

The Magazine About Ferrari

# FORZA

## ENZO AT ODDS

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Mid-Engine Assault

## PHOTO ESSAY

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# First Look! 550 Maranello

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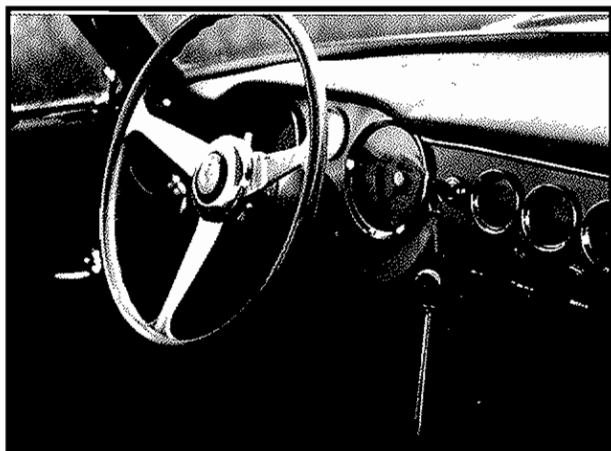


# NIXON GOES TO FERRARI



**In the early Sixties as a young *Autosport* reporter, Chris Nixon made a series of memorable visits to the Ferrari factory. Today, his mental recollections are as stirring as his black and white photographs—printed from negatives forgotten in his files for more than three decades.**

*On the opposite page, Chris Nixon (the young man leaning over Ferrari's right shoulder) watches attentively as Enzo signs a copy of his memoirs after lunch at the Palace Hotel in Modena in the late fall of 1962. Below, the fine frontal aspect of a newly minted 250 SWB. Bottom, the interior of another SWB, this one picked up the same day by Steve Earle, future creator of the Monterey Historic Races.*



**I**n 1960 I was a staff writer for the English weekly car magazine *Autosport*. That year I went to Italy to watch the races at Monza and Modena. This led me to Pete Coltrin, the man you just *had* to know if you wanted to go anywhere and meet anyone in Modena or Maranello. A crew-cut Californian with a daft sense of humor and a taste for very dry martinis, Pete had made his home in Modena a couple of years earlier, having fallen in love with Ferraris and Maseratis and the Italian way of life in general. He became a freelance writer/photographer and set up shop in the bar of the Palace Hotel, where we would meet every morning to plan the day's activities. It was he who arranged my first experience with the magic of Maranello—a visit to the Ferrari factory—by introducing me to press officer Franco Gozzi.

Modena was unique in the Fifties and Sixties. The Maserati factory was not far from the main railway station and although the Ferrari factory lay a few miles up the road in Maranello, the Scuderia's original prewar garage and offices were on Viale Trento Trieste, just a short walk from the Palace Hotel. All of the visiting drivers stayed at either the Palace or the Albergo Real nearby.

Today's journalists would not believe how accessible the Grand Prix aces were in those days. The idea of casually joining Michael Schumacher or Damon Hill for a relaxed lunch in a local *trattoria* is just laughable, but in Modena in 1960 one thought nothing of sitting down for a meal of pasta and wine with Hill, Ginther, Moss, or whoever was in town.

So, not long after the Modena Grand Prix I found myself having just such a lunch with Wolfgang von Trips. A real-life count, he was an extremely affable man, multi-lingual and charming and known to the motor-racing fraternity as Taffy. To my surprise he asked *me*—a stranger—for advice. With both Porsche and Ferrari offering contracts, he was having a hard time making up his mind who to drive for.

I asked if he really believed he was capable of winning the World Championship in the coming season.

"Absolutely!" he replied.

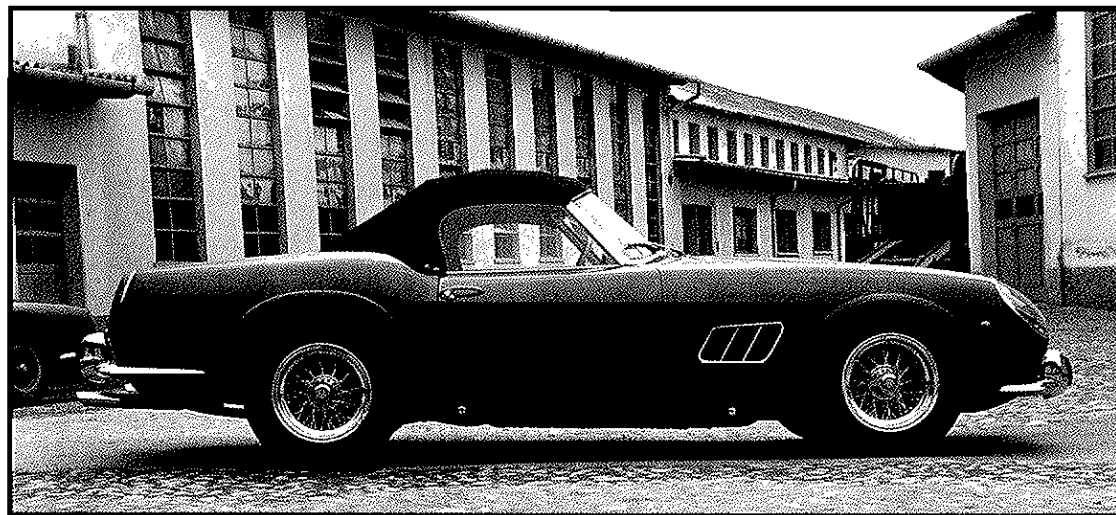
"Then you must sign with Ferrari."

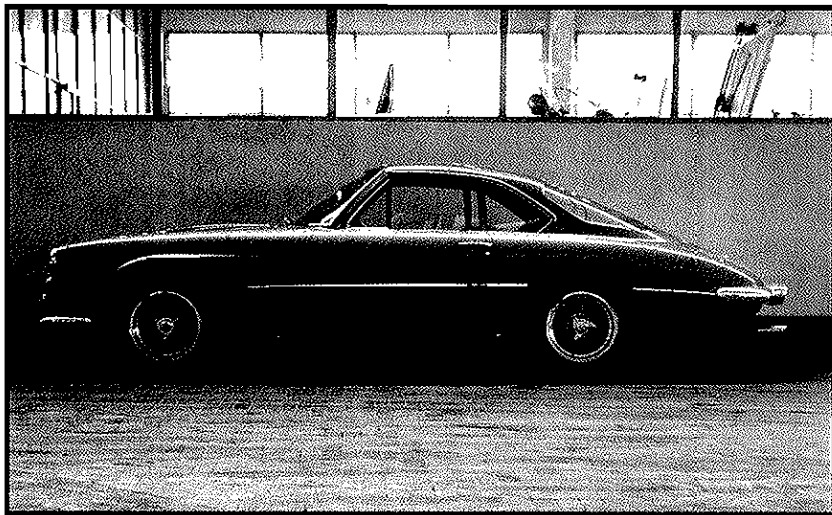
Porsche was about to make their debut in Formula One, and although they had been very successful with their sports and Formula Two cars, you didn't have to be a genius to realize that they were unlikely to beat Ferrari the first time out.

Of course, Taffy knew this as well as I, but I guess he just wanted an outsider's

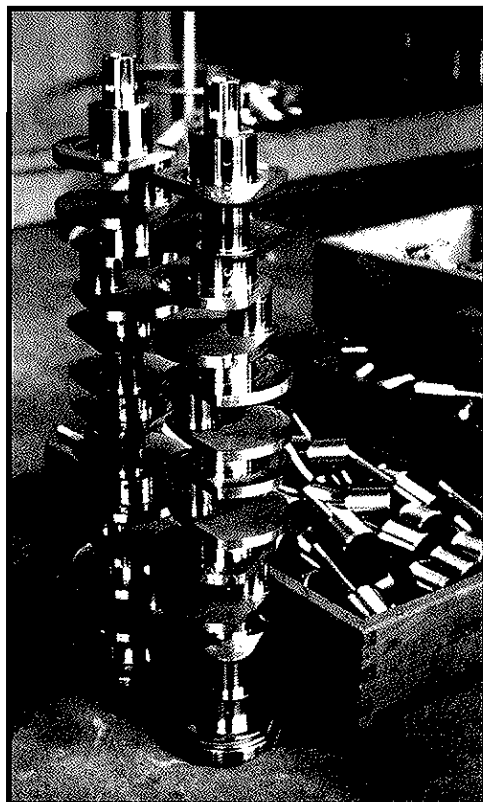


*In the photograph above, a batch of completed Ferrari GTEs and a couple of California Spyders await delivery in front of the production line at Maranello. This building was brand-new in 1962. Pictured to the right, the California Spyder has to be one of Pininfarina's most elegant designs. A topless version of the 1957 Series 2 Berlinetta, the California began with a 2600 mm chassis and some 46 examples of this long-wheelbase car were built. A short-wheelbase (2400 mm) version was introduced late in 1959 and a further 50 were made.*





*Above, the supercar of the Sixties. The 400 Superamerica, for which 400 bhp and 186 mph was claimed by the factory, was indeed another fabulous product of two automotive masters. Ferrari and Pininfarina produced several versions of this model. Pictured to the right, works of art. These magnificent crankshafts were machined from solid billets of steel.*



opinion to confirm his own. By the time we had finished our lunch he had committed himself to joining Scuderia Ferrari.

Not long after the British Grand Prix at Aintree, (which Taffy won after an outstanding drive in torrential rain) I persuaded *Autosport's* editor, Gregor Grant, that we should run a special Ferrari issue at the end of the season to acknowledge what was undoubtedly going to be a double-championship year for the Scuderia. I wrote to Gozzi, explaining my plan and asked if he would set up interviews with key Ferrari personnel and drivers, starting with Enzo himself. To my delight Gozzi agreed, and he suggested I visit Maranello right after the Italian Grand Prix.

Sadly, *Autosport's* special issue never happened because Taffy and fourteen spectators lost their lives on the second lap at Monza, after his Ferrari tangled with Jim Clark's Lotus. When I heard the news that Sunday evening I was stunned, and my memory flashed back to that lunch a year earlier when Taffy had been convinced he would win the world title with Ferrari.

As was always the case when one of his cars was involved in a fatality in Italy, Enzo Ferrari came under heavy fire from the press and the church. He closed the competition department and declared the factory off-limits to all visitors.

**B**ut another large problem was about to burst into the open, and in November Ferrari announced that no fewer than eight of his executives had resigned. They included chief racing engineer Carlo Chiti, team manager Romolo Tavoni, test driver Giotto Bizzarini, and Fausto Galarsi, in charge of the foundry. Two soon returned to the fold, but the other six were out of work.

But not for long, for in February 1962 it was announced that they had all joined ATS, a new company financed by three very rich men, Count Giovanni Volpi, Jaime Ortiz Patino, and Giorgio Billi, with the aim of going racing in Formula One and building GT cars.

I was now on Ferrari's invitation list, and that same February found me back in Italy for his annual press conference and the exciting moment when we journalists were led into the forecourt at Maranello to see the cars that would contest the coming season. On this occasion the star was the GTO, which looked every inch the winner it would soon become.

Since my tour of the factory had been aborted the previous September by the von Trips tragedy, Gozzi saw to it this time

that I was virtually given the run of the place, only the competition department being off-limits to my camera. I was even granted a brief audience with Enzo Ferrari in his spartan office, which was dominated by a photograph of his beloved son, Dino, who had died of muscular dystrophy in 1956 at the age of 26. The portrait hung above three plastic roses, each with a lighted bulb inside. Later I was shown Dino's office, which had been kept exactly as he had left it. In a nearby garage his car, a Fiat 500, was mounted on blocks.

**A** few days later Pete Coltrin and I drove to Bologna where Chiti and Tavoni had just moved into their new ATS headquarters.

Already a factory was in the planning stage, to be built at nearby Sasso Marconi. Chiti and Tavoni would not be drawn into giving the reasons for the mass walk-out from Ferrari, but rumors were rife in Modena and Maranello that it was in some way due to interference by Enzo's wife Laura.

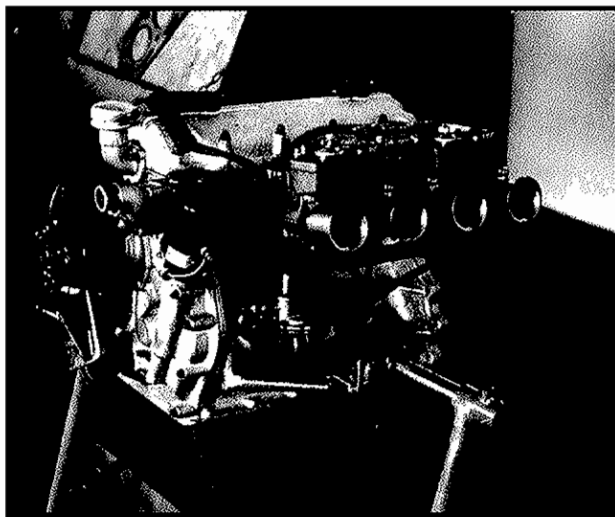
Theirs was an odd marriage, to put it mildly. Ferrari was known to have had numerous mistresses over the years and for some time his relationship with his wife had been strictly a business one, Laura being a major shareholder in the company. Both had been devastated by the death of their only son, and the fact that Enzo had a fifteen-year-old illegitimate son—Piero Lardi Ferrari—was just beginning to seep into the public domain.

Pete Coltrin and I found the two ex-Ferrari men in fine form, with Chiti putting in long hours drawing the new ATS Grand Prix car, a V8 slated to make its debut in the Italian GP. Sadly, it was a disaster and the company soon folded.

In November I was again invited to Maranello, this time for the publication of Ferrari's so-called autobiography, an event marked by a splendid lunch and lots of Lambrusco at the Palace Hotel. Entitled *Le Mie Gioie Terribili (My Terrible Joys)*, it was a truly terrible book that took selective writing to new heights, for the reader learned more from what Ferrari left out than from what he revealed. The fact that my copy is signed, dated, and dedicated to me by Enzo Ferrari certainly makes it a minor collector's item, but as a record of his life it is virtually worthless.

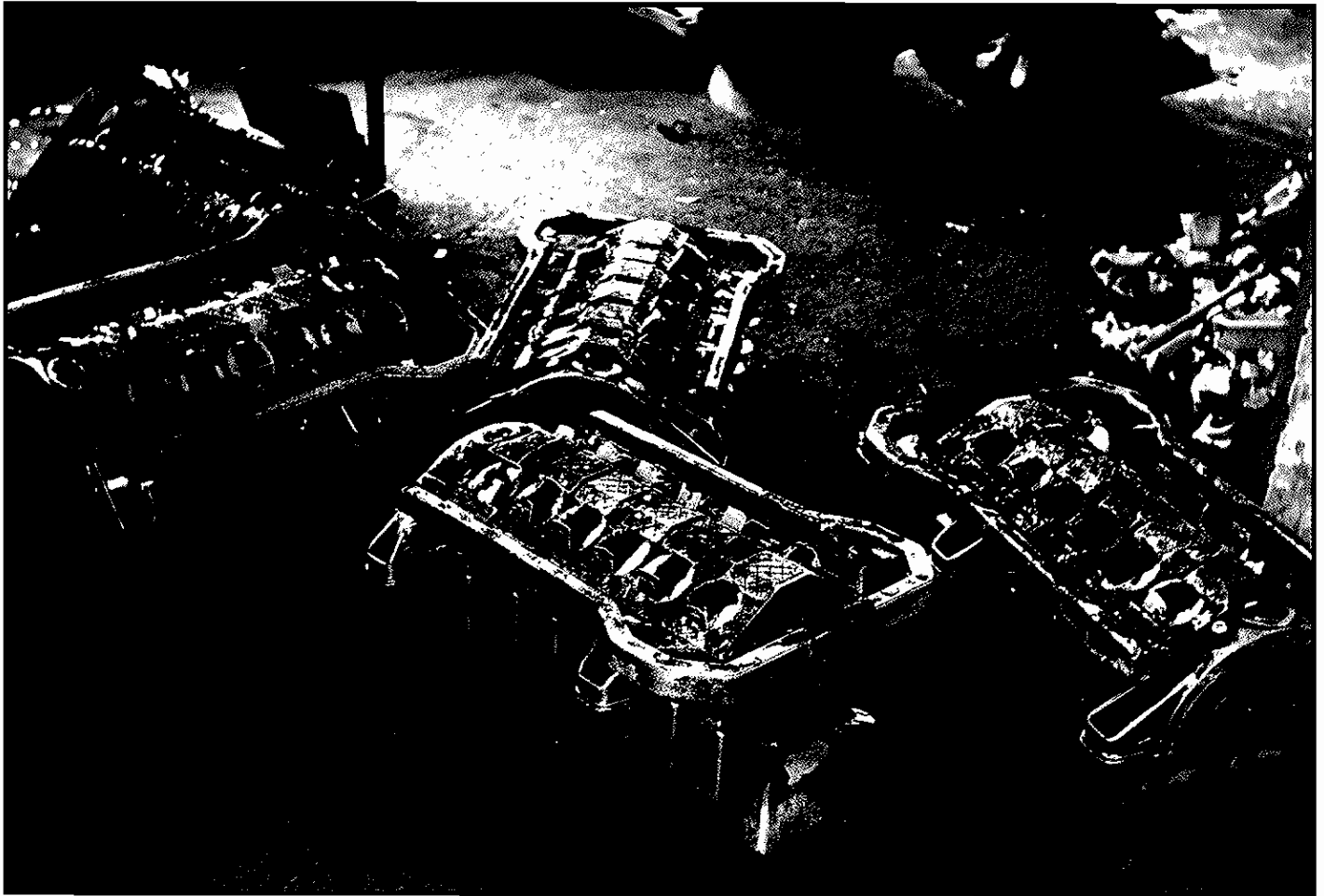
And that, unfortunately, was my last visit to Ferrari for many years, as I left *Autosport* in 1963 for the more profitable world of film and television.

But those early days in Modena and Maranello were unforgettable ones. ●



*For some time Enzo toyed with the idea of producing a small Ferrari, a car to be built by an outside firm, but nothing much came of the scheme—in the end the ASA company built just over fifty cars. To the left, the 4-cylinder unit powering the little Ferrari. In its final form it was given a 1032cc volume and put out an even 100 bhp. Below, press officer Franco Gozzi (left) poses beside the pretty little car, which had a Giugiaro-styled Bertone body.*





*Determined to be as self-sufficient as possible, Enzo set up his own foundry at Maranello in 1952. By 1960 the facility was producing more than 100 parts for the V12 engine alone, in addition to gearbox housings and differentials. The crankcases in the photograph above are just in the process of being broken out of the molds. To the right, it's lunchtime at Maranello. A craftsman's tools lie abandoned beside a dozen tiny cylinders and a finished cylinder head.*

