

G O D B L E S S A M E R I C A



In 1952, Enzo Ferrari had too many racing engines on the shelf, so he built road cars around them, and sent them across The Pond – including this 342 America

Words Massimo Delbò Photography Dirk de Jager



included small, folding, leather-covered platforms behind the seats, where Franca Fassio's dogs could sit, and it's certain that she liked the car a lot because, soon after, she went on to order a 375 America, chassis 339 AL, with the same finish and split front bumpers.

Also clear is that Ferrari had built the car with some racing-spec equipment, including a 92-litre fuel tank (usually supplied to endurance and rally cars), a more powerful engine with 235bhp instead of the standard 200bhp, plus two sets of wheels (for road and racing use) and a rally timer, which is still in the car today.

It returned to Pinin Farina later that year to be transformed with black paint, a new single front bumper and a revised rear window (from wraparound to rectangular). Thus modified, it arrived in the USA and, in the spring of 1954, New York City dealer Max Hoffman sold it to Steve Briggs of Lake Forest, Illinois, who promptly showed it at the Wilmot Hills Concours and won the sports car class. In 1956 it was sold on to William R Peters of Minnesota, who kept it for the next 33 years. By 1989 the odometer read a mere 43,168km and, via several more owners in Europe and the USA, and

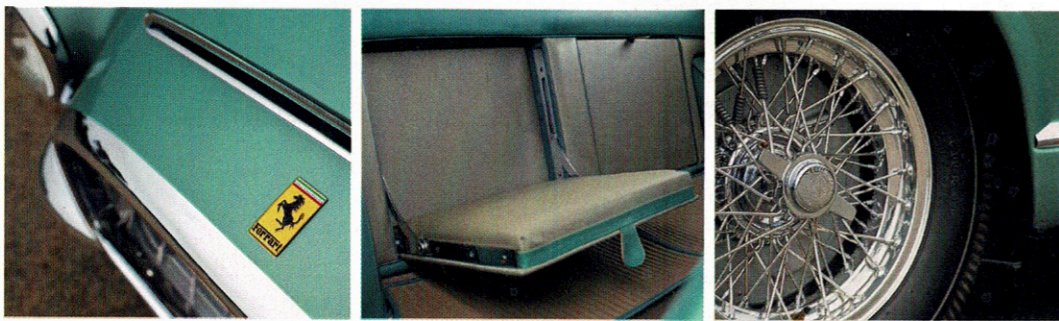
some inaccurate restoration work, in 2012 the car entered its current ownership.

'I had other, less important cars,' says Bruce Vanyo, 'but the opportunity to buy such a rare Ferrari, in very original condition, with all the correct numbers, doesn't happen very often and I decided to go for it. I saw it at Brian Hoyt's shop and it was the first time I had heard of a 342 America. I did some research and discovered how special these cars are. I didn't have a plan, but I knew from day one that it wasn't going to be a short-term relationship.'

In 2013, the Ferrari went to Perfect Reflections in California, with the aim of returning it as close as possible to the condition and style in which it had left the factory 60 years before. Patrick Ottis and Bryan Hoyt disassembled all the mechanical components, to inspect, repair and replace only as the last resort, and they found it very original in every aspect. 'I still have the 232 handwritten pages of Patrick's description of the work performed,' says Hoyt.

The body was taken back to bare metal, repaired, and resprayed in the original dual-colour combination, →


Above and right
Interior is simple yet attractive; restoration involved matching the paint to fragments found within the structure.



remnants of which had been found hidden within the car. It was the same story for the interior, which retains the custom parts requested by the Fassio family, and has been retrimmed in materials as close to original as possible. After three years the car was ready, and first time out it won Best in Class and the Ferrari Elegance Cup at Cavallino 2017, plus awards at Mar-A-Lago and at the Swiss Concours in 2018. While it was in Europe, the car received Ferrari Classiche certification too.

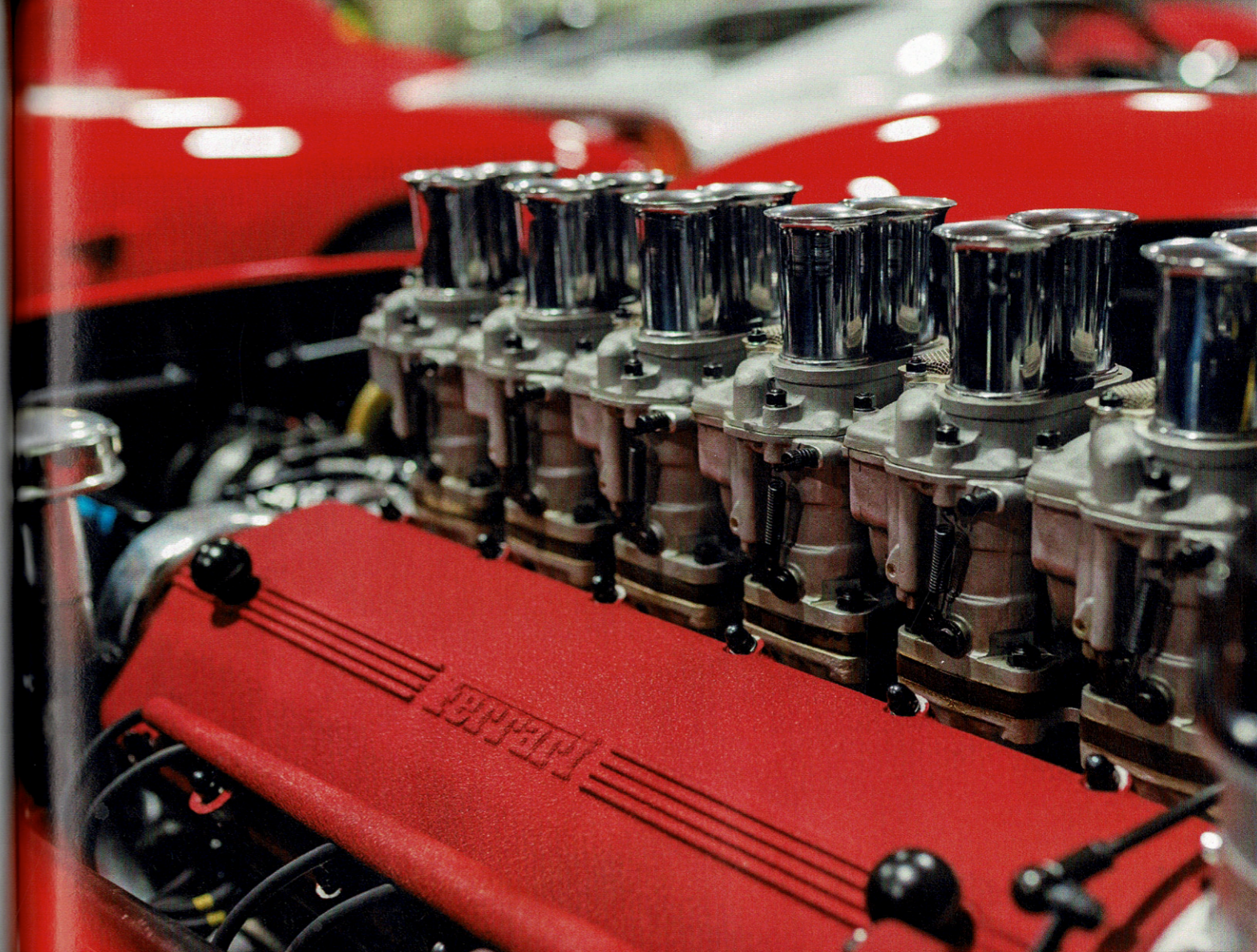
It isn't driven often and, when we take it for a run along the 17 Mile Drive close to Pebble Beach in California, we almost feel guilty. But it takes only a few minutes for confidence to build, and the car, once warmed-up, starts to rev with authority and, suddenly, the surroundings reverberate to its powerful thunder.

You soon get used to working the broad steering wheel to counter the writhing movement of the tyres over the road surface, and the easy power of the 4.1-litre V12 pulls the car along with disdain. With three huge Weber 40 DCF/3 carburettors, you need to explore the further reaches of the throttle with discretion, pushing gently so they work at their best.

All too soon it's time to return the 342 America to the protective garage where it will wait for the truck home. But, if I ever dared to imagine the perfect car for an event such as the Colorado Grand, now I know what it would be. 

1953 Ferrari 340/342 America Pinin Farina

Engine 4102cc V12, OHC per bank, three Weber 40 DCF/3 carburettors
Power 335bhp @ 7000rpm
Transmission Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
Steering Worm and sector
Suspension Front: double wishbones, single transverse semi-elliptic leaf spring, Houdaille hydraulic dampers. Rear: live axle, longitudinal semi-elliptic leaf springs, Houdaille hydraulic dampers
Brakes Drums
Weight 1200kg (approx)
Top speed 120mph (est)



THE ENGINE SPECIALISTS

GTO Engineering are renowned devotees to Colombo and Lampredi engines as well as Ferrari Dino V6 and V8 units. These, along with examples from Maserati (A6GCS and 250F), Aston Martin (DB2 to DB5) and Alfa Romeo (158/159, 8C and 12C) give us a breadth of experience in period engine-building.

GTO Engineering are therefore uniquely qualified to undertake small, bespoke engine projects as well as larger production experimental work. We are building improved and developed V12 engines in batches of limited runs and can incorporate

many subtle but progressive updates, such as invisible solutions for modern mappable ignition and fuel injection that significantly enhance efficiency, usability and performance.

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