1962 Ferrari GTO

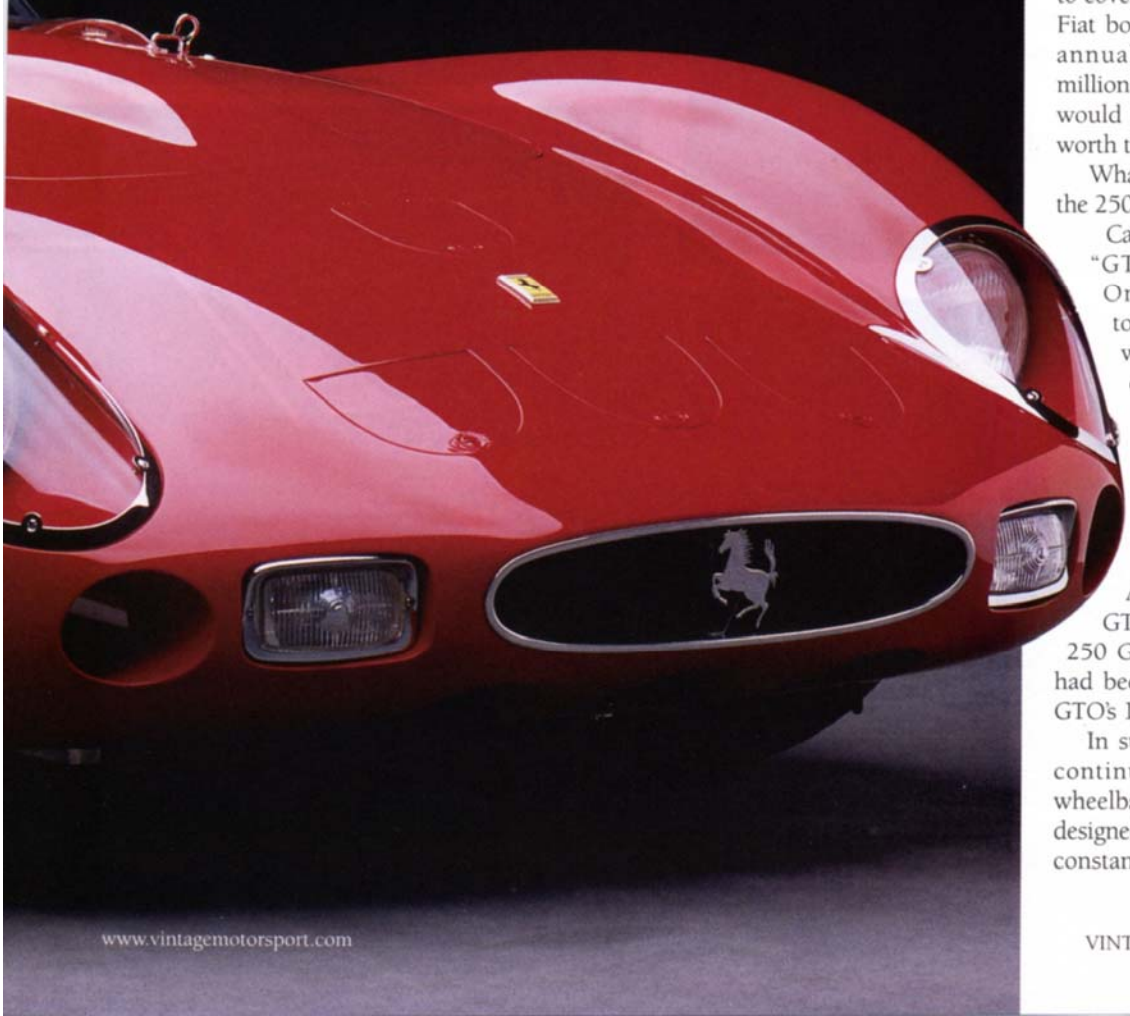
The Pearl *of* Great Price

PHOTO DAVE FRIEDMAN

Richie Ginther heads into Riverside's Turn 7 at the '63 Times Grand Prix driving for Otto Zipper.

No matter what you say, the 250 GTO is the Ferrari you really want.

BY TED WEST • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON HEINY



In the best of all possible worlds, Enzo Ferrari would never have built road cars. Racing was his passion, and Ferrari road cars had one purpose—to capitalize racing. No wonder, then, that in the early '60s he was intrigued with the idea of selling the road-car business to Henry Ford II—provided Ford would underwrite his racing.

It seems odd to think of Maranello as being strapped for cash. But in the war-torn Italy of the late '40s, Ferrari couldn't wait to get back to racing, and money was in short supply. Even as late as 1957, Ferrari's controller sold off Enzo's personal car to meet the payroll and Mr. Ferrari had to resort to using an ordinary Fiat 1100 sedan like the rest of his staff. Most "experts" figure that the price of a Ferrari road car was inflated by about $1500 in those days to cover Enzo's racing expenses years before Fiat bought the firm. Even today, Ferrari's annual F1 budget is said to be $500 million. But if Enzo Ferrari were alive, he would simply nod, never doubting it was worth the price.

Cash was the source of its very name. "GTO" stands for Gran Turismo Omologato—homologated grand-touring car—but in truth, the name was a sham.

What has the need for cash to do with the 250 GTO?

Cash was the source of its very name. "GTO" stands for Gran Turismo Omologato—homologated grand-touring car—but in truth, the name was a sham. By FIA regulation, a GT-class racing car could be homologated only if 100 examples were built, assuring that GT-class entries were "production" cars. However, Ferrari could not afford to build 100 of these labor-intensive, hand-built race cars. Accordingly, the firm claimed the GTO was merely a continuation of the 250 GT, which in short-wheelbase form had been Ferrari's GT weapon before the GTO's 1962 introduction.

In support of Ferrari's claim, the GTO continued the 250 GT SWB's 94.5-in. wheelbase and the Gioacchino Colombo-designed 3.0-liter V12, the latter receiving constant tweaking to increase power and

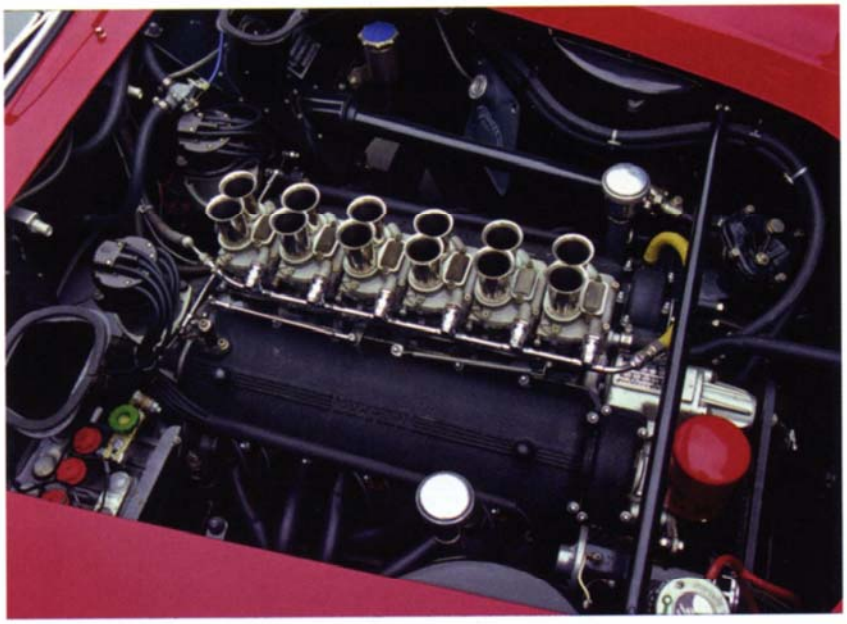
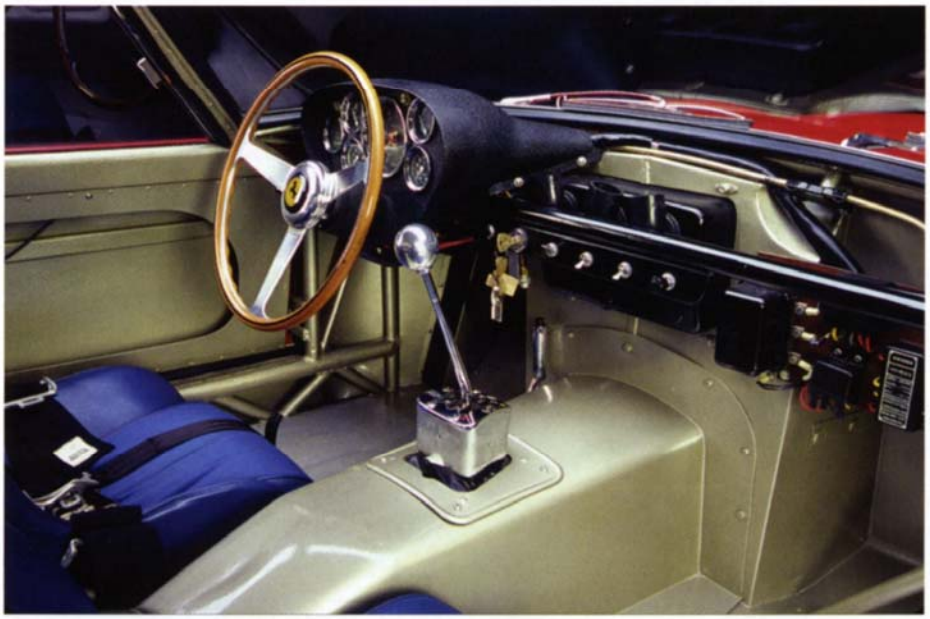
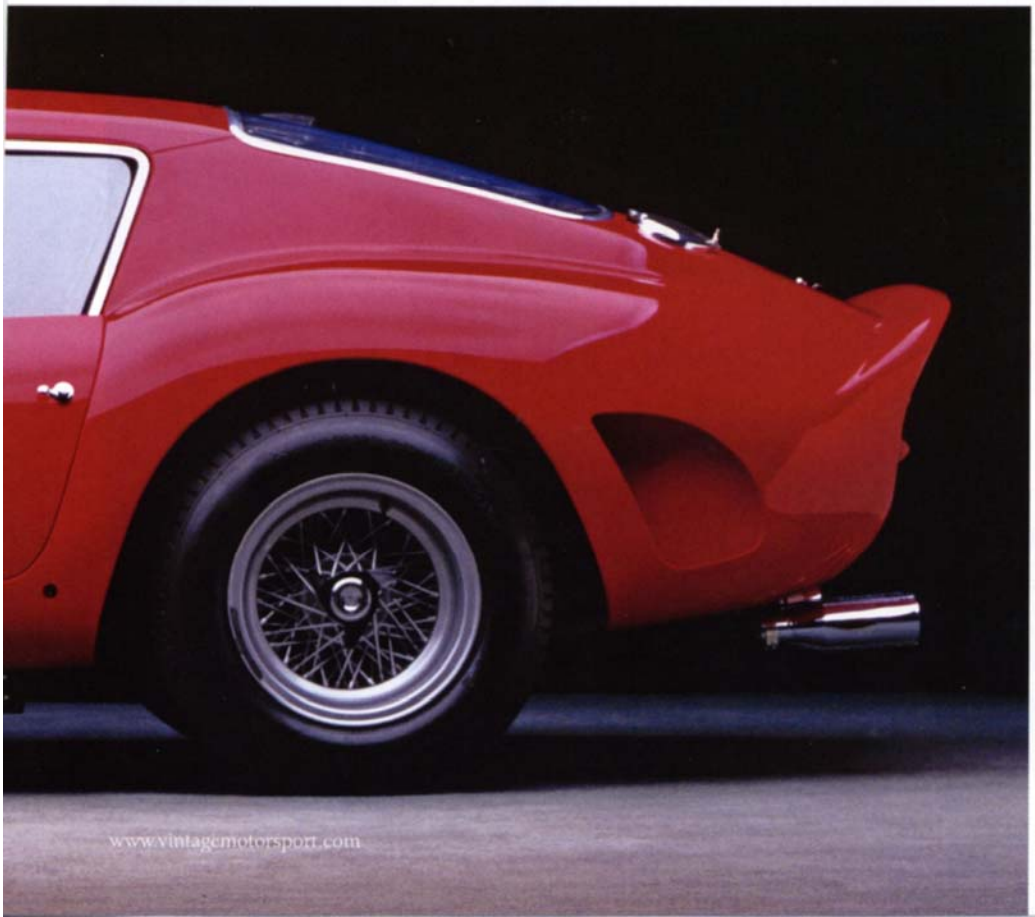


PHOTO ALLEN KUHN

◀ October 13, 1963, Richie Ginther finished behind four Cobras at Riverside.





reliability. Ferrari could point to the large numbers of 250 GTs built as proof that this 250 GTO satisfied the F.I.A. minimum-production requirement. By its very name, it was "omologato."

But one glance makes clear that the 250 GT SWB and 250 GTO are vastly different animals. Devoted Ferraristi often are heard to say that someday, some way, they'll own an SWB. But the reason they say that is, the car they'd really choose—a 250 GTO—is priced far beyond the dreams of ordinary mortals. Our Salon GTO is chassis No. 3987—the 21st example of 36 cars total—an early-1962 car that has been part of the Ralph Lauren collection since 1985. It was purchased in the mid-six figures, and the present worth of a significant 250 GTO (they're virtually all significant) is $10-12 million. Oh dear.

Ferrari could point to the large numbers of 250 GTs built as proof that this 250 GTO satisfied the F.I.A. minimum-production requirement. By its very name, it was "omologato."

The first car with the standard 250 GTO body was chassis No. 3757, more than 200 chassis numbers before our Salon car. But GTO chassis numbers were carefully blended into the 250 GT production series so they would appear to be part of the same production run. Not at all.

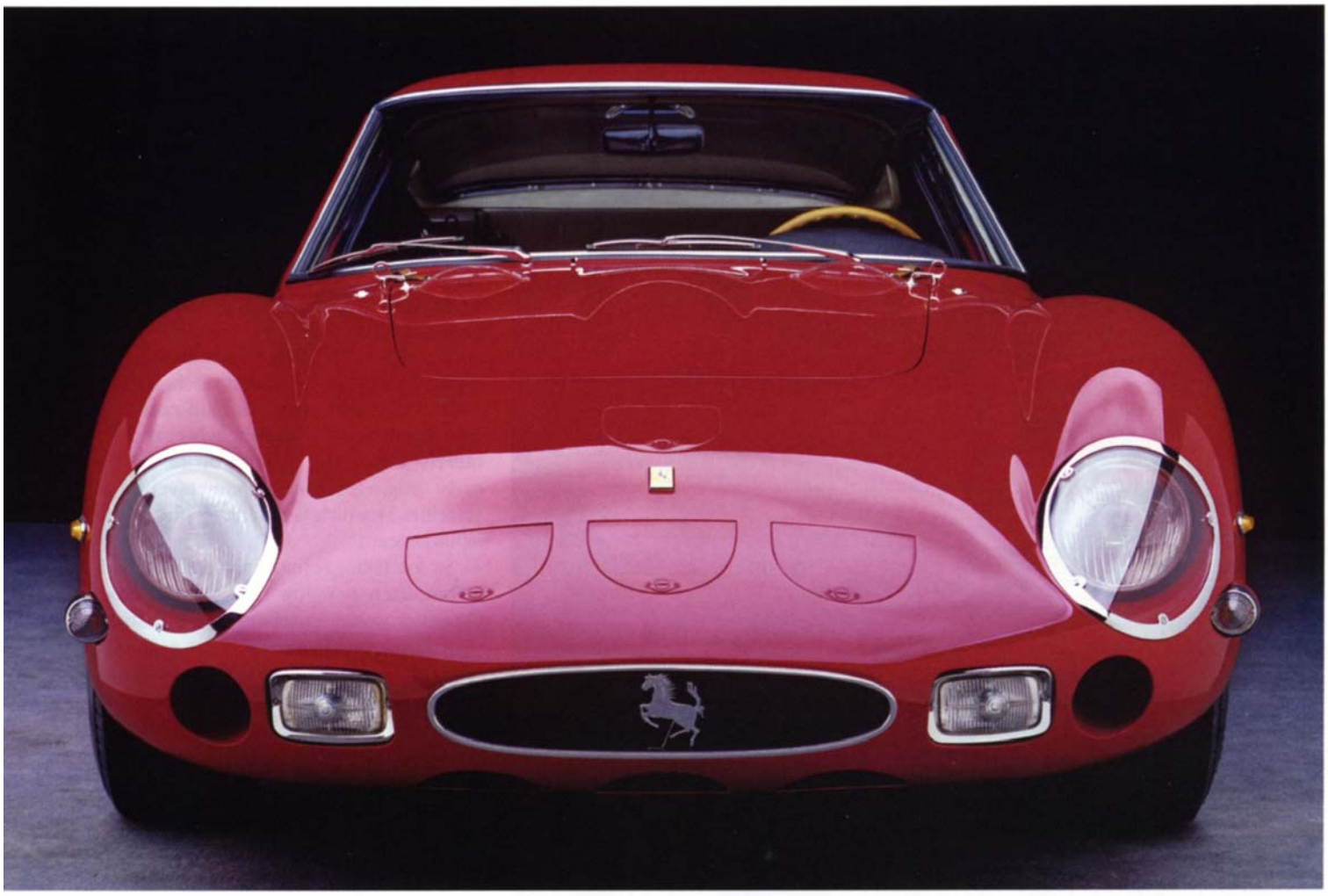
The 250 GT SWB had a successful racing career right up until it reached about 150mph. At that point, its bluff nose rose into the air and the steering wheel became merely something to hold on to. In the early '60s, racing cars were traveling at velocities at which aerodynamics became a lethal concern.

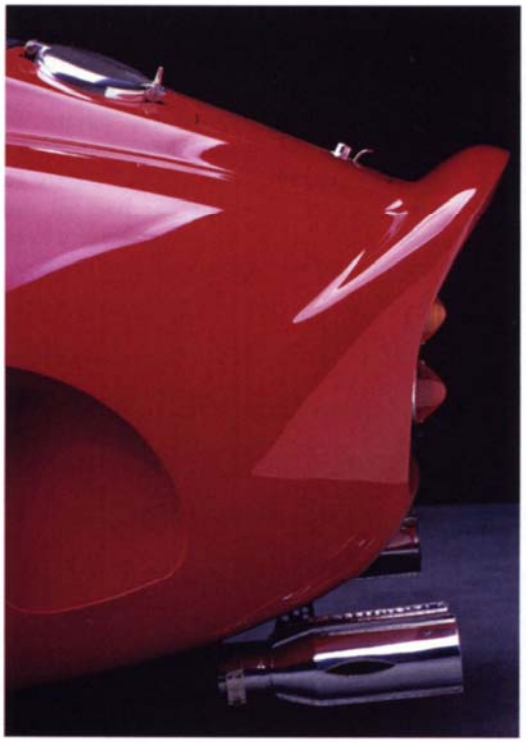
So for 1962, Ferrari drew a coupe with a completely new low-drag, low-lift nose, the better to stay earthbound. The fastback roof was cut off abruptly in a classic "Kamm tail," fitted with a pronounced spoiler lip at the insistence of American Ferrari-factory driver Richie Ginther. The resulting 250 GTO, which was built by Scaglietti, is the most admired Ferrari of all time. It was capable of 170mph, had good balance and promptly won the Grand Touring-class World Manufacturer's Championship.

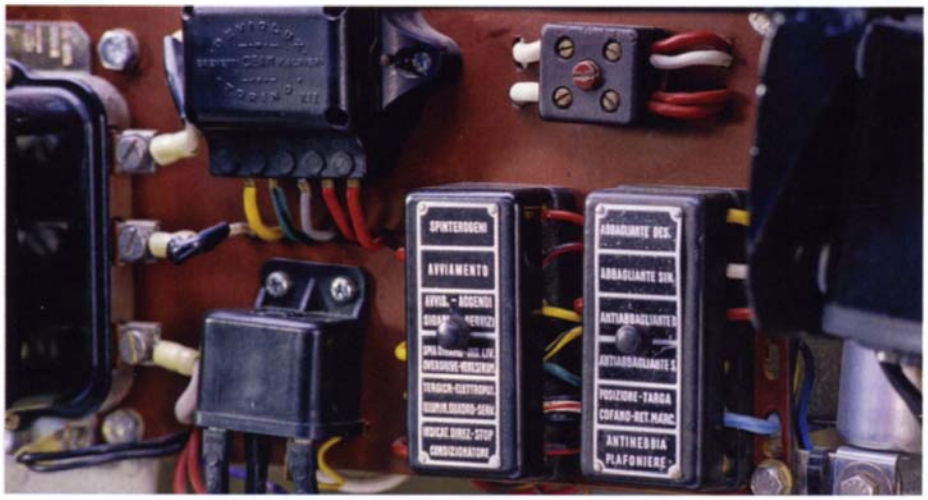
www.vintagemotorsport.com

Roger Penske and Augie Pabst drove the GTO to fourth overall at Sebring in '63 for the Mecum Racing Team.

PHOTO DAVE FRIEDMAN



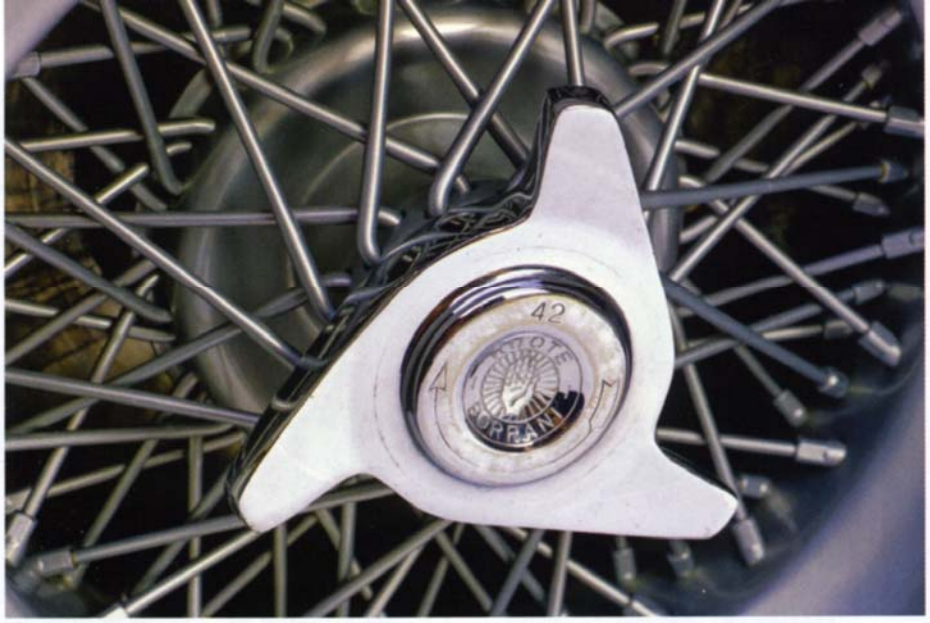




As compiled by Swiss Ferrari authority Marcel Massini, chassis No. 3987 has an admirable racing history. It began life with Luigi Chinetti's 1962 North American Racing Team entry, winning at the Montlhéry 1000km in October 1962 in the hands of Ricardo and Pedro Rodriguez. Thence it went to the Mecom Racing Team and was driven by Roger Penske to wins the 1962 Bahamas Speed Week "Preliminary" and Speed Week Tourist Trophy. Penske placed it second at the 1963 Daytona Continental. At Sebring, he shared the car with Augie Pabst, placing fourth overall and first in GT.

In 1963 USRRC events, Penske won with it at Pensacola, then he and Pabst placed second in class at Road America. Pabst won at Lynndale Farms, Wisconsin, before the car was sold to Californian Otto Zipper for driver Richie Ginther—the GTO still painted in silver blue and white Mecom Team colors. At the L.A. Times GP support race for GT cars in 1963, Ginther placed fifth overall behind winner Bob Bondurant, Allen Grant, Lew Spencer and Dan Gurney, who were all driving Cobras. Zipper advertised the GTO for sale in the August 8, 1964, edition of *Competition Press*.

After passing through various owners, Lauren sent the car to Massachusetts restoration genius Paul Russell. The Bondo®, old paint and other gunk removed from it, used to amend its various racing dings, filled a very large drum at Russell's shop. Simultaneously, inflated GTO prices had given rise to sniping in some quarters about the authenticity of this and other 250 GTOs.



But when 3987 was stripped to bare aluminum and hammered into its pristine original form, it was displayed in raw metal at the Amelia Concours, partly to demonstrate the Russell shop's miraculous metal-working prowess, and partly to demonstrate that this car had all the appropriate "scars" and other evidences to verify its long racing history. It was The Item.

It began life with Luigi Chinetti's 1962 North American Racing Team entry, winning at the Montlhéry 1000km in October 1962 in the hands of Ricardo and Pedro Rodriguez.

This quintessential Ferrari produced 295-302hp at 7500 caterwauling rpm. Fed by six 38 DCN Webers, the engine had a racy compression ratio of 9.7:1.0, all of it driving a Porsche-built, gated 5-speed. Face it; this is the Ferrari we all really want. And having once been allowed to drive a memorable, street-tuned 250 GTO decades ago, I can say that a more utterly splendid ride to the Kwiki-Mart for cream cheese cannot be imagined.

PHOTO DAVE FRIEDMAN

▲ At the 1963 Road America 500, the Penske/Pabst Mecum Team GTO makes a pit stop.