

CLASSIC DRIVER

[A day with Monsieur C. and his Maserati A6GCS](#)

Lead

Mr C. is one of those connoisseur collectors who could have chosen a big-business career, but opted instead to dedicate his life to classic cars. Mr C. has some important cars, but prefers to remain discreet. Among his fabulous machines, we decided to focus on a very special one: his Maserati A6GCS.



What's your oldest automobile memory?

My grandparents had a big company, made big money, and they always had nice cars. As often as she could, my grandmother would take me with her to the casino, in her Delage Coupé Chauffeur. There was a toy shop next to the casino and, almost every day, she bought me a Dinky Toy. I loved them, played with them all the time, and I still have a few – in excellent condition, still in their boxes. I also remember going to their factory with my brother. My grandfather had a [Bentley](#) and my brother always jumped in it, as if he was going to start it up and hit the road. And I always screamed, “No, no, stop it!”

And what next?

We had a big family country house. The gardener's son was always working on his moped and one day I began to work with him. I loved going there, because I could work on the mechanical parts, and after that he bought his first car and we continued to work on it together. That's how I learned how a car worked, and how it was put together.



Why didn't you work in the family business to make big money to buy all your dream cars?

Well, for two reasons: the first is that I wasn't so good at school, and I didn't want to keep studying. The second reason is that I just wanted to work on classic cars, not in the family business which has nothing to do with cars. But still, while I didn't make 'big' money, I did make enough to buy the cars I've always wanted.

And how did you start? With which cars?

The first was a Citroën Traction 11 Légère. Then I had some [Jaguars](#), [Austin-Healeys](#) and, in 1994, my first pre-War car: a [Rolls-Royce Phantom I](#). In a way, this changed my life as a collector...

Why?

...because pre-War cars have this 'je ne sais quoi' which make them very special. Once you've driven one, you can't forget it, and you want to drive others. It's an addiction.



And so you bought more pre-War cars?

Yes, a [Bugatti 57 Ventoux](#) and then a Delage D8-120 Aerosport that I completely restored to concours condition. It made a big impression at the 1997 Rétromobile, as I presented the car half-restored.

What's your philosophy regarding classic cars?

Cars are made to live, to be driven. Almost every day I take one of my cars from home to work. That's a huge pleasure. I've always favoured cars with authenticity and soul. When I sit in a car, I want to feel something. I want to feel its history, its soul. I want to see the traces of age, of the good times... I like it when the original patina expresses something, tells you the story of the car.



Which matters more to you, design or mechanics?

Definitely design. I love very special cars. I like to imagine how the designer pictured the body before building it. Even if I'm also a mechanics freak...

Do you regret buying or selling any cars?

No, I have no regrets. Although there's one car I hope I'll never have to sell: my Bugatti Type 51.

What's the most wonderful car in your opinion?

A [Hispano-Suiza](#) in cabriolet form. There are some awesome bodies on Hispano chassis: I'd love to own one.



And the most interesting car, mechanically?

A Hispano-Suiza again. The engine parts are wonderful.

So we can say you dream of a Hispano-Suiza?

Well, I'd love to have one. My grandfather had an H6B – but my dream would really be a [Talbot-Lago](#) Le Mans car.

In your collection, which car do you like the most?

Either my Bugatti Type 51, or my Maserati A6GCS.



And what about your Maserati? As a pre-War specialist collector, is that a car you always wanted?

Well, we've come back to my childhood. Among all my Dinky Toys, there's one I loved above all others: a red Maserati A6GCS that I still have in its little box. I loved the shape and always thought, "One day, I'll have one."

Can you tell us more about the car?

Well, as I said, I like cars with a very clear and unusual history. This particular car is the 23rd built in the series but, most importantly, it's one of the four Works cars that ran for [Maserati](#) in period.



So it has a special racing history?

Yes, indeed. In 1955, the car ran in the Mille Miglia, Le Mans 24 Hours, the Coppa d'Oro delle Dolomiti and the Targa Florio, where it finished second in class. In 1956, it ran again in the Mille Miglia and finished first in class and 13th overall. Then in 1956, 1957 and 1958, the car competed in such races as the Grand Prix des Frontières in Chimay, the 6 Hours Esso in Vallelunga, the Shell Trophy in Monza, the Spa Grand Prix...

And what about its condition?

The car is mostly original: in 1958, the front end was modified with a more aerodynamic nose by Fantuzzi, and the aluminium sheets are still the right ones. The car has its original engine and gearbox and the majority of small details are correct for the period and have clearly never been modified. I really love this car... the shape is incredible, the music of its engine is unique, and the feeling at the wheel can't be described.



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So your childhood dream came true?

Yes, the little Dinky Toy is now full-size in my garage... I think that's a nice story. And as my son is also crazy about cars, I know this car (and the others) will continue to live for a long time. Just as they were made to do: being driven with passion.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2015

Gallery

