

"The Detroit Weekend" - October 24-25, 1964 by **John Lundin**, November 1964

Although there are many members of the Club more capable of writing a Newsletter, none could have enjoyed this event more than Judy and I. And since the Merritts and the Markleys were responsible for the occasion, it would seem unfair to ask them to also write about it.

The schedule opened with a gathering at Dick Merritt's home in Royal Oak, Michigan. Anticipating a warm and sunny fall week end, Club members and friends started to arrive even before the appointed hour of 1:00. Dick was out in the street to wave in the first arrivals. It didn't take long for the neighborhood to become aware that it was a Ferrari Club meeting because three snarling Ferraris were soon present.

After a number of cups of coffee and much spirited conversation, the afternoon activities began. Some of the women wanted to visit the Cranbrook Art Museum, so they went their way. Everyone else headed for the British Boys' Shop, Proto Products, Inc. These five men are master craftsmen and coachbuilders in the true sense of the word. They work not only with aluminum for body panels, but also with wood and steel as the job requires. The cars in the shop attested to their versatility: a complete body for a futuristic car created by a GM designer, a body skin for a 200 MPH dragster, a new front end (from the cowl, forward) for an AC Aceca which was being modified to Cobra specifications, various wood frame members and steel body panels to restore a classic Lincoln, and complete bodies for SSK Mercedes and vintage GP Alfas. The results these men achieve with their "wheel" technique of forming metal are almost unbelievable.

After watching a demonstration of the rolling of a fender for a Bugatti, the tour proceeded to Bill Markley's impressive garage. Here, everyone had their eyes knocked out by Bill's collection. He has an '08 Oakland which he takes to antique car shows, and a 1930 V-16 Cadillac Roadster that is a real show winner! The Cadillac was started for us and it runs beautifully. Bill also stores an unrestored but operable 1933 Rolls Royce PII Newport Town Car in this garage. Although not usually kept here, his immaculate 4.9 Ferrari Super America was present for our inspection. In addition to his own cars, some of Bill's friends also keep exotic machines in the garage. One may not appreciate ordinary exhaust fumes, but when they're from a magnificent 2.3 blown 8 cyl. Alfa the aroma becomes almost

enjoyable.

From Bill's the tour moved on to Ray Jones' for another set of surprises. Ray and his crew do faultless restorations for those who want only the best. His home appears at first to be a typical nice suburban ranch-style abode. We entered through a 2 1/2 car garage. Parked in among many, many automobile parts and pieces (including a Mercedes SSK engine so monstrous that it looked like it should have been a stationary powerplant rather than a mobile one) was no less than the famed Count Trossi SSK Mercedes. We were treated to a deep throated roar from this fabulous automobile, and the noise of that giant engine with its "elephant blower" has to be heard to be believed. Some lucky people was it on the street the next day heading for a little exercise on the expressway.

"So," you say, "Ray Jones has a are collectors' item. Interesting, but so what?" Friend, you ain't heard nothing yet. So far everything is not too abnormal: a big family-home garage with piles of car parts and one very unusual automobile. But then someone suggested we go downstairs, and this is where the story gets unusual; the basement is all garage and shops! It even has a paint booth and an upholstery room. There were several Mercedes being rebuilt, Bill Markley's '29 Auburn Boattail Speedster being reupholstered, and Bugattis and Bugattis and Bugattis and Bugattis! In one room alone I counted eight (8)! On the roof of that room, which is normally a patio or sun deck, were two more Bugattis! There were more Bugs in, on, and around that basement than I had ever seen before! Of course, we had to hear one fired up. When you see 'em and hear 'em like this, it's easy to understand why there is a fanatic cult of long standing.

When the group finally settled down enough to stagger back to their cars, the tour moved again. The final stop was at the home of Dick Teague, who specializes in antiques - but has lately been "bitten" by one of Ray's Bugs. When he opened the door to one of his three garages, we saw four beautifully restored antiques. And for our enjoyment, Dick started a 1912 Pope Harfford. This car, thanks to its giant flywheel, will idle at a ridiculously low speed - about 200 RPM. After stepping from a Ferrari which sounds unhappy at anything below 1200, it's uncanny. One of the prize specimens was an '03 Ford - serial number 574. Dick led us up a hill to another garage where he has an unrestored Type 43 Bugatti and a 1902 one-cylinder Rambler. A rather unusual old automobile top that we saw raised the subject of vet another Rambler (1904 2-cvl.) so Dick escorted us to a workshop

attached to his home where he is replacing the clutch from that antique. One complete wall was lined with brass lamps and cast iron toy cars - every one a museum piece. If Dick seems slightly partial to one make, it could be due to his job as Vice President for Styling at American Motors. But don't be surprised if he gets a Ferrari one of these days.

To the Detroit people, these were familiar grounds; the rest of us were tremendously impressed. One might expect to find many people in Detroit interested in automobiles, but who would expect private shows like these? Are there places like these in other cities? I rather doubt it. Not in the quality and quantity that there is in one small section of the Detroit area. Although the Saturday tour was spectacular and well worth any trip to Detroit, it was just the beginning of the activities. Saturday evening, the Ferrari Club of America held its first Annual Banquet. There were 21 loyal enthusiasts gathered around a large table at the Detroit Athletic Club. No speeches, just friendly talk, good food and drink, and true fellowship. The Detroit Athletic Club is an elegant facility; there is probably none finer. We all felt that it was appropriate for the Ferrari Club to have the First Annual Banquet in such a fine location.

After a day full of traveling, touring, and socializing, everyone went his own way for a good night's rest. But all present paused when Gerry Buhrman pulled up to the entrance in his new silver-grey Berlinetta GT Lusso - truly a fitting conclusion to a glorious day.

It seemed impossible, but Detroit provided even nicer weather on Sunday, and the first official event of the day was a delicious brunch at the palatial Bloomfield Hills Country Club. Five Ferraris were gathered there. The group was also graced by the magnificent 1932 Cadillac V-8 roadster of Dave Hollis. The Parade from the Country Club to Bill Markley's home for the business meeting stopped many an automobile and pedestrian.

The business meeting was short because some members had to start for distant cities, and the rest had one more visit to make to complete the week end. The final stop of the Ferraris was at the beautiful century-old farm of Mrs. James A. (Doris) Blackwood near Metamora, Michigan. Doris is interested in horses - the king on the horn button of her short wheelbase Berlinetta, and the kind that eat hay and jump. The women that visited her house that Sunday afternoon could tell you much about

the appointments and furnishings that the untrained eye of male missed. But Mrs. Blackwood's home has all the appeal and warmth that it can possibly get from a charming woman and gracious hostess. It is wonderful to meet a person like Doris who is a real Ferrari enthusiast, when we had come to think of the Club as a masculine interest. Mrs. Blackwood, our collective hat is off to you for a delightful afternoon.

And the Club hat is off to the other members from the Detroit area who worked so hard to arrange that fine week end. Particularly, the Club extends its thanks to Dick Merritt for arranging the tours and to Bill Markley for providing the facilities of the Detroit Athletic Club, the Bloomfield Hills Country Club, his garage and his home. For such a memorable week end, "thanks" seems grossly inadequate.