



Gran Turismo

The Official Publication of the
Apollo Owners Registry

Major Development

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Blackhawk Collection Acquires Apollo

Danville, CA – The Blackhawk Collection – the multi-million dollar pool of cars for display at the Blackhawk Museum – has recently acquired a 1964 Apollo GT, the first by a major collection or museum.

According to the Collection's owner, Don Williams chose the Apollo because it represents a milestone of American design and Italian craftsmanship. "I love good-looking cars. They're like beautiful women. The Apollo epitomizes this quality. I just like the lines; they're simple and flowing. The Apollo is a significant design tour de force. It needs to be here."

That Apollo acquired is a silver 5,000 GT, no. 1034, built in 1964. It was originally owned and preserved by Robert Turccios of San Pablo, California and is in original pristine condition. Many of you remember that Bob was the founder of the Apollo Owners Registry.

The Blackhawk Collection,



Don Williams and Milt Brown with The Blackhawk's No. 1034

owned by Williams, was the driving force in locating cars for Ken Behring's Museum when it opened in 1988 in the newly created city of Blackhawk. While the museum has since been donated to the University of California, the Blackhawk collection supplies most of the cars exhibited, including three of the Bertone B.A.T. show cars.

A long time broker of classic and exotic autos, Williams began selling classic and exotics in the 1970s. The following decade he rode the wave of the classic auto boom. "During the 80s I operated like a stockbroker with a fax machine and a Federal Express card working from warehouse garages, but I stored a set of chandeliers for seven years until the day I created the elegant

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From the Editor's Desk...



Back in February, 2004, I received a call from Milt Brown about “an Apollo you can afford.” After jotting down the seller’s name and phone number, I immediately contacted him after finishing my call with Milt.

As we discussed the car and its condition, I could tell he knew nothing about the Apollo. So I related a short history of the car and about its designer and builder, Milt Brown. And as I continued to educate him about the Apollo, his asking price kept dropping! We finally agreed on a price and pick up date right then and there.

In April of that year, I drove out to Atascadero, California to pick up “an early Apollo.” Milt offered to come down from Berkeley in order to verify the car’s provenance. It was when we met at the seller’s ranch that two facts were made clear:

This car, number 1003, was the first production Apollo (actually, the prototype steel-bodied car that was subsequently rushed into production to meet the official



No. 1003 today - at Finley's Museum in Texas.

launch at Phil Hall Buick in Hollywood). Milt verified this by 1) identifying a less steep slope of the rear fender line as compared with later cars, 2) different door panel treatment and 3) a solid four-inch square tube frame indicating that this was built by Milt himself; all subsequent cars had frames built in Italy out of two u-shaped steel pieces welded together to form the four-inch square tubing; it didn’t exist in that country!

If I wasn’t going to buy the car that day, the seller was going to get it running, cut the top off and use it as a ranch “hack”!

I bought the car...

Over the years I purchased components and worked with Milt to build a front nose buck to reproduce this section by a contact in Italy. But time and money prevented me from getting serious about the restoration of 1003. In 2009, I subsequently sold it to form IMC sales manager, George Finley.

Those of you who attended the 50th anniversary celebration at the 2013 *Concorso Itahano*



When I picked it up: Yes, a “project” car in anyone’s eyes!

may remember this car. Well, George and the team at his Corpus Christi museum have lovingly brought this car back to original pristine condition (with a few more details to be worked out).

I was fortunate to drive this beauty during my visit in April, 2016. And it was a very emotionally-thrilling moment.

All because a rare Apollo was rescued.

We have another owner, Dennis Collins, who has rescued another Apollo in Louisiana. Terry Schulte rescued a hacked-up convertible (via Larry Kay) and is busy working on restoring it. There will be others willing to save these rare and precious vehicles. Please offer your assistance when they come calling for parts or advice.

Bob Northrup
Editor

“Apollo” Museum Obtains Original Corporate Archives **IMC Corporate Archives “Come Home” to Texas**

While the Blackhawk receives worldwide attention, another location closer to our hearts has become the unofficial Apollo museum which boasts not only three GTs, but also International Motor Cars’ archives.

And the owner is none other than an IMC alumnus, former sales manager George Finley. His collection began with the purchase of convertible no. 2001 – the first made – from Milt Brown in 1998.

He then acquired couple no. 1054 from Mike Anderson. Finally, the first production Apollo, coupe no. 1003 went from Bob Northrup’s stewardship to Finley’s loving care. A four year restoration produced a stunning example of the original concept.

Just as significant is his recent acquisition of the original company archives, which Milt Brown and Bob Northrup examined during a recent trip to Finley’s Corpus Christi, Texas museum in April. “This is significant,” remarked Finley. “There was a lot of blood, sweat and tears shed by Milt, me, Ned and Plescia. Seeing these documents and photographs brought it all back.”

“It’s been over 50 years since I’ve seen this stuff,” commented Milt Brown.” It was thrilling to see some of the build sheets and photos. “But seeing the investor



Milt and George review photos from the company archives they haven’t seen in over 50 years.

pitches and Peat Marwick audits also brought back some of the heartaches we experienced.”

The archives include typical manufacturing documentation: build sheets and re-

ords, invoices, balance sheets and customs forms. But this collection also includes hundreds of photographic negatives and prints, sales literature, press clippings from publications,

and Ned Davis’ original hand-drawn spreadsheet which lists the desirable characteristics and specifications as given by the enthusiast publications of the day and an appraisal of contemporary GTs and sports cars, including Ferrari, Mercedes Benz, Jaguar, Porsche, Aston Martin, etc.

Finley’s Corpus Christi Car Museum is a joint venture with Steve Shook, a local restorer/repair specialist and boasts a number of pre-war Cadillacs, a Ferrari 308 CT4, a 1964 Avanti and a myriad of other cars in various stages of restoration.

And three Apollos.



Finley’s trio of Apollos: 1003, first production Apollo; 2001, first convertible; and 1054.

Product Update

More “details” for Aluminum Valve Covers—Reported Earlier

Eight years ago, the editor introduced a vendor that could supply original-type “no name” finned aluminum valve covers, as per Milt Brown’s original specs.

Fine and dandy. However, many of you have invested in (and prefer) your Offenhauser-script covers. Well,



we’ve got a nice little acces-

sory that will add real detail to your covers: Enamelled **Apollo**



Apollo script badges.

The editor worked with Deron Jones of Pamela David Enamels, our badge supplier in the UK, to develop an enameled badge that will fit into a recessed created when machining out the Offenhauser script. The ones featured here were purchased by Terry Smith for his recently restored convertible (and were seen at The Quail Lodge event August, 2009).

The standard colors are

Apollo yellow for the background and white for the letters. Terry, however, opted for Apollo yellow lettering and a red background to match his car. Needless to say, as these are made to order, the vendor can accommodate about any color combination.

They are not cheap at around \$325 a pair (including shipping but dependent upon exchange rates) but they look fabulous. “This is what we

would have done if the resources would have been available to us,” says Milt Brown.

Chassis/VIN Plates

The editor still has a supply of 3500 and 5000 reproduction chassis plates. These are exact down to the type font and the manufacturing method.

Contact the editor to order yours at apolloreistry@yahoo.com.



Mechanical Update

Breaking News...

One of the questions that keeps popping up is where do the front wheel bearings come from for the disc-braked 5000 GT. I finally called Milt and he confirmed they were the same 1962 Buick Special bearings used on the 3500 GT, claiming that “...it was a miracle that the Buick bearings fit the Avanti hubs!”

When the customers all wanted disc brakes, Milt worked with a number of suppliers to see if a disc brake system was possible for the Apollo (remember that Detroit had yet to come out with proprietary discs). Only Ben-

dix offered a tried-and-true system and it was made under license from the British Dunlop concern.

Both the 1963 Studebaker Avanti and Golden Hawk models used the Bendix-Dunlop system on the front, and it was just by chance that the Studebaker wheel spindle was exactly the same diameter and taper as the Buick!

With Bendix’ help, Milt completely re-engineered the braking system for the 5000 GT. Drum brakes from a mid-fifties Chevy were specified for the rear as they fit the bolt pattern of the Buick Special axle.

While hot rodders will tell you

the brakes are inadequate — upgrade to more modern GM components, the Bendix people were very impressed with Milt’s braking system design and the brakes were praised by enthusiast magazine road testers of the day. So it’s best not to listen to those hot rodders’ “conventional wisdom” (which is usually based on brand names and popularity, not performance) and keep your Apollo’s brakes original.

In fact, it’s best to keep your Apollo original in all respects...

Wiring Diagrams

The wiring on old Italian cars can be a real puzzle, and the Apollo is no exception.

Thankfully, Ron Plescia produced a hand-drawn schematic several years ago and the editor has a copy in PDF format.

While it may not correspond exactly to your car (there were differences) this schematic can help you sort out electrical gremlins.

Y and Z continues to recreate accurate Apollo wiring harnesses.

Long-lost Apollos found

New Faces, New Acquisitions, Monterey Auctions

A number of new Apollo owners have joined our ranks, some of them bringing with them here-to-for undiscovered cars:

Coupes

Ernie Warrender - 1029
UK

Jeff Drubner - 1030

Tom Davis - 1061

Dennis Collins - AC103969MD
(a very rusty Texas-built car recently featured on *My Car Quest* blog)

Walt McCune - 1060

Convertibles

Jim Moore - AI662005
(Jack Castor's car)

Joseph Talpe - 2008
(Belgium; the "Mexican" spyder)

Additional Intrigue

Andi Graf found another Apollo in Germany – no. 1039 – and is attempting to add this one to his stable

Now this is a project! Dennis Collins outbid everyone for this very rusty Apollo, found in Louisiana.



Russo and Steele Monterey 2016: 5000 GT went for \$125,000 (with commission). Milt Brown saw the car: "It's one of our later cars, but it has a grey interior, which is not original. At least the price was right."



Mecum Monterey: Sold a very rough "5000 GT." It was a left-over body/chassis unit sold off to pay bills while awaiting new financing. Says Milt Brown: "It's a complete dog of a barn find. The frame is twisted and it has a Ford small block engine and T 10 transmission." Body/chassis is no. 1044. (Remember that cars were not always numbered sequentially; it looks to be a leftover body/chassis unit sold to an individual to complete.)

1044 sold for \$25,000, plus commission.



Miscellanea

In Memoriam – Bob Lee’s Passing

With sadness I announce Bob Lee’s death on December 5, 2015. Bob had taken over the reigns of this club when he purchased car no. 1011, and guided our group until passing the mantle to the editor in 2004.

He remained passionate about the Apollo until his death, and only sold his car to James Taylor when Bob’s health prevented him from driving it.

He will be missed.

A Plea for Help

A computer crash earlier this year has made retrieval of the registry spreadsheet impossible (haven’t yet been able to extract the file from the hard drive).

As the editor only has an old print out of the registry, he asks if all of you with Apollos and Vetta Ventura’s will send me an e-mail containing:

- Name, address, phone
- Car number/VIN
- Date when you purchased the car and from whom
- Any special features unique to your Apollo

This will allow the editor to compare your information with what he currently have in the hard copy as well as update the registry with new finds.

Eventually, this will be made available to all members in pdf form.

A Day With Apollo Designer Ron Plescia



My recent business travels took me to Tucson, Arizona and, in my spare time, I had the privilege of spending a day with Ron Plescia, the man who designed the Apollo GT prototype and worked hand-in-glove with Milt Brown and Franco Scagleone to “productionize” the prototype as well as create the convertible version.

A consummate product designer, Ron was working for a San Francisco product design firm when he styled the prototype. He had previously “designed” dozens of dream cars with Milt Brown before the duo created the Apollo.

His resume includes work for NASA (Apollo space capsule interior!), Maxell,

and numerous IT firms in the Bay Area.

His thoughts on the Apollo after 54 years? “I was so lucky to have been in the right place at the right time to do the car!

“Scagleone was very kind – and professional – when he reworked my original design for the Apollo. He kept most of my design while tweaking the front and rear to make it look right. He also used my drawings for a convertible when he did the spyder version when Milt was in Italy in 1963...

“After more than 50 years, the car still looks good!

“It’s been an incredible ride!”

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Blackhawk Collection Acquires Apollo *continued...*

wanted!” Now the collection displays up to 20 cars in grand style, including the chandeliers...

Williams continues buying and selling significant vehicles in order to keep his collection – and the museum’s display – fresh.

And he continues to love the Apollo...



Post Script...

As we’ve witnessed the turmoil and strife the American automobile manufacturers have experienced the last couple of decades, all of us can look back over the last forty years to see an institution that has lost its way...

Indeed, an industry that had lead the world in design, aesthetics, and innovation almost since the car’s inception had reduced itself to providing transportation that was more “glitter, flash, and romance” than quality, innovation and performance.

This “custom” Chevy Citation seems a fitting repre-



Unique: Chevy Citation found in the Texas Panhandle says it all about the status of our auto industry!

sentation of that loss of direction! Thankfully, our Apollos were created in a different time, a different era, when America still built great cars...

