

8C 2900 A

auto Quarterly XI-2
2nd QTR 1973
Has list of SS# and
owners as of 1973

The Immortal Alfa



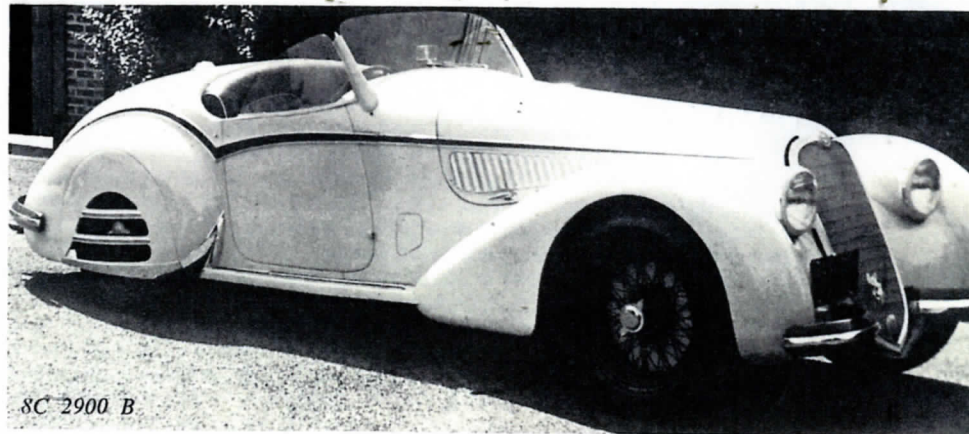
Brivio, winner of the
1936 Mille Miglia

The Alfa Romeo 2.9-litre sports cars were a direct result of the Milanese firm's efforts to keep a stranglehold on their domination of the Mille Miglia races, plus their need for a prestige model to replace the great straight-eight supercharged 2.3-litre cars after their almost complete ascendancy in sports car racing.

There is an oft-repeated story that the 8C 2900's were put into production between 1935 and 1938 as a means of "using up" a number of engines intended for the Tipo B (also referred to as P3) Grand Prix cars which happened to be lying around the factory. In view of the fact that some forty-three 8C 2900 sports cars were probably made, and only fifteen of the GP cars, it would seem to have been an act of undue pessimism to have made so many spare engines for the GP cars, which hardly lends credence to the story. In fact it is likely that engine parts manufactured for the sports car were pressed into service to repair Grand Prix cars returned to the factory for overhaul by private owners in the late Thirties. One such car existing today has an engine with a Tipo B number (50004) on one engine mount and a 2900 number (422005) on the other.

It was in 1934 that the Mille Miglia rules were changed, allowing any car to take part which had two or more seats, mudguards and electrical equipment. The old touring car class was abolished. As a result many "Monza" Alfa Romeos were entered, pure Grand Prix cars in sports trim which had been designed as two-seaters, and these cars swept the first three places. In 1935 the rules were taken advantage of to an even greater extent when the Scuderia Ferrari entered one of their current Grand Prix cars, the 2.9-litre Monoposto Alfa Romeo, or the Tipo B, converted into a narrow two-seater and fitted with lights and mudguards. This car, driven by Carlo Pintacuda with the Marquis Della Stufa as passenger, had an easy win, finishing forty-two minutes ahead of the second car, Tadini's 2.6-litre Monza.

by
Peter Hull
and
Simon Moore



8C 2900 B

Romeo "Two-Nine"

We do not know how good the lighting arrangements were on Pintacuda's car, or even whether it was equipped with a dynamo. The facts seem to show that he did not need to do a great deal of night driving, as the Mille Miglia was held in the middle of April, and Pintacuda's was the last car away from Brescia at 5:53 A.M. His journey, at an average speed of 71.72 mph took him 14 hours 4 minutes and 44 seconds, so he arrived back at the finishing line at Brescia at 7:57 P.M.

For the 1936 season, converted Grand Prix cars were hardly eligible for the majority of international sports car races, and the production Alfa Romeos of the time, the unsupercharged 6C 2300 cars, were no longer powerful enough to be in the running for outright wins. Thus was born the 8C 2900 A Alfa Romeo, still by way of being a converted Grand Prix car, yet a legitimate production sports car on sale to the general public, an example of which was on the Alfa Romeo stand at the 1935 London Motor Show with a price tag of £2,725, or about \$13,625.

The 2900 A was a much more advanced machine than the two-seater which had won the 1935 Mille Miglia. It used the chassis of the very latest Alfa Romeo Grand Prix car, the 8C 1935. This had independent suspension all around, at the front by trailing links and coil springs with hydraulic dampers, this arrangement being common to both racing and touring Alfa Romeos before the war; the 2900 A rear suspension, consisting of a transaxle with swing axles and a transverse leaf spring, was found only on the racing cars, the current production cars having torsion bars and the gearbox in unit with the engine.

The engine in the 2900 A was the well-known 2.9-litre eight-cylinder ten main bearing unit first fitted to the GP cars in 1932 in 2.6-litre form and enlarged to 2.9 litres in 1934. This plain bearing straight-eight 68 x 100 mm engine was in two blocks of four, with a nondetachable head, a central drive to the camshafts, and two small capacity superchargers, one to each block of four



Pintacuda, winner of
the 1937 Mille Miglia

cylinders. The 8C 1935 GP car on which this 8C 2900 A was based had a bigger 3.8-litre version of this engine.

The sports car had a lower compression ratio than the Grand Prix model, 6.5 to 1 instead of 7.1 to 1, and output was quoted as 220 bhp at 5300 rpm as opposed to the 255 bhp at 5400 rpm of the 1934 GP car. The main alteration to the engine was due to the necessity of fitting a dynamo, and was brought about by discarding the Bosch magneto and substituting the dynamo off the same drive. Ignition was now by a Scintilla Vertex magneto on top of the engine, driven off the rear end of the lefthand camshaft.

The three 8C 2900 A's which made their debut in the 1936 Mille Miglia had the general look of the 8C 1935 Grand Prix cars, but with two seats, substantial cycle-type mudguards, lights and windscreens, and each car had a spare wheel on the left side somewhat obstructing the passenger's entry to the cockpit. The difference in dry weight between the 8C 1935 and the 2900 A was not great, approximately 1804 pounds for the Grand Prix car and 1820 pounds for the sports version — the latter, presumably, weighed without the spare wheel.

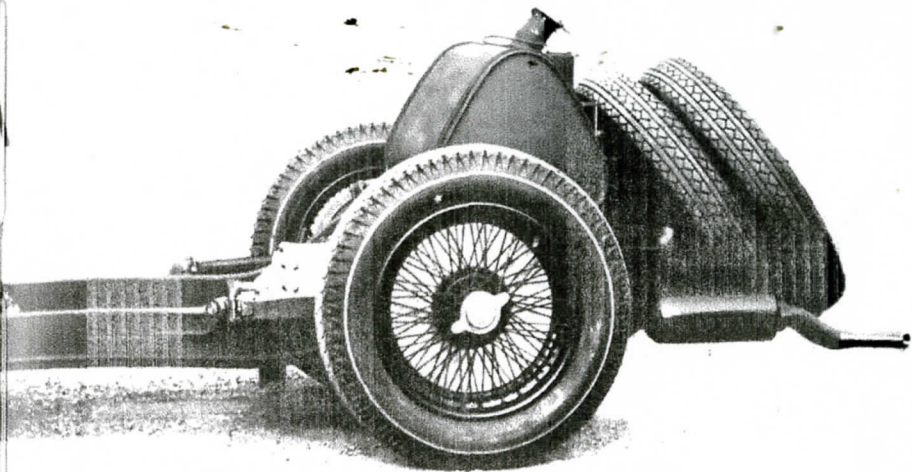
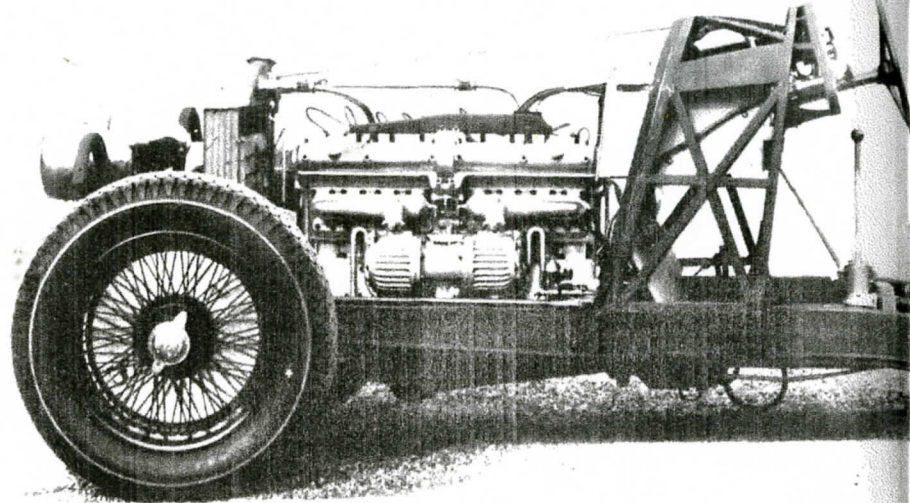
A formidable opponent appeared to challenge the 8C 2900 A's in the Mille Miglia, in the form of the thinly disguised Grand Prix car which had won the previous year, but which was now fitted with an enlarged 3.2-litre engine producing some 265 bhp. Moreover, it was driven by Clemente Biondetti, destined in the future to win more Mille Miglia races than any other driver, four in all. Undoubtedly this was the fastest car in the race and was in the lead at Bologna on the outward run, and also at Rome. Its consumption of tires, however, was prodigious, and Biondetti was delayed through frequent wheel changes and a rather prolonged refuelling stop at Perugia. In the end he finished in fourth place behind the three 2900 A's of Marquis Brivio, Farina and Pintacuda. Despite driving through rain and darkness without headlamps for the last twenty-five miles (they had been smashed by stones along the route) "Tonino" Brivio had averaged a new record of 75.57 mph.

Le Mans was cancelled in 1936, but in the Belgian 24 Hours Race at Spa, a 2900 A shared by Sommer and Severi won the race thirty-nine miles ahead of two Delahayes at a record average speed of 77.67 mph, which was not beaten for thirteen years. A second 2900 A driven by Farina and Siena retired after nine hours with a broken valve.

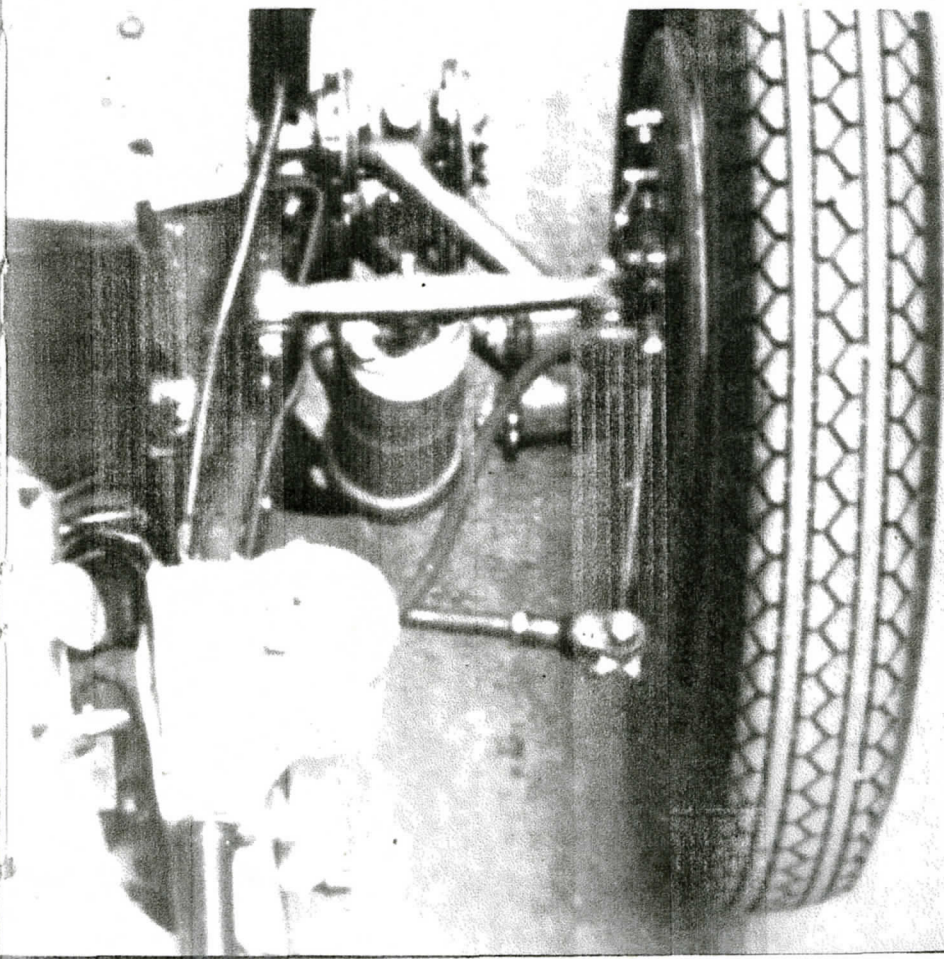
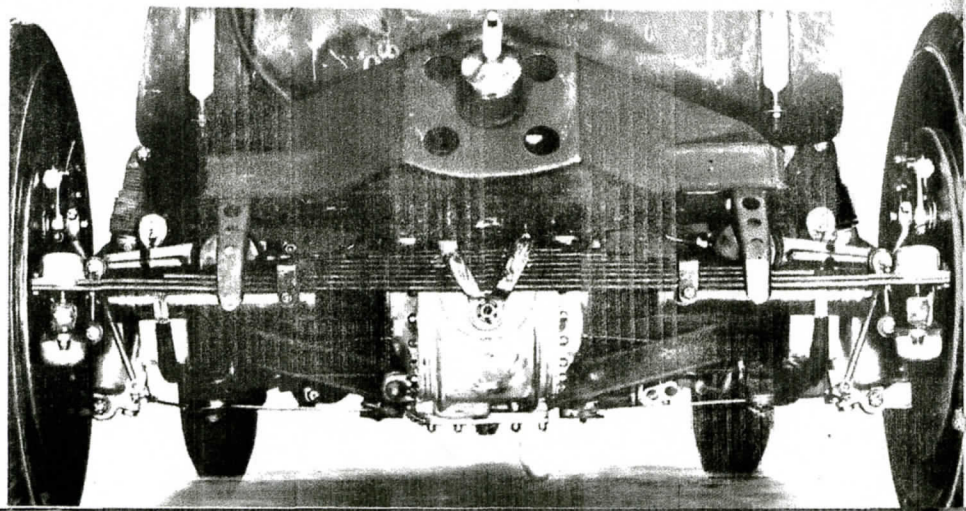
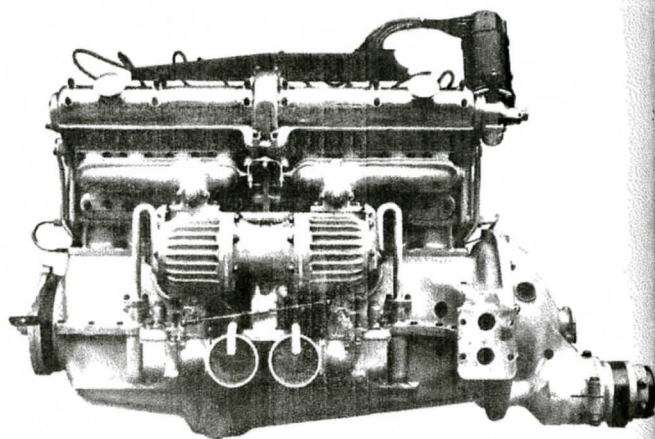
In the summer of 1936 the Scuderia Ferrari sent two 2900 A's to Brazil to take part in the Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo Grands Prix. Drivers were Carlo Pintacuda and the Alfa test driver Atilio Marinoni. The cars ran stripped of their road equipment and had little luck in the 178-mile Rio de Janeiro GP over the notorious "Devil's Springboard" circuit, where Marinoni retired on the first lap with engine trouble and Pintacuda withdrew with differential trouble after being comfortably in the lead at half distance. The race went to an elderly 2-litre Bugatti.

The 140-mile Sao Paulo GP the following month was a different story, Pintacuda winning from Marinoni, both ahead of two 2.3-litre Monza Alfa Romeos driven by the Brazilian Manuel de Teffé and a French girl, Mlle. Hellé-Nice.

The 1936 French GP was actually for sports cars and was held at Montlhéry. Although a team of Ferrari Alfa Romeos was entered, they were subsequently withdrawn, and the Tourist Trophy race was of no interest to Alfa Romeo now since superchargers had been banned in the Ulster event since 1934. The last appearance of the 2900 A cars that year was the hill climb at Stelvio. Here Tadini won, but Severi in the sister car could do no better than fifth behind Trossi's 2.5 Maserati, Biondetti in the 3.2-litre converted Tipo B and Castelbarco in a 2.3 Alfa.



*The 8C 2900 B:
chassis, shown from the
left, above;
engine with superchargers
at right; rear
suspension below; front
suspension on facing page.*



Italy was at war in 1936, the time of the Abyssinian crisis, and Alfa Romeo was far more concerned with aero engine production than sports car racing at that time. In fact, total 1936 car production amounted to only ten chassis, of which five were 2900 A's, making the total 2900 A production ten cars altogether, with the five from 1935.

If production of the series had ended with the last 2900 A chassis made in 1936, the story of the left-over Grand Prix engines might have been believable, but in 1937 production started of the long and short chassis 8C 2900 B cars, which were not pure sports/racers as most were fitted with luxury bodywork. Whereas the wheelbase of the 2900 A had been nine feet, that of the "Corto" chassis 2900 B was about nine feet two inches, and the "Lungo" about nine feet ten inches. The track of four feet five inches of the 2900 A was the same on both types of 2900 B chassis, which had precisely the same suspension. In order to make the 2900 B engines more docile, the compression ratio was reduced to 5.75 to 1 from the 6.5 to 1 of the 2900 A, and output was thus reduced to 180 bhp at 5200 rpm. Weight, naturally, went up, the 2900 B Corto with two-seater spider bodywork weighing nearly 700 pounds more than the 2900 A, whilst with a four-seater open coupé body the Lungo came out as weighing almost 900 pounds more.

Ten of these 2900 B cars were produced in 1937, another twenty-two in 1938 and one from parts in 1941, and they are generally considered to have been the fastest pre-war production sports cars in the world. Bodies were made for this chassis mainly by Carrozzeria Touring of Milan, first in open two-seater spider form. Later, in 1938, several 2+2 berlinetta coupé bodies were made fitted to the long chassis.

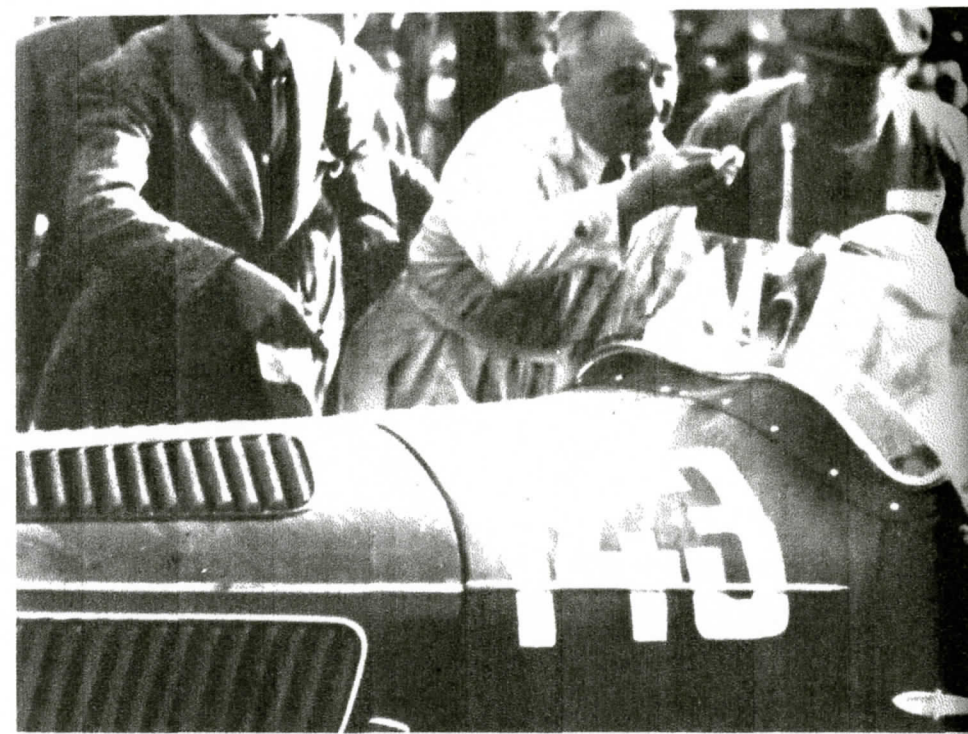
Carrozzeria Touring was founded in 1925, and it is of interest that one of the three founders of the firm was Vittorio Ascari, brother of the celebrated Alfa Romeo driver Antonio Ascari, and uncle of Alberto, World Champion in 1952 and 1953. Commencing by making Weymann fabric bodies during the Twenties, Touring abandoned this principle after 1930 and went over to all-metal coachwork. Experience in making aeroplane parts in light alloy under government contracts led them to patent their "Superleggera" or "ultra-light" method of building sporting bodywork in 1937, which was eventually adopted by other firms both in Italy and abroad.

The first 2900 B chassis with a known history, numbered 412011, was fitted with an open sports two-seater body by a firm called Nowack of Austria, although this rather Horch-like body may have replaced an earlier Italian one. Both Pinin Farina and Stabilimenti Farina of Turin also built on 2900 B chassis, but only in ones and twos, and to nothing like the extent that Carrozzeria Touring did.

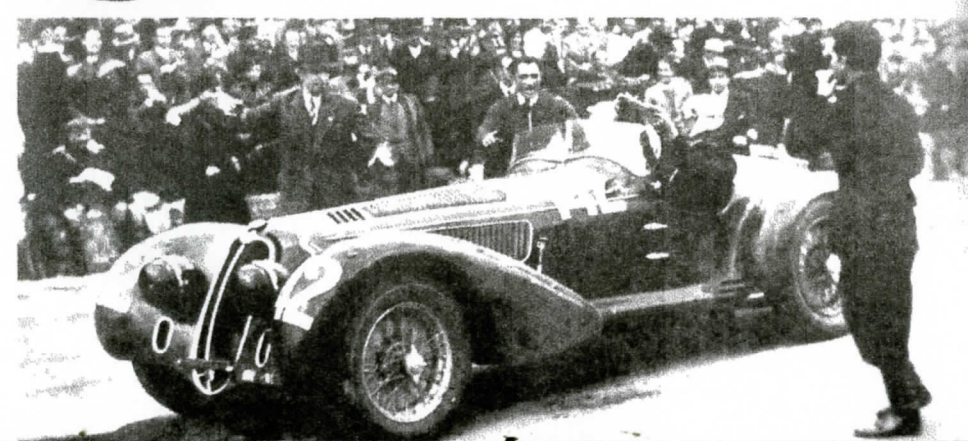
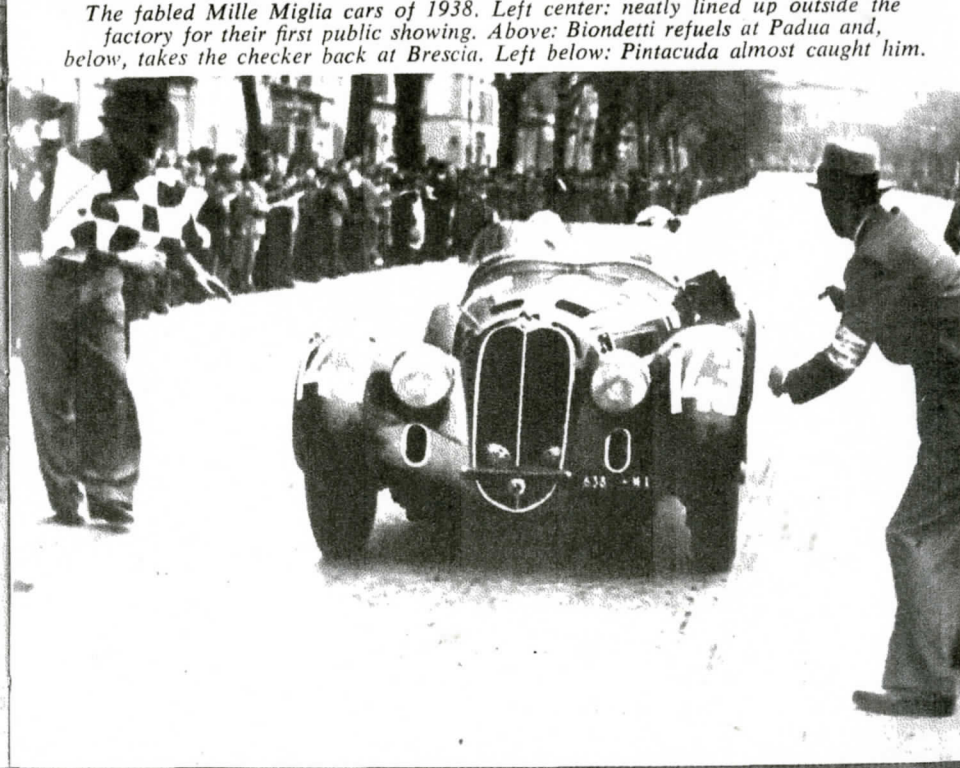
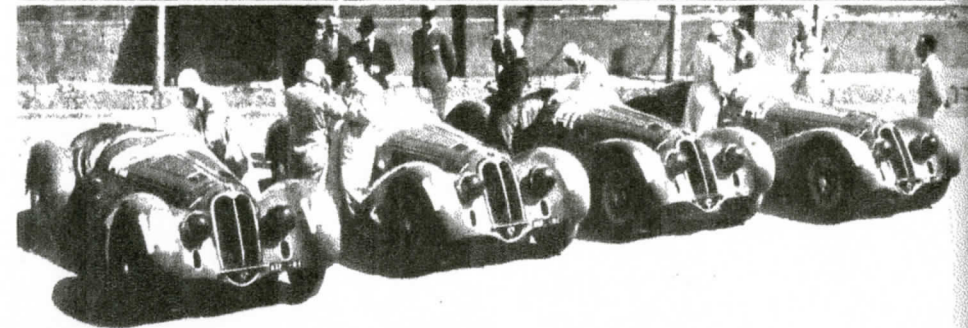
The Touring Spiders were not all identical, mostly differing in their nose and tail treatment, and no doubt most owners had their own ideas regarding such details. With special bodywork, costs were bound to vary from car to car, but they were generally priced a little under \$10,000.

In 1937 *The Autocar* took a short run at Brooklands in a 2900 B Spider from Thomson and Taylor's and recorded zero to sixty in 9.4 seconds and reached 111.8 mph with two up within a half mile. The makers gave 115 mph as the maximum speed of the Corto and 106 mph as the maximum speed of the Lungo. Fuel consumption was around 12 mpg.

For 1937 Alfa Romeo, or rather Scuderia Ferrari, relied on the 2900 A cars for sports car racing, and another Mille Miglia win was recorded, Pintacuda again being the victor by eighteen minutes over his teammate Farina, with a 3.8-litre Delahaye third. Biondetti, in the third 2900 A, did not feature in the results. The 1937 2900 A cars were reputed to have 260 bhp engines.



The fabled Mille Miglia cars of 1938. Left center: neatly lined up outside the factory for their first public showing. Above: Biondetti refuels at Padua and, below, takes the checker back at Brescia. Left below: Pintacuda almost caught him.



Nevertheless, due to the heavy rain experienced during the race which made the roads extremely difficult, Pintacuda's winning average of 71.30 mph was more than four miles an hour slower than the 1936 record.

The Scuderia must have been a little short of 8C 1935 cars on May 30th, as Emilio Villoresi drove a stripped 8C 2900 A at Genoa for the GP there, finishing third behind the 12C 1936's of Trossi and Tadini. Some successes came to the 2900 A's on the hills, with Tadini winning the Susa-Montensio Farina's Mille Miglia car, followed by the Parma-Berceto, while Gherzi won the Pontedecimo-Giovi. Tadini also took a car to the German Mountain GP hill climb but predictably finished behind the German Mercedes and Auto Union Grand Prix cars.

This was the sum total of racing successes in 1937, for only one car was entered for Le Mans, driven by Raymond Sommer and the Alfa Romeo test driver Battista Guidotti, and that retired early in the race.

In 1938 Alfa Romeo decided to organize their motor racing themselves, so the Scuderia Ferrari was disbanded and Alfa Corse was formed, though with many of the old Scuderia personnel present, including Enzo Ferrari himself. Alfa Corse entered four new 2.9-litre cars for the 1938 Mille Miglia on April 3rd. It was of a type which has become almost fabled, the ultra-light Spiders fitted with the new "Superleggera" coachwork by Touring. The drivers were Farina, Pintacuda, Biondetti and Eugenio Siena. Farina crashed and was out of the race, and a blown engine befell Siena, who was sharing his drive with Emilio Villoresi. A battle for the lead developed between Pintacuda and Biondetti, until Pintacuda lost a wracking fourteen minutes over some brake problems, allowing Biondetti to take over. Pintacuda was gradually gaining on Biondetti but there were still two minutes and two seconds between them at the finish as Biondetti won. As Biondetti had started two minutes after Pintacuda, there were actually only two seconds separating the two cars on the road when they crossed the line at Brescia — after 1005.2 miles! Biondetti's high average speed of 84.13 mph is a little misleading as the Mille Miglia route was faster in 1938, including more stretches of autostrada than before. In third place was one of the previous year's 2900 A's, now owned and driven by Piero Dusio. A Delahaye was fourth and a French Talbot fifth.

The winning car is thought to have had a 295 bhp Tipo. 308 Grand Prix engine, and this is confirmed by the "Tipo C" chassis plate in this car as opposed to the normal "Tipo 8C 2900 B" found on the other Mille Miglia cars and the 1938 Le Mans car.

A single streamlined coupé was entered for Le Mans on June 19th by Alfa Corse, driven by Sommer and Biondetti. Sommer celebrated the luxury of saloon car motoring by wearing a straw hat Maurice Chevalier style, which he waved gaily at the crowd as he passed the pits on the third lap in front of the big 4.5-litre V-12 Delahayes, which he had just overtaken after a poor start. By 8 A.M. on the Sunday, the Alfa had a thirteen-lap lead over the nearest Talbot, the Delahayes having retired. In the early afternoon Sommer had an anxious moment when a front tire burst at over 130 mph on the Mulsanne straight, the tread actually piercing the enveloping bodywork, and the repair is still evident on the car today. Biondetti took over, but a valve dropped when the car was by now over 100 miles ahead of its nearest rival, a 3.6-liter Delahaye. The car was driven back to the pits under its own power, but had to retire. It had put up fastest lap at 96.1 mph, within 0.3 mph of the lap record.

Three weeks later on July 10th, two 2.9 Alfas appeared at Spa, both Mille Miglia cars, but fitted with extra headlights to give better illumination for the night driving. The Le Mans car did not appear, although it would have seemed logical to run the streamliner on this fast circuit.

Sommer and Biondetti shared one of the cars, but retired when in the lead on the Sunday morning with transmission trouble, allowing their teammates Pintacuda and Severi to go on to win over a 3-litre six-cylinder Delage on a rain-soaked track at an average speed of 76.44 mph.

The cars were also used for hill climbs, and Tadini started off the season well with a win in the Colli Torinesi on April 24th. This car was Pintacuda's Mille Miglia car, still with the same racing number it had worn three weeks before (142) and the "trade" number plate 632 MI; the car ran with twin aero screens rather than the plexiglass full-width screen used in the Mille Miglia, and all subsequent appearances of these cars were with aero screens.

Biondetti, driving his Mille Miglia-winning car, finished second to Emilio Villoreisi's sister car in the Parma-Berceto, but Villoreisi had to give best to Farina in the Pontedecimo-Giovi on July 17th, where Dusio finished third in his 8C 2900 A. Dusio had his revenge in the last climb of the year at Stelvio, where he beat the works cars of Pintacuda and Severi.

Pintacuda's 1936 Sao Paulo GP car had stayed in South America all this time and was raced by Carlos Arzani in late 1936 and early 1937, although he only won once with it, at Costanero in October, 1936, in the first Buenos Aires GP, beating Carlos Zatuszek's highly successful SSK Mercedes. However, he did establish the fastest lap in his first race with the car at Venado Tuerto in August.

In 1937 Arzani acquired an 8C 1935 GP car, and the 2900 A was passed on to Domingo Ochoteco who fitted it with a single-seater body and in 1938 won at Casilda and Tres Arroyos, and in 1940 at Mendoza and Concordia, besides being second to Arzani's 8C in 1938 at Rosario, and third to the same car and Canziani's 3.2-litre Tipo B Alfa Romeo in 1939 both at Parana and at La Plata. He had another third place at Mar del Plata in 1940.

The 250-mile race at Tres Arroyos (incidentally, the birthplace of Fangio's mother) in 1938 had to be stopped when Ochoteco was in the lead after a multiple accident. Due to nil visibility caused by dust thrown up by the cars on the 5½-mile dirt circuit the collisions were probably inevitable, but this was typical of the tough racing that went on in the Argentine.

By the time racing resumed there in 1947 Italo Bizio, a talented Buenos Aires racing mechanic, had taken over Ochoteco's car. He bored out the engine to 3.1 litres, lowered the chassis and fitted a new single-seater body. Though he had no wins, he finished in the first four in several big Argentine races before he was killed in the car in 1949.

One of the magnificent 1938 Mille Miglia cars appeared on the Alfa Romeo stand at the London Motor Show along with strict orders that it was not to be sold. Despite this, it was bought anyway by the wealthy amateur racing driver Hugh Hunter, who also occasionally raced a 328 BMW. This car had the extra lights in the wings, and so was definitely one of the two run at Spa, while the "Tipo C" plate proclaims it to be Biondetti's Mille Miglia winner as was claimed at the time of the London Motor Show.

Attempting to trace the history of the individual 1938 team cars is a complex business, which is not helped by the way Alfa Romeo swapped around the license plates from car to car. In the Mille Miglia Farina's car was 630 MI, Pintacuda's 632 MI, Biondetti's 638 MI and Siena's 639 MI. At Le Mans the streamlined coupé bore the number 630 MI, but any theories as to its having been Farina's Mille Miglia car rebodied are complicated by the fact that 630 MI was also displayed on the winning spider at Spa. In fact, proof that the coupé was a fifth car seems to be substantiated by a photograph showing two Mille Miglia cars and a sister Spa-type model in company with a type 412. The 412 had a three-carburetor unblown V-12 4.5-litre engine in a strengthened 2.9

chassis, and two of these cars were built to replace the 2.9's in racing in 1939, being used on a couple of occasions. The presence of a 412 in the photograph shows that it was taken after 1939, when the Hunter car was known to be in England, which seems sufficient proof that the coupé was not a converted Spider.

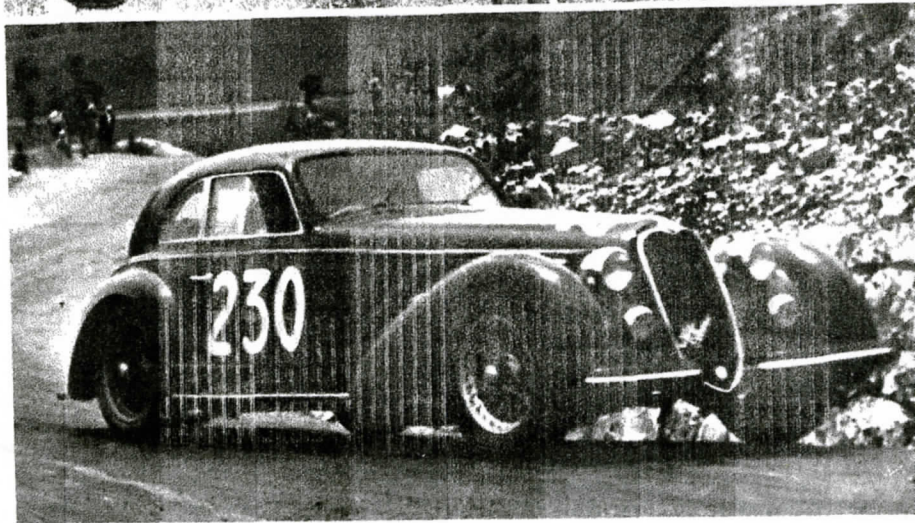
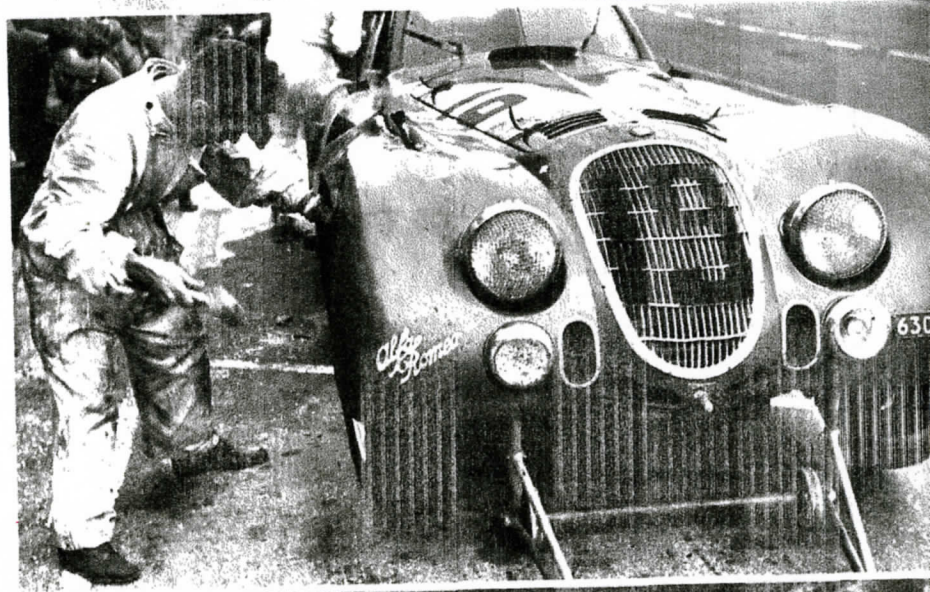
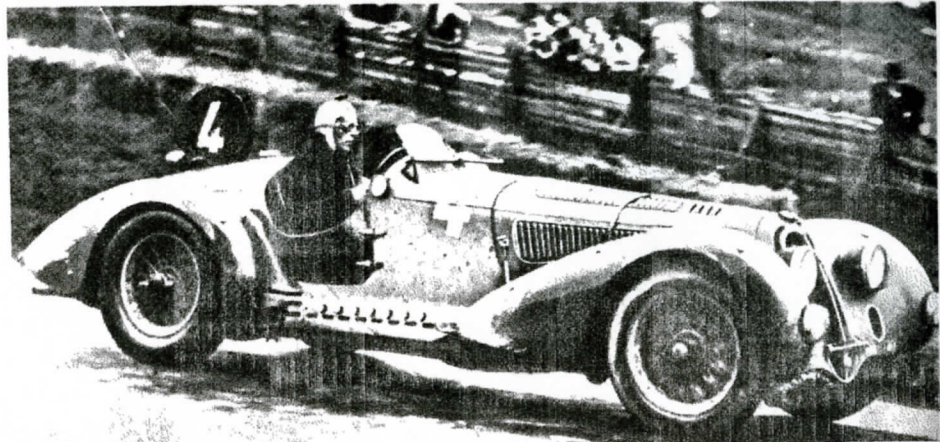
It is fair to surmise that Biondetti probably shared his winning Mille Miglia car at Spa with Sommer until their retirement on the Sunday morning. One of the authors of this article recently examined the engine of this car to find that although it has the 69 mm bore of a 308 GP engine, it is definitely standard 2900 B so far as blowers, crankshaft, camshafts and so on are concerned. The comparison was not difficult as there happened to be two disassembled 2900 B engines in the vicinity so that notes could be taken from these rare commodities. The theory is that the 308 engine was probably removed either because it was needed for a 308 chassis, or perhaps Alfa Corse did not think the Spa scrutineers would pass a pure racing engine, unlike their more liberal-minded (and Italian) counterparts at the Mille Miglia. This ex-Hunter car is the only one of the Mille Miglia spiders whose whole history is known, of the other cars it is impossible to tell which one is which out of the original team.

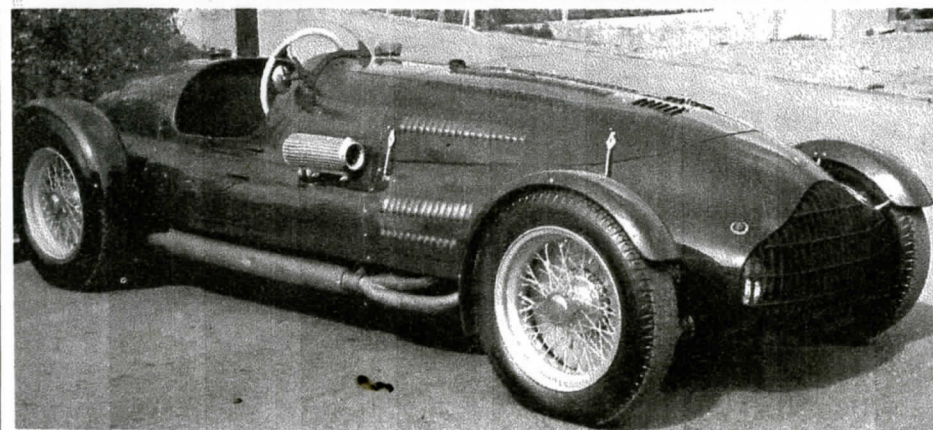
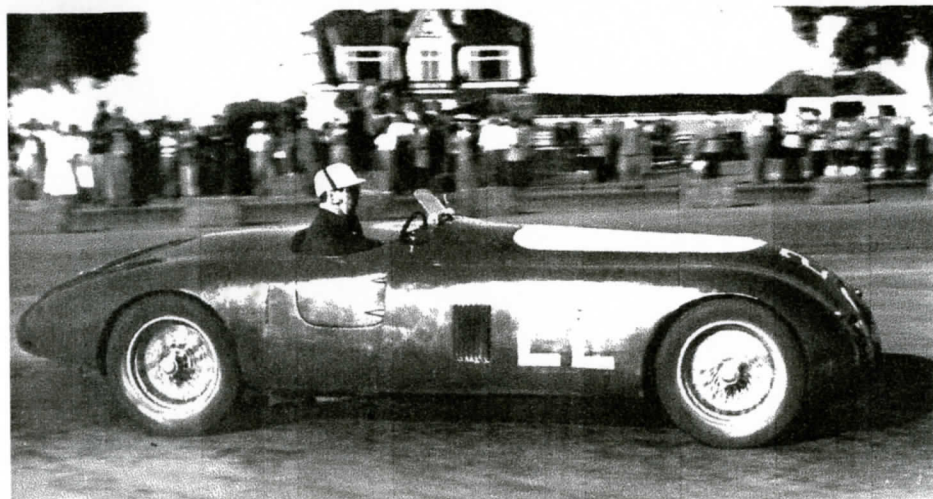
Although the 412's superseded the 2.9's in sports car racing in 1939, a 2.9 Mille Miglia spider did appear just once for the works during this year when it was driven by Emilio Villoresi in the Luxembourg GP. Villoresi finished fourth behind Wimille's winning 4.7-litre-engined Type 59 Bugatti, Biondetti's 412 and Levegh's Talbot, and except for this one occasion the only 2.9 Mille Miglia spider competing in 1939 was Hugh Hunter's car.

This car caused a big stir in England, particularly when it was entered for a contest at Brooklands at Whitsun, 1939, with the object of finding the fastest car used on the roads of Britain. The winner was to be the car which covered three and a half laps of the Campbell Road Circuit and five laps of the Mountain Circuit in the shortest time. This was not a serious contest, only seven cars took part comprising Delahaye, Delage, Peugeot, Darracq, two Alfa Romeos and an Alta, so the entry could hardly be described as representative. Hunter narrowly won the race over the Campbell Circuit by four-fifths of a second over the more experienced Arthur Dobson in a 3½-litre Delahaye, with Ian Connell's 4-litre Darracq third. In the race around the Mountain Circuit, Hunter's gearbox failed on the first lap, so the Delahaye won the contest over the Darracq.

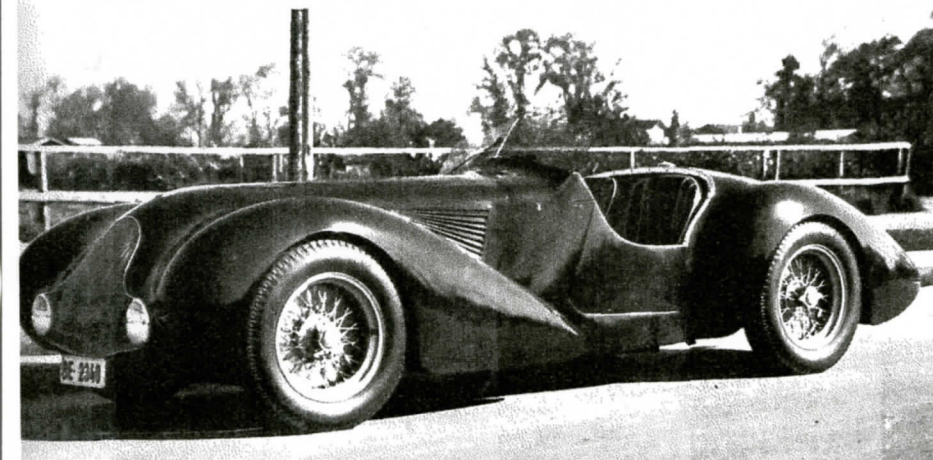
During the war Anthony Crook acquired Hunter's car and raced it extensively during the early postwar years, now fitted with cycle-type mudguards. In 1942 he had purchased a normal Touring spider two-seater, DLY 163, and in full cry the car used to do eight or nine miles per gallon. Fortunately Crook, as an R.A.F. bomber pilot, received a generous gasoline ration from Bomber Command, and because of the lack of traffic and the car's phenomenal acceleration — not to mention the carefree attitude of the period — some fantastic average speeds were recorded, especially between Crook's bomber base in Lincolnshire and London. He still recalls the absolute astonishment on the faces of troops sitting in the rear of trucks as this extraordinary blue projectile flashed up behind the convoys and howled past at 125 mph or more. After the war Crook concentrated on his Mille Miglia car, JML 1, and DLY 163 was sold to a collector in the United States.

An early postwar appearance in Continental racing by a 2900 B was in the 1946 Frontières GP at Chimay in Belgium, where a driver called Steinbach finished second in the sixty-three-mile race, one lap behind H. L. Brooke's 1½-litre E.R.A. R7B, and in front of a 2.3 GP Bugatti. Bira's 2.9-litre Maserati retired and the race was a survival of the fittest, but the Alfa with its full-width





Facing page, from the top: Pintacuda winning the 1938 twenty-four hour race at Spa; the Sommer/Biondetti coupé, near winner at Le Mans, 1938; Biondetti winning the 1947 Mille Miglia. This page, from the top: "The Whale," as raced by da Villa in Argentina, 1951; a 1938 Mille Miglia spider as modified by Paul Glauser for postwar Swiss racing; another 1938 Mille Miglia car modified for postwar racing in Switzerland, this one by Jean Studer.



windscreen and spider two-seater body by Touring looked out of place in a field largely made up of open-wheel racing cars — most of which it soundly beat.

Nineteen forty-seven saw the first postwar Mille Miglia won by a 2.9 Alfa, but surprisingly enough by a long chassis berlinetta. This car was owned by Emilio Romano, who entered it to be driven by the master Biondetti with himself as passenger. As superchargers were barred the car was fitted with four Solex carburetors and a raised compression ratio. Despite losing the use of first and second gears and having to make five stops to deal with fuel feed troubles, Biondetti won the race by a quarter of an hour from Nuvolari's 1100 cc Cisitalia — which had also suffered a fifteen minute delay. Two more Cisitalias followed them home.

The victorious berlinetta was then sold to an Argentinian called Barra, who passed it on to Perez da Villa. This driver raced it until he bought another 2900 B which is described later, and which became known as "The Whale." The next owner, Cresto, blew up the engine and the car has not raced since. It is now in running order, having recently been restored by Lucio Bollaert of Buenos Aires, and it still bears a silver plaque saying, "Romano, Biondetti. Primo Assoluto XIV Mille Miglia, Brescia."

In 1948 a Touring berlinetta triumphed again, this time with a normal supercharged engine, during the first Watkins Glen race in the United States. (See *AUTOMOBILE Quarterly*, Volume VIII, Number 3.) The driver was Frank Griswold, a Pennsylvania Alfa Romeo dealer who in 1940 had won the New York World's Fair road race at Flushing in a Tipo B Grand Prix Alfa Romeo.

One of the four 1938 Mille Miglia team cars, but not one of the two that subsequently ran at Spa, found its way across the Atlantic at the end of the Second World War and was raced by Mack Hellings at Watkins Glen and elsewhere. It then passed briefly into the Tommy Lee collection, to join the Farina- and Touring-bodied roadsters Lee owned at that time. On Lee's death in 1951 the car went to Phil Hill, destined ten years later to be World Champion.

Initially Hill had trouble with the scavenge pump packing up and the engine overheating due to a too high compression ratio. He first raced it in February, 1951, on the dirt at Carrell Speedway, Los Angeles, where he won a "trophy dash" over a home-made single-seater. At Palm Springs he did two-and-one-half laps before a rear wheel came off. He then lent the car to Arnold Stubbs who came in second with it in the Sandberg Hill Climb. In late May Hill won the Del Monte Handicap over ten laps at Pebble Beach, but in the scratch Pebble Beach Cup race he kept having to stop for oil and finished fourth behind two Cadillac-Allards and a Jaguar. After that Hill sold the car, and it was never raced in anger again, being now in immaculately restored retirement. (More about this car later.)

The two other 1938 Mille Miglia team cars and several roadsters, including the Frontières GP car of Steinbach, appeared in Switzerland after the war and there they frequently took part in hill climbs and also in the annual national sports car race which preceded the Swiss Grand Prix on the Bremgarten Circuit in those days. The first of these races was in 1947, when Jean Studer retired his Mille Miglia spider after damaging the car in a spin and the race went to an 8C 2.3-litre Alfa Romeo. In the 1948 race Paul Glauser drove a Mille Miglia spider with modified front bodywork and just managed to win from Studer after a race-long battle, Studer now being at the wheel of a Farina-bodied 2900 B roadster.

In 1949 Studer reappeared at Bremgarten with his Mille Miglia spider, set fastest lap in practice, and led a 412 Alfa Romeo driven by Willi Daetwyler

412031	Touring Mille Miglia Spyder	Won 1938 Mille Miglia. Sold to Hugh Hunter and later to Tony Crook who modified the body. Sold from the Thomson Collection in Scotland in 1970.	Bill Serri New Jersey
412032	Touring Mille Miglia Spider	Farina/Meazza Mille Miglia car. Sold to Switzerland postwar.	Fritz Schlumpf France
412033	Touring Le Mans Coupé	Almost won Le Mans, 1938. Sold from Italian collection in 1968 to Colin Crabbe.	Lord Doune Scotland
412034	Touring Mille Miglia Spider	Siena/Villoresi Mille Miglia car. Sold to E. Romano of Brescia (with 412036) and then to Switzerland.	Fritz Schlumpf France
412035	Touring Berlinetta	Delivered to Donegani, 1938, crashed, rebuilt before going to U.S. from Switzerland. Won first Watkins Glen Grand Prix in 1948.	Dr. Donald Vesley Oklahoma
412036	Touring Berlinetta	Won 1947 Mille Miglia in unsupercharged form. Imported into Argentina by Barra in 1949. Found in scrapyard in 1966 with 6C 2500 engine. Proper engine now installed.	Lucio M. Bollaert Buenos Aires Argentina
412041	Touring Open Sports	Imported into Argentina in 1949 by Carlos Menditeguy, made into special by German Pesce.	Broken up
412043	Open "The Whale"	Assembled in 1941 by works from spares with streamlined open body. Raced extensively postwar by Carlos Perez da Villa in Argentina.	Señor Iriate Argentina
No plate	Farina Open Sports	Ex-Tommy Lee Collection	Harrah's Automobile Collection, Nevada
Not known	Touring Open Sports	8C 2900A owned by Robert Arbuthnot in U.K., also Townley and Tony Crook, exported to U.S. after the war.	Not known
Not known	Touring Open Sports	Delivered new to the Maharani of Indore, given to her doctor, sold to U.S. in 1970.	Not known
Not known	Touring Open Sports	Car burnt out in fire in Missouri about ten years ago.	Destroyed
Not known	Touring Berlinetta	Delivered new to King of Rumania, car still there with 6C 2500 engine fitted.	Not known
Not known	Factory Open Mille Miglia	Pintacuda. Carlos Arzani Domingo Ochoteco Italo Bizio 8C 2900A. Severely damaged in accident.	David Llewellyn England (less engine)

before having to retire with what was described as "crankshaft problems." Glauser also retired his Mille Miglia car, now completely rebodied.

In 1950 Studer ran second throughout the race to the 412 and did the same in 1951, although in the latter year he failed to stay on the same lap with it. Both these Swiss Mille Miglia cars are understood to have gone into the Fritz Schlumpf collection in Alsace, which otherwise consists mainly of Bugattis.

The last 8C 2900 made was constructed in 1941, and was fitted with an open all-enveloping body with a full undertray. This streamlining was so successful that the car was found to be exceeding its maximum revs in top gear, so a higher axle ratio was fitted which raised the maximum speed from 190 km/hr (118 mph) to 220 km/hr (135 mph). The car was raced with some success in Argentina after the war by Perez da Villa. The bodywork had been modified somewhat by this time, and it had lost the beautiful lines of the original Alfa Romeo design, and was consequently christened *Ala Spessa*, "The Whale." This car had the Lungo chassis and in its original form weighed about 120 pounds more than a standard short chassis roadster.

Two other roadsters were raced in the Argentine after the war, one being ruined by a man called Pesce in his unsuccessful attempts to build a special out of it.

After a long sojourn in a static collection of cars in Scotland, in which it remained after leaving the hands of Tony Crook, the 1938 Mille Miglia winner now belongs to an enthusiast in New Jersey whose undoubted aim is to use it on the road in the same way that he uses his Type 51 Bugatti. It is an unfortunate fact that very few of the surviving 2900 B cars are in regular use, an exception being a Touring-bodied roadster belonging to Lord Doune which is regularly taxed for the road in the summer months. Lord Doune also owns the streamlined Le Mans coupé which came to the United Kingdom from Italy in the late Sixties, but this car needs some mechanical restoration.

Lord Doune was kind enough to invite Simon Moore to go for a ride in his 2900 B spider, once the property of the late Lord Ridley. It was noticeable that the clutch was rather fierce — IN or OUT and nothing in between — which helps to explain the occasional poor starts in races made by Sommer and Phil Hill. Hugh Hunter also criticized the clutch, and "Taso" Mathieson noticed it was jerky when he was given a run up the road in the coupé before the 1938 Le Mans race. Mathieson drove a Talbot at Le Mans that year with Lord Waleran and shared the same garage with the Alfa Romeo équipe, hence the offer of the ride. The car impressed him as being quite oppressively noisy, albeit outstanding and very fast.

Another point of criticism of the "Two-nines," at any rate here in England, was their instruments, which were rather stylized and were the same as those on the cheapest 6C 2300 berlinetta of the time. These instruments even appeared on the Mille Miglia cars.

On Lord Doune's spider it was also apparent that the gearbox, being in the back axle, took a long time to warm up and initially the gear lever was very stiff. Once the car was warmed up the performance was of the "kick-in-the-back" variety and significantly better than that of the earlier 8C 2300 Alfas, with very effective brakes to go with it. Moore's most vivid memory is of accelerating past the holiday traffic on the Stirling-Doune road where it seemed the whine of the blowers could be heard about three cars ahead. No horn was necessary to warn other road users of the 2.9's approach.

The majority of 2.9 Alfas have now found their way across the Atlantic, possibly because they are thoroughbred European cars which in some cases are more thoroughly respected there than in Europe — prophets without honor perhaps. ☸



Phil Hill racing 412030 at Pebble Beach, 1951.

CHASSIS	BODY	HISTORY	PRESENT OWNER
412004	Not known	Not known.	Fritz Schlumph France
412011	Nowack Open Sports	Car found by Paul Schreiber in Chicago with 6C 2500 engine. Proper engine now installed.	H. William Knauz Illinois
412014	Touring Open Sports	Imported into U.S. in 1938 for MacLure Halley. Subsequently owned by Tommy Lee, George Huguely, Samuel Scher, Al Garthwaite among others.	Richard C. Paine Maine
412016	Touring Open Sports	Delivered new to Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. Imported from U.K. in 1953.	A. James Ibold Ohio
412019	Touring Open Sports	Delivered new to Indian Maharajah. Taken to Australia in early 1950's. When imported into U.S. in 1969 by Jackson Brooks, car had done 7750 miles since new.	Edmund P. Osborn Ohio
412020	Touring Berlinetta	1938 Paris Salon car. Imported from Germany in late 1940's. Subsequently owned by Ed Reich.	Keith Hellon Illinois
412022	Touring Open Sports	Imported into U.K. just prior to war for 1939 London Motor Show (never held); not put on road until after the war. Subsequent owners: Pat Wilkins, Jack Bartlett, Lord Ridley, Bill Summers.	Lord Doune Scotland
412023	Touring Open Sports	Imported into U.S. from Switzerland in early 1960's by Vintage Car Store, Nyack, New York. Later owned by Dr. H. A. Mueller.	John C. North II Maryland
412024	Touring Berlinetta	Owned prewar by Jack Bartlett, postwar by Dennis De Ferranti and Lord Ridley.	Nigel Mann France
412026	Touring Open Sports	Imported from U.K. around 1960 by Erwin Goldschmidt, also owned by Bob Grossman and Dr. David E. Lawrence. Currently on display in an East Coast Ferrari dealership.	Luigi Chinetti Connecticut
412027	Touring Open Sports	Found in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, by Vojta Mashek.	Walter B. Weimer Minnesota
412029	Touring Berlinetta	Not known.	Alfa Romeo S.p.A. Italy
412030	Touring Mille Miglia Spyder	Pintacuda 1938 Mille Miglia car. Raced postwar by Phil Hill after acquisition from Tommy Lee estate.	Brooks Stevens Automotive Museum Wisconsin

In an effort to more fully document the histories of these cars, the authors would

collection car 412036