

THE FIRST FERRARI



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Franco Cortese drives the first Ferrari at Piacenza, May, 1947.

Chapter Six – Afterwords

In 1950, 010I was at the factory where it undoubtedly received service. It would appear that the factory used it for rental rides for aspiring racers. It was certainly raced by Luigi de Filippis, (brother of Maria, the well-known Italian lady driver) in the 11th Grand Prix of Rome on the Caracella Baths circuit in which it retired. John Heath saw it at Naples that year, still with Dudley Folland's name on it.

It was during 1950 that Colombo left Ferrari and returned to Alfa Romeo in Portello. There, he redesigned the rear suspension of the 1900 road car and carried out trials with the forthcoming CM62 "Disco Volante" race car.

In July, 1951, John Wyer finally managed to sell, through the factory, the now four year old Ferrari. It is possible that the factory, having a virtually "free" car to play with, did not bother to try and sell the car, leaving that up to Wyer. 010I was bought for just one quarter of its purchase price of four thousand pounds, being sold to John Willment, a Ford dealer who was later to become a business partner of John Wyer's.

Wyer insisted that the car had to be taken delivery of in Modena, thus circumventing any importation into Britain problems and John Willment had the factory remove the body so that he could import the chassis for "research and development". When Willment finally received the car, he had Williams and Pritchard, a respected English coachbuilder re-body the car with an all-enveloping body and then, after trying the car, John Willment left it in his garage in storage for the next twenty three years.

David Mulvaney purchased the car from John Wilment in 1974 and, shortly thereafter, sold the car to Anthony Bamford, a Ferrari collector of note and the son of Joseph Bamford who had started a Company, JCB Limited, which made earth moving equipment and which provided Anthony Bamford with the wherewithal to indulge his hobby.

At this time, Anthony Bamford also owned 002C, the third Ferrari produced and, after careful research, decided to sell this to finance restoration of 010I. It was during this time that Don Nelson, an inveterate enthusiast and past owners of such exotic Ferraris as a 250GTO, 275LM and a 212 coupe, (to name but a few!), visited Bamford's premises to inspect 010I with a view to buying it. Don later told the author: "I couldn't get into it. It was made for a tiny person. I looked long and hard at it, with the idea of moving the rear bulkhead back, so that I could get into it, but there wasn't enough room. I did have a good look at the car and reckoned that it was exactly what Anthony Bamford said it was, a very, very early Ferrari. Anthony then offered me his 275LM, which fitted me like a glove and I drive home in it that night!"

In March, 1975, Anthony Bamford sold the restored Spyder Corsa, 010I, to Paul Jackman who registered it as 328 DEL and lovingly looked after the car, bringing it out to use on sunny days and attending many Ferrari Owners' Club functions with it.

Sadly, Paul Jackman died in 1993 and 010 I was subsequently bought at auction in 1994 by another collector, a Mr. Ravi Wethasinge, who lived in England. He gave the car to DK Engineering, a noted Ferrari restoration Company, who did considerable mechanical work, and true to their reputation, at the same time kept as much of the car's originality as possible.

David Cottingham, the founder of DK Engineering, recounted that "the engine had white metal bearings" - and - "is certainly the oldest Ferrari engine I have ever seen". The car had been entered in the 1995 Mille Miglia, and on completion of the engineering work, Frank Bott was commissioned by DK to run in the car, and in so doing, he completed some 500 trouble free but exciting road miles, incrementally using more of the available power. The car was immediately transported to the Mille Miglia start point in Brescia, was available for the event but unfortunately, Mr. Wethasinge had another commitment, and the car never started.

In 1995, there was a Ferrari Celebration Meeting at Silverstone, and naturally a parade of important Ferraris had been assembled by the British Ferrari Owner's Club to mark the occasion. Mr. Wethasinge very kindly offered 010 I to the Club so that the car could lead this parade, and as Frank Bott was the Club Chairman at that time, who better than to collect, use, and return the car after the Silverstone event. He remembered it as being "a lovely little car. Even though after it's running in period, I only used in excess of 4,500 rpm in short bursts in deference to a newly rebuilt engine, it was obvious to me that this must have been a bombshell in 1947. Steering was light and precise, you could put it exactly where you wanted and it stopped on a sixpence. I vividly recall the ivory gearlever knob lettered in Roman numerals, so that you changed up from IV to VI! You do have to be the master where the gearbox is concerned - just flick it straight through from one gear to the next without wasting time. If you tried to be deliberate, you could graunch the gears, and from that beautiful little leather covered armchair of a driving seat, to graunch anything would have been an act of extreme disrespect to all those notably famous previous incumbents. Going into roundabouts (traffic islands-Ed.) flicking down from fifth, to fourth, to third with the engine crackling on the overrun was terrific. I even took the car shopping, though it did look just a little incongruous parked between the Rover Metros and the housewives 4 x 4's in the supermarket car park! I did in total approaching 1000 miles and had to be more or less amputated from it when it came to hand back time. It was a wonderful experience."

In February, 1996, 010I appeared on the market once again and, after being offered for sale by several brokers, was consigned to be sold at Auction by Coy's of Kensington at their Silverstone auction of August 3rd. It failed to meet it's reserve and was bought by the Symbolic Motor Car Company of La Jolla, California who imported the car into the United

States.

Whilst at Symbolic's service department, a lead plug, painted in the color of the chassis and bearing the chassis number "010I", was removed to display the number: "01C" beneath, thus proving, for once and all that the car had, as had long been thought, been re-numbered. On November 20th, a new U.S. registration was issued showing the chassis number as 01C.

It has long been known that 02C, sold as a bare chassis in 1949 to Franco Cornacchia of Team Guastalla had been re-numbered as 020I and been re-bodied in 1950 as a coupe by Touring of Milan. The proof of the factory re-numbering both of their first two cars produced is evidence of Enzo Ferrari's comment that: " We had to sell the first cars in order that our workers could be paid."

01C's first appearance in America was at the Palm Springs Concours d'Elegance where it won a first prize. Since then, it has regularly appeared at numerous concours and taken part in the Mille Miglia Retro event in 1997.

Today, 01C is a car that has seen 56 years of life. Most race cars do not last long. They were, after all, designed to be expendable. Astonishingly, 01C has survived without major trauma, having had a racing career which stretched over four years and still winning a race three years after first seeing the Italian light of day. 01C/010I currently wears at least its sixth body and has now been re-bodied back to its original style full-width roadster body style, the same as it wore at Piacenza when it first started a race on May 11th, 1947.

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