tasty as well.

After lunch, Seth and I went to the LBJ Library in downtown Austin. Just as you walk into the library, there is LBJ's 1965 Lincoln Continental Presidential limousine sitting there in greeting. On the top floor, there is a recreation of the Oval Office as it was during Johnson's administration. There was also a recreation of Lady Bird Johnson's office as well. There were exhibits regarding the Civil Rights Act, the War on Poverty and Vietnam. We could have spent all day there and not seen everything. Seth and I went back home where Diana was making her delicious sweet and sour meatloaf for dinner. After dinner and pleasant conversation, I went back to Motel Hell for the night. I was up before my alarm went off and quickly packed up and got out of there. I met Seth for breakfast and was then off for Shreveport.



East Texas is as green as West Texas was brown. There were truck and cattle farms and quaint little towns all along the route. As before, the road was four lanes wide, no divider, 75 miles an hour until a town popped up and the speed limit went back down to 35. I saw a gold '74 Scamp in someone's driveway as I rolled through some town.

Before too long, we rolled into Louisiana. I was on my way to visit old friend Lester Ewing, who was doing some work down in his shop, which is not far from downtown Shreveport.

Lester has an eclectic mix of stuff...some British stuff, a lot of Swedish stuff, parts, manuals...gearhead nirvana. I got to see the E-Type that he's been tinkering with, his collection of Saabs and the Triumph

## Through a Windscreen Darkly Cont'd

with its spaghetti of ductwork on the floor. We spent some time catching up, and then it was time for me to head for dinner and then bed.

Up early the next morning, we were pressing on to South Carolina. We crossed the Mississippi River for the second time in our journey, this time in Vicksburg, Mississippi. We passed the huge Mercedes assembly in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where Metris, Sprinters and GLEs are manufactured. We stopped for gas in Waco, Georgia, where a line of hopeful folks waiting to play their lucky Powerball numbers stretched out into the

parking lot. We passed through Atlanta, the Coca Cola tower dominating the dark skyline. Surprisingly, we weren't back in the Eastern time zone until we reached Georgia.

We finally hit Greenville, South Carolina, about 10 that evening. The place was full of plumbers, roofers, construction and power crews heading into the coastal Carolinas to rebuild after the hurricane. We got settled, fell into bed and were up the next morning, this time heading for Hazleton, Pennsylvania, our last stop before home.

The Red Roof in Hazleton was a welcome sight after almost 12 hours on the road. It was way off the beaten path, but Waze got us there quickly; the Garmin had seemingly forgotten where the East Coast was located once again .

Roxie's wheels were on the pavement at 4:30 the next morning. Four and a half hours later, we were backing into the driveway at home. We had traveled more than 5,200 miles, passed through 20 states, met up with four great friends, met some new friends and saw some amazing scenery.

We're going to Arizona in 2020 to see the Grand Canyon. Bet on it.



**All photographs by the author.**



*When she is at home, Linnea lives in the wilds of New Hampshire with her ever-expanding brood of Saabs.*



# Pulling Saab Rabbits out of a Hat!

By Tom Donney

The year 2018 is a bit of a “lost year” for me and Patti. Setting up a Saab museum is a full time job by itself. Let alone transporting 150 plus cars and literally “tons” of shop supplies and equipment to operate it. Taking 10 hours each way to haul trailer loads of Saab stuff from Fort Dodge, Iowa, to Sturgis, SD, is a daunting task. So having time for “fun stuff” was ruled out for 2018. Job ONE is the museum. But Chuck Andrews helped haul 100 cars out from May to July which was a “God Send” for me and Patti. But even with Chuck’s help I told Patti in early July that running at Bonneville Salt Flats seemed out of the question this year. I had been trying to figure out a way to perform a magician’s “hat trick” and pull a couple horsepower rabbits from my green Sonett hat. But that seemed to be impossible for 2018. To be successful at Bonneville you need to have more horsepower than the previous year to set a new record. For me that takes a lot of dynamometer time. Usually 75-150 Dyno “pulls” as we call test runs. But the Saab museum has consumed all of my time this year and any spare time I have needs to be spent addressing issues at my transmission business.

By mid-August I was working on a possible “hat trick” and I told Patti I had one chance to produce more horsepower on the Dyno with our “best guess” modifications. Problem was I only had 3 days to do the testing and mods! One mistake and the rabbit would die. Also even if you keep everything the same on a two-stroke engine, but you increase the bore size, typically then intake and exhaust modifications must be modified too. So just increasing the bore does not give you extra horsepower like a four-stroke.

Also, if I failed at added HP, I had one more rabbit I could pull out of my hat. And that was to “Hop up” a class and run in the LARGER engine size class of 751cc-1000cc. I like the saying, “figures don’t lie... But liars figure.” Because of all the speed we have managed to obtain on our small 750cc engine we were now running a faster average mile speed record in “J Class” at 123.765 mph, then the “I Class” with a 1000cc engine at 122.539 mph. That meant if I could just make my engine a few CC larger and keep everything else the same I would have a chance to set a new record in the “I Class”. Maybe I had found ONE rabbit hopping around!

That said we made one attempt to increase horsepower on the dyno and we did! We got lucky. That gave us just enough added horsepower to potentially exceed the “J Class” record of 123.765 mph.

So with 2 rabbits in our hat we set off in September for “World of Speed” 2018. I had three main goals for the trip. First was a new world record. Second was to obtain my 125-149 MPH license. Lastly was NOT to blow up my engine! I took along my service manager Chuck Crimmins and my lead Saab tech Will Roberts along to help pit.



**All photographs by the author.**

It took a few runs as we missed the first run by .023 of a second from qualifying. The next two runs were lost to a throttle cable stretching and then breaking! But on the next run we eventually squeezed just enough power to exceed the “I Class” Record of 122.539 to a very slim NEW RECORD of 122.679 mph (That is the average speed for 2 runs, for the 2-3 mile run, over 2 days).

With our first goal accomplished it was time to tackle the next two goals. The problem was they tend to collide with each other since we could only get to 122.5+ mph. But in Bonneville you either break records or break parts. And to go over 125 mph was going to require a delicate dance of carb mixture, timing, compression ratio and fuel choice. I have a friend named Howard who is my “go to guy” for two-stroke racing tuning. We talked Sunday night on the phone and crunched the numbers. He felt the engine “might blow up” with these new settings, but I hoped I could get to the 3-mile mark before it melted down! Running



## Pulling Saab Rabbits out of a Hat! Cont'd



wide-open throttle for 3 straight miles is a strain on any engine! My pit crew was a bit divided on which way to go. Young Will Roberts had been campaigning to make the changes and "go for it," Both Chuck and I thought we were at the end of our power output with the 752cc engine and exceeding 125 was not possible. Chuck and I went for a walk and told young Will to decide on his own. If we came back and the changes were in the process of being made we would compete the next day. If not we would head home and spend more time on the dynamometer to find the needed horsepower to exceed the 125mph mark without blowing up an engine immediately!

When Chuck and I returned to the pit "Will Power" had taken over! Will was making the delicate changes and we would see what the morning would bring.

The next day the car ran faster than it ever has! As I entered the 2 mile I was already over the speed of 124 mph. And this GPS-monitored speed just kept climbing! We ended up with an exit speed of 129mph and a run of 127.763 mph for the 1 mile average speed. The second rabbit had finally been pulled out of the hat! We had discovered a new formula to make the small engine run even faster than we thought it was capable of.

We did our backup run into a 2 mph headwind which only cost us 2/10's of a mph. So we ended up with a two-run average of 127.660 mph for the NEW "I Class" record! (751-1000cc engines).

And the icing on the cake was that our engine was in perfect condition. No damage had occurred. It was time to go home!

But the story doesn't end there. Armed with a new formula to make the car run faster we then set our sights on the "World Finals" three weeks later in October with a slightly smaller engine back in our old

"J Class" (501-750cc engines).

My crew for the "World Finals" consisted of my wife Patti and newfound friends (we had only met a week earlier at the Saab Museum) Reggie & Kitty Pitts of Hill City, SD.

We had the right car & the right crew...And FOR A DAY, the right conditions. We ran our FASTEST run ever at 128.758mph. (That is an average speed for 1 mile) with a top speed of 130+mph).

However rains came that night and we were unable to run our mandatory "backup run" the following day. Racing was postponed for a day and the course was shortened by 2 miles (from 10 miles to 8) because dry salt was found out in the middle of the course.

Unfortunately more rains came that night and what was an already saturated salt became a salt of sea. We were left in impound without a new record. We left our fastest ever run slip hanging on the "Porta-Potty wall" along with about 18 other race teams that were unable to compete in the newly formed "Lake Bonneville."

We loaded the race car and all of our tools and parts from our pit area in tow to ankle deep saltwater and sadly headed home. But we were encouraged by our fastest runner ever. More importantly Patti and I had felt blessed to have found new friends in Reg & Kit.

So never be afraid of rabbits & hat tricks!



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# Saving Saabs

*This article originally appeared in Petrolicious.com. Used with permission.*



In the winter of 2010, a formation of about 100 Saabs approached Times Square. Their mission: win over support from the public in hopes of saving the ailing brand. It looked like a military-style show of force, with multiple squadrons of turbocharged Swedes buzzing through one of the busiest intersections on earth. Those familiar with Saab's aircraft heritage might liken it to an elephant walk of JAS-39 Gripen fighters taxiing in tight formation.

Commanding the Wing from Northern New Jersey was Mike Grieco, a man who has dedicated his life to the often misunderstood Swedish marque. He's piloted a Saab since the late '60s, an era when Saab's three-cylinder, two-stroke cars were dominating the Northern European rally circuits and all but obliterating more powerful contenders on ice tracks. Mike said the popping and humming sound of his Saab 93 through Times Square drew people out of coffee shops to catch a glimpse of these obscure cars, and indeed early Saabs sound like nothing else on the road. They puffer along like a giant popcorn maker on wheels sending loud snaps and bangs out the back of the car while leaving sizable puffs of white smoke and burnt oil at stop lights. In short, they're strange. And largely unfamiliar. And that's exactly why Mike first fell in love with them.

The Times Square mission didn't save Saab, but it hadn't been a failure either. A few months after the rally it was announced that Saab was purchased by Spyker after nearly going to Koenigsegg. Good news for Saab enthusiasts, but it didn't last long, and Saab eventually closed its doors for good in 2011 after succumbing to global market forces. And in a way, that's when the second phase of Mike Grieco's mission started: keep as many Saabs on the road as possible through offering his decades of experience as a Saab mechanic to owners that were diligent

enough to stick with the brand after the dealerships disappeared and parts supplies suddenly became more finite.

In his youth, Mike was a devoted American muscle car enthusiast. He built a '68 Pontiac Firebird screamer in his garage. It was the kind of Firebird that rocked from side to side at stop lights and had more torque than most modern pickup trucks. It all changed when he introduced himself to a pretty girl one night at one of NYC's nightclubs in the early '80s. We often don't consider it, but peripheral events, like matters of the heart, have an impact on our automotive taste. After dating for a bit, she urged Mike to work at her parents' dealership, Zumbach Sports Cars, as a tech, but the kind of cars that Zumbach sold didn't have a lick of chrome nor V8 engines under their hoods. Naturally he was hesitant—but the tennis courts and swimming pools at his girlfriend's parents' house helped convince him that he might as well give it a shot.



He went through tech school for Saab and started working solely on the quirky Swedish brand. The more

## Saving Saabs Contd

time he spent around them, the more he appreciated them, coming to love Saab's incredibly pragmatic approach to engineering an automobile. During his tenure at the dealership, he started to fall harder for Saabs and out of love with his girlfriend, whose parents owned the dealership he worked at. When she pushed for marriage he knew he had to leave Zumbach Sports Cars. The money and the brown-nosing just weren't worth it in his eyes. He didn't want to do her the disservice of marrying for the wrong reasons, but he didn't want to leave the brand he'd grown to admire deeply. He left her, but stuck with Saab.

Mike went on to work at two other dealers as a tech, and finally opened his own Saab-focused garage in 1991. He's owned and operated Grieco Bros. Saab in New Jersey ever since. And now that Saab has been gone for over half a decade, the role of the independent Saab mechanic is more important than ever.

The centerpiece of Grieco Bros. is a fleet of vintage Saabs from the days when emissions laws allowed two-stroke motors to be used in more than weed whackers and lawn mowers. A blue 93, wearing its original paint, acts as an ambassador for the shop at local shows and meet ups. Now it's set up for vintage rallying and racing, and it gets a chance to trumpet around the track at Pennsylvania's Carlisle Import & Performance Nationals every year, but it came to Mike in a form far from what it is today.

Through some chatter on the internet, Mike heard about a Saab 93 that had been sitting on the tarmac of an aviation defense contractor in Trenton, NJ for decades. It was free for anyone to take as long as they towed it away at their own expense. Mike showed up early the next weekend with his trailer to find a car that was even rougher than described. Local hooligans had jumped on the roof at some point and dented in the metal, kicked in all the windows, and made sure that not a single single knob remained in the interior. But it didn't matter, it was free and Mike's core mission was to save as many Saabs as possible. This one would come back from the dead, too.

When the 93 arrived back at the shop, he discovered a fully built race motor under the hood that was designed to run on alcohol. It was clearly intended as a race car and he didn't have a title, so he figured the best future for the car was in ice racing, spiked tires and all. During the teardown he found the rotting registration slip, barely legible, so he reached out to the company listed on it and an executive there agreed to help transfer the title, and gave him

a history lesson on the car. The executive told him that the car used to be used as a testbed for engineers that worked for the contractor, and that they called it the "Super Saab" and planned to race hill-climb events with it. During the '60s this was a popular form of amateur racing in the Northeastern United States, and the Saab fit nicely into the circuit. The team of aerospace engineers made modifications to the fueling system in addition to adding cold air ducting. It wasn't a surprise to Mike to find out that aerospace guys would be drawn to tinkering with Saabs. Born from jets and all that.

Mike rebuilt the hot but tired motor with an eye towards reliability, but kept the engineers' vision in mind by adding period race elements, like a SuperTrapp exhaust and Panasport wheels. The interior was mildly refreshed, while the original paint was kept after the dents were hammered out. The philosophy of the build erred towards completing the project the team started in the '60s rather than starting from scratch.

Alas, the 93 served as a testbed once again for a project that was considerably more complicated than the first: Mike would make the first home-built turbo two-stroke Saab 96, and he would use the 93 to help develop that car. Saab had become synonymous with turbochargers from the '80s onward, so Mike imagined what would have been created had the brand committed to the technology in the '60s and '70s. The build took years, but what emerged was a 96 that looks stock and pristine, but shrieks with a distinct turbo whistle under load.

Mike has seen a revival of interest in Saabs in recent years that he hopes will continue to grow. Ironically, he's busier than he's ever been, and he's even taken to reproducing parts that aren't available anymore from the factory. With the lack of dealership support, more customers are coming to him to keep their cars on the road. It takes a strong commitment to own any Saab in 2018, but with mechanics like Mike servicing them, coupled with a strong spike in interest among the collector market, the brand may be set to take off on a new flight plan.



**All photographs provided by the author.**





**Koenigsegg**

Swedish car makers NEVS AB and Koenigsegg AB are together forming a strategic partnership, enabling the development of parallel vehicle models in slightly higher volumes with emphasis on electrification, as well as strengthening growth opportunities in the hypercar segment.

NEVS is making a capital injection of EUR 150 million, thereby taking a 20 percent minority stake in Koenigsegg's parent company.

Additionally, the parties are forming a joint venture to expand into new market segments where NEVS AB is contributing USD 150 million in starting capital for a 65 percent stake and Koenigsegg obtains 35 percent by contributing primarily with intellectual property, technology licenses, and product design.

The partnership will deepen an already existing collaboration between NEVS and Koenigsegg, creating synergies between their geographical footprints, experiences and competencies. Koenigsegg already has a distinguished unique market position for hypercars, and through the additional joint venture NEVS and Koenigsegg are partnering up to develop a product for new and untapped segments, leveraging both of the companies' strengths.

Alongside NEVS capacity for production in Trollhättan and China, NEVS through its majority owner Evergrande, has a wide distribution platform and channels through ownership in one of China's largest car retailers. Last week, Evergrande announced the acquisition of 58.07 percent in automobile battery maker Shanghai CENAT New Energy Co Ltd, a \$156 million deal.

"Koenigsegg is an enticing company developing advanced cars with unique technology and with a customer base that is one of a kind. To be able to expand our investment in the Swedish automotive industry through a company that we know and have an established relationship with, is an important step for us," says Kai Johan Jiang, Chairman of the Board of Directors at NEVS AB.

Founded in 2012 after acquiring the assets of Saab Automobile AB, NEVS seeks to shape mobility for a more sustainable future through a global portfolio of fully electric premium vehicles, mobility solutions, and sustainable city offerings. NEVS' head office and main research and development facilities are located in Trollhättan, Sweden, with about 650 employees.

Through NEVS production facilities in Trollhättan, Koenigsegg will access additional capabilities as well as benefiting from the extensive automotive knowledge in the region, whilst maintaining their centre of excellence in Ängelholm.

"Koenigsegg is breaking new ground, capitalising on our unique technology, performance track record and market position to explore and develop new products. This partnership will create the best conditions for Koenigsegg to accelerate growth in the hypercar market, as well as enabling us to break ground into an untapped market segment together with NEVS. We very much look forward to working together with NEVS to develop products that ensure a sustainable future," says Christian von Koenigsegg, Founder and CEO of Koenigsegg.



***When Saab was up for sale by GM some years ago, Koenigsegg was a potential suitor. This publicity photograph (above) was seen, and interest was high. That deal fell through. The photograph below is from NEVS, announcing their partnership with Koenigsegg.***



*From Jalopnik.com. Reprinted with permission.*

Former Faraday Future Backer Pivots to Zombie Saab.

**By Raphael Orlove**

We have a new contender for Wildest Decision Maker In The Global Auto Industry and it's Evergrande Health. Fresh from hopping out of being the backer of Faraday Future, Evergrande just dropped \$930 million to take control of another electric vehicle company: NEVS. That's right. Zombie Saab. It's like the Recession never ended.

Those of you who love self-flagellation may remember following the prolonged quasi-death/quasi-rebirth of Saab, the carmaker that refuses to stay in the dirt.

Saab, of course, went bust back in 2012, having sort of thrashed around for two years after GM cut it loose. Spyker was involved. It was weird.

In any case, a Chinese consortium oh-so-cleverly branded as the National Electric Vehicle Sweden (NEVS) picked up the rights to Saab, which it held until 2014 at which point it... things got weird again. There was another bankruptcy filing, there were new Chinese backers, production moved from Sweden to China and the old Saab 9-3 kept getting made, just with NEVS branding.

I was going to joke that that all sounds super straightforward, but honestly it does in comparison to Faraday Future, whose business dealings I can no longer keep straight no matter how hard I try.

And that puts me right in company with Evergrande, as the South China Morning Post reported today:

Evergrande Group, China's third-largest property developer by sales, has bought control of a producer of electric vehicles in the country, bolstering its founder's ambition to diversify from real estate into the emerging industry of next-generation automobiles.

The developer will use its subsidiary Evergrande Health Industry Group to pay US\$930 million for 51 per cent of National Electric Vehicle Sweden (NEVS), according to a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange, where it is listed. Evergrande Health has paid first installment of \$430 million on Tuesday, while the remainder of the transaction will be completed by the end of January, according to the statement.

Another Dow Jones wire report sheds a bit more light on the deal with NEVS, which is simultaneously bigger and smaller than I thought it'd be:

China Evergrande also said it agreed to provide a three-year \$1.1 billion unsecured loan to Evergrande Health.

NEVS has 500 staff members at its electric-vehicle research and development center in Sweden, with production bases in Trollhättan, Sweden and Tianjin, China, and plans another production base in Shanghai, the company said. NEVS also has two electric vehicle models that have reached production standards, Evergrande said.

Evergrande did put a good \$800 million into Faraday Future, but some of its FF EV planning may roll into Zombie Saab, particularly with regard to a new factory originally meant for FF, as Sean O'Kane wisely pointed out today on Twitter:

I keep wanting to call this an out of the frying pan into the fire moment, but again, anything seems stable in comparison to FF.

Maybe.

I would also say that I am looking forward to seeing some of these zombie Saabs get into production but my heart has been hurt too many times. No longer do I dream that the Saab Phoenix will go into production. Do not remind me. I'm not crying.



***The Saab Phoenix by designer Jason Castriota. Better days.***

# Put Down that Phone!

**By Daniel Cahill**

If you are like most people these days, you are tethered to your tech devices. If you leave home without your mobile phone, most likely you turn back. There are, however, places that you can find yourself off the grid, intentionally or not. Recently, I was traveling in a nearly thirty-year old Saab 9000 from Denver to Dallas and was able to “Find Your Own Road” by merging right when most were going left.

The drive from Denver was pleasant given the clear winter day and Sunday traffic. Deep in Southern Colorado I discovered what I thought was a very organized junkyard near the famous site of Pike’s Peak Viggen Hill Climb. My first thought was “brake for Saab parts”; however it turned out to be the staging ground for abandoned newer VW TDIs await their fate so I only slowed to a crawl. Crossing into New Mexico brought all the enchantment you would expect from this quirky place and naturally the Saab was right at home among the non-conformists who make up a large part of the population. As I entered NM there were snow-dotted fields with pocket herds of Pronghorns (fastest land animal in North America) grazing in the distance. Those engaged in their phones would never see them as they blend well into the golden wintery landscape. There can be a spooky feeling when you are the only person on a lonely stretch of road, even when the weather is great and it’s only mid-afternoon.

This road was portrayed as light grey on the GSP, the color that indicated it was really small and isolated. The fifth-mile stretch was the kind of place without noise pollution and only the sounds of nature, one’s own poor singing voice and a senior Swede with her occasional squeaks as you motored down the unmarked pavement. Occasionally, a rural farm cabin could be seen off in the hills and I imaged myself walking in snow a mile off the road if I had to call because of a breakdown as cell service faded in and out. This underlining fear was driven mostly because I grew up in the backseat of crummy old vehicles like Ford Escorts, Mercury LTDs, Ford Rangers and Chevy Caprices all

which left our family on the side of the road at some point or another. I remember spending many hours as a kid lying in the backseat coloring those puzzle travel books you got at truck stops waiting on a rescue. The Saab, of course, had other plans and got me to my destination with a smile on my face and that feeling you really only get from the seat of a 9000, saying to yourself, “wow, they really just got the layout of this car right the first time!”

I took time to hit the ski slopes near Cimarron, NM (yes, like “Cadillac Cimarron”) while the 9000 relaxed in the valley with other euro chariots and many workhorse Subarus. Duty called and I loaded the Saab up and headed deeper into NM. I had planned to limit my decision-making for the day to only “red, green or Christmas” and focus on a relaxing day as I made my way back home to Texas. Aware of my personal limits and with lots of ski runs under my belt I grabbed a hotel in Amarillo, TX, as the sun disappeared into the mountain range behind me. The next morning I pressed on, tackling the gloomy drive back to Dallas. This stretch of Texas is flat and not a landmark for hours to look forward to, other than perhaps the famous Cadillac Ranch. I fired up some morning NPR on the Clarion-Saab stereo, hot coffee in hand (remember the 9000 does not have a cup holders), started scanned the oncoming traffic for any Saab sightings in the wild and made my way home.

If you choose to go off the grid, be bold and do it in a Saab; anything else might as well just be a wrong turn.



**Photograph provided by the author.**





# It Lives!

**By Andrew Hetzel**

In Cave Creek, Arizona, September 2016, through a friend I found this 1958 93B at the end of the owner's property...waiting to be saved. It was almost dark, and I was approximately 25 yards away when I first saw the 93B. Note to self, don't buy something when (1) tired, (2) just before darkness arrives, and (3) more than 2-feet away from the car.



I really didn't know much about bullnose Saabs. I could see it was a bullnose, small rear window and doors hinged at the back ("B"). I made a very low-ball offer and surprise, surprise ....it was accepted! It quickly got too dark, and I was afraid of stepping on a snake, to get a better look at the car. However, dreams of a cool-looking 93B kept running through my mind most of the night.



**All photographs provided by the author.**

Returned the next morning and immediately thought....what did I do? It had been a desert rat's nest for 20+ years. Photos do not really do it justice. Three days later the 93B was ready to be towed to

Vernon Atterberry's Saab Restoration Shop in Fort Smith, Arkansas. From my four years' experience with vintage Saabs in Alaska, I knew there were few, if any, 2-stroker's that I could get parts from. Vernon is, in my opinion, a 2-stroke specialist...and he has parts.

I was ashamed to arrive at Vernon's shop with the 93B still needing more rat's-nest cleanup, but I had to return to Alaska the next day. I expressed to Vernon, I believe, the opinion that after being around it for three days, it should be a parts car. After Vernon's very close examination, he said, "No, it can be saved...it has good bones and little rust." Loads of patina, but little rust. In Alaska I was finishing up a 1967 96 and two Sonett V4s (serial #s 355 and 423), so Vernon could take his time working on the 93B.



Fast forward one and a half years: Vernon completed my requested mechanical restoration. Since the 93B did not have a complete 2-stroke motor, Vernon installed a rebuilt 850 cc motor; a 4-speed transmission, and front disc brakes. Moreover, Vernon totally removed all evidence of the 93B being a 20-year-old rat's nest.

In October 2018 I spent a few days with Vernon and Reba Mize in Fort Smith, Arkansas driving the 93B. I'd heard from experienced vintage Saab owners that the most fun driving a Saab is driving a 2-stroke bullnose. Yes, yes....I have to agree.

July 2019 I'll fly from Eagle River, Alaska, to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to pick up the 93B and then tow it to the 2019 SOC in Loveland, Colorado. After the SOC it's back to Alaska.





## President's Letter

Dear SCNA Members,

I have just returned from Loveland, CO, where we held our annual site visit at the location of the 37th annual Saab Owners' Convention in July of 2019. We met with most of the members of the SCNA board as well as members of the Rocky Mountain Saab Club (RMSC). RMSC has built a tradition of hosting the convention every ten years, and we are working together to make this another amazing convention. Back in 1999, the year the Viggen model was first introduced in the US, the convention was here in Colorado. As we return to the Rockies thirty years later, we developed our theme around celebrating this iconic model. We hope to feature some of the nicest Viggens by offering a limited "Viggen VIP Exclusive Program," which would allow a participant to feature a Viggen inside the convention hall as well as other special enhancements to your SOC experience. For more details, check our registration site at [saabconvention.com](http://saabconvention.com), where you can find the link to reserve hotel room in addition to other registration updates in the days and weeks to come.



Meeting with SCNA board members in person, as well as with the active and dedicated members of RMSC, is a unique and important opportunity not only to discuss the upcoming convention, but to share ideas and develop a vision for the Saab Club of North America moving forward. SCNA recognizes the importance of strong local clubs as well as official service centers and independent shops alike to keep the cars looking and driving their best. We thank Orio Saab Original parts for their continued commitment to SCNA and to the hundreds of local service centers who rely on them for quality parts at affordable prices.

### The Saab Club of North America, Inc.

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**Daniel Cahill**, Vice President  
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The Saab Owners' Convention  
Permanent Web site  
[www.Saabconvention.com](http://www.Saabconvention.com)

**NINES**, The Saab Club Magazine  
1729 Lynnville Trail  
Austin, TX 78727  
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[sethbengelsdorf@mac.com](mailto:sethbengelsdorf@mac.com)  
Subscribe or renew online at  
[www.Saabclub.com](http://www.Saabclub.com)

This summer, the convention will take place from July 25th – 28th at the beautiful Embassy Suites Convention Center in Loveland, CO, about an hour north of Denver. In the days before the event, SCNA is organizing a visit with Tom and Patti Donney at the Saab Heritage Museum USA in Sturgis, SD. Tom and Patti have invited Saab convention attendees, family and friends beginning on Tuesday, July 23rd to view the museum as well as a take a driving tour of the surrounding areas. If you have never visited Mt. Rushmore and the Black Hills of South Dakota, you will not want to miss the mild summer weather, iconic scenic drives, and historic towns and landmarks in the area. For more information about this and other pre-convention events, check our convention website or email me directly at [president@saabclub.com](mailto:president@saabclub.com).

Thank you again for your commitment to Saab and your continued support of SCNA.

Respectfully,

Sanford Bogage  
President, SCNA



# Saab 900 Sound System

*Radical and Realistic Upgrades*

**By Charles Lewis**

Saab boasted state of the art in sound systems, featuring Clarion systems with optional equalizers, trunk-mounted CD players and even an external amp. The system available in a Saab 900 was probably as good as most other cars of its time but by now it is dated.

Unfortunately the Saab 900 has some basic shortcomings to upgrade it to a modern system or any better system at all. Only 4" speakers on a vent cover in the dash and 4x10 pickup truck speakers in the rear. No door speakers, No rear passenger speakers, and limited options available for what was there.

For me there was the dilemma of keeping stock equipment and originality of the car vs. some ineffective changeout. Many attempts I saw to enhance the system didn't really bring hi fidelity and looked bad. I wanted true improvements while trying to keep the Saab's cutting-edge technology philosophy. Here are some of my solutions I used for system upgrades. If you lack the tools, time, experience, or ability to take on any of these tasks, there are people you can find to do the job

The single most bang-for-the-buck upgrade is adding a subwoofer. Any sub of any size or power will totally transform your system to O My God that's better. Keep the stock speakers, maybe replace them with new. Keep the original tape player and use an input dummy tape plugged into your phone and you will want people to listen to your new system with the addition of a subwoofer.

Fortunately there are many small self-powered subs that fit almost anywhere and can take an input from your rear speakers that are easy to access. There are several places for power like the fuse box under the seat. Working with power is dangerous. Use safety precautions like disconnecting the battery at the + and -, using fuses close to the source. If you lack the knowledge you should find someone who has it. Remember small self-powered subs are available and will work fantastic anywhere you install them.

If you want modern features you should change your head unit. I first used a Bluetooth amplifier to preserve the stock look and it worked well but there were compromises. I found a Clarion that had everything I wanted or needed: HD tuner, Bluetooth, front USB and separate RCA outputs for amplifiers. It is nice still having Clarion. It's helpful to get a wire harness adapter. This will plug into your factory

harness and make it compatible with the new unit. Choose your dealer by their ability to supply a matching adapter. Otherwise you have to research wire diagrams. I used Crutchfield; they are the best with support. I only endorse them here because they knew what was needed and had it. Any brand will work but I recommend top brands and top of line for advanced features. Single DIN units are great. They drop right in and even have pop-out displays if you want. Double DIN or big screen units don't bring better performance and many features are replaced by using your phone.

Once you have a head unit with preamps out, the options open up. It is easy to run cables thru the center console under the carpet behind the side panels past the back seat to your amps. Something I learned about the Saab 900 is that everything comes apart and goes back in with only a few basic tools. For one reason or another I have taken the console apart, removed the carpets, had the kickboards out, and replaced the headliner, so I was familiar with taking things out or off then putting them back. Removing the rear seat and center consoles makes everything possible and it's only a few bolts. Be prepared to take the rear seatbelts off (something I learned replacing the headliner). The point I want to make is that the Saab 900 is wire-pulling friendly to the back and dash.



**All photographs provided by the author.**

When adding amps, smaller ones may be better for you. They require less power and are easier to find room for. Class D amps are the most efficient and smallest. I like using the sides in back of the hatch location. The passenger side has an offset and carpet to run wires thru. It looks clean, hides your wires and is

## Saab 900 Sound SystemCont'd

well vented. 50-100 watts per channel amps will make your system loud and clean while not using too much current. A 500-watt mono block amp or 5 channel amp when paired with the right sub(s) will blow you away without putting huge demands on your electrical system. You can go as big as you like with amps and subs but bigger isn't always necessary.

It's recommended to run large power and ground wires: battery cable size, 0-4 gauge. An electrical upgrade called the big 3 is upgrading the factory battery cables and wire to the alternator. The factory battery cables on the Saab 900 are substantial, better than most other cars and big enough to power even a monster. The short power wire from the alternator is undersized for big demands. I made a 0 gauge one. Search the big 3 for car audio. Also search wire sizing for speakers subwoofers and amps. The factory-sized battery is small. I found the car easily holds a larger battery. These upgrades seriously improve audio quality. I changed the alternator to a 120 amp, which is bigger than the factory 85amp, and dropped right in. I added power storage capacitors and a second battery because I'm trying run a multi-thousand-watt system. The lesson is that it's your available power that makes the sound clear.

I replaced the front 4" speakers with 6.5" components. They are running off a separate amp in the hatch. The head unit is driving an extra pair of tweeters. It was possible because the Alpine type R I used has a smaller but stronger magnet and fits. Other speakers may fit but the type R does and it's top quality. Clean sounding and takes big power if you have it. I think Alpine goes with Saab in some way. My trick was eliminating the defrost vent and hose. I made my own insert out of black marine board and with the dash cap it looks and sounds amazing with as much power that you can give it. It's a very desirable setup unique to a 900 I included photos of the change.

Two things about the Saab 900 that bothered me the most: No door speakers and no rear speakers. 4x10 hanging out almost open can never be great. I run the 4x10 from the head unit. It's nice if I want to listen to news and not turn the amps on it will play nicely. I found an adapter that replaced the 4x10 with two 3.5" speakers that sound a little cleaner and could take more power. Changing the 4x10 out requires removing the latch to the rear window and lower head liner panels. Not as bad as you would think but makes taking the grill off possible. Maybe a bit of a pain but worth it.

With the back seat out and seatbelts out the rear side panels can be removed. This makes it easier to

run wires to the doors and dash. Amazingly I found the panels can take speakers. Again I used Alpine type R components because of the size. Another brand might fit but I was into type R's with the separate tweeter mounted facing forward. You would never think speakers would fit there. The factory missed a great location. The only negative comment I got was "why only one?" So I took the panels out again and doubled the speakers. Both on 100 watts a pair at the moment. I also added soundproofing to the metal. I include photos of the panels out cut fitted and back in.



I never saw a door speakers installed in a Saab 900 I liked. It's difficult because of space. I removed the cover for the door pocket cover (the leather flap). It's held on with a few staples and a rod. Easily removed when the panels are off. Again I used black marine board and built a baffle. Staying with the "why only one?" idea I installed 4 JL Audio C2 per door. Great speakers and I didn't need to cut into the door panel except to mount the separate tweeters. I later added a pair of surface-mounted JBL that are in a better acoustic location. I think it's truly unique. I'm running a 400 watt 4 channel JL amp to the doors. Each pair is on 100 watts. If I had done this simple door speaker install first I might have never done anything thing else. Almost subwoofer quality bass, super loud, super clean, and looks great.

Upgrades we covered are a subwoofer anyway you can. Changed out 4x10 to new or adapted. New dash speakers to 6 1/2 Alpine type R. Full size speakers in the rear seat. Electrical upgrades. Not covered but important are crossovers, EQ's, digital sound processor and tools to set levels. Worth researching or I can post an advanced article in the future.



# Classified Ads

## NINES CLASSIFIED AD RATES:

Ads offering Saabs or parts for sale, or wanted, are available to members and non-members. Ad rates are for 25 words EXCLUDING your name, telephone number, address, etc. Extra words are charged at \$1.00 per five extra words. Classified ads MUST be prepaid. Ad rates are as follows:

TYPE OF SALE	Members	Non-members
CAR	\$ 10	\$ 15
PARTS	\$ 5	\$ 7.50
WANTED	\$ 2	\$ 3
COMMERCIAL	\$ 15	\$ 15

**DEADLINE:** 25<sup>th</sup> of two months preceding publication for inclusion in the next issue.

Mail ads with full payment to:

**SB Productions**  
**Saab Classified Ads**  
**1729 Lynnville Trail**  
**Austin, TX 78727**

NINES can also place your ad on The Saab Network (Internet classified ad) for you. Your NINES classified fee covers listing in both locations: \$30 for cars, \$20 for parts, \$15 for wanted, for up to 150 words (on the internet.)

## Autos for Sale

### 2008 9-5.

Color: Blue - Trans: Automatic - Mileage: 207,000 - Price: 2,850 OBO. Very good condition. Near mint black leather heated front and rear seats. Sunroof, satellite, all power options. See at Carlisle Imports, trade up/down for similar SportCombi. Contact: Bob Smale, Pottstown, PA 19464. Phone: 610-327-1086.

### 2006 9-3 Aero Convertible.

Color: Fusion Blue Metallic - Trans: Automatic - Mileage: 122,XXX - Price: \$6500.

Time for my cherished convertible to find a new home. Runs and drives great! Fusion Blue Metallic Exterior with gray leather interior and black top. High end Aero 2.8 Liter, V-6 turbo with 6 speed automatic transmission. Loaded with almost every U.S. option that year, except navigation. Tow bar ready for bike rack or anything up to 1000-lbs. Photos can be found in my Saabnet.com Member Photo Gallery (<http://jentu96.saabnet.com>). Photo available at The Saab Network Classifieds: <http://www.saabnet.com/tsn/class/9-3convertibles.html#18053106551jdani> Contact: Jennifer Daniels, Niles MI. Email: <http://www.saabnet.com/tsn/class/classmail2.php3?tag=18053106551jdani>

### 1999 9-5.

Color: Blue - Trans: Automatic - Mileage: 201,129 - Price: \$700.

I quit driving it because it tripped a code that the throttle body was not closing properly. When the car was started it idled fine, cruise control worked properly to turn it on. As soon as I pressed the throttle and let off it would trip a code that throttle did not return. 2 new front tires, new calipers, pads, rotors on rear. Car is clean inside. Great

car to fix or use for parts. Photo available at The Saab Network Classifieds: <http://www.saabnet.com/tsn/class/9-5.html#18122715361k> Contact: Kevin, YOH. Email: <http://www.saabnet.com/tsn/class/classmail2.php3?tag=18122715361k> Phone: 330-559-5653.

### 1985 900 SPG.

Color: Black - Trans: Manual - Mileage: 355,000 - Price: \$5,300.

A 100% rust-free CA/ID car, this 85 SPG has a new windshield, pre-pump and exhaust. Suspension upgraded with B&G Springs and Koni shocks. S&R steering wheel and lower console gauge cluster. Transmission gone through about 20K miles ago and shifts perfectly. Engine runs solid. Dash was recently replaced and uncracked. Front seats were replaced with good cloth ones. The '85 wiring harness was replaced. Photo available at The Saab Network Classifieds: <http://www.saabnet.com/tsn/class/900-93.html#19012050461jwirt> Contact: John Wirt, Boise ID Email: <http://www.saabnet.com/tsn/class/classmail2.php3?tag=19012050461jwirt> Phone: 208-850-464.

## Parts and Miscellaneous

### Books and Service Manuals.

More than 200 different titles of factory original Saab manuals available for sale. 9-3 shop manual, \$35. 9-5 shop manual, \$35. 9000 shop manual, \$35. 900 (1979-1998, please specify year) service manuals, \$15 - \$48. Earlier models also available. See [www.books4cars.com](http://www.books4cars.com) or call 206-721-3077 or toll free 888-380-9277. Alex Voss, 4850 37th Ave So, Seattle, WA, 98118.

## Top Motor and Cylinder.

For 1991 900 turbo convertible.

Contact: Leslie Pagenkopf  
321 Church St.  
Algoma, WI 54201.  
Phone: 920-365-9023.

## Wanted

## New Convertible Top.

For 1999 900SE convertible.

Contact: Leslie Pagenkopf  
321 Church St.  
Algoma, WI  
Phone: 920-365-9023.

## 1990-93 900 C900 4 Door

### Manual

Looking for a C900S 4 Door, manual, 1990 to 1993.

Contact: Jon Fitzgerald, Lafayette LA  
Email: <http://www.saabnet.com/tsn/class/classmail2.php3?tag=190204jfitz>  
Phone: 337-371-5482.

## 900 SPG Turbo.

I am looking for a Saab 900SPG, preferably black exterior but will certainly consider any exterior color. The vehicle must have meticulous service history documentation. It must be in excellent, original and extremely well maintained condition both inside and out. Price is certainly flexible as I know that the proper unit will be priced accordingly. Minor tasteful upgrades (for example Bluetooth, Sirius stereo system) are welcome as they do not detract from the originality of the vehicle. Emails preferred. Contact: James Vlasis, Toronto ON Canada. Email: <http://www.saabnet.com/tsn/class/classmail2.php3?tag=190206james> Phone: 416-729-7552.

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