



# Gran Turismo

The Official Publication of the Apollo Owners Registry

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK...

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Welcome to another issue of Apollo News—now called *Gran Turismo*. We've wanted to expand the newsletter, but until now we haven't had the resources. Now we do.

Writer Robb Northrup has volunteered to man the graphic design table, and to help out with some of the editorial tasks. You may remember Robb from his 1995 article on the Apollo in *AutoWeek* magazine. He has loved the Apollo since reading the *Road & Track* road test as a kid. And now as a new member of our group

(see accompanying story), Robb feels doubly obligated to get involved with our cause.

For those of you who can read pdf files, we're pleased to share our new format with you (text files are available to those who can't). This affords us the liberty to add photos and graphics into an attractive package befitting our wonderful cars. And we have expanded our coverage of all things Apollo. We'll do our best to provide more features to read, and more technical information to help keep

your cars going (or get them going!).

If you've got comments or suggestions, don't hesitate to E-mail me. We want this to be *your* publication.

*Bob Lee*

No. 1011



## Gran Turismo

### Editorial Board

Editor:	Bob Lee
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## ONE THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY...

In this day, the proverbial barn find is nearly unheard of. That's why we're pleased to report one such discovery that's extremely significant to Apollo owners

Writer Robb Northrup re-

ceived a tip about "an early Apollo" last January. With only a few photos to go on, Robb made the deal and recently picked up the car in California (he lives in Texas). It had been sitting for over 30 years...



A shot of Robb's car during delivery.



## ONE THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY...



Definitely, it's a project car!

Milt Brown journeyed from Berkeley to witness the event. According to Milt, International Motor Cars (IMC) was anxious to receive a car for publicity photos and magazine road tests before production commenced in earnest. So Intermeccanica painted and upholstered the first steel car and *air freighted* it to Oakland for final assembly. "We also wanted to get some cars out on the road before its debut at Phil Hall Buick, you

know, to work out the bugs," says Milt. Afterwards, the car was sold to John R. Nivens in January, 1963. "The guy had ordered his car eight months before," says Milt. "It has a number of details that are different from the rest of the production cars. The front wheel arches are smaller, the fuse box is different, and the inner door panels are of a different design." IMC took stock of several shortcomings on this

car and gave Intermeccanica a list of changes to effect on subsequent cars.

So, Robb's got himself a very rare Apollo indeed—the first one completed and sold.

But why does it boast chassis plate no. three if it was the first assembled? Milt Brown: "We didn't want the owner to think we hadn't delivered any production-cars!"



## TECHNICAL NOTES



### ***This wheel story goes 'round and 'round***

As restorations continue, several owners have inquired about which Borrani wheel is correct for the Apollo. The following is what Borrani factory records list under all orders from Intermeccanica for the

Apollo:

Size 5 1/2" x 400

Model No. RW 3796 Rudge Record®

Made by "RUOTE BORRANI - MILANO" or "CARLO BORRANI Sp.A. MILANO"

The wheel adapters are

marked:

"Buick" XXXX" "Destro" (Right)

"Buick" XXXX" "Sinistro" (Left)

Now, for the translation:

The Rudge Record® was Borrani's premiere wheel (and still is!), with 72 spokes

## UPDATES

## CONCOURS EVENTS



### ***Apollo Badges***

For those who have ordered these special front-end badges, they are now back from the plating shop and should be finished sometime in June. Call *Bob Lee* at 925-634-4303 for details.

On the show scene, *Bob Lee* showed No. 1011 at the Hillsborough Concours d'Elegance in Hillsborough, CA.

The next show is the Palo Alto Concours d'Elegance in Palo Alto CA. in late June, and *Bob Lee* is planning on entering that one.

In mid August, we are expecting a good crop of Apollos at Concorso Italiano in Monterey, including *Jack Triplett's* convertible No. 2009.

If you can, please bring your car to show your support.

## Technical Notes, continued

laced to a special forged aluminium rim, the same as that found on Ferrari racing and street sports cars. These wheels were much lighter than the steel-rimmed version (if you doubt, pick up a Jaguar E Type wheel of the same vintage – it's heavier!), and the polished aluminium rims look just fabulous.

The size seems simple: 5 1/2 in. x 400. The original wheel supplied – to order, by the way – by Borrani concern was in a somewhat popular European size of 5 1/2 in. x 400 MILLIMETER diameter! That's right, 400 millimeters. That translates to 15 3/4 in. Why the odd diameter? According to correspondence between Milt Brown and Frank Reisner in 1962, it appears that the Borrani "Turbo Disc" steel wheel that was originally supplied on the Apollo prototype (and originally specified for all production Apollos by Intermeccanica) was in that size and already in use by Alfa Romeo. Fair

enough. However, as no production car was ever supplied with that wheel, why was the odd size continued?

Today, owners want to keep their Apollos original, as many cars now lack their Borannis (or have had the wheels rebuilt 15 in. diameter rims. Why? Because early owners found replacement tires almost non-existent, and you can bet your local Goodyear or Kelly Springfield dealer didn't stock anything close back in 1963. It was just easier (and cheaper) to unbolt the Borannis and their hub adapters and replace them with common 15-inch diameter wheels and tires..

And while correct-fitting tires may not have been easy to obtain in the late 1960s, you can get them today at *C o k e r T i r e* ([www.coker.com](http://www.coker.com)). They feature a Michelin X radial in both 165 x 400 (the original size) and a 185 x 400

variant. Both sell for about US\$160.00 per tire.

By the way, Borrani was taken over by another manufacturing firm in the 1960s, *Contruzione Meccanica Rho*, also of Milano, Italy. The company continues to craft Borannis to this day.

### Shocking News

Good news for all Apollo owners: Jack Woods (No. 1005) reports that Koni® still has dampers (shocks) available for the Apollo:

Front: part no. 8040 1019 (originally for 1963 Corvette)

Rear: part no. 8212 55 (originally for Dodge Charger or Challenger)

Retail price for each is approximately US\$134.00.

According to Jack, the rear shocks went right on with no problem. But the front shocks were a slightly different story.

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**"The Rudge Record® was Borrani's premiere wheel, with 72 spokes laced to special forged aluminium rims"**

## MARKET PLACE

The market for Apollos is strong and getting more active. Recent sales include:

*Milt Brown* sold No. 1074 through Fantasy Junction to Chip Fudge of Oklahoma City, OK. The car was listed for \$45K and sold very close to that number.

*Don Brakhage* of Boulder CO purchased No. 1035 from Bob & Sue Olsen of Kelseyville, CA

*Roger Morrison* sold No. 1071 at Barrett Jackson for about \$38K. It was felt the wrong wheels and steering wheel plus PS/PB and automatic

trans held the price back. By the way, the badge on the nose was a photo decal made in a local print shop! We do not know who the new owner is... Have we lost one?

*David Hailey* of Prosper, TX sold No. 1052 to John Baron of York, ON Canada.

1052 is in need of major restoration work, but John appears to have the experience and drive to get it done.



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## Technical Notes, continued



The cross-hold down rod, (on the shock, with two bolt slots) that secures the bottom of the shock to the bottom control arm, is slightly longer and I had to modify them by lengthening the slot hole and grinding down the outer edge.

In a 1995 road test of convertible No. 1, then owned by Milt Brown and completely authentic, author Winston Goodfellow complained that the shocks were a bit soft for sporting driving. With the adjustable performance characteristics offered by the Konis, this could just be the ticket...

### Top This...

For those interested in those neat finned aluminium valve covers from Offenhauser Sales Co. for Buick-powered Apollos, they can

buy them from:

Steve Bechtold  
306 Ocean Ave.  
Northport, NY 11768  
Phone: 631-757-2285

Steve first machines the covers and then applies the Apollo script. He also machines the gasket surface, making it completely flat and smooth. He then adheres a FelPro® rubber gasket, and includes stainless steel screws and chromed breather caps.

Yes, they cost over \$300, but are worth it as they don't leak! And, they are made on the original tooling for tops in authenticity. Please note: Many a concours judge – having only seen an Apollo in magazine articles – considers the Offenhauser valve cover as correct for the car!

### Your Motor Head...

Speaking of Buick-powered Apollos (nearly every car!), you may want to visit with Dan LaGrou at D & D Fabrications of Almont, Michigan. Dan is a retired GM engineer with more experience with the aluminum 215 and the 300 than anyone around. If you need a part, he's got it. If you need more, he has a complete engine building shop dedicated to these incredible motors.

Call him at 810-798-2491 or visit on the web at [www.aluminumv8.com](http://www.aluminumv8.com).

