

Scrapyard sensation

The names of great Italian racing drivers trip easily off the tongue – Ascari, Farina, Villoresi, Castellotti, Bandini... Today there are probably more Italians actually driving in Formula 1 than at most other times in history, but to all intents and purposes the early to mid-1950s marked a high tide of Italian dominance. Rated somewhere just beneath the superstars was a whole bevy of very capable 'second division' players, and one of them was a Maserati privateer good enough to attract a strong measure of factory support, the Italian 2-Litre Champion, Enrico Giletti.

He came from Biella, a dapper, moustachioed man who became a good customer of Maserati's, and on May 6, 1953 (according to the factory party-line) he took delivery of one of their new A6GCS/53 sports racing cars. It was a 2-litre 6-cylinder, wearing that pretty little humpy-fendered coachwork styled by Giocchino Colombo (freshly arrived ex-Alfa Romeo/Ferrari/Alfa Romeo) and fashioned by ruly-poly Medardo Fantuzzi and his panel-men. Sounds like a 1960s pop group doesn't it?

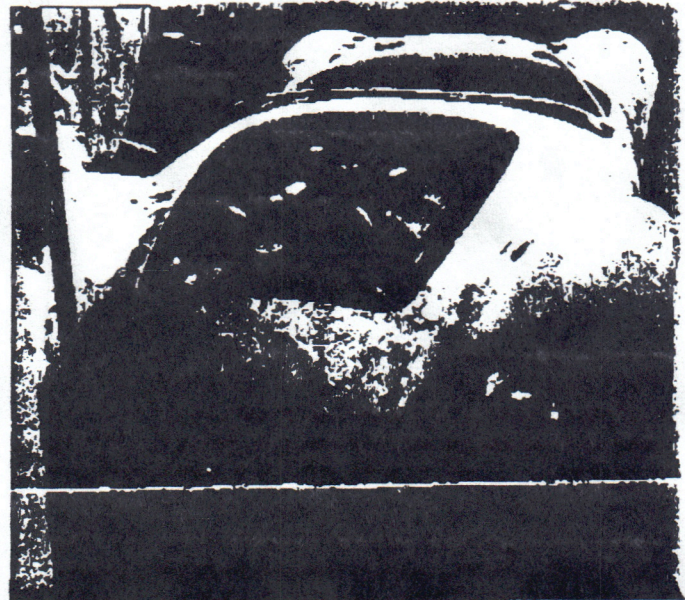
The chassis serial of Giletti's new car was '2040' and it was the first of some 51 of these raucous, tight and quick little cars. Giletti appears to have raced it before it formally became his property, the certificate of origin accompanying the sale apparently being dated May 6, 1953. In fact, on April 12 Giletti drove an A6GCS in the *Giro di Sicilia* round-the-island race. He retired, but then came the Mille Miglia on April 28, in which he was accompanied by chief mechanic Guerrino Bertocchi in '2040' and finished sixth overall, first 2-litre home, after a really impressive drive.

In those days the annual Turin Show was held at Mille Miglia time, and Giletti's class-winning car – race number '525' – was promptly displayed on Maserati's stand there, alongside one of the new A6GCM Formula 2 single-seaters.

Then in the rain-swept Targa Florio, Giletti actually led overall on the slick *Piccolo Madonna* mountain circuit until the roads dried, the factory Lancias could put their power down, and Umberto Maglioli's won from Giletti second and again first 2-litre home, ahead of Fangio in Sergio Mantovani's sister A6GCS, probably '2042'.

Giletti/Onofre Marimon shared what I presume was '2040' again in the Nürburgring 1000Kms, running second behind the leading Ascari-Farina Ferrari 375 only for the valve-gear to fail virtually within sight of the finish. The car was then sold to the wealthy Swiss privateer Benoit Musy, who raced it widely with further minor success during 1954. It then eventually found its way to the USA where it raced for many years at minor level. As merely a 2-litre class contender it was owned and raced by relatively impecunious amateurs. They modified it in merely minor ways to keep it competitive, its chassis surviving almost unmarked. Eventually its nose was modified – perhaps following a mild ding? – to a Lister-like shape with fared-in headlights replacing the standard exposed-lens design. A cooking Ford V8 (with Cobra rocker covers) was fitted without great surgery, and a suitably beefed-up back axle was added.

Eventually the old car was abandoned. It lay exposed to the elements in a scrapyard in the Oakland area of California. Ultimately the scrapman



Beneath that disguise – fared-in-headlights, Lister 'nose-job' and Ford V8 eng all to keep the car competitive – lies the otherwise hopefully unsullied Maserati.



sold it for a song, subsequently twigged his possible mistake and succeeded in buying it back, still derelict. Recently he sold it to confirmed *Maseratista* Bruce Vanyo of Paolo Alto, and we recently examined it in the back store of Nino Epifani's restoration shop nearby. Its faded pale-pink, mossy

body looks largely original, save that reshaped nose and the tacky wheelarch flares, while there on top front chassis cross-member and rub, you find the original star – '2040'.

Another little time machine – see? They can still be discovered.