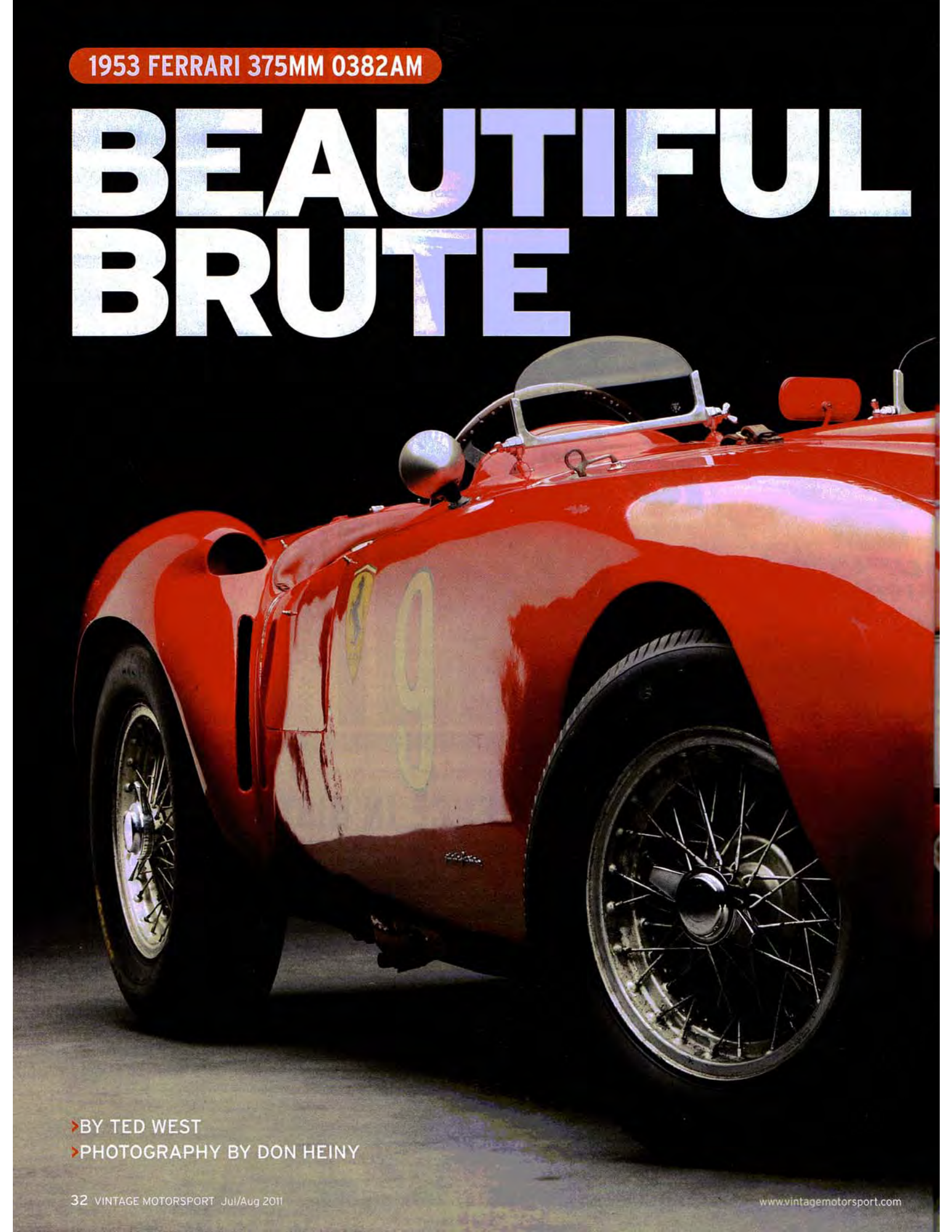
1953 FERRARI 375MM 0382AM

BEAUTIFUL BRUTE



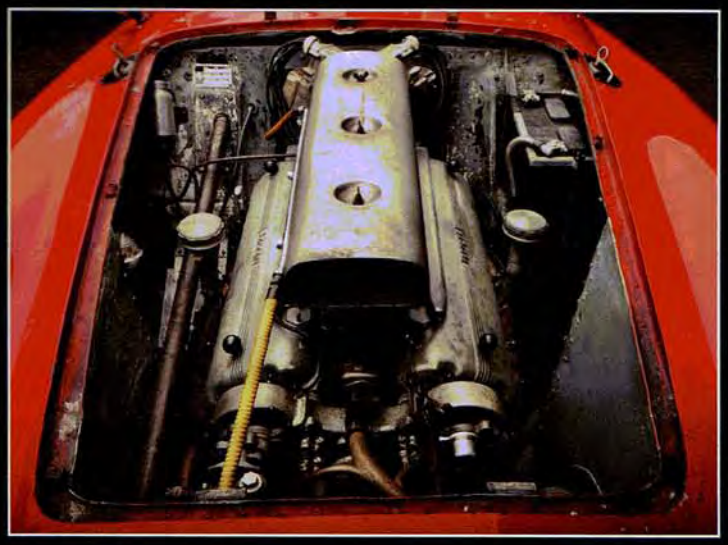
>BY TED WEST
>PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON HEINY

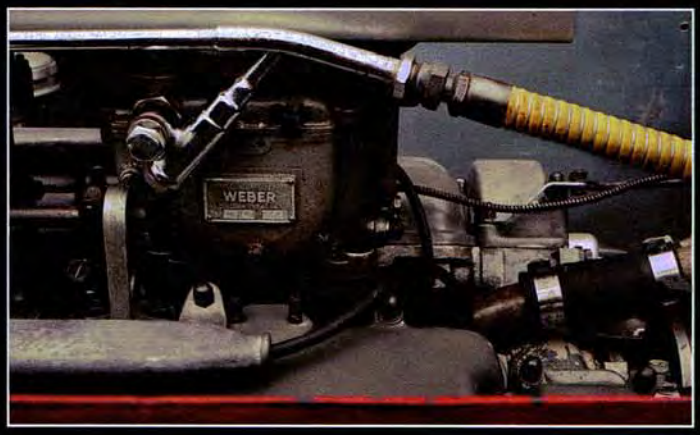
NATIONAL CHAMPION BILL SPEAR WANTED TO PLAY IN THE DEEP END. SO DID HIS 375MM.

Sports-car racing in the '50s was different. In that time, real men smoked Camels. They faced disaster and incineration wearing salad-bowl helmets and polo shirts. They never even thought of a rollbar. And the term "gentleman racer" was not dismissive; they were *nothing but* gentlemen, because nobody else could afford a competitive car. These gentlemen thought nothing of spending *six or seven thousand dollars* (a few million Lira, in the native tongue) on some flashy, blaring Italian amalgamation of aluminum and fire that wouldn't start unless you called Luigi.

Now take a look at the car in the photos. Beautiful, right? Just beautiful.

But take another look. Keep looking until you see the snaggle-toothed junkyard dog just beneath its shiny-red skin. Consider the gluttonous maw of a hood scoop, gulping down more raw air than Luciano Pavarotti (that other Italian V12) could use in a year. Notice the skinny, scary 7.00 x 16 tires this 160-mph beast teeters on even at standstill. And the downward, shark-ish mouth ... it was designed to devour opponents like hors d'oeuvres at a wake. The egg-crate grille was so charismatic that, beginning with the

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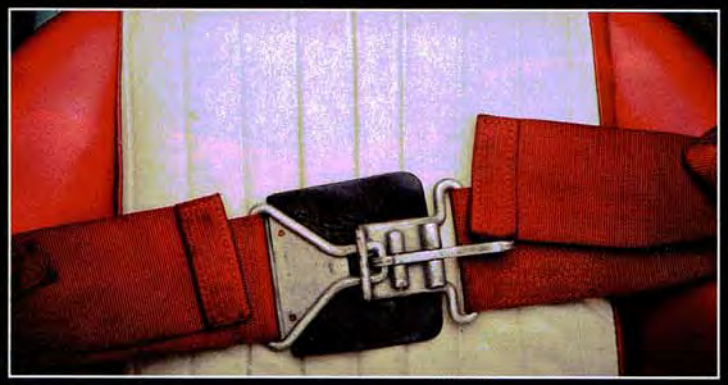

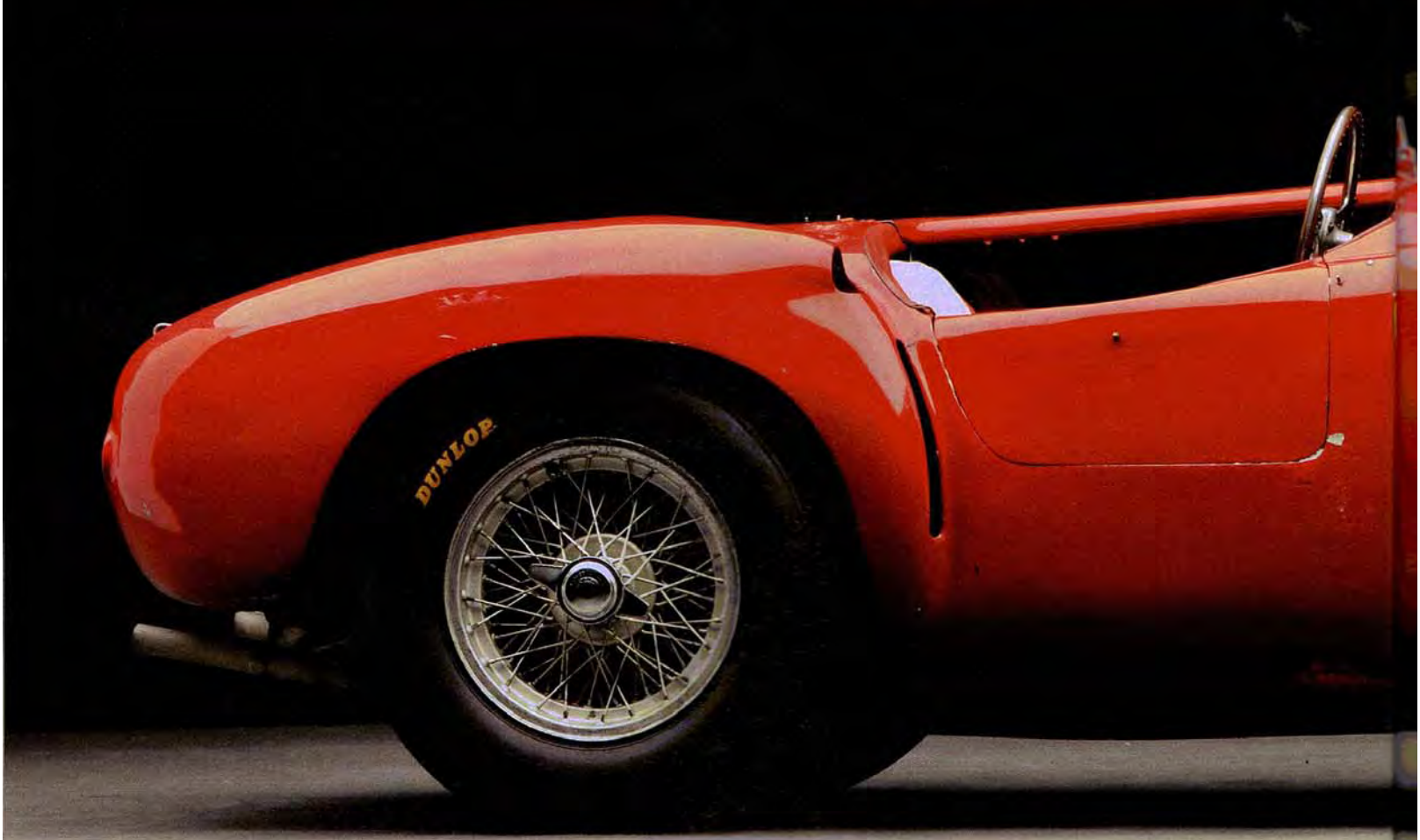
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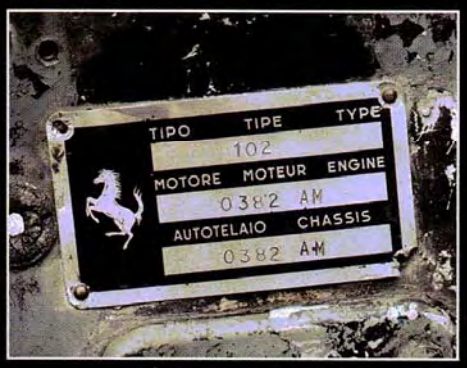


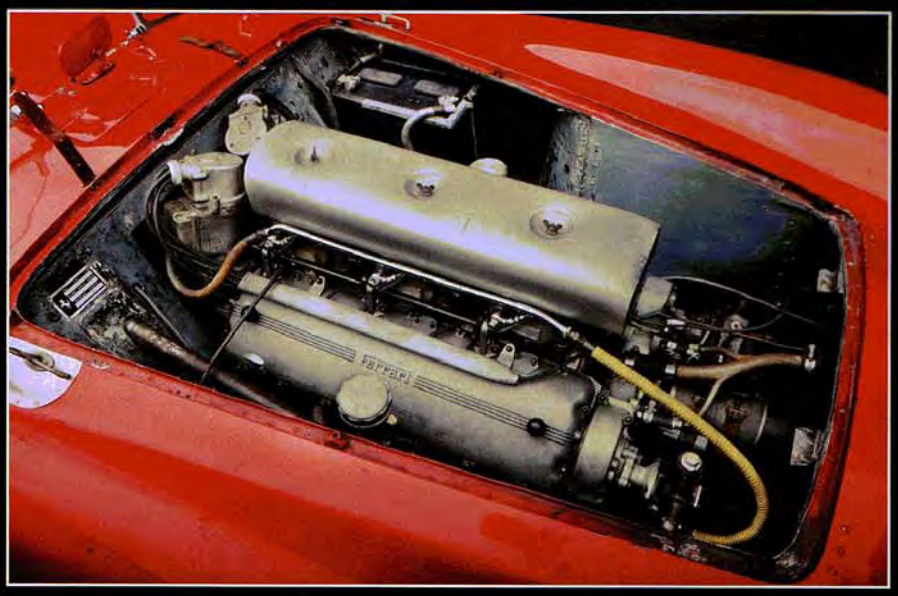
soon-to-arrive 1955 Chevrolet, imitations have surfaced again and again right up to the present day.

Our featured car, serial no. 0382 AM, is a 1953 Ferrari 375 Mille Miglia by Pininfarina. The 375 was a satisfying improvement upon the previous, ill-handling 340 MM. A 340 managed to win the 1953 Mille Miglia, but the model was unstable and a bitch to drive … so Ferrari sold them off to privateers, three of whom died in them.

But the 375 MM, a customer car with a 4.5-liter SOHC 60-degree V-12 (as opposed to the factory team's 4.9-liter 375 Plus) was an enormous success around the world in privateer hands. It used a tubular-steel spaceframe, aluminum drum brakes and weighed about 1980 wispy pounds. Independent unequal-length A-arms suspended its nose, but the rudimentary rear live axle was supported by leaf springs and located with parallel trailing arms. The 375's 4-speed all-synchro gearbox was driven by a 4,522cc V12, fed by three Weber 40 IF/4C carburetors, producing 340hp at 7000rpm.

Our Salon car was the last of nine 375 MM's built in late 1953 for the 1954 season. Simultaneously, five 4.9-liter 375 Plus models were built for the Ferrari team drivers—the factory giving itself the usual advantage over its paying customers. But the 375 Plus' extra 0.4 liters added only four more horsepower.

Our 0382 AM was purchased by the archetypal gentleman racer. Mr. William Spear maintained two residences, in Westport, Connecticut and Palm Beach. (Get the picture?) But Bill Spear was no empty suit. One of America's best road racers, he won the 1953 SCCA National Driving Championship. In 1954, he placed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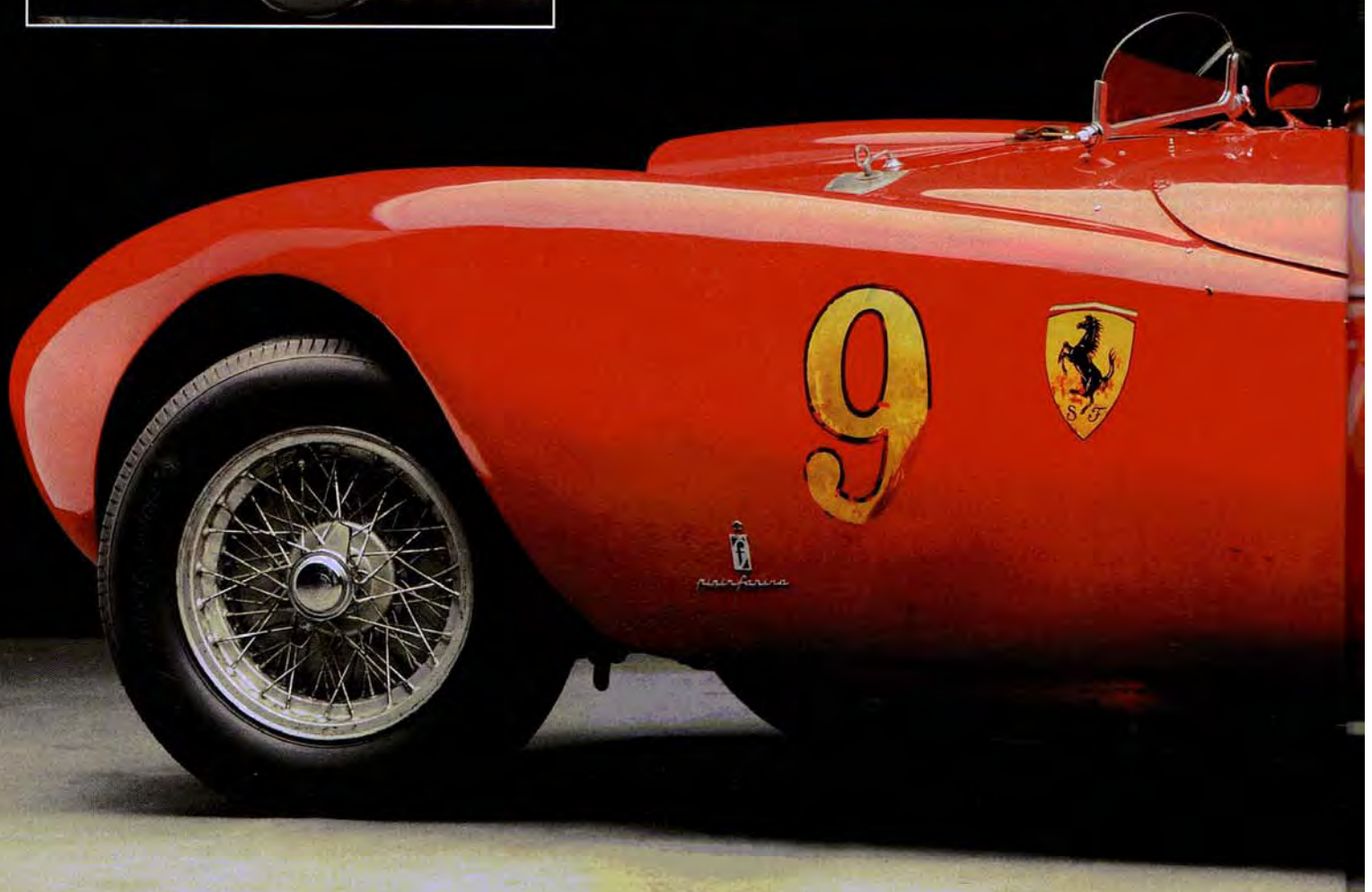
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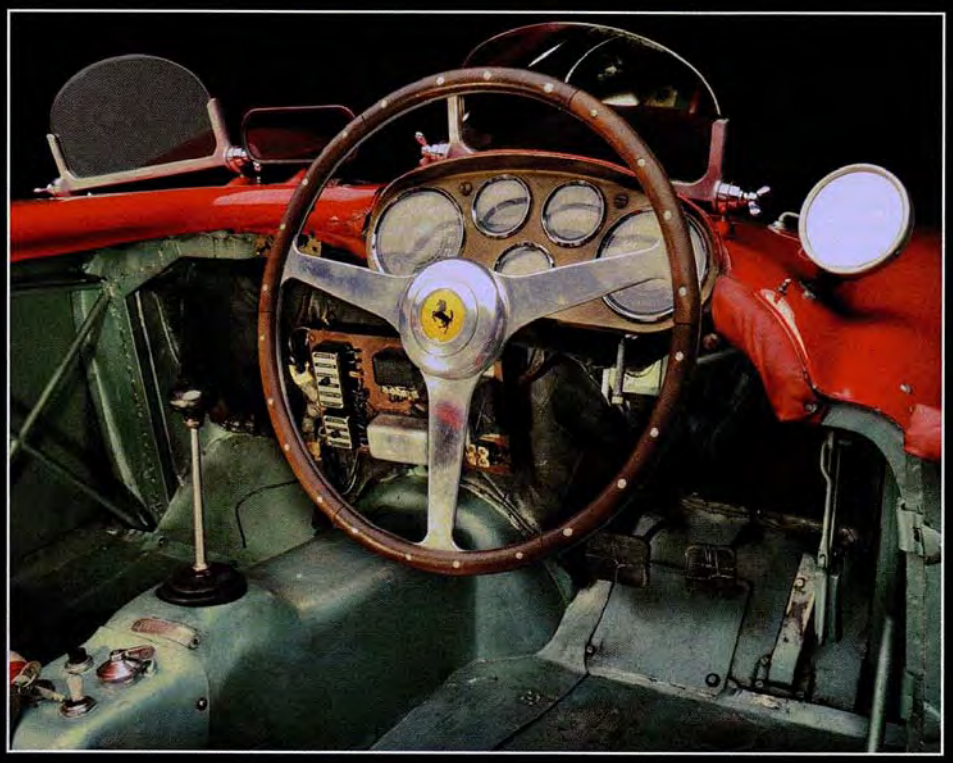
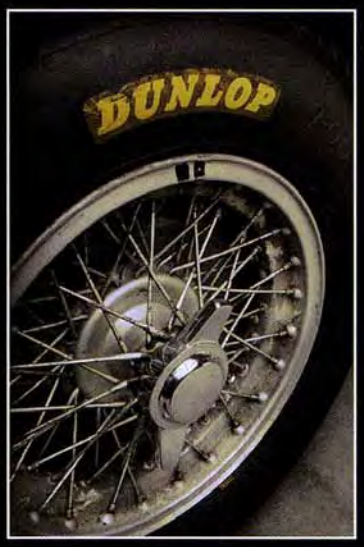


third at Le Mans, sharing a Cunningham C4-R with Sherwood Johnston. He also managed to survive 1953 driving one of the treacherous 340 MM's.

But well before 1954's 24 Hours of Le Mans in June, Spear initiated 0382 AM's racing career at Sebring in March, 1954. He shared the car with Phil Hill, and the two were fastest in the early going. But 60 laps into the 12-hour race, leading comfortably, 0382 AM's rear axle failed, ending its day. From then on, however, Spear had a banner 1954 season, winning at Andrews AFB, Thompson (twice), and March AFB, with second-place finishes at Hunter AFB and Offut AFB. At the last Watkins Glen race run on public roads, Spear, leading convincingly on his seventh circuit, scored a lap record for the 4.6-mile track of 3:10:8 at 86.6mph, before his rear axle failed. His time stands as the fastest lap ever around the old Glen road course.

In 1955, 0382 AM began the long, slow spiral downwards towards obsolescence. It was passed on to Jack Rutherford, who did three races with it, before it moved on to Duncan Black. In 1955-58, Black campaigned very successfully in 27 events, scoring the occasional win, nearly always finishing in the top five. And on July 21, 1957, Bill Spear took 0382 AM's wheel once again at the Giant's Despair Hillclimb—and won!



Dr. George Burke next purchased the car, but its winning days were past. It went then to Englishman Colin Crabbe, who, in turn, sold the car to Joel Finn in 1971 for, ohhh God ... $2400! In 1972, Finn passed it on to Ian Gunn of Mt. Kisco, N.Y. for $10,000. But Gunn, recognizing 0382 AM's immortality, vowed never to sell it as long as he lived. He kept it in his garage for 37 years—the classic barn find—and made good on his vow. At Gunn's passing, his heirs sold the car in March, 2009.

Current proud owner Andreas Mohringer, appreciating the value of 0382 AM's rich racing patina, sent it to restoration wizard Paul Russell—but not to be "restored" to showroom condition. It was to be, in Russell's well-chosen word, "re-commissioned." Mohringer wanted it made mechanically sound and thoroughly cleaned, yet it must remain the last unrestored 375 MM in the world. Russell did a sensitive job of reawakening the grand old Ferrari without in any way altering its character—and thanks to his work, it took third place in Pebble Beach 2010's Preservation Class.

Since then, Russell has further re-commissioned 0382 AM's transmission and final drive—for the most exciting of reasons. After appearing at the prestigious Villa d'Este Concours, it will "race up the hill" at Lord March's 2011 Goodwood Festival of Speed. Then it's on to the Gaisberg Hillclimb in Salzburg, the Vernaccia Silver Flag Hillclimb in Italy and the Italia Classica Ferrari Edition tour from Maranello to Venice. One of the most heavily campaigned of classic Ferraris is on the road again!