

THE FERRARI 250 GT DROGO BERLINETTA



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Stirling Moss driving the Ferrari 250 SWB of Rob Walker, chassis # 2735GT, in its original incarnation.

The Ferrari 250 GT Drogo Berlinetta

I've had a few cars built in my time in this hobby/business of exciting cars. Probably the most dramatic was a recreation of a car that I had loved since teenage years (yes, sad, isn't it?).

Let me explain.

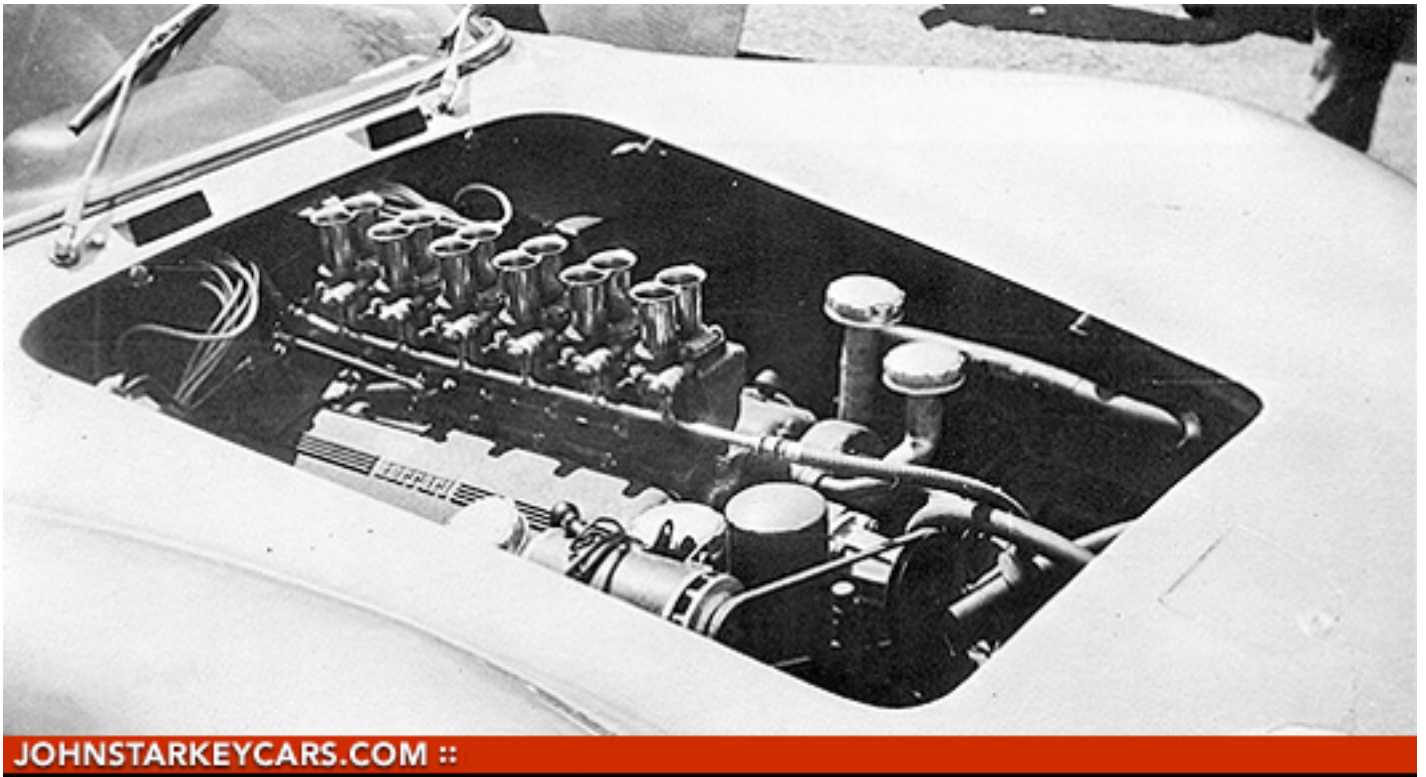
2735 GT was a 1961 Ferrari 250 GT Short Wheelbase Berlinetta. With the redoubtable Stirling Moss driving, she had won the Tourist Trophy at Goodwood apparently, as Moss himself later quoted: "Whilst listening to the radio(!)" Before this, 2735 GT had been a Rob Walker team car and had raced at Le Mans where the dark blue coupe, driven by Graham Hill and Stirling Moss, had uncharacteristically retired with engine failure. After this, Moss had reeled off five consecutive victories with the car and it had also done a spell with the U.D.T. Laystall team, where Innes Ireland drove it.

2735 GT was then sold to a wealthy privateer, Chris Kerrison, who had previously raced a sports-racing Lotus. Chris Kerrison entered the Ferrari for the 1962 Tourist Trophy and there, his co-driver Chris Benson crashed it, causing severe damage to the bodywork.

As was normal in those days, Chris Kerrison phoned the Ferrari factory, who suggested that he send the crashed car to Piero Drogo's establishment, "Modena Sportscars".

Piero Drogo was an interesting man. He had gravitated to Modena from his homeland of Brazil and raced a Ferrari Testa Rossa. Realizing that he had to make a living, he founded his Carrozierra and had two well-known craftsmen, Neri and Bonaccini, repair and rebody a wide number of Ferraris, some crashed, some with an owner who just wanted "something different". Sadly, Piero was killed in later years whilst at the wheel of a Ferrari 250 California on the street.

So Neri and Bonaccini worked away to rebody Chris Kerrison's Berlinetta. Of course, 1962 was the year of the 250 GTO's introduction, and so something even lower and more dramatic was called for. Kerrison certainly got it! Although no-one would call the resulting Berlinetta pretty, it was one of the most dramatic looking bodies Drogo ever built on a Ferrari chassis. From the ground-hugging snout to the sharply cut-off tail, this car embodied the word "aggressive". The opportunity had been taken to move the engine back in the chassis and lower it, something that bore the trademark of Ing. Giotto Bizzarrini, though whether he had anything to do with this Berlinetta, I do not know.



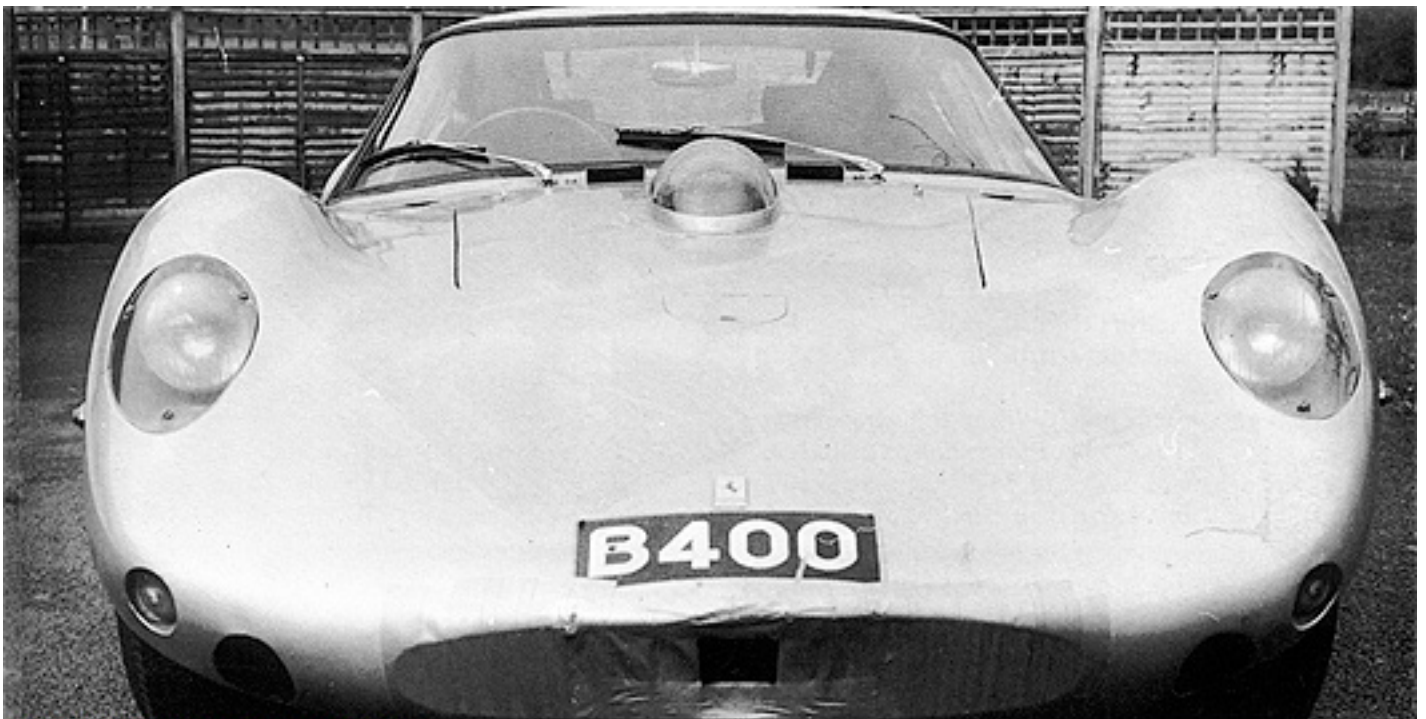
The engine of the Kerrison Drogo when new. Note that it has the 6 carburetors of a GTO.

When Kerrison got his Berlinetta back, he must have had a shock. He is about six feet, three inches tall and now, it would be difficult to fit a five foot ten inch person into it. Nevertheless, Chris Kerrison accepted the challenge and put up some good performances with the car before selling it in 1964 as it was now, "just an old racecar."

2735 GT then passed through a succession of owners, losing its original engine (this is rumored to be in a GTO now) before being restored by Hugh Edgley in 1972. Hugh Edgley loved the old Berlinetta and kept her for several years. In 1983 the car was sold to Clive Beecham, who undertook a comprehensive restoration, a new SWB body in aluminum being fabricated. The old Drogo bodywork was discarded and bought by an enthusiast who had the paneling made good with new aluminum where necessary and then fitted that to a "GTO-ized" GTE chassis. That is when I came into the picture!

Having always loved the look of the Drogo Berlinetta, I bought the rolling chassis and took it to my old friend, Allen Goodall, who owns an excellent bodyshop in Redditch, Warwickshire, in England.

Of course, I wanted to build this recreation as nearly as possible to resemble the real thing and thought to seek out Chris Kerrison. I dug out an old "Autosport" magazine from 1964, when Kerrison was advertising the car as: "The fastest breadvan in the World!" I called the telephone number on the page and a voice answered, saying: "Chris Kerrison." It was he!



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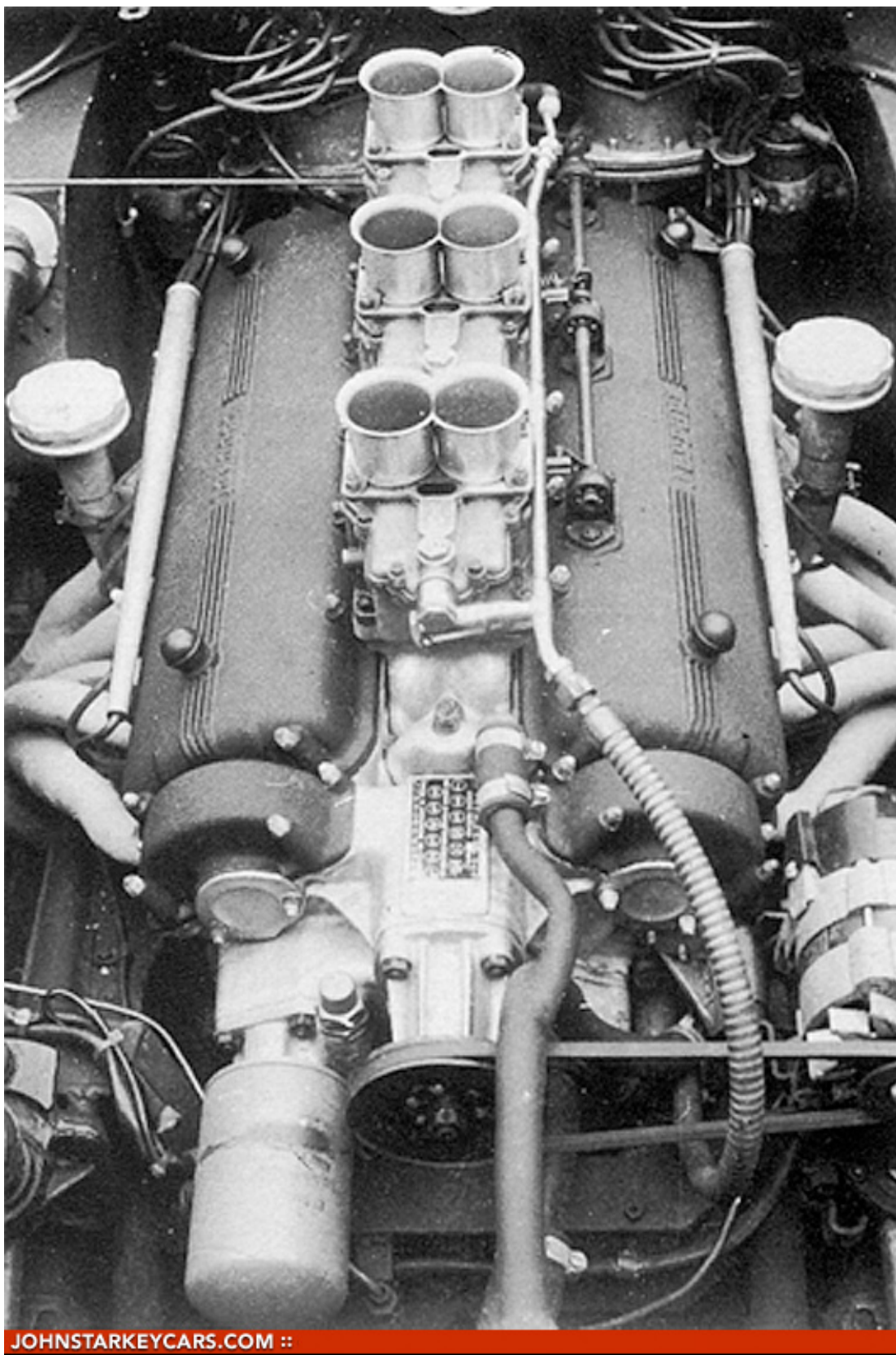
The Drogo-bodied Ferrari, now registered for the street, when owned by Hugh Edgley.

Thirty years later, Chris Kerrison was still living in the same house as he had when he owned the Ferrari. He gave me lots of information on the car, including: "I really wanted a GTO, but they were in such short supply the factory would never give me a delivery date."

Meanwhile, Allen and his crew set to work. I "found" a Ferrari engine and four-speed gearbox and, within six months, the car was completed. One problem – although I am five feet eleven inches tall, to begin with, I could not fit into the cockpit! By cutting a slice out of the chassis longeron that ran beneath the seat, and reclining that as far as possible, I was able to finally fit into it, arms straight and knees splaying the steering wheel. With a crash helmet on, I always had to drive it with my head bent to one side! When I questioned Chris Kerrison about this, he couldn't remember it being that cramped, which somewhat surprised me.

So, here I was at last with the Kerrison Drogo. I remember driving it to the local pub one Sunday lunchtime. The pub's car park was festooned with new Porsches and Jaguars. They didn't stand a chance! No-one coming out bothered to look at them just the "old" Ferrari.

The car drove beautifully, both on the road and the track. I entered her for races at Brands Hatch, Monza and Spa. Great handling, which I can only attribute to the even balance of the car, with the engine moved back and lower in the chassis. At Brands Hatch, I had an hour-long duel with an Aston Martin DB4 GT, the Aston running wide onto the grass at one time.



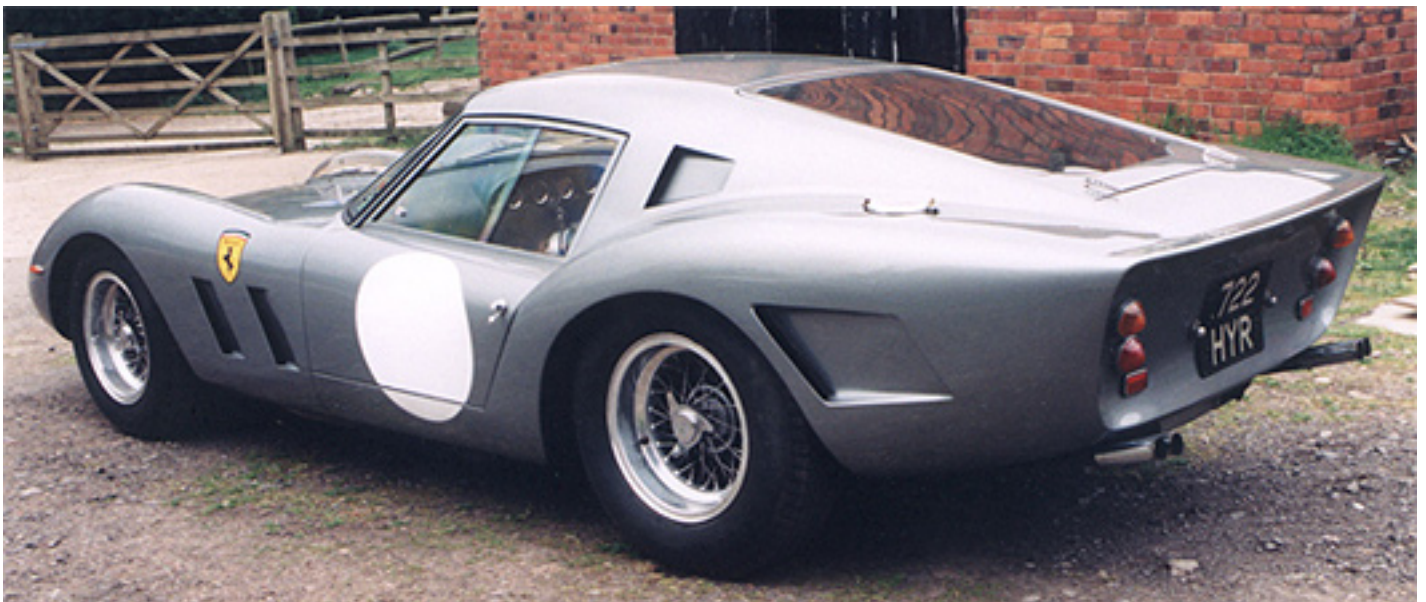
In later years, the original engine of 2735GT was removed and this engine from a 250GTE put in its place.



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The finished recreation of the Kerrison Drogo Berlinetta.

We finished seventh and eighth after one of the most hectic hour-long duels that I can remember.



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A side view of the Drogo recreation.



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A rear view of the Drogo recreation.

By 1998, I had decided to immigrate to America and didn't really want to take the Ferrari with me. I sold her to Dan Ghose, who raced her a few times and then sold her on. I don't know where she is now, but if I had a few million, I wouldn't mind her back!

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