

My 500 Mondial

THE SERENDIPITOUS STORY OF S/N 0556(0446) MD

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IMAGES FROM PRIVATE COLLECTIONS



Image Courtesy: "Ferrari: Le 4 Cilindri Sport" by Gino Munaron

Gino Munaron in the 500 Mondial, s/n 0556(0446) MD, race number 66, at the Imola Shell Cup, on June 19, 1955.

PART ONE...

In the early spring of 1955, Ferrari's chassis maker *Gilco Autotelai* delivered a new tipo 510 chassis to the Ferrari factory in Maranello. This chassis was not stamped with the next serial number, 0556 MD, that it should have received in the normal manufacturing sequence. It was immediately stamped by Ferrari with the serial number 0446 MD, which had been used the previous year on a 735 Sport sold new to François Picard of Nice, France. The 735 Sport was being replaced for Picard with the new 500 Mondial. It is presumed that this serial re-use was done for tax or carnet [customs] reasons. We call this 500 Mondial s/n 0556(stamped 0446) MD, or more simply, s/n 0556(0446) MD.

As it turns out, this re-used

serial was not the only unusual aspect of this new car. The steering box had its own previous history when it was pulled off the shelf and installed in our 500 Mondial. It was originally installed in the 375 Plus, serial number 0396 AM, which won the 1954 Le Mans 24 Hours in the hands of Maurice Trintignant and Jose Froilán Gonzalez. Thereafter, s/n 0396 AM was sold to John Edgar, who hired Jack McAfee to run it in the 1954 Carrera Panamericana. Unfortunately, McAfee crashed badly, killing his co-driver Ford Robinson. The car was returned to Italy and rebuilt. Somehow in that process the rebuilt steering box was put back on the shelf, from whence it made its way to the new s/n 0556(0446) MD. Another different aspect occurred, perhaps at the request of the client Picard. A tab was added

to the reverse lockout on the shift gate to also lock out first gear, and a note was made to that effect on the gearbox build sheet. On May 6, 1955, the first dyno run of the tipo 111 motor (used only in the Series II cars) produced a result of 173.5 horsepower at 7000 rpm, and the chronometric tachometer is marked in red at that point. The beautiful Scaglietti body was painted a light blue, the customary national racing color of France for the Frenchman Picard, and the upholstery was red "plastico" (vinyl). Sergio Sighinolfi, the Ferrari racer and test driver, performed the road test of the car before it was turned over to Picard.

Almost immediately after the car was completed and tested, François Picard and his friend Paul Maret drove the car in its first competitive outing at the 24

Heures Gran Prix de Paris - Bol d'Or at Montlhéry, on the 15th of May, 1955. It is of note that the license plate was the same number MO 33744 which had been used on Picard's earlier 735 Sport. Well into the race, Maret "ran out of road" and they had to retire the car with minor right front end damage. Two weeks later, Paul Maret and Gino Munaron entered the car at the 12 Hours d'Hyères. Only Munaron drove, but in the ninth hour the tipo 111 motor, like several of its earlier brethren, broke a connecting rod and damaged the crankcase.

Back at the factory, a replacement motor had been built, apparently on a new spare crankcase with the cylinder head from the prototype motor originally in s/n 0512 MD, hence the Weber 40 DCOA/3 carburetor serial numbers being number 2