



Gran Turismo

The Official Publication of the
Apollo Owners Registry

Once-in-a-lifetime event!

Apollo Reunion Set for 2006 Concorso Italiano

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We mentioned in the last issue of Gran Turismo that the organizers of *The Concorso Italiano* had requested the Apollo Owners Registry put on a special display commemorating Denny Paul's winning of the inaugural "Motor Trend Classic Highway One Award" at the 2006 event. Well, that has evolved into a full-blown Apollo reunion that will give our cars special recognition

Given that the Apollo has been considered by many enthusiasts to be an obscure marque, this development represents a paradigm shift in the market place. The *Concorso* has essentially been our "home event" for the past several years, so it's only fitting that we go all out to support this year's show.

Because of the special status being given the Apollo in 2006, the *Concorso* organizers will place our display of cars in a more favorable location near the judging stand. This



The "concourse" of Apollos at the 2004 Concorso Italiano. Get your car in this year's event.

provides enthusiasts and judges easier access to our cars — and to us for our commentaries. We will also have a write up in the event program that will further educate the enthusiast public about the unique heritage and qualities of the Apollo.

As suggested in the last issue of this newsletter, the 2006 *Concorso Italiano* is the perfect opportunity for a reunion of those involved with the creation of the original Apollo: Milt Brown,

Ron Plescia, Ned Davis, George Finley, and Paula Reisner and son Henry for Intermeccanica. This would give Apollo owners, the press, and enthusiasts a chance to visit with these personalities and hear their stories first-hand.

Of course, some of us don't have cars ready to show (the editor is looking at 2010 for his car!). That's all right.

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From the Editor's Desk...It's time to come out of the woodwork



For years, we've watched the collector car marketplace pass us by, essentially ignoring the Apollo for other, better known marques.

While there have been occasional articles in the enthusiast press, the inaccuracies contained therein tended to reinforce the notion that the Apollo venture was a rather haphazard affair by naïve young enthusiasts. And this lack of awareness coupled with plenty of misinformation has kept many enthusiasts from fully appreciating the virtues our cars offer: Italian styling and craftsmanship coupled with the high performance and reliability of powerful American mechanicals in a truly limited production package.

As I've done research for the book I am writing about the Apollo, I have interviewed almost all of the original participants (George Finley, we still have to meet!). This includes Fred Ricketts of the Vetta Ventura project. The nearly 50 hours of interviews – all representing first-hand knowledge of the Apollo – have been faithfully transcribed and reviewed.

From this experience, I have concluded that the Apollo GT venture was not haphazard in any way. The cars were well engineered by Milt Brown and Frank Reisner. The styling by Ron Plescia – and tweaked by the legendary Franco Scaglione – was contemporary and elegant.

The cars were assembled with great care and attention to detail by Intermecanica and its subcontractors.

And they performed! Just look at the original road tests. Apollos were considered better than the Corvette and equal to or better than the Jags, Maseratis, and Ferraris of their day (Denise McCluggage's 1964 report in *Science and Mechanics* details this comparison).

Ned Davis founded International Motor Cars with Milt Brown and Ron Plescia, and ran the company as if it were a larger auto manufacturer. He organized procurement, testing and quality control, accounting, and sought financing. It was his cash flow management that kept the company going longer than it should have. They simply did not have the operating capital to begin with.

It is time the enthusiast world learned the story. One of the best ways to do this is for Apollo owners to become proactive with their cars. The first opportunity to do this will be the 2006 *Concorso Italiano* as it will be a world stage for the Apollo. And then owners should participate in local shows and events.

Make a new year's resolution: if your Apollo needs a little work to get it back on the road, do it. If it needs a

little to bring it "up to snuff," do it. And contact Registry members about parts and services before striking out on your own. We already have engine and wire wheel specialists; we're developing a resource for body and trim parts (our own Scott Sisserson in Scottsdale); and we're in the process of developing relationships with suspension and brake suppliers; and reproducers of steering wheels, seats, and fuel tanks.

To borrow from the Nike show campaign: Do it.

Bob Northrup

No. 1003



Concorso Italiano Details

Leave your car behind and come any way to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime event. You'll enjoy the company of fellow Apollo enthusiasts, and you'll meet suppliers in the vendor display that just might have that elusive part you're looking for.

As the *Concorso* forms an important part of the Monterey Historic weekend, hotel reservations can be difficult to obtain; the longer one waits, the harder it will be – and the more it will cost – to secure a room at that time.

So you need to act now to make these arrangements for next year's event.

The event will be held at the Black Horse Country Club in Seaside, California on Friday, August 18. It's paramount we all commit now to making the 2006 *Concorso Italiano* the best ever for the Apollo. For registration information, visit www.concorso.com. Or call Jason De Leo at 425-742-0632; you can e-mail him at ci@concorso.com.



Denny Paul winning the "Highway One" Award started the ball rolling...

New Discoveries

The "Mexican" convertible

It's always exciting when a "lost" Apollo is found. For example, last year, we heard

60s muscle car when a friend called him about an 'abandoned race car sitting in a guy's yard.' "All he could tell me," says Jesus,

the owner didn't want to sell."

Not able to forget the image of this car, Jesus returned home to do a little research. He kept looking for a car that had the same shape. "Then I found it – the Apollo! I couldn't sleep at all that night. At 7:00 am the next day I was at the man's house again.

"I talked to the owner, but he wanted a lot of money for it. But then as we talked, we came to an arrangement and I got it for about half of what he was asking.

"My friend noticed a plate on the firewall: Apollo International, Car No. 2008. There are a few things unique to this car. First it has a steel hood. It also has the Monza gas cap on the left rear fender. And it has a 389 Pontiac V8."

Oh, Canada!

In the Spring, 2005 issue we reported that coupe 1013 had been sold at the 2005 Barrett Jackson auction. The new owner is now one of our members. Canadian Terry Johnson is looking to bring his car up to spec. 1013 was a transition car, the second with the Buick 300 engine, but with the first series dashboard and external Monza fuel filler.

Terry, it's good to have you in fold!

Wanted

Jack Hedrich is looking for an Apollo. If you are looking to sell, you can contact Jack at 415-461-1703.

Or, e-mail him at: ljhedrich@yahoo.com.



of a mysterious convertible found in Mexico. Well, we've spoken with the new owner who is currently doing a ground up restoration.

Jesus Ruvalcaba is a jeweler in Calexico, California with a taste for American Muscle. In fact, he was looking for a

"was that the owner said it was an 'Altissimo Torino,' which turned out to be the name on the tail light lens! I went to see the car, and it had dusty carpets on top of the car. But I noticed the it was metal, so it was going to be special. Unfortunately,

Technical Update

Supplier found for Apollo Reproduction Steering Wheels

The editor is working with a very talented craftsman who not only restores wood rimmed steering wheels, but builds them as well. Mike Lempert is currently restoring the editor's origi-



nal "Coventry" wheel (made in England by Springall), utilizing

the original spokes but adding a metal rim (the original had a rim solely of wood with no metal reinforcement – very unsafe) over which new wood is being applied.

We'll have a feature on Mike later, but if your steering wheel needs some attention in preparation for this year's *Concorso Italiano* (or if it's nonexistent – Mike can make new spokes), contact Bob Northrup at apolloreistry@yahoo.com for details.

Dayton Wheels Still does Borrani Restorations

We recently heard a nasty rumor that Dayton Wire Wheels had closed its restoration shop. A quick call to Mike Edgerton quickly put it to rest. "Rumors like this keep coming up periodically. I don't know who starts rumors like these, but there's

always someone 'in the know' that claims to have inside information. It just isn't true."

In addition to manufacturing wire wheels for a myriad of applications (including accurate Borrani replicas), Dayton has one of the largest restoration shops in the world for wire wheels.

Info to Aid Your Restoration

Our historian James Taylor writes:

"I've been helping owners restore their cars to spec. I provide photos and assistance via our Apollo Yahoo Group. My coupe – No. 11 – is totally original and serves as an excellent guide for early Series 1 cars. I also have a Vetta Ventura/Pasadena – No. 58, a transition car as well with AC – to help owners with series

2 or 3, later cars. I currently group Apollos in the following manner: Series 1 up to Vetta Ventura (Nos. 3-40); Series 2 Vetta Ventura (Nos. 41 to at least 58 which has both Vetta and Pasadena badges!; Series 3 Pasadena cars (I think car No. 64). We are missing cars 59 through 64.

"I use our **Apollo Yahoo Group**. Feel free to post. Ask questions and I'll provide photos and try to get give or source accurate answers."

To subscribe free of charge:

apolloGT-subscribe@yahoo.com

To post messages:

apolloGT@yahoogroups.com

Supplier Showcase — Baker Auto: *The original 215 Expert*

As the Apollo continues to garner more and more awareness, so to do the various specialists that cater to various aspects of the car. Recently, the editor discovered once such company that can do more to keep the aluminum 215-powered Apollos on the road than any other firm: Baker Auto.

Driving around the sleepy hills outside of Seattle, Washington, it's hard to imagine a world-class engine-building firm exists among these posh residences. But it does, and the father-and-son engineering team have built more high-performance 215 V8s than anyone else in the business.

"After WWII," remembers

father Phil, a former Navy PBY pilot, who flew reconnaissance in the Pacific, "I went to work for the fire department up here, but I always had a small shop doing engine repairs and conversions on the side." Old Phil learned quickly how to improve a car's performance by installing a bigger engine from another vehicle. He was particularly fond of the Buick straight 8. "Buicks could outrun Fords if you prepped them right," he says.

In 1962, while scouring a local wrecking yard, Phil came across his first aluminum 215 V8, and was he impressed. "What a motor! It was light, but had all kinds of potential."

He began his 215 performance



Phil Baker (left) with son Ray have been building reliable, high performance 215 aluminum V8s for over 40 years.

work by boring out the cylinders. As 'bigger is always better,' he quickly bored them to 3.8 inches. "But then they ran hot," Phil re-

calls. He finally settled on a bore of 3.7 inches, which gave no problems.

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Baker Auto...continued

Over the years, Phil Baker experimented with every known hot rod technique to increase both performance and reliability of the 215. It was when he retired from the fire department in 1970 that he could devote full-time efforts to developing the engine. "Being all aluminum, it was a light engine, good for smaller foreign cars. The engine had vast potential," says Phil

Joined by son Ray, the team crafted hi-po aluminum power plants for a number of applications: air boats, dune buggies, Datsun 240 Z, Triumph Spitfire and GT 6, MGB, even the Porsche 914. This experience at engineering transplants into a wide variety of cars allowed the Bakers to fully understand the capabilities of the engine as well as it challenges. "There's a certain learning curve that goes," says Ray. "You've got to know about core shift and cooling. We've uncovered a lot of things that can optimize performance of even dead-stock 215s."

An old mechanic's tale states the 215 runs hot, so it's a bad engine. It *can* run

hot if not prepared correctly, but that doesn't make it a bad motor. "The problem," says Ray, "is the Buick water pump has terrible tolerances on the back side – it's got too much clearance – so not enough



The Baker's shop is fully equipped to build even the hottest 215!

coolant flows through the pump. And it's even worse on rebuilt pumps. This can make your engine run a little hot. We've found the Buick 3.8 litre V6 water pump is built to much closer tolerances and fits perfectly. And you can even use the front-wheel-drive versions to shorten up the front of the engine if you need to.

"We've also found that installing a Borg Warner electric "in-line" pump – in the return line – precludes any tendency to overheat. NASCAR racers use them to pressurize the engine."

Another myth: the oiling system is flawed. Again, the Bakers have the answer. Says Ray: "The oil pickup tube is just a tad small. So under high performance conditions, it could restrict oil flow a little. We use the heavy duty oil pump from the 231 cu. in. Buick V6, which also has a larger pickup tube. But you should use the stock pump's bypass spring; the spring from the heavy duty pump doesn't allow the piston to move back far enough to relieve the pressure when it's cold; it also kills the distributor drive gear."

"You'll also hear that you need to Heli Coil® the block (install treaded inserts) to prevent studs and bolts from pulling out. Not true, unless the threads are already stripped. First, you should always inspect the threads to ensure they're OK. And if so, you must follow the factory torque specifications *exactly*. Working with aluminum engines is different than with iron ones."

In addition to building perfect, stock 215s, the Bakers can build engines with larger displacements – up to 292 cubic inches – if more

power is what you need. They have perfected the art of boring out the stock sleeves and installing new ones to increase the bore. "We have cut engines apart just to see how much metal can be removed around the bores, and it's clear that GM intended to have larger bores on this engine," says Ray. They also adapt the Buick 300 crankshaft for lengthening the stroke. The Bakers have developed their own tooling for these procedures, and have cultivated relationships with outside shops to make it all happen. The result is a reliable, trouble-free motor.

The word to the wise is: Don't leave the preparation of your engine solely to your local mechanic unless he is a specialist on the 215 or even the 300. Go to an expert!

And if you want to go to the Bakers, you can call them at 206-363-5088 or e-mail Ray at v12ray@comcast.net.

