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# FORZA

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT FERRARI

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## Ferrari's Future?

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**PLUS!** PININFARINA & FERRARI: THE BEGINNING,  
375 AMERICA, TARGA FLORIO, DICK MERRITT



# When Ferraris Were Cheap

DICK MERRITT was one of the first Ferrari enthusiasts in America, and was preaching the gospel of Maranello back when few wanted to hear it. JACKIE JOURET talked with Merritt about the early days with Ferrari in the U.S., the founding of the Ferrari Club of America, his co-authorship of the first Ferrari road car history, and the 48 Ferraris he's owned over the years.





**H**ad he been able to keep every Ferrari he's ever owned, Dick Merritt would have one of the great Ferrari collections today. Financial realities required that he sell one car to get the next, but in the process he was able to own and drive some of the world's finest sports cars, and to acquire a tremendous body of knowledge in the process.

As the co-author of the first-ever book on Ferrari road cars and one of the founders of the Ferrari Club of America, Merritt has made an invaluable contribution to Ferrari enthusiasm in the U.S. and abroad. Enzo Ferrari himself even thanked him for his efforts on behalf of the marque. It's time to pay a modest tribute to one of the people to whom every *Ferraristi* owes a small debt of gratitude: meet Dick Merritt.

As a youngster in Ames, Iowa, Merritt was seduced early on by hot rods and dirt track racers. He moved with his family to Boulder, Colorado in 1947 while he was in high school, and his enthusiasm for cars grew. He worked part-time at car dealerships and built a couple of "el cheapo" hot rods with his high school pals, but what really fired him up were the car magazines. "I didn't have the money to subscribe, so it was the treat of the month to go to the newsstand to pick up the latest issue," Merritt said. "I'd tell the news dealer to get me *Speed Age*, *Road & Track* and *Motor Trend* and he'd keep them under the counter like they were pornography!"

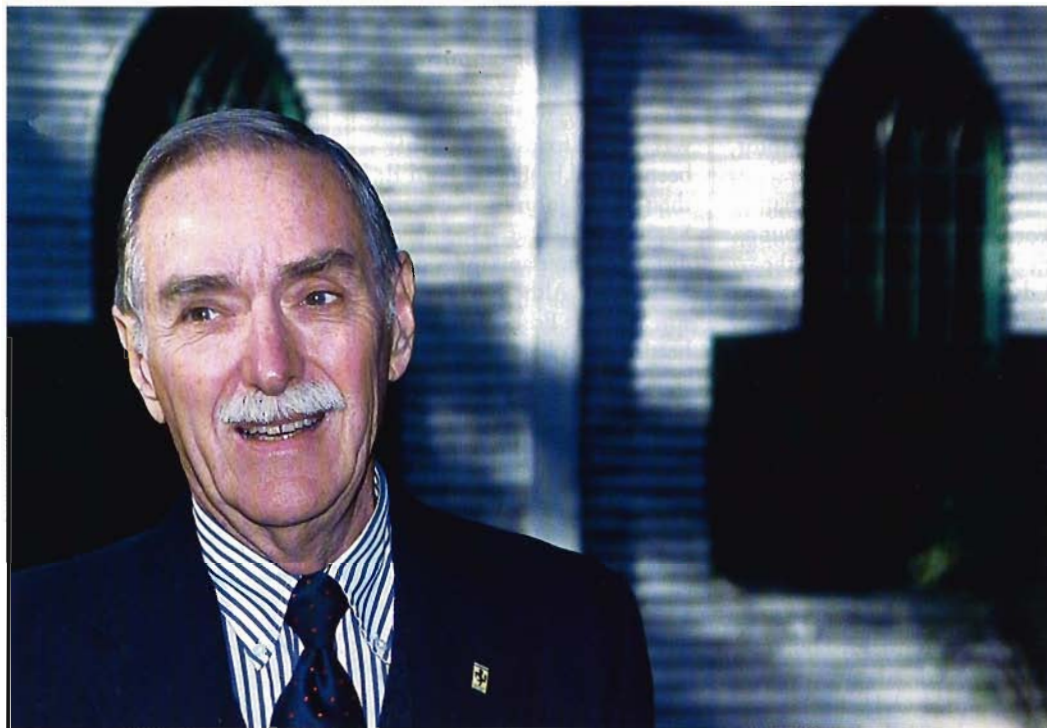
Merritt graduated from high school in 1949, spent a year working for a Ford dealership and enrolled at Colorado University in 1950. When the Korean War came along, he joined the National Guard to avoid the draft and ended up in the motor pool. His unit was activated after just a couple of semesters, and Merritt was sent first to San Antonio, Texas, and then to Alaska, where he learned how to keep a Jeep

running in sub-zero temperatures. "It's a job, let me tell you. Prestone would freeze, clutch cables would snap, valve springs would break. I got so that I could replace the valve springs in a Jeep faster than anybody!" And when he wasn't working on Jeeps, Merritt was reading car magazines in the barracks, particularly *Road & Track*. "I started reading about

Sports Car Enthusiasts."

Merritt and his buddies—two brothers with an MG, another fellow with a Triumph—hung around at the house of Porsche fanatic Jim Lowe, who raced a 356 and had a subscription to England's *Autosport* magazine. Together, they'd convoy to the sports car races at Estes Park and Steamboat Springs—"Forget

Aspen, s/n 031S, but it failed to make much of an impression. What did make an impression, however, was the 1954 arrival in Boulder of a 166 MM barchetta with Monza-style Scaglietti bodywork reputedly designed by Dino Ferrari. It had been purchased by Danny Collins from Luigi Chinetti in New York. "Danny was a Denver postman who had saved



**TRUE BELIEVER:** Dick Merritt today, outside his home—a parsonage built in 1850. (Opposite) Merritt made several rescue missions to Europe, where he'd pick up cars with Robby Box, right.

Ferraris, and they just seemed like a dream come true—the 12-cylinder engines, the styling."

Along with reading car magazines, Merritt established another habit while he was in Alaska: buying and selling cars. "I bought clunkers and fixed them up and sold them, working my way up to a '51 Ford convertible," Merritt said. "This is '52 or '53, so I was living pretty good by then." Upon his discharge, Merritt and his wife drove the Ford down the Alcan Highway and back to Boulder. There, he re-enrolled at CU and hooked up with "a subversive clique of sports car nuts—we called ourselves the Boulder

about studying!" Merritt laughs. He soon traded the '51 Ford for a Jaguar—an XK120M roadster that was the fastest production sports car in Colorado. Its previous owner had used it in SCCA racing until he died of a heart attack behind the wheel during a Lookout Mountain hillclimb.

On a club outing to races in Aspen, Merritt saw his first Ferrari in the metal, a 340 MM Vignale roadster, s/n 0140A (now owned by Gil Nickel). "When I saw that car and heard it run," Merritt said, "that really got me steamed up. I thought, Wow! These Ferraris are as good as I'd fantasized."

He also saw a 166 coupe at

his money—\$5,000, which was a lot of money in 1954—to buy a 166 competition coupe. At the last minute, Chinetti switched him into a lovely little car, s/n 0050, which, it turns out, is not 0050 but 0308 or 0328. It had been owned by Porfirio Rubirosa and still had his *Corps Diplomatique* license number. It was renumbered by the factory so Rubirosa wouldn't have to pay duty.

"Collins showed up with this thing in Boulder in October of 1954, and he'd give everybody in our club a ride in it," Merritt said. "You'd give him two or three bucks for gas and get a ten or fifteen minute ride. He'd run it through the



gears, and the noise, vibration and sound of that car hooked me for good. Once I'd ridden in a real thoroughbred racing Ferrari, I said, 'That's it, I've gotta have one.' That car addicted me to Ferraris; in fact, it changed my whole life. I'm a sentimental old fool about these things, and I'd like think that it was Dino's soul in that car that got me involved."

After graduating from college in 1956, Merritt was determined to get a job in the car industry, and, after interviewing with a number of companies, left Boulder that summer for Dearborn, Michigan and the Ford Motor Company.

"There were rumors that Ford was going to bring out a new car, and I landed in the Edsel division," Merritt recalled. He was a Product Planning Analyst Trainee, which put him on track for a position in upper management.

"I was discouraged from the day I got there," he said. "When they showed me that big turkey... mind you, I was driving a little 220 Mercedes, which I thought was the car of the future—it had independent rear suspension, centralized lubrication, an overhead cam aluminum head, leather bucket seats, and seatbelts I'd put in myself. It was obvious to me that the Edsel was a lost cause, and in Product Planning, I tried to get the Edsel to go front-wheel drive. They didn't want to do it. I said, 'Okay, let's do independent rear suspension.' No, we don't want to do that.

"We could have doubled the warranty—which at the time was pitifully small, three or four thousand miles—and for like \$5 or \$10 a car, we could've updated the crap that would fall off enough so that we still wouldn't have to pay any claims. But they said they wouldn't pay a nickel more for parts, and as long as it lasts the three thousand miles, they were happy. The replacement parts that would last were on the dealer's shelf, where the customer has to pay for them after

the warranty has expired."

Despite his frustrations at Ford, Merritt found Detroit to be a hotbed of car enthusiasm. At SAE and sports car meetings, he met a "neat bunch of guys," most of whom had come from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, and most of whom worked in the styling department at General Motors. ("In the Edsel division, there were only two or three of us who were car nuts, and we were subversives!")

While "schmoozing around Detroit" with the car nuts, Merritt happened to find out that a Ferrari was for sale. It was a black roadster that had been owned by Henry Ford II; then-owner John Egan wanted \$3,600 for the car, which had just a few thousand miles on it at the time. Although he was sure that the Edsel division was headed for collapse, Merritt

Thunderbird. It was a 212 Inter barchetta, s/n 0253EU—the only one, Merritt says, in which the driver sits in the middle of the car—with a white interior and a body by Touring. "I'm in heaven, I tell you. Now I've got a Ferrari."

Like Danny Collins back in Colorado, Merritt shared his passion by taking friends for rides in his Italian sports car. At one Sunday afternoon picnic, he took a number of

just keep going!' It dawned on me that this car has an aphrodisiac effect on some women, that this is powerful stuff!"

The car also exuded a powerful effect on Merritt, who was growing ever more frustrated with his work at Ford. "I'd come home after work, warm up the Ferrari and go bombing around the Ford Expressway for like half an hour. I'd come back rejuvenated, thinking the world is good, after all. The car



bought the car. "I was making \$425 a month and I financed it all through the Ford credit union—I had the silly idea that if I owed the credit union any money, Ford wouldn't fire me!"

The car had been one of several that the Ford Motor Co. had studied prior to the introduction of the first

people out, including one single gal who was there as a friend's date. "I gave her a good run through the gears, took it around some curves and through Dearborn, and when I said I thought we ought to go back, she put her hand on mine, looked me in the eye and said, 'Let's not go back! Let's

really buoyed up my spirits, and I was ready to go back and fight the Edsel division."

During that time, Merritt had a few surreptitious interviews with GM styling, and they agreed to hire him, but an industry-wide agreement meant that he had to take a year off between jobs. He agreed to go



back to Boulder to get a Master's degree, then to return to Detroit a year later to work for GM.

It was the fall of 1957, and as Merritt prepared to head back to Colorado, he tried to sell the Ferrari. "I could not give it away in Detroit," he

where Dick drove the Ferrari for a month or two while it was for sale. One prospective buyer wanted to turn this one-off into a street car by fitting bumpers and a top—Merritt refused to sell it to him. He eventually found the car a good home with Bill Parfett in Golden,

things had been fiddled with. It had mags on it when it was raced, because the wire wheels would collapse on the Mexican roads," Merritt said. "It was a trucky thing, and I didn't like it all that much, but it expanded my knowledge of the cars. I'd get under it and study it, change the oil, put spark plugs in it, figure out the rear end. I realized it's a pretty simple car."

With Rhodes, Merritt went to Texas to buy another Ferrari, this one an ex-factory 375 racer from La Carrera, s/n 0320. "The car had been mildly crashed in Denver traffic, and it had a new nose on it that Charlie Lyons, a genius aluminum guy had put on," Merritt said. "It was geared for the Mexican road race, and I drove it back to Boulder from Dallas, bombing across those two-lane Texas roads. I was flying along—the plugs would

objected, "and I never forgave her for that!" Merritt said. He and Rhodes had paid \$3,000 or so for the car, and some time later sold it for four or five thousand dollars.

After he'd finished his Master's degree, Merritt returned to Detroit to work for GM styling, where he was a Product Planning Analyst whose responsibilities also included the maintenance of a technical reference and automotive history library for the car stylists. He worked under Bob McLean in a styling studio that "didn't really style cars per se" but put forth advanced design proposals instead, like the one they created for a revolutionary front-wheel drive station wagon. At GM, he met Warren Fitzgerald, with whom Merritt would soon co-author the first reference book on Ferrari road and sports cars.

He'd also bought another Ferrari, an ex-Fon de Portago 250 MM roadster, s/n 0332. "That was a fun car to drive—those early 3-liter cars with the four-barrel carbs have a responsiveness that very few cars have. It would get me so excited that my foot would shiver, and the engine would respond to the shivers in your foot!" After doing some restoration work on the car, it was sold, and Merritt again made a small profit.

"Then, one day, I got word that the 'Jackie Cooper' Superfast One was for sale in California," Merritt said. "I had a partnership at the time with a crazy guy named Gary Wales. He was a car nut, and we agreed to go in together, buy some Ferraris, have some fun and make a little money. We bought Superfast One, and that car was fantastic. We also bought a little 212 Ghia and sold it.

"About this time, I was trying to convince anyone who'd listen that Ferraris were great cars that deserved to be loved, cherished and collected," Merritt said, "and nobody would believe me." He tried to convince Bugatti collector Ray Jones to switch over to Ferrari, arguing that Ferraris had every-



**(Opposite, top) The first Ferrari Merritt ever saw, a 340 MM, s/n 0050. He eventually owned its engine. (Left) Henry Ford II in his 212 Inter, s/n 0253EU, which became Merritt's first Ferrari. (This page, top) S/n 0150A seen in Merritt's driveway in Boulder, CO in 1958. (Above) Merritt bought this ex-Fon de Portago 250 MM in unrestored condition.**

said. He decided to trailer it to Colorado, where he hoped to have better luck selling it. After a treacherous crossing of the Great Plains in an icy blizzard with his pregnant wife alongside him and the Ferrari on a crude, brake-less trailer behind their 1950 Ford, the Merritts made it back to Colorado,

Colorado, and made \$1,000 on the transaction, which helped feed his new son, Kendall, and pay for graduate school.

While the barchetta was for sale, Merritt met a fellow student named Bill Rhodes, with whom he struck up a friendship that became a partnership. "I told him that I'd made a thousand dollars on it, and he said he'd put up the money if I bought us another Ferrari, which we would sell and split the profit." The two flew to Toledo, Ohio, where they bought a 340 Ghia coupe, s/n 0150A, that turned out to be the one that had been owned by Tony Parravano and raced in the Carrera Panamerica.

"I knew we had that car because I could see that some

start to foul at anything less than 100 mph. The thing was unbelievably fast." And when a V8-powered '57 Chevy tried to "show this funny little pip-squeak furrin car" a thing or two, Merritt simply passed the Chevy in third, then hit fourth and shot over the horizon just as the Chevy was expiring in a cloud of smoke.

Back in Boulder, Merritt and Rhodes would drive the Ferrari at night, making laps of a nearby lake and hiding the noisy car from the local sheriff after the neighbors complained. After his wife gave birth to their son, Kendall, Merritt wanted to bring the baby home from the hospital in the 375, so that Kendall's first car ride would be in a Ferrari. His wife



thing going for them that Bugattis did: an eccentric personality behind the cars who was a self-made genius, a small factory, a racing history, sexy production cars, etc.

"The Bugatti people had a club, plus a Bible to refer to, activities and meets, and the last of the four corners of the chair: collectors," Merritt explained. "I figured that when we got all of those four for Ferrari, we'd be as big as Bugatti."

As Merritt was pondering how to best promote Ferrari enthusiasm, a fellow *Ferrarista* named Jack Katzen wrote to *Road & Track* with the idea of starting a Ferrari club. When Merritt and his Midwest buddies contacted him, Katzen had changed his mind, but gave the group his blessing and passed on the letters he'd gotten in response to his query in *R&T*.

"We all met at Larry Nicklin's house in South Bend, Indiana one day in '62 or '63," Merritt said. "I could have been the first president, but my wife gave me such trouble that I said I'd forget the whole thing. Then I decided I wasn't going to let that stop me and joined the club. I was the second president."

Once the Ferrari Club of America was established, Merritt set about establishing another "corner of the chair," a reference book. "I was collecting stuff—magazine articles, clippings, correspondence, taking pictures of every car I saw and hopefully writing serial numbers down." And at GM, he was making friends with Fitzgerald, who had been writing articles for a classic car club magazine and was friendly with *Road & Track* publisher John Bond. "Whenever Bond would be in town, we'd all go out to dinner—Fitzgerald, me, John and Elaine Bond, maybe one or two other guys—and we'd all talk cars. Fitzgerald started doing classic car stories for *Road & Track*, and I said we really ought to do a Ferrari book, and that we could write it together."

To make his scheme work, Merritt also knew he needed a

collector, someone who would establish the legitimacy of Ferraris by gathering a selection of the best cars in one place. In 1965, he convinced Carl Bross to start collecting Ferraris.

"Bross lived in Birmingham, a wealthy suburb of Detroit, and he managed his mother's wedding ring business," Merritt said. "Bross had a Ferrari or two that he'd bought from Chinetti, and I encouraged him to put together the first Ferrari collection. He said okay, and I set him up with some really neat cars, not even making a buck on the deals."

In 1965, when Merritt and Bross went to California on a Ferrari-buying mission—Merritt had left GM by then and was selling Volkswagens part-time—Merritt stopped by *Road & Track* to pitch the book idea. "I told the Bonds that Ferrari was the coming thing, that we've got a club going, we've got events, we've got a collector—and now we need a book," Merritt said. "Bond had at least one or two Ferraris, and he was sorely tempted to do it, although Dean Batchelor was against it. I talked my head off, and they finally decided they wanted to get into the book business, and that they could always use it as a tax loss. It was the first book they did, and there were no other Ferrari books at the time other than Hans Tanner's mediocre little thing, which doesn't cover the road cars, only the GP stuff."

"It sold fabulously well, and went into four editions. They were so emboldened by that success that they did other car books, too, but the other books were a disaster. It's the only book they ever made money on, I've been told. Poor Batchelor was in charge of the book division, and he was fired because it lost money."

Beyond its financial success, the book that Merritt and Fitzgerald wrote (simply titled *Ferrari*) gave the Ferrari enthusiasts something that was sorely needed: a definitive reference work that would identify cars



once and for all. "*Road & Track* published some blurbs that said, 'Dear Reader: We're going to publish a Ferrari book, and anyone who owns a Ferrari please send us information on your car.'"

Merritt collected letters from Ferrari owners all over the country and the world, and entered every name and serial number in a log book. "I went up to 1500—I figured that's the end of the really great cars." In 1969, Merritt went to the Ferrari factory and gave Enzo a copy of *Ferrari*. "He seemed pleased, but he didn't say much. I had my book of serial numbers with me, and I asked Dr. Gozzi, who was the P.R. manager, if I could go through the files and fill in the rest. He said, 'Oh, no. We can't allow that.' I felt crushed, but then

**(Top) Superfast I—note the pillarless windshield, which made scary noises at speed! (Above) 0728TR, which won Le Mans in 1958 with Phil Hill. Merritt tried to convince Hill to buy it, but he wasn't interested. (Opposite, top) 06C, the 1949 GP racer Merritt bought for \$1,200 in 1965. (Opposite) Enzo Ferrari wrote Merritt in 1968 to thank him for his and the Ferrari Club's efforts on behalf of the marque.**

he said, 'Give us your book, leave it here for a day or two, and we'll fill in all the blanks for you.' They gave it to some gal and she filled in everything, so I was the first guy who really had all the early serial numbers.

"These records are not Germanic in precision—there's funny numbering, and cars



with double numbers. I never did broadcast that wholesale, because I figured Ferrari considered it semi-confidential, although I would share the information with people.”

Along with gathering information, Merritt was also gathering cars, and he always had at least a few Ferraris in the driveway. On that original 1965 trip to California with Bross (“We stayed at this fabulous hotel in Hollywood called the Chateau Marmont, and I

because I was hurting for money. I had no full-time employment; I was basically buying and selling cars and parts—at one time I had 21 Ferrari engines in my basement—and trying to get a fledgling restoration service started,” Merritt said. “He was too tight to do it. I’d found a 166 engine (number 031-S) in Denver and bought it for him for \$500, but he told me he didn’t want it. That ticked me off, and then I stumbled onto a

had a big falling-out over that, but he’d shot himself in the foot by not taking the engine and by not giving me a retainer. I kept the car—it didn’t run, and I was afraid to crank it up—and I eventually sold it to Pierre Bardinon. It’s one of the jewels of his collection.”

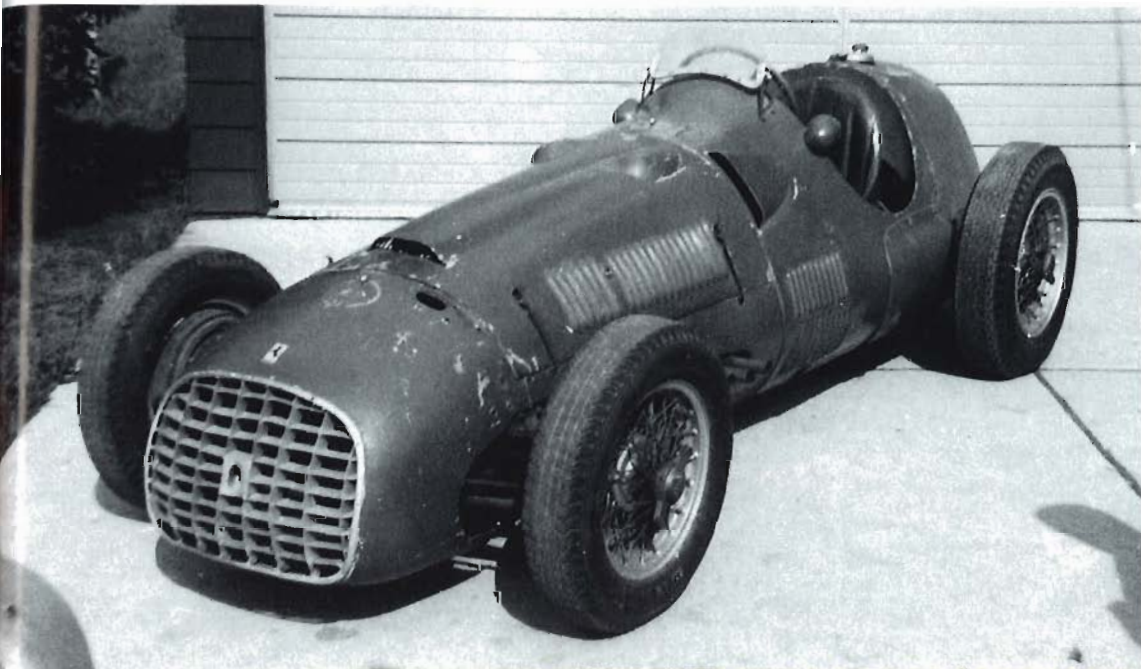
Bardinon had “popped up out of nowhere” in 1969, Merritt recalled, as the first European Ferrari collector. Bardinon had built his own racetrack in the South of

Curtain. Merritt and Box struck up a partnership and a friendship, and Merritt would buy the cars that Box found in Europe, intending to bring them to the U.S.

It wasn’t an easy sell. “I’d tell Americans, ‘Look, I’m digging up these old Ferraris, and most of them need a little TLC, a little love. I’m trying to get you guys to buy ‘em—and you won’t lose money on ‘em—but if you don’t buy ‘em I’m going to sell ‘em to this guy in France, because he’s paying big bucks. I’m trying to sell you pontoon-body TRs for five grand, and you won’t buy ‘em, so I’m going to sell ‘em to Bardinon for 10.’ I sold him my GP car for \$30,000, which was big money in those days, and then I had some capital to deal with. I was importing two, three, four cars a year from Robby, mostly mundane stuff. I’d buy a Lusso for \$2,000 or \$3,000 and sell it for \$5,000. I thought that was great money, particularly if I didn’t have to work on it. The Swiss cars were always well-maintained, which wasn’t true of those that came out of Italy.”

Along with the growing Bardinon collection, the increasing English enthusiasm for vintage racing was also driving the price of Ferraris higher, and furthering global awareness of their desirability. “I was selling derelict old Ferrari roadsters to Colin Crabbe and Chris Renwick and so on—they were way ahead of us in vintage racing.”

Although he imported most of his European cars through Box, Merritt had earlier acquired the legendary Count Volpi “Bread Van,” a 250 GT with strange-looking aerodynamic bodywork (see FORZA #27 for a photo of the car today.—Ed.) through an Italian Ferrari enthusiast, Roberto Goldoni, to whom he’d been introduced by Ed Niles. It was delivered to Newark along with a TdF (s/n 0555) that Merritt and his then-partner Gary Wales and Michael Kennedy intended to drive to Detroit. They also had a new



Egregio Signor Merritt,

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Al piacere di poterla in futuro incontrare a Maranello, invio molti cordiali saluti.

*Leone*



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thought I was in paradise. I expected to see all kinds of starlets lying around the swimming pool, but there wasn’t a woman in the place. Boy, was I disappointed!” he located one of the earliest GP Ferraris ever, s/n 06C.

“I had begged Bross to put me on a small monthly payroll,

really neat 166 GP car (06C) in San Diego, and I bought it for \$1,200.

“When I got back to Detroit, I said, ‘Carl, did I get lucky! I bought a single-seat GP car while I was there.’ And Carl said, ‘That’s MY car. Anything you find is mine.’ He threatened to sue me, and we

France, and he put on Ferrari club meets there starting that year, which Merritt attended in ’69, ’70 and ’72.

At the same time, Merritt made contact with a Dutchman named Robby Box who lived in Switzerland and dug old cars out of Europe, even from behind the Iron



330 2+2 that Merritt was to deliver from Chinetti's shop to a Dr. Cluxton (Harley's father) in Chicago in January, 1966.

"The three of us set off in the dead of winter at night—we're going to convoy, so that if we have car troubles we can help each other keep these turkeys running, because the Bread Van and the TdF were well-used cars at this point—and we got separated before we even got out of the city. Our first stop was going to be Ed Jurist's car store in Nyack, and we were going to try to sell the cars to him. They never got there, so I started down the throughway in a blizzard to Batavia, New York, where we were going to stay the night.

"I hadn't driven an hour when the car quit running. I could hear the fuel pump running, so I figured I was out of gas and the gauge was bad. A patrolman stopped and gave me a few gallons, which I had to put in standing out in the cold and the wind. I told him I had two pals that were supposed to be on the throughway in Ferraris and asked if he'd seen them. 'No,' he said, 'but I've had radio reports about a strange-looking car going like a bat out of hell. The snowplows are reporting that this thing passed them going 100 mph on a snowy, icy road.'

"Well, it was Wales and Kennedy in the Bread Van," Merritt said. "What had happened was that a rock had flown up and broken the windshield of the TdF, which was tempered glass and shattered, so they limped into Jurist's place, left the TdF, piled into the Bread Van and started off down the road. They were livid, because they figured I had a nice cozy car and they had this thing with no heater in the middle of winter. The next morning, I wake up in a motel and sure enough, there's the Bread Van.

"Wales tells me this crazy story that at some point a car had decided to race him in a blizzard, and Wales had decided to race him back. It was a

cop! At some point, Wales realized it and pulled over, and then sort of rolled out onto the ground wearing this huge raccoon coat and a Russian hat—he must have looked like a grizzly bear. 'Take me to jail!' he said. 'I'm frozen, I've had it,

17th, a 250 LM he got from Robby Box, another Count Volpi car. He paid \$8,000 for it, "which was a ton of money," and had Box air-freight it to Detroit in time for a big Ferrari Club meet. His plans to show the car were nearly ruined when

use...it had electric windows, a nice quilted interior, some extra air vents, a little bit of sound insulation, bumpers front and rear, Teflon suspension bushings. It was a delightful car to drive. I even drove it to Mid-Ohio for a club



I hate this car—just put me in jail so I can get warm! The cop said, 'No, no...just slow down, because the bridges are icy!'"

The Bread Van made it back to Detroit intact, and Merritt, not having a garage, kept it in his front yard with a few other Ferraris. "I had a picture of the Bread Van, the TdF and a 275 GTS sitting in the snow, and the Bread Van was the only one that would start. To this day, I don't know why, because logic would tell you that the race car wouldn't, but that Bread Van would start in the coldest weather!"

The Bread Van may have been the most visually notorious of Merritt's Ferraris, but his greatest of all, he says, was his

it arrived with a big dent in the nose, but fortunately some English panel-beaters he'd known for years were able to repair the bodywork.

The damaged paint was another matter. The car was painted silver, a notoriously difficult color to match, but when he asked a "rinky-dink paint shop" to match it, he found it was merely ground aluminum in carrier, with no tinting, and a perfect match was made. "We got to the meet with the paint practically not set up hard, and that car was the center of attention," Merritt said. "If you can imagine a 250 LM racing car that had been very judiciously but only slightly modified for road

**(Top)** In 1966, Merritt and Gary Wales imported the Count Volpi Bread Van from Europe. **(Above)** The greatest Ferrari he's ever owned, a 250 LM. **(Opposite, top)** Merritt, standing, with his Indy racer. **(Right)** Merritt had 21 Ferrari engines at one point, and envisioned himself running a Ferrari junkyard.

event with my wife, with our son Kendall sitting on a tool bag on the door sill!"

Merritt owned and enjoyed the LM for a while, "and then I needed money, as usual." He sold the car to broker Kirk White for \$14,000 and agreed to deliver it to a truck stop in Toledo, Ohio, where it would



be loaded up and taken to its new owner in Fort Collins, Colorado. "I was in the LM by myself with my son and two other guys in a Fiat 124 following me to drive me home, and I decided, well, I've never really driven this Ferrari flat-out. This is my last chance to find out what the car really feels like.

"I ran the thing up to 7,000 rpm in fifth gear—I have no idea what ratios it had, but I had to be going 150, for sure, even with the lowest ratios. I'm

Toledo, there's a big traffic jam. I'm stopped, and I notice that the drawbridge was up. And all of a sudden, out of nowhere, four or six cops jumped on the car and pulled me out like a common criminal. No cop was ever on my tail, so I said, 'Officers, what's this all about?' They said, 'You've been speeding! We're taking you to jail!'"

The arrival of the chase car meant that Merritt's LM didn't have to be towed, and the hun-

spent a night in jail for that car, which was worth it, in truth!"

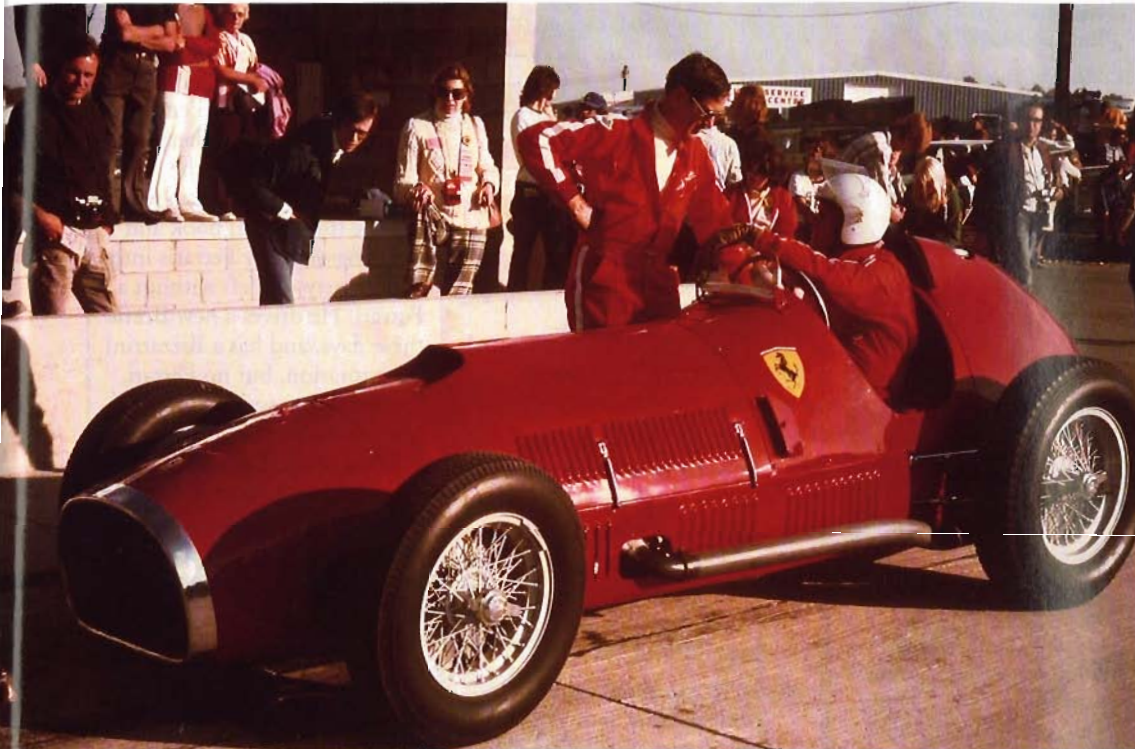
The 250 LM was sold to pay for Merritt's next piece of exotica, the Grant Piston Ring Special that had raced at Indianapolis in 1952. He almost didn't get it. The word of his impending purchase made it back to his old partner, Carl Bross, who overbid Merritt for the car when he found out it was for sale. "Not too long after that, Bross became ill and died. This was

nerve to drive it flat-out. It was still in wild Indy tune, and half of its 24 plugs would foul. I never drove it on more than six cylinders. Carroll Shelby drove it in an exhibition at Long Beach and drove the hell out of it, because he's brave!

"We had fun with that car," Merritt continued. "It had a 14:1 compression ratio, and the fuel formula is one-third each methanol, benzene and aviation gas, the three most toxic, evil substances known to man. We had to have the gas tank welded up because it would eat holes in the tank. The gas lines would bubble, too. We'd run it with the tailpipe sticking into Ernie's garage to try to muffle the noise, and the formaldehyde coming out of that thing would burn your eyes and your lungs. You couldn't stay behind that car, and I heard that was even true in races."

In mid-1976, Merritt, now divorced, moved from Detroit to Washington, D.C., where he lobbied on behalf of gasohol for the State of Nebraska. "Ferrari had gotten me into the alcohol fuels crusade," Merritt explained. "I'd found a book put out by Shell Italy called *Apunti d'Storia* that claimed Enzo Ferrari had become famous not because he was a great mechanic or a great driver or a business genius, but because he had this rocket fuel supplied by Shell Oil—Shell Dynamin, which was 20% grain alcohol. In 1932, every car in the Mille Miglia ran Shell Dynamin. It kept the heads cool so they didn't crack, had octane and didn't foul plugs like lead.

"I fought the oil companies from '76 to '80 from here in the house [*an 1850 parsonage just outside Washington, D.C. that Merritt originally rented for \$90 a month.—Ed.*], then Reagan killed the program and I threw in the towel," Merritt said. "In 1983, I got lucky and got a job at the Department of Transportation, where I still am, as an automotive safety compliance analyst. All the paperwork for personal imports



flying blissfully along, passing semi trucks like they're standing still, and the faster that car went the better it felt. It tracked down the road straight as an arrow, and it was just a joy. I was cranking along for a fair distance at some really hellacious speeds, always over 100, and as I get to the outskirts of

dred-dollar bill in his pocket from a VW sale the night before meant he could make bail. But when he returned to Toledo for his court appearance on Monday, he found himself before a tough judge who'd seen the LM in the parking lot and figured it for a 200-mph car. His was the last case on the docket, just after that of a kid who'd been caught going 120 on the other side of town. "He got two weeks in jail, and I was scared!" Merritt said. They'd put up the drawbridge to stop the kid, and had gotten Merritt in the process. He ended up being sentenced to three nights in jail, with two suspended for the time he'd spent on bail. "So I

'72-'73. A lawyer named Ernie Beutler—who'd bought one of my Lussos—and I approached Bross' mother and offered to sell off the collection as brokers for a commission, then Anthony Bamford came over from England and told Mama he'd buy the whole shebang from her. It turned out that the Indy car was in Bross' personal estate and that everything else was in the company name, so Ernie and I put the heat on the estate and got the car for \$20,000.

"I drove it, and it scared the hell out of me," Merritt admits. "It was big, long and flexible, and obviously far faster than anything I could ever tackle. Mercifully, we didn't have the



## Do You Own One? Dick Merritt's 48 Ferraris

(Model/Coachbuilder/Notes/Serial no.)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 212/250 Touring barchetta (ex-Henry Ford) s/n 0253EU</li> <li>2. 340 Ghia coupe (ex-Parravano) 0150A</li> <li>3. 375 MM Farina competition coupe (ex-factory) 0320AM</li> <li>4. 250 MM Vignale roadster 0332MM</li> <li>5. 410 Superfast I Farina coupe (ex-Jackie Cooper) 0483SA</li> <li>6. 212 Ghia coupe</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. 250 LM Scaglietti coupe (ex-Count Volpi, imported from Switzerland) 5995</li> <li>18. 375 Plus Farina competition roadster (exported to England) 0392AM</li> <li>19. 250 MM Vignale coupe 0266M</li> <li>20. 250 TR ('57 pontoon roadster, exported to England) 0730TR</li> <li>21. 250 TR ('59 ex-factory team roadster, exported to England) 0770TR</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30. 212 Farina convertible (with Chevy V8 engine) 0235EU</li> <li>31. 250 GT SWB Berlinetta (bought in Switzerland, exported to England) 2159GT</li> <li>32. 250 GT Farina coupe (parted out) 1443GT</li> <li>33. 330 GTC Farina coupe (with sunroof, imported from Switzerland) 09185</li> <li>34. 275 GTB Scaglietti long-nose coupe (bad engine) 08669</li> <li>35. 275 GTB/6 LWB Scaglietti coupe (exported to Switzerland) 06639</li> <li>36. 250 GT California Scaglietti spyder (ex-Peterson) 1715GT</li> <li>37. 250 GT SWB Scaglietti coupe 3963GT</li> <li>38. 250 TR Scaglietti roadster ('58 Le Mans winner, exported to France) 0728TR</li> <li>39. 246 S Dino Fantuzzi roadster (imported from France, exported to Belgium) 0784 TR</li> <li>40. 250 TR Scaglietti roadster (pontoon body, imported from France) 0742TR</li> <li>41. 500 TRC Scaglietti roadster (exported to England) 0686MD/TR</li> <li>42. 250 GT Boano coupe 0601GT, engine 2723</li> <li>43. 250 GT Boano alloy coupe (exported to England) 0569GT</li> <li>44. 250 GT Boano coupe (exported to England) 0631GT</li> <li>45. 250 GT Boano coupe (exported to England) 0579GT</li> <li>46. 250 GT Lusso Scaglietti coupe 4377GT</li> <li>47. 250 GT Farina Europa 0395GT</li> <li>48. 212 Vignale coupe 0289EU</li> </ul> |
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- 7. 166 GP racer (exported to France) 06C
- 8. 250 GT SWB Scaglietti coupe (imported from Italy) 2521GT
- 9. 250 GT TdF Scaglietti coupe (imported from Italy) 0555GT
- 10. 250 GT "Bread Van" (ex-Count Volpi, imported from Italy) 2819GT
- 11. 195 Ghia coupe 0101S
- 12. 250 GT Farina coupe (imported from Switzerland) 1419GT
- 13. 250 GTE 2+2 Farina coupe (imported from Switzerland) 3177GT
- 14. 250 GT Lusso Scaglietti coupe (imported from Switzerland) 5543GTL
- 15. 250 GT Lusso Scaglietti coupe (imported from Switzerland) 4971GTL
- 16. 250 GTE 2+2 Farina coupe (ex-R. Pass)

- 22. 500 Farina Mondial roadster (exported to England) 0438MD, engine 0538MD
- 23. 500 TRC Scaglietti roadster 0668MD/TR
- 24. 500/625 TR Scaglietti roadster (ex-Pabst) 0612 MD/TR
- 25. 121LM Scaglietti roadster (exported to France) 0558LM
- 26. 330GT 2+2 Farina coupe (imported from Switzerland) 8829
- 27. 410 SA Farina coupe (imported from Switzerland) 1305SA
- 28. 250 GT California Scaglietti spyder (ex-Jo Siffert, imported from Switzerland) 1217GT, engine 2507GT
- 29. 375GP Indy (Grant Piston Ring Special) 02

comes across my desk, and the government pays me for my hobby and expertise!"

In a world of escalating prices, however, it wasn't easy to maintain a Ferrari habit on a bureaucrat's salary, and Merritt sold one of his last Ferraris—a pontoon TR (s/n 0742) he'd gotten in a trade with Bardinon—in 1984 for \$300,000. "If someone had said, 'Merritt, sit on that car. It's going to be a four-million dollar car,' I probably wouldn't have believed it. And \$300,000 looked awfully good in the bank."

And so the man who did so much to foster Ferrari enthusiasm—encouraging others to buy the cars, starting the Ferrari Club of America, writing the first Ferrari book and bringing so many Ferraris into the country—is left without a Ferrari. He drives a new Beetle these days, and has a Bizzarrini in restoration, but no Ferrari.

"It's a bittersweet thing," Merritt said. "My prophesy was fulfilled beyond my wildest expectations. I never dreamed that the GTOs I passed up for five to nine thousand dollars would go for 14 million at one time. And I didn't have the capital to sit on this stuff—I always had to sell one car in order to buy the next one. That was fun, because I got to see so many cars and learn a lot, but it's to the point that, basically, I can't buy back in. I could buy a mundane Ferrari, but the stuff I used to own that was really great, I can't buy now—Lussos that I sold for \$5,000 I could buy back in for \$125,000, which is a little tough, but I guess that's life. I proved my point, but it steamrolled past any imagination.

"What's even worse," Merritt continued, "I dreamed up the swindle of 'lifetime memberships' in the Ferrari Club back when I didn't think it would survive. They were \$100, and I didn't buy one myself, so now I have to pay \$80 every year just to stay a member. If only I'd had the courage of my convictions!" ●