

CLASSIC DRIVER

Gooding Testa Rossa: a personal tale

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My father posing with the road-registered Testa Rossa on our front lawn. Note the yellow California licence plates. Aside from licence plates, the car was 'as raced' with no modifications other than perhaps softer plugs. He occasionally drove the car to cocktail parties, dressed as you see here, with my mother.

When Classic Driver reader Roy Spencer saw our coverage of Gooding's forthcoming Pebble Beach auction, he got in touch with a fascinating personal story about the 1957 Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa, chassis 0666TR. This is what he told us...

"I read with great interest Gooding & Co's recent announcement trumpeting the consignment of the 'Legendary 1957 Ferrari Testa Rossa Prototype' for Monterey 2011. Legendary indeed. Fifty years have not diminished my memories of this blood red, gloriously contoured and hopelessly impractical road car. I vividly recall the TR's ripping, crackling exhaust note and the aromatic mist of the castor-based oil essential to its well-being, exiting the four massive megaphones arrayed under the unadorned tail.

"The trip from Maranello to [Gooding's auction ramp](#) will have been a long and tortuous one for chassis 0666. It has been hurled on the limit around the globe's most treacherous circuits by Gendebien, Hawthorn, Trintignant, Von Trips and Gregory, the bespectacled Missourian. Our friends at Gooding would be featuring a different car this month had Mr Ferrari chosen not to resurrect the demolished hulk that was the result of Bruce Kessler's monumental accident and fire at Le Mans in 1958.

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A late-afternoon shot on our front lawn with neighbour Sid Colberg (a highly influential, Jaguar XKSS-owning man on the Northern California racing scene; a cool guy) sitting in the TR. His new Opalescent Brown E-type is on the end of the line-up. The blue SS100 was a friend's car that we stored in our massive garage (an old carriage house). The LWB, covered-headlight California Spider was my father's. It was soon replaced by a Maserati 151 purchased from Briggs Cunningham.

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This is a casual shot of the TR sitting in our gravel driveway either before or after one of my father's Sunday afternoon drives.

"But Ferrari did rebuild the car - there was money in retired race cars - and via Luigi Chinetti sold 0666 to Northern California privateer Rod Carveth in February 1959. Carveth campaigned the then light blue TR in Northern California and during unsuccessful trips to Sebring, Nürburgring and Le Mans, before retiring the car in late 1960. The well-used TR sat for sale at Carveth Enterprises, awaiting a patron to offer it a more sedate future away from the perils of racing.

"That patron was my father, Bev Spencer. We're not entirely sure how the deal was struck but I remember our entire family waiting at the bottom of our driveway for him to arrive in his latest - and most exotic - Ferrari in early 1961. Carveth's shop was only 15 minutes from our house, so it was perfectly logical to simply drive the TR home. He duly arrived in a business suit, piloting the TR still in full racing livery and, to everyone's delight, shrieking around the block seven or eight times giving us all rides.

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My father was a Buick dealer in SF and always towed the cars with new Buicks, usually Rivas. Here we see him unloading the TR at Laguna Seca in late 1962. He had 'borrowed' the track for a fun day, exercising both the TR and his Maserati 151 Le Mans coupé. There was a video crew there as well, recording the proceedings, and some footage of this day exists at the end of the Bill Birdsey production 'This is Laguna Seca'. The fellow walking toward my father is Jack Flaherty, a top NorCal sports car driver of the day and Monterey BMC dealer. Trailer quality would improve with the arrival of our first GTO.

"The rides continued during the year or so that 0666 was under my father's dedicated care. The starting ritual is still in my brain: a few jabs at the throttle, rotate the odd-shaped key 30 degrees clockwise, allow the fuel pump to tick over and a push on the key toward the dash panel to actuate the low drone of the starter motor. For a very young man sitting next to his father in the definitive sports-racing car of the late 50s, the resulting wall of sound was at once intoxicating, terrifying and extraordinarily exciting.

"It wasn't until writing this, that it dawned on me that while I was certainly excited during my rides in 0666, the 41-year-old Ferrari enthusiast sitting next to me and rowing the TR's bolt-upright shift lever through its polished aluminum gate must have been absolutely over the moon. He would bless our family with a steady stream of amazing Ferraris over the next four years... but those are stories for another time."

Text: [Roy Spencer](#), [MercedesHeritage.com](#)

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