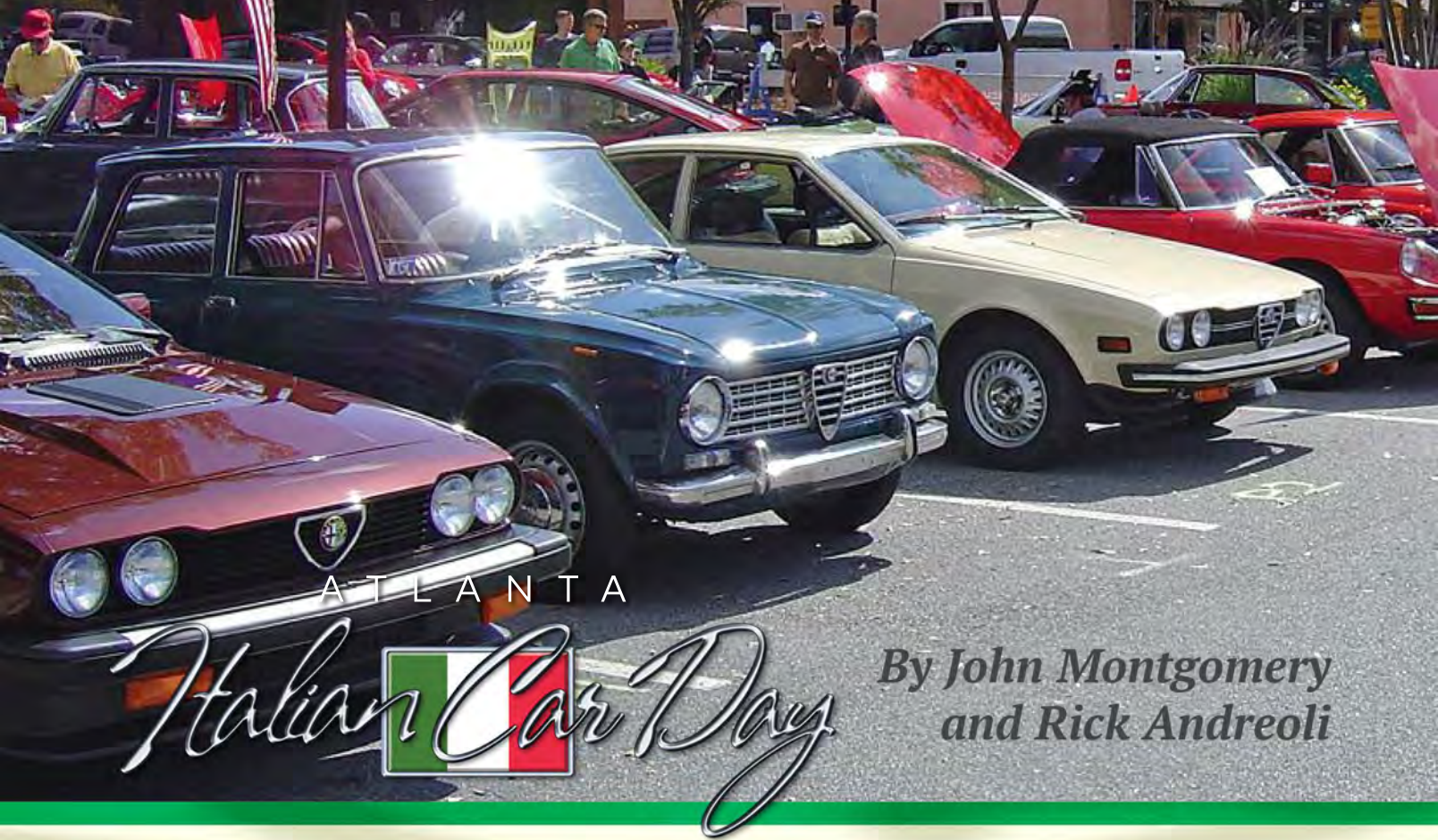


# What a Difference a (Italian Car) Day Makes



By John Montgomery  
and Rick Andreoli

In 1996 the world came to Atlanta, Georgia for the Olympic Games and AROC came for our National Convention. A very successful British Car Day was also being held at Chateau Elan in Braselton, an hour's drive north. Gathering all marques of the British Isles together on the front lawn of a castle-like mansion was so popular that everyone knew "The British were coming" every spring. So, a year after the AROC convention, interest for an all-Italian-marques

show blossomed.

Mike Acuna and other local AROC members organized the first Atlanta Italian Car Day (ICD) in October 1997, at Chateau Elan. Over 100 Italian cars and motorcycles made it to this debut event on the finely manicured front lawn. Italian beauties from Fiats to Ferraris and a strong showing by Alfa Romeo owners, including those owning the new 164. There were no sponsors, only former Alfa dealer Paul Spruell, by then a Lamborgh-

ini dealer, showing the all-new, gull-winged Diablo. The January 1998 issue of *Alfa Owner* featured this very first show.

The following year, another ICD show was planned at the Chateau, but venue expenses would prove difficult, including the Chateau's catered lunch, which was priced at three times the entry fee. No one wanted the show to die, so it was moved to nearby Lake Lanier, using a large picnic pavilion in Buford Dam Park. A lakeside display amid colorful fall

## Celebrating 27 years of Atlanta's grassroots Italian marques show



Above, sites in and around Norcross were the show-grounds from 2011 to 2019 and the event moved to the Ferrari Maserati of Atlanta store in 2021 (below). The collectible Andreoli posters (right) have generated enthusiasm every year since 2009.



rick-andreoli.pixels.com

foliage was a great alternative. For the third year, the Fiat Club's John Montgomery and a few AROC members picked up the mantle and carried on with a grassroots approach. "Bring your Italian car, no matter its condition, meet new friends, perhaps win an award or a raffle prize" was the theme. Get there, get inspired and drive away happy! The show recipe is still running strong after more than a quarter of a century.

John Montgomery took the leadership

reins next, adding peer judging for marque trophies, a "Best of Show" award, and in the Italian tradition, made sure there was always something for lunch! In the early years piping hot spaghetti was served to attendees. Blame it on those crazy Fiat guys, who learned how to cook pasta outdoors at the annual Road Atlanta Mitty races. In 2001, the show was delayed by the tragic events of September 11th. Finally held in November, the warm autumn sun complemented by

the beautifully crisp fall air made everyone thankful for the chance to enjoy the simple pleasure of an outdoor car show. In 2002, DeTomaso Pantera owners in 39 cars had a reunion, tying their all-time marque attendance record that still stands today.

After 2003, the show moved to Kurt's Restaurant in Duluth, Georgia. Owners Kurt and Vreny Eisele turned their German restaurant into an Italian bistro one Saturday each year for several years.

For nine years, the show enjoyed the greens of Lillian Webb Park, in Norcross.



Bud McIntire

The 1997 inaugural took place at Chateau Elan, with Alfa Romeo front and center.



Rick Andreoli (6)

Left: A lovely 2000 Touring at Lillian Webb Park in 2012 and (right) John Montgomery announces in 2016.

Professional car portraits were taken by John Adams Shutter Group, who still shoots the show today. In 2009, the show began offering the now-famous keepsake event posters, created by AROC's own Rick Andreoli.

Atlanta Italian Car Day moved in 2011 to downtown Norcross, Georgia and then onto the lawn at Norcross's Lillian Webb Park for nine years. Unfortunately, COVID restrictions in 2020 shut this venue down.

Ferrari Maserati of Atlanta then stepped up and offered their top-notch facility. Imagine, an exotic car dealership pulling all their inventory off the lot just for a car show? It illustrates the love for the pure, simplistic beauty of an Italian car gathering. ICD does not include a fashion or jewelry show, a live auction or music stage band. No starving artists in tents are selling wall art, and there's not even a wine tasting. It's all about the Italian *automobili* and *motociclette* and the

loyal owners who showcase them!

Join the Southeastern *Alfisti* and show off your Alfa on Saturday, October 26, 2024! There will be Best of Marque, Best of Show and Car I'd Like to Drive Home awards, plus vendor raffle prizes, and onsite food and beverage service. Registration prices, registration link and deadline are on the website.

Go to [AtlantaItalianCarDay.org](http://AtlantaItalianCarDay.org) to register. For information, contact John Montgomery / [bertoneman@aol.com](mailto:bertoneman@aol.com) ■