



INTERVIEW OF A PROMINENT ARTIST IN THE FERRARI WORLD

By Wallace Wyss

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EDITOR'S NOTE Our contributing artist, Wallace Wyss (rhymes with "Reese") saw the Chuck Queener book collection for sale on FML and asked if he could interview Queener. I agreed.

Jim Weed

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INTRO: Chuck Queener is a well-known name in the US. Ferrari enthusiast world. Since the early '70s, he was a member of Ferrari clubs on the West coast as well as clubs. In the early '70s, while working at *Motor Trend*, he invited me to follow along to some Ferrari club events and it was there that I developed a passion for the marque. At work I got to see him do some drawings for Ferrari magazines including the Ferrari shield for the cover of the first issue of *CAVALLINO*. In Feb. 2026, over 50 years later, I saw his ad for his Ferrari book collection and decided to ring him up for an interview so FML members can see what an artist has brought to the table.

WYSS: I know in your life before being *Motor Trend* assistant art director, you were in the Air Force in Alaska. But did you go to art school? Which one?

QUEENER: *I left high school in 1961, moving with my mother and sister to Chicago. It was temporary. There was no college in my future, so I joined the Air Force with hopes I could be stationed in California where I thought the cars were. They said if I took an overseas assignment for 18 months they would send me to a Strategic Air Command base, March Field in Riverside. Little did I know it was a few miles from Riverside International Raceway. After 18 months in Fairbanks, Alaska I was in California.*

WYSS: Did you start drawing cars then, or not 'til long after art school?

QUEENER: *I began drawing when I was 5. When I was 14, I became interested in cars and picked up a copy of Road & Track and saw my first Ferrari. I liked the way they looked, and I also became aware of The Fisher Body Craftsman's Guild that General Motors started in 1930. You could design and build the car of your dreams and win a college scholarship that would lead to a design job at one of the manufactures in Detroit. I thought this was something I could do because I had built many World War II model airplanes.*

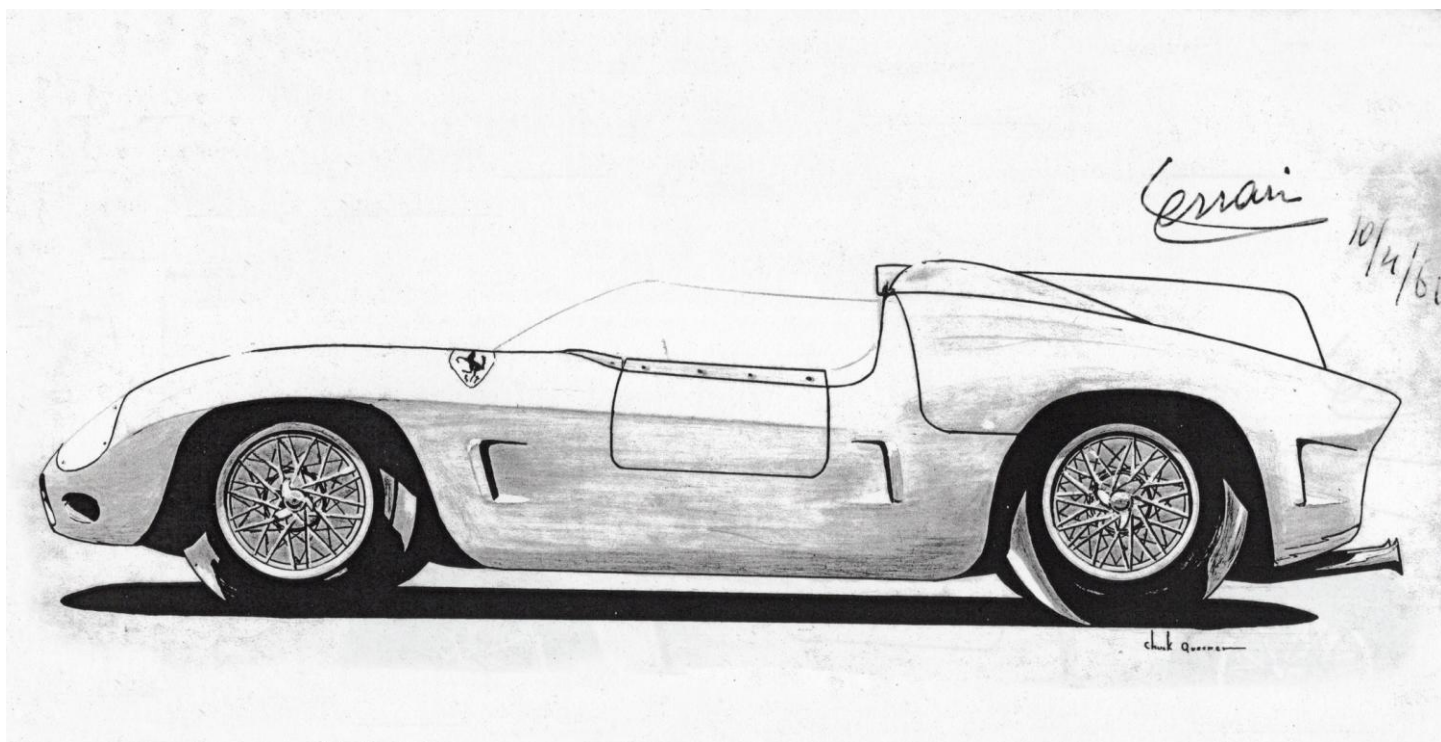
I asked my father if we could get the material needed and he had me do a cost analysis. This was 1954. Paint, balsa wood, knives, etc. came to \$30. His answer was "Sorry, can't afford it."

In 1955 we moved to Miami Beach, Florida when my parents divorced. I had an art teacher in the 9th grade who said, "You can make a living drawing cars." She had worked for Chrysler and knew what she was talking about and that stuck with me. I wasn't sure how I would get there, but I never forgot her comment. Now in my teens, I drew cars for friends but failed art in high school because I refused to work on the "home coming sign."

During my stay at March Field I went to Riverside several times a week where the Carroll Shelby School of High Performance Driving was held and I met Pete Brock who told me about the Art Center College of Design. We've been friends ever since. I submitted a portfolio of drawings, one of a Cobra, and was accepted. I got an early discharge and started Art Center in the Fall of 1964.

WYSS: What has been your media throughout the years or has it changed (oil painting, acrylic oil, colored pencil, etc. and paper used?

QUEENER: *I started painting with acrylic and moved to watercolor and gouache. I did a lot of early drawings using a Pentel that bled when you added water and that gave me a way to show speed. My drawings are in charcoal pencil for black and white but when I'm going to do a poster I use a B weight graphite pencil. I've only tried oils a couple of times and because of deadlines I couldn't wait for them to dry so it was back to gouache.*



WYSS: I saw many of your works of the '60s, the most prolific one the 250GTO. Did you warm up to the Ferraris of the '70s, '80s. 90's to today or have your art tastes stuck to a certain earlier era?

QUEENER: *In my senior year at Beach High, a friend's father worked for the Miami Herald and Ferrari was sending the new rear-engined 246SP for "Taffy" von Trips to drive and he asked me to do drawing for the paper's sports section; my first published piece.*

My love of the 250 GTO came later in 1962 when the car was first launched. I first saw one in Road & Track. But living in L.A. I saw one in the street. These were the days when you could drive them on the street. And as time went on, I was lucky enough to do just that.

In 1971 I went to work for Motor Trend where we met. Phil Hill was very helpful in getting me that job. In '73 I moved to Road & Track.

WYSS: Throughout the years have you had originals in galleries? Has there been one gallery in particular that championed your work (or still has your work now)?

QUEENER: *My work is usually commissioned for events like the Monterey Historics (1974-2009) or Amelia Island (1996-2021) and others. In those two cases I rotated the cover illustrators because I felt we needed variety with the posters and program covers but I tried to do it every other year.*

I've only had two gallery shows not counting The Automotive Fine Arts Society shows at Pebble Beach years ago.

My Art Center roommate Ken Eberts started AFAS but there aren't any galleries that have my work. I usually sell it directly to the client but usually make Giclee prints for sale.

I was lucky enough to have clients in Europe. Mostly France and Belgium.

WYSS: Have you sold originals or has most of your work been available in the last five decades been prints? (If you say you only sell prints, can you explain why you kept the originals?)

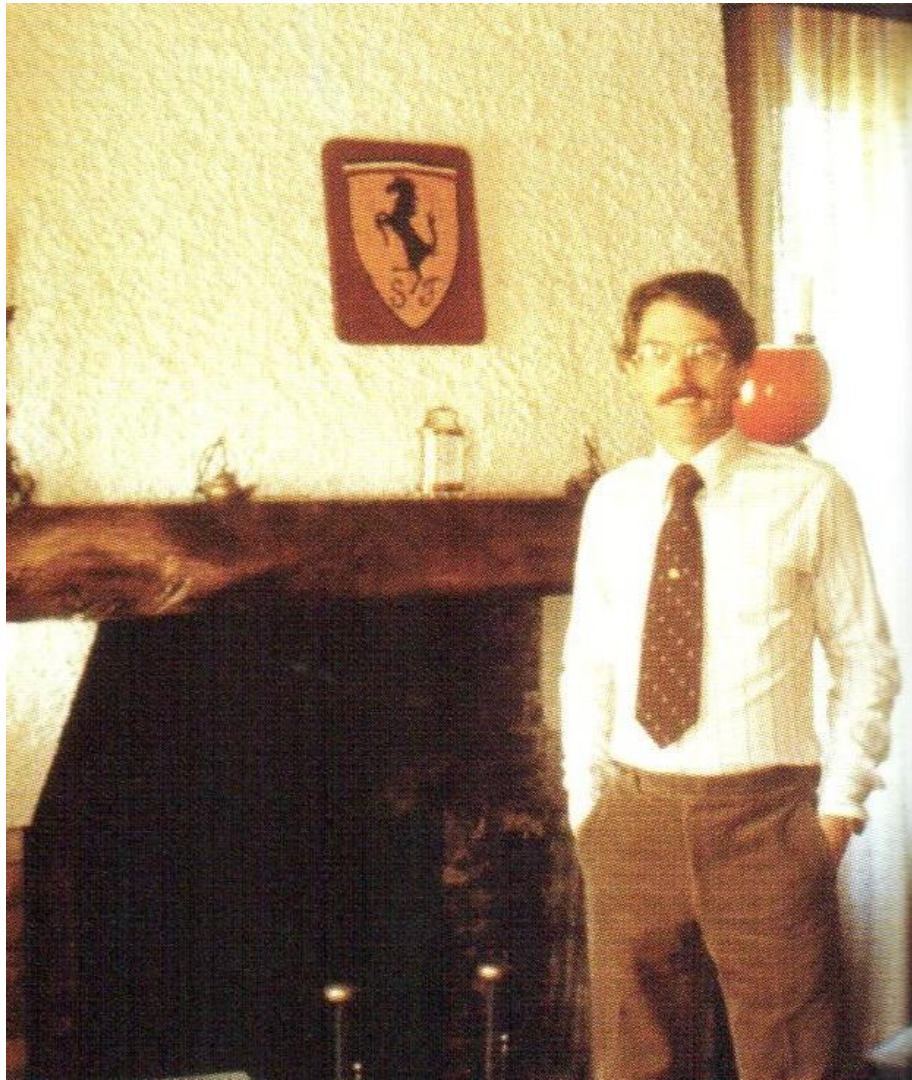
QUEENER: *The originals will go to the client and prints I will sell directly.*

WYSS: I remember when you showed me the first cover of CAVALLINO. Was it a collage of tile? Did you do the collage yourself and have you done more in that media?

QUEENER: *In 1978 I left R&T to start Cavallino. I had been producing the newsletter for The Ferrari Owners Club in Southern Calif. It gained worldwide recognition and it occurred to me I could do a magazine devoted to Ferrari, but I had to move East to make it happen.*

The first cover was a mosaic my then-wife Carol made for me, and I used it on the cover FOC newsletter. It was obvious I would use it in the first Cavallino cover.

I also gave it to Mr. Ferrari and it hung in his apartment at Pista di Fiorano for many years until Michael Schumacher moved it.



WYSS: I remember when you and John Lamm took the Steve Earle (founder of Monterey Historics) Ferrari 250GTO and photographed it. It was better than any *Road & Track* cover. Did that one photo and subsequent story spawn more interest in the US in old Ferraris? I feel so but have others expressed that?

QUEENER: *Steve Earle and I became friends in the late '60s and I was his first employee when he started the Historics in 1974. John Lamm and I photographed his GTO (4293 GT) for the first issue of Sports Cars of the World published in 1971 by Petersen Publishing Co. I wrote one of the first pieces ever published on the GTO's history and a few years later we photographed it again for the cover of Jess Pourret's La Légende Ferrari. That's me on the cover!*

It was also in the days when GTOs were being sold for \$6,000. Remember there were no Monterey Historics then. No one cared about old race cars. I was offered two Ferraris for \$3K each. One was a 1954 750 Monza and the other was a 1965 short-nosed 275 GTB that was being repossessed by the Bank of America. I didn't have \$3K but I was able to borrow it from a good friend and I got the GTB.

WYSS: I also was treated to a ride in the same GTO when Earle loaned it to you for a week and I wonder were there any memorable reactions to it when you drove it around town and parked it?

QUEENER: *Not really. No, one cared and I didn't use it as a daily driver. At that time the car was worth around \$12,000.*

WYSS: When did you move back to the East Coast and where were you born originally? Was it in close proximity to some New York based agencies that needed commercial art?

QUEENER: *I was born in New York City. My grand father had an ad agency, and he taught me to draw. My father was a musician and played with Benny Goodman and was with Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis when they had a TV show. He had no interest in my drawing as I mentioned.*

WYSS: Can you give me your book titles or titles of books you illustrated Ferraris for and tell us what book dealer still stocks them?

QUEENER: *I couldn't really make a living as an illustrator, so I got into publication/magazine design as that was steady work. I started doing books because they were fun. You can buy any of the books I've designed on the Internet. In 2006 Murray Smith and I did **"The Alphabet and The Automobile"** which I designed and co-wrote. We used my illustrations from the Louis Vuitton Classic at Rockefeller Center from 1996 to 2000. I've done several with my good friend Lamm. Too many to list.*

WYSS: Why are you selling your collection? Do you feel anyone who collects old Ferraris ought to have such a collection? To have some of the most memorable cars but not the literature of the marque's history is unfathomable by you?

QUEENER: *I'm selling the second half of my collection so someone else can enjoy it. I sold the first half over 15 years ago. It was all the early brochures and yearbooks etc. Stuff I had collected since Mr. Ferrari sent me my first yearbook in 1961. My mother didn't know what it*

was and trashed it, but I found it. That's when I learned Ferrari printed many things going back to the Alfa pre-war days.

WYSS: As far as larger (say 20" x 30") works have you had some bought or commissioned by Ferrari collectors? Any museums you can name or big-time collectors?

QUEENER: *Yes, many collectors but their names aren't necessary. I've done many posters for Club Ferrari France and I did three posters for Belgium Ferrari importer Jacques Swaters' 40 anniversary many years ago.*

WYSS: I didn't enter the fine art world until 2009--some 40 years after we met--but I was shocked to find that some owners of prized Ferraris don't have art in their garage or in their den over their fireplace. Do you think the American public, as opposed to Europe, is a little behind in art appreciation of collector's cars? I mean I've been in \$5 million houses in California that don't have any fine art. None. Nada.

QUEENER: *The market is changing and it always will. You can count on that. A few years ago, a GTO was sold privately for over \$80M but in February at auction one went for \$38.5M. They've become so valuable, few are raced for fear of someone crashing. The anniversaries are well attended but accidents happen there as well.*

WYSS: Of all the roadable Ferraris you have depicted in art, which five are your favorites? I am presuming 250GTO but what others have you waited years to have the opportunity to depict?

QUEENER: *The GTO is at the top. The 250 LM is fun. I gave R&T editor Tom Bryant his first ride in a Ferrari in the LM I had for a couple of weeks in 1976. Always liked the 250 Short Wheelbase Berlinetta. An F40 is there and maybe an Enzo.*

WYSS: Did you attend Ferrari events world-wide (and on your own nickel?) Such as LeMans, or the Goodwood events? Which few stick out in your mind, particularly when you met some enthusiast you had long corresponded with.

QUEENER: *Yes, I did and as you say on my own nickel.*

WYSS: During your long association with Ferrari art, did the factory ever reach out and include you in any event? Which one, if it happened?

QUEENER: *Yes, the factory reproduced many of my drawings in several of their books. One book has 11 drawings. I made Mr. Ferrari an honorary member of the Ferrari Owners Club in*

1971 when I was president. That's also when I met him for the first time and gave him the mosaic.

WYSS: Have you met any Ferrari designers, even those who only did one or two cars (Giugiaro I think did three)? Did you talk about the good and bad of the ones they did? Were they happy to hear a critique by an artist?

QUEENER: *No, never met any of those guys even though I worked for Ferrari North America. I developed a magazine, Testa Rossa for them which led to Rosso Ferrari. Something you may not know about.*

WYSS: Did you own a Ferrari yourself? Or were you instrumental in finding a classic for someone else (barn hunter?). Which one did you almost buy that you regret you didn't, and what was the price back then?

QUEENER: *I mentioned getting the repo 275 GTB. I worked with Rob Walker when he wanted to sell his 196S and he couldn't sell it in the UK so we brought it to the States and sold it to a guy in Japan. I drove it to the Cavallino office in Scarsdale and parked on the street. There are other stories, but it gets boring.*

WYSS: So, all in all, in the last 60 plus years, do you think this singular passion was worth all the time, compared to say, spending every Sunday watching NFL? How can you sum up your second life in the Ferrari world? What did it bring you?

QUEENER: *I was able to make a living out of a hobby or passion. Not many can say that!*

WYSS: Where can collectors reach you regarding the bulk sale of your entire library? Are you requiring a cashier's check? Is there a deadline to the offering, does the offering conclude at a certain date?

QUEENER: *I'm offering a pdf of the book collection, shown here, and I can show them what I have in my photo files. It's easy. Just send me an email at chuck@queenerdesign.com*

WYSS: Thank you and I appreciate the chance to catch up after half a century.

