

LETTERS

CORRESPONDENCE FROM YOUR FELLOW READERS

2643 GT TALES & GTO GENESIS...

Dear *Cavallino*,

Thank you very much for your letter and the *Cavallino* magazine, and taking for granted what you write, that the readers are very appreciative, etc.

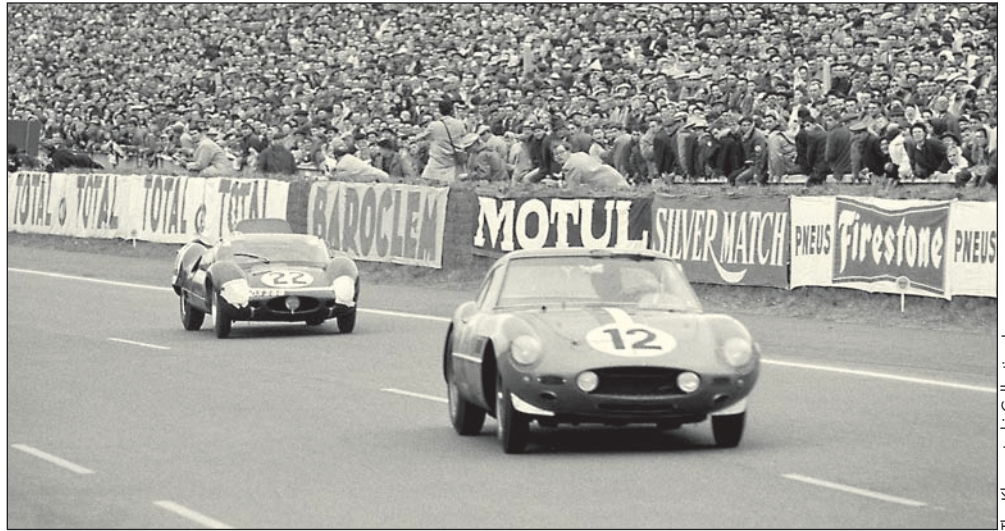
I am sending some more comments on the excellent story on the s/n 2643 GT by Keith Bluemel.

I am familiar with this car because in its Italian spell, it was owned by a collector whom I know and who let me take pictures when the car was just restored and painted in red. You are probably more interested in knowing that the car had an engine labeled 128 LM at its first outing at Le Mans, and in the data sheet that went with the car; the engine had been bench tested with 310 hp (well really cv) at 7750 rpm.

There is another little bit of information, this time from the Ferrari race results book (I did spend some of my 80 years pouring over these books to write my stories of the Ferrari). It says that the problem of high speed instability was already evident on the second test day (Thursday) and that they tested the rear spoiler and decided the car would race with it. In that same test, Baghetti said that there was a problem, the one that eventually would lead to the car's breakdown. The problem was a drop of the oil pressure in the curve due to the oil tank. It didn't say if it was the tank position or capacity.

This is the car that somebody has dubbed the 250 GTO prototype. It is obviously not the real fact because Giotto Bizzarrini, who is still live and well, has told me the story and I supposedly have written it somewhere (although I have written so much that I do not remember all).

To make a long story short, Bizzarrini says that Ferrari was noticing the SWB berlinetta was losing superiority over the competition and told him to take a chassis that was lying in the shop and do the best he could.



The Klemantaski Collection Image

Above, the 250 GT, s/n 2643 GT, at Le Mans in 1961.

He shortened a LWB chassis, put the engine farther back, modified the suspensions and covered it all with a body apparently made by kicking the aluminum sheets with his feet. That's what we saw at Monza prior to the 1961 Italian G.P.

When they were satisfied the new car was indeed what the doctor ordered, Ferrari entrusted it to Scaglietti to build the definitive body. And Scaglietti (another of the great I am lucky to be friends with) tells the story in these simple terms: "Well, they tell me to make a berlinetta body on the chassis and I drew the wires," and this is how the 250 GTO was born.

Drew the wires, in Italian, is "*ho tirato i fili*" for those not familiar with the *carrozzeri* slang which means that one takes a roll of construction steel wire about 3/8" in diameter and cutting pieces of suitable length builds a cage over the chassis trying to cover everything with smooth lines. When the job looks satisfying, this cage is used as a jig to build the aluminum body, not by hammering the sheets over it but by checking that each piece fits on the cage and then assembling the body.

At this point, I remember another bit of information. As you know, there were no draw-

ings for the 250 GTO but some years ago I was lucky to meet the owner of the first one, the s/n 3223 GT, at the Ferrari Factory. I asked his permission to take measurements of the body and with rule, plumb and level, [and] I took the necessary information with a precision, I hope, of 1-2 millimeters. I gave this information to a draftsman who made a rendering at 1/10 scale, a copy of which I have had signed by Sergio Scaglietti himself. Also, this can be made into a file if you would ever like the idea of publishing a more comprehensive story of the 250 GTO.

Another bit of information regards s/n 2429 GT. This car

was indeed equipped with a 168 engine, and during its life one owner had it modified to resemble s/n 2643 GT. You probably are aware that its present owner, an American collector, had the car restored to its pristine splendor and color. You'll excuse me for not mentioning the names, because I respect these gentlemen's privacy.

Well, I was lost in memories and this is a good effect of reading *Cavallino* magazine.

Best regards,
Gianni Rogliatti
Torino, Italy

Below, the 250 GT, s/n 2643 GT, in the pit lane at Le Mans in 1961.



Brian K. Joscelyne Image