

Road Tests: Corvair Monza Spyder • Oldsmobile Jetfire

CAR and DRIVER

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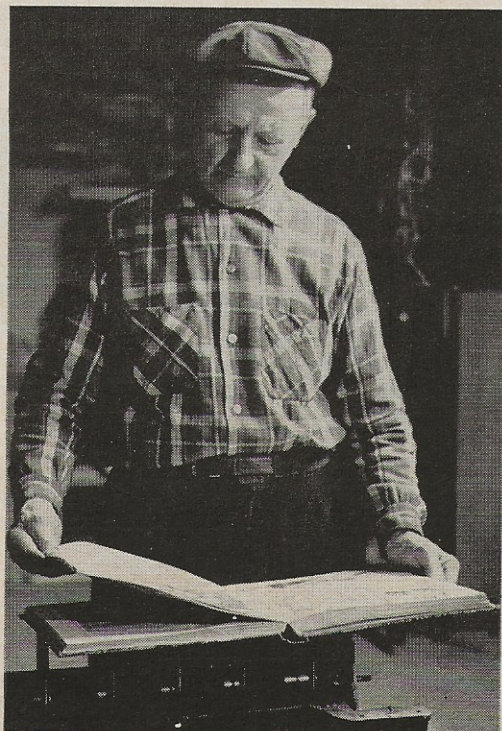
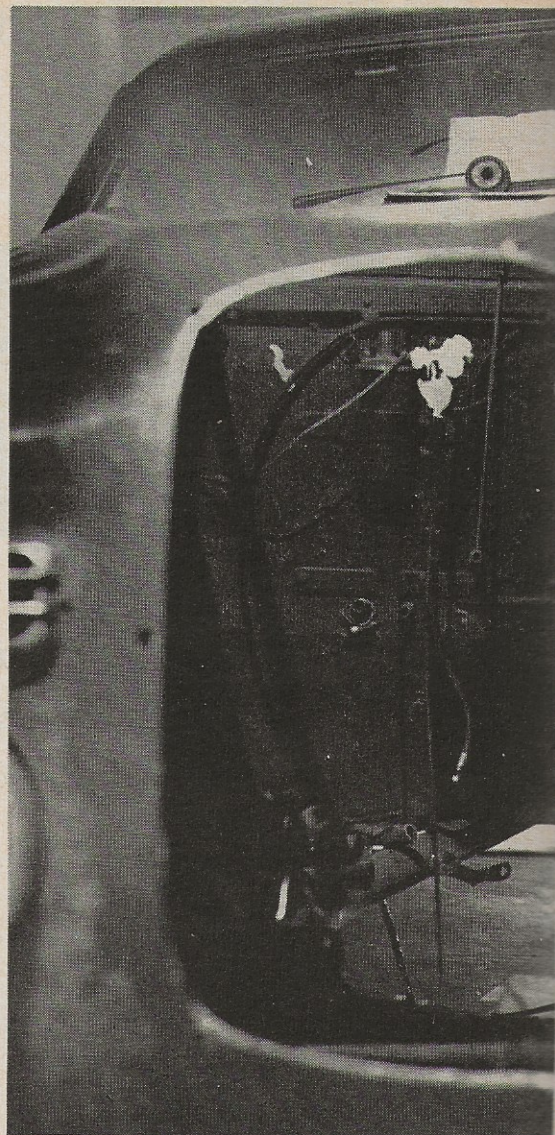
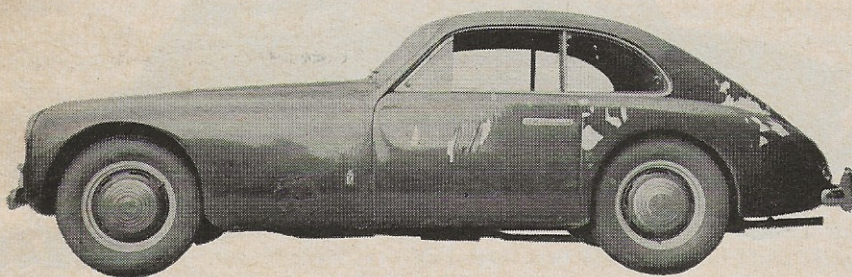


Class Winners at C/D's Concours d'Elegance

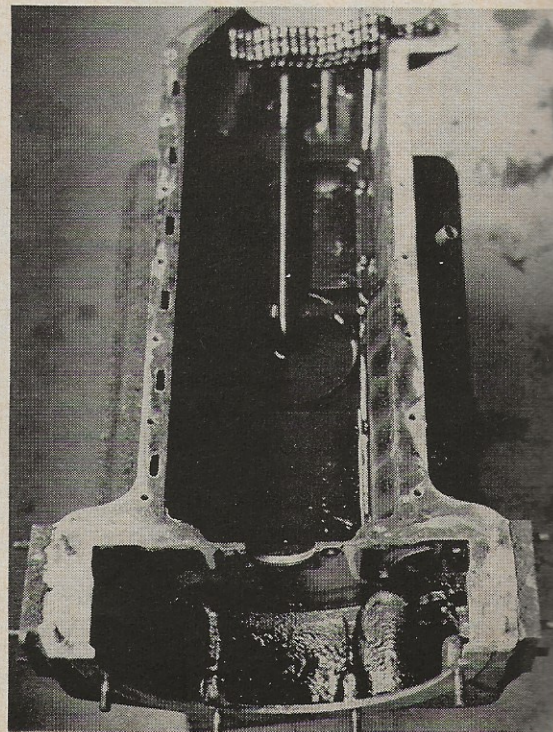
DAYTONA: Dan Gurney Compares GT vs. Stock Cars

Rocky Road to the Concours

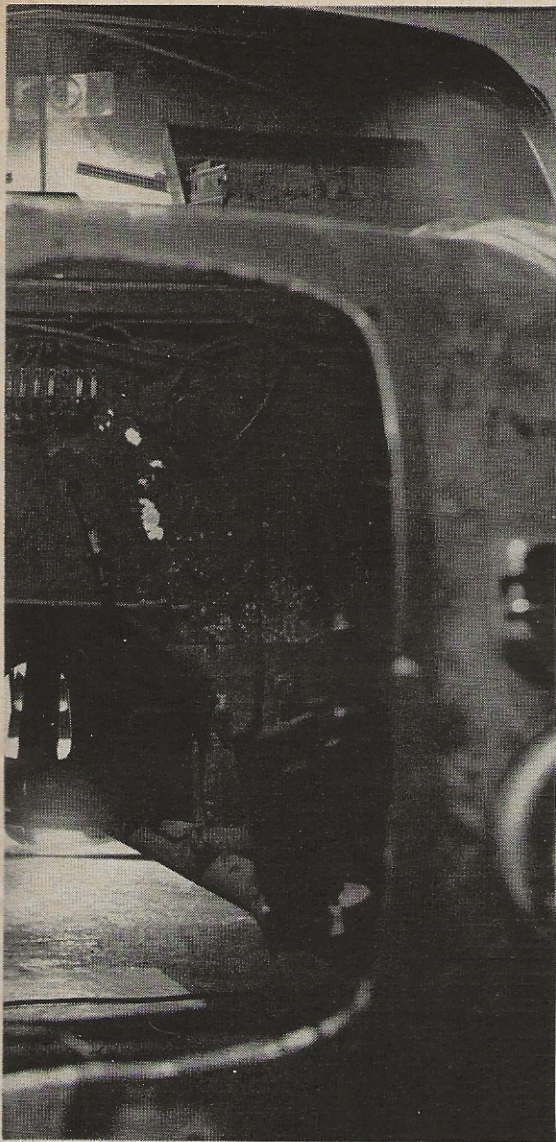
*C/D's Maserati turns
out to be a lady in
need of rehabilitation*



Now "retired," Stich is a dedicated craftsman.



Sump was littered with tiny metal chips.

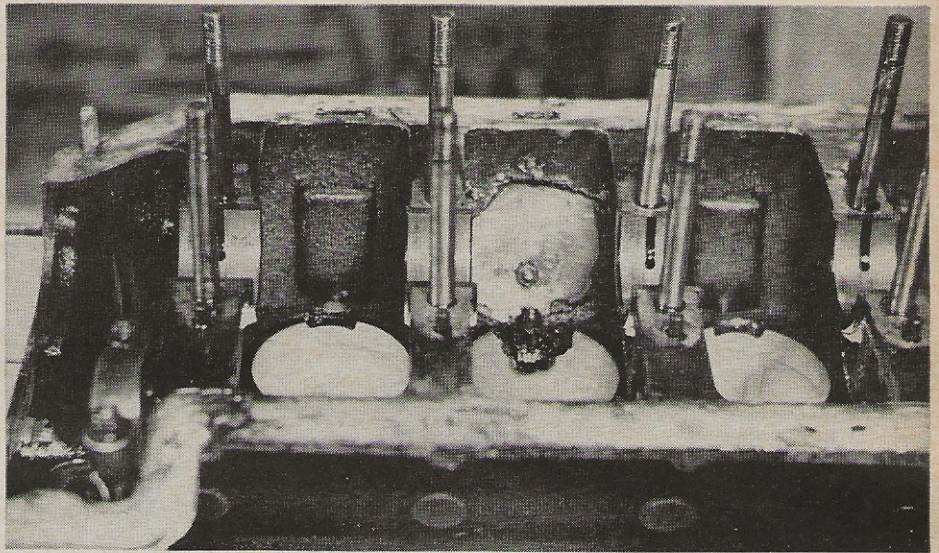


Engineless, the Maserati gapes vacantly.

Directions to the Catskill cottage had been simple, and when we stopped at the first house after the fork left, there was no mistaking it. A two-bearing Fiat 500 crankshaft-and-flywheel was mounted on the wrought-iron porch railing.

The stairway it marked was snow-covered, so we approached the entry beside the garage door and pressed—further confirmation—the shaft of a horizontally mounted Bermuda bell. The white-haired, 70-year-old gentleman who answered its kling-klang was Charles Stich, restorer extraordinary of antique autos. After running his own garage business for 43 years (and 12 previous years of apprenticeship), he chose to retire last winter to the quiet of the Catskills and a milder pace. CAR AND DRIVER's Maserati A6G, whose design history was chronicled last month, is the first of his one-at-a-time projects here.

We had blithely imagined that all our 14-year-old car needed was a



Gouged bottom of number-two cylinder and patched crankcase wall tell a sad tale.



Number-two piston's short skirt and missing bottom ring reveal makeshift repair.

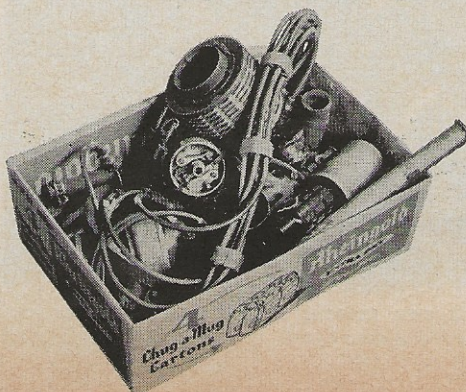
new rod bearing and maybe a valve grind, so glowingly had it been described. Charles Stich tore away our illusion as deftly and directly as he strips an engine.

The machinery was in far worse shape than we'd thought. All 12 valves were shot. Apparently they had been ground down so far they were about to fall through into the ports, so he had already sent the stripped head off to Brooklyn to have new valves cut to size.

Then he turned the crankcase over

to show us its underside—and more trouble. Reminding us that the number-one rod bearing had melted out, he pointed to a shiny, well-hammered spot on the bottom of the corresponding liner. The A6G's liners stick well down toward the sump, so far that they have little reliefs on each side so the connecting rods won't touch. Trouble is, when a bearing melts out, the extra movement of the rod exceeds the clearance provided. Only by a little, but at 3,000 rpm that's a lot of tippy-tapping by the con-rod bolt.

If the engine is run this way for long, the liner can easily be broken. To our dismay, Charles Stich pointed to the adjacent cylinder where this had not only already happened, knocking off roughly a square inch of cylinder wall, but bringing down on the then-owner's head a horrible heap of troubles. A carefully welded-in patch in the aluminum crankcase alongside testified mutely that the number-two connecting rod



MASERATI CONTINUED

had committed the great, unpardonable sin. Confirming this, the number-two piston has one fewer oil ring than its mates and a shorter skirt (which can't have helped the balance very much). Also, that rod's flanks have none of the hammer-like marks that defile the other five.

One may presume that when the rod broke bits and pieces flew like shrapnel all through the crankcase.

How could this happen in an engine so highly reputed, one that was strong enough to be developed eventually into an F-1 power plant? It is indeed a strong engine but, like many highly developed devices, it not only deserves a sympathetic

touch, it desperately needs it. We don't pretend to know what befell our baby in her checkered past—perhaps she had been driven mostly in fourth, with the foot well down even at low rpm; or perhaps she had merely been wildly overrevved.

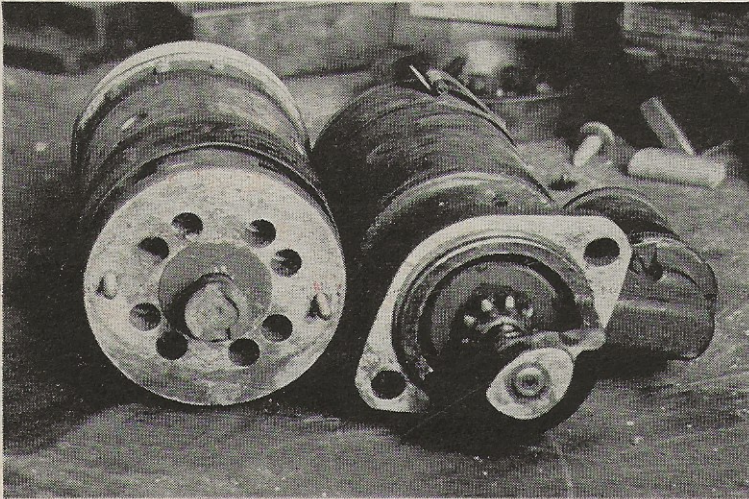
All journals on the seven-main-bearing crank are scored, most of them lightly, and the source of the metal fragments responsible was readily pointed out—the timing chains to the single overhead camshaft were so loose and floppy that they had rubbed great graunching grooves in the soft aluminum case; a grand argument for an oil filter.

The grooves themselves aren't important, and new chains and sprockets will be easy to find, since standards for them are international. But new babbitt must be poured in each bearing shell; then the main's will be line-bored, the crank journals will be polished (and some of them reground .010-inch undersize).

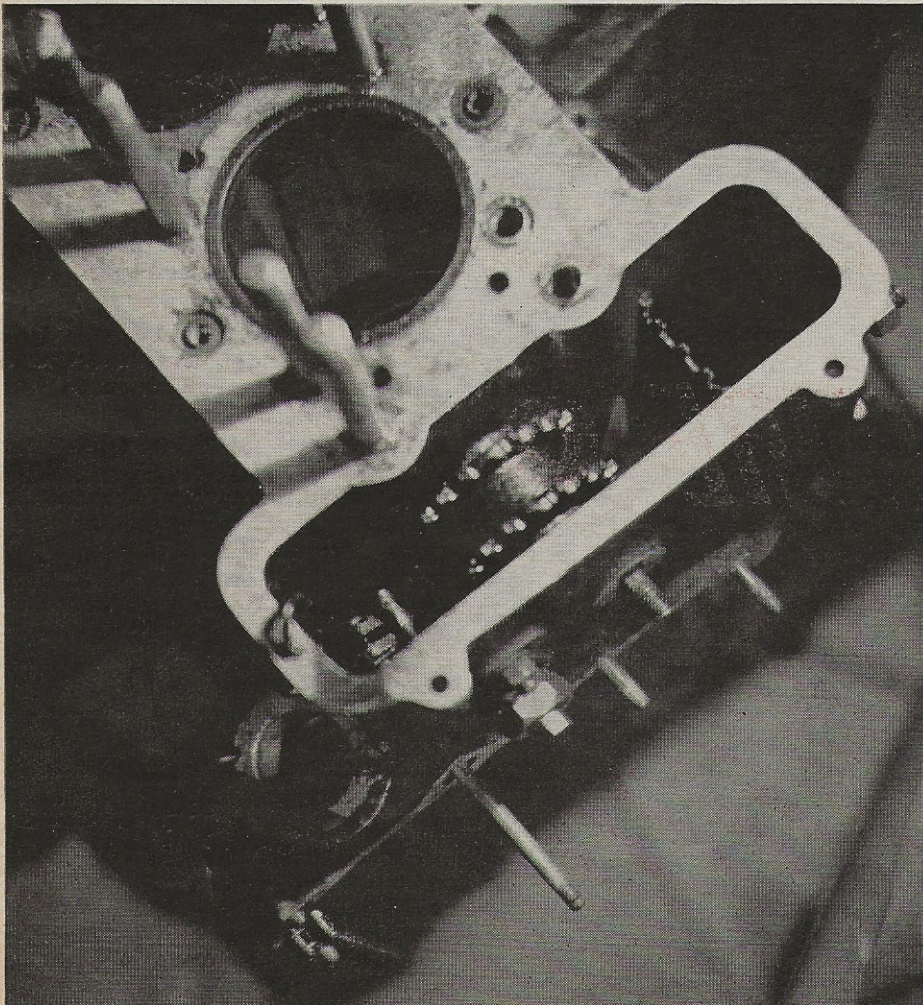
The lobes on the cam are in "iffy" condition, some of the metal bits having passed that way. They will merely be polished off, since this is not a project to revive every last bhp. The tongue-like followers need regrinding but pose no problem. The starter's Bendix gear was half worn away—she must have been a temperamental devil to start—and the generator's dog-drive to the water pump is so worn that Mr. Stich suspects it often abandoned the cooling system to the thermosiphon system, a not-so-good thing for our jewel. The clutch was like new—the reason being obvious when we saw all the blue stains of over-heating on the flywheel. An axle seal needs replacement on the left rear, and perhaps the shocks need replacement.

The bodywork, fortunately, needs little attention. Paint has cracked extensively, evidently from exposure to both brilliant sunshine and cold, wintry air which makes the aluminum skin expand and contract more than the brittle lacquer can cope with. The floor carpets will probably be replaced and the seats will be cleaned, but we plan no overly finicky, super-extravagant "better-than-new" restoration.

While it is our bad luck to find that our A6G has had such a hard life, more filled with abuse than use, a happy coincidence befell us on our return to New York. On a visit to Alfred Momo's, U. S. center of Maserati activity, who should be there but Signor Omer Orsi, head of Maserati. If the interpretation we got while we talked was accurate, we can hope to have the A6G in running condition, if not absolutely A-1, just in time for our Concours. *cjp*



Teeth of starter's Bendix gear have been more than half worn away.



Loosened timing chains have chopped their own grooves into the aluminum casing.