

A GREAT FIRST YEAR WITH A 3500 GT

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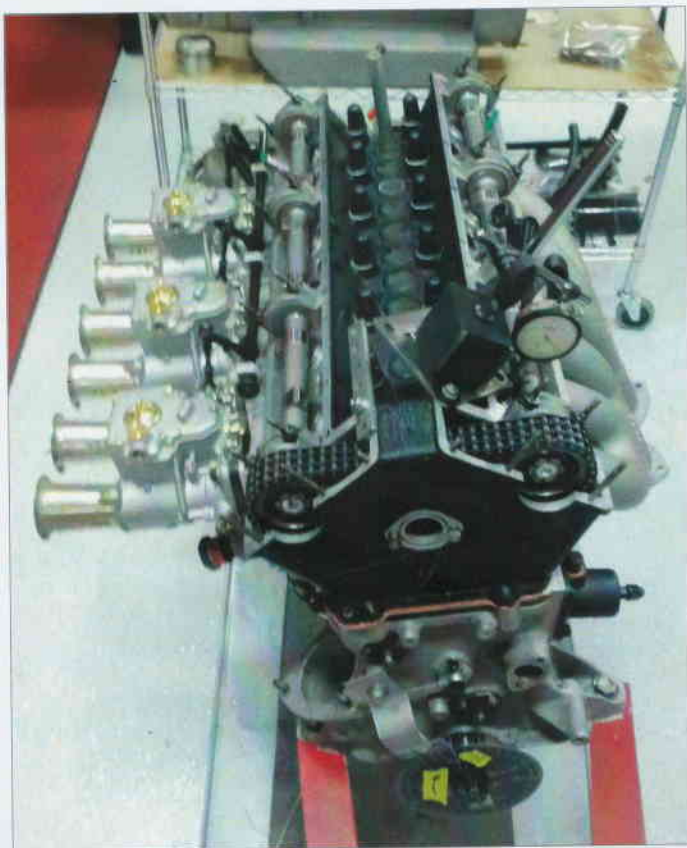
I've always been a huge fan of 1950s and 1960s sports cars. I had known of the Maserati 3500 GT coupes ever since I was in grade school and even had a picture on my bedroom wall of one as a kid, but I'd never thought about owning a Maserati until a few years ago.

I first got the idea of getting a 3500 when I saw an ad for a particularly nice coupe that Bill Noon at Symbolic Motors had. That led me to start reading up on the cars and talking with owners. Maserati owners are a terrific bunch who are always ready to share their knowledge, experience and sources. One in particular, Bill LeMasters, has spent hours and hours helping me. Bob Lederer has also been great.

The next thing that pushed me towards a Touring coupe came when I saw a very original one that my friend Terry Larson, "Mr. Vintage Jaguar," had bought. The car's timeless lines were even better in person than in pictures. I mentioned my interest in the cars to another friend, Bill Hall of Borroni Americas. When he told me about a special car he thought might be available in Scottsdale (where I spend winters), I jumped at the opportunity to see it. A deal was struck and I bought the car in May 2014 from Alberto Gutierrez, a noted car collector who had shown it at our terrific Arizona Concours earlier that year.

As you can see right away from its side trim, which other





coupes don't have, number 101-058 really is special. And that's just the beginning. The car was a 1957 factory prototype, which Maserati tried out various ideas on. For example, the steering wheel has a fancy brass Trident in the center, finer mesh is used in the grill and many badges and labels are unique. There are several mechanical differences too, such as magnesium brake drums and an oversized oil cooler that looks like it came off of a 300S.

Another distinguishing thing about the car is that it was exhibited in the 1958 Paris auto show by Maserati. I think that may be why its gauges are in French and the trunk floor is even different from what I've seen, quilted leather.

The prior owner had already entered 058 in The Quail Concours in Carmel, California for August 2014, so I in essence, had bought the most expensive ticket to that show. I had been to the Monterey car week several times before, but exhibiting a vintage Maserati there as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the marque was truly special. It gave me the chance to meet many more Maserati owners and enthusiasts from around the world, including Joe Duray of Los Angeles whose beautiful blue 3500 coupe was next to mine in the display. I also showed my car at Concorso Italiano the next day where I met more owners and fans, including Larry Ruben, who has been a great resource for rare parts and advice on these cars.

When I bought the car, I knew I wanted to use it for vintage rallies; in fact one of the attractions of a very early car was its eligibility for some tours which are limited to pre-1961 cars like the Colorado Grand and the California Mille. I decided to start with the Copperstate 1000. To get ready for a long high speed run, I decided to completely rebuild the engine. After checking around, I picked Lyman Scherer in Scottsdale who had recently rebuilt another 3500 GT engine and has prepared many cars for vintage rallies. Whenever you embark on a project like this, you always have surprises and usually not pleasant ones. This was no exception. It turned out that the cylinder head was cracked and even if that could have been fixed, it had been decked so many times that it couldn't be salvaged. Finding a head for a nearly 60 year old car was like searching for "unobtainium," but I was finally successful. While the engine was out, I also decided to replace the 4 speed with a Maserati 5-speed to reduce the revs at high speed.

The clock was ticking for the April 2015 running of the Copperstate. Many new parts were obtained, including pistons and valves. Lots of the parts came from MIE, *the* greatest source for old Maserati bits. The carbs were also rebuilt, by Pierce Manifold, the Weber specialists. I also decided that it would be safer to use wider modern tires, but they wouldn't fit on the original Borrani disk wheels. After checking around,



I found out that Turrino in the UK made wire wheels that could take larger tires, looked great (just like the wires originally offered) and fit with an adapter they sell.

With all that work, serious road testing started less than a month before the rally. My friend Dr. Terry Maxon shared the testing with me since he was going to be my co-driver. By coincidence, Terry had owned a 3500 coupe before and his mechanical knowledge helped solve some teething pains.

The start of the Copperstate rolled around before we knew it. The rally was kicked off with a car show at a spring training baseball park. Even though it was surrounded by million dollar Ferraris and other rare cars, the 3500 GT was very popular with the public. Once the show was over, the cars lined up, passed in review before the crowd and headed out on the highway. Terry and I were on our way.

Over the next four days, we drove over 1,000 miles on some of the most beautiful desert and mountain scenery in the U.S. This year's route took us north up to Zion National Park and then down and around the Grand Canyon and Sedona, Arizona. We were escorted by a great group of motorcycle police from the Arizona Department of Public Safety and when it was safe and the road was

clear, they waved us ahead and my old Maserati moved out like it was meant to. The other cars were terrific, ranging from a Bora owned by Bob White of Scottsdale, to a tiny Arnolt MG, to a 1970 Dodge Charger that looked like it came right out of "Bullet," and to Clive Cussler's 1929 Bentley.

As impressive as the cars were, though, the drivers and co-drivers were the best. One of the people I enjoyed meeting a lot was Bruce Male of Boston. When I told him how much I loved his fabulous 1959 Ferrari Tour de France, Bruce confided that he is really a Maserati guy. Is he ever – he owns two 1950s A6GCSs! Another great participant was Ed Mell, Arizona's most famous artist, who has driven in all 25 Copperstates since its inception. A painting by Ed was auctioned as part of the rally and raised even more money for the Copperstate's primary beneficiary, the Phoenix Art Museum.

So what's next? I plan to drive my 3500 GT as much as I can – there are terrific day trips in every direction from Scottsdale. Car friends in California have encouraged me to bring the car to shows there and I'd love to go over to the Santa Fe New Mexico Concorso with it. For the next rally, I have my sights set on the Colorado Grand in 2016; another opportunity to see great scenery and cars, meet fun people and most importantly drive the 3500 as it was meant to be driven – fast!

