



HOW A LONG TIME FAN ENDED UP WITH THREE SIGNIFICANT FERRARIS

By Wallace Wyss

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AUTHOR INTRO: John Clinard is a jovial public relations man now living in SoCal but still working for one of those automakers in Detroit, let's see, the one with the big smokestacks. (My dad made Model A Fords there nearly 100 years ago.)

Anyhow, John was first hired onto Ford as a PR man in 1972, and he's still with them, somehow long after typical retirement age.

But another part of his life has been a lifelong affair with Ferrari. I knew him through the Ferrari clubs and my job as associate editor of *Motor Trend* and knowing his Ferrari love, asked if he could tell us how to spot a winner, and how to know when to trade it in on a bigger winner.

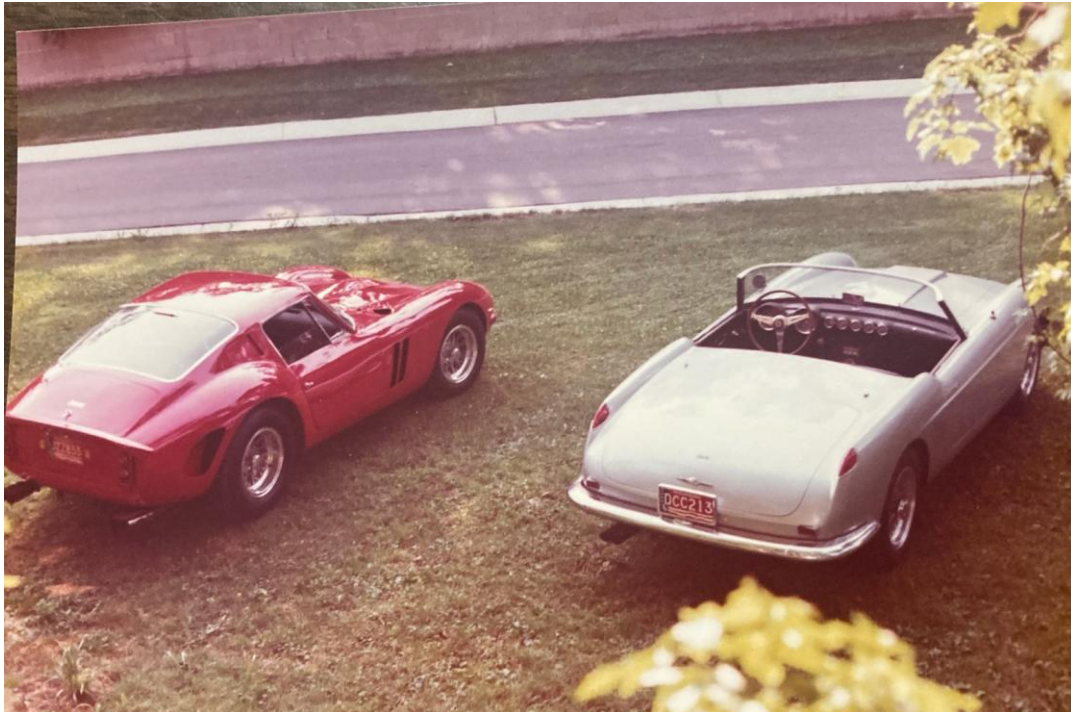
Wallace Wyss

WYSS: When you first started at Ford wasn't that the era where, if you were a sports car guy, you didn't dare drive that furrin' car to work for fear of seeming disloyal?

CLINARD: Surprisingly, it was not that way. Quite a few prominent car designers and engineers in all four of the companies, Ford, GM, Chrysler, AMC ... owned significant Ferraris. Fresh out of college, my car was a '65 Alfa Romeo Giulia Spider, so I was able to "fit in" with this community. I worked in Ford's World Headquarters building my first two years, proudly parking my Alfa in the lot among Fords of every description. Edsel Ford II owned a Ferrari Daytona, so it was forgiven!

WYSS: Of the group that still persisted in buying foreign cars, though keeping the cars out of the limelight, I remember someone from American Motors had a 250 GTO. Who was that? Did they take it to events? What other Detroit designers and engineers owned Ferraris (there was one from Chrysler....).

CLINARD: I was able to “officially” join the fraternity in 1976 when I sold my Alfa and bought a '58 Ferrari 250 Cabriolet (1079 GT). One of the great things about Ferrari ownership is that it doesn't matter your station in life, if you have a Ferrari, you're part of the community. Among my close friends were GM vice president, Chuck Jordan (Lusso, 512 Boxer, Testarossa, F40), Dave Cummins of Chrysler Design (Daytona, 410 Superamerica, 275 GTB/4), Hank Haga of GM Design (250 LM, 166 Barchetta), Manfred Lampe of Ford Design (250 TdF and 512S Can Am car), Dick Teague of American Motors (250 SWB “SEFAC Hot Rod,” 250 cabriolet), McLaren executive Roger Meiners (250 SWB Berlinetta and 275 GTB/C) ... and Ford engineer, Fred Leydorf. Fred owned a 250 GTO (330 LM S/N 3765), a four-liter GTO that was later converted to three-liter. I drove that car a lot. Fred liked to ride in the car and frequently invited me to drive him! A second 250 GTO was in town, cared for by Gordon Barrett. I have a cassette recording I made while driving that car in the snow. Those were the days. No one owned a trailer ... we drove the cars everywhere. As this list illustrates, Detroit was a significant part of the Ferrari universe in the seventies/eighties.



WYSS: I can't neglect the Ferrari Barchetta Enzo gave to Henry Ford II. Did that car achieve anything for his largesse?

CLINARD: This is such an ingrained bit of folklore! The car was not gifted to Henry Ford. It was purchased through an Italian dealership by Ford of Italy, then shipped to Dearborn to serve as a design reference. It is speculated that Henry Ford's name was attached to the transaction to gain shipping priority. Elements of the car found their way into the original Thunderbird. The Barchetta was later purchased by Dick Merritt (co-author of the seminal “Fitzgerald-Merritt” book on Ferrari). Dick worked at Ford at the time in product development. His co-author, Warren Fitzgerald, worked at General Motors.

WYSS: Decades ago you told me about when your wife heard you wanted to buy a Ferrari and you had a house to pay for and three children, and even with her being a teacher, your combined salaries was far short of the Ferrari you found-- a 1958 Cabriolet, SN 1079. How did you justify it to her and then get her to say "Yes"

CLINARD: I cannot overstate how lucky I've been. First, I grew up in North Carolina in the same neighborhood as Norman Silver. Norman was a pioneer in the Ferrari world. In the sixties/seventies, he owned 14 significant Ferraris in a huge garage in his back yard. I spent many days with him. Linda, my girlfriend from Indiana who became my wife in 1972, visited Norman on several occasions and shared my fascination with the cars.



In 1976, Linda and I had the opportunity to buy the 250 Cabriolet, a twin to one of Norman's cars that was the first Ferrari I ever drove. The price was \$13,000. That was Linda's annual salary as an elementary school teacher. It took about 30 seconds for her to say "yes". Moral of the story ... marry a car enthusiast! Yes, I've been lucky.



WYSS: And you took that car to do a lot of activities?

CLINARD: Yes, mostly to various concours events. Meadow Brook in Michigan, then to California for Newport Beach, Rodeo Drive, and twice to Pebble Beach. It's such a beautiful design, always welcomed at such events and frequently a winner. The car was amazingly original and preserved when we bought it, yet over time we restored everything ... engine, gearbox, suspension, brakes, paint and leather.

WYSS: And were there other Ferraris?

CLINARD: Yes, in 1977 we bought a one-off 250 Pininfarina coupe, number 0751 GT. The price was \$15,000, which again shows how much things have changed! In appearance, this car is closely akin to the cabriolet, same

overall shape. The car was made for Liliana de Rethy, princess of Belgium. It is the second of three unique Ferraris made for her. She was the second wife of King Leopold who was a staunch supporter of Enzo Ferrari and client of Pininfarina. Today, the car resides in Germany in the Nationales Automuseum – The Loh Collection. We restored this car and enjoyed it for several years, then traded it for a 500 Superfast, and subsequently traded that for a 330 GTS. More by accident than by design, we didn't sell cars over the years, we traded when something appealing came along, simply graduating among the cars over the years. Other cars that have come and gone are a 330GTC, a 365 2+2, two 246 Dinos and a 308 GT/4.

WYSS: And I know your two sons wanted to drive it. How long did they have to wait? Were you always in the right hand seat when they did?

CLINARD: In addition to a supportive wife, our daughter and two sons fully share the automotive affliction! Ferraris bring such a great opportunity to meet accomplished people, and this has enriched all of our lives. Solo drives were welcomed. And yes, all of us know how to double clutch!

WYSS: Did you give any big Ford execs a ride in the car, such as HFII, HFIII, head of design etc.? What was their response?

CLINARD: My initial office in California was in Ford's Irvine design studio. I was granted permission to keep the cabriolet in the studio, which is the best storage imaginable! J Mays, Ford's design VP, would spend long moments walking around the car, making erudite observations about its genius.

In a related incident, we displayed the car in the 1993 Rodeo Drive Concours where the Ferrari 348 Spider was introduced. Sergio Pininfarina was there and he sat in the Cabriolet for a few minutes. He then thanked me with a handshake before moving on to the next car. As he walked past our car, he reached behind himself without looking back and gave the car a pat on the fender. I cannot imagine a greater endorsement.



WYSS: So, after a mere 39 years of ownership of the Cabriolet, I heard that you up- and sold that car, your lifelong treasure. Did you have to convince your wife in reverse to do that?

CLINARD: After 39 years, the cabriolet was simply a part of our family, our only Ferrari. Then, in an unexpected turn of events, we were pursued by two gentlemen wanting to buy it. Would we consider a trade? Family meeting. We made a trade for two Alfa Romeos and a Ferrari 275 GTB/4. Not just any 275. It was originally owned by movie director, John Frankenheimer, who was given a \$1,000 “special discount” by Enzo Ferrari to purchase a car off the assembly line following the release of Frankenheimer’s movie *Grand Prix*.

Painted a brilliant giallo fly, the car was accepted at Pebble Beach in 2024. It didn’t win anything, but just being there next to a 250 GTO was good enough for me! Today, it is being returned to the original Frankenheimer color ... Blue Sera. Do we miss the cabriolet? I never look back. It’s a great car that provided decades of enjoyment. Now, the 275 offers another experience with fabulous dynamics and timeless design to behold. Both cars represent the best of Ferrari.



WYSS: While accompanying your car to Pebble Beach, did you have conversations with any collectors that were surprised you worked for that company with the seven smokestacks by the Rouge River?

CLINARD: Occupations never came up. Several Pebble judges are employees of Ford, GM and other car companies. I’ve been a judge at Pebble for 30 years. I think there is a universal language spoken by “car people” that accepts everyone regardless of occupation.

WYSS: Did you always, as it turned out to have a lust for the 275 GTB, and couldn't believe you were being offered one?

CLINARD: Another of Norman Silver’s cars that I drove decades ago is the original NART Spider. That car’s impressive powertrain left an indelible impression on me. To have a 275 4-cam of my own to re-live that experience is irresistible.

WYSS: I haven't followed the market at auctions, but aren't 250GT Cabriolets going for millions now? Or are you like a stock investor who sells one stock to buy one that has stronger value?

CLINARD: This may sound artificial, but a car's value is not a primary criterion in my decisions. Today's "ordinary" cars like the Ford Mustang I drive, are sophisticated and serve me well. What dictates my choice of Ferrari is how different the driving experience is in comparison to everyday driving. I value the older cars more because they offer a more visceral experience. The closer a car is to a race car on the street, the more I like it! I'm spending my money for a different experience. For example, cars with clutch pedals are much more rewarding to drive. Just look at the premium in modern Ferraris with manual transmissions.

WYSS: So, in the end, do you feel that even if one car turns out to be worth more than another, you still made the right choice, or is it something you never know?

CLINARD: I have no second thoughts. The opportunity to experience another iconic Ferrari was my motivation. Ferraris offer so much variety, it's fun to sample the menu!

WYSS: What advice can you give a beginning Ferrari collector searching for car that will appreciate? To take a chance and buy the car instead of a bigger house? To get two jobs? To rob a bank?

CLINARD: The world has changed since I started. Investment was not on my mind or virtually anyone else's mind in the seventies. We bought Ferraris because they were exciting to drive, never imagining they would multiply in value. In retrospect, I would say rarity and appealing design are the two elements of importance. The car has to be appealing foremost. Then rarity.

WYSS: Do you also have a lot of Ferrari memorabilia--books, paintings, stacks of magazines--are you a walking talking historian of the marque?

CLINARD: I'm a student of cars. Very little in my house is of aesthetic value. I have shelves of three-ring binders containing magazine articles and factory documents accumulated over the years. This is valuable reference for my judging duties, plus I just enjoy learning about cars.

WYSS: In sum, do you feel your one marque devotion has served you well as far as enjoying being a car collector and the people you've met along the way?

CLINARD: I enjoy all cars. I simply hold Ferrari at the highest level. With Freeman Thomas, I co-founded the Cars and Coffee movement that began at Ford's Irvine studio, welcoming just about everything on wheels. Over the years, I've owned 11 Ferraris, seven Porsches, seven Alfa Romeos plus Austin Healey, Lotus, Maserati, Aston Martin, Fiat 124, Sunbeam Tiger, and a couple of formula race cars. Each one has introduced me to a great circle of friends.

WYSS: One last question: Do the two sons get to drive the GTB/4? And, if so, are you the required passenger?

CLINARD: My sons own an '89 Porsche 911 and '74 Alfa Romeo GTV. They can take the Ferrari out anytime, with or without me!

AUTHOR NOTE: Wallace Wyss is a contributing artist to FML. His painting of a 275 GTB is available as a 20" x 30" canvas print For info write to: mendoart7@gmail.com